

# Sonya Mehta

Program Specialist, Early Care and Education Program - Alameda County

## 2018 Surge Fellow

**S**onya Mehta lives, works, and engages in progressive education reform work in Oakland. She is part of the design team for the Alameda County Child Care and Early Education Initiative (Measure A), which is on the cusp of becoming the largest public investment in California's children since Prop 10 created the First 5 agencies in 1999. Sonya is also a founding member of the national Teachers Take Action Against Gun Violence group, which grew to over 8,000 members in its first month, and has worked with other educators to create the first curriculum resource guide to support educator and student actions against gun violence.



Prior to her transition into early childhood policy work, Sonya taught kindergarten at a Title I school in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland for five years. In her time as a teacher, she served on the instructional leadership team, raised more than \$20,000 for her school site through grants and crowdfunding, and spearheaded the creation of many programs and projects including the school's first garden science lab.

During her time as a teacher, Sonya was a 2014-16 teacher policy fellow with the Great Oakland (GO) Public Schools coalition, where she worked with fellow teacher leaders to decrease educator turnover in Oakland by creating more professional pathways for highly effective teachers. Sonya also engaged in classroom inquiry research with the Mills Teacher Scholars group, working with colleagues to collect and analyze data in our classrooms to better understand student learning, and received the Educate78 Teacher Innovation Grant for the 2016-17 school year.

Sonya graduated with honors from UCLA, where she studied political science, community development, and Spanish. She received her MA in education and bilingual K-8 credential (Spanish) from UC Berkeley. Throughout college, she worked on a variety of campaigns and legislative actions including the Obama 2007 primary race and 2008 general election (with Nevada headquarters), and the California and federal DREAM Acts to increase opportunities for undocumented youth. Sonya sees her work in public education as profoundly political, with the potential for far-reaching impacts on social inequalities. She believes that lasting changes happen when people from different progressive sectors work together, and coalition building is central to her work.