

Bernadette Pilar Zermeño

TK Teacher, ASCEND

2018 Surge Fellow

Bernadette Pilar Zermeño is a movement maker, community mobilizer, and early childhood educator. With over fifteen years of experience in early education, she remains passionate about working alongside adults and children to facilitate lifelong learning beginning at the earliest ages.

As an educator, Bernadette is a dedicated advocate for hands-on, personalized, whole child-centered learning. In the world of early childhood in the Oakland Unified School District, Bernadette was a founding dual immersion Transitional Kindergarten (TK) teacher. She significantly contributed to cultivating a program that truly reflected developmentally appropriate practices in both English and Spanish. As part of building the TK program in the district, she forged and continues to maintain partnerships with Oakland Promise, Oakland Literacy Coalition, Educate78 and Lead East Bay. She is currently the inaugural TK teacher at ASCEND, an arts-integrated TK-8 school in East Oakland that emphasizes family and community partnerships while aiming to nurture both a passion and agency for learning and self-discovery.



As a community mobilizer, Bernadette builds solid relationships with all families and students, creating and leading transformational movements. Her colleagues believe that “Bernadette has a major impact on school culture. Her enthusiasm and willingness to take on new responsibilities encourages other teachers to join in. She plays a pivotal role in building networks of support for the school and bringing in new resources.”

Bernadette has taken her passion and drive for supporting the earliest learners is taken outside of the walls of TK and into an adult setting, focusing on Bay Area Preschool, TK and Kindergarten teachers. In addition to teaching TK full time, she currently works also as an Adjunct Professor of Early Childhood at Chabot College in Hayward, a literacy specialist and Preschool and TK professional development provider with SEEDS of Early Learning. She has presented at a national education conference on research focusing on dual language immersion in early education, and she continues to research new, effective ways to support language as an asset.

Bernadette’s drive and determination for early education and transformational change has led her to become a member of Oakland Rising, Lead East Bay and a board member of the California Kindergarten Association. She is National Board Certified as an Early Childhood Generalist. She holds an M.A. in Education with a bilingual multiple subject teaching credential and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of California at Berkeley.