



The Oakland Reach Case Study

Parents designing a custom education experience for their kids

Date: January 2023

Team: Reconstruction



Reconstruction

Oakland Reach: Parents designing a custom education experience for their kids

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Oakland Reach co-founder Lakisha Young knew that kids in Oakland weren't getting the education they needed and deserved. After all, less than a third of Black and brown students in Oakland were reading on grade level. Young also suspected that, if given the choice, parents themselves could organize exceptional educational experiences for their children.

Through years of on-the-ground organizing, Young had created a powerful network of parent activists. When schools in Oakland closed due to the pandemic, Young was well poised to create a robust virtual hub to offer intensive reading support and enrichment activities to families, free of charge.

Reconstruction was one of the content providers Young reached out to. She chose Reconstruction because she saw that they offered an extensive selection of academic and enrichment courses for every grade level — and that these courses were designed by Black educational and subject experts with extensive experience in their fields. Ease of implementation was another factor in the choice; Reconstruction makes the onboarding process for school and organizations seamless, providing dedicated instructors, called Reconstructors, to live tutor all classes.

A powerful recipe: academic rigor, identity affirmation... and actual fun!

In the beginning, Reconstruction focused its course offerings on math and reading classes, as parents in Oakland were deeply worried that children were not learning enough of these core skills in school. Parents responded with enthusiasm to Reconstruction's approach when they saw how their children were engaging with core skills in a culturally relevant way.

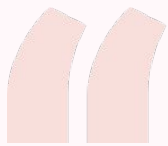
Reconstruction worked to ensure that, in addition to rigorous academics, students experienced joy in every class. Students don't just memorize skills in Reconstruction classes — they apply skills to topics that they're excited about, that relate to their lives and interests. Reconstructors aim to show students that these are powerful tools that they can use in the real world.

Given the resounding success of the math and reading classes, before long Oakland Reach asked Reconstruction to add some of its signature classes that explore Black identity and intellectual culture. Families who identified as Black as well as those who did not were eager to participate and learn about these topics. Classes like Cooking for the

Soul encouraged students to embrace food as an expression of culture. Together with their families, they discovered the history and health benefits of each dish while learning how to prepare it in a guided tutorial. In another course, called #BlackBooks, students engaged in book-club style conversations on classic and emerging Black literature.

A better understanding of Black experience benefits everyone

One Latinx Oakland father said that he never really understood what Juneteenth was until his family took Reconstruction’s Juneteenth course. As a result of his participation, he was moved to share more with his family about their own culture and their people’s path to freedom.



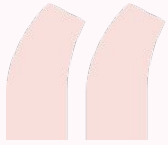
“This self-reflection made students think about how they wanted to showcase their identity to others but also how their identity can help them make a difference in their world.”

Kahleah Brown, Reconstructor

The experience he detailed is one that Reconstruction has seen often in its classes — that creating rich content centered on the Black experience can enhance our knowledge of history and of ourselves, no matter who we are. In the words of one Reconstructor, Kahleah Brown, who taught Oakland students: “Learning about the Black experience has benefits for everyone because it allows one to reflect on their own identity. This self-reflection made students think about how they wanted to showcase their identity to others but also how their identity can help them make a difference in their world.”

Reconstruction scores high with students and parents

Since 2020, Reconstruction has provided 32 unique courses to over 700 Oakland students. Students were already doing their classwork from home during this period, making it that much easier for families to participate in learning together. In a family survey conducted in the summer of 2021, Reconstruction received the highest score out of any other provider, with parents rating Reconstruction a 3.85 out of 4.0 in terms of how much their children liked their classes. Similarly, parents gave high marks for the amount of learning their children attained from the classes, with a 3.79 out of 4.0 rating.



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Lakisha Young, Oakland Reach Co-Founder

Once parents had the chance to experience powerful academic programming that affirmed their children’s identity – and even had the opportunity to learn alongside their children – they refused to return to business as usual. When schools in Oakland finally reopened and the virtual hub was disbanded, Oakland parents continued to demand Reconstruction classes, enrolling their children at their own expense and recruiting neighbors to enroll their children as well. As a result of parent advocacy, local schools like Encompass Academy incorporated Reconstruction into their school day.

“Reconstruction courses are critical not just to supporting our students in reading and math, but also in helping them connect to their identity, to understand who they are and where they are going,” Lakisha Young explained. “We envision a day where this kind of identity development curriculum is a core part of what kids learn in school every day.”

Get in touch with Reconstruction to learn more

Interested in partnering with Reconstruction to nurture Black excellence and joy in your school, organization, or community? Visit our website to learn more and to schedule a call with our sales team.

