

Innovate
Public Schools

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No matter who we are, when we send our children off to school, the things we hope for aren't very different.

I've spent more than twenty years talking with parents about their hopes for their children, mostly in working-class urban neighborhoods. Their answers are similar to each other – and to my own hopes as a father of two kids in public school.

We want the kind of education that will give our kids great choices in life. We want our kids to be challenged to work hard, to love school, to be safe, and to find a path to a successful and comfortable life. We want our kids to go on to good jobs and to be able to provide for families of their own. We want schools that will help kids turn their dreams – and ours – into reality.

There are a lot of schools that do that for most of their students. But they aren't distributed equally, or fairly. In low-income neighborhoods, they can be rare.

That's not a surprise. What is a surprise is that the Bay Area – for all its incredible wealth, for all its passion for equality – actually does a worse job delivering a quality education for its low-income African American and Latino students than the rest of the state does.

That's the bad news. The good news is that there are shining exceptions – public schools that shed light on what's possible and how to achieve it – schools that everyone can learn from.

That's what this report is about: the brightest lights in our working-class communities of color, the schools that are making good on the promise that every child in America should enjoy.

Because, when we look at how little progress we've made in closing gaps of achievement and race, it would be easy to get discouraged. Or to draw the wrong lesson – that we're somehow setting the bar too high and should lower our standards.

These are the schools that are showing what's possible. There are not enough of them, but they aren't random lightning strikes. They're examples of what any community can do with the will and the commitment and the vision. Every one of these schools has inspired its staff and its families with that vision, has supported its teachers effectively, and has taken a fearless look at what the data says about what's working. Our kids need us to learn every lesson we can from them.

The Bay Area has the genius, the passion, and the resources to change the way the world works. Surely we can do right by all of our kids.

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www.innovateschools.org