Lakisha Young is Co-Founder & CEO of The Oakland REACH, a parent-run organization founded in 2016 with the mission to “make the powerless parent powerful.” She has dedicated her career to promoting access to quality schools because she knows firsthand that a good education changes lives. The Oakland REACH has conducted over 5,000 1:1s with parents in Oakland’s most underserved communities and trained 450 families in their fellowship program to create a team of informed and organized parent advocates fighting for quality schools.

Because of this foundation and fieldwork, The Oakland REACH was in a unique position to reach and support families during COVID19. That’s why Lakisha moved urgently within days of the city’s stay-at-home order to launch the REACH Relief Fund. Under her leadership, the team raised and distributed $400,000 in emergency cash assistance to over 1,000 families, twice, to help pay for rent and groceries. But the crisis didn’t stop there, so neither did this work. Lakisha created a vision for a Virtual Family Hub, a one-stop shop supporting families’ economic survival and their children’s educational success. This first-of-its-kind model to make parents leaders in their children’s education launched in June 2020 with almost 200 families — and doubled enrollment by the fall. This year, the Hub is expanding within Oakland Unified School District to reach more students and their families on six different pilot campuses in the district. The Hub has been featured in local, national, and international media from TIME Magazine to KQED, BBC News, CNN, Univision, The San Francisco Chronicle, and more.

Lakisha has led and created multiple major campaigns and initiatives for The Oakland REACH. In March 2019, The Oakland REACH had a significant policy win, The Opportunity Ticket, which gives the most vulnerable students higher preference for enrolling in quality schools. Building off the successful passage of the Opportunity Ticket, The Oakland REACH doubled down on its commitment to opportunity with the launch of Literacy for All, a campaign targeting increasing the literacy of the whole family — including the mamas and grandmamas.

Lakisha is a respected national voice on parent advocacy and regularly consults other cities across the country interested in exploring parent advocacy to demand for better access to quality education for underserved students.