2015-2016
Policy and Programs Annual Review

Student Groups 1
Student Achievement and Data Use 51
Strategies to Expand Opportunity 77
Critical Issues 103

Student Groups

Latino Students in California's K-12 Public Schools 1

English Learners in Focus, Issue 1: Updated Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners 7

English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs 15

English Learners in Focus, Issue 3: Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners...... 21

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 1: Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students 27

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 2: Closing Opportunity and Achievement Gaps for African-American Students 35

Our Foster Youth: What School Boards Can Do 43

Foster Youth: Supports for Success........ 45

FactSheet *October 2016*

Latino Students in California's K-12 Public Schools

by Manuel Buenrostro

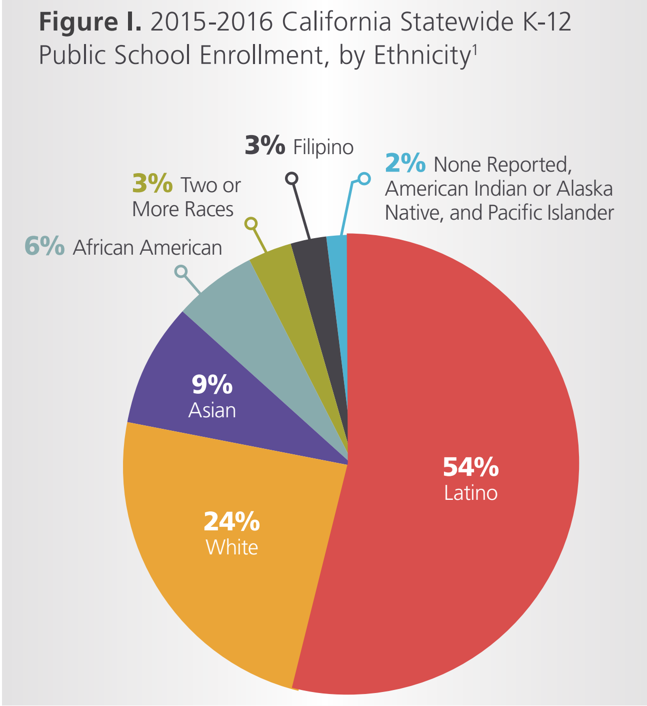
Latinos are an important part of California's cultural fabric and are central to the state's future economic prosperity. Critical to this prosperity is how California's K-12 public schools prepare Latino students for success in college, career, and civic life. This fact sheet summarizes key demographic and achievement data as part of an effort to highlight the opportunities and challenges facing Latino students. Future briefs will expand on these data and offer information about research-supported strategies and recommendations for board members to promote Latino student achievement.

Enrollment

Of the six million K-12 students who attend California public schools, just over half — 3,360,562 million (54%) — are Latino. This student population has grown steadily and has made up the majority of public school students since the 2009-10 school year.

While Latino students attend school in all of California's 58 counties, their numbers vary considerably, ranging from seven percent of students in Alpine County to 92% of students in Imperial County. In nine counties, more than two-thirds of all students are Latino (a significantly greater proportion than the 54% state average), while less than one-third of students are Latino in 20 counties.

Figure I. 2015-2016 California Statewide K-12 Public School Enrollment, by Ethnicity[1]



The concentration of Latino students also varies considerably at the school district level. Nearly 40% of school districts have a majority Latino student population — and half of these (191) have a concentration of 75% or more Latino students. The largest of these high-concentration Latino school districts is the Santa Ana Unified School District, which enrolls 55,909 students, 93% of whom are Latino. However, to put this in perspective, the vast majority of high-concentration Latino school districts enroll fewer than 5,000 students.[2]

Table 1. 2015-2016 Latino Student Enrollment, by County[3]

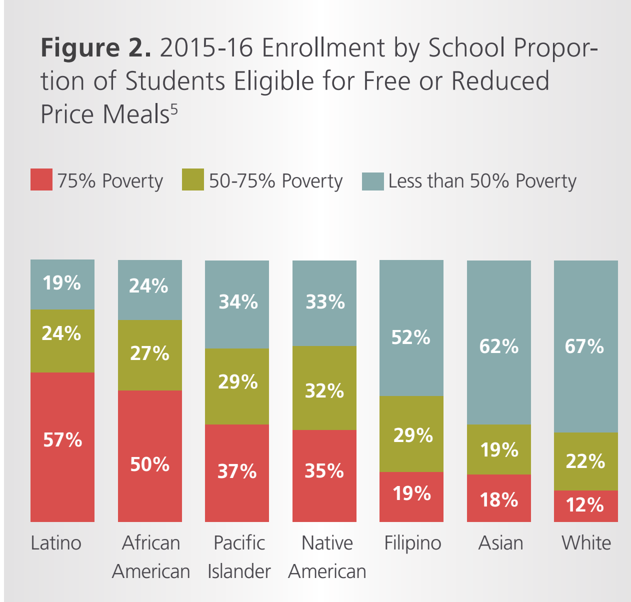
County	Latino Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Percent Latino	County	Latino Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Percent Latino
Alameda	76,408	225,925	34%	**Orange**	242,064	493,030	49%
Alpine	6	85	7%	**Placer**	13,582	71,435	19%
Amador	801	4,060	20%	**Plumas**	304	2,196	14%
Butte	7,324	31,155	24%	**Riverside**	267,561	427,537	63%
Calaveras	994	5,649	18%	**Sacramento**	74,544	242,725	31%
Colusa	3,504	4,630	76%	**San Benito**	8,049	11,114	72%
Contra Costa	60,992	176,413	35%	**San Bernardino**	262,507	408,948	64%
Del Norte	888	4,160	21%	**San Diego**	243,397	504,561	48%
El Dorado	5,341	26,987	20%	**San Francisco**	17,674	59,759	30%
Fresno	128,580	200,333	64%	**San Joaquin**	74,545	145,760	51%
Glenn	3,190	5,629	57%	**San Luis Obispo**	13,508	34,866	39%
Humboldt	3,146	18,550	17%	**San Mateo**	36,277	95,502	38%
Imperial	34,301	37,425	92%	**Santa Barbara**	47,183	69,069	68%
Inyo	2,581	4,698	55%	**Santa Clara**	106,966	274,948	39%
Kern	117,714	181,393	65%	**Santa Cruz**	22,806	40,453	56%
Kings	19,209	28,368	68%	**Shasta**	3,865	26,315	15%
Lake	3,126	9,230	34%	**Sierra**	57	381	15%
Lassen	714	4,419	16%	**Siskiyou**	938	5,804	16%
Los Angeles	991,050	1,523,212	65%	**Solano**	23,335	63,707	37%
Madera	22,697	31,077	73%	**Sonoma**	31,667	71,131	45%
Marin	9,332	33,638	28%	**Stanislaus**	63,323	107,653	59%
Mariposa	331	1,913	17%	**Sutter**	8,355	21,693	39%
Mendocino	5,509	13,210	42%	**Tehama**	4,045	10,705	38%
Merced	41,323	57,477	72%	**Trinity**	157	1,509	10%
Modoc	515	1,471	35%	**Tulare**	78,587	102,703	77%
Mono	1,119	2,081	54%	**Tuolumne**	987	6,002	16%
Monterey	60,003	76,768	78%	**Ventura**	81,043	140,548	58%
Napa	11,389	20,817	55%	**Yolo**	13,897	29,681	47%
Nevada	2,090	12,016	17%	**Yuba**	5,162	14,213	36%

Economic, English Learner, and Special Education Status

When looking at specific demographics of Latino students, there are multiple factors that contribute to their educational attainment such as economic, English learner, and special education status.

Latino students are the most economically disadvantaged ethnic student group in California — 80% of Latino students are economically disadvantaged, compared to 28% of white students and 74% of African American students.[4] Of particular concern, Latinos have the highest concentration of students in high poverty schools amongst all ethnic student groups. The vast majority (57%) of Latino students attend schools where at least 75% of students are eligible for the free or reduced priced meals program (the most common barometer for measuring poverty among student groups).

Figure 2. 2015-16 Enrollment by School Proportion of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals[5]



The majority of Latino students come from households where a language other than English is spoken at home. This is an advantage, as bilingualism is an asset that will benefit them in college, career, and life. However, many Latino students are not proficient in English, which affects their academic achievement. In the 2015-16 school year, one in three (34%) Latino students were English learners. The proportion of Latino students who are English learners drops as they move up the grade levels — 52% of first grade Latino students are English learners, compared to 31% by sixth grade and 21% by ninth grade.[6]

Within special education programs, Latino students are identified at a comparable rate to their white peers — 12% of Latino and white students are identified for special education. By comparison, 15% of Native American and 18% of African American students are identified for special education.[7]

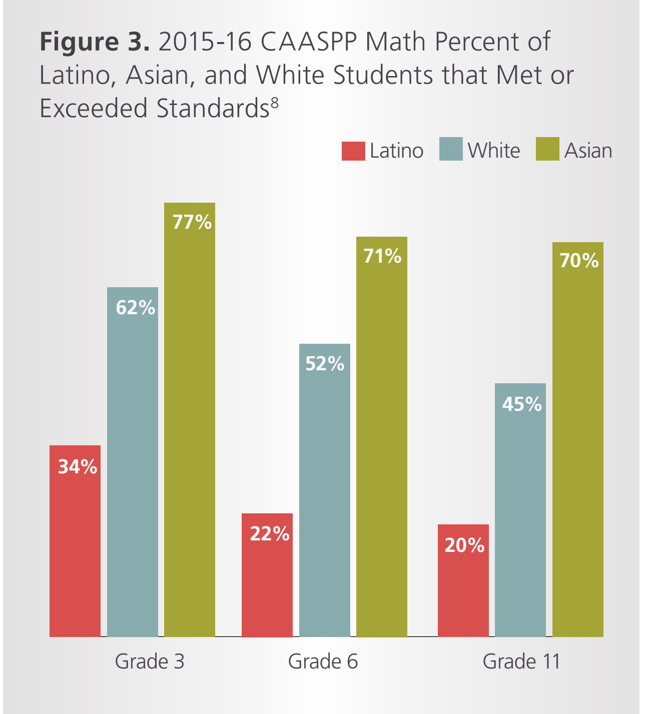
Academic Achievement

According to the 2015-16 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, or CAASPP, results in math and English language arts, a significant achievement gap persists between Latino students and their white and Asian peers across all tested grades. For example:

» Among sixth grade students that met or exceeded standards in math, there is a 30 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 49 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their Asian peers.

» Among sixth grade students that met or exceeded standards in English language arts, there is a 27 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 40 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their Asian peers.

Figure 3. 2015-16 CAASPP Math Percent of Latino, Asian, and White Students that Met or Exceeded Standards[8]



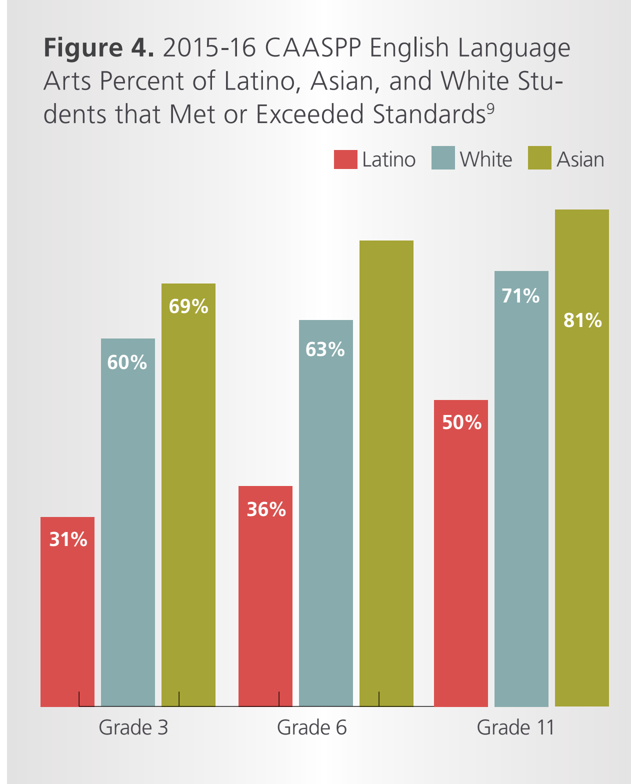


Figure 4. 2015-16 CAASPP English Language Arts Percent of Latino, Asian, and White Students that Met or Exceeded Standards[9]

Moreover, Grade 11 results suggest that only 20% of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math coursework, compared to 45% of white and 70% of Asian students. In English language arts, 50% of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework, compared to 71% of white and 81% of Asian students.[10] While the California State University and many community colleges have been using 11th-grade math and English language arts standardized test scores to indicate college readiness for a number of years, going forward, 11th-grade CAASPP scores will be included in the college and career readiness index as part of the state accountability system.

High School Graduation Rates

According to 2014-15 four-year cohort graduation data, nearly 79% of Latino students graduated from high school, compared to 88% of white, and 93% of Asian students. Despite these gaps, cohort graduation rates have improved for all students since the 2009-10 school year, with the gap closing slightly between Latino students and their white and Asian peers.

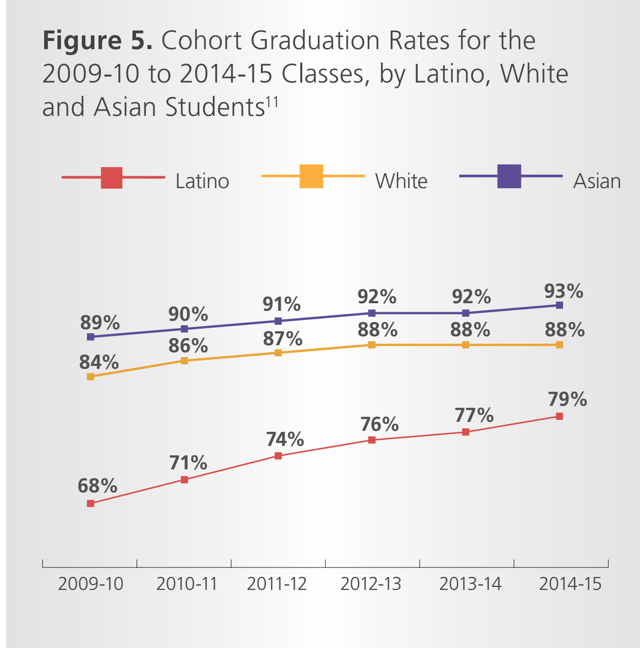


Figure 5. Cohort Graduation Rates for the 2009-10 to 2014-15 Classes, by Latino, White and Asian Students[11]

However, despite the progress in high school graduation rates, only 35% of Latino students that graduate from high school, do so having completed the courses required for entrance to a University of California or California State University campus — compared to 50% of white students and 72% of Asian students.[12]

Conclusion

The information in this fact sheet is an overview of statewide results. However, a more detailed analysis of each county, district, and school data can help board members and other education leaders to make more informed decisions about how to best serve this important student population. As part of CSBA'S continued efforts to shed light on California's diverse student population, we will continue to produce additional briefs, fact sheets, and articles to highlight research-supported strategies and recommendations for board members to consider.

Endnotes

1 California Department of Education. Statewide enrollment by ethnicity with county data. California Department of Education. September 28, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dxYeDC

2 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Enrollment in California public schools by ethnic designation, 2015-16. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dVyqnQ

3 See Endnote 1

4 See Endnote 1

5 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Unduplicated student poverty – free or reduced price meals data 2015–16. September 28, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dhLZsO

6 California Department of Education. Enrollment by gender, grade and ethnic designation. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2e5XqrN

7 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Special education enrollment by age and major ethnic group. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dVswj7

8 CSBA analysis: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. 2016 California statewide research file. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2cV6yiC

9 See Endnote 8

10 See endnote 8

11 California Department of Education. Cohort outcome data report by race/ethnicity. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dNMZWp

12 California Department of Education. 12th grade graduates completing all courses required for U.C. and/or C.S.U. entrance. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1TO3fZX

Manuel Buenrostro is an Education Policy Analyst for the California School Boards Association.

English Learners in Focus, Issue 1

Updated Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners

by Julie Maxwell-Jolly and Manuel Buenrostro

This brief is part of CSBA's effort to support governing boards in their work by shedding light on the educational needs of California's diverse student population. It is the first of a series focused on English learners. The goal of this brief is (1) to provide a profile of the state's English-learner students and a snapshot of how they are faring in our schools and (2) to present basic data and questions that can inform board discussions about policies and practices to help districts and counties best meet the needs of all students. This brief, originally published in March 2014, has been updated to reflect current demographic and assessment data.

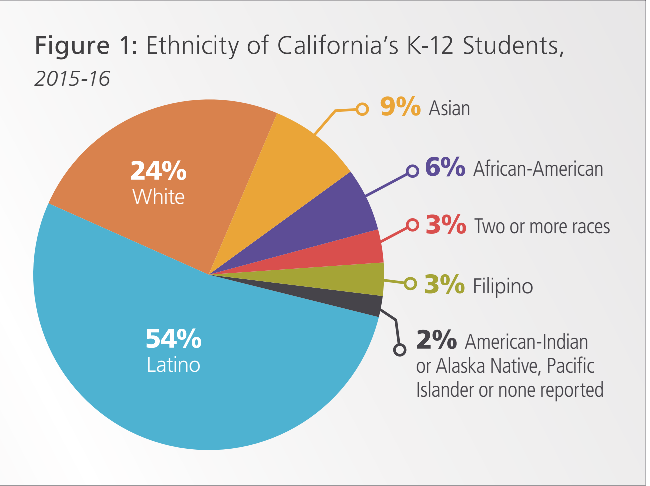
Demographic Profile and Trends

Diversity is a defining characteristic of California's student population. Our students are ethnically and linguistically diverse. If history is any indication, California's students and families will continue to be a culturally and linguistically rich mix. Viewing our diversity as both a challenge to our ability to address the different needs of multiple students, as well as an important resource and educational tool, will help us to do the best we can for all of California's students.

Ethnic Diversity

In 2015-16, 54 percent of California's students were Latino and 22 percent were from other nonwhite groups, principally Asian (9 percent), African American (6 percent) and students from a mix of other groups. White students represented just 24 percent of the state's K-12 population (Figure 1).[1]

Figure 1: Ethnicity of California's K-12 Students, *2015-16*



Linguistic Diversity

22 percent (or 1,373,724 of 6,226,737), of California's K-12 students were identified as English learners. An additional 21 percent (1,291,197) were identified as students whose primary language is other than English but who have met the district criteria for proficiency in English (reported as fluent English proficient by the California Department of Education).[2] This means that 43 percent of the state's students live in households where the language spoken at home — some, if not all of the time — is other than English. This has important implications for districts' education programs, and efforts to engage parents in their children's education and the development of Local Control and Accountability Plans.

California's level of linguistic diversity has remained relatively steady for the last decade. While the overall student population decreased slightly (by 85,699 students) between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the proportion of students who are English learners has declined only slightly during these same 10 years, from 25 percent to 22 percent.[3]

Socioeconomic Status

More than 86 percent of English learners are socioeconomically disadvantaged, as defined by the proportion of students eligible for the free and reduced price meal program. Additionally, 73 percent of fluent English proficient students are also socioeconomically disadvantaged. Overall, four in five students whose primary language is other than English are socioeconomically disadvantaged, compared to 59 percent of all students in California.[4] These students are more likely to come from households or neighborhoods where both academic and non-academic resources are not as readily available. This has important implications for the strategies districts and counties employ to educate all of these students.

Distribution by Language, Grade and County

Concentration of English Learners by Language

While many of the world's languages are represented in California schools, the vast majority of English learners, 84 percent, speak Spanish. This proportion has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years.[5] Nonetheless, California's English learners and their families speak many other languages. There are 32 home languages spoken by 1,000 or more English learners in California's K-12 classrooms (Table 1). While the overall number of students in each of these groups may be small, they are often geographically concentrated. Thus, a language other than Spanish may be the principal language of English learners in some districts and schools, while others may enroll a range of English learners from a variety of different language groups, with only a small number who share a common home language.

Proportion of English Learners by Grade Level

The proportion of English learners varies across the grades but a higher proportion of these students are in the lower grades. Approximately 34 percent of all California kindergarteners were English learners in 2015-16.[7] While the proportion of English learners decreases as the grade level increases, this number is never zero because English learners who are new to the U.S. continue to enter school at all grade levels. In addition, there are students who have been in U.S. schools for all or most of their education but have not attained the academic English skills to be reclassified as fluent English proficient. Looking at California students by grade span, 34 percent of students in grades K-3, 24 percent of students in grades 4-6 and 13 percent of students in grades 7-12 are English learners (Table 2).

Table 1: The 32 Languages Spoken by 1,000 or More of California's English Learners, Descending Order[6]

Language	# of ELs	Language	# of ELs	Language	# of ELs
Spanish	1,147,404	Armenian	7,336	Lao	1,915
Vietnamese	30,161	Farsi (Persian)	6,213	Ukrainian	1,725
Mandarin *(Putonghua)*	20,048	Japanese	5,852	Tamil	1,509
Filipino *(Pilipino or Tagalog)*	18,456	Hindi	4,638	Pashto	1,499
Arabic	17,689	Khmer *(Cambodian)*	4,374	Somali	1,395
Cantonese	16,741	Mixteco	3,300	Hebrew	1,372
Other non-English languages	13,170	Urdu	3,182	Thai	1,360
Korean	11,128	Portuguese	2,236	Gujarati	1,178
Hmong	10,732	Telugu	2,220	German	1,064
Punjabi	9,686	Chaldean	2,063	Bengali	1,045
Russian	8,146	French	1,937		

Table 2: California English Learner Enrollment by Grade Level, 2015-16[8]			
Grade Level	**Total Enrollment**	**EL Enrollment**	**EL %**
K	530,531	180,263	34%
1	444,573	159,243	36%
2	463,881	160,995	35%
3	470,157	151,518	32%
4	485,885	142,870	29%
5	476,427	114,857	24%
6	471,467	93,528	20%
7	470,753	75,878	16%
8	465,322	65,658	14%
9	487,202	64,407	13%
10	488,004	61,360	13%
11	472,968	51,539	11%
12	492,835	49,995	10%
Total	**6,226,737**	**1,373,724**	**22%**

Distribution of English Learners by Grade Span

While the previous section focused on the proportion of English learners in each grade level, understanding their distribution by grade span is important for targeting services. Among California's 1,373,724 English learners, nearly half (47 percent or 652,019 students) are in grades K-3. Nearly 26 percent of the state's English learners (351,255 students) are in grades 4-6 and 27 percent (368,837 students) are in grades 7-12 (Figure 2).[9]

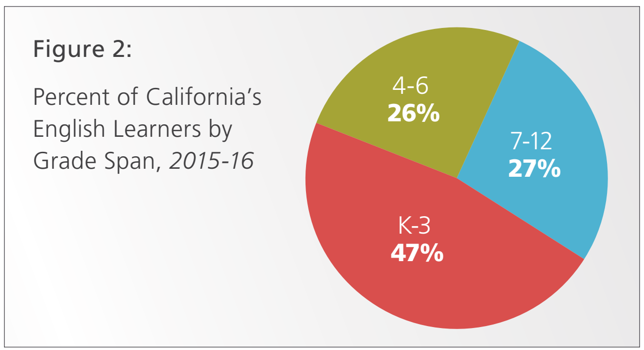


Figure 2:

Percent of California's English Learners by Grade Span, *2015-16*

Long-Term English Learners

A significant number of secondary-level English learners have been in U.S. schools for six or more years but have remained at the same English language proficiency level for two or more consecutive years and have not reached the achievement threshold for reclassification. These students are called long-term English learners and make up 63 percent of the state's secondary English learners.[10] These students often have advanced social language skills but weak academic language skills and struggle in reading and writing.[11]

These characteristics of many of the English learners in California secondary schools has important implications for how the state educates them. For example, it is critical that they receive adequate and explicit instruction in the academic language skills they need to master the complex content of the upper grade levels. It is also crucial that younger English learners receive high-quality instruction taught by skilled teachers to effectively foster learning and fluency.

Proportion of English Learners by County

The proportion of English-learner students also varies across school districts and counties. The distribution of English learners among California counties illustrates this diversity. Only 11 of the state's 58 counties have a student population made up of less than five percent English learners. These counties tend to be in the more mountainous and less populated regions of the state. In contrast, 29 counties have a student population in which more than one in five students are English learners, and in two of these — Monterey and Imperial — more than 40 percent of the students are English learners. This diversity varies by district and within districts as well. Thus, even counties with fewer than 5 percent English learners may have districts or schools with a high concentration of English learners (Table 3).

This variation has implications for how districts deliver instruction and supports. Districts with few English learners may have the advantage of easier classroom integration, i.e., greater opportunity to place English learners in classrooms with native English speaking students who provide strong English language models. On the other hand, districts with more English learners may be better able to attract and hire education specialists with greater expertise and experience and may find it easier to provide targeted English language development instruction. In short, every district has its own advantages and challenges.

Table 3: California English Learners by County, 2015-16 [12]

County	Percent	County	Percent	County	Percent
Alameda County	21.5%	Marin County	14.8%	San Mateo County	23.7%
Alpine County	0.0%	Mariposa County	3.1%	Santa Barbara County	32.9%
Amador County	1.7%	Mendocino County	21.7%	Santa Clara County	23.3%
Butte County	8.6%	Merced County	27.8%	Santa Cruz County	28.2%
Calaveras County	2.5%	Modoc County	18.8%	Shasta County	3.6%
Colusa County	39.3%	Mono County	28.9%	Sierra County	3.9%
Contra Costa County	17.7%	Monterey County	40.6%	Siskiyou County	3.6%
Del Norte County	8.1%	Napa County	23.9%	Solano County	13.8%
El Dorado County	7.7%	Nevada County	5.8%	Sonoma County	22.8%
Fresno County	21.7%	Orange County	24.9%	Stanislaus County	24.7%
Glenn County	24.4%	Placer County	8.2%	Sutter County	17.6%
Humboldt County	7.6%	Plumas County	3.9%	Tehama County	17.6%
Imperial County	43.8%	Riverside County	20.7%	Trinity County	1.8%
Inyo County	17.5%	Sacramento County	17.3%	Tulare County	28.8%
Kern County	22.7%	San Benito County	29.2%	Tuolumne County	2.1%
Kings County	21.4%	San Bernardino County	18.9%	Ventura County	23.5%
Lake County	12.7%	San Diego County	22.1%	Yolo County	22.4%
Lassen County	4.0%	San Francisco County	27.3%	Yuba County	17.4%
Los Angeles County	22.7%	San Joaquin County	23.4%		
Madera County	26.3%	San Luis Obispo County	14.9%		

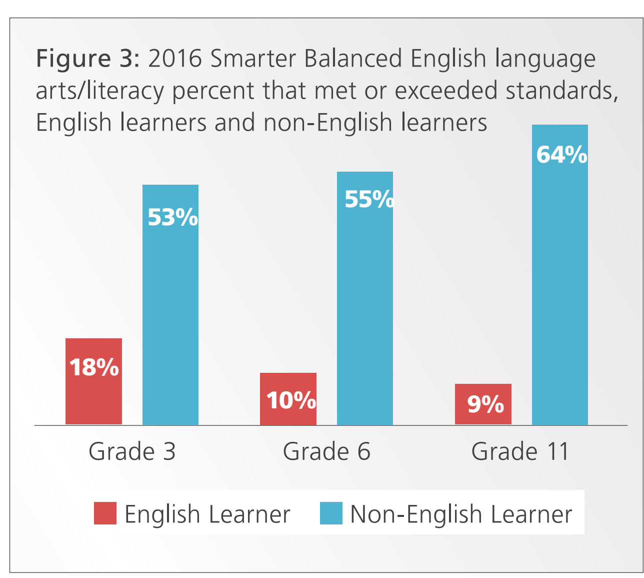
English Learner Achievement

English Language Arts/Literacy

In the 2016 California Smarter Balanced Assessment in English language arts/literacy, the proportion of English learners that met or exceeded standards was below that of non-English learners (students who are English only or fluent-English proficient, which includes both initially-fluent and reclassified-fluent English proficient students).

By definition, it is expected for English learners to score lower in English language arts/literacy than non-English learners. However, a point of concern is that the large gap between the percent of English learners who met or exceeded standards compared to their non-English learner peers increases for students in higher grades. For example, the gap between English learner and non-English learner students who met or exceeded standards in English language arts/literacy increases from 35 percentage points in third grade to 45 percentage points in sixth grade (Figure 3).[13] This is a reminder that as school leaders think about investments in improving education outcomes for English learners, they should consider the importance of ensuring that enough of those investments occur in the early grades.

Figure 3: 2016 Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy percent that met or exceeded standards, English learners and non-English learners



The California English Language Development Test is another instrument used to measure language achievement for English learners. The CELDT is designed to (1) determine English language proficiency when English learners enter school, (2) assess their progress toward English language fluency as they advance through the grades and (3) serve as an important indicator of readiness for reclassification as English fluent. Reaching a predetermined level of English proficiency as indicated by the CELDT is a key criteria for determining that English learners have the language skills necessary to compete — without support — on an equal footing with their English fluent peers. During the 2015-16 school year, 29 percent of third-grade students, 44 percent of sixth-grade students and 49 percent of 11th-grade students, were early advanced or advanced on the CELDT annual assessment.[14]

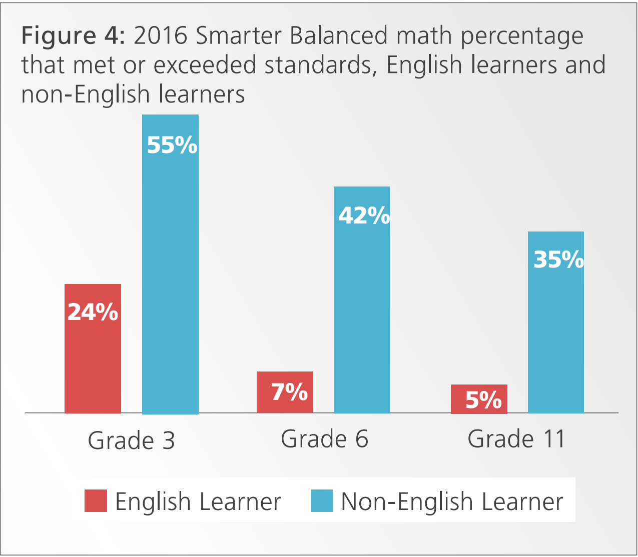
It should be noted that English learners score higher on the CELDT than on the Smarter Balanced Assessment for English language arts/literacy. This is due primarily to the fact that the CELDT focuses principally on communication skills while the Smarter Balanced Assessment has a greater focus on academic language skills.

Mathematics

English learners lag behind their English fluent peers in math achievement, as well. While we often think of math as being less language intensive than many other subject areas, a math gap raises questions about the importance of appropriate language instruction in every subject. The achievement gap in math could be due to a variety of factors in which language plays a role, including instruction that does not provide access to the content for English learners and the inability of existing tests to capture the student's knowledge.

According to the 2016 Smarter Balanced Assessment results in math, only 7 percent of English learners in sixth grade met or exceeded standards, compared to 42 percent of non-English learners. These gaps also increase in math as students move up the grade levels. The 31-percentage point gap between third-grade English learners that met or exceeded standards in math and their non-English learner peers, increases to 35 percentage points by sixth grade (Figure 4).[15]

Figure 4: 2016 Smarter Balanced math percentage that met or exceeded standards, English learners and non-English learners



Ever-English Learner Achievement

Just looking at the gap between English learners and non-English learners does not tell the whole story. As discussed earlier, English learners will likely have lower proficiency rates in English language arts than their non-English learner peers. Additionally, unlike a subgroup based on race or socioeconomic status, the composition of the English-learner subgroup is always changing, as students who gain English proficiency leave the category, and new students who arrive in U.S. schools are added. In their 2014 publication, "The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape" the Education Trust-West created an "ever-English learner" subgroup for their analyses, which combined English learners and reclassified-fluent English proficient students.[16] This approach to measuring the achievement of ever-English learners allows districts, counties and states to track the progress of English learners over time, as it includes both the students who are still learning English and those who have met the criteria for reclassification.

As would be expected, the gap would narrow if English learners and reclassified-fluent English proficient students were combined into an ever-English learner subgroup. This is largely due to the comparable achievement of reclassified-fluent English proficient students, when compared to their English only peers. For example:

» In English language arts/literacy, 58 percent of reclassified-fluent English proficient students met or exceeded grade-level standards compared to 54 percent of English-only students.

» In math, 40 percent of reclassified-fluent English proficient students met or exceeded grade-level standards compared to 42 percent of English-only students.[17]

Reclassification

During the 2015-16 school year, 11 percent of the state's English learners were reclassified as English fluent.[18] However, the most important consideration for districts should not be the speed of reclassification but whether reclassified students are well-prepared. A district policy that leads to more rapid reclassification but does not ensure that students have attained the necessary English language skills to compete on an even playing field with their peers is counterproductive. It is critical that English learners receive the academic support, instruction in classroom subjects and the necessary English language development to prepare them to meet the threshold for reclassification, and that they are reclassified as soon as possible after the threshold has been reached. While it is not advisable to let students languish as English learners when they are ready to be reclassified, neither is it sound practice to reclassify students who are not adequately prepared to thrive without the English language development instruction and other English-learner support.[19]

Dropouts

Nearly one in five English learners dropped out during the 2014-15 school year.[20] According to a report from the California Dropout Project, English learners drop out of school at twice the rate of their English-fluent peers. The report's author notes that English learners drop out due in part to language challenges but observes that they are also at high risk of dropping out due to other factors.[21] For example, most of California's English learners — 86 percent — are also socioeconomically disadvantaged and therefore share the challenges of other low-income students regardless of language background. It remains unclear which factors best explain why English learners are more likely than their non-English learner peers to drop out of school: linguistic, academic, background, school characteristics or a combination of all of those.

Questions and Considerations for Board Members

As important decision-makers in their districts and counties, board members have the responsibility to ask questions and think strategically about closing achievement gaps for all students. While this brief has focused on state-level statistics, the challenges for individual districts and counties will be different depending on their demographics, geography, history and local community needs. To initiate a conversation regarding the English learners in their district or county, boards are encouraged to focus on the following key questions:

Enrollment

- Who are our English learners and how are they distributed by school and grade?
- Are administrators at every level aware of the characteristics of our English learners? How often do administrators receive this information, and in what format?
- Are teachers aware of the characteristics of English learners in their classrooms and at their schools? How often do teachers receive this information, and in what format?

Student Achievement

- What are the measures of success for English learner achievement in our county or district?
- How do our measures and strategies change across the grade levels?
- How do our English learners compare to non-English learners in academic achievement, graduation and dropout rates?
- How does this compare to past performance (i.e., are we improving)?
- What are our indicators that students are ready to successfully transition from English learner to English proficient?
- What is the average number of years it takes for a student to be reclassified?
- Over time, how do reclassified English learners compare to English-only students in math and English academic achievement, graduation and dropout rates?

Resource Supports

- How are we distributing human and financial resources to support English learners based on where they are distributed in our district or county?
- What professional development do we offer our teachers to help them gain expertise to teach English learners? How many teachers take part in this professional development? How does this professional development differ by grade level and span?
- What other support do we provide to help teachers provide English learners with high-quality instruction?
- What academic and other supports do we offer English learners? What have been the results of these supports?

Programs

» What approaches and programs are we currently using to serve English learners in the early, middle and later grades?

» What were the results of the most recent evaluations for these programs?

Conclusion

California's English learners are extremely diverse in their ethnicity, language, background and achievement. Recognizing who these students are, their current struggles and strengths, as well as the resources of culture and language that they bring to our schools will help educators to better meet their needs. This brief, while focusing on the condition of English learners in California, is a starting point from which local and state educational leaders can gain insight and take steps to improve student achievement.

CSBA will continue to support boards in their efforts to improve outcomes for California's diverse student population. We will continue to expand our existing series focused on English learners. The second brief in this series, "English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs," highlights a proven strategy for improving English-learner achievement. The third brief, "English Learners in Focus, Issue 3: Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners" explores the effect of the teacher shortage on English learners and how districts and counties can address this issue. Subsequent briefs will continue to focus on other English-learner issues of importance to our members.

Additional Resources

For links to a variety of helpful resources on English learners, please visit CSBA's English-learner webpage at www.csba.org/EnglishLearners.

Endnotes

1 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "Statewide Enrollment by Ethnicity." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

2 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Grade" and "Fluent-English-Proficient Students by Language by Grade." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

3 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Language by Grade" and "Statewide Enrollment by Ethnicity." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

4 See endnote 2

5 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Language by Grade." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

6 See endnote 5

7 See endnote 5

8 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Language by Grade" and "Statewide Enrollment by Grade." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

9 See endnote 5

10 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "2015-16 Long-term English Learners (LTEL) by Grade". Accessed September 19, 2016 from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/longtermel/LongTerm.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=State&year=2015-16.

11 Laurie Olsen (2010), "Reparable harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners," Californians Together. Accessed from http://bit.ly/24hLfH8

12 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Statewide Data Summarized by County." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

13 CSBA Analysis of California Department of Education, "CAASPP Test Results for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics, 2016 California Statewide Research File." Downloaded August 24, 2016, from http://bit.ly/2bEeCB3

14 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "California English Language Development Test (CELDT), 2015-16". Accessed August 24, 2016 from http://bit.ly/2c5hLd0

15 See endnote 13

16 Education Trust-West (2014), "The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape." Accessed from http://bit.ly/1VsQfZ3

17 See endnote 13

18 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "Number and Percent of Students Redesignated to FEP." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

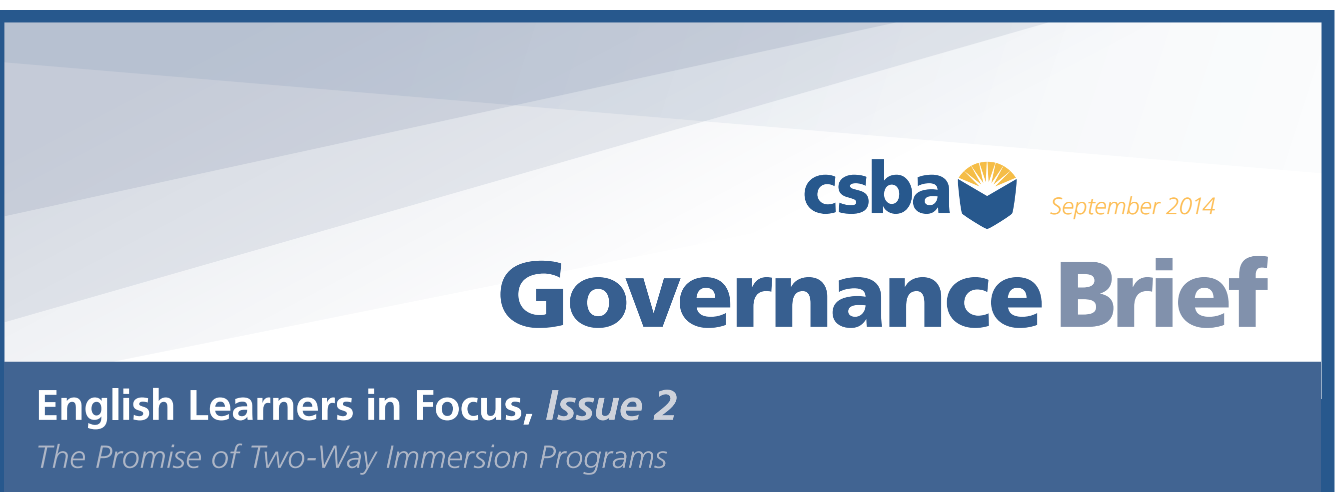
19 Laura E. Hill, Margaret Weston and Joseph M. Hayes (2014), "Reclassification of English Learner Students in California," Public Policy Institute of California. Accessed from Institute of California. Accessed from http://bit.ly/1hMmnRV

20 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2014-15." Accessed August 26, 2016, from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest

21 Rebecca M. Callahan (2013), "The English Learner Dropout Dilemma: Multiple Risks and Multiple Resources," California Dropout Research Project. Accessed from http://bit.ly/2bzvUh7

Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D., is Senior Director of Policy and Programs for California School Boards Association

Manuel Buenrostro is an Education Policy Analyst for California School Boards Association



English Learners in Focus, *Issue 2*

The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs

Introduction

A fundamental goal of our education system is to prepare students for successful careers in an ever-changing world of work. As California businesses expand around the world, they will need personnel who can function effectively in multiple languages and cultures. To prepare our K-12 students for success we must be mindful of the global context into which they will emerge as a young workforce. Two-way immersion programs can utilize the strength of our diversity to ensure all students are well-prepared to thrive in an ever-more complex and globalized world.

California's ethnic and linguistic diversity

California is well situated to meet the challenge of preparing students for success in a world that is increasingly interconnected. It is the most culturally diverse state in the country and its student population mirrors this diversity. More than half, 53%, of the state's students are Latino and an additional 20% are from non-white subgroups, principally Asians, 9%, African Americans, 6% and students from a mix of other groups. Non-Hispanic white students represent about 25% of California's K-12 population.[1]

The state is extremely linguistically diverse as well. California children come to school speaking an array of primary languages and almost one quarter, 23%, of the state's K-12 students are English learners (EL), students who are not yet proficient in English. Many of the world's languages are spoken by California's EL students: there are 30 languages in California schools that are spoken by 1,000 or more EL students each.[2] Nonetheless, the vast majority (84%), speak Spanish as their home language.

There are English learners in all grade levels but the greatest concentrations are in the early grades and EL students make up a large share of all students in these grades. Nearly 40% of all kindergarteners and 36% of all K-3 students in California schools are English learners. A significant proportion, 23%, of students in Grades 4-6 are English learners and 13% of those in Grades 7-12 are EL students.[3]

The need for effective strategies

Overall, our current practices and approaches are not meeting the mark when it comes to providing English learners with an effective education. One indicator of this is that nearly 60% of high school EL students have attended U.S. schools almost all of their schooling but have not attained sufficient levels of academic language and content skill to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (FEP).[4] Achievement gaps between EL students and their English fluent peers surface in the elementary grades and widen as students move up in grade level.[5] EL students also drop out at a rate that is twice that of their English fluent peers.[6]

These disappointing outcomes indicate how critical it is that we act early and effectively so that EL students do not begin to fall behind. From the moment English learners enter our schools, we must help them build a foundation of academic knowledge at the same time that they are learning communicative and academic language skills. Losing out on even a small increment of learning every year can quickly add up to a shortfall that is extremely challenging to overcome—both for students and teachers.

A promising approach: two-way immersion

All of these factors—the importance of helping all students to be competitive in a global economy that values multiple cultures and languages, the resource of cultural and linguistic diversity among California's students, and the need to improve outcomes for the state's more than 1.3 million English learners—argue in favor of the instructional approach called two-way or dual immersion. This approach provides well-documented advantages to both English learner and English fluent students.

Dual language (or bilingual) education is an overall term used to describe a range of programs that integrate English learner and native English-speaking students for academic instruction in both English and the home language of the English learners (Table 1). These programs differ from English-only programs in their approach and goals. Clearly, one difference is the use of two languages. Another is that although the models share the goal of English language fluency and literacy for EL students, bilingual models have the additional goal of developing and maintaining students' oral fluency and literacy in another language.

Table 1: Dual Language Approaches[7]

	Two-way immersion (TWI)	Developmental bilingual (DBE)	Transitional bilingual (TBE)
Language goals	Bilingualism and biliteracy	Bilingualism and biliteracy	English fluency
Cultural goals	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture & maintain/appreciate ELs' home culture	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture & maintain/appreciate ELs' home culture	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture
Language/s of instruction	Primary language of ELs and English	Primary language of ELs and English	Primary language of ELs and English
Students	Both native and non-native (with same primary language) speakers of English	Non-native speakers of English with same primary language	Non-native speakers of English with same primary language
Grades served	K-12	Mainly elementary	Mainly elementary
Typical length of participation	5-12 years	5-12 years	2-4 years

Two-way immersion programs are a particular form of dual language education in which the non-English language is used for a significant portion of instruction. The fundamental goal of two-way immersion is that both English learner and English fluent students gain high levels of bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. In order to achieve this, students begin two-way immersion in kindergarten or first grade, and continue the approach throughout their elementary school careers.

There are two variations of two-way immersion: the 50:50 and the 90:10 models. In the 90:10 model, kindergarteners and first graders receive 90% of their instruction in the partner (non-English) language, with the remaining 10% in English. At each successive grade level, the percentage of English instructional time increases until Grades 4-6, when instruction is equally balanced between English and the partner language. In the 50:50 model, students receive half of their instruction in English and the other half in the partner language throughout elementary school (K-6).

In both models of two-way immersion, teachers must be bilingual and biliterate. They must also be skilled in strategies and techniques for delivering instruction in content and language to students who are not familiar with the language of instruction: to both EL students who are not familiar with English and to English fluent students who are not familiar with the partner language.

Instruction in two-way immersion programs

Teachers in two-way immersion programs use a variety of techniques to communicate content and build language skills for students who have varying degrees of proficiency in the two languages. Among these are:

- Social interactions in instruction that are equitable between the two languages
- Reciprocal (interactive) rather than transmission (lecture) approaches
- Cooperative learning strategies that are well-planned and monitored to ensure interactions that enhance language development
- Slower, simplified and repetitive speech when students are at the early stages of proficiency
- Techniques to check and confirm comprehension
- Contextual clues and visual aides
- Gestures and modeling[8]

Two-way immersion outcomes: bilingualism, biliteracy and gap-closing

Two-way immersion education has experienced a growth in interest over the last few years due largely to robust research findings that support its success in achieving bilingualism and biliteracy for all students and in helping EL students close achievement gaps. By the end of sixth grade, both English learner and English fluent students who participate in two-way immersion develop proficiency in English and the partner language, become biliterate in both languages, develop bicultural understanding, and achieve on par with or above their peers in other programs on standardized tests.

The emerging research on two-way immersion includes the gold standard of education research and analysis, large-scale longitudinal and comparative studies. Additional smaller scale studies of single or multiple classrooms also support positive outcomes of two-way immersion education. A number of earlier studies focused on French-English two-way immersion programs in Canada; more recent research is based on Spanish-English programs in California. All find similar strong student outcomes for two-way immersion.

A significant advantage of two-way immersion programs is that in addition to developing students' bilingual, biliteracy and bicultural skills, these programs promote successful academic outcomes for both English learners and English fluent students. Moreover, English learner participants in two-way immersion programs achieve at higher levels than their English learner peers in other programs. A review of a number of U.S. studies concludes that in two-way immersion programs:[9]

- All students perform at or above grade level on standardized reading and math tests in English
- All students achieve at or above grade level in reading and math tests measured in the partner language
- EL students close the achievement gap with native-English speaking students by fifth grade

This same review of research finds that the success for students who participate in two-way immersion programs in elementary school persists through their secondary schooling: middle and high school students who participate in continuous dual language programs in K-6 have better outcomes than their peers in English mainstream programs. With regard to secondary education outcomes, these studies find that in two-way immersion:[10]

- All students were as or more likely to be enrolled in higher level math courses
- All students were as or more likely to pass the high school exit exam
- All students were less likely to drop out of school
- ELs were more likely to close achievement gaps with native-English speakers by the end of high school

Moreover, these positive outcomes are consistent for both models of two-way immersion (50:50 and 90:10). Although research indicates that in the early grades, English learners in 50:50 models exhibit higher scores in English than ELs in 90:10 models, these differences disappear by the upper elementary grades and students in both models have similarly positive and enduring achievement and English fluency outcomes.[11]

Finally, it is of note, and somewhat counter-intuitive, that research on two-way immersion and other dual language approaches reveals that English learners who spend more school time studying English do not have

higher academic achievement or gain greater proficiency in English than their peers in dual language programs. Rather, the evidence is that EL students who spend more time developing advanced literacy skills in their first language, benefit in terms of developing greater proficiency in their second (English) and in improving their academic outcomes on English language achievement tests. In short, this research indicates that while all EL students need and benefit from English language development, those who also develop strong primary language skills through two-way immersion ultimately show greater proficiency in English and stronger academic achievement.

Potential contributors to improved outcomes

Research identifies several factors associated with bilingualism and biliteracy that are likely contributors to the improved outcomes for all students who participate in dual immersion programs—both those who are English fluent and English learners—and to closing achievement gaps for EL students. These additional benefits of bilingualism include cognitive benefits to the brain, the ability to transfer knowledge across languages, and the positive impact of integration within the classroom.

Neurocognitive advantages of bilingualism

Research suggests that advanced levels of bilingual competence have positive effects on cognition and brain activity. Such positive effects include advantages associated with problem-solving skills, memory skills, reading abilities, and the ability to think in science and math. Researchers surmise that the experience of controlling attention to two languages in order to keep them separate and use them appropriately is what enhances these abilities and skills in bilingual individuals. These advantages are most evident in bilingual people who acquire relatively advanced levels of proficiency in two languages and who use their two languages actively on a regular basis. Collectively, "these findings argue for bilingual education as cognitive enrichment, and, at the same time, argue for programs that provide substantive and continuous opportunities for students to develop bilingual competence in school so that they enjoy the cognitive advantages that high levels of bilingualism confer."[12]

Transfer of knowledge and skills

A number of studies have found that academic language skills developed in the first language form the foundation for the development of literacy skills in the second.[13] Therefore, one reason for the greater success of EL students in dual language immersion programs is likely associated with the opportunity it provides for students to build a strong foundation of first language skills. In addition, use of student's primary language to convey difficult academic concepts before students have a level of proficiency to understand these concepts through instruction in English means that they can access complex information while their English skills are still emerging. This helps ensure that they do not fall behind in academic skills and understanding while they are building their English proficiency.

Benefits resulting from integration

Integration of English learners and English fluent students plays an important role in EL students' success and two-way immersion programs are specifically designed to ensure such integration. These programs are founded on a principle that "children will learn from each other and learn to respect each other if they are exposed to learning situations in which they have sustained contact of a basically positive nature and their social status is equalized."[14] Another reason for the importance of this integration is that peers who provide strong English language models are an important contributor to EL students' language development. Social interaction, not just on the playground but in learning contexts where students can use different types of language and be exposed to language that is beyond their current levels of language proficiency, is key to learning and to developing English language skills.[15] In addition, particularly for EL students who are new to the US, sharing classrooms with non-EL peers helps them learn the social norms of mainstream society and schools. Moreover, the integration of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in two-way immersion contributes to socializing young people toward a lifelong broader understanding and tolerance of California's diverse population.

Characteristics of quality programs

Achieving such successful outcomes as those documented above depends on a number of factors. It requires a clear understanding of the two-way immersion approach and what it entails as well as faithful and full

implementation. Perhaps most critically, given that effective teachers remain the in-school factor most associated with student success, it requires high quality bilingual and biliterate teachers who are familiar with the dual immersion model, theory, and instructional strategies. Teachers with Bilingual Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) certification have the strong skills and training needed to teach effectively in two-way immersion—or any program for students who are not proficient in English. BCLAD teachers bring unique skills to their instructional practice, including the ability to use English and the students' primary language in ways that foster student comprehension. Research has identified some of the reasons that BCLAD teachers are able to promote the success of EL students:[16]

- Educators who are familiar with their students' culture and fluent in their language teach in ways that build on these student assets, which creates supportive relationships that result in more effective instruction.
- Teachers who are bilingual feel more comfortable communicating with parents of English learners, and thus are more likely to build and maintain important home-school connections.
- Bilingual credentialed educators express more positive attitudes about language and about teaching diverse students and feel more confident about their capacity to teach EL students. Both of these factors are associated with more effective instruction.

Other factors critical to the success of two-way immersion programs include:[17]

- Cohesive school-wide vision and planning and clearly defined goals for student achievement in dual immersion programs
- Effective, standards-aligned curricula that provide meaningful and challenging material in both languages
- An environment that welcomes, informs, and values parents from all backgrounds

Challenges of two-way immersion programs

A significant challenge to two-way immersion programs is that philosophical differences and political controversy over the last decades have eclipsed research findings on the successful student outcomes of many programs that employ bilingual methods. In California, these differences led to a voter initiative, Proposition 227, which restricted the use of the primary language in the state's classrooms and made it much more difficult for parents of EL students to choose such programs for their children. Under Proposition 227, parents of English learners must petition if they wish to have their children in programs that include the primary language and if adequate numbers of EL parents do so, the school may decide to offer such programs.

The passage of Proposition 227 has led to a sharp decrease in the number of students in programs that include primary language instruction. In the 1997-98 school year, just before the Proposition was implemented, approximately 30% of EL students (409,879 out of 1,381,000) were in education programs that included some instruction in the students' primary language. After Proposition 227, that number continued to decrease. During the 2010-2011 school year (the most recent year for which data are available) just under 5% of EL students (71,809 out of 1,441,901) were in such programs.[18] The decline in the number of students enrolled in dual language programs has resulted in a commensurate drop in the number of teachers pursuing BCLAD training, which has led to a shortage of such highly qualified teachers. The number of educators completing these credentials decreased 37% between 1998 and 2008.[19]

Conclusion

Well-implemented two-way immersion programs foster the academic success of English learners and their English fluent peers and help prepare students to compete in a globalized economy by providing them with bilingual, biliterate skills and cross-cultural understanding. As districts and schools look for ways to better prepare all students for the interconnected world of the twenty-first century, two-way immersion programs hold significant promise.

AB 215 *(2011)* created a State Seal of Biliteracy that recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. The award can go to a student whose native language is English and acquires proficiency in a foreign language or to an English learner who is fluent in another language—and becomes proficient in English. More than 165 school districts currently offer the award.[20]

Questions for board members

1. Who are the district's EL students (e.g. what languages do they speak? How long have they been in U.S. schools? In which grade levels are they?)
2. What does the board know and believe about two-way immersion programs?
3. What are the programs currently employed for English learners?
4. How successful are these programs at promoting EL achievement?
5. Can two-way immersion programs fit into the district's plan for raising the achievement of EL and non-EL students in the district?

Endnotes

1 Data downloaded from CDE Dataquest May 6, 2014 http://bit.ly/We1DMB

2 Data downloaded from CDE Dataquest January 29, 2014 http://bit.ly/1i6TIap

3 Percentages extrapolated from data on enrollment numbers downloaded from California Department of Education Dataquest January 29, 2014 at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest

4 Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable harm: Fulfilling the unkept promise of educational opportunity for California's long term English Learners.* Californians Together. Available online at www.californianstogether.org

5 California School Boards Association. (2014). *English Learners in Focus Issue 1: Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English learners.* Online at: http://bit.ly/1wpCNK8

6 Callahan, R. M. (2013). *The English Learner dropout dilemma: Multiple risks and multiple resources.* California Drop out Research Project. Available online at www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/pubs_reports.htm

7 Lindholm-Leary, K., Genesee, F. (2010). Alternative educational programs for English Learners. In, *Improving Education for English Learners: Research Based Approaches* (p. 329). Sacramento: California Department of Education.

8 Howard, E. R., Sugarman, J., Christian, D., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., & Rogers, D. (2007). *Guiding principles for dual language education* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics (pp. 12-14).

9 Lindholm-Leary, K. (2012) Success and challenges in dual language education. (p. 257).

10 Lindholm-Leary, K. (2012). (See endnote 9; pp. 257-258)

11 Lindholm-Leary, K., Genesee, F. (2010). (See endnote 7; pp. 350-351)

12 Lindholm-Leary, K., Genesee, F. (2010). (See endnote 7; pp. 325).

13 August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners. Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

14 Gándara, P. and Orfield, G. (2010). *A return to the "Mexican room": The segregation of Arizona's English learners* (p. 19). The Civil Rights Project, UCLA. Available online at http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED511322.pdf

15 Ellis, R. (2005). Principles of instructed language learning. *System*, 33, 209-224.

16 Hopkins, M. (2013). Building on our teaching assets: The unique pedagogical contributions of bilingual educators. *Bilingual Research Journal: The Journal of the National Association for Bilingual Education*, 36 (3), 350-370.

17 Lindholm-Leary, K. (2005). The rich promise of two-way immersion. *Educational Leadership* (pp. 56-58).

18 Data downloaded on 5-23-14 from CDE Dataquest http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/

19 Gándara, P., & Orfield, G. (2010). Moving from failure to a new vision of language policy. In Gándara, P. & Hopkins, M. (Eds.), *Forbidden Language: English Learners and Restrictive Language Policy* (pp. 216–226). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

20 For more information on the California State Seal of Biliteracy visit: www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp

Further reading

Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches (2010). California Department of Education (Ed.). Sacramento: California Department of Education Press.

Goldenberg, C. and Coleman, R. (2010). *Promoting Academic Achievement among English Learners.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

English Learners in Focus, Issue 3

Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners

by Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Manuel Buenrostro and Magaly Lavadenz

Introduction

This brief is part of CSBA's effort to shed light on the education needs of the diverse preK-12 students who attend California schools. It is the third in a series focused on English learners — students whose first language and the primary language they speak at home is not English. The series explores strategies for providing English learners with an equal opportunity to achieve their potential, and highlights schools, districts and programs that are successfully achieving that goal. The focus of this brief is on the importance of staff who are well-prepared to meet the needs of English learners, and on strategies for recruiting, supporting and retaining them, particularly in view of the current teacher shortage.

California's English Learner Population

Given that almost 25 percent of California's students are English learners, the state's strength and prosperity is closely tied to their success. California also has the largest share of the country's English learners: More than 30 percent of the 4.5 million English learners in the U.S. attend school here.[1]

The nearly 1.4 million English learners in California are not a uniform group — they come to school with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and needs. Nonetheless, the primary language of 84 percent of California's English learners is Spanish and the great majority (approximately 86 percent) are from low-income families.[2]

Highly Qualified Staff to Promote English Learners' Academic Success

The evidence is strong that well-prepared, experienced teachers are essential to student learning. While not all aspects of what makes a good teacher may be quantifiable, research does tell us that the quality of teachers' undergraduate and teacher preparation work has an impact on student learning. In addition, there is evidence that on average, students of teachers who have some years of classroom experience outperform students taught by beginning instructors.[3]

Advantage of Teachers with Cultural and Linguistic Background and Understanding of Students

Additional research provides evidence that a cultural and linguistic match between teachers and their students can contribute to greater student success. Studies have shown that African-American and Latino students have greater academic achievement in classrooms taught by teachers from similar backgrounds. This results from a number of factors, including how teachers from the same cultural background as their students serve as role models, make decisions about instruction that is culturally relevant, have a greater understanding of student behavior, are less likely to suspend or expel students, counteract negative expectations and reinforce higher expectations for their students.[4]

When it comes to teaching English learners, teachers who are from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as their students have another important advantage: They can more accurately diagnose whether or not students' challenges are primarily due to limitations in their English language proficiency or in their ability to grasp content concepts. This results in a lower likelihood of over or under diagnosing them for learning disabilities.

In addition, staff members who understand their students' backgrounds and view their language, culture and experience as an asset rather than a deficit, contribute to a positive school environment.[5] Research has noted that students who feel connected to school, who have a sense of belonging, and who have supportive teachers, perform better on both academic and non-academic measures.[6]

An especially important advantage of teachers and other school staff who understand the culture and language of English learners is their ability to communicate with their families: A critical strategy for increasing parent/guardian engagement in their children's education. In California, 43 percent of students live in households where they primarily speak a language other than English at home.[7] Therefore, recruiting and hiring teachers and staff who are bilingual and come from a similar cultural background to many of their students is a necessary aspect of an effective parent/guardian engagement strategy.

Need for English Learner Teachers Who Can Integrate Language and Content

Teachers skilled in integrating language and content for English language learners are especially critical as California implements new content standards that include a stronger focus on high-level language skills. This content and language integration is a central focus of the new English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework, adopted in 2014. The Framework links content and language in a way intended to prepare English learners, like their non-English learner peers, in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving along with collaboration and communication across the content areas. This work will require not only qualified teachers of English language development for English learners but also general education and subject-area teachers who have the skills to integrate English language development standards within core subjects. For example, while the Next Generation Science Standards provide an important opportunity to deliver instruction based on real-world applications — instruction that research has shown to particularly benefit English learners — proper implementation will require science teachers who understand how to ensure access to science instruction for English learners without diluting content.

The Current Statewide Teacher Shortage

With California experiencing a teacher shortage, there is a critical need for teachers — and particularly for teachers who are skilled at English language instruction. The current shortage is not due to an overall increase in students: The student population is relatively stable statewide — although this varies by region with some districts continuing to see increases while others are experiencing declining enrollment. Rather, the current shortage results from several factors. These include efforts to lower class size to pre-recession levels, large numbers of teachers retiring in recent years, a relatively high rate of attrition among new teachers and a diminished supply of new teachers. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped sharply during the years of recession when many teachers were laid off and districts were not hiring new teachers. Meanwhile, those who remained experienced constant lay off warnings, salary freezes and diminished support due to budget cuts. All of these factors in turn resulted in unfavorable working conditions, which are likely to have contributed to attrition and decreasing interest in the teaching profession.[8]

The shortage is becoming drastic: Total enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped by half from 2009-10 to 2013-14, from 36,577 to 18,984. If this trend continues, there will be far fewer teachers to fill the projected need for 21,483 new teachers during the 2015-16 school year.[9]

Unequal Impact on Highest Need Students of the 2000-01 Teacher Shortage

If the past is any indication, the current teacher shortage could have an unequal impact on students with the greatest need. During the significant teacher shortage of 2000-01, California experienced an increase in the disproportionate placement of low-income students of color and English learners in classrooms with the least prepared teachers.[10] During those years, 15 percent of the state's teachers were underprepared, that is, they had not completed a credential program and/or were teaching out of their field (e.g., history majors teaching math), and most of these teachers were in schools with the highest proportion of students in poverty and students of color. For example, while 22 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools were underprepared, only 7 percent of these teachers were placed in low-poverty schools.[11] This disproportionality affected English learners, of whom nearly 84 percent are low-income.

Shortage of Highly Skilled English Learner Teachers

Not only is there a teacher shortage overall, but there is an even greater shortage of teachers who are well-prepared to work with English learners. Policy changes in 2002 that embedded an English learner authorization within the Multiple and Single Subject credentials, and in 2006 that did the same with regard to the Education Specialist Credential, have resulted in fewer teachers receiving a more robust and targeted preparation in the instruction of English learners. Therefore, while most teachers who receive a credential today have some level of preparation for working with English learners, far fewer new teachers have the deeper expertise in English learner instruction. While new teachers could choose to seek more advanced preparation for working with English learners, there is little incentive for them to do so since their credential already embeds an authorization for teaching English learners. Teachers prepared outside of California or those receiving their credential before 2002, must still obtain an English learner authorization, mainly earned through completion of California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) coursework or passage of the CTEL examination.

In addition, the teacher shortage has resulted in a significant increase in certifications and permits that encompass less rigorous preparation overall. For example, the numbers of university and district intern credentials continue to rise: During the 2014-15 school year, 2,806 English learner intern authorizations were issued, while only 2,259 were issued three years before during the 2011-12 school year. The number of waivers of authorization to teach English learners is on the rise as well: There were 382 waivers for English learners issued during the 2014-15 school year compared to less than half as many, 181, during the 2011-12 school year.[12] While the numbers of these less rigorous credentials are small, their trend is significantly upward, reflecting the growing shortage of teachers statewide, and the need for districts to find ways to address this shortage in their local schools.

English Learner Authorizations Indicating Greater Expertise

Aside from the English learner authorization embedded within Multiple Subject, Single Subject, and Education Specialist credentials, there are other authorizations available for teaching English learners that require a higher level of coursework and training. One of these is a Bilingual Authorization, which can be earned alongside a Multiple Subject, Single Subject or Education Specialist Credential. After the 2009-10 school year, California implemented more rigorous preparation standards for Bilingual Authorizations, which can be met through coursework, commission-approved examinations, or a combination of the two. While the ways that teachers have earned Bilingual Authorizations has varied over the past 10 years, the numbers have remained steady. During the 2014-15 school year, there were 369 Bilingual Authorizations issued, compared to 370 issued during the 2009-10 school year.[13] However, this is well below the demand for these teachers. There is an estimated need for at least 513 new bilingual-credentialed teachers during the 2015-16 school year.[14]

The other, more advanced authorization is the Single Subject-World Language: ELD Authorization. The World Language: ELD content area may be added as a stand-alone authorization to a Single Subject Teaching Credential, and is earned through completing a program with approved coursework. This credential allows for departmentalized English language development instruction for secondary students.

Strategies and Solutions

Solutions to the Broader Teacher Shortage

The Learning Policy Institute's "Addressing California's Emerging Teacher Shortage," proposes several policy recommendations to address the emerging teacher shortage in California. Their recommendations focus on both recruiting new teachers to the field, and retaining those who are already teaching in California's schools.

They note that strategies related to retaining teachers are often overlooked but are as important as those to attract new teachers to the profession. A 2014 report by the Alliance for Excellence in Education highlighted that nearly 19,000 teachers left the profession in California during the 2007-08 school year. While this estimate included retirees and non-voluntary leavers, just reducing this number by a quarter would nearly eliminate the teacher shortage.[15] According to the report, this would also save California schools $82 million to $178 million in attrition costs.[16]

The Learning Policy Institute discusses key strategies to attract and retain teachers, including mentoring, teaching conditions, support, preparation and compensation.[17] Below are some of the recommendations from the report, which cover aspects of these strategies:

» Provide all beginning teachers with high-quality support and mentoring, which can reduce early attrition and enhance competence, for example, through well-designed Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs.

» Improve teaching conditions by ensuring that administrators have the training to help them create and support strong learning environments for teachers and students.

» Offer urban and rural teacher residencies in hard-to-staff areas that include an apprenticeship, coursework and a living stipend in exchange for a commitment to teach three to five years in the district.

» Create more avenues into teaching, including high school pathway programs, collaborations with local colleges to recruit community members into the profession and paraprofessional pipeline programs.

Solutions Specific to English Leaners

While any solution to the broader teacher shortage will help English learners, in this section we offer specific recommendations for recruiting and retaining teachers and other school staff for English learners. While the recommendations presented here are not exhaustive, they are meant to ignite a conversation within counties and districts from which additional ideas can be developed.

» **Recruit Diverse Teachers.** The teaching profession is not as ethnically or linguistically diverse as the student population in California. Yet, teachers with similar backgrounds and experiences to their students can be particularly effective. Strategies that successfully address the need for more diverse teachers include grow-your-own, teacher residency and other programs create pathways to a teaching career (such as the Teach Tomorrow in Oakland). What these initiatives have in common is that they actively recruit diverse candidates with a passion for teaching in high-need schools, and have a record of retaining these teachers longer. Ensuring that such programs continue to focus on recruiting diverse candidates and on supporting bilingual teaching candidates can help to expand the pipeline of highly skilled teachers for English learners. In addition, districts should encourage support staff, such as counselors and paraprofessionals, to become teachers and provide them with incentives for pursuing a career in education, especially if they are bilingual or come from a similar background of their students.

CSU Fresno Teacher Residency

This 15- to 18-month residency program is run through CSU Fresno and in partnership with the Fresno Unified School District. The program helps prepare new middle school teachers for the classroom with an emphasis on math and science instruction. It combines rigorous masters-level coursework, teacher-credentialing coursework and a yearlong apprenticeship in a classroom with a mentor teacher supported by a comprehensive professional development curriculum. Residents also receive a stipend during the training period and make a commitment to teach in the Fresno Unified School District for a minimum of three years after completing the program. National statistics on teacher residency programs show an 84 percent three-year retention rate and an enrollment of significantly more teachers of color than traditional credentialing programs.[18] Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chico also have similar teacher residency programs.

» **Reduce Financial Barriers to Entry into the Profession.** Along with programs that recruit and attract diverse teachers, recognizing the financial limitations that affect entry into the profession is also critical. Entering the teaching profession means additional coursework, test fees and other preparation expenses that candidates with lower incomes can find challenging. As California considers incentives for recruiting and retaining teachers, it should target resources where they are needed most, focusing investments on teachers who make a commitment to serve the hardest to staff schools and hardest to fill subjects, including those serving a large number of English learners.

» **Treat Teachers as Respected Professionals.** Research shows that it is highly important for teacher satisfaction and retention that they are treated as professionals. Related to this is providing them with appropriate time for planning and collaboration — time that is even more critical when considering the demands on all teachers to implement the more rigorous new standards that integrate content and language for English learners. Another way for districts to support teacher professionalism is to recognize and reward teachers who have particular skills and responsibilities for working with English learners.

The Promise of Learning Networks

There is emerging research on the promise of learning networks for improving student success.[19] An example of within-school- or district learning networks is a coaching structure, which includes ongoing analysis to improve instruction, guided observation and reflection on practice. Building these networks for the entire teacher pipeline, from pre-service through induction and beyond, can help ensure that all teachers of English learners are of the highest quality possible.

» **Promote Bilingualism for Teachers and Staff.** This strategy has three components: 1) recruit bilingual staff, 2) provide professional development to build the bilingual competence of existing staff and 3) support career ladders for staff who have such competence. With regard to the recruitment of staff, districts and counties can benefit from looking within their own ranks. For example, providing incentives for a proven bilingual teaching aide to become a teacher. In addition, school staff and teachers can develop their skills through professional development and collaboration with their bilingual colleagues, which can improve the practice of everyone in the school. Another important component to promoting bilingualism is ensuring that principals and other district and county leaders also receive training to build their bilingual competencies and that such competencies are valued when districts and counties search for new school leaders.

Lessons from Top Performing Districts

In "The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape," the Education Trust-West identified 11 top-performing districts for English learner achievement and found some common trends in their practice. For example, educators in these high-performing districts believe that English learners can achieve at high levels and that their home languages are an asset rather than a liability. These districts also ensure that teachers are skilled in meeting the needs of English learners and support this through professional learning opportunities and time to collaborate. For example, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District offers professional development to all administrators and teachers of English learners on the English language development standards and English learner instructional strategies. Los Alamitos Unified School District has implemented a five-year professional development and coaching plan, including training for K-12 teachers in strategies for teaching English learners, including reading aligned with the California State Standards.[20]

What District and County Boards Can Do

Ask Questions

Governance teams have the responsibility and authority to make decisions that can significantly raise the achievement of all students and close gaps for English learners. Taking advantage of opportunities to look at data and advance promising strategies to recruit, support and retain highly skilled staff can go a long way toward achieving that goal. Asking the superintendent and staff to answer following questions can help district and county boards in their efforts to increase the availability of highly skilled staff for English learners.

Knowledge of Current Staff

» What are the languages, other than English, spoken at home by our students? Do we have materials and staff that promote effective communication with the families of these students?

» Do we have the necessary well-trained staff with various roles and responsibilities to best support English learner educational success?

» What training do we provide staff to support their understanding of and strategies for working with English learners and their families?

Recruitment of New Staff

» Are there successful teacher or staff pipelines for recruiting and retaining diverse candidates that we can model? How might we support the expansion of these pipelines?

» What incentives and strategies do we provide to attract new teachers? Are there incentives targeted particularly to attract teachers with English learner expertise?

Support and Retention of Current Staff

» Are we investing adequately in professional development, mentorship and support for new teachers to work effectively with English learners?

» Are there any programs to support and employ career advancement to staff with the cultural and linguistic competencies to effectively communicate with students and their families?

Advocate for Resources and Programs

Governance teams can also advocate for additional resources and programs that can support their efforts to recruit, support and retain highly skilled teachers. For example, one of the recommendations from the Learning Policy Institute is to advocate for reinvestment in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs at the state and federal level. These programs offer loan forgiveness to teachers in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need areas and subjects for a defined period.

As bills to help counties, districts and schools better manage the teacher shortage move through the Legislature, governance teams can use CSBA's advocacy resources, which include a list of positions, sponsored legislation and tips for effective advocacy. For more information visit www.csba.org/Advocacy/LegislativeAdvocacy.

Conclusion

Almost one-quarter of California's K-12 students are English learners and 43 percent of the state's students are from households where the primary language is other than English. Therefore, most schools can expect to serve at least one student who either is an English learner or comes from a family where another language is spoken at home. Based on this, and keeping in mind the importance of a quality instructor, the need to increase the pipeline of qualified teachers and staff with the competencies to help English learners achieve educational success is clear.

CSBA will continue to support boards in their efforts to improve outcomes for California's diverse student population. It is our hope that this brief, along with our first two publications in this series will continue to provide valuable information for governance teams and spark important discussions about strategies in counties, districts and schools. Subsequent briefs will continue to focus on English learners and other issues of importance to our board members.

Resources for Board Members

CSBA's "English Learners in Focus, Issue 1: Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners": www.csba.org/BriefEL1.

CSBA's "English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs": www.csba.org/BriefEL2.

The Education Trust-West's "The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape": http://bit.ly/28SGdPp.

Endnotes

1 National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey" and "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey." Accessed May 11, 2016 from http://1.usa.gov/28OTXrF

2 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Language by Grade." Accessed January 24, 2016 from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

3 Linda Darling-Hammond (2000), "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement." Accessed from http://bit.ly/28OTS7d.

4 Seth Gershenson, Stephen B. Holt, and Nicholas W. Papageorge (2016), "Who Believes in me? The Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations," Economics of Education Review. Accessed from http://bit.ly/WhoBelievesInMe

5 Ana Maria Villegas and Tamara Lucas (2002), "Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Rethinking the Curriculum," Journal of Teacher Education. Accessed from http://bit.ly/28YDGCr

6 Heather P. Libbey (2004), "Measuring Student Relationships to School: Attachment, Bonding, Connectedness, and Engagement," Journal of School Health. Available from http://bit.ly/28RnlA3

7 California Department of Education, Dataquest, "English Learner Students by Language by Grade" and "Fluent-English-Proficient Students by Language by Grade". Accessed January 24, 2016 from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

8 Linda Darling-Hammond, Roberta Furger, Patrick M. Shields, and Lieb Sutcher (2016), "Addressing California's Emerging Teacher Shortage: An Analysis of Sources and Solutions". Learning Policy Institute. Accessed from http://bit.ly/28NLynn

9 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2016), "California Educator Supply and Demand." Accessed May 20, 2016 from http://bit.ly/28NAg2G

10 See endnote 8

11 See endnote 8

12 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2016), "Teacher Supply in California: A Report to the Legislature Annual Report 2014-15". Accessed from http://bit.ly/292qvQ1 and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2013), "Teacher Supply in California: A Report to the Legislature Annual Report 2011-12". Accessed from http://bit.ly/293ZRbF

13 See endnote 9

14 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2016), "Teacher Supply in California: A Report to the Legislature Annual Report 2014-15". Accessed from http://bit.ly/292qvQ1 and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2011), "Teacher Supply in California: A Report to the Legislature Annual Report 2009-10". Accessed from http://bit.ly/291UkBw

15 Estimate assumes that reducing attrition by a quarter would yield 4,750 additional teachers plus 15,277 credentials issued during the 2014-15 school year, which is close to the 21,483 estimated teacher hires during the 2015-16 school year. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2016), "California Educator Supply and Demand." Accessed May 20, 2016, from www.ctc.ca.gov/reports/data/edu-supl-landing.html

16 Alliance for Excellence in Education (2014), "On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers." Accessed from http://bit.ly/29mOfPz

17 See endnote 8

18 National Center for Teacher Residencies, "Impact & Results." Accessed April 7, 2016, from http://bit.ly/ImpactResults

19 Anthony S. Bryk, Louis M. Gomez and Alicia Grunow (2010), "Getting Ideas into Action: Building Networked Improvement Communities in Education," Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Accessed from http://1.usa.gov/28YDCCG

20 The Education Trust-West (2014), "The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape." Accessed from http://bit.ly/28SGdPp

Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D., is Senior Director of Policy and Programs for California School Boards Association

Manuel Buenrostro is an Education Policy Analyst for California School Boards Association

Magaly Lavadenz, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Founding Director of the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 1

Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students

Introduction

The Local Control Funding Formula, along with an improving state economy, have provided additional resources for California's K-12 public schools serving large numbers of low-income, English learner and foster youth students. For LCFF's strategy of equitable resources leading to improved achievement to be successful, it is crucial that district and county leaders across the state invest these funds in ways that effectively tackle achievement gaps.

Many African-American students come from comfortable homes, have families that have been afforded the opportunity to achieve educational and economic success, and live in neighborhoods and attend schools that are safe and well-resourced. However, a greater share of these students do not have such opportunities and advantages, and this is reflected in the achievement gaps between African-American students and their peers. These gaps persist when comparing African-American students to their peers across all income levels — low-income African-American students have lower achievement levels than their other low-income peers and African-American students who are not low-income have lower achievement levels than their peers who are not low-income.

A host of conditions has contributed to these gaps. African-American students have more limited access to high quality early childhood education, disproportionately attend schools where the majority of their peers are low-income, are more often taught by instructors who are less experienced or teaching outside of their credential field, and are more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods that have fewer public resources such as parks and libraries — resources that play a key role in educational success. These conditions contribute to challenges for African-American students that their peers are less likely to face. To ensure that African-American students achieve the college and career success that is the ultimate goal of the education system, education leaders must find ways to address these challenges. This will take time and require efforts of many institutions, with the public school system playing a crucial role.

This governance brief is part of CSBA's effort to shed light on the educational needs of California's diverse student population. It is the first in a series focused on African-American students. The goal of the series is to describe challenges that must be addressed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential and highlight schools, districts, and programs that are successfully addressing these challenges and closing achievement gaps — and thus serve as guideposts for broader efforts. Taking findings from a number of reports and data sources (such as the Education Trust-West's *Black Minds Matter* report), this brief focuses on the conditions of African-American students in California's K-12 public schools. A subsequent brief will focus on existing and potential strategies and considerations for how boards and state, county, and district leaders can be part of the solution.

African-American Students Are Highly Concentrated in California School Districts

Almost 400,000 African-American students attend California K-12 public schools. This is the sixth largest population of African-American students in the country — larger than the overall student population of 15 other states. While six percent of public school students in California are African American (compared to 16 percent nationally), this average masks their concentration in a limited number of school districts. More than 20 California school districts have an African-American student population that is near or above the national average. In addition, 12 California school districts have

an African-American student population that is more than one-fifth of their total enrollment (Table I).[1]

Table I: *School Districts with the Highest Percentage of African-American Students, 2014-15 School Year*

District	% African American	African-American Enrollment
Emery USD	55%	380
Inglewood USD	40%	5,447
Vallejo City USD	30%	4,468
Lancaster ESD	29%	4,399
Mojave USD	28%	747
Oakland USD	27%	12,839
Antioch USD	26%	4,768
Eastside Union ESD	25%	836
Adelanto ESD	23%	2,341
Sausalito Marin City SD	22%	116
Hawthorne SD	21%	1,843
John Swett USD	20%	343
Victor ESD	20%	2,387
Victor Valley Union HSD	19%	2,681
Compton USD	19%	4,249
Berkeley USD	19%	1,958
Pittsburg USD	18%	2,020
West Contra Costa USD	18%	5,621
Antelope Valley Union HSD	18%	4,494
Natomas USD	18%	2,397

African-American students are also concentrated in certain California counties. School districts with the greatest percentages of African-American students are principally in the largest urban areas in Northern California, including Sacramento, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and Solano counties. A map showing the concentration of African-American students in each county can be found in the Education Trust-West's *Black Minds Matter* report.

Because of the concentration cited above, the majority of African-American students can be found in just a handful of California school districts. More than half of African-American students attend school in just 22 school districts and more than three-fourths in just 77 school districts. By comparison, half of all California K-12 students enroll in 75 school districts and three-fourths in 197 school districts.[2]

In terms of numbers (not percentages), California's largest urban school districts serve the greatest numbers of African-American students. These school districts are in the largest five urban centers in California: Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, San Francisco-Oakland, San Diego, Riverside-San Bernardino, and Sacramento. Although these districts might not have the highest concentration of African-American students, all of them have a proportion of African-American students that is above the state average of six percent and for 14 of the 20, this percentage is more than twice the state average (Table II).

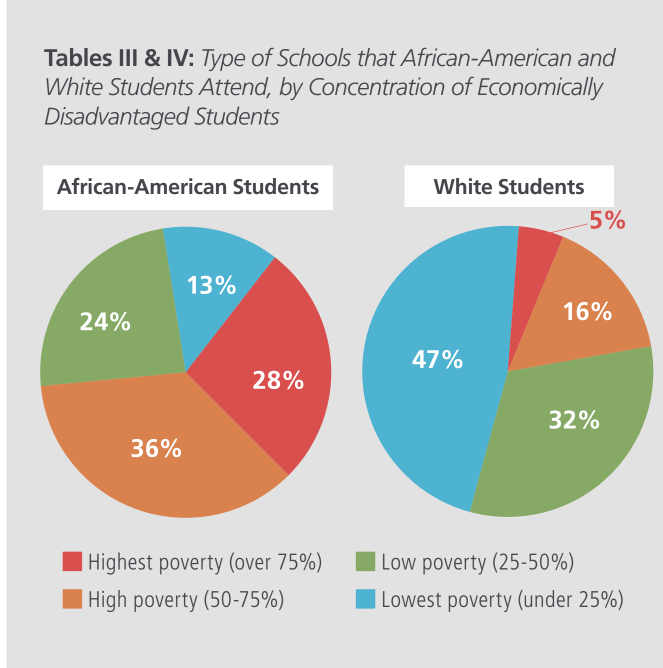
Table II: *School Districts with the Largest Enrollment of African-American Students, 2014-15 School Year*

District	African-American Enrollment	% African American
Los Angeles USD	56,863	9%
Oakland USD	12,839	27%
San Diego USD	12,085	9%
Long Beach USD	11,446	14%
Elk Grove USD	8,824	14%
Sacramento City USD	8,103	17%
San Bernardino City USD	7,113	13%
Fresno USD	6,562	9%
San Francisco USD	5,635	10%
West Contra Costa USD	5,621	18%
Inglewood USD	5,447	40%
Moreno Valley USD	5,375	16%
Antioch USD	4,768	26%
Twin Rivers USD	4,511	15%
Antelope Valley Union HSD	4,494	18%
Vallejo City USD	4,468	30%
Stockton USD	4,412	11%
Lancaster ESD	4,399	29%
Compton USD	4,249	19%
San Juan USD	3,805	8%

African-American Students Are More Likely to Attend High-Poverty, Less Diverse Schools

Not only are African-American students more likely to grow up in poverty than their white peers, they are also much more likely to attend schools with higher poverty rates. Of the 373,000 African-American students in California, 64 percent (237,000) attend schools where more than half of the students are economically disadvantaged. By comparison, only 21 percent of white students attend schools with such high levels of poverty. Looking at the schools with the highest levels of poverty in the state — those where more than three-fourths of students are economically disadvantaged — 28 percent of African-American students attend such high-poverty schools, compared to only five percent of their white peers.[3]

Tables III & IV: *Type of Schools that African-American and White Students Attend, by Concentration of Economically Disadvantaged Students*



African-American students are also more likely to attend less ethnically diverse schools. When looking at schools based on their enrollment of non-white students, nearly three out of four African-American students attend schools that have a student enrollment that is more than 75 percent non-white. By comparison, less than one in five white students attend schools that are more than 75 percent non-white.

There is often an overlap between the students who attend high-poverty and less ethnically diverse schools. For example, the vast majority of African-American students who attend high-poverty schools also attend schools that have a less diverse student population.

Students Perform Better in Socio-economically Diverse Schools

The lack of ethnic and socio-economic diversity in schools that most African-American students attend is not conducive to student success. Economically disadvantaged students in schools enrolling peers with mixed income levels do better than similar economically disadvantaged students in high-poverty schools. Research supporting socio-economic integration goes back to the 1966 Coleman Report. Coleman found that the strongest school-related predictor of student achievement was the socio-economic composition of the student body, a finding that has been replicated by many subsequent studies.[3] For example, a 2010 analysis found that students of all socio-economic statuses, races, ethnicities, and grade levels were likely to have higher mathematics performance if they attended socio-economically and racially integrated schools.[5]

Integrating lower- and higher-income students can result in improving other outcomes as well. For example, low-income students who attend more affluent schools improve their chances of attending a four-year university by 68 percent.[5] In addition, researchers report that upward mobility increases for low-income families who live in socio-economically diverse neighborhoods and that school quality is one of the contributors to this outcome.[7]

Poverty Has an Impact on Educational Outcomes

In California, nearly half (47 percent) of all children are from low-income families (making below $47,248 for a family of four with two children in 2013). A greater share, 59 percent, of African-American children are from low-income families compared to 25 percent of white children.[8] When considering the lowest-income families who are defined as living in poverty (i.e., those who have an income of less than $23,624 for a family of four), more than one in three African-American children live in poverty compared to one in 10 white children.

Extreme poverty takes its toll on families, which is reflected in the number of African-American students who are in foster care. As of July 2015, there were 13,879 African-American children in foster care, making up 22 percent of all foster care children in California.[9] While California data on the ethnicity of students experiencing homelessness is not available, there were 297,615 homeless students in California in 2014, with the percentage and number increasing over the past decade.[10] Nationwide, homeless youth are disproportionately African American — these students represent 32% of youth experiencing homelessness in the U.S.[11]

Growing up in poverty often means more limited access to resources, which affects African-American students early on. For example, only 60 percent of African-American students statewide have access to preschool programs compared to 66 percent of their white peers.[12] This disparity in access to preschool programs is magnified when considering the quality of programs. African-American families are often limited to publicly funded early education programs. Unfortunately, a national report found that California state-funded preschools met only four out of 10 preschool quality standards.[13] This disadvantage sets the stage for challenges that become more apparent as children progress through the K-12 education system.

Low-income African-American students are also more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty, defined as areas where more than 40 percent of the population has incomes that are below the poverty threshold. Living in neighborhoods of such concentrated poverty contributes further to the disparities in access to the kind of resources that support students' learning, health, and well-being. Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have fewer local resources, public places, libraries, grocery stores, quality health centers, and other social services, all of which are important contributors to student academic achievement.

Limited Access to Quality Instruction and Positive School Environment

The disproportionate numbers of African-American students who attend high-poverty and less diverse schools can be a contributing factor to the existing gap in access to resources. For example, the *Black Minds Matter* report cites that African-American students, in addition to being more likely to attend schools with higher poverty rates, are also more likely to attend schools with lower test scores and lower graduation rates than their white peers. The following factors that limit learning opportunities are critical in considering how to improve outcomes for African-American students:

1. **Greater Numbers of Underprepared Teachers.** Schools with the highest poverty rates have greater numbers of teachers who have less experience and preparation. While research has shown that teachers are the most important in-school contributors to student achievement, high-poverty schools experience greater rates of teacher turnover, employ more underprepared and underqualified teachers (i.e., those without full certification or who are teaching in subject areas in which they are not certified), and experience higher rates of staff absenteeism — meaning that students spend more time in classrooms with substitute teachers.

   The recent California educator equity plan highlighted data showing that in districts with a higher proportion of minority and low-income students, those students were more likely to be taught by an inexperienced (less than two years of experience), out of field, or intern teacher.[14] In addition, while the LCFF has shifted more funding toward districts that have a higher proportion of high-need students, high teacher turnover and the result in cost to hire and train new teachers is also an important factor to consider. This cost takes resources away from the classroom.

2. **More Limited Access to a Rigorous Curriculum.** Many factors contribute to an education system in which African-American students are often denied access to a rigorous curriculum. These include district policies, teacher attitudes, and the lack of options in under-resourced schools. For example, African-American students are underrepresented in Advanced Placement courses in California. During the 2011-12 school year, they made up only three percent of enrollment in AP mathematics and AP science.[15] In addition, African-American and Latino students are more likely to be held back and are less likely than their peers to be placed in courses for which they qualify and for which they have met the prerequisites. As was highlighted in CSBA's *Math Misplacement* brief, many successful students in California's K-12 schools are unnecessarily held back in mathematics despite earning good grades and test scores.[16] Research has shown this practice to disproportionately affect African- American and Latino students.

   Additional findings from the *Black Minds Matter* report highlight the lack of access to a quality curriculum, including that:

   » African-American students are three times less likely to be identified for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE).

   » Only 31 percent of African-American high school graduates complete A-G coursework, compared to 49 percent of their white peers.

   » African-American students are under-represented in rigorous courses, including Algebra 2, advanced math, calculus, chemistry, and physics.

3. **Positive School Culture and Cultural Relevance is Key.** A positive school culture and climate where students feel welcomed, valued, and safe is associated with better student outcomes. As a diverse state, California has a particular opportunity and responsibility to ensure that new textbook adoptions, standards, and teacher and principal preparation programs support cultural awareness and inclusion that values all students' backgrounds. One critical reason that this is important is that, unfortunately, multiple studies have shown that teachers hold lower expectations for students of color and low-income students.[17] These negative expectations show up in discipline statistics as well: African-American students are three times as likely to be suspended or expelled — including for the same infractions as their white peers.[18]

Persistent and Striking Achievement Gaps

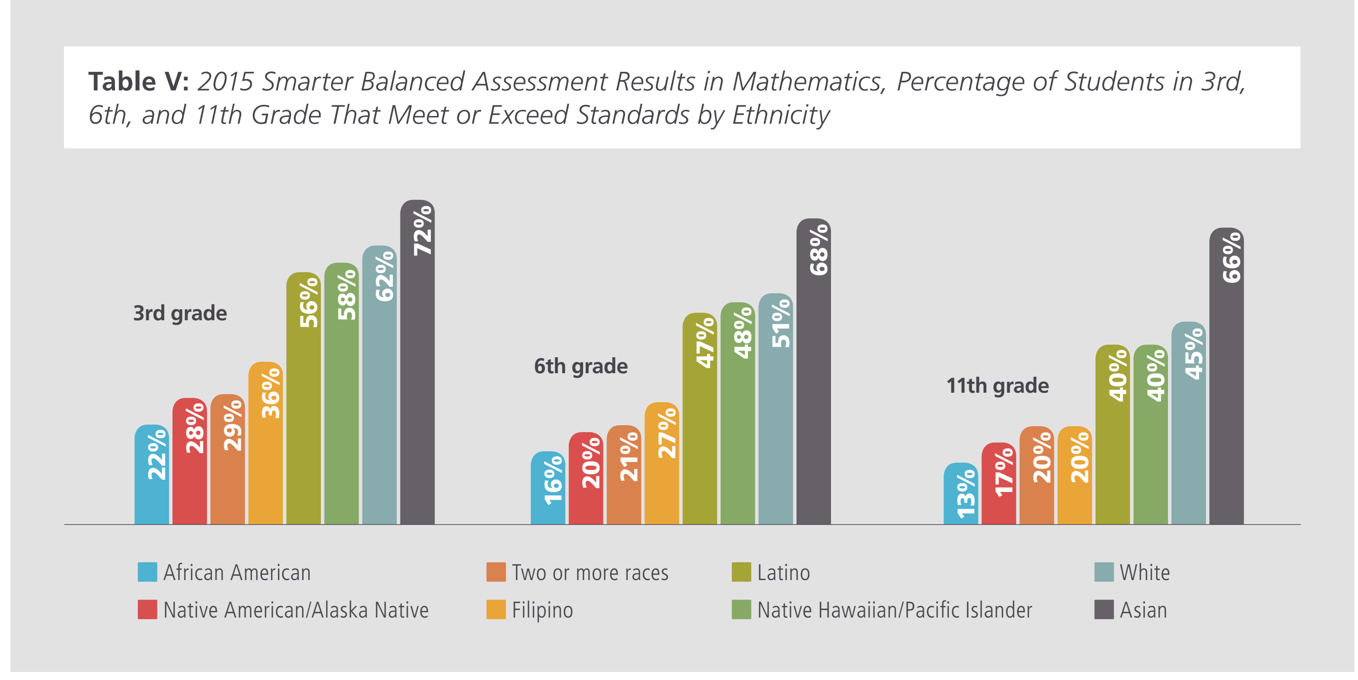
The previous sections describe some of the conditions of limited opportunities in the schools and communities of many African-American students. This section addresses some of the outcomes resulting from these limited opportunities. The most recent results of the Smarter Balanced Assessments show wide achievement gaps between African-American students and their peers. Across all grades and in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics, a lower proportion of African-American students met or exceeded standards than their Latino, white and Asian peers. For example, there is a 32 percentage point gap between African-American students and their white peers in both sixth-grade mathematics and English language arts/literacy.

While proficiency rates are lower for African-American students across all grades, the 11th-grade scores are particularly noticeable. These are students nearing the end of their K-12 public education years who should be prepared for college, career, and civic life. Unfortunately, only 13 percent of African-American students met or exceeded standards in mathematics and 37 percent in English language arts/literacy. Moreover, these are the students who have persisted in school. Many others with the greatest challenges may have already dropped out.[19]

Questions for Board Members

As important decision makers in their districts and counties, board members have the responsibility to ask questions and think strategically about closing achievement gaps for all students. While this brief has focused on state-level statistics, the challenges for individual districts and counties will be different depending on their demographics, geography, history, and local community needs.

Table V: *2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment Results in Mathematics, Percentage of Students in 3rd, 6th, and 11th Grade That Meet or Exceed Standards by Ethnicity*



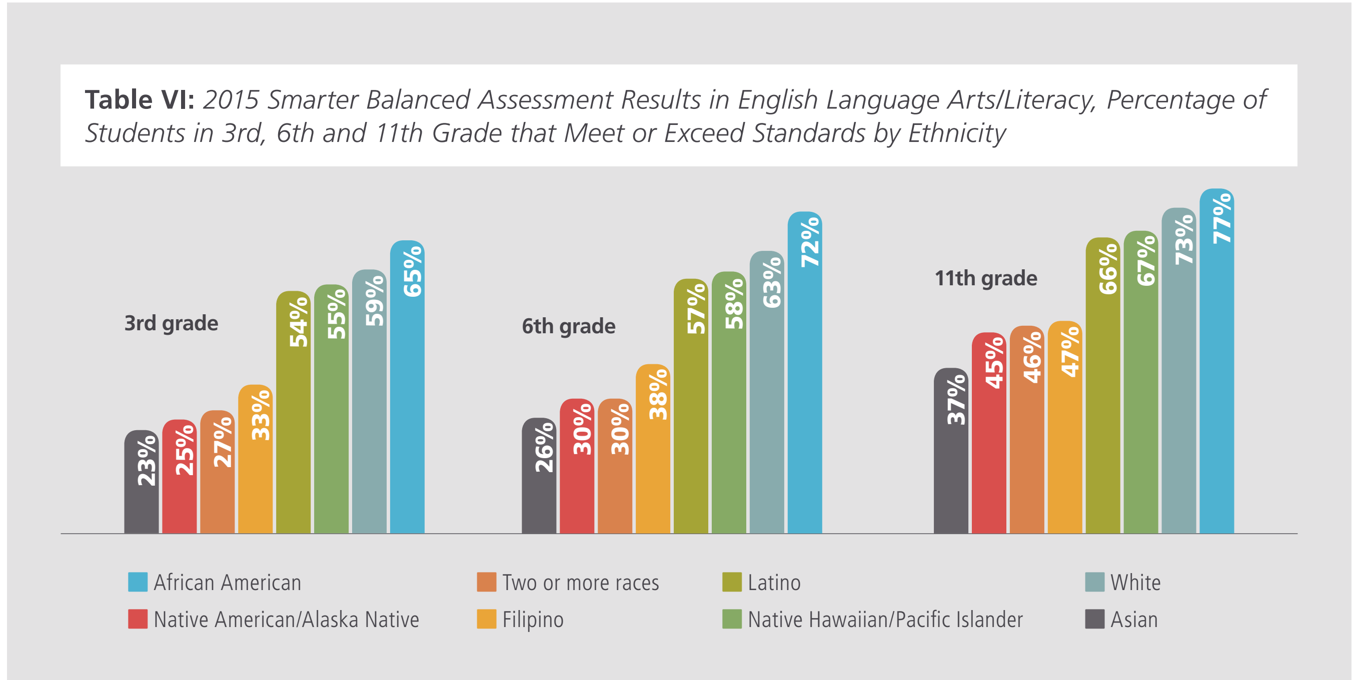


Table VI: *2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment Results in English Language Arts/Literacy, Percentage of Students in 3rd, 6th and 11th Grade that Meet or Exceed Standards by Ethnicity*

Seeking answers to the following questions can help board members better understand their local context:

1. What are the student demographics in my district or county and how do they compare to the demographics of individual schools?
2. Within individual schools, do African-American students have access to and enroll in rigorous coursework?
3. What supports are provided to help African Americans succeed in these rigorous courses?
4. What is the achievement of African-American students across the district or county and within individual schools? What is the achievement gap countywide, districtwide, and in each school?
5. What additional supports are available for students in poverty, both provided by the county office of education, the school district or through other organizations? Are there additional partnerships that can be leveraged to enhance supports?
6. Is the school environment relevant to all students based on their backgrounds and cultures? Does the course content relate to the experiences and backgrounds of African-American students (for example, does the history curriculum highlight the achievements of African Americans)? Is the district or county staff equipped to relate to students' experiences and background? Does the teaching and administrative staff reflect the diversity of the student population?
7. Does the district or county have any programs specific to African-American students? Are they effective, supported, and funded adequately?

Conclusion

The conversation about how to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to achieve their potential should continue to be a top priority for board members. This brief, while focusing on the condition of African-American students in California, is a starting point from which local and state educational leaders can gain insight to inform steps to improve student achievement. CSBA will continue to focus on how board members can best improve outcomes for California's diverse student population. To support these efforts, a second brief in this series, *African-American students in Focus, Issue 2: Closing Opportunity and Achievement Gaps for African-American Students* will focus on possible solutions and recommendations for board members and other education leaders to improve the achievement of African-American students in California.

Resources for Board Members

The Education Trust-West's *Black Minds Matter* report: http://bit.ly/1MQxhsY

CSBA's *Math Misplacement* brief: http://bit.ly/1ozgW0n

U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection: http://ocrdata.ed.gov/

UCLA Civil Rights Project: http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

Endnotes

1 CSBA Analysis of California Department of Education, Student & School Data Files, "Enrollment by School". Downloaded on March 21, 2016 at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/#e

2 See endnote 1

3 CSBA Analysis of California Department of Education, Student & School Data Files, "Enrollment by School" and "Student Poverty-FRPM Data". Downloaded March 21, 2016 at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/#e

4 Coleman et al. (1966), "Equality of Educational Opportunity". Available at http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED012275

5 Mickelson, R.A., & Bottia, M. (2010), "Integrated Education and Mathematics Outcomes: A Synthesis of Social Science Research." North Carolina Law Review 87, 993-1089.

6 Gregory J. Palardy (2013), "High School Socioeconomic Segregation and Student Attainment", American Educational Research Journal. Available at http://bit.ly/1Vmy6MI

7 Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, and Emmanuel Saez (2014), "Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States". Available at http://bit.ly/1eipsN5

8 National Center for Children in Poverty, "California Demographics of Low-Income Children" and "California Demographics of Poor Children". Accessed on March 21, 2016 at http://bit.ly/1qIBbKC

9 California Child Welfare Indicators Project, "Children in Foster Care California CWS Outcomes System, October 1, 2015". Accessed on March 21, 2016 at http://bit.ly/1NuUWx5

10 Kidsdata, "Homeless Public School Students, 2014". Accessed on March 21, 2016 at http://bit.ly/1S7SrQs

11 Congressional Research Service (2013), "Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs". Available at http://bit.ly/1S7SzPX

12 Education Trust-West (2015), "*Black Minds Matter*: Supporting the Educational Success of Black Children in California". Available at http://bit.ly/1WziAyS

13 Steven Barnett, Megan Carolan, James Squires, Kirsty Clarke *Brown*, and Michelle Horowitz (2015), "The State of Preschool 2014: State Preschool Yearbook", National Institute for Early Education Research. Available at http://bit.ly/1WziAyS

14 California Department of Education (2015), "California State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators". Available at http://1.usa.gov/1SgvNe0

15 U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, "2011-12 Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Enrollment Estimations by Program Type". Downloaded on March 21, 2016 at http://1.usa.gov/1SAPG9s

16 CSBA Governance Brief (2015), "Math Misplacement". Available at http://bit.ly/1qpZPiM

17 Ulrich Boser, Megan Wilhelm, and Robert Hanna (2014), "The Power of Pygmalion Effect: Teachers Expectations Strongly Predict College Completion", Center for American Progress. Available at http://ampr.gs/23FWgU7

18 See endnote 12

19 CSBA Analysis of California Department of Education, CAASPP Test Results for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics, "2015 California Statewide Research File". Downloaded on March 21, 2016 at http://bit.ly/1TS9ESv

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 2

Closing Opportunity and Achievement Gaps for African-American Students

Introduction

As California continues to target additional K-12 public school resources to meet the needs of low-income, English learner and foster youth students, it is crucial for school communities to focus on tackling achievement gaps. Education leaders must think strategically about building partnerships and making investments that best support these and other students to make equal opportunity for all a reality.

This governance brief is part of CSBA's effort to shed light on the education needs of California's diverse student population and is the second in a series focused on African-American students. The goal of the series is to describe challenges that must be addressed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. It highlights schools, districts, and programs that are successfully meeting these challenges and closing achievement gaps—and serve as guideposts for broader efforts. While CSBA's previous governance brief, *Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students*, focuses on the challenges faced by African-American students, this brief focuses on considerations for board members and state, county, and district leaders to help close gaps.

Shared Responsibility to Meet the Challenge

As was highlighted in *Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students*, the challenges faced by African-American students are significant and rooted in a myriad of factors, including the higher prevalence of childhood poverty, higher concentration in high-poverty and less diverse schools and lower access to resources, including rigorous courses, quality instructional materials, and qualified teachers.[1,2,3,4] Overcoming these challenges will require the efforts of many institutions, with the public school system playing an important role.

The state's Local Control Funding Formula framework supports local decision-making by those who best understand the needs of their community's students and families. School and county boards provide direction and approve the resources necessary to pursue that direction. While the roles are different for other county and district leaders and staff, they all have a responsibility to work collaboratively amongst themselves and community members to improve student outcomes and ensure equity.

This brief is organized in two parts. The first focuses on district strategies and programs. The second addresses how boards can exercise their governance responsibilities. While not exhaustive, these recommendations can be a starting point for districts, counties, and communities to think proactively about their role in ensuring that African-American students achieve their potential.

State, County, and District Strategies and Programs

State, county, and district leaders, including board members, superintendents, principals, and staff, can implement or support programs focused on serving the needs of African-American students. By using research and evidence, they should identify the most promising investments and practices that can close achievement gaps. The following recommendations are research-supported and are viable strategies for improving African-American student achievement. They center on seven areas:

1. Invest in Early Education
2. Provide Access to High-Quality Curriculum and Materials

3. Support Access to High-Quality Staff
4. Ensure Adequate Student Supports
5. Cultivate Cultural Respect and Relevance
6. Foster Collaboration
7. Support Family and Community Engagement

1. **Invest in Early Education.** As mentioned in the previous brief, the condition of African-American children is such that many are behind academically once they enroll in kindergarten, as a result of being less likely to have attended preschool or have access to high-quality programs.[5] There is strong evidence that supports investing in early childhood education as one of the most effective means of improving outcomes for students. These investments can address knowledge gaps early and prevent students from getting progressively further behind as they move through the grade levels. Research shows that children who attend high-quality preschool enter kindergarten with significantly larger language, literacy, and mathematics skills.[6]

Transitional Kindergarten in California. In 2010, through the Kindergarten Readiness Act, California added Transitional Kindergarten (TK) as the first year of a two-year district run program. TK is available to students who turn five years old between September 2 and December 2, of the program year, filling the gap that might exist between preschool and kindergarten. The program also uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate and taught by an appropriately credentialed teacher and, unlike preschool or child development programs, is part of the K-12 public school system by statute.

A critical aspect of providing all students with the opportunity to attend preschool is accessibility in terms of location and hours. Options should be widely available within a community and not require extensive travel by parents/guardians and young children. The quality of early childhood education programs is another important consideration. There is a wide range of program quality, with African-American students less likely to have access to the highest-quality options.[7] Expanding and improving existing programs, while also investing in well-trained professionals and other staff, is critical for districts looking to provide equitable early childhood programs to all families.

Preschool for All Program, City of San Francisco. The city of San Francisco has expanded its preschool program so that all four year olds are eligible for free enrollment. This program is a full year longer than the California TK program. Eligible preschool providers are located in many San Francisco neighborhoods. Many of these neighborhoods have been previously underserved and have been home to a large proportion of African-American and Latino students. According to the Education Trust-West's 2015 *Black Minds Matter* report, the program serves three fourths of all four year olds in Bayview-Hunters Point, the neighborhood with the highest proportion of African-American students in the city.[8]

2. **Provide Access to High-Quality Curriculum and Materials.** High-quality instruction means providing students with access to rigorous coursework and materials. This access is essential to prepare students for college and career and to ensure that they can make post-high school choices based on their wishes and interests, not on the limitations of their high school preparation. In addition, rigorous, challenging, and relevant curriculum and instruction that motivates students is crucial to their engagement in school. Many students do not drop out because they are unable to keep up with their peers, but rather because they are unmotivated or do not see the connection between their education and their lives.[9] All students should also have equal access to rigorous courses, including A-G coursework, Advanced Placement classes, and other opportunities to enroll in college-level coursework while in high school. Programs that can deliver rigorous and relevant coursework for African-American students can include Linked Learning, career academies, career and technical education, and partnerships with community colleges and universities that allow for dual enrollment.

Fair and Transparent Policies to Counteract Math Misplacement. Math misplacement is a practice where students are held back in mathematics despite earning good grades and test scores. Research has shown that African-American and Latino students are disproportionately affected by this practice. For example, a 2010 report by the Noyce Foundation found that only about one third of African-American and Latino eighth-grade students who earned good grades and test scores in Algebra I were promoted to Geometry in ninth grade.[10] Districts and counties must implement fair and objective placement policies (such as CSBA Sample Policy BP 6152.1 – Placement in Mathematics Courses) to close this gap. At least 22 districts in California have already taken steps to adopt fair mathematics placement policies. They report that such policies have helped eliminate the potential bias in mathematics placement decisions and ensure fairness and accuracy throughout the mathematics placement process. For more information, see CSBA's joint governance brief with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, *Math Misplacement*: www.csba.org/mathmisplacement.

Advanced Placement Initiative, Corona-Norco Unified School District. Corona-Norco USD collaborated with Equal Opportunity Schools to close the race and income participation gaps in AP courses, raise AP performance, and develop systems and structures to sustain and improve upon results in the future. During the 2014-15 school year, students who were underrepresented in AP courses were recruited, placed into an AP course for the 2015-16 school year, and provided with supports including summer institutes, before- and after-school tutoring, and review sessions. In just one year, the enrollment of African-American students in AP courses grew by nearly 60 percent.

3. **Support Access to High-Quality Staff.** Finding ways to ensure that all African-American students have equal access to experienced and qualified teachers is essential, especially considering that such access is currently not a reality.[11] With the ongoing teacher shortage crisis, strategies that expand the teacher pipeline and ensure that new teachers with the skills, competencies, and attitudes to teach in the highest-need areas are brought into the profession and are provided with the support that keeps them there, are more important than ever. Staffing policies that equitably allocate teachers are also an important and effective strategy to ensure that the highest-need students receive instruction from the most qualified teachers. Incentives to place the most qualified and experienced teachers in the highest-need areas can include salary increases, bonuses, extra support, or housing subsidies.

California State University, Chico Rural Teacher Residency (RTR). The RTR is a comprehensive partnership between the CSU Chico's School of Education and four high-need, rural school districts in northern California designed to improve the preparation of new teachers, address the needs of rural schools, and improve the achievement of all students. The program provides residents with classroom experience alongside trained mentor teachers, with graduate coursework at CSU Chico and a support system of university faculty, school administrators, and other teacher candidates. Both general and special education residents participate together to cultivate professional learning communities, collaboration, and promote school change. An induction program gives support for the first two years of teaching. Upon completion, residents receive a dual masters degree and teaching credential, and are placed in cohorts, facilitating collaboration and online professional development communities to provide continued support. National statistics on teacher residency programs show an 84 percent, three-year retention rate and an enrollment of significantly more teachers of color than traditional credentialing programs.[13] Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Fresno also have similar teacher residency programs.

Diversity and cultural competencies are also part of the definition of quality. Teachers and administrators with an understanding of the cultures and backgrounds of diverse students and a predisposition to work with diverse populations, including African-American students, have been shown to have higher expectations as well as being more adept at communicating with and involving parents—all of which is associated with greater student success.[12] Cultural sensitivity training during pre-service and throughout teachers' careers are essential strategies for closing achievement gaps for African-American students. Recruiting efforts should also seek out diverse

candidates for teaching, leadership roles, and other school staff positions. Teachers and leaders who are from similar backgrounds can be powerful role models for students.

Teach Tomorrow in Oakland (TTO). This initiative within the Oakland Unified School District recruits and retains local teachers. The program does not wait for colleges to graduate teachers; it operates in partnership with community organizations, undergraduate unions, churches, and other groups that are already working with people of color towards developing a pipeline of community candidates. The program provides support that removes barriers to becoming a teacher, including providing reimbursements for teacher test, credential, and fingerprinting fees and provides tutoring for teacher tests (e.g. CBEST and CSET) at no charge. The program does not require a specific credentialing program, but strongly recommends that candidates attend partner universities as a cohort. Once teachers are placed in the classroom, the program also provides materials and supplies, helps to decorate teachers' classrooms, and offers monthly professional development sessions led by TTO teacher-leaders. The professional development uses a critical race theoretical lens, which helps participants to understand the impact of race, poverty, and other factors on the lives of their students. Currently, TTO has a 78 percent retention rate, and more than half of its teachers are on track to complete their five-year commitment to teach in Oakland.[14]

4. **Ensure Adequate Student Supports.** As districts and counties provide greater access to rigorous coursework, they must also provide students with the supports and school time that they need to succeed. These supports can take various forms, including additional staff who can provide students with mentoring and tutoring to ensure that they are meeting grade-level standards. Another important strategy for helping students increase their learning at a more rapid pace is providing them with extra learning time. Extended learning time can include before-school, after-school programs, and summer learning opportunities. Finally, in many of the districts and schools with a large number or proportion of African-American students, supports can include having healthcare workers and mental health professionals on site to ensure that the needs of the whole child are met. These strategies can include the important element of collaboration between a district and one or more community organizations.

Fresno Summer Learning Programs. The Fresno County Office of Education provides funding for most of the after-school programs in the county and works closely with the California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF), a local nonprofit organization that hires and provides professional development for college students who work in more than 200 after-school programs in Fresno and Madera counties. Working with local school districts, the two organizations leverage this structure to provide summer learning programs. Reading, leadership, nutrition, and science have been central learning goals in the programs, largely depending on district priorities. Several districts have allocated a portion of their LCFF funds to underwrite facility and transportation costs and to cover the per-pupil fee that the CTFF charges in order to pay program staff. For more information on how to implement summer learning programs, read CSBA's *Summer Learning Resource Guide*: www.csba.org/summerlearning.

Riverside Unified School District's Heritage Plan. The Heritage Plan program is focused on improving academic outcomes and college-going rates for African-American students attending Riverside USD. Mentor teachers at each high school recruit students in grades 10-12 and work closely with counselors, who review the student transcripts. Through this review, the counselors and teachers identify A-G courses still needed for college eligibility, monitor grade progress, and help students plan for college. Building college awareness is a large component as students visit nearby colleges and universities, and receive help in completing applications for college, applying for financial aid, drafting personal statements, and transitioning to college through partnerships with California State University, San Bernardino and University of California, Riverside's Early Academic Outreach Program.

5. **Cultivate Cultural Respect and Relevance.** Students need to see the relevance of their educational experience to their lives, cultures, and future aspirations. The curriculum, textbooks, and other content materials should include the stories, achievements, and perspectives of peoples from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including those of African Americans. Investing in materials and programs that support instruction in which diverse cultures are represented in a balanced light, recognizes their challenges, and highlights their contributions to society, is an important strategy for closing achievement gaps. As the state develops new instructional frameworks aligned with the California Common Core State Standards and approves new instructional materials for adoption, it should consider cultural relevance and diversity as critical factors.

Oakland's African-American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI). This initiative from Oakland USD, in partnership with the Urban Strategies Council and the East Bay Community Foundation, coordinates efforts and develops strategies and programs tailored to support the potential of African-American students. The initiative's main component, the Manhood Development Program (MDP), is an elective course that enrolls more than 400 African-American male students across 16 schools. The course is designed to address and counteract the negative narrative about African-American males and develop a strong sense of self. The curriculum is uniquely rooted in African-American history and culture, while infusing a strong focus on college and career preparation. In addition, the initiative matches elementary students with middle and high school student mentors. To date, suspension rates for MDP students have decreased by one third, while both GPA and graduation rates have increased. Oakland USD has continued to support the initiative through community partnerships and funding through the Local Control and Accountability Plan process. In addition, other California districts have started to explore similar initiatives. For example, Antioch Unified School District implemented an initiative in 2013.

Cultural respect and relevance can also improve through policies related to staff recruitment and training. As mentioned previously, students need teachers with the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to teach children from diverse backgrounds. Such teachers are often those who come from the same backgrounds as their students, and these teachers provide the crucial advantage of serving as positive role models and examples of success. Teachers and staff should receive cultural sensitivity training that helps them to be aware of implicit bias and understand how to mitigate its impact on students. State efforts promoting diversity in the teacher pipeline, along with investing in training that leads to a better understanding of students' backgrounds and needs, are effective strategies for improving outcomes for African-American students.

Youth Leadership Summit, ABC Unified School District. The Youth Leadership Summit program primarily focuses on developing African-American and Latino student leaders. These individuals positively affect the climate at their high schools by using their knowledge of the consequences associated with high-risk behaviors (e.g. bullying, smoking, poor choices in relationships, etc.) to influence the behaviors and attitudes of their peers. A noticeable decrease in the number of student disciplinary referrals, and an increase in student attendance and participation in leadership opportunities, is an indicator of the impact of the Youth Leadership Summit program. This program received CSBA's Golden Bell Award in 2015.

6. **Foster Collaboration.** Collaboration is an essential strategy for ensuring that programs and strategies achieve desired results. This includes collaboration across district departments and programs and across various stakeholders, community organizations, and non-district agencies to leverage the resources available in a community. For example, several city and county agencies can help schools provide supports for homeless and foster youth, while partnerships with healthcare providers can ensure that students remain healthy and ready to learn. Collaboration to provide enrichment opportunities such as internships and other work-related experiences is also critical. These opportunities are often provided in cooperation between schools and employers through programs such as career academies, Linked Learning and career and technical education.

School-Based Health Centers. School-based health centers bring vital primary care services into low-income neighborhoods. These programs have more than doubled over the past decade, serving nearly 250,000 K-12 students and their families. There are currently 243 school-based health centers located in schools from Del Norte County to San Diego County, with large concentrations in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Most centers are in schools with low-income Latino and African-American students—ethnic groups that are more likely to suffer health disparities. They also have lower rates of health insurance and less access to health and mental health services. Amongst the many positive outcomes, school-based health centers have improved school attendance, reduced dropout rates, and improved academic achievement.[16] The California School-Based Health Alliance provides a list of funding opportunities and other resources on their website at http://bit.ly/GrantsWithDeadlines.

Linked Learning. The Linked Learning approach integrates rigorous academics that meet college-ready standards with sequenced, high-quality career and technical education, work-based learning, and supports to help students stay on track. Linked Learning pathways are organized around industry-sector themes. These programs require collaboration amongst teachers across subject areas, industry professionals, and industry leaders that can support programs by facilitating work-based learning experiences and mentorship opportunities. Given that Linked Learning aims to increase equity by graduating college and career-ready students, it is of particular importance that this initiative serve African-American students, who face the lowest high school graduation and highest unemployment rates of any racial or ethnic group.[17] African-American students in certified pathways earn more credits through 9th and 10th grade than their similar peers in traditional high school programs.[18] There are currently nine districts participating in the ConnectEd Linked Learning initiative, including Antioch, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Pasadena, Sacramento, and West Contra Costa Unified School Districts, all of which enroll an African-American student population that is above the state average.

7. **Support Family and Community Engagement.** Meaningful and ongoing collaboration with families and the community should be a key component of any strategy to close achievement gaps. Research has shown that family and community engagement is associated with higher student achievement outcomes.[19] State, county, and district leaders should create welcoming environments in school sites and district and county offices so that parents/guardians are encouraged to attend meetings and participate in school activities. In addition, engagement should be meaningful so that parents/guardians are true partners in the education of their children. For example, activities that simply inform parents of district decisions are not as powerful as continuous engagement that allows them to help shape such decisions.

   Staff and parent/guardian training is also critical. Staff training can better help them to understand the culture and background of their students' families. Parent/guardian education can help them learn how to be proactive in their child's education and ask questions to understand what is happening in school.

The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. This initiative, started in Sacramento City Unified School District, has brought school staff and parents together to build trust, instill cultural competency, and increase capacity to support students. The program involves teachers conducting home visits to meet with parents, reinforce their importance as their child's first and most important teacher, and share information about their student's school program. Initial visits are followed by the establishment of Academic Parent Teacher Teams, which bring parents to their child's classroom once every other month to learn activities that are adapted to their child's specific needs, practice how to use these activities at home, and review student data on how their child is progressing. During the 2012-13 school year, the program had over 3,300 home visits conducted by over 400 teachers. Students with participating parents also saw increases in their academic achievement.[20]

PTA National Partnership Standards. The PTA has collaborated with education leaders to develop National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. These research-based blueprints make it easy and effective for families, educators,

and community members to work toward shared goals. The standards include:

1. Welcoming all Families Into the School Community
2. Communicating Effectively
3. Supporting Student Success
4. Speaking Up for Every Child
5. Sharing Power
6. Collaborating with Community

These standards can provide a blueprint from which counties and districts can build their family engagement efforts. In addition, CDE has developed a family engagement framework available at http://bit.ly/EngagementFramework.

Governance Recommendations for Board Members

Board members can work with their superintendents to set direction for their districts and counties and ensure that there is a continual focus on closing achievement gaps for African-American and all students. The following are strategies for board members to consider as they carry out their governance responsibilities:

» **Request, Consider, and Understand Data.** Boards need information about the conditions of students, communities, and schools, as well as student achievement. Through careful consideration of data, board members can better understand the outcomes of the students in their schools and the factors contributing to those outcomes. To gain a full picture of student progress, boards should request a combination of data on academic assessment, school climate and access to resources, to inform further actions.

When considering data, it is important to identify achievement gaps by considering disaggregated and school-level data. While the overall achievement of a school might be high, district leaders must look further into that school's data to ensure that all students, including African-American students, are achieving.

» **Set Ambitious Goals to Close Gaps.** Board members have the responsibility to ensure that the goals of their districts are appropriately ambitious and resonate with the community. Goals must be differentiated by significant subgroups of students. To close gaps, the bar for progress must be set higher for the students who are currently trailing behind their peers. For example, a goal of raising achievement for all students by 5 percentage points is not acceptable when African-American students trail behind their white peers by 20 percentage points. Goals for African-American student achievement must display a commitment for faster growth.

» **Align Investments to Close Gaps through the LCAP.** Once districts and counties have a clear picture of the challenges faced by their students and have set appropriately ambitious goals for moving them forward, the LCAP can be a vehicle for investing in improvement and aligning resources to produce the desired results. Moreover, as data are collected and priorities are set, district and county leaders should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their investments and consider expanding successful strategies and abandoning those that are not having the desired effect on student conditions or academic achievement.

Equity with regard to resource allocation means that all students receive the resources they need to succeed. When data show gaps in student outcomes, additional supports and resources should be targeted to accelerate achievement and close gaps. District and county leaders should consider adequacy in terms of the amount invested per child, the quality of those investments, and their impact. For example, equal spending on instructional materials is not equal when African-American students have more limited access to culturally relevant textbooks.

These strategies are interconnected, and when taken together, will help board members to better understand the challenges faced by African-American students in their districts and individual schools, and help boards to set ambitious goals and effectively assign resources to meet those goals. Continuous improvement and reflection must also be the norm. After resources are assigned through the LCAP process, data collection efforts should measure the impact of new strategies, which will inform whether such strategies should be adapted or expanded.

Conclusion

There is much work ahead to close the historic achievement gap that has denied opportunity to many generations of African-American students. California is at a crossroads with its new funding system that has shifted resources and responsibility to local districts. In addition, a new accountability system is being developed. This shift has made it more critical than ever for district leaders to understand how to ask the right questions, consider the right data to answer those questions, and allocate resources adequately to address student needs.

CSBA will continue to support boards in their efforts to improve outcomes for California's diverse student population. Ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential must continue to be one of the top priorities for all governance teams.

Endnotes

1 National Center for Children in Poverty, "California Demographics of Low-Income Children" and "California Demographics of Poor Children." Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/1qsFJVm

2 CSBA Analysis of California Department of Education, Student & School Data Files, "Enrollment by School" and "Student Poverty-FRPM Data." Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/1Ui20kp

3 U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12. Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://ocrdata.ed.gov

4 California Department of Education (2015), "California State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/EquitableAccess

5 Education Trust-West (2015), "Black Minds Matter: Supporting the Educational Success of Black Children in California." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/BlackMindsMatter

6 Society for Research in Child Development (2013), "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/InvestingInOurFuture-13

7 Steven Barnett, Megan Carolan, James Squires, Kirsty Clark Brown, and Michelle Horowitz (2015), "The State of Preschool 2014: State Preschool Yearbook," National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/StateofPreschool2014

8 See endnote 5

9 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2006), "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/SilentEpidemic2006

10 Noyce Foundation (2010), "Pathways Report: Dead Ends and Wrong Turns on the Path Through Algebra." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/PathwaysReport2010

11 See endnote 4

12 Seth Gershenson, Stephen B. Holt, and Nicholas W. Papageorge (2016), "Who Believes in me? The Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations," Economics of Education Review. Available from http://bit.ly/WhoBelievesInMe

13 National Center for Teacher Residencies, "Impact & Results." Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/ImpactResults

14 Larry Ferlazzo (2015), "Response: Strategies for Recruiting Teachers of Color," Education Week. Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/Response-2015

15 California School-Based Health Alliance, "California SBHS by County." Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/SBHCs-County

16 California School-Based Health Alliance (2014), "School-Based Health Centers: Proven Impact on Learning." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/SBHC-ImpactLearning

17 Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." Accessed April 7, 2016 from http://bit.ly/LaborStatistics2016

18 The James Irvine Foundation (2015), "Taking Stock of the California Linked Learning District Initiative." Retrieved from http://bit.ly/TakingStock-LL

19 William H. Jeynes (2005), "Parental Involvement and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/Involvement-Achievement

20 Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (2016), "Information Packet, Parent Teacher Home Visit Project," Retrieved from http://bit.ly/HomeVisitProject

FactSheet

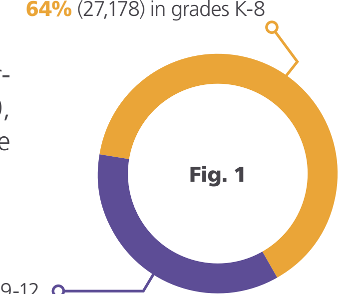
May 2016

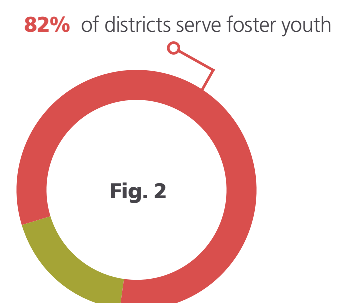
Our Foster Youth: What School Boards Can Do

K-12 students in foster care face circumstances that are far more challenging than those faced by many of their peers. Such circumstances often make foster students' learning difficult and their futures uncertain. An important first step to changing foster youth outcomes is learning about their challenges.

Where they are

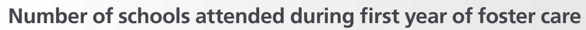
More than 43,000 K-12 students in California schools were in foster care in 2009-10, and most California school districts serve foster youth (Figures 1 and 2).[1,2]

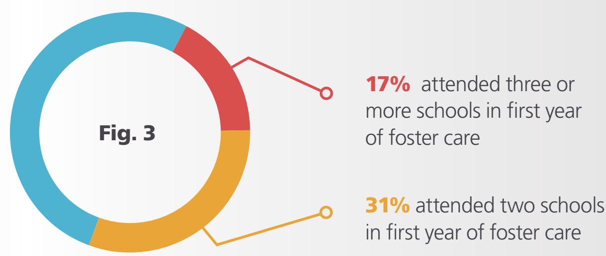




Instability is a major challenge

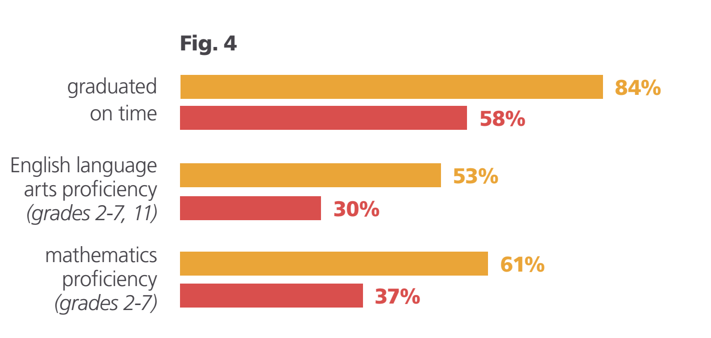
Almost half of students changed schools mid-year in their first year of foster care (Figure 3). 34% of 17- and 18-year-olds had attended 5 or more schools.[4] 4-6 months of learning is lost each time they change schools, and foster youth have double the absence rate of their peers, nationally.[3,4]





Achievement suffers

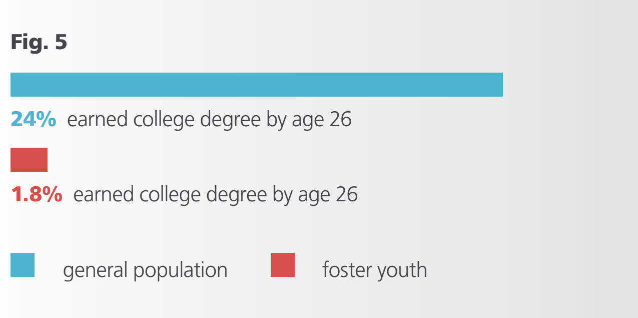
Foster youth graduation rates and the percent scoring proficient or better on state tests in 2010 were well below those of their peers (Figure 4). [1,2]



Challenges persist after high school

A 2011 study of former foster youth[5] found that by age 26, less than 2% earned a college degree (Figure 5), 33% had incomes at or below the poverty level or had no health insurance, and 54% experienced clinical-level mental health challenges.

Fig. 5



K-12 boards of education can help foster youth by aligning values, policies, goals and budgets to support the ability of staff to effectively serve foster youth through three core strategies emphasized by foster youth advocates.

Safety

Staff assist foster youth with:

1. Immediate identification and enrollment
2. Increased emotional support to cope with trauma

Stability

Staff assist foster youth with:

1. Minimizing school transitions
2. Accommodations for unavoidable transitions—Partial credit and timely transfer of records (AB 490)
3. Working productively with ERHs—those authorized to make educational decisions for foster youth

Support

Staff assist foster youth with:

1. A network of relationships: personal, professional and organizational collaborations that coordinate support
2. Encouragement and guidance for college planning and meeting A-G graduation requirements
3. Accommodations for graduation requirements (AB 167/216), if needed

Endnotes

1 WestEd. (2013). The Invisible Achievement Gap, Part 1: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California's Public Schools. San Francisco: Barrat, V. X., & Berliner, B.

2 Wiegmann, W., et al. (2014). The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 2: How the Foster Care Experiences of California Public School Students Are Associated with Their Education Outcomes.

3 The Institute for Higher Education Policy. (2005). Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers. Washington, DC: Wolanin, Thomas R.

4 Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. (2014). Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care.

5 Casey Family Programs. (2005). Improving Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study. Washington: Pecora, Peter, J., et al. (http://bit.ly/1Rnm8Aq)

For more CSBA publications and videos on foster youth, visit www.csba.org/fosteryouth.

Foster Youth: Supports for Success

by Terra Thorne

Introduction

California recently became the first state in the nation to incorporate foster youth into its education accountability framework, with the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula and the Local Control and Accountability Plans. Under LCFF and LCAP, districts must identify the steps they will take to improve the academic outcomes of foster youth. However, there is much more to learn about which services, teaching strategies or interventions will raise the academic performance and life-long success of these youth. This brief is intended to help board members better understand the specific challenges foster youth face, and the support, academic and otherwise, that will help foster students succeed. It also includes information drawn from surveys of 33 former foster youth who have achieved an important benchmark: enrollment in higher education.

Foster youth face distinct challenges

Foster youth represent a small, but particularly vulnerable group of students in California's public education system. One out of 150 California students is in foster care and two-thirds of these students are enrolled in just 10 percent of the state's school districts.[1] Although the population is small, foster youth face significant challenges that educators can help address.

Courts typically remove foster youth from their homes due to substantiated claims of abuse or neglect. Such experiences can result in trauma that puts foster youth at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse problems, and a variety of other mental health issues.[2] In addition, this population faces increased risk of involvement with the criminal justice system, homelessness and early parenting.[3,4]

These out-of-school challenges can directly affect academic success. A Washington state study found that students who experience three or more traumatic events during their childhood had three times the rate of academic failure, five times the rate of severe attendance problems, and six times the rate of school behavior problems as their peers with no known trauma.[5]

In addition, foster students typically experience higher school mobility than other students, often because of changes in placement while in the foster care system. In California, 69 percent of foster youth had three or more placements during their time in the foster care system.[6] Each change in school can result in delayed enrollment or difficulty transferring academic records, and students may lose four to six months of educational progress with each school change.[7]

Foster students lag behind even other at-risk students on a number of academic measures, including high school graduation rates, math and English proficiency (see figure 1).[8] Research also finds that the more time students spend in foster care, the less likely they are to enter community college in California. For those who do enroll, they often leave before completing their first year.

Supports for success: What the research shows

There is a small but growing body of academic literature focused on what helps foster youth overcome barriers to attain educational success. Most of this literature focuses on the role of outside influences, or external factors.

External factors

Social support is consistently identified as one of the most important factors helping foster youth and former foster youth attain successful educational outcomes.[9,10,11]

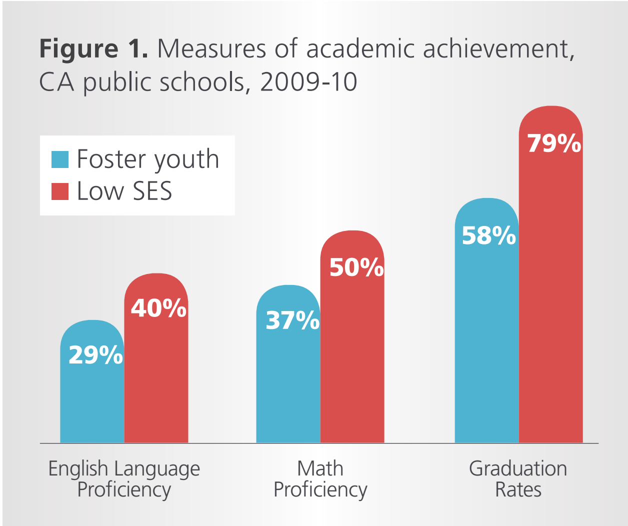


Figure 1. Measures of academic achievement, CA public schools, 2009-10

Social support includes relationships in which peers and adults connect with foster youth to help instill acceptance, self-confidence and understanding. It also includes offering helpful, encouraging and positive academic feedback, as well as providing critical resources such as financial aid and academic assistance. Research indicates that such support from adults and peers contributes to increased student self-confidence and sense of purpose, which in turn bolsters academic persistence and success.[12] College-enrolled former foster youth indicate social support as a key contributing factor to their academic achievement.[13,14,15]

In addition to social support, the research identifies several other external influences as important contributors to success. Meaningful participation in school and community activities can nurture feelings of belonging, and provide avenues for positive social interactions that help foster youth succeed.[16] Former foster youth enrolled in college also cited financial aid information, college advising and a challenging academic environment (such as enrollment in Advanced Placement and honors courses) as key factors in helping them prepare for college.[17]

Research also suggests that outreach efforts such as the Independent Living programs can help foster youth successfully transition out of care. A study on the influence of ILP on foster youth found that participants had more access to educational support from tutoring to financial aid resources to supports for building social-emotional skills.[18] Another study found foster youth who received consistent independent living training were almost three times more likely to graduate from high school than students who did not receive this support.[19]

Internal factors

Another area of focus of is on the role of helping students build a sense of competence, self-confidence, goal orientation, diligence, persistence and grit.[20,21,22] There are instructional practices available to help build these non-cognitive qualities. While these practices are promising, the association between internal traits and individual characteristics and student achievement is still emerging. There is much more to learn about how non-cognitive factors influence academic performance, and the best ways to build and support these factors.

Researchers have also begun to develop tools to help educators identify and measure such character development in the classroom.[23] Such instructional tools can help school districts focus on non-cognitive development. However, districts are should proceed with caution, since these tools cannot be used as part of an accountability system and labeling students as deficient can create stigma.[24]

Survey findings

With policy makers and educators in California increasingly focused on improving the academic outcomes of foster youth, the perspective of foster youth themselves is also key to understanding contributing factors to academic success. A recent survey administered by the California State University, Sacramento public policy and administration program asked former foster youth to identify the components that enabled them to make it to college, (42 percent of foster students do not graduate from high school).[25] Thirty-three foster youth enrolled at two 4-year universities in California responded.

Highlighted findings from the survey

- More than 70 percent of respondents indicated social support was an important factor in helping them transition to college.
- Of the respondents who identified an individual as a source of social support, half cited teachers, counselors or other mentors whom they met in their school environment. Given the instability that many foster youth face in their home lives, school may provide a stabilizing environment from which this population can draw support.
- Many students cited support programs for foster youth and at-risk students (e.g., Foster Youth Services and Upward Bound) as key factors helping them along their academic path.

» There is a clear emphasis among this student group that receiving guidance and information about college during their high school years was critical to their success. When asked what factors were important in their transition to college, information about financial aid was cited the most frequently (87 percent of respondents) followed by advising about college (84 percent).

While the survey captured student perceptions about what helped them enroll in college, it did not establish whether the assessed factors actually influenced their academic performance. Additionally, the group of students surveyed represents a small and likely unique portion of the overall foster youth population, so results should not be generalized to broader populations. Nonetheless, the survey findings provide some important insight about how these 33 students accounted for their own success.

One of the most important lessons from the survey is that the students did not rely on only one source of support. Rather, respondents named several sources of encouragement that helped them succeed at enrolling in college. Interconnected supports also boosted student's self-confidence and belief that higher education was attainable. One previous study calls these caring relationships "turnaround people" because they not only provide students with emotional and social support, but they also help youth understand their own strengths and abilities.[26] Such relationships can be key in creating a college-going mindset, one that allows foster students to become comfortable with the concept of college, to have information on how to apply to school, and receive the social and emotional support that facilitates their personal growth and helps them succeed.

The Local Control Funding Formula

California included foster students as a targeted subgroup under the LCFF in recognition of their distinct needs. The funding system, enacted in 2013, dedicates a greater portion of current school funding towards improving outcomes for foster youth, low -income students and English language learners.[27]

With this targeted funding comes greater accountability. LCFF also requires districts and county offices to develop a Local Control and Accountability Plan, which identifies strategies, goals and measures of academic progress across student groups.[28] While still in its early implementation, evidence indicates that school districts need greater understanding of their foster youth and how best to serve them. A review of 100 LCAPs in 2014 showed that most school districts did not identify distinct goals for foster youth. More often, districts addressed foster youth needs within their goals for low-income students.[29] Given the unique challenges that foster youth experience, school districts and their boards are encouraged to develop programs and services to accommodate this unique student group. As part of this, it is critical to first Identify effective practices for helping foster youth achieve their academic goals.

The importance of foster youth data

As a result of LCFF's inclusion of foster youth as a specific group for targeted improvement, there are new data-sharing requirements to help with accountability and tracking student improvement. The California Department of Social Services, for example, shares information with the California Department of Education, which then tries to identify the student's current school and education history. CDE then passes the information along to school districts. However, this data-sharing relationship is still relatively new, and as a result, the information school districts receive may not yet be complete. An additional concern with regard to sharing these sensitive data is how to protect students and share the data that will help inform appropriate and timely support, without infringing on students' privacy unnecessarily.

Questions and considerations for school boards

As important decision makers in their districts and counties, board members are responsible for asking questions and thinking strategically about improving the educational success of foster students. Board decisions regarding policies, goals and budgets directly impact the district's ability to meet foster youth needs. Each district or county board of education faces different challenges including demographics, geography, history, conditions in the local community, and the number of foster students enrolled. The following questions can help board members better understand their local context and how best to support the foster youth in their communities:

1. How many foster youth attend school in your school district? Where do they attend school? What information is district staff gathering about them?

2. Is the school district taking advantage of the new data-sharing agreements between the child welfare and social services systems and the education system to learn all it can about these students? If so, what measures are taken to balance the need for protection of students' confidentiality with that for information in order to best serve them?

3. Do school staff — certificated, classified, and/or administrative — receive any training or professional development for understanding and working with foster youth? If so, what and how often?

4. Does your school district have a policy in place regarding credit transfer for foster youth? Has it adopted the Partial Credit Model Policy ?

5. LCFF requires involvement from the community in the development of the LCAP — does your school district engage foster youth and foster parents?

6. Does your LCAP include strategies and goals for addressing the unique needs of foster youth as well as metrics to assess progress and make adjustments as needed?

7. Are there cross-agency partnerships that exist or could be developed in your district focusing on foster youth that might assist the school district to meet their needs?

8. How can your district best collaborate across systems due to the number of agencies involved in a foster student's life (e.g., child welfare, FYS, mental health services, the courts)?

Conclusion

The goal of ensuring that all students have equal opportunity to achieve their potential should remain a top priority for board members. Foster youth are a particularly vulnerable population: An understanding of who they are and effective strategies for addressing their needs is essential to ensuring their success. CSBA will continue to focus on how board members can best improve outcomes for California's diverse student population and how to support foster youth to meet and overcome their unique challenges.

For further information:

Please visit CSBA's foster youth webpage at csba.org/fosteryouth for a helpful Fact Sheet on foster youth and to view short videos on how to support foster youth success.

CSBA provides related sample board policies and administrative regulations, on foster youth. The most relevant is BP/AR 6173.1 - Education for Foster Youth, which will refer districts to other appropriate policies.

Endnotes

1 Barrat, V. & Berliner, B. (2013). The Invisible Achievement Gap: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California's Public Schools. San Francisco: WestEd. Available at http://bit.ly/22iv8d0

2 Courtney, M. E., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2004). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

3 Ibid.

4 Merdinger, J. M., Hines, A. M., Osterling, K. L., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. Child Welfare, 84(6), 867-896.

5 Stevens, J. E. (2012, February 28). Spokane, WA, students' trauma prompts search for solutions. Aces Too High News. Available at http://bit.ly/1YJMiy8

6 Frerer, K., Sosenko, L. D., & Henke, R. R. (2013). At greater risk: California foster youth and the path from high school to college. Stuart Foundation. Available at http://bit.ly/240okjr

7 McNaught, K. M. (2009, September 15). Testimony on behalf of the American Bar Association before the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support Committee on Ways and Means. Washington D. C.: United States House of Representatives. Available at http://bit.ly/1TvSJ7E

8 See Endnote 1

9 Hass, M. & Graydon, K. (2009). Sources of resiliency among successful foster youth. Children and Youth Services Review, 31, 457-463.

10 Lovitt, T., & Emerson, J. (2008). Foster youth who have succeeded in higher education: common themes. National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Information Brief, 7(1). Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503289.pdf

11 See Endnote 4

12 Kirk, R., & Day, A. (2011). Increasing college access for youth aging out of foster care: Evaluation of a summer camp program for foster youth transitioning from high school to college. Children and Youth Services Review, 33, 1173-1180.

13 See Endnote 9

14 Rios, S. & Nevin, A. I. (2009). What do former foster youth say about their academic journey to get into college? Implications for K-12 education. Florida Educational Leadership, 9(2), 44-53.

15 See Endnote 10

16 See Endnote 10

17 See Endnote 4

18 Lemon, Hines & Merdinger, (2005). From foster care to young adulthood: The role of independent living programs in supporting successful transitions. Children and Youth Services Review, 27(3), 251-270.

19 Pecora, (2012). Maximizing educational achievement of youth in foster care and alumni: Factors associated with success. Children and Youth Services Review, 34(6), 1121-1129.

20 See Endnote 9

21 See Endnote 10

22 See Endnote 12

23 Sparks, S. D. (2014, June 2). New character report cards rate students on 'grit'. Education Week. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1TpsAUH

24 Shifrer, D. (2013). Stigma of a label: Educational expectation for high school students labeled with learning disabilities. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 54(4), 462-480.

25 Thorne, T. (2015). Pathways to higher education: Perceptions from college-enrolled former foster youth. Unpublished master's thesis, California State University, Sacramento.

26 See Endnote 9

27 California School Boards Association (2013). Impact of Local Control Funding Formula on Board Policies. Available at http://bit.ly/1NCJQJ2

28 Local Control Funding Formula Overview. (n.d.). Available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcffoverview.asp

29 Frey, S. (2014, September 15). State, districts struggle to support foster youth. EdSource. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1YJMRb2

Terra Thorne, M.A. is the LegiSchool Project Director at the Center for California Studies at California State University, Sacramento. She contributed this governance brief as a CSBA/CSUS fellow.

Student Achievement and Data Use

Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs 51

LCFF Rubrics, Issue 1: What Boards Need to Know About the New Rubrics (Updated) 57

2015-16 California CAASPP Results for Mathematics and English Language Arts 63

Achievement Gaps in California 69

School Climate and Student Achievement 73

Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs

by Kelsey Krausen

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was signed into law in July 2013 to give local education agencies (LEAs) greater discretion over how they allocate funds and to more effectively direct resources to the state's most vulnerable student populations. LCFF also changed how LEAs are held accountable for improvement. All LEAs are required to create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that details how they will use funds to improve outcomes for students.

LCAPs require extensive planning and coordination on the part of district leaders, and as with all major policy changes, district leaders need time and support to improve their ability to develop equitable and effective district plans. To support continued innovation in LCAP development and implementation, this policy brief presents findings from interviews with superintendents and board members at the school district and county levels on their promising LCAP practices.[1]

This policy brief is an extension of the year three LCAP research, conducted by CSBA in the spring of 2016. The full report of this interview study, *Increasing LCAP Transparency and Reaffirming California's Commitment to Local Control: Experiences of District and County Leaders*, is available at http://bit.ly/2dhCOI5.

The brief provides information gathered from school district and county office of education leaders on the role of board members and superintendents in supporting the work of LCAP development, as well as practices related to LCAP development that they found effective. These promising practices fall into four main categories:

1. Collaboration
2. Leadership
3. Community engagement
4. Alignment between goals, programs, and resources

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on interviews with members of the California School Boards Association's (CSBA) LCFF Collaborative Working Group (CWG). In 2014, CSBA formed the CWG in partnership with California Forward, to identify and promote promising LCFF and LCAP implementation strategies, solutions, and effective practices. Members of the CWG meet quarterly for facilitated sessions focused on improving LCFF implementation, LCAP development, and sharing promising practices.

Collaboration

Currently, only limited opportunities exist for county and district board members and superintendents to share experiences and promising practices related to LCAP development. District and county leaders reported that their participation in the CWG was a valuable experience that provided them a rare opportunity to share ideas and address local challenges. Interviews with district leaders further suggest the need to increase the avenues available to share effective practices for LCAP development including strategies for engaging the public; ways to connect LCAP goals to the ongoing work of the board; strategies for making the LCAP more accessible to the public, and ways to structure the involvement of the superintendent and school board members to increase the meaningfulness of their contribution to the development process.

Traditionally, county offices of education have served in a supporting role for school districts. County offices of education review and approve school district budgets, and monitor districts in several areas (e.g., compliance with the Williams

Consent Decree). Likewise, under LCFF county offices of education have been assigned a key role in supporting local districts as they address challenges with the implementation of the new funding formula. Yet, county offices of education are not solely responsible for this important role of support and information-sharing between districts. The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), CSBA, and other statewide organizations will have a role in ensuring LEAs do not have to work in isolation on their LCAPs, and can continue to innovate and improve their plans through meaningful collaboration with colleagues. While CSBA's working group and this policy brief — as well as the efforts of other organizations — are critical, developing a coordinated statewide effort to provide districts with opportunities for greater collaboration and information-sharing on LCAP development and implementation is essential if we are to expect large scale systems change.

Leadership

In interviews, county and district school board members were asked to identify their most important role in the LCAP process. Their responses can serve as a guide to new superintendents and board members who want to strategically and effectively engage in LCAP development.

Most important role for board members

Responses from school board members on their role in LCAP development and implementation primarily focused on budget oversight, community engagement, and ensuring improvement.

» **Budget oversight.** Board members reported that they are responsible for making sure district funds are spent correctly to support the students it is intended for, including state specified groups. Specifically, board members must make sure district priorities are reflected in the budget and to do "big picture thinking" about how limited resources can be used to meet district goals. "Board members have to assess whether the investments we make are going to take us in the direction we want to go," said one respondent.

» **Community engagement.** Board members also discussed their role in community engagement. One board member cited the importance of hearing from the community and staff, and assessing their input. "'Where's the data to back them up? Not just 'do we want to do this?' but 'How is it aligned with our district plan?' 'Does it align with our data?'" Another board member stated the need "To get as much information as possible from the staff about what the [public engagement] process is and to push for the kinds of stakeholder involvement that we think are important." Another board member reported that "School board members have a primary responsibility to assess the effectiveness of the LCAP as a primary communication device." If the public does not understand the plan outlined in the district's LCAP, more must be done to ensure transparency in district programs, expenditures, and progress towards district goals.

» **Ensure improvement.** Board members also reported that they are responsible for ensuring the district and county makes progress towards their goals. Specifically, they have a responsibility to look at the results of the investments that have been made and ask, "Are the process and the investments we make going to get us where we want to go?"

> *"I never went in [to the public engagement meetings] and asked 'so what do you want?' They paid me a lot of money to decide what the district needs. This is what the data says, this is what I've heard you say, here's what I think is the plan, what is your feedback?"*

Most important role for superintendent

Not unlike the work of board members, superintendents reported a range of responsibilities for LCAP development and implementation. The duties they cited include responsibility for meaningful engagement with the public and guiding the process to build a strong plan.

Ensure meaningful enagement with the public

The superintendents interviewed for this project stressed the importance of ensuring that those meetings were well-publicized, that the draft plan was clearly articulated at the meetings, and that the public was given a genuine opportunity to provide input. Below is a more detailed list of their suggestions on the most important role of the superintendent in the public engagement process.

- **Create opportunities for meaningful engagement with the public.** "Set the model for sincere meaningful engagement. This isn't about jumping through a hoop but really engaging with the needs of teachers and parents that will serve students."
- **Model the importance of transparency.** One superintendent reported the need to organize LCAP development and implementation so that the work is transparent to all stakeholders. In particular, the LCAP documents should, "become vehicles for carrying your message rather than just another area of distrust between the district and stakeholders."
- **Ensure engagement with the community.** Gather input online. See the themes that independent people have come up with and what they see as the needs of the district. It is not enough to simply hold a public engagement meeting. Districts need to develop strategies for incorporating the public's feedback into their plans.
- **Know the data.** The superintendent should know the data better than everyone in the community.
- **Create a balance between school district and public expertise.** Try to balance efforts to educate stakeholders about the district's plan with opportunities for public input so that everyone's voice is heard. Superintendents need to make sure clear procedures are in place.
- **Create meaning for the public.** The LCAP document on its own may not be accessible to all stakeholders. The superintendent must ensure that district goals and strategies for achieving those goals are clear to all. The superintendent must also articulate to the public and to district and school staff why the LCAP is important and why it can and should be used as the number one planning document for the district.

Guide the process

Other superintendents stressed the need for the superintendent to help guide the LCAP development and implementation process, to maintain responsibility for the final plan, and to ensure district programs and expenditures outlined in the LCAP result in improvement, especially for targeted student populations.

- **Facilitate LCAP development, input, and approval by the school board.** One superintendent noted, "Regardless of whether or not you call it LCAP, it's the role of the superintendent to work with the board, to ensure their priorities are met and that everything we do aligns with it." This LCAP leadership role includes direct coordination of plan development and interaction with the board to ensure they are "apprised and aware" of the goals, programs, and budget allocations contained within the LCAP document.
- **Make a coherent plan.** Above and beyond the role of coordination, superintendents also reported that they were ultimately responsible for the construction of their district LCAP. One superintendent remarked, "The superintendent is responsible for making a coherent plan. To bring the mission, the vision, the stakeholder engagement process, values and goals into actions in the LCAP."
- **See the big picture.** Moreover, another superintendent stated that "the superintendent's most important role is to see the big picture and use the LCAP as the plan that really drives that work. The LCAP needs to be the focused plan…The superintendent is responsible for creating and selling the vision of the organization. The superintendent has to understand what that vision is. You need to be the torchbearer for that. You need to go in with your plan. The superintendent brings clarity to the plans and processes and defines it for people. This is not so different from what the superintendent did in the past. You need to have as a superintendent a vision for what you believe. You need to be brave enough to tackle the real issues that are impacting student success. You have to be the bearer of that message. You have to go out and get feedback. Have a vision, go back to the data. Get feedback."

- **Ensure improvement.** Finally, the superintendent must "Make sure the work is super impactful for the target populations the state has identified."

Community Engagement

Several district leaders reported expanded and more meaningful community engagement as a positive outcome of their LCAP, including increased engagement from students, parents, and teachers. In this section, we outline the strategies district leaders reported as most effective in helping them to increase transparency and provide new channels of communication with the public, with school staff, and with other stakeholders about their LCAP. These practices include strategies to simplify the LCAP so it is more accessible to the public and inviting students and members of the community to help facilitate the public engagement meetings.[2] Specifically, district leaders reported the following practices:

- **Strategies to make the LCAP more transparent.** Creating an infographic of the LCAP and sending out monthly/quarterly "LCAP Updates."
- **Using data to make the work of the district more transparent.** One district leader reported that their district has used the community engagement process to provide additional information to the public about what it really costs to educate students. As a result, "It's created a lot of conversations around aligning the budget with district priorities." Another county leader reported that the LCAP has led to greater transparency around student achievement. "The LCAP is one mechanism to report information on student outcomes. These are data they already had but weren't sharing it."
- **Strategies to more authentically engage with the community.** Student facilitation of the student engagement process; parent-led community meetings; and an LCAP parent advisory committee are all strategies districts reported to improve their engagement with the community around LCAP development.

At the same time, superintendents and board members reported several challenges with the community engagement process including the time and resources required to effectively engage the community each year. Accordingly, when asked what they were most interested in learning about LCAP development and implementation, district leaders overwhelming responded that they would like more information on other districts' strategies for engaging the public.

Alignment Between Goals, Programs, and Resources

Several district leaders also reported that the development of their LCAP has led to more regular reviews of the district's progress towards goals/targets and programmatic decisions through greater alignment between district goals and budget decisions. The following promising strategies emerged from the interviews for creating greater alignment between the district's goals, programs, and expenditures.

- **Analyzing the budget to ensure supplemental and concentration funds are being used as intended.** Several district leaders reported on the need to improve their district's system for tracking how supplemental and concentration funds are spent to ensure that the funds reach the students they are intended to support. These districts are conducting new analyses of their budgets, with a specific focus on how supplemental and concentration funds are being spent within the district.
- **Setting up budget codes so they correspond with LCAP programmatic goals.** Two district leaders discussed new efforts to assign budget codes so that they correspond with programmatic goals in their district LCAP. In doing so, the district can more easily track the effectiveness of their expenditures in improving student achievement.
- **More attention to data.** Many district leaders said the LCAP has pushed them to focus more on data to track improvement in the district. For example, one district leader reported that they now have the principals come in mid-year to talk through their data and how they are making progress. According to the district leader, there is a more "heightened awareness around the data…They are talking about 'How do you know if it's great, how do you know if it's working?'" A county leader reported that more districts now make decisions based on data. According to a county leader, "Some of the districts have always excelled in this area. That is what they did before. The LCAP basically standardized this for the rest of the state."
- **Connecting LCAP goals to district work.** One district reported that they are using the targets in their LCAP as goals for staff (e.g. counselors have to report regularly on progress towards reducing the number of students receiving D's and F's). Similarly, another district has asked that all staff identify the relevant LCAP goals when they make presentations to the school board. A larger district reported that they assigned a specific person who is responsible for each sub goal in

the district LCAP and can regularly report on progress towards that sub goal. Finally, two districts reported that they have used the district's progress on their LCAP goals to evaluate their superintendent.

Policy Implications

The LCAP is a new policy and districts need time and resources (not just funding but also strategies) to implement it well. Strategies in this report may help build the capacity of district leaders to carry out this work. Districts want more information and guidance from the state, but the state does not want to make the process too prescriptive. Information-sharing networks and online repositories of promising practices have the potential to provide district leaders with the resources they need.

As mentioned previously, school district and county leaders are keenly aware of the need for additional training and resources to ensure that LCFF and district LCAPs are implemented properly and with the intended impact. To accomplish this, a comprehensive effort to inform, engage and involve a range of stakeholders — including statewide associations like CSBA — are critical. Additionally, priority should be placed on building multi-agency and cross-cutting collaborative groups much like the CWG, which has been credited with encouraging understanding of the challenges and potential solutions to the most complex issues facing districts in LCAP development and implementation. The CCEE's solicitation and incorporation of key "lessons learned" and promising practices from the field in their work — including ongoing efforts to collect current information from collaborative efforts — will only serve to strengthen efforts by districts and county offices across the state, and ultimately, better serve the interests of the state's 6.2 million students and their families.

Endnotes

1 Throughout this brief, we use the term district leaders to refer to superintendents and board members at the school district and county levels.

2 CSBA's *LCFF Rubrics, Issue 1* governance brief includes communication tips for sharing data with the community: http://bit.ly/2eZHN4O; The California Collaborative on District Reform's July 2016 brief offers strategies for communicating with the public about district plans http://bit.ly/2e6IJFc

Kelsey Krausen, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral researcher at UC Davis School of Education

LCFF Rubrics, Issue 1:

What Boards Need to Know About the New Rubrics (Updated)

by Mary Briggs, Teri Burns and Troy Flint

After more than two years of discussion, California has redesigned its accountability system to reflect the state's new standards, assessments, and funding formula. Under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) regulations, all districts, county offices of education, and charter schools must create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to document how they align their goals, student needs, services, and spending, as well as report student outcomes. The LCFF evaluation rubrics are the tools that will measure school and district progress toward their LCFF goals.

The following California School Boards Association (CSBA) brief is the first in a series of updates for our members about the new LCFF evaluation rubrics that the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted in September 2016, and plans to publish online in early 2017. In this brief, CSBA provides an overview of the proposed indicators and suggests next steps for school boards. This brief, initially published in August 2016, has been updated to reflect changes made by the SBE at their September 2016 meeting. CSBA wants to provide school boards with enough lead time to develop a strategic response now.

To help members develop an effective plan for sharing the rubrics with stakeholders, CSBA has also included a communications tip sheet and talking points at the end of this brief.

What are the LCFF evaluation rubrics?

The LCFF rubrics are designed to be a tool for evaluating district and school performance in each of California's eight LCFF priority areas: basic services, implementation of state standards, parental involvement, pupil achievement (including English learners' progress), pupil engagement, school climate, access to a broad course of study, and pupil outcomes within a broad course of study.

In 2015, the state suspended use of the Academic Performance Index (API), and the rubrics will replace API scores and rankings as a key component of California's new system of accountability and continuous improvement. Information within the rubrics will provide the public with a quick snapshot of school or district performance in multiple areas. The rubrics will also serve as a reference for schools and districts as they develop strategies for continuous improvement. County offices of education will use the rubrics to identify Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and charter schools in need of technical support. Ultimately, the rubrics will be aligned to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements and interventions.

Beginning this November, the California Department of Education (CDE) is scheduled to provide counties, districts, schools, and charter schools with their populated rubrics. This will give local education agencies time to review their results before the rubrics are made available online in early 2017. The CDE will populate the rubrics with several state indicators such as test scores, English learners' progress towards English proficiency, high school graduation rate and other measures (see Table 1). Districts will also upload local data to the rubrics. CSBA anticipates that LEAs and charter schools will be allowed to contextualize their performance by providing an optional local narrative.

In future years, populated rubrics should be accessible in the late fall. This timeline is intended to support development of district and charter school LCAPs and LCAP updates for the following years. Alongside the displays of school and district performance, the state will post links to "Statements of Model Practices" and "Additional Resources" to support improvement efforts.

School boards should prepare for the release of the rubrics now.

School boards should begin working immediately to identify and address potential concerns about performance on any of the proposed indicators. Districts already have access to most of the data to be included in the rubrics reports (see Table 1). Therefore, governance teams can and should review relevant data and consider appropriate responses before district and school performance on the rubrics are released in early 2017.

School boards should focus on two major points: 1) how to address areas of concern and 2) how to communicate their local performance and plans to respond with stakeholders. SBE President Michael Kirst has noted that school boards have a key role in explaining the rubrics to their communities. Governance teams should start developing an effective communication strategy before the state releases school and district results. To do so, school board members should collaborate now with their district staff to interpret the data included within the forthcoming rubrics, identify strategies to contextualize the data for stakeholders, and decide on the messages they want to convey to their communities, including how the district will strengthen and target services to improve outcomes for students.

What will the rubrics include?

During the September 2016 SBE meeting, CDE staff presented revisions to the proposed design for what they described as the "Top-Level Summary Data Display" or "Dashboard." The SBE has not approved a final version of the data display. The Dashboard is ultimately intended to be an online tool with many dynamic features, including:

Indicators

The rubrics will include indicators for all eight LCFF priority areas. The SBE is finalizing the indicators to be included in 2016, along with methods for calculating results and cut points to be reported using color-coded performance bands. A number of indicators and performance standards will not be finalized this year, and SBE members are clear that the rubrics will evolve as the Board approves additional relevant measures.

a. State Indicators: The CDE will populate some indicators of LCFF priorities using data the state already collects. These include ELA and mathematics assessments, English learner progress, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, and college and career readiness (reported as the new "College and Career Index"). In September, the SBE approved five colors to represent the combined performance on the status and change reports for each indicator, ranging from high to low as follows: blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Final graphic representation will be approved at a future SBE meeting.

b. Status Report: For each indicator, the SBE will rate the current overall performance of the LEA or school. This is the "status indicator," which will provide a snapshot of all students' performance within each area: very high, high, intermediate, low, and very low.

c. Change Report: Because the state's new accountability system emphasizes continuous improvement, the rubrics also report how the LEAs or schools perform over time. In addition to reporting the current status of each state indicator, the rubrics will also report changes to performance from earlier years: improved significantly, improved, maintained, declined, or declined significantly. The SBE staff have not finalized how the status and change indicators will be represented in the data display, but they have signaled that both status and change indicators are key components of the rubrics.

d. Local Indicators: These four LCFF priority indicators will be populated using data that the LEA or charter school uploads to the rubrics: basic conditions at school (i.e., the Williams Act checklist), school climate, implementation of academic standards, and parent engagement. Essentially, these are reported as pass/fail indicators. In lieu of the status and change indicators described above, LEAs and schools will report whether each indicator's standards were "met," "not met for one year" or "not met for two or more years."

Optional Local Narrative and Summary of Self Assessments for Local Indicators

The optional narrative will allow LEAs and schools to explain relevant circumstances and local activities related to performance across any local and LCFF priorities. The additional summary includes results of self assessments for local indicators.

Equity Report

For student achievement, pupil engagement and school climate, the rubrics will note any of the student groups identified in Education Code (EC) 52052 with a valid sample size: socioeconomically disadvantaged students, ELs, foster youth, homeless youth, students with disabilities and racial/ethnic student groups reflected in standard reporting and which are reported as having "low" or "very low" overall performance in each state indicator.

Navigation Pane

Next to each indicator, the rubrics will display tabs/links pointing to subpages with detailed reports, model practices, and additional resources. This tool will expand as the rubrics are further developed, including the eventual ability to compare results with up to two other schools, districts, or counties.

What will the rubrics look like?

The SBE viewed the proposed design of the top-level data display in July and September 2016 and have directed CDE and SBE staff to continue making revisions that will make the information more user-friendly. Because the visual display may be modified substantially before its adoption, CSBA has focused this brief on the state and local indicators that will likely be included within the rubrics rather than its design. Therefore, Table 1 does not reflect the format of the data display; it lists what measures the SBE has said will be included as indicators for each of the LCFF priority areas. This information can be used to identify what data districts should review in preparation for release of the populated rubrics in November.

Table 1: Proposed LCFF Rubrics Data Sources and LCFF Priority Areas

LCFF Priorities	Indicators & Grade Spans	Proposed Data Sources for 2016 Rubrics
		Data populated by CDE
Student Achievement	ELA Assessment (3-8)	2016 SBAC results.
	Math Assessment (3-8)	2016 SBAC results.
	English Learner Progress (K-12)	Proposed composite is the sum of the percent of ELs who moved up at least one performance level on CELDT plus the percent of ELs reclassified in the year prior. This year will use 2014-2015 data.
Pupil Engagement	Graduation Rates (9-12)	Will include four-year graduation rate from 2014-2015 data. Considering adding 5th and 6th year as allowed by ESSA.
	Chronic absenteeism (K-12)	Students missing more than 10 percent of the school year. Might not be populated this year.
School Climate	Suspension Rates	Will include suspension and in-school suspension categories. Will be weighted by LEA type (elementary, high school, and unified) and school type (elementary, middle, and high).
Student Access and Enrollment in a Broad Course of Study and Related Pupil Outcomes	College & Career Readiness (9-12)	Under development; will likely be presented as a list. Likely to be operational this year, but will evolve. Rankings based on a student's highest achievement on any one measure as incentive to move all students forward. "College and Career Indicator" (CCI) Model currently contains AP exam results; 11th grade results for ELA/math; A-G completion; CTE pathway completion. Other considerations include IB and dual enrollment, State Seal of Biliteracy; Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, ROTC.
		Data populated by LEA/charter
Basic Services	Basic Services (K-12)	Self-certified Williams Act checklist.
Implementation of Standards	Implementation of Academic Standards (K-12)	LEAs and charter schools will report some form of self-assessment, certifying whether they met or did not meet the requirements.
Parental Involvement	Parent Engagement (K-12)	Self-certification about ways they are involving parents in decision-making and promoting family participation.
School Climate	School Climate Survey (K-12)	Pupil survey — share of students still to be determined. Choice of multiple survey options.

How will the data be used?

2016-2017

This year is the first year of the LCFF rubrics implementation. Some elements will be modified once the U.S. Department of Education provides further clarification about ESSA accountability requirements before the 2017-2018 school year.

The SBE has explained that it intends the rubrics to inform decisions at the local level, especially in the eight LCFF priority areas. For 2016-2017, the rubrics will not initiate formal interventions, although counties will have access to the rubrics when reviewing an LEA's proposed LCAP update. Districts should consider this year an opportunity to prepare for the full rollout in 2017-2018.

Districts and charter schools can use the rubrics, along with the new SBE-adopted Statements of Model Practices and Additional Resources when developing their LCAP updates next spring. The rubrics might serve as a reference for assessing areas for support and technical assistance at individual sites or districtwide.

County offices will be able to review the rubrics alongside districts' and charter schools' proposed LCAP updates. This might be a tool for conversations between LEAs and LCAP Evaluation Teams. LCAP review teams may also use the rubrics as part of their evaluation of LCAP updates.

The public will have full access to the data reported within the rubrics, as well as the Statements of Model Practices and Additional Resources. Stakeholders can use this to inform their feedback and recommendations during the LCAP development.

2017-2018 and beyond

The U.S. Department of Education will clarify the ESSA accountability, and the CDE plans to update the rubrics to align with ESSA. Once ESSA is fully implemented, failure to meet the standards in two or more areas of the rubrics for more than two years will trigger technical support at the county or even state level. CSBA will address the steps and features of the accountability and continuous improvement system in supplemental briefs once the state and federal policies have been clarified.

What is the timeline for implementation?

The SBE has been working with the CDE to refine the content and format for reporting district performance in the rubrics. A broad overview of the process is listed below:

Time Frame	Activity
July 2016	SBE approved several performance indicators/standards for use in the rubrics and directed staff to continue their development. CDE staff was asked to develop a timeline for further work: » changes to indicators. » standards for several indicators. » statements of model practices. » alignment of the rubric to the ESSA state plan.
September 2016	SBE adopted the initial rubrics. CDE convened work groups for recommendations about composite scores and associated cut scores for EL proficiency and measures of school climate.
Winter 2016/ Spring 2017	LEAs draft the next LCAP annual update; rubrics used for data analysis and self reflection in developing the draft.
Early 2017	The evaluation rubrics will be available to the public in an online, interactive platform. The CDE will give LEAs the data that will be reported in the evaluation rubrics. LEAs will be able to review this information prior to the public release of the rubrics. The Federal government will clarify ESSA reporting requirements. California will adopt its ESSA state accountability plan in May and submit it to the federal Department of Education in July 2017.
Spring 2017	SBE will revisit the indicators of the rubrics and discuss modifications for 2017-2018.
Fall 2017	CDE will publish expanded rubrics with updated performance results.

What should school boards be doing right now?

Boards should begin conversations with district staff about the proposed rubrics. Districts currently have access to the relevant data that will likely be included within the rubrics when the public can access districts' completed data displays. While the standards for performance (i.e., what scores are associated with each "level" of performance) have yet to be finalized, governance teams can use the data to estimate the district's performance in broad terms. Some fundamental questions include:

- **What do we believe the rubrics will identify as our district's strengths?** These areas are important to celebrate with your district personnel and the public.
- **What areas likely require improvement?** What are we already doing to address any areas of concern? If this is an ongoing challenge, what are the trends in our performance? If this is a new area of concern, what initial steps might we take to make improvements?
- **Are there contextual factors that can help us understand our performance (e.g., new initiatives, an unanticipated demographic shift, new discipline policies, etc.)?**
- **How can we be proactive in communicating the rubrics and our performance when they become available to our stakeholders?**

The governing board should collaborate with the central office to ensure that when the rubrics are published, your district has planned a coherent and consistent response. This includes a unified approach to sharing results with the community and developing appropriate supports to strengthen services and outcomes for all students. To assist our members, CSBA has developed the attached tip sheet with recommendations for developing an effective communications strategy.

Tips for Communicating Effectively: Making Sense of the Rubrics Cube

The introduction of the LCFF evaluation rubrics provides a key opportunity to engage families and community in conversations and planning on student achievement, the conditions of children, school successes, areas for growth, district goals, and how dollars can best be allocated to support improved student outcomes. The success or failure of this engagement will depend heavily on the quality of the underlying communication. With that in mind, consider these strategies to demystify the rubrics and partner with your community on a path to student improvement.

K.I.S.S. (Keep it Super Simple)

Don't assume anything. The LCFF evaluation rubrics build on the work done with the LCAP during the past three years, but many people will be hearing about the rubrics — and even about LCAP — for the first time. So, keep it simple. That means providing information about the LCFF rubrics and what they are supposed to accomplish in plain language.

Start at the Beginning

Provide the context needed to understand why the LCCF evaluation rubrics are important. Share the work that has been done to this point and the broad cross section of groups and individuals that have been involved. This will help parents and community understand that the rubrics are now the primary method of measuring student achievement, school performance and progress toward more equitable outcomes for all students.

Great Values

Achievement. Equity. Better conditions and improved outcomes for students. Increased transparency for families and community. That's what the LCAP and the LCFF evaluation rubrics are designed to promote, so make sure your district's communications staff (or equivalent employees) establish how funding and programmatic decisions advance these goals and align with your district's overall objectives. Above all, focus on what these tools can mean for children, keep the discussion student focused and make sure local conditions and objectives remain at the forefront of the analysis.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Customize your presentations for different audiences. The best communicators adjust content and programming to reach target demographics and you should take a page from their book. Different portions of the community will have different interests and different needs, so tailor your content and your communications vehicles accordingly.

You're Not Alone

Partner with local community groups to expand the reach of your LCAP communications and to build on the foundation of trust these organizations have established with their members. No district, on its own, can properly spread the word and educate community members on every aspect of the evaluation rubrics. Make use of parent committees and community groups, involve students and host meetings at places beyond the district offices where families already gather.

LCFF Evaluation Rubrics Talking Points

1. **Although public education in California remains significantly underfunded, the LCFF represents a dramatic improvement over recent funding models.** LCFF restored funding to 2007 levels (and possibly higher for certain districts with high numbers of low-income, English language learner, foster and homeless students). Unlike previous systems, the LCFF prioritizes equity and tries to align funding with student need so that all students succeed.

2. **The LCFF evaluation rubrics are now the primary method of measuring student achievement, school performance and progress toward more equitable outcomes for all students.** This tool displays the results of our work and allows us to plan for the future.

3. **The LCFF rubrics replace the old, one-size-fits-all approach that used a single, narrow metric of student achievement with multiple, diverse measures of student learning.**

4. **The LCFF rubrics offer a more holistic picture of what's happening in our schools than previous systems.** It measures skills in English language arts and math, but also emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving and considers important factors like graduation rates, suspension rates, college and career readiness and the quality of school services.

5. **The LCFF rubrics play a critical role in identifying areas of growth and those that need targeted support to promote continuous improvement and accelerate achievement.** It indicates where we need to adjust strategies and shift resources to create better conditions for children and improved outcomes for students.

6. **The LCFF evaluation rubrics are also a powerful tool for local control and community engagement.** Those closest to the situation, right here in our district, understand best what our students need. The rubrics help indicate where we need to adjust strategies and shift resources to create better conditions for children and improved outcomes for students.

7. **We must review and analyze the LCFF rubrics data as a community, discuss the results together and collectively determine the best path forward for this district, its families and students.**

Mary Briggs is an Education Policy Analyst for CSBA.

Teri Burns is a Legislative Advocate for CSBA.

Troy Flint is Senior Director of Communications and Public Information Officer for CSBA.

September 2016

Governance Brief

2015-2016 California CAASPP Results

for Mathematics and English Language Arts

by Mary Briggs

In August, the California Department of Education (CDE) released the results of the 2015-2016 assessments for mathematics and English/language arts (ELA). This brief examines California student performance in the second year of Smarter Balanced testing, suggests questions that board members might ask about their local data, and provides resources for boards to share with their constituents.

Overall, more students in 2015-2016 met or exceeded standards than the prior year. Although all grade levels and student sub-groups made progress, troubling gaps in achievement still persist. The new funding formula and accountability system are designed to ensure local education agencies (LEAs) address these gaps by allocating resources to reduce opportunity gaps. California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data can help governance teams by providing critical information about local needs. The California data described within this brief can help LEAs situate their results within the broader state context.

In this brief:

- Summary of statewide 2015-2016 math and ELA test results
- Comparisons to 2014-2015 results
- Achievement gap update
- Questions for board members to consider when analyzing local results
- Resources for parents and teachers

California's second year of the Smarter Balanced Assessments

California transitioned from the paper-based, multiple-choice Standardized Testing and Assessment (STAR) tests to the computer-adaptive Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments in 2015. The new tests are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the results will be a critical element of the state's new evaluation rubrics.

The SBAC summative assessments for math and ELA are two components of the CAASPP accountability system. In addition to the SBAC assessments, the CAASPP system also includes the California Standards Tests for Science, alternative assessments for students receiving special education services (math, ELA, and science), as well as the optional Standards-based Tests in Spanish for Reading/Language Arts.

Notably, California State Universities and many community colleges consider performance on the grade 11 tests to be an indication of readiness for college-level work. The state's new "College and Career Indicator" (CCI) incorporates meeting or exceeding standards in math and ELA as one factor in determining whether individual students are prepared for college and career.

How did California students do last spring?

Nearly 3.2 million California students in grades 3-8 and grade 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessments in the spring of 2016. Participation rates were high, with fewer than one percent of eligible students not participating in testing due to parental exemptions.

In the CAASPP system, scores are reported using four performance levels: Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met. Overall, 49% of California students met or exceeded standards in English language arts. In 2016, the results indicate that about 6 out of 10 grade 11 students are ready or conditionally ready for college work in English language arts.

California students, on average, did not perform as well in math. In 2016, only 37% of students met or exceeded grade-level standards in mathematics. Troublingly, only one-third of California's eleventh graders are ready or conditionally ready for college work in mathematics.

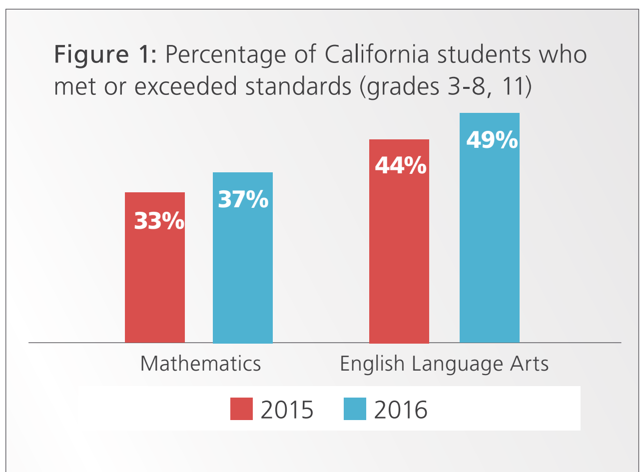
Comparing with caution

Keep in mind that 2016 was only the second year of CAASPP testing. Comparing the results from this year to the 2015 baseline can be useful, but governance teams should be cautious about reading too much into any changes or making high-stakes decisions based solely on the comparisons to scores from 2015 and 2016. Clear trends in student performance won't begin to emerge until three or four years of data are available.

It is common for schools and districts to see an uptick in scores in the first few years after a new assessment is implemented. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson noted that this year's increases can be explained, in part, by the fact that teachers and students had an additional year of instruction using the CCSS and more experience with the online test format. Additionally, Local Education Agencies have invested in technology improvements, and many schools also began using interim tests to gauge student progress during the year. This gave students additional practice with the test format and allowed teachers to modify instruction if needed.

How do California's overall results compare to last year's?

Last year was the first year California students took the SBAC assessments for math and ELA, so the scores are seen as a baseline. Overall, scores for ELA increased 5 percentage points, while math scores increased 4 percentage points (See Figure 1). It is encouraging to see scores increase in math and ELA in every grade level and student sub-group, though the improvements are what we might expect given the factors described above.

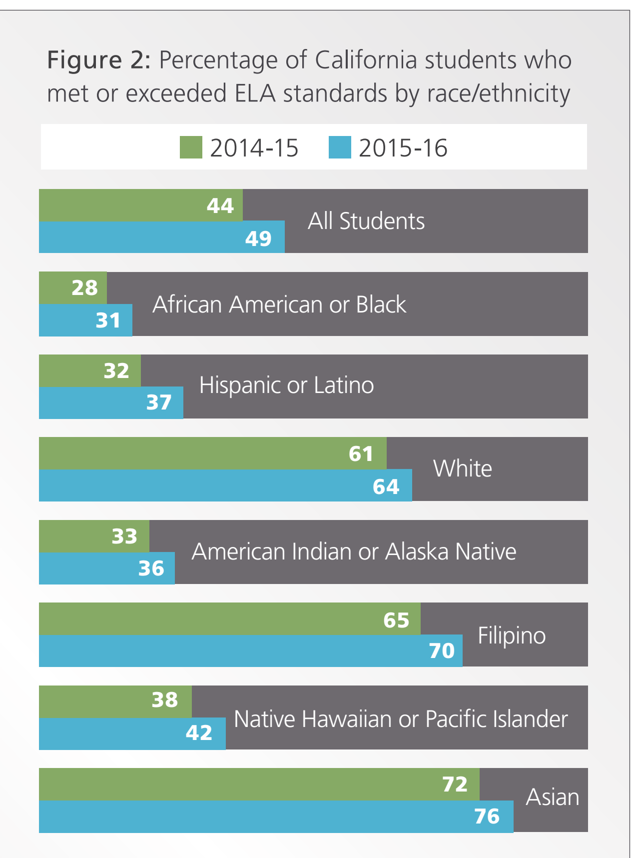


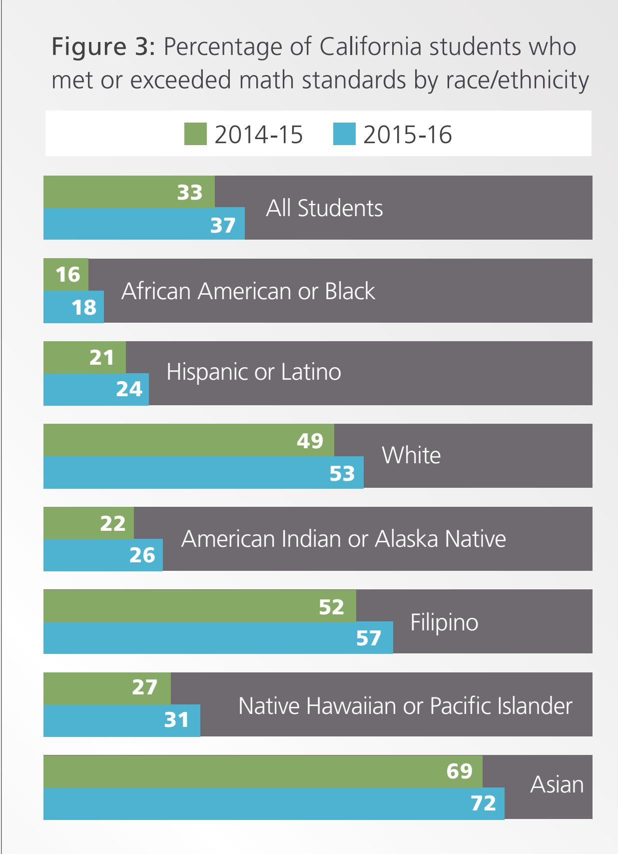
The percentage of California students who met or exceeded ELA standards increased by three percentage points in grades 8 and 11 and by at least four percentage points in all other grades. Third graders made the largest gains in math, with the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards up six percentage points from 2015. All other grades increased by two or three percentage points.

What about the state's achievement gaps?

Despite small, across-the-board increases in math and ELA scores, the state's achievement gaps — the result of long-standing disparities in educational opportunities — remain troubling. California LEAs can use data to inform decisions that strategically increase support for historically underserved students. Even if all student groups improve, however, low-performing sub-groups would have to improve at a faster rate to reduce performance gaps.

2015-2016 scores, however, increased in math and ELA at relatively similar rates, with some gaps remaining the same and some widening slightly. Figure 2 shows difference in ELA performance by race/ethnicity in both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, while Figure 3 depicts the same information for math.





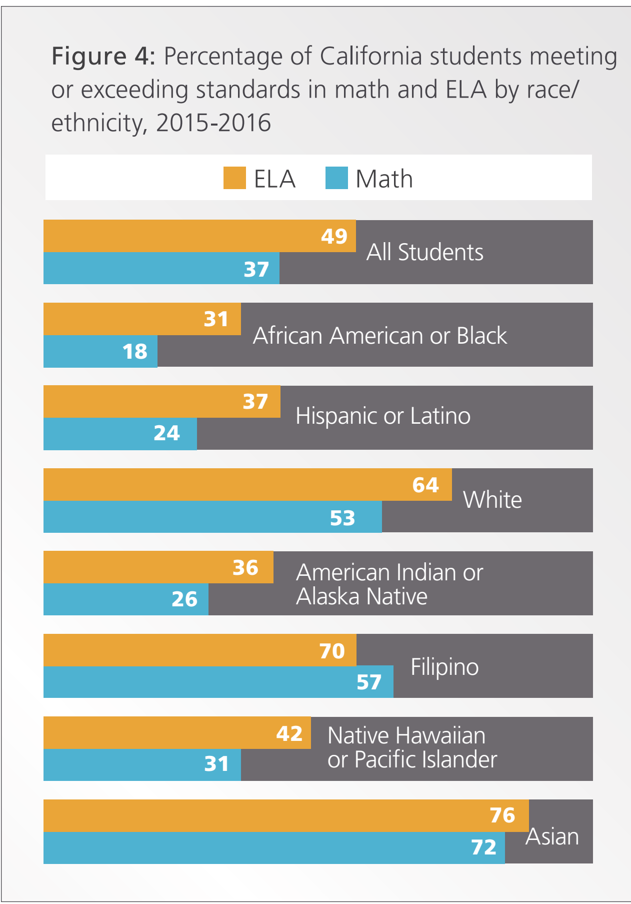
The increase in performance for each group, while slight, is encouraging, but the gaps remain largely unchanged.

California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) places particular emphasis on providing additional support for English language learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and foster youth. LEAs receive supplemental funding for these priority sub-groups to offset the cost of providing additional support for these students.

The state's new accountability system, including the forthcoming LCFF evaluation rubrics, will also report on districts' sub-group performance. Again, policy makers, administrators, and educators must be mindful that these findings only represent two years of data, but the results suggest that governing boards and districts will need to continue developing strategies that might lead to higher overall achievement while also closing gaps for vulnerable sub-groups.

Racial/ethnic achievement gaps

Figure 4 shows the percentage of students, by race/ethnicity, who met or exceeded standards in ELA and math during the 2015-2016 year.



For ELA, 76% of Asian students, 70% of Filipino students, and 64% of White students met or exceeded standards. In contrast, only 37% of Latino students, 36% of American Indians or Alaska Natives, and 31% of African American students met or exceeded ELA standards.

Grade 11 scores suggest that about half of all Latino students and 4 in 10 African American students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level work in ELA, compared to 8 in 10 Asian students and 7 in 10 White students. While almost half of the state's students met or exceeded ELA standards, the gaps are significant between student groups.

Overall, students did not perform as well in math, and the gaps between racial/ethnic groups are even starker. While almost three-fourths of Asian students and over half of Filipino and White students met or exceeded math standards, slightly less than one-fifth of African American students and about one fourth of Latino and American Indian or Alaska

Native students did the same. Fifty-four percent more Asian students met or exceeded standards than African American students, and the gap between White and African American students was 35 percentage points.

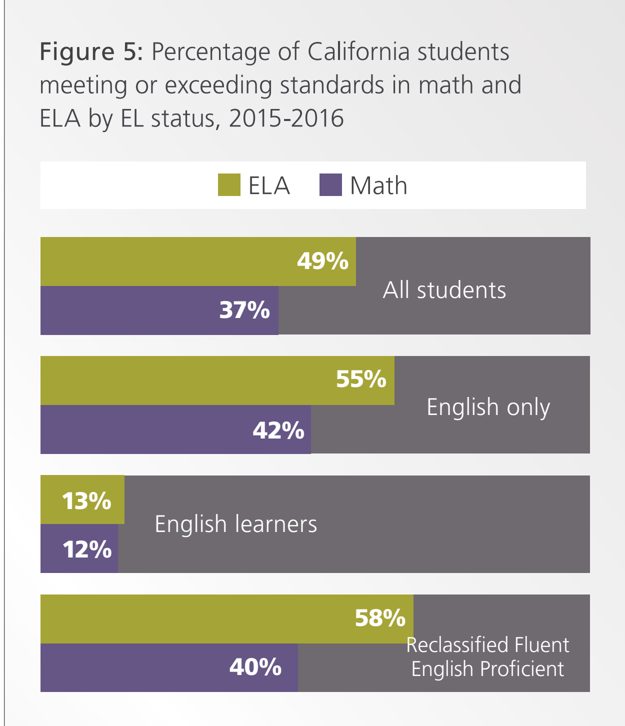
According to grade 11 results, only 14% of Black or African American students and 20% of Hispanic or Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math coursework, compared to 70% of Asian students and 44% of White students.

ELL performance

English Language Learners (ELLs) are identified as a priority sub-group within the state's funding formula. As shown in Figure 5, there are significant gaps in the percentage of ELLs and English only (EO) students or ELL students reclassified as English Proficient. In part, the lower ELL scores reflect that once an LEA reclassifies English language learners as proficient in English, their scores are no longer reported in the ELL sub-group. This means that the highest scoring ELLs are continually removed from the pool as they are reclassified. Additionally, ELL scores generally do not include English learners enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months, as the state exempts them from the ELA assessment.

As shown in Figure 5, only about 13% of ELLs met or exceeded standards in ELA, compared to 55% of English only students, a difference that is expected given that by definition, ELL students are not yet proficient in the English language. However, in math, where we might expect to see a smaller gap, only 12% of ELLs met or exceeded math standards compared to 42% of English only students. Consistent with existing research, ELLs who are reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) performed higher on the ELA exam than English only students.

Figure 5: Percentage of California students meeting or exceeding standards in math and ELA by EL status, 2015-2016

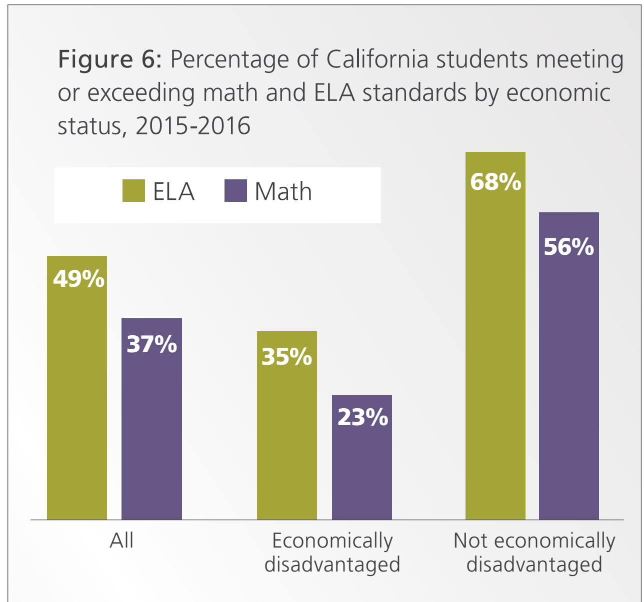


If using grade 11 scores as a measure of college readiness, only about 1 in 10 ELLs is ready or conditionally ready for college level English coursework and slightly more than 1 in 20 ELLs is ready or conditionally ready for college level coursework in math. Almost two-thirds of English only students are ready or conditionally ready for college coursework in English, and almost four in ten EO students are ready or conditionally ready for college level math coursework.

Economic status

Economically disadvantaged students, defined as students who participate in free and reduced-price meal programs, are another priority sub-group under LCFF. As shown in Figure 6 below, economically disadvantaged students performed about half as well on both tests as their non-economically disadvantaged peers.

Figure 6: Percentage of California students meeting or exceeding math and ELA standards by economic status, 2015-2016



The gap is further evident in college and career readiness, with only 48% of economically disadvantaged eleventh graders identified as ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework in English, compared to 72% of students who are not economically disadvantaged (a 24 point difference). In mathematics, 21% of economically disadvantaged eleventh graders are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math courses, less than half that of their non-economically disadvantaged peers (46% ready or conditionally ready).

How are the statewide and local results useful to board members?

Statewide results can help districts consider local performance within the broader context. Boards might find it useful to compare statewide and county results to their district's performance.

Additionally, when looking at local results, boards might want to ask a series of important questions:

Comparisons

» How do our 2016 results compare with our performance last year?

» What patterns can we observe when looking at performance at the district's individual school sites?

Equity data

» Which student groups have the largest proportion of students "almost meeting" or "not meeting" standards in mathematics and English language arts?

» How are LCFF funds currently being used to support these groups of students? Given these results, are adjustments to our goals or budget appropriate?

» When looking at performance across the different grade levels and sub-groups, are there areas that the board should study further? What additional data would be useful?

LCAP and LCFF

» How do we anticipate these results will be reflected in the LCFF evaluation rubrics that will be published in the coming months?

» How can we use these results to inform our 2017 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) update?

» How can we share these results with the community in a way that will increase stakeholder engagement, involvement and support for student achievement efforts?

Mary Briggs is an Education Policy Analyst for the California School Boards Association

CAASPP Resources

Official CAASPP Site with Results for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics
http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2016
The 2016 CAASPP results site allows users to compare test scores across counties, districts, school, or the state on a single screen. It also allows users to view results for 2015-2016 alone or alongside 2014-15 results.

EdSource
https://edsource.org/smarter-balanced-results/index.html
EdSource provides a searchable resource for exploring 2016 CAASPP results.

Online Practice Tests
www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html
Teachers and students can access online practice tests. The CDE hopes LEAs will ensure families are aware of this resource.

Smarter Balanced Digital Library
www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/diglib.asp
The Digital Library offers educators subject- and grade-specific resources for formative assessment during daily instruction. The Digital Library also allows users to rate materials and collaborate with their peers across the country. It is available to all local educational agencies serving grades K-12. CAASPP coordinators currently must register new users, though the CDE plans to allow educators to self-register in the near future.

Understanding the CAASPP Student Score Result 2015-16
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoxPJtFbBKE
Brief video overview of how to read the Student Score Report sent to families.

CDE Smarter Balanced Resources
www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalresources.asp
Includes CCSS, accessibility, and accommodation information, presentations, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets.

All data used to generate the figures within this brief were accessed online using the CAASPP website. 2015 scores were accessed at http://bit.ly/1ieacTn. 2016 scores were accessed at http://bit.ly/2bxTPkk.

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS IN CALIFORNIA

A SNAPSHOT OF DISPARITIES IN PreK-12 EDUCATION

by Manuel Buenrostro

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS refer to any significant and persistent disparities in academic performance between groups of students, such as groups from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. These disparities are usually quantified using standardized test scores, but they can also reflect graduation rates and other measures. Generally speaking, an achievement gap refers to outputs — the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits. Another term gaining recognition, opportunity gaps, refers to inputs — the inadequate or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. While important progress has been made in many districts during the past decade, California still suffers from unacceptable gaps in achievement and opportunity. These charts indicate the essential work that remains in order to produce high-quality outcomes for all California public school students.

WHO ARE CALIFORNIA'S KIDS?

California has 6.2 million public school students

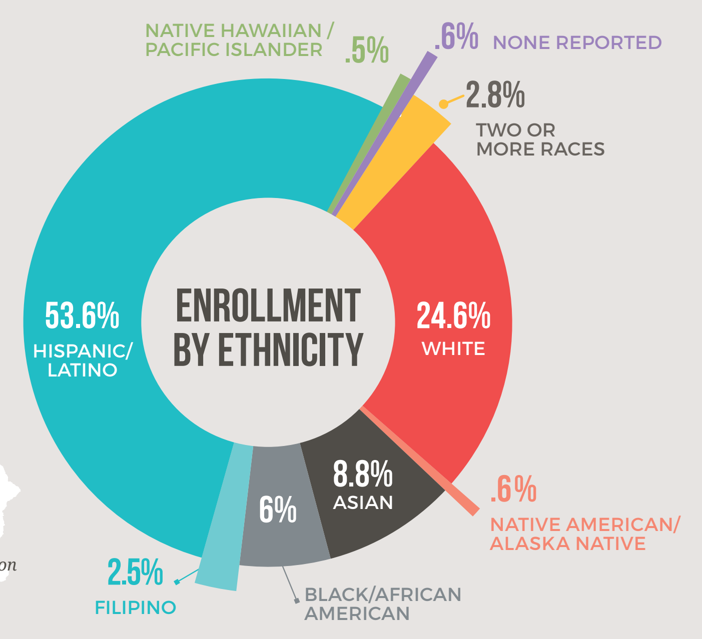
4 IN 10 students speak a language other than English at home, while 1 in 4 students are English learners* [SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015]

58.6% of students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals* [SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015]

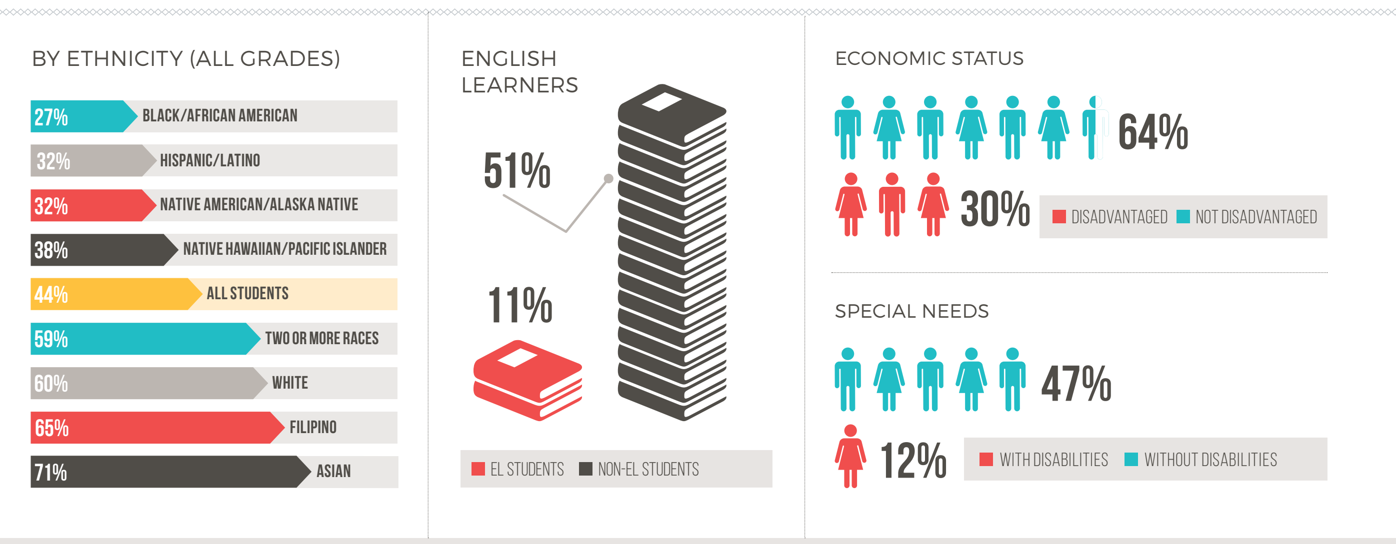
62,605 students are in foster care† [OCTOBER 2015]

284,022 students are homeless‡ [SCHOOL YEAR 2013-2014]

*Sources: * CDE, † California Child Welfare Project, ‡ National Center for Homeless Education*



2015 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS | Percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards



2015 MATH | Percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards

BY ETHNICITY (ALL GRADES)

Percentage	Group
16%	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN
21%	HISPANIC/LATINO
22%	NATIVE AMERICAN/ALASKA NATIVE
26%	NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
33%	ALL STUDENTS
49%	TWO OR MORE RACES
49%	WHITE
52%	FILIPINO
69%	ASIAN

ENGLISH LEARNERS

39%

11%

EL STUDENTS | NON-EL STUDENTS

ECONOMIC STATUS

52%

21%

DISADVANTAGED | NOT DISADVANTAGED

SPECIAL NEEDS

36%

10%

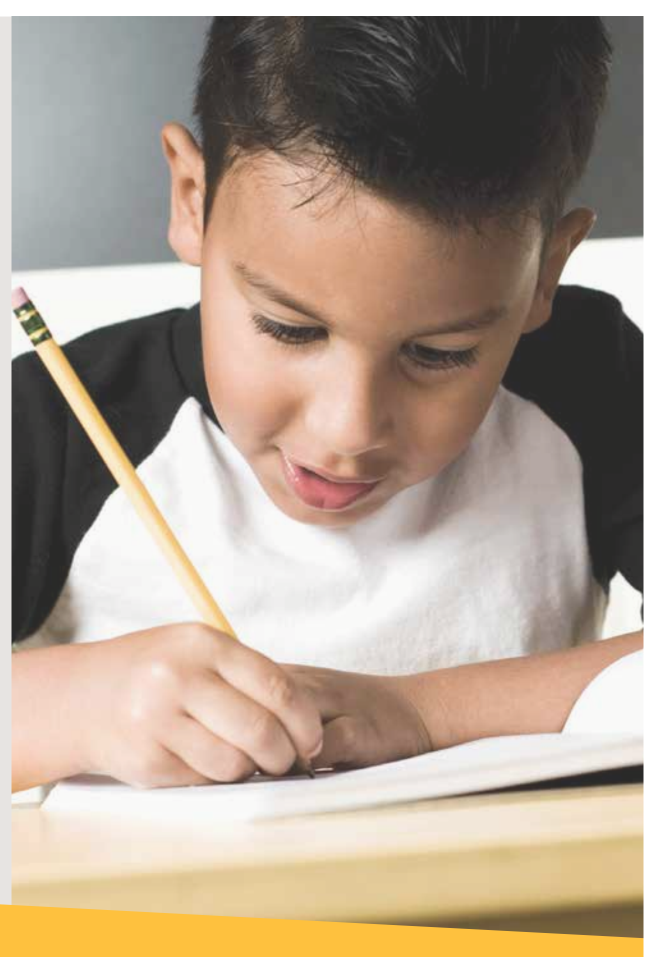
WITH DISABILITIES | WITHOUT DISABILITIES

ADDRESSING POVERTY

Students from low-income backgrounds frequently face challenges in school or at home that impact their education. Many students from low-income families live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty where access to safe public spaces, nutritious food, healthcare and other services is lacking. Additionally, school resources and school quality are often impacted by the wealth of the surrounding community. Equitable education must account for the conditions that impact the whole child.

ADDRESSING DISABILITY

Students with special needs must be appropriately identified and provided with the services and supports needed to reach their full potential. These services are not supplemental. Rather, they are part of a public school system's commitment to equity and the development of all students.



ADDRESSING LANGUAGE STATUS

English learners come to school holding an important asset—knowledge of a second language. At the same time, they require strong language instruction, coupled with effective teaching, targeted supports and extended learning time to gain the academic language skills required to be successful in school. For more information, read, "The promise and challenges of English learner education in California," on page 50.

ADDRESSING RACE

Certain ethnic groups in California are more likely to face poverty and other historical conditions that have an impact on their educational attainment. Yet, even adjusting for income doesn't, by itself, explain the disparate results for students of different ethnicities. Understanding the intersection of race, opportunity and performance, including explicit and implicit bias, is a critical part of providing all students with a high-quality education.

FOUR-YEAR ADJUSTED COHORT OUTCOME DATA | Class of 2013-2014

ETHNICITY	GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	STILL ENROLLED RATE
Asian, Not Hispanic	92.4%	4.5%	2.5%
Filipino, Not Hispanic	92.2%	4.4%	2.8%
White, Not Hispanic	87.6%	7.6%	4.1%
Two or More Races, Not Hispanic	85.6%	8.4%	5.2%
Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	80.4%	12.4%	6.1%
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	76.6%	13.9%	8.8%
Native American or Alaska Native, Not Hispanic	70.6%	18.8%	9.4%
Black/African American, Not Hispanic	68.2%	20.3%	10.4%

Source: CDE

CSU REGULARLY ADMITTED FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN REQUIRING REMEDIAL COURSE WORK | Fall 2015

Students in need of remediation are more likely to dropout and often require more time to graduate college

ETHNICITY	% NOT PROF. MATH	% NOT PROF. ENGLISH
White, Not Hispanic	12.9%	9.4%
Asian	14%	24%
Filipino	17.7%	18.9%
Two or More Races	19%	14%
Pacific Islander	28.1%	36.3%
Native American	30.1%	25.6%
Mexican American	36.6%	36.2%
Other Latino	37.9%	33.9%
Black/African American	48.2%	38.3%
Total	27.4%	27.5%

Source: CSU

AS BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUE TO SET THE VISION for their counties and districts through the Local Control and Accountability Plan process, CSBA recommends the strategic use of data to inform resource allocation and education plans. Counties and districts should collect their own local data (both academic and non-academic) to better diagnose and understand their challenges. Counties, districts and schools can see their results in the Smarter Balanced Assessments through **http://bit.ly/1ThgGQw.**

SCHOOL CLIMATE & STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

CALIFORNIA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY PROVIDES SNAPSHOT OF STUDENT RESILIENCY, RISK BEHAVIORS & MORE

by Christopher Maricle and Gayle Romasanta

A 2007 STUDY by the American Institute of Research found that not only are school climate and student achievement positively correlated, but also that improving school climate is related to gains in student scores on statewide achievement tests.

While it is included as one of eight priorities identified in the Local Control Funding Formula statute, improving school climate may also be a highly effective overarching strategy for addressing other priorities, including student achievement and district performance.

To spark dialogue about school climate, it is important for school districts to read the 2013-15 California Healthy Kids Survey report **wested.org/online_pubs/hhdp/15thBiennial.pdf**. CHKS, the largest statewide student survey, polls randomly selected 7th, 9th and 11th grade students. Traditionally, school districts administer the survey every two years. According to WestEd, it is a comprehensive survey that helps schools and school districts "identify areas of student and school strengths and weaknesses, and address related needs."

CHKS gives education leaders an idea of statewide trends on student resiliency, protective factors and risk behaviors. It also gives a snapshot of what is happening on school campuses across the state. Districts that take part in the survey can compare their results against the statewide averages. Districts that aren't part of the survey can read the statewide results and start their own conversation about how to measure their school climate.

Below are a sampling of the 2013-15 CHKS results. The 2013-15 results were collected between fall 2013 and spring 2015, with 36,573 randomly selected students from 105 school districts throughout the state representing the state sample. Grade 7 students were predominantly 12 and 13 years old, while grade 9 students were 14 and 15 years old and grade 11 students were 15 and 16 years old.

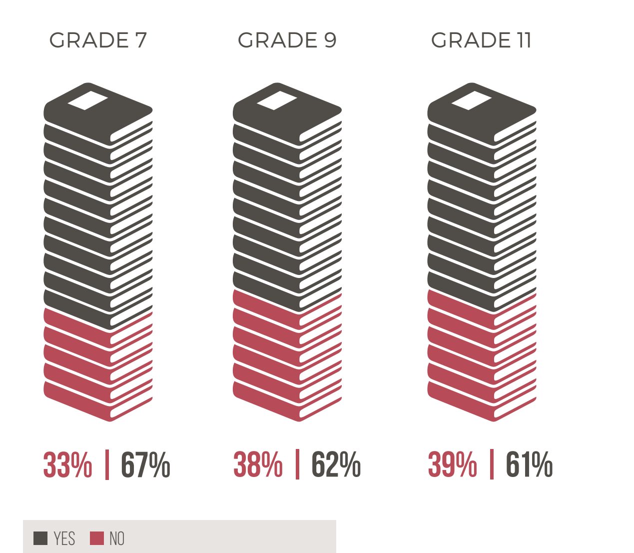
It is important to understand that CHKS is part of a larger survey system, The California School Climate, Health and Learning survey (CAL-SCHLS) that surveys students (CHKS), staff (California School Climate Survey) and parents (California School Parent Survey). The three surveys are interrelated and developed and supported by the California Department of Education.

2013-15 CONDITIONS AT HOME | What is your parents' highest level of education?

PARENT EDUCATION LEVEL	GRADE 7	GRADE 9	GRADE 11
Did not finish high school	11.2%	15.3%	18.6%
Graduated from high school	14.5%	17.8%	18.4%
Some college	11.1%	13.9%	15.7%
Graduated from college	31.7%	37.7%	36.7%
Don't know	31.5%	15.3%	10.4%

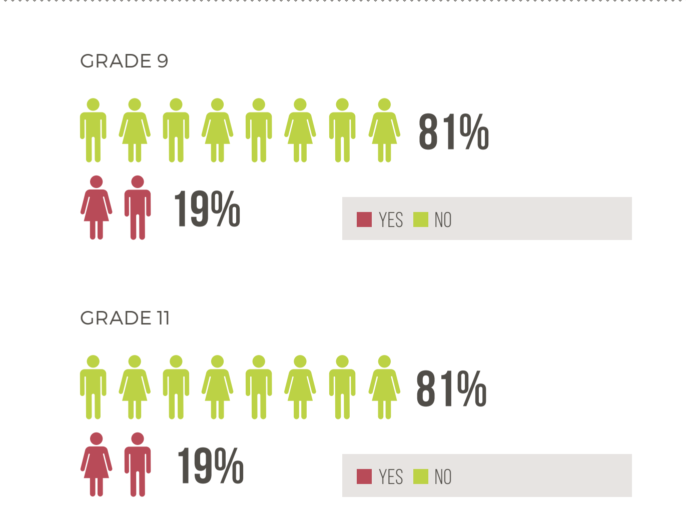
2013-15 CONDITIONS AT HOME

Did you eat breakfast today?



2013-15 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider suicide?



2013-15 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS | Belonging

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A MEMBER OF A GANG?

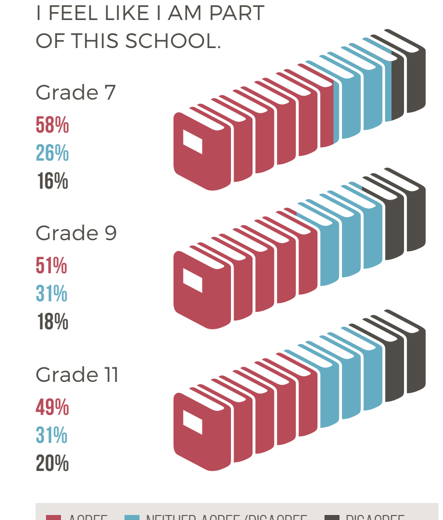
6%

94%

	Grade 7	Grade 9	Grade 11
No	94%	94%	94%
Yes	6%	6%	6%

YES NO

I FEEL LIKE I AM PART OF THIS SCHOOL.



Grade 7
58%
26%
16%

Grade 9
51%
31%
18%

Grade 11
49%
31%
20%

AGREE NEITHER AGREE/DISAGREE DISAGREE

THE TEACHERS AT THIS SCHOOL TREAT STUDENTS FAIRLY.

GRADE 7 54% | 25% | 21%

GRADE 9 48% | 30% | 22%

GRADE 11 50% | 30% | 20%

AGREE NEITHER AGREE/DISAGREE DISAGREE

2013-15 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS | Teaching and Learning

I TRY HARD AT SCHOOL BECAUSE I AM INTERESTED IN MY WORK.

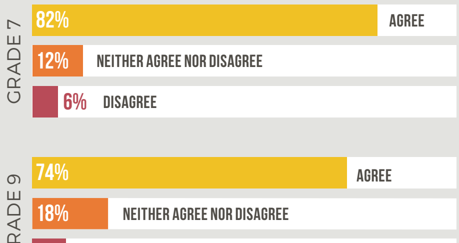
GRADE 7 60% | 26% | 14%

GRADE 9 54% | 29% | 17%

GRADE 11 53% | 29% | 18%

AGREE NEITHER AGREE/DISAGREE DISAGREE

I AM ALWAYS TRYING TO DO BETTER IN MY SCHOOLWORK



GRADE 7
82% AGREE
12% NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
6% DISAGREE

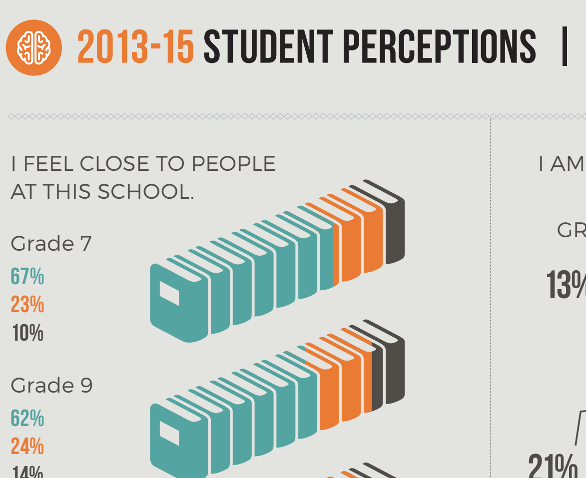
GRADE 9
74% AGREE
18% NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
8% DISAGREE

GRADE 11
73% AGREE
20% NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
7% DISAGREE

*For the purpose of this infographic, "agree" responses include "agree" and "strongly agree" student responses. "Disagree" responses include "disagree" and "strongly disagree" student responses. To view the CHKS survey results in its entirety visit **wested.org**.*

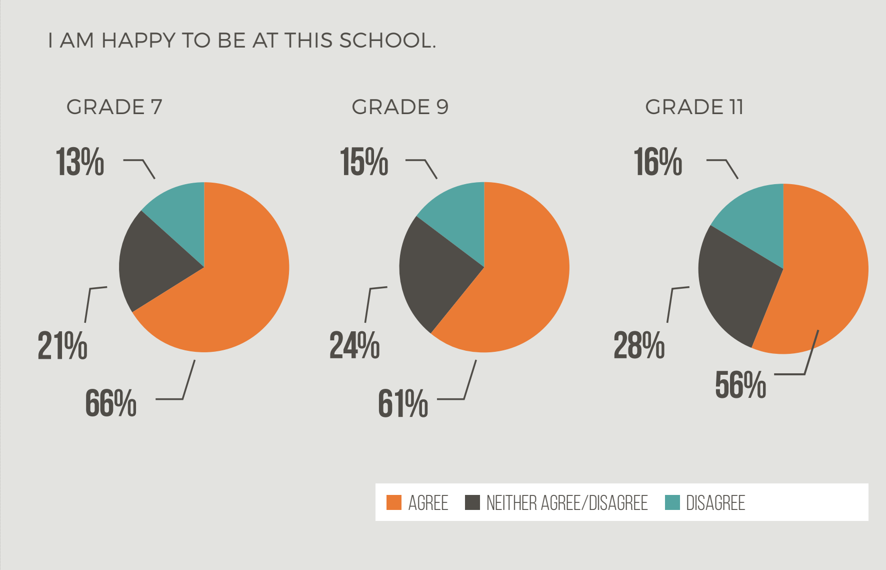
2013-15 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS | Relationships

I FEEL CLOSE TO PEOPLE AT THIS SCHOOL.



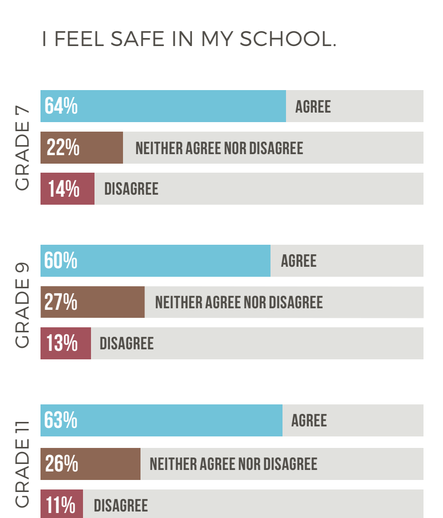
AGREE | NEITHER AGREE/DISAGREE | DISAGREE

I AM HAPPY TO BE AT THIS SCHOOL.



2013-15 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS | School Safety and Violence

I FEEL SAFE IN MY SCHOOL.



DURING THE LAST YEAR I HAVE HAD MEAN RUMORS OR LIES SPREAD ABOUT ME.

GRADE 7 57% | 24% | 19%

GRADE 9 64% | 15% | 21%

GRADE 11 68% | 13% | 19%

NOT AT ALL | ONE TIME | TWO OR MORE TIMES

PERCEPTION DATA is one important aspect of data, but school boards should also look at student achievement data, process data and financial data. The most important thing is for a board to agree on what kind of perception data can be collected easily that would yield the greatest benefit, and what data can be combined with other data to provide the greatest holistic picture possible.

For more information about CHKS, visit **www.chks.wested.org**. For additional information and guidance on school climate, read California School Boards Governance Brief Series, Climate for Achievement, Issues 1-4 at **www.csba.org**.

Strategies to Expand Opportunities

STEAM and Summer Learning 77

Research-Supported Strategies to Improve Accuracy and Fairness of Grades 83

What Boards of Education Can Do About Kindergarten Readiness 87

Integrating Physical Activity Into the School Day 95

Supporting the Summer Learning Strategy to Boost Student Achievement 99

Summer and STEAM Make an Ideal Match

by Mary L. Perry

Introduction

The Next Generation Science Standards are challenging educators to think in new ways about student learning and instruction. As part of preparing California students for college and careers, educators and school leaders are encouraged to expand learning beyond the traditional school year calendar and outside of classroom walls.

A growing body of research supports this need to think differently, particularly in the areas collectively called STEAM — science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Research is also helping guide school district leaders on making these changes in ways that most benefit student achievement and public investment.

Is it STEM or STEAM?

In this brief, STEM and STEAM are used inter-changeably. By way of background, use of the term STEM to designate learning in science, technology, engineering, and math became widespread in education, business, and government circles about a decade ago.

More recently, STEM has often been expanded to STEAM. The impetus for this change came from two directions. One was concern that the arts must also be an integral part of the curriculum. The other was more nuanced, reflecting a strong belief that STEM and the arts are closely related.

As The STEAM Journal, published by Claremont Graduate University explains, "Although there is a long history of the interaction of the sciences with the arts, STEAM is a new acronym that has … a multitude of definitions and approaches. Some of the main themes of STEAM are fostering innovation, the need for twenty-first century skills, and divergent and convergent thinking."

An article retrieved from Slate put it this way: "STEAM says we can be better engineers by learning how to think artistically, and we can re-engage artists with science by letting them see how STEM can work in the arts. …In STEAM, creativity is the central tenet. It … addresses, through real-world projects, why the STEM subjects should matter to everyone. And that's how we should all be learning."

The government joined the discussion in November 2015 when the Congressional committee drafting the language for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) expanded STEM-focused funding to encompass and embrace the idea of STEAM.

STEAM learning – a high priority for schools

As the 21st century continues, it is clear that young people with competency in the STEAM disciplines are more likely to prosper both in their lives and in their careers. A 2014 publication by the Afterschool Alliance describes how STEAM-related learning contributes in three important areas, competency in the modern world, career aspirations, and U.S. competitiveness.[1]

Competency in the modern world

Smart phones, computer-equipped cars, and self-regulating appliances are just a few reminders of the pervasive presence of technology in our lives. We also know they are harbingers of more technology-driven change that will occur during the lifetime of today's students.

Building the capacity of young people in science, technology, engineering, and math — and working with them within the humanistic frame that the arts help provide — is essential. Young people will need a high level of STEAM literacy to

make decisions about their daily lives. And, as citizens, they will need that literacy to understand and act on complex issues such as global climate change, renewable energy sources, and genetically modified foods.

Career aspirations

More pragmatically, today's young people will find that more and more jobs require proficiency in STEAM disciplines. As Krishnamurthi et al explain, "There is great concern that without access to adequate educational experiences, large segments of the population will be unable to participate effectively in the modern workplace."

The STEM Education Coalition cites recent statistics that underscore this concern:[2]

- Between 2014 and 2024, the number of STEM jobs will grow 17% compared to 12% for non-STEM jobs.
- At all levels of educational attainment, STEM job holders earn 11% higher wages compared to their same-degree counterparts in other jobs.
- Almost all of the 30 fastest-growing occupations in the next decade will require at least some background in STEM.

U.S. competitiveness and long-term economic prosperity

U.S. employers have reason to worry when they hear that American students are being outperformed in science and math by young people in many other industrialized countries. A 2014 survey of corporate leaders showed that about 60% of job openings require at least basic STEM literacy and 40% require advanced skills.[3] Other research documents the difficulty U.S. employers have finding qualified workers for jobs requiring advanced computer/information technology or quantitative knowledge.

Girls and students of color are further behind

Even more troubling, students of color and girls tend to be less represented in STEM fields. For example, the STEM Education Coalition reports, "While women represent over 57% of college graduates, the number of women entering STEM fields is only 26% and the number of women in fields such as engineering is even lower, at 22%."[4]

Results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science assessment provide additional indicators of achievement gaps in science. California students score lower than the U.S. overall student average and within the state, substantial gaps exist. Asian and White students score significantly higher than African American and Latino students, students who are not low income earn much higher scores than those who are from low income families, and boys score somewhat higher than girls (see Table 1).

Table 1: 2015 NAEP Science Assessment-Percent of California Students Scoring Proficient and Above, 4th and 8th Graders[5]

Student Group	4th Graders	8th Graders
White	43%	46%
Asian	47%	44%
African American	11%	13%
Latino	12%	10%
Boys	26%	26%
Girls	22%	21%
Low Income	11%	10%
Not low income	46%	43%
US All	37%	31%
CA All	24%	19%

A lot to do — and summer can be an opportunity of great value

Ambitious STEAM learning goals for all students can leave educators saying there are just not enough hours in the day — or at least not during the traditional school year. That problem is compounded when schools have to also address the impact of summer learning loss, which is disproportionately a challenge for children from low-income families.

For children from higher income families, the summer months frequently include activities, such as camps and vacations, proven to keep children engaged and learning in measurable and positive ways. Such opportunities are not accessible for many lower-income children whose families do not have the resources to provide for these kinds of summer activities. For children in low-income communities, summer is too often an educational drought that results in losing knowledge gained during the school year.[6]

Over the last several decades, researchers have been documenting summer learning loss and the ways that it exacerbates the achievement gap between middle- and high-income students.

A summary of the data from the Summer Matters website includes the following:

- Children from low-income families lose more than two months of reading achievement every summer.
- Summer learning loss explains two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap.
- By fifth grade, low-income children without summer learning opportunities are already two to three years behind their peers.

Educators and independent researchers have found that high-quality summer learning programs can have a strong impact. In a recent brief, the National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment reported that "High-quality summer learning programs can not only curb summer learning loss, they can even help boost student achievement. When children continue to learn during the summer, they are healthier, safer, and smarter, and their schools and communities are more successful."[7]

In California, the development of new summer learning experiences offers examples of how school districts can create quality programs that align with learning goals while also engaging and motivating students. Evidence also indicates that summer learning programs support the approaches emphasized in California's new standards, including the Next Generation Science Standards. A 2013 report, for example, found that young people in summer learning programs were tackling complex open-ended questions; making active choices about their learning; working collaboratively; connecting themes and knowledge across subject matter areas; and developing their communication skills, including in public speaking.[8]

Research shows that summer learning and STEAM go together very well

A major strand in many summer learning programs — and sometimes the central theme — has been STEAM subjects. STEAM programming in afterschool and summer has grown at an extremely rapid pace in the past few years.[9]

The afterschool providers who often run these programs have embraced STEAM in part because the hands-on learning it affords fits well with the youth development at the core of their programs. Those approaches in turn align with what researchers report as the experiences that lead students to develop a science identity. According to Krishnamurthi et al, "Development of a science or STEM identity involves multiple pieces: getting young people interested in STEM topics and professions; developing competence and a sense of confidence; and getting youth to envision themselves as contributors and participants in this enterprise."[10]

Similarly, students with informal access to STEAM outside of school often develop interests and aptitude in those fields. Studies document, for example, that participation in informal STEM activities correlates with greater interest in STEM careers and higher test scores on the NAEP science assessments. The ability of these programs to engage young girls in STEM, in particular, has also been well-documented.

As summarized by Krishnamurthi et al, "Settings like afterschool and summer learning programs can be thought of as pollination points in a wider STEM ecosystem, where having multiple locations to learn reinforces students' developing mastery of science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills."[11]

Documented impacts of out-of-school STEM programs[12]

- The programs are successful in engaging and retaining large numbers of students from diverse populations in STEM.
- Participants express curiosity and interest in STEM subjects, in ways that extended that interest in school and out of school.
- As they participate, young people gain real skills and the ability to productively engage in STEM processes of investigation.

- Youth learn essential STEM-relevant life and career skills, such as working in teams and collaborating effectively, as well as making presentations to audiences.

- Participants in many programs come to understand the value of STEM in contributing to society and solving global and local problems. They begin to see how STEM intimately connects to their everyday lives.

- Students display an increased awareness of career options, as well as a nuanced understanding of those careers.

Quality is a critical ingredient for STEAM success

According to research, quality is a crucial pre-condition for ensuring STEAM learning in summer programs. A vast compendium of research and evaluations have helped define what high-quality, productive programs look like.

That work has been summarized by the National Research Council, which concluded that there were three characteristics of successful informal STEM education programs:[13]

- "Productive programs engage young people intellectually, socially, and emotionally. …In such programs, young people are engaged in firsthand, materials-rich, and place-based learning experiences that involve processes of scientific or engineering investigation and practice." Such programs engage young people in ways they find compelling and challenging, that encourages them to continue engaging in STEM learning.

- "Productive programs respond to young people's interests, experiences, and cultural practices." These programs make STEM relevant to young people, support their collaboration and leadership, and train staff to support and develop student interest. By being responsive to young people's prior interests and experiences, these programs enable them to "see STEM as meaningful and relevant to their own experiences and aspirations."

- "Productive programs connect STEM learning in out-of-school, school, home, and other settings." Such programs "explicitly help young people make connections among STEM experiences in and across settings and programs, leveraging community resources and partnerships and brokering ongoing opportunities to engage in STEM learning activities." They also help young people relate what they learn to other settings, including school.

These criteria — combined with additional research regarding program quality — show that teaching STEAM subjects successfully in informal summer programs is vital. To make that happen, school districts have to invest in purposeful planning, staff capacity building, and creative partnerships.[14]

Summer STEAM and the role of school board members

Effective leadership and active support from boards and superintendents are key to successful summer programs. Not only does the board establish the vision and goals for the district, it adopts the budget, sets the policies that provide direction and structure, and monitors program effectiveness.

Researchers offer several recommendations to school boards for building better summer learning programs:[15]
Move summer programs from the periphery to the core of school reform strategies through better planning, infrastructure, data collection, and accountability.

- Strengthen and expand partnerships with community- based organizations and public agencies to tap into existing resources, identify gaps, and improve programs.

- Provide budget and logistical information to participating schools and potential partners by March to allow sufficient time for planning and recruitment.

- Be creative with funding: use multiple sources.

- Create a summer learning task force of local stakeholders who can identify areas of collaboration and planning.

- Change the summer focus from remediation and test preparation to a blended approach of academic and enrichment activities.

Through all its areas of responsibility, the board can also create the expectation that summer programs are part of a school district's overall educational effort and that STEAM subjects should be a particular focus in those programs. To achieve this goal, school districts and their governing boards should treat summer learning equally with traditional school year programs, and include them in the district's central strategy and efforts to reduce the achievement gap in STEAM learning.

Endnotes

1 Krishnamurthi, A. B. (July 2014). Examining the impoact of afterschool STEM programs. Afterschool Alliance.

2 STEM Education Coalition Policy Forum. (April 2016). The case for investing in out-of-school learning as a core strategy in improving science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

3 See endnote 2

4 See endnote 2

5 Summary of data from: National Center for Education Statistics. State profiles. Retrieved November 1, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/

6 California School Boards Association. (2015). Summer learning: as easy as 1, 2, 3.

7 National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2016). NCASE summer learning brief.

8 Summer Matters Network. (November 2013). Putting summer to work: getting a head start on the common core.

9 See endnote 2

10 See endnote 1

11 See endnote 1

12 Afterschool Alliance. (2011). Seizing opportunity: developing quality STEM learning for summer and afterschool.

13 See endnote 2

14 See endnote 12

15 McCombs, J.E. (2011). Making summer count: how summer programs can boost children's learning. Rand Corporation.

Mary L. Perry, is an education consultant with extensive experience in education policy. She was Deputy Director of EdSource for 18 years and served for more than nine years as a school board member in the Campbell Union School District.

Research-Supported Strategies to Improve the Accuracy and Fairness of Grades

by Christopher Maricle and Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D.

Background

This brief describes research-supported strategies that can help school districts improve the accuracy and fairness of their grading policies and practices. Grades can have an enormous impact on students' lives. They are often the most important factor in college admissions and therefore, key to the opportunities that come with earning a college degree. Both University of California and California State University determine admissions largely on the basis of grades. In addition, counselors use grades to recommend what courses students should and should not take in junior high and high school. It is essential, then, that local policies ensure that grading practices are as fair, accurate and consistent as possible.

Grades serve several purposes. They provide students with feedback on their learning, communicate to parents about students' academic achievement, inform teachers for instructional planning and certify that students have mastered the skills needed for the next level of learning. Grades can also motivate students to perform well.[1]

In order to serve these purposes, grades must accurately reflect what students know. Research suggests that grading systems need to be "simple, stable, straightforward and easily understood." They also need to be "administered consistently, and result in predictable, fair and accurate assessments of student achievement." Grades that are "based on uneven standards applied in an uneven manner, cannot possibly fulfill the primary informative purposes of grading."[2]

Recommended grading practices

In California, we have an example of how grades can be inaccurate. Public college data indicate that grades do not always offer a realistic picture of students' content knowledge. The average grade point average (GPA) of students who enter the CSU system is above a 3.0, a GPA that should indicate a strong grasp of high school subject matter. Yet, almost half (45 percent) of CSU freshmen need remediation in basic subjects, indicating that the grades of many students who enter CSU are not, in fact, an accurate reflection of their content knowledge in basic subjects like language and math.[3]

Researchers who study grading have uncovered practices that contribute to the inaccuracy of grades. They offer two principal recommendations designed to improve these practices and increase the accuracy, fairness and consistency of academic grading, particularly in the junior high and high school setting.

Recommendation 1: Assess non-academic factors separately

Academic grades should reflect only student mastery of academic content in order to reflect what students know about the subject matter that they must learn in order to succeed in progressively more rigorous classes. Although it is a common grading practice to combine academic and non-academic factors into a single grade, there is little research to indicate that some of the factors that are often included in academic grades provide an accurate reflection of students' academic achievement. Examples of non-academic factors that school communities often assess include classroom participation, effort, study habits and turning in assignments on time. Researchers propose that including such nonacademic factors can make academic grades *less accurate*.[4]

These researchers do not suggest ignoring nonacademic factors altogether. Families and schools often value certain nonacademic factors that may contribute to students' ability to learn and therefore, want to include them when reporting outcomes. However, researchers indicate that, while it may be important to provide an indication of student progress

with regard to these factors, it is equally important to report such factors separately from academic grades, in order to ensure that grades indicate the actual performance of students with regard to mastery of academic content.[5]

A meaningful alternative is to establish clear and separate criteria for such nonacademic factors and assign them a separate set of marks. The marks in such a system communicate to students and parents how students are doing, but are not part of the grade point average that is designed to indicate how well students have mastered content. Homework provides a concrete example. With marks on a 1-4 scale, 1 might indicate numerous missing assignments, 2 a few missing assignments, 3 only one or two missing and 4, that all homework was done and turned in on time.[6]

Many districts have adopted these recommended practices. Some have designed local report cards to include nonacademic student outcomes, often using performance level indicators (such as the homework example above) instead of letter grades to distinguish them from the academic marks. Examples include:

» Plus (+) or minus (-)

» Numeric scale

» Descriptors, such as "satisfactory, needs improvement, and not satisfactory"

In other districts, completing homework assignments and participating in class are discussed with parents at conferences, but not recorded on report cards. Some school systems try to emphasize the value of these and other behaviors and use them as positive motivators by connecting them to other kinds of consequences. For example, some schools have used attendance or classroom behavior as criteria for extracurricular eligibility or honor roll status.

Nonacademic factors to consider including in a separate measure

Among the non-academic factors that schools can measure, some are associated with student success, although they are not direct indicators of students' mastery of academic content.

Class Attendance: Maximizing learning time is highly correlated with student achievement, and it begins with coming to class. Chronic absenteeism — missing more than 10 percent of school days — is associated with lower academic achievement.[7] In a 2008 study, the chances of graduating from high school on time dropped to less than half for junior high students who were absent from school more than 10 school days per year.[8] However, docking students' academic grades for being absent can be unfair. Students cannot control being sick and often are not in control of their transportation or when families schedule vacations during the school year. It can also be inaccurate, because some students master academic content despite a poor attendance record.

Homework: While research on the benefits of homework in elementary school is mixed, there is evidence that some homework is correlated with greater academic achievement in high school.[9] However, assigning homework and grading homework are separate decisions and researchers suggest that the latter practice may not contribute to an accurate understanding of what students know. Traditionally, teachers assign homework to provide students an opportunity to practice a skill that has been newly taught. By including performance on homework in the calculation of overall academic grades, teachers are not giving students enough learning time before holding them accountable for mastering content. Grading reform advocates suggest that homework not be graded, but instead be considered formative in nature, because its purpose is to practice a new skill or knowledge set, not to demonstrate mastery. Teachers can check that students are completing their homework — a work/study habit that can be included in a separate measure — and can look at homework to determine students' understanding and need for additional instruction.

Homework Practices at McNally High School – Alberta, Canada

McNally's homework policies tap into student motivation by giving them opportunities for autonomy, mastery and purpose. Homework is explicitly designed to provide students with practice. It is not graded and teachers let students decide if the practice the homework provides will help increase their understanding. However, if students fail the summative assessment (mid-term or final exams, for example), they must go back and finish all the previous formative assessment assignments — including homework — before they can retake the summative test to assess whether or not they have mastered the content.[10]

Behavior: Including student behavior in academic grades is not uncommon, but grading researchers maintain that behavior is "not a part of the evidence that reflects what students have learned and what they are able to do." However, the reality is that student behavior often influences teachers' grading practices. Research in elementary grades has shown that how teachers perceive students' behavior, influences the academic grades students receive.[11] This suggests that directing teachers to record their perceptions of student behavior separately may help them to remove the influence of those perceptions in the calculation of academic grades.

Recommendation 2: Ensure academic grades reflect only final mastery of content

Another practice that researchers recommend for academic grades to reflect student mastery of academic content is to base grades on what students have learned by the end of a unit of study or course. They reason that students continue to learn the content after an early test or difficult assignment, and therefore, basing grades on assignments or tests before students have completed this learning provides an inaccurate picture of their level of mastery. Three practices are recommended to address this.

Use end-of-course assessments

Formative assessments are those used to track how well students are acquiring new skills and knowledge during the learning process. Examples of formative assessments might include pop quizzes, homework and chapter tests. They are used to provide feedback so both teachers and students understand what students have learned so far and where more instruction is needed. However, they do not reflect mastery of content by the end of the course. End of-course-(summative) assessments, are designed to determine how well students have mastered content and skills after multiple opportunities to learn and practice. Basing grades on these summative assessments can better reflect students' content knowledge. Examples of summative assessments include culminating projects, demonstrations, and end-of-course exams.[12]

Allow students to re-test

Students can perform poorly on assessments for a wide range of reasons. Grading researchers suggest that students should be allowed to retake summative assessments to demonstrate mastery, possibly using an alternate form of the assessment equivalent in nature and scope to the original test. This could also be applied in cases of students' poor performance in prior quarters. As students progress in the second or third quarter, they may gain greater understanding of content covered in the first quarter, that they did not initially understand.[13] A good analogy is the smog test. If a car fails the test, the problem is addressed and then the car is retested.

Allow late work

Many high school teachers do not accept late work. However, turning assignments in late is not a matter of academic understanding. It is a behavioral concern, one that could be addressed in a separate measure of behavior as discussed above.[14] Many educators stress the value of teaching students the importance of submitting work on time by imposing the penalty of a lower grade for submitting work after it is due. The logic is often based on the belief that low grades inspire students to work harder. However, research on student motivation indicates that this often has the opposite effect, discouraging students and decreasing motivation.[15] The purpose of grading is to reflect the degree of academic achievement of the student by the end of the course. When the work is submitted (or the learning is achieved) is independent of the degree of understanding a student ultimately develops.

Grading Practices at Minnetonka High School

This high school in Minnetonka, Minnesota has been engaged in ongoing grading reform for several years. Some of the most significant changes in grading practice include that:

» Grades are based principally on summative assessments.

» Nonacademic factors (behavior, effort, etc.) are discussed with parents at conferences.

» Rather than including attendance in grades, they have an aggressive absence intervention protocol.

» Students must complete missing or late work during lunch or before school.

Although they cannot be tied solely or explicitly to changes in grading practice, student achievement, behavior and absences all improved after these grading reforms were introduced.[16]

What boards can do

With grades playing such a crucial role in students' lives, grading accuracy is of concern to boards of education. Through their authority to set policies, boards can establish a system of student accountability that is fair, consistent and accurate. Boards interested in exploring grading practices can begin with a few core questions.

» How consistent is the grading in our schools? How much discretion do schools have in determining academic grading policy?

» Do we have explicit grading policies that outline what should and should not be included in academic grades?

» To what extent do teachers have discretion to decide whether or not to include nonacademic criteria in determining academic grades?

» What is our policy regarding homework?

» How do absences (excused or unexcused) and late/missing work impact grades?

» How does student behavior impact grades?

» Are students allowed to retake summative exams to improve their performance?

Conclusion

Academic grades are a gateway to college, and completing college is highly correlated with a range of positive life outcomes. Compared to students who did not finish high school, college graduates live longer, have a better chance of being employed, and earn 66 percent more income over their lifetimes. Better education also leads to lower involvement in crime. High school dropouts — only 20 percent of the general population — account for 75 percent of the state prison inmate population. Finally, those with higher levels of education are more likely to vote and to be civically engaged.[17]

Grading policy is one of the means through which governing boards can help improve student outcomes and fairness in their districts and counties. Working with the superintendent and the professional staff, boards have the power to convene conversations about grading, so that the board, staff, parents and students can collectively learn about what research says about effective grading practices and how grading policy can lead to better student outcomes. Through these conversations and better understanding of this issue, boards lead their counties and districts to improve grading policy in a way that better captures student knowledge while respecting the professional judgment of educators.

Additional CSBA Resources

The following are policies on grading that will come out concurrently with this brief:

» BP 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement

» AR 5121 - Grades/Evaluation Of Student Achievement

Endnotes

1 Carey, T. and Carfio, J. (2012). The Minimum Grading Controversy: Results of a Quantitative Study of Seven Years of Grading Data From an Urban High School. Educational Researcher, 41 (6), 201-208.

2 Ibid.

3 CSU Performance data. http://bit.ly/2a7hwNG Accessed on June 10, 2016.

4 Guskey, T. (2006). Making High School Grades Meaningful. Phi Delta Kappan, 87 (9), 670-675

5 Chiekem, E. (2015). Grading Practice as Valid Measures of Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students for National Development. Journal of Educational Practice, 26 (6), 24-29.

6 Ibid.

7 Pearson Research and Innovation Network (2016). Not Present, Not Learning: Tracking Chronic Absenteeism and Other Nonacademic Factors. Old Tappan, NJ: McClarty, K. http://bit.ly/29CrqGS Accessed on April 18, 2016

8 Silver, D., Saunders, M., and Zarate, E. (2008). What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

9 Dean, C., Hubbell, E., Pitler, H. and Stone, B. (2012). Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement, 2nd Ed. Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

10 Vatterott, C. (2011). Making Homework Central to Learning. Educational Leadership. 69 (3), 60-64.

11 Bennett, R.; etal. (1993). Influence of Behavior Perceptions and Gender on Teachers' Judgments of Students' Academic Skill. Journal of Educational Psychology, 85(2), 347-356.

12 Marzano, R. and Heflebower, T. (2011). Grades That Show What Students Know. Educational leadership, 69 (3), 34-39.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Carey, T. and Carfio, J. (2012). The Minimum Grading Controversy: Results of a Quantitative Study of Seven Years of Grading Data From an Urban High School. Educational Researcher, 41 (6), 201-208.

16 Reeves, D.B. (2008). Leading Change/Improving Student Attendance. Educational Leadership, 65 (8), 90-91.

17 Moore, K.A. and Emig, (2014). Making the Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports. Chidtrends. Available online at: http://bit.ly/29FPY4t

Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D., is Senior Director of Policy and Programs for California School Boards Association

Christopher Maricle is an Education Policy Analyst for California School Boards Association

What Boards of Education Can Do About Kindergarten Readiness

Introduction

An established and respected body of research underscores the importance of early learning to children's later success in school and life. Increasingly, school districts that once considered pre-kindergarten programs to be outside their core mission are expanding their focus and investment in the early years. Many are motivated by a realization that achievement gaps are best addressed *before* children enroll in kindergarten.

From state preschool to Head Start to Transitional Kindergarten and beyond, a variety of opportunities and funding streams make it possible for California school districts to play an active role in helping children get a strong start in elementary school.

This brief

In this brief you will find:

» Details about early learning opportunities and funding streams in California.

» A primer on the research base in early learning.

» A review of the importance and key elements of quality in effective pre-K.

» Information about unmet need for pre-K in California.

» A set of questions designed to spur productive conversations among school board members and their governance teams.

For the purposes of this brief, the umbrella term pre-K includes Transitional Kindergarten, the California State Preschool Program, Head Start, child care programs adhering to state Title 5 regulations and private preschool programs that serve 3 and 4 year-old children.

The link between quality early learning and later success in school

The period before children enroll in kindergarten is one of dramatic brain growth and development. Appropriate and nurturing stimulation is essential for children to build the neural pathways, social skills and self-confidence that will later help them succeed in school.

The foundation children bring with them to school is incredibly important, but not all of them start on the same footing. Researchers report that by age 3, for instance, children from high-income families have double the vocabulary of same-age children from low-income families.[1]

Research shows that quality preschool—using curriculum that includes play along with purposeful teaching to build social/emotional and readiness skills—can help narrow those gaps, and that children who have access to these programs enjoy an advantage over those who do not.[2] Rigorous studies show that quality pre-K helps build a stronger foundation in language, literacy, and numeracy (early math) skills.

Researchers studying New Jersey's exemplary Abbott preschools, for example, found that disadvantaged children who participated in 2 full years of pre-K had significantly higher vocabulary and math skills than children who did not participate.[3] Closer to home, findings have been particularly strong for Latino children and children of immigrant parents—two groups strongly represented in many California school districts.[4]

Equally important, children in pre-K have the chance to develop the social and self-regulation skills that are essential for success in school, such as interacting with teachers and peers in positive ways, solving problems with increasing independence and learning to focus their attention.[5]

Further, studies show that a child who does *not* have the opportunity to participate in quality pre-K is 25% more likely to drop out of school,[6] 40% more likely to become a teenage parent[7] and 70% more likely to commit a crime,[8] compared to socio-economically similar peers who had the opportunity to attend quality pre-K.

"We have better evidence for the effectiveness of early childhood education than for almost any social or educational intervention."

—***Timothy Bartik***, *Economist, W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research*

New findings on Transitional Kindergarten

In 2015, an American Institutes for Research team reported significant benefits for children enrolled in TK.[9] This rigorously designed study found that:

- Children enrolled in TK were substantially better able to identify letters and words in kindergarten, equating to a 5-month learning advantage over their control-group peers who were not enrolled.
- TK students had stronger knowledge of basic mathematical concepts and symbols in kindergarten than their peers who did not attend TK, giving them a 3-month lead in kindergarten.
- Children enrolled in TK had a relative advantage in executive function, meaning they had great ability to regulate their behavior, remember rules, and think flexibly.

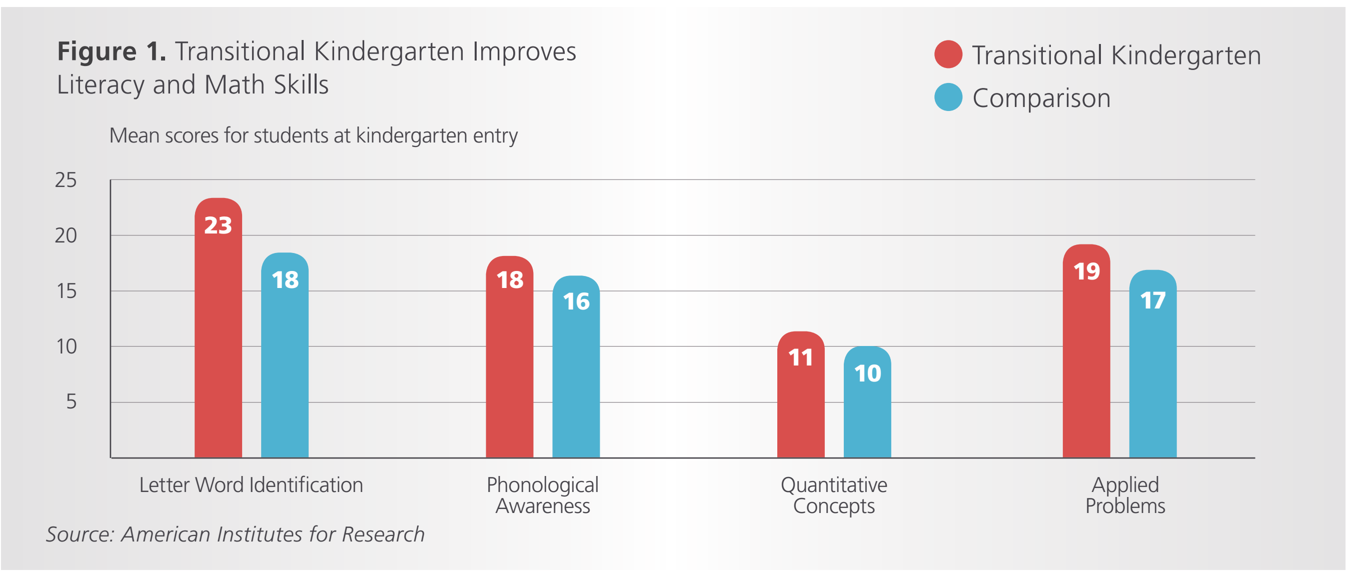


Figure 1. Transitional Kindergarten Improves Literacy and Math Skills

Source: American Institutes for Research

Not all early learning programs have shown uniformly strong results. A recent examination of Tennessee's state-funded preschool program, for example, showed that gains made before starting kindergarten faded by the time participating children reached third grade.[10] Critics of this study point out problems with its design and execution.

But the most salient take-away from the Tennessee program may be that good results for children are difficult to produce in programs that lack key aspects of quality, or that lack alignment with quality primary education designed to sustain gains. The Tennessee program did not have all of the high-quality standards supported by research, nor alignment with expectations of the state's public school primary grades.

While alignment between pre-K and K-12 in California is very much a work in progress, the state has several strong foundational elements in place that increase its likelihood. For instance: Well-regarded, state-developed and approved standards—known as the California Preschool Learning Foundations—and accompanying curriculum frameworks have been developed and aligned to the state's academic standards for K-12. These foundations and frameworks are used by all state preschool programs and increasing numbers of transitional kindergartens.

Pre-K's return on investment

The majority of research makes clear that the academic and social benefits of quality pre-K are far reaching. For school board members, the fiscal benefits may be just as important. Quality pre-K can reduce the need for downstream remediation or special services that are costly to both schools and children themselves. For example, researchers at Duke University followed a group of children enrolled in a high-quality pre-K program in North Carolina as they progressed through elementary school. The researchers found that by third grade, the pre-K group had 39% fewer special education placements compared to similar children who did not attend the pre-K program.[11]

These benefits, along with broader benefits to society, such as reduced criminal activity and incarceration and increased earnings in adulthood, add up to savings of $8 for every $1 invested up front.[12] Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman has documented these returns, illustrated in the graphic below, to show that quality pre-K programs are among the most cost-effective education investments that schools and society can make.

> "Early childhood development is perhaps the strongest investment we could make on a raw return-on-investment basis."
>
> —***James Heckman**, Nobel Laureate in Economics*

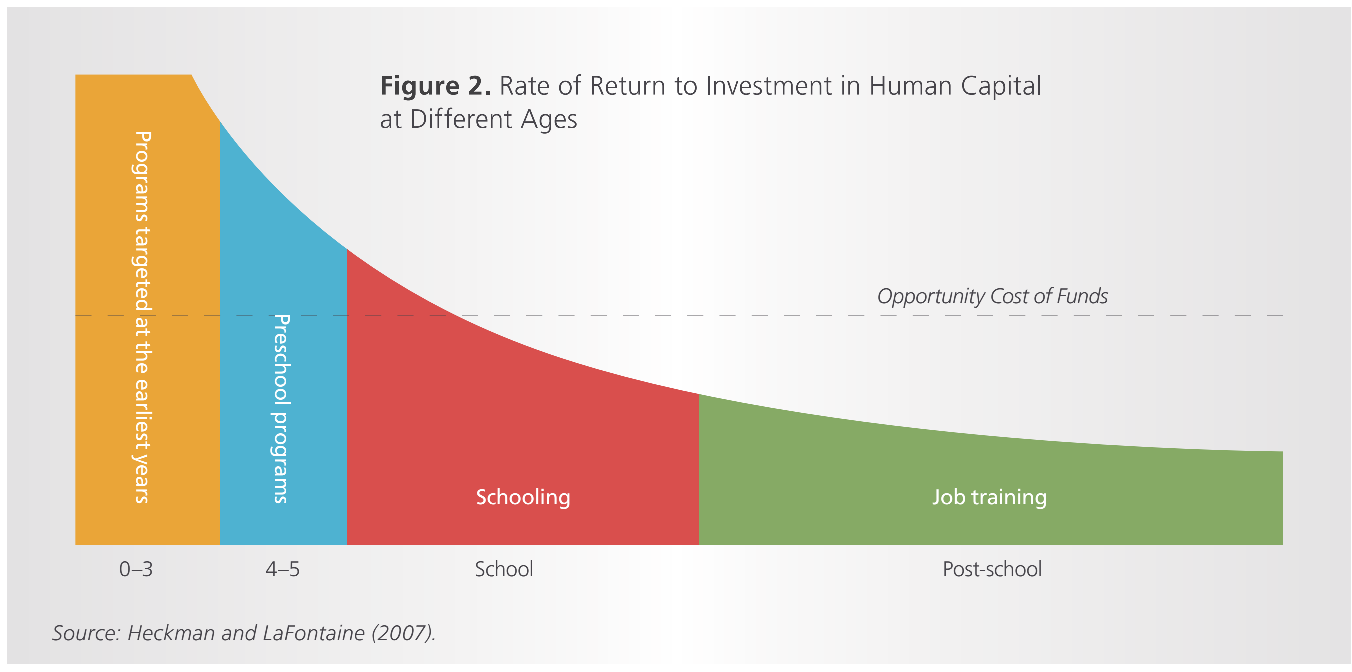


Figure 2. Rate of Return to Investment in Human Capital at Different Ages

Source: Heckman and LaFontaine (2007).

Additional considerations for school districts

Pre-K programs can help better engage families in school life and education. Those districts that offer the strongest and most accessible pre-K options have early learning advantages over districts or charter schools without such programs. Those advantages, in turn, can add up to significant accrual of Average Daily Attendance over time, as families enrolling their children in pre-K build relationships with schools and fellow parents, and ideally with the school district.[13]

In addition, school districts that establish strong Transitional Kindergarten preschool programs have an opportunity to focus squarely on alignment across programs from pre-K through third grade, so that each year of learning is connected to and builds upon the prior year, and early gains can be sustained or strengthened as children progress through the primary grades.[14]

Public programs serving young children in California

The array of early childhood programs available in California is sometimes referred to as a system, though it could more accurately be called a patchwork, given the variety of funding streams and eligibility requirements. Publicly funded programs include:

Transitional Kindergarten: School-based, publicly funded pre-kindergarten year for children who turn 5 between September 2 and December 2, regardless of family income. These children were formerly admitted to kindergarten. All California districts that provide kindergarten are required to offer TK to eligible children. The same credentialing requirements that apply to kindergarten teachers apply to TK teachers. In addition, TK teachers hired after 2015 are required to have completed 24 units in early childhood education/development; or to have comparable professional experience with preschool-age children, as determined by the school district; or to hold a child development teacher permit issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing .

Expanded Transitional Kindergarten: In 2015, the Governor and Legislature changed the Education Code to clarify that districts may expand their TK programs to children with 5th birthdays after the December 2 cutoff. In the 2015-16 school year, a number of districts, including Alum Rock, Los Angeles, Pasadena and Placentia-Yorba Linda, moved to extend TK opportunity to younger children.

California State Preschool Program: Part-day or full-day program for 3 or 4 year-old children from families who earn less than $46,896 annually (family of four). Provides preschool curriculum as well as meals and snacks to children, education for parents and referrals to health and social services for families. More than half of children enrolled are in programs administered by school districts.

Head Start: Federal program for children from families who earn less than $24,250 annually (family of four). Provides preschool and nutrition for 3 and 4 year-olds and support services for their families. Administered by a variety of local agencies including school districts.

General Child Care and Development: State and federally funded programs that provide education, nutrition and care to income-eligible children from birth through age 12 in centers and family child care home networks administered by public or private agencies and local educational agencies. Eligibility limited to families earning less than $46,896 (family of four).

Title I-funded Preschool: Federal Title I supplemental funds, allocated to school districts based on counts of poor children, may be used to fund kindergarten readiness programs. A number of California school districts invest Title I funds for this purpose.

Source: California Department of Education, Legislative Analyst's Office

The importance of quality in early learning

Research on the benefits of pre-K strongly underscores the importance of quality in achieving positive results for children. Positive and engaging interactions between children and teachers and caregivers are the single most important contributors to gains in language, literacy, math and social skills.[15] Children benefit most when teachers build on children's interests, provide related learning opportunities and engage in back and forth conversations—known as verbal serve and return—to discuss and elaborate on a given subject.[16] While many model preschool programs feature teachers with a bachelor's degree, early childhood experts note that some effective preschool programs do not. They explain that most importantly, preschool teachers need a special set of skills including the ability, "to relate well with very young children who are rapidly changing across multiple domains of child development, and know how to embed play with learning. In order to do that teachers need to understand child development and know what children are like as they grow from infants to preschoolers."[17]

More easily measured structural features of quality, such as class size, child-teacher ratios and teacher qualifications create the conditions for stimulating and supportive teacher-child interactions—but do not guarantee them.

The Learning Policy Institute has recommended 10 important elements of high-quality programs that are supported by a substantial body of research.[18] These elements offer school board members and district administrators important insights about effective programs. They include:

1. Well-prepared pre-K teachers who provide engaging interactions and classroom environments that support learning.
2. Ongoing support for pre-K teachers, including coaching and mentoring.
3. Comprehensive early learning standards and curricula that address the whole child, are developmentally appropriate and are effectively implemented.
4. Assessments that consider children's academic, social-emotional and physical progress, and contribute to instructional and program planning.
5. Support for English learners and students with special needs.
6. Meaningful family engagement.
7. Sufficient learning time, including full-day, year-round programs over multiple years.
8. Small class sizes with low student-teacher ratios that facilitate meaningful teacher-child interactions. A class size of 20 with a student-staff ratio of 10:1 is the largest acceptable by general professional standards.
9. Program assessments that measure structural quality and classroom interactions.
10. A well-implemented state quality rating and improvement system that establishes quality standards and supports continuous improvement efforts.

It is important to note that not all of the laws and regulations governing California's public early education programs require adherence to the exact best practice quality standards recommended above. Some school districts and local First 5 Commissions have chosen to invest local or federal dollars to enhance quality beyond the level now required by the state.[19]

Professional development in support of quality

Like their peers in the K-12 system, pre-K teachers, staff, and program leaders benefit from job-embedded professional learning opportunities. In the pre-K setting, coaching and mentoring have been identified as effective strategies to build educator capacity and reduce teacher turnover.[20]

In addition, collaborative professional development that brings together educators from pre-K and early elementary grades can develop and deepen a shared understanding of child development and school readiness expectations.[21]

School districts can use local and federal funds to support professional learning opportunities. State educator effectiveness funds, federal Title I and Title II funds and the Local Control Funding Formula may all be used to support professional development.

Opportunity to support dual language learners

More than a third of California children enter kindergarten speaking a primary language other than English, and their proportion in the school population is growing.[22] Their status as dual language learners brings advantages but also challenges, with many entering kindergarten behind their peers on measures of readiness, and lagging in reading achievement at the end of first grade.[23]

Quality pre-K is a sound strategy for addressing these challenges early. Children from non-English-speaking homes who attend pre-K have significantly better pre-reading skills, compared to their peers who do not.

Research also indicates that programs that support children's home language in the early years are more successful than English-only programs.[24] Pre-K programs that are most successful with dual language learner children have at least one adult in the classroom who can speak the home language, and have staff overall who can support the culture of the home. This underscores the importance of a diverse and culturally sensitive teacher workforce, as well as linguistically appropriate programs and practices, in pre-K settings.[25]

Unmet need for pre-K in California

Despite mounting evidence of developmental and fiscal benefits, and despite encouraging state and local reinvestment following the Great Recession, many children from low and middle-income families still lack access to quality pre-K in California. New data from the American Institutes for Research show that some 33,000 eligible 4 year-olds (16%) don't have a space in the subsidized programs for which they qualify. Roughly four times as many 3 year-olds (about 137,000 to 40%) who qualify do not have a space in the subsidized programs.[26] Moreover, many middle class families are ineligible for subsidized programs and struggle to afford quality private pre-K, which can cost more than $10,000 annually for a part-day program.

Promising practice: Educare and Franklin-McKinley Unified School District

In 2015, Educare California at Silicon Valley established an early learning center at Santee Elementary School where almost all of the students are low income and three-quarters are English learners. The early learning center has quickly become a showcase for best practices, and for what is possible elsewhere in the state. Now serving 170 children from birth to age 5 from low-income families, the program also functions as a training and professional development institute for current and aspiring pre-K teachers and caregivers in the region.

Educare is a non-profit, research-based early learning model that features:

» Teacher professional development provided to those who work on site and elsewhere in the community.

» Small classes led by lead teachers with bachelor's degrees and 2 assistants.

» Full-day, year-round learning focused on language and cognitive development, numeracy, the arts and problem solving.

» Stability in adult-child relationships—children staying with the same teacher and peer group for 3 years.

» Specially trained parent educators to support family involvement in the program.

The public-private partnership is supported by a combination of federal, state, local and philanthropic dollars, including Head Start, California State Preschool Program, child care and school district resources.

Sources: EducareSV.org, First 5 Santa Clara County, New America[27]

Putting the pieces together: Making the most of existing resources for early learning

School districts have an important opportunity to impact the kindergarten readiness of students they have traditionally waited to enroll at age 5. Many districts have moved to deliver and improve early learning by making smart use of federal, state and local resources. The most creative among them are stitching together these funding streams to create full-day opportunities that are most desired by working families.

School districts can, for example, serve the same low-income child in a morning TK program and an afternoon California State Preschool Program classroom. In 2015, the California Department of Education confirmed that such combinations are authorized, so long as the programs are delivered subsequently and not simultaneously.[28]

For districts that operate both expanded TK programs and state preschool, the enrollment of larger numbers of 4 year-olds in TK opens up the opportunity to serve more low-income 3 year-olds in preschool. Provided that the programs are of high quality, this creates an optimal pre-K continuum for low-income children in which they receive 2 years of formal early learning before they start kindergarten.

Questions for school boards

As school board members and school district staff focus on early learning, the school district's baseline early learning context will be important to understand. To establish the facts on the ground and encourage an informed discussion among the governance team, a number of key questions may be important to ask.

1. How many children are enrolled in our district in TK (4 year-olds), CSPP (3 and 4 year-olds), Head Start (3 and 4 year-olds), and are children on waiting lists for these programs?

2. Have we done any fiscal modeling of what it would cost to invest more significantly in early learning? What could we save over time by doing that?

3. How does the district ensure high quality in all of the early learning programs we provide?

   » What are the adult-child ratios and class sizes in TK? Have we considered investing local or federal dollars to improve those metrics?

   » Do we use developmentally appropriate curriculum for 4 year-olds in TK?

   » Do we go beyond minimum state permit requirements when we hire teachers for our California State Preschool Program?

4. Do our pre-K teachers, staff, directors and principals engage in early learning-focused professional development on a regular basis, comparable to the quality and frequency of PD that is available in K-3?

5. What are we doing to promote alignment of our pre-K-kindergarten-third grade programs?

6. Do we have good relationships and communication with our COE and private and non-profit preschool-childcare providers in our community?

   » How do we coordinate with non-district providers, including Head Start and First 5, on school readiness activities, especially in providing opportunities for collaborative professional development?

   » Could we convene them in a joint conversation about our mutual roles in promoting kindergarten readiness?

   » Do we participate in local and regional efforts with our COE and our First 5 Commission?

7. Do we address pre-K in our Local Control and Accountability Plan?

Additional resources for school board members:

» American Institutes for Research study on the impact of TK:

  www.air.org/resource/impact-californias-transitional-kindergarten-program-2013-14

» Learning Policy Institute brief on elements of quality programs:

  learningpolicyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/LPI_ECE-quality-brief_WEB-022916.pdf

» Early Edge California (policy advocacy organization's web site, multiple resources):

  www.earlyedgecalifornia.org

» California Preschool Learning Foundations (state "standards" for preschool):

  www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp

» Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy and Learning (CDE):

  www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf

This brief was written by Susanna Cooper, senior fellow at the Stuart Foundation and an independent consultant on education policy and strategic communications. She wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Deborah Kong of Early Edge California for her review and for substantive contributions to the section on the importance of quality, and Julie Maxwell Jolly of CSBA for review and helpful suggestions for refinement.

References

1 Hart, B. & Risley, T. (1995). "Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children." University of Kansas.

2 Grusky, D. et al (2015), "Why Is There So Much Poverty In California?" Stanford University Center on Poverty and Inequality.

3 Barnett, W. S., et al (2013). "Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow-Up." National Institute for Early Education Research.

4 Gottfried, M. (2014). "English Language Learner School Readiness and Pre-Kindergarten Care." Educational Policy. Gottfried, M. (2015). "Formal versus Informal Pre-kindergarten and School Readiness for Children of Immigrant Families." University of California, Santa Barbara.

5 Boyd, J., et al. (2005). "Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Development Through Preschool Education." National Institute for Education Research.

6 Ounce of Prevention Fund, "Why Investments in Early Childhood Work." Retrieved from: http://www.theounce.org/who-we-are/why-investments-in-early-childhood-work.

7 Campbell, F., et al (2002). "Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project." Applied Developmental Science 6.

8 Reynolds, A., et al (2001). "Long-term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest." Journal of the American Medical Association 285.

9 Manship, K. et al (2015). "Impact of California's Transitional Kindergarten Program, 2013-14." American Institutes for Research.

10 Lipsey, M. et al (2015). "A Randomized Control Trial of a Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Program on Children's Skills and Behaviors through Third Grade." Peabody Research Institute, Vanderbilt University.

11 Muschkin, C. et al. (2015). "Impact of North Carolina's Early Childhood Initiatives on Special Education Placements in Third Grade." Duke University.

12 President's Council of Economic Advisers (2015). "The Economics of Early Childhood Investments."

13 School Services of California (2015). "Expanded Transitional Kindergarten: New Opportunity for Districts." Fiscal Report, vol. 35, no. 21.

14 New America (2015). "The Power of a Good Idea: How the San Francisco School District is Building a Pre-K – 3rd Grade Bridge."

15 Yoshikawa, H., et al. (2013), "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education." Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development.

16 Ibid.

17 Muenchow, S. (2014) What to Look for in a High Quality Preschool. AIR Education Policy Center essay. Retrieved from http://www.air.org/resource/what-look-high-quality-preschool

18 Wechsler, M. et al. (2016). "The Building Blocks of High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs." Learning Policy Institute.

19 In January of 2016 the Governor proposed collapsing QRIS funding, such as that described in recommendation 10 above, into an Early Learning Block Grant to be distributed to school districts. As this report went to print, the Legislature was considering this proposal, which would remove requirements that $50 million in annual QRIS funds be devoted to quality improvement.

20 Ibid. Citing: Aikens and Akers (2010), Background Review of Existing Literature on Coaching," and Boller, K. et al. (2010). "Seeds to Success Modified Field Test: Findings from the Outcomes and Implementation Studies." Mathematica Policy Research.

21 Allen, L. and Kelly, B., editors (2016). "Professional Learning for the Care and Education Workforce." Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. Allen, L. and Kelly, B., editors (2016) "Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation." Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. Ewen, D. and Herzfeldt-Kamprath, R. (2016). "Examining Quality Across the Preschool-to-Third-Grade Continuum." Center for American Progress.

22 American Institutes for Research (2012). "Condition of Children Birth to Age Five and Status of Early Childhood Services in California." Prepared for the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.

23 Cannon, J., et al, (2012). "Preschool and School Readiness: Experiences of Children with Non-English-Speaking Parents." Public Policy Institute of California.

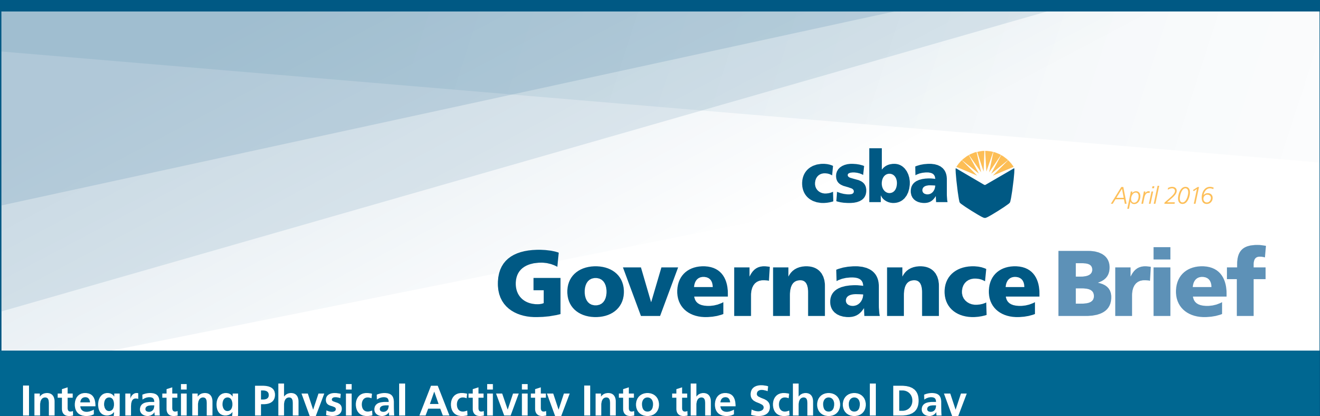
24 Burchinal, M., et al. (2012). "Instruction in Spanish in Prekindergarten Classrooms and Child Outcomes for English Language Learners." Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27, 188-197.

25 Early Head Start National Resource Center @ Zero to Three (2008). "Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five."

26 Manship, K. and Muenchow, S. (2016). "Unmet Need for Preschool Services in California: Statewide and Local Analysis." American Institutes for Research.

27 New America (2016). "California Communities Aiming for Quality in Early Learning. Focus: San Jose."

28 California Department of Education Management Bulletin 15-08: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb1508.asp.



Integrating Physical Activity Into the School Day

A Joint Publication of CSBA and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Skills learned in the classroom impact students throughout their lives. The latest research shows those vital life skills are not just mental, but also physical. When students are physically active, they increase their opportunities to become better learners, achieve academic success, and to develop lifelong healthy habits.

There is a distinction between physical education and physical activity. Physical education is a class that is specifically focused on physical activity and physical activity is an active lifestyle. Research indicates the importance of school environments that support both physical education and physical activity by encouraging opportunities for movement throughout the day. A 2010 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that when children are more active, their classroom behavior and focus on schoolwork improve.[1] These findings were reinforced by a recent study published in the journal Preventive Medicine, which found that implementing physical activity breaks is associated with improved classroom behavior.[2]

Experts recommend that students have at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.[3] One of the best ways to ensure they get that is through high-quality physical education at school. California law requires that elementary school children have at least 200 minutes of physical education every 10 school days (an average of approximately 20 minutes a day) and that middle and high school students have at least 400 minutes of physical education every 10 school days (an average of approximately 40 minutes a day).

An active lifestyle is essential to improving the health of California students. Currently, more than 30 percent of California youth ages 10-17 are overweight or obese.[4] Students who are obese are more frequently absent from school than their peers, missing out on valuable learning time as well as opportunities for physical activity, thus perpetuating the cycle.[5] According to the 2014-15 FITNESSGRAM physical fitness tests, only 26.4% of fifth-graders, 32.5% of seventh-graders, and 37.6% of ninth-graders scored in the Healthy Fitness Zone, the level of fitness that offers protection against diseases resulting from sedentary living.[6]

School leaders generally understand the importance of both physical and mental activity in school. A 2009 survey conducted by CSBA and California Project LEAN found that most school board members believe physical activity positively impacts student fitness levels and academic performance.[7] Across California, school leaders are creating greater opportunities for students to improve their health and learning through well-implemented physical education and physical activity in schools.

Spotlight on success

The Central Valley's Sanger Unified School District has made physical education and physical activity a priority, keeping students active and ready to learn. All of Sanger's elementary school students engage in 210 minutes of physical education every 10 school days, in addition to recess. The district's secondary school students engage in 400 minutes of physical activity every 10 school days.

There are signs that the increased physical activity is contributing to improvements in student learning, as well as to better physical health. "If we look at past and current performance on state and district assessments, you notice that when our elementary physical education program began, the performance on assessments went up," said Sanger Unified Physical Education Coordinator Jaime Brown. At Quail Lake Environmental Charter School, teachers had students "power walk" 20 minutes before taking state assessments because school leaders saw that students were more engaged after they walked.

Sanger improved student activity with help from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program. The Alliance's Framework of Best Practices for creating a healthier school was a key component of Sanger's

program. Even Sanger Mayor Joshua Mitchell became involved, leading the Mayor's Fitness Challenge. Students in select schools were encouraged to participate in a specific number of minutes of physical activity each day and kept activity calendars that their parents or guardians signed. Students who completed the program received a certificate presented by the mayor. The program was so popular that parents asked to expand it to more schools the following year.

How school boards can help

Lasting change needs ongoing support at all levels: district buy-in and commitment of resources helps school administrators and staff take the steps needed at the local level to invest in improving physical activity.

There are many ways boards can improve student physical activity in their counties and districts. A few suggestions are to:

- Review physical education and activity policies to identify room for improvement. CSBA's sample board policy and administrative regulation BP/AR 6142.7 – Physical Education and Activity, provide guidance, as does the Alliance's model wellness policy.
- Ask CSBA colleagues in other districts about what physical activity programs and policies have been successful for them.
- Give students opportunities to contribute to physical activity plans.
- Provide professional development opportunities and resources to classroom teachers to help them integrate physical activity into classroom instruction.
- Partner with local entities to promote physical activity. Businesses and organizations may be willing to donate money or equipment to help students become more active.
- Encourage school administrators to:
  - Open school buildings early and provide physical activity programming with adequate supervision, so students can be active before the start of the school day.
  - Create joint use agreements so the community can access a school's indoor and outdoor physical activity facilities during non-school hours.
  - Start a walking school bus.
  - Participate in programs such as the Billion Mile Race, Marathon Kids, or 100 Mile Club.
- Contact the Alliance for a Heathier Generation for information on how to integrate physical activity into the school day and grant programs that could help support these goals.
- Encourage schools to join the Active Schools/Active Minds Initiative.

How the Active Schools/Active Minds Initiative can help your district

To help schools, districts, and county offices of education increase physical activity, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation created the Active Schools/Active Minds Initiative. Participating schools receive free guidance, technical assistance, and training so they can improve physical education and physical activity in their schools. The Alliance's online assessment and action plan tools provide a customized roadmap for schools to increase opportunities for physical activity. The roadmaps are flexible enough to adapt to changing needs throughout the school year.

This year, as part of Active Schools/Active Minds, the Alliance is challenging participating schools to keep students physically active for 60 minutes every school day, including activity before, during, and after school. They suggest a 10+20+30=60 equation. In elementary schools, 10 minutes of physical activity breaks, 20 minutes of recess, and 30 minutes of physical education are recommended. For middle and high school, the equation changes to 20+40=60. That's 20 minutes of physical activity breaks and 40 minutes of physical education.

Schools that meet this goal as part of the Active Schools/Active Minds Initiative can win prizes, such as time with a celebrity athlete. Schools can participate in the Active Schools/Active Minds Initiative and can join the Healthy Schools Program at healthiergeneration.org/active.

Endnotes

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. http://1.usa.gov/1c6SUSz

2 Carlson JA, Engelberg JK, Cain KL, et al. (2015). Implementing Classroom Physical Activity Breaks: Associations with Student Physical Activity and Classroom Behavior. *Preventive Medicine*, 81:67-72.

3 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2008). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. http://1.usa.gov/1p4RnoJ

4 2011/12 National Survey of Children's Health (2015). Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. http://bit.ly/1WJ7qDm

5 Geier AB, Foster GD, Womble LG, et al. (2007). The Relationship Between Relative Weight and School Attendance Among Elementary Schoolchildren. *Obesity*, 15(8): 2157–2161.

6 State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Announces Physical Fitness Test Results Show Students Mostly Holding Steady (2015). California Department of Education. http://bit.ly/1oHzkVC

7 Physical Activity and Physical Education in California Schools: A Survey of District/County Office of Education Perceptions and Practices (2010). California School Boards Association and California Project LEAN. http://bit.ly/1VEF3Ws

FactSheet December 2015

Supporting the Summer Learning Strategy to Boost Student Achievement

Research indicates that summer learning can be an effective approach to closing opportunity gaps for students from low-income families. Many county offices of education and school districts offer summer learning as part of a complete educational strategy: two-thirds (66%) percent of respondents to a 2013 CSBA survey reported offering some type of summer learning program.

This fact sheet provides school board members with information that can help them determine if summer learning is a strategy that could be implemented in their counties or districts. The fact sheet offers a brief description of the summer learning model, an exploration of research supporting the need for students to engage in summer learning as well as of the positive effects of summer learning programs, examples of potential sources of funding for summer learning, considerations for school board members as they explore implementing summer learning, and links to additional resources on all of the above. CSBA's Summer Learning Guide provides a more complete picture of summer learning and all of the topics discussed in this fact sheet.

The summer learning model

Summer is often a time of learning loss, particularly for low-income students.[1] Providing these students more opportunities for learning during the summer months is one of the most effective ways to avoid learning loss and enhance students' progress.[2] However, not all extra time is created equal: programs that include a broad range of hands-on, problem- and project-based activities through summer enrichment experiences (similar to those available to children from higher income families who can pay for them) have been shown to be particularly effective. The summer learning model focuses on these kinds of activities and experiences that motivate and engage young people.

Financing summer learning

While the cost of summer learning varies from place to place, county offices of education and districts that operate summer learning programs report that these programs are cost effective, in part because they marshal resources from the larger community and from a range of funding sources. Much of the variation in cost for summer learning is due to the mix of certificated and classified staff members employed by the county or district and to the contribution of resources from outside agencies and partners. There is no singular avenue of support for summer learning: successful programs braid together multiple revenue sources, including funds from the Local Control Funding Formula. While securing funding for summer learning requires planning, persistence, and creativity, many counties and districts have shown that it is possible—and the research shows that it is an effective investment in student learning.

Recent research

The RAND Corporation has launched a five-year study to investigate the effect of summer learning programs in five states. The study follows a group of third-grade students enrolled in public school as of the spring 2013. The researchers used "a randomized controlled trial to assess the effects of large-scale, voluntary, district-run, summer learning programs serving low-income elementary students." Given the large scope and rigorous methodology of the RAND team, their findings are particularly helpful to those looking to increase the effectiveness of summer learning in California. RAND released early results from the study in 2014.[3] Some of the most positive findings in support of summer learning were:

» **Communities want summer learning:** The researchers found a high demand for free, voluntary

programs that combine academics and enrichment. Districts were not able to serve all the students who applied and of those who were denied admission, 60% reported not attending any kind of summer program or camp over the summer.

» Attendance matters: Increased attendance in summer learning programs was strongly associated with higher math achievement as measured by standardized tests. While third-graders' reading achievement was not found to increase as significantly as in math, the data trended upwards.

» Instructional quality and instructor grade-level experience helps reading achievement: The researchers' analysis found that reading instruction was more sensitive to instructional quality than math and that third-grade summer learning students who had a teacher who had taught third or fourth grade the prior year performed better in reading.

Implications for boards

It is a board's responsibility to set the guiding vision for the county office of education or school district. This vision should reflect the needs and wishes of the community. By asking the right questions, board members can bring attention to the issue of summer learning and offer insight into how best to create partnerships and use resources to support programs.

» Boards should ask questions about the prospective scope and approach for summer programs. The RAND study suggested that there is likely to be more demand than supply for free, voluntary programs. Therefore, considering the students who would benefit most from summer learning and the resources needed to serve these students are important areas for boards to address. As community leaders, board members can be key to identifying potential partners and creating collaborations—for example, with the city parks and recreation department or a local foundation.

» The RAND finding that attendance is an important indicator of student achievement is consistent with research on attendance during the regular school year. By communicating the value of summer learning and its potential for improving student outcomes, boards might help to create a culture in which students regularly attend, not only because they are motivated by the summer learning enrichment approach, but also because their parents understand the value of summer learning opportunities.

» Boards can make year-round investments in summer learning by supporting and funding teacher and staff professional development that can benefit student learning during the regular school year and carry over into summer.

Quality summer learning opportunities occur when they are supported by visionary, knowledgeable leaders, including board members and superintendents, committed to continuous improvement and securing the resources needed to deliver the learning experiences students need.

For further information:

CSBA

www.csba.org/summerlearning

CSBA provides related sample board policies and administrative regulations, including BP 6177 – Summer Learning Programs and BP/AR 3552 – Summer Meal Program, as well as a Summer Learning Guide, policy briefs, fact sheets and articles.

Summer Matters

www.summermatters2you.net and
http://partnerforchildren.org

This statewide campaign seeks to increase access to summer learning and enrichment programs for low-income children and youth. Through a network of partners, the Summer Matters campaign provides technical assistance and advocacy support for summer learning programs. The Partnership for Children and Youth oversees the Summer Matters campaign. Publications include Leveraging Summer for Student Success: A Guide to Help School Leaders Understand Why and How Summer Learning is an Essential Strategy in the Local Control Funding Formula; Putting Summer to Work: The Development of High-Quality Summer Learning Programs in California; and Funding to Support Summer Programs: Lessons from the Field.

RAND Corporation

www.rand.org/topics/summer-learning

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges. In a series of reports that was funded by the Walton Foundation, RAND researchers will describe whether summer learning programs benefit low-income elementary stu-

dents and what program features are associated with good outcomes.

Endnotes

1 Heyns, B. (1978). Summer learning and the effects of schooling. New York: Academic Press.

2 McCombs, J.S, Agusustine, C.H., Schwartz, H.I., et al. (2011). Making summer count: How summer programs can boost children's learning. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

3 RAND released Ready for Fall? Near-Term Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Students' Learning Opportunities and Outcomes in 2014. This is the second report in a series of five. The next report is expected in 2016.

This fact sheet was supported by a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

SUMMERMATTERS

Critical Issues

Supporting Implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards 103

Charter Schools in Focus, Issue 1: Managing the Petition Review Process 109

Key Statistics on the Teacher Shortage 117

Concussions in Student Athletes and How to Reduce Risk 123

Fact Sheet: Recent Legislation on Vaccines: SB 277 125

Supporting the California Next Generation Science Standards

by Manuel Buenrostro

The California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS) aim to ensure that all students have access to science and engineering instruction — education critical to preparing them for college, career, and life. CA NGSS instruction centers on understanding and applying scientific concepts. Therefore, effective implementation of the CA NGSS is critical to its success, and requires sufficient support and training for teachers, comprehensive district plans, and direction from governing boards.

The goal of this governance brief is to inform board members about the timeline and background for the implementation of the CA NGSS, and to provide recommendations on how governing boards can best support such efforts.

In this brief:

- Explanation of the need for the new science standards and their impact
- Overview of the timeline and components for implementation of the science standards
- Advice for boards on how they can support implementation of the science standards

CA NGSS Background

Nearly one in five jobs in the United States requires at least some education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), with the growth of these jobs expected to outpace growth in other sectors.[1] Furthermore, according to a 2015 report by the Public Policy Institute of California, the state faces a shortage of 1.1 million college-educated workers by 2030. Demand is expected to increase most rapidly in many high-paying STEM-focused occupations, including computer and mathematical science, architecture, engineering, and health care.[2] The ability to meet this demand with an educated, prepared workforce — particularly in science and engineering — is crucial to California's future economic prosperity.

The CA NGSS are designed to provide this education for K-12 public school students. The new standards are based on robust research and the contributions of teachers, scientists, and education experts to ensure relevance and real-world applicability. The CA NGSS also provides teachers with the flexibility to design learning experiences that are relevant to their students and the local community.

The Need for New Science Standards

It has been nearly 20 years since the 1998 adoption of California's previous science standards. Since then, there have been transformational scientific and technological advancements that highlight the need for new standards that emphasize the skills and knowledge required to keep pace with these breakthroughs. In addition, the CA NGSS provides students with a solid foundation in science and important life skills, including critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving.

Implementation Timeline and Key Components

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the CA NGSS in fall 2013. To assist effective implementation and support for teachers, the SBE approved the *NGSS Systems Implementation Plan for California* in November 2013. The plan's timeline provides for a gradual transition, with full implementation in every classroom slated for the 2018-19 school year. The California Department of Education (CDE)

will provide guidance throughout the transition. School and county board members can also support this transition by ensuring that their school district or county office of education has a plan for each step in the process. The timeline includes the following key components:

- **Adoption of the California Science Curriculum Framework.** The SBE approved the new California Science Curriculum Framework in November 2016. Since 2014, the development of the framework has comprised multiple focus groups and public comment periods, including the participation of CSBA.
- **Adoption of Instructional Materials.** Following the adoption of the framework, new science instructional materials will be adopted. The list of K-8 science instructional materials is expected to be approved by the SBE in 2018. For 9-12th grade, county offices of education and school districts will be responsible for identifying instructional materials that are aligned to the content standards and that meet the needs of all students.
- **Science Assessments.** The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASSPP) plan includes science assessments in 5th and 8th grade, and once in high school. During the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, the first two years of CASSPP implementation, students took the California Standards Test (CST), the California Modified Assessment (CMA), or the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) in science. The CMA and CAPA are alternate, individually administered science assessments for students with disabilities. In 2016, the SBE adopted a plan for establishing NGSS-aligned student assessments, the California Science Test (CAST) and the California Alternate Assessment for Science (CAAS), which will eventually be included in the state's accountability system. Once fully implemented, the CAST and CAAS will be administered in 5th and 8th grade, and once in 10-12th grade (the grade at which the assessment will be administered at the high school level will be a local decision). The timeline for these assessments is as follows:

Year	California Science Test (CAST)	California Alternate Assessment for Science (CAAS)
Spring 2017	Pilot Test	Pilot Test
Spring 2018	Field Test	Pilot Test
Spring 2019	Full Implementation	Field Test
Spring 2020	Full Implementation	Full Implementation

Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, all 5th and 8th grade students will participate in the CAST or CAAS pilot, with the CDE assigning (by January 2017) a grade to be assessed for each high school. The pilot test for the CAAS will be administered for two years to ensure a more accurate measure for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It is also worth noting that while there is an optional standards-based test in Spanish for English language arts, there is no plan to offer such a test for math or science.

- **Professional Development.** In preparation for the full rollout during the 2018-19 school year, county offices of education and school districts should immediately start to educate teachers and administrators about the new standards and their effective implementation. In addition to the training provided by county offices of education, school districts, and schools, the CDE and other groups, including CSBA, are also offering training for school district leaders on CA NGSS implementation.

The CA K-8 NGSS Early Implementation Initiative

Eight California school districts and two charter management organizations (CMOs) are currently implementing the CA NGSS through a four-year demonstration project. By fully implementing the new standards ahead of other school districts, these early implementers can serve as a source of best practices and lessons learned. The intiative is also helping teachers and administrators develop the skills needed for the rollout of CA NGSS. Participating districts include Galt Joint Union Elementary School District, Kings Canyon Unified School District, Lakeside Union School District, Oakland Unified School District, Palm Springs Unified School District, San Diego Unified School District, Tracy Unified School District, and Vista Unified School District. The project is funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, led by WestEd's K-12 Alliance, and supported by the CDE and Achieve. The CMOs in the initiative are Aspire and High Tech High, with their participation funded by the Hastings/Quillin fund at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Teachers participating in this initiative contribute monthly to *California Classroom Science* (http://bit.ly/2eyRV4x) and more information can be found at the K-12 Alliance website (http://bit.ly/2ep6Hgd).

Impact of CA NGSS Implementation

Among the many benefits of the CA NGSS, their full implementation will:

» **Increase Student Engagement.** The CA NGSS are designed to encourage curiosity, inspire students to ask questions about the world around them, and allow for hands-on learning — all while incorporating the most current ideas and discoveries.

» **Provide Science and Engineering Instruction in the Early Grades.** The CA NGSS promotes a curriculum focused on building scientific concepts over time, from Kindergarten through high school. Teaching science across all grades — and in the early grades in particular — is a critical change from the previous standards. According to a 2011 report, 40% of elementary teachers stated that their students received 60 minutes or less of science instruction per week, while 13% reported 30 minutes or less.[3] This is not ideal, particularly because research shows that early exposure to STEM material is essential for encouraging more females and students of color to pursue STEM careers. In addition, early exposure to science and related concepts has been shown to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills and support academic achievement in other subjects.[4]

» **Promote Integration of Science Across All Subjects.** The CA NGSS encourages a collaborative approach to learning that incorporates science concepts within math and other subjects. Therefore, implementation of the standards requires additional support, time, and professional development for teachers in all grades and subject areas. For example, elementary teachers will need additional opportunities to learn science concepts while secondary teachers will need support and planning time to collaborate with their colleagues across subject areas. The long-term goal is for teachers to improve their instructional skills in science principles and across the curriculum.

» **Encourage Real-World Learning Opportunities.** School district or county office of education collaboration with museums, libraries, businesses, community colleges, and universities can greatly supplement instruction and provide real-world experiences for students. For example, partnerships with business and museums can offer internships and summer jobs. County office of education or school district programs, such as afterschool programs, can also provide valuable experiences to underserved communities and students, which have been shown to help close opportunity gaps. For example, the Afterschool Alliance found in a recent evaluation of STEM programs across the country that youth who attended high quality afterschool programs in middle school improved their attitudes about STEM fields and careers, increased their knowledge and skills, and were more likely to graduate and pursue a STEM career.[5]

What Can Boards Do?

Implementing the CA NGSS takes planning, persistence, and time. Board members can make a critical contribution by establishing the right messages, ensuring that there is a coherent implementation plan, and allocating sufficient resources. Here are a few recommendations for how governing boards can support the transition to the CA NGSS:

Ensure an Implementation Plan Is in Place

All school districts and county offices of education should have an implementation plan for the transition to the CA NGSS, including robust professional development for school leaders and teachers on the new instructional methods and assessments. While the roles of school districts and county offices of education are different, support should be a key theme. For a school district, providing support to school sites will be critical, while county offices of education will want to ensure that their school districts have sufficient guidance. Staff and resource capacity is always a concern but can be more challenging for small and rural school districts. In these situations, county offices of education can help fill gaps in services while also encouraging partnerships to bring about more resources. School districts and county offices of education can refer to the *NGSS Systems Implementation Plan for California* at http://bit.ly/1qGigK1

Align Resources

With California's shift to greater local control of education, county offices of education and school districts have the authority and responsibility to set priorities and allocate resources to support any new endeavor. State law requires that all school districts and county offices of education include the implementation of the CA NGSS as a priority within their Local Control Accountability Plan. This process also allows board members to engage with teachers, school leaders, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders to ensure that the transition is widely supported. Investments in the transition should also emphasize closing opportunity gaps and ensuring that additional support is provided to schools with inadequate science offerings, teacher capacity, or science achievement. Local Control Funding Formula base funding can be used to support science implementation

while the use of supplemental or concentration funding may be appropriate for providing extra science support for high-need students. In addition, April 2016 guidance from the U.S. Department of Education provides recommendations for county offices of education, school districts, and schools to use federal funding to support STEM education, available at http://bit.ly/1V24apj

Prioritize Professional Learning

High-quality instruction and qualified and well-trained staff are the most critical components of an effective transition to the CA NGSS. As demonstrated by the transition to California's new math and English language arts standards, school districts and county offices of education should prioritize investments in professional development for teachers and school leaders. Research has shown that effective teacher professional development occurs when aligned with the specific needs of schools and students, along with sufficient time to collaborate and apply concepts to curriculum planning.[6] Empowering experienced teachers to become leaders and train their peers can also be an effective strategy for delivering professional development while creating leadership and career growth opportunities. Fortunately, school districts and county offices of education do not have to think about this on their own. The California Science Teachers Association, the K-12 Alliance at WestEd, the California Science Project, CDE, and other groups, have offered and will continue to offer professional learning opportunities for teachers, administrators, and other school leaders.

Including the Community, Teachers, and Parents and Guardians

Inclusion of the community, from teachers to parents/guardians in all aspects of the CA NGSS transition is also key to successful implementation. Therefore, it is important for county office of education and school district leaders to communicate the goals of CA NGSS and its potential for positive impact on student success. Parents/guardians can in turn, be key contributors to STEM education at home, in the classroom, and through their feedback on school and district plans. The California PTA has resources available for county offices of education and school districts that can support parent/guardian engagement efforts, available at http://bit.ly/2dDNWUE

Questions for Board Members

As important decision makers in their school districts and county offices of education, board members have a responsibility to ask questions and think strategically about the implementation of the CA NGSS and the support it will require. Answers to the following questions can help board members prepare for and support the CA NGSS implementation:

1. Has our school district or county office of education developed a plan for the implementation of the CA NGSS? Have funds been allocated to support all phases and aspects of implementation, including for the purchase of materials and professional development?

2. What does our current science and engineering instruction look like? What does it look like for student groups? Based on their achievement, are there schools or student populations that might require additional support during and after implementation?

3. Have we analyzed facility and equipment needs and is there a plan to address them? Do our facilities have sufficient laboratory space?

4. What are the professional development opportunities provided to teachers about CA NGSS implementation? Is there support for teachers targeted specifically at the elementary and secondary levels?

5. Does each school have teachers with the appropriate credentials, training, and support to deliver strong science and engineering instruction? Is there a plan to compensate for gaps in staffing capacity in a time of teacher shortages? Is there a plan for professional development to advance learning and leadership skills?

6. What are the best methods to communicate the changes in science and engineering instruction and assessment to staff, students, parents and guardians, and the greater community? Are potential anxieties or concerns anticipated and addressed in a communication plan? How can we engage stakeholders in ways that stimulate their support?

7. Have we reached out to local partners, such as museums, businesses, community colleges, and universities to support science and engineering instruction and develop additional resources and learning opportunities for students?

In addition, the following questions are specific to county offices of education as they build their capacity to support school districts and schools under California's new accountability framework:

8. Has the county office of education contacted school districts to determine initial needs and supported them in the development of an implementation plan?
9. How can the county office of education help school districts share resources, plans, and best practices?
10. For county offices of education serving small or rural school districts, what are the capacity gaps in each school district? How can the county office of education build its capacity to help meet these gaps?

Conclusion

The CA NGSS is a key educational foundation for all California students, and critical to preparing them for college and the workforce. School district and county office of education board members can help with implementation by supporting CA NGSS as a top priority, and by ensuring the requisite teachers and staff are in place. In addition, all school district and county office of education plans should include provisions for monitoring opportunity gaps and ensuring that there are aggressive strategies to close them. The CA NGSS play an important role too in closing these achievement gaps through their focus on student engagement and learning across disciplines and subject areas. CSBA will continue to monitor CA NGSS implementation and other issues in California's changing education landscape and alert governance teams to opportunities to improve achievement for all California students.

Resources

CSBA Resources

CSBA will continue to issue guidance to board members on the implementation of new standards and assessments. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to AR 6162.51 – State Academic Achievement Tests through Gamut Online at http://www.gamutonline.net/

External Resources

» **The California Alliance for Next Generation Science Standards (CA4NGSS) Communications Toolkit.** The CA4NGSS facilitates collaboration among education, business, government, and community leaders to support effective and timely implementation of NGSS throughout California. As a member, CSBA is supporting the development of communication toolkits for multiple stakeholders. Completed materials can be found at http://bit.ly/2eM5OtZ

» **California Department of Education (CDE).** The CDE provides relevant information on the implementation of the CA NGSS, including guidance for county offices of education, school districts, and schools. Visit CDE's NGSS page at http://bit.ly/1GzhQxB

» **NGSS Systems Implementation Plan for California.** California's implementation plan for the transition to the new science standards, available at http://bit.ly/23oPcyu

» **U.S. Department of Education Dear Colleague Letter.** Letter providing guidance on how to use federal funding to support STEM education, available at http://bit.ly/1V24apj

» **Science Collaboration Committee.** A multi-stakeholder leadership group focused on strengthening and building state systems of support to help teachers and schools implement the CA NGSS instructional shifts. To learn more, visit http://bit.ly/2eD4H0Y

» **California PTA Resources for Engaging Parents in STEM Education.** Resources for county offices of education and school districts that can support efforts at parent engagement, available at http://bit.ly/2eySmvG

» **Teaching Channel Video: NGSS: A Vision for K-12 Science Education.** Available at http://bit.ly/1wywN2C

Endnotes

1 Rothwell, J. (2013). The hidden STEM economy. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. Retrieved from http://brook.gs/2e4PumZ

2 Johnson, H., Cuellar Mejia, M., Bohn, S. (2015). Will California run out of college graduates? Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2eAwzB4

3 Dorph, R., Shields, P., Tiffany-Morales, J., Hartry, A., McCaffrey, T. (2011). High hopes — few opportunities: the status of elementary science education in California. The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2eCQUHx

4 National Research Council. (2011). Successful K-12 STEM education: identifying effective approaches in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The National Academies Press. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2dDv7kJ

5 Afterschool Alliance. (2011). STEM learning in afterschool: an analysis of impact and outcomes. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1IRgPmo

6 Darling-Hammond, L., Chung Wei, R., Andree, A., Richardson, N., Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession: a status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad. National Staff Development Council. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2eERdRr

Manuel Buenrostro is an Education Policy Analyst for California School Boards Association

Charter Schools in Focus, Issue 1

Managing the Petition Review Process

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

This brief is the first in a series aimed at supporting governing boards to provide effective charter school oversight. School districts and county offices of education are charged with delivering a high-quality educational program for all students that prepares them for college, career, and civic life. Locally elected school boards and county boards of education play a major role in holding the system accountable. When students attend a public charter school that may have a separate governance structure and significant flexibility in the delivery of an educational program, the school board or county board of education that approved the charter maintains ultimate accountability to the community.

This brief focuses on the steps and strategies for governing boards to consider upon receiving a charter petition (i.e., a formal plan to establish and operate a charter school). Many of the processes and criteria for the review of charter petitions are delineated in law. Regardless, there is still considerable discretion for boards to determine whether a proposed charter school meets the legal criteria for approval. By requiring petitioners to engage in careful and comprehensive planning, governing boards can increase the likelihood of a charter school's success in providing a high-quality education.

Charter Schools in California

According to data from the California Department of Education, there were more than 1,200 active charter schools during the 2015-16 school year, serving 572,752 students statewide — or approximately 9% of all K-12 students in California. There are charter schools operating in 53 of California's 58 counties.[1] Since California began to approve charter schools in 1992, growth has been steady. However, the number of charter school approvals has increased more rapidly over the last few years, growing by more than 400 schools from the 2009-10 to 2015-16 school years. During that same period, enrollment in charter schools has grown by nearly 250,000 students.[2]

Research has shown mixed academic results for charter schools in California and nationwide. The second brief in this series will provide detailed information on various outcomes for a range of student groups in California.

Governing Board Responsibilities and Recommendations

Governing boards along with the support of the superintendent and staff, have three major oversight responsibilities as charter school authorizers:

1. **To review the charter school petition,** prior to making a decision, to determine compliance with statutory requirements and feasibility of the proposed operations.
2. **To oversee the performance of the charter school,** including that it meets student achievement targets, demonstrates fiscal stability, and complies with state and federal laws — including submission to the authorizer of the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and other documents.
3. **To determine whether a charter school should be renewed** or, if needed, revoked in accordance with the law.

Principal among these responsibilities is ensuring that a robust review process is conducted prior to making a decision on a charter petition. This is critical so that only charter schools that are the most likely to be successful are authorized, and that the parameters of their relationship with the school district or county office of education are established ahead of time.

Recommendations in Anticipation of a Charter School Petition

After receiving a complete and properly submitted petition to establish a charter school, a governing board has 60 days to grant or deny the charter contract. This period can be extended an additional 30 days with mutual agreement between the board and the petitioners. The review process is relatively short and moves fast, therefore, it is imperative for governing boards to have their policies, procedures, and key staff in place to meet their obligations and make the best decision for their students and community. The following are recommendations for governing boards to manage charter school petitions more effectively:

1. **Establish a Charter School Petition Review Team**. To assist the governing board, a team of staff members and if necessary, consultants, should be established to review charter petitions. The team will review petitions and supporting documentation before board action is required. The team should include individuals with expertise including human resources, business, finance, facilities, education services, special education, and curriculum, along with legal counsel. The team will want to provide an explanation for each of its findings on a petition for the board to review. While the superintendent is responsible for establishing this review team, governing boards can ensure sufficient resources for the review process and provide direction on how information should be prepared.

2. **Establish and Refine Policies Regarding Charter Schools.** Every board should consider establishing a policy outlining requirements for submission and review of charter school petitions. This policy should specify any information that the board will need to evaluate the potential success of a charter. In addition, policies addressing charter school oversight, renewal, and revocation, should be available to petitioners so that they are aware of any requirements if their charter is granted. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to sample board policies, administrative regulations, and exhibits: BP/AR 0420.4–Charter School Authorization, BP/E 0420.41–Charter School Oversight, BP 0420.42–Charter School Renewal, BP 0420.43–Charter School Revocation, and BP/AR 7160–Charter School Facilities.

3. **Define any Authorizer Preferences.** In accordance with Education Code 47605(h), "the governing board shall give preference to petitions that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to pupils identified by the petitioner or petitioners as academically low achieving." Governing boards should address this preference in their policies or guidance documents. For instance, the board may want to encourage petitioners to focus on specific needs, such as targeting English language learners. While petitions do not need to conform to any of the preferences, outlining them in advance might shape potential petitions.

4. **Determine Support Available to Petitioners.** Some school districts and county offices of education have staff look at petitions prior to submission to allow time to fix deficiencies. Some interact with petitioners during the review period to negotiate changes. Others strongly believe that thorough and complete charter petitions should be submitted without assistance, allowing the board and staff to judge them on their own merits and determine the petitioner's ability to operate a school successfully. However, there could also be issues, such as services to be provided by the school district or county office of education, which can require additional guidance. While the extent of staff support is based on local preferences, the review process should be discussed and approved by governing boards ahead of time.

5. **Engage the Public and Petitioners.** School districts and county offices of education should make available information regarding charter school applications to any interested party. This information can include school district or county office of education policies related to charter schools, authorizer preferences, additional materials for submission, and the format for submitting that information. This is also an opportunity for the governing board and staff to engage community members, families, and other stakeholders so that there is a common understanding of school district or county office of education goals and vision for charter schools.

Importance of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

Governing boards will want to determine any MOU components it may want to complete with petitioners during the review process. An MOU is a legally binding agreement between the charter school and the school district or county office of education. While charter law does not reference MOUs, they are recommended to establish and clarify operational details when necessary. However, efforts should be made to add any critical details in an original petition where appropriate. Any MOU should be incorporated in a petition as an attachment so that it becomes part of the final charter. Since some of the items may be lengthy, a separate MOU for business operations, facilities, administrative and support services, special education, assessment, and athletics are common. *CSBA's Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams* discusses these items in more detail and is a helpful resource for further guidance.

Key Steps of the Charter School Petition Review Process

Within 60 days of receiving a charter school petition, review teams must provide a robust review of the petition, identify challenges early on, and provide timely information to allow the governing board to make an informed decision. While some school districts and county offices of education will have dedicated staff to do this work, others will need to be creative about staffing during the review process, which might include hiring consultants. The following are key steps that governing boards should keep in mind during the review period.

Day 1: Governing Board Officially Receives and Date Stamps the Petition

Staff should officially submit and date stamp a complete and properly submitted petition at the first board meeting following receipt. This will start the 60-day timeline for review.

By Day 30: Board Holds Public Hearing

Within 30 days of official receipt, the governing board must hold a public hearing. This is an important opportunity for the board to hear from the petitioners, their staff, and the public. The board may choose to hold multiple hearings, provided that they meet all required timelines and public notice requirements. Board members should also seek public input from relevant participants, including families, unions, and teachers, to identify areas of support and any concerns.

Ongoing: Staff Conducts Internal Review

The internal review of a charter petition is conducted by the petition review team and should begin as soon as the petition is received. During this process, the review team should compile relevant information and report its findings to the board in advance of the public hearing. In some school districts or county offices of education, a checklist or rubric is used to ensure that reviews are consistent and provide adequate information for the board to make a sound decision.

As part of the internal review, legal review of the petition is also critical. For all charter petitions, governing boards should ensure that legal counsel:

- » Confirms that the petition complies with applicable Education Code provisions regarding petition review and all other applicable state and federal laws.
- » Reviews the adequacy of the petitioner's insurance and liability terms.
- » Confirms that the petition addresses any services that will be provided by the school district or county office of education (e.g., testing administration, food, and accounting services).

By Day 60: Take Action

Within 60 days of officially receiving the petition, the board must complete the review process and determine whether to grant or deny the charter. After analyzing the petition, ensuring it complies with the Education Code, and reviewing staff recommendations, the board may take one of the following actions:

- » **Grant the charter for a term of up to five years.** This can include any MOUs detailing operational agreements during the review process, including on special education and facilities.
- » **Grant the charter with conditions to operate.** Conditions can be established in an MOU and require that, within a designated period of time, the petitioners resolve issues raised by the governing board or provide materials not available during the review process (e.g., insurance, leases, corporate filing, human resources manuals, etc.). Failure to comply with established conditions is a violation of the charter and can lead to its rescission or revocation. School districts or county offices of education should consult with legal counsel when determining how to handle these violations.

- **Ask the petitioners to withdraw the petition** until they can correct deficiencies.
- **Deny the petition** based on grounds established in Education Code.
- **Seek the allowed 30-day extension** through written agreement from petitioners, in order to have additional time for consideration.

Components of a Complete Charter School Petition

There are certain requirements for complete charter school petitions delineated in law. Governing boards can establish their own policies for submitting charter school petitions that include these requirements in addition to other information. CSBA recommends that governing boards establish a process for the review of charter school petitions that includes the following information:

- A petition application letter.
- A signature page.
- The petition's 16 required elements.
- Statutorily required information and affirmations.
- Locally recommended additional information that may help the board determine whether the petition meets requirements.

The 16 required elements include information ranging from a description of the charter school's educational program, admission requirements, and closure procedures. Additional information at the local level can include the school calendar or board member biographies. For additional information, see Education Code 47605 and *CSBA's Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*.

What Should Boards Consider in Making their Decision?

When evaluating a petition, governing boards must grant approval unless written factual findings are made that certain, specified requirements have not been met. The board may not deny a petition based on the potential impact of a charter school on the school district's or county office of education's other educational programs, fiscal health, or facilities.

Any one of the following conditions must exist for a petition to be denied, as delineated in Education Code 47605(b):

- The charter presents an unsound educational program.
- The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition.
- The petition does not contain the number of signatures required.
- The petition does not contain an affirmation of each of the conditions described in Education Code 47605(d).
- The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of the 16 required elements as described in Education Code 47605(b).

Except for the signature requirement, most criteria for denial require a more rigorous evaluation by the review team. The governing board can be proactive by establishing criteria for an "unsound educational program," the conditions under which a petitioner might be "unlikely to successfully implement the program", and the level of detail required for the affirmations and the 16 required elements.

The State Board of Education (SBE) has approved regulations (5 CCR 11967.5.1) pertaining to original and renewal charter petitions that come before it on appeal. Specifically, these regulations define "unsound educational program" and the terms to measure "unlikely to successfully implement the program." These regulations are not binding for school districts or county offices of education, but may be helpful for reviewing charter petitions and establishing criteria for success. The SBE regulations can be found at http://bit.ly/2dfFEgR

Grade-Level Restrictions

A petition to establish a charter school may not be approved to serve students in a grade level that is not served by the school district or county office of education considering the petition, unless it proposes to serve all grade levels served by the school district or county office of education. In other words, elementary school districts would be prohibited from approving petitions for charter schools serving only high school students. However, an elementary school district serving K-6 students can approve a petition for a K-12 charter school since the school would be serving students in all of the grade levels served by the school district, plus the additional grade levels of 7-12.

Appeal Considerations

Charter petitions denied by a school board can appeal first to the county board of education and then if necessary, to the SBE.

Appeal to the County Board of Education

Petitioners may submit an appeal to the county board of education within 180 days of denial by the school board. The county board of education has 60 days (plus a possible 30-day extension by mutual agreement) to approve or deny the appeal. Unlike most expulsion appeals, the county board of education reviews the petition anew (i.e., "de novo") and must make its own factual findings if it decides to deny the petition on appeal. If the county board of education approves the petition on appeal, it becomes the authorizer and is responsible for oversight.

Appeal to the State Board of Education

Petitioners may also submit an appeal to the SBE if the county board of education denies the petition. Just as with an appeal to the county board of education, the SBE also reviews the petition anew. If the SBE approves the petition, then the California Department of Education becomes the oversight agency. By mutual agreement, the SBE may designate the board that originally denied the petition or any local education agency in the county in which the charter school is located as the oversight agency. However, the SBE would retain the authority to revoke the charter.

Note that petitioners have the option to seek a judicial review of the school board's original decision if the county board of education or SBE fail to act on a petition within 120 days of receipt.

Charter School Petitions Submitted Directly to a County Board of Education

Charter school petitions can be directly submitted to a county board of education under the following circumstances:

Authorization of Charter Schools Serving a Student Population Normally Served by the County Office of Education. County boards of education may approve a charter petition directly when the county office of education would otherwise be responsible for providing direct education and related services to the students served in the proposal. Denial of these petitions may be appealed to the SBE.

Authorization of Countywide Charter Schools. A countywide charter school operates at one or more sites within the geographic boundaries of a county and provides instructional services not generally provided by a county office of education. If making a decision to approve such a charter, the county board of education must find (in addition to the other legal requirements) that the charter school will offer educational services to a student population that cannot be served as well by a charter operating in only one school district in the county.

County offices of education should establish a separate process for countywide charter petitions to prevent confusion and legal challenge. The timeline for consideration of countywide charter petitions is 90 days with a possible 30-day mutually agreed extension. The county board of education's decision to deny a countywide charter petition is final — there is no appeal to the SBE.

Questions for Board Members

Board members can ask the following questions to gain a better understanding of the process for reviewing charter school petitions by their school district or county office of education.

Before a Petition

1. Who are the staff in charge of reviewing charter school petitions? Do they have sufficient time and expertise? Are consultants needed to bring in additional expertise?

2. Who is conducting the legal review? What will be their role in the review process?

3. Has the board approved any policies for establishing charter schools? Are the policies up to date with current law and best practices?

4. What information pertaining to a charter school petition is provided to the board before the public hearing? In what format is this information provided, and is it sufficient to make an informed decision?

During Petition Review

5. What experience do the petitioners have operating a school? Do they have the resources or experience to implement what is proposed in the petition?

6. Does the proposed educational program meet the board's definition of a "sound educational program," and is the program research-based and aligned with the California State Standards?

7. What is the governance structure of the proposed charter? Do the members of the charter governing board have the necessary expertise to successfully support the school and understand the needs of the community?

8. Is the petition (including individual charter board members) affiliated with any other charter school or Charter Management Organization? What are those connections and how do they effect the operation of the proposed school? What have been the student outcomes of the affiliated charter schools?

9. Does the petition include a realistic, balanced budget? How realistic are the enrollment projections?

10. Does the petition clarify the expected role of the governing board, community, and other stakeholders in the LCAP process?

11. Are there clear goals for student achievement for which the charter school will be accountable? Are the goals and indicators for progress measurable and commonly understood by board members, school district staff, community members, and the petitioners?

12. What are the services and other operational aspects of the charter school that should be in the petition or an MOU before approval?

After Petition Review

13. What types of reports and information will staff need to provide for the board to monitor the performance and progress of charter schools? What additional training can be provided to improve how staff monitors the performance and progress of charter schools?

14. How should the school district or county office of education communicate concerns to its charter schools?

15. How can the charter petition review process and charter school policies be improved?

Conclusion

Governing boards have the responsibility to make decisions that provide students with access to a quality education that prepares them for college, career, and civic life. As part of this responsibility, school districts and county offices of education need to carefully review charter school petitions and approve only those with a sounds educational program and adequate evidence that points to its successful implementation.

CSBA is committed to supporting the role of governing boards in maintaining and overseeing accountability and improving the quality of education in California schools. This brief, along with subsequent briefs in the series, our sample policies, and *Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*, are powerful resources to support board members in carrying out their governance responsibilities.

CSBA Resources

Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams (February 2016). CSBA's nuts-and-bolts explanation of charter law and regulations to help school boards and county boards of education negotiate charter petitions, renewals, facility requests, and other topics related to charter school oversight. Available for purchase at www.csba.org/store

Education Insights: Legal Update Webcast, Season 3, Ep.3 (March 2016). This webcast focuses on charter schools and board member responsibilities. Watch as legal and policy experts discuss each governing board's oversight responsibilities and other issues such as facility requests and the petition and appeals process. View the webcast at www.csba.org/EdInsights

Gamut Online. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to the following charter school-specific sample policies and regulations:

» BP/AR 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization

» BP/E 0420.41 - Charter School Oversight

» BP 0420.42 - Charter School Renewal

» BP 0420.43 - Charter School Revocation

» BP/AR 7160 - Charter School Facilities

Visit www.gamutonline.net

Endnotes

1 California Department of Education. Public schools and districts data files. Downloaded June 20, 2016 from http://bit.ly/2eicB0C

2 California Department of Education. Enrollment in California public charter schools by ethnic designation, 2009-10 and 2015-16. Downloaded August 3, 2016 from http://bit.ly/2e991rR

Manuel Buenrostro is an Education Policy Analyst for California School Boards Association

KEY STATISTICS ON THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

by Manuel Buenrostro

THE TEACHER SHORTAGE PRESENTS A SERIOUS PROBLEM TO PRE-K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA.

As the most important in-school factor to student achievement, teachers are essential to county offices of education, school districts and schools meeting their goals of providing a quality education for all students and closing opportunity gaps.

1 THE CRISIS

CALIFORNIA DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH TEACHERS TO MEET DEMAND AND THE PROBLEM IS GETTING WORSE.

NEED FOR TEACHERS HAS DOUBLED

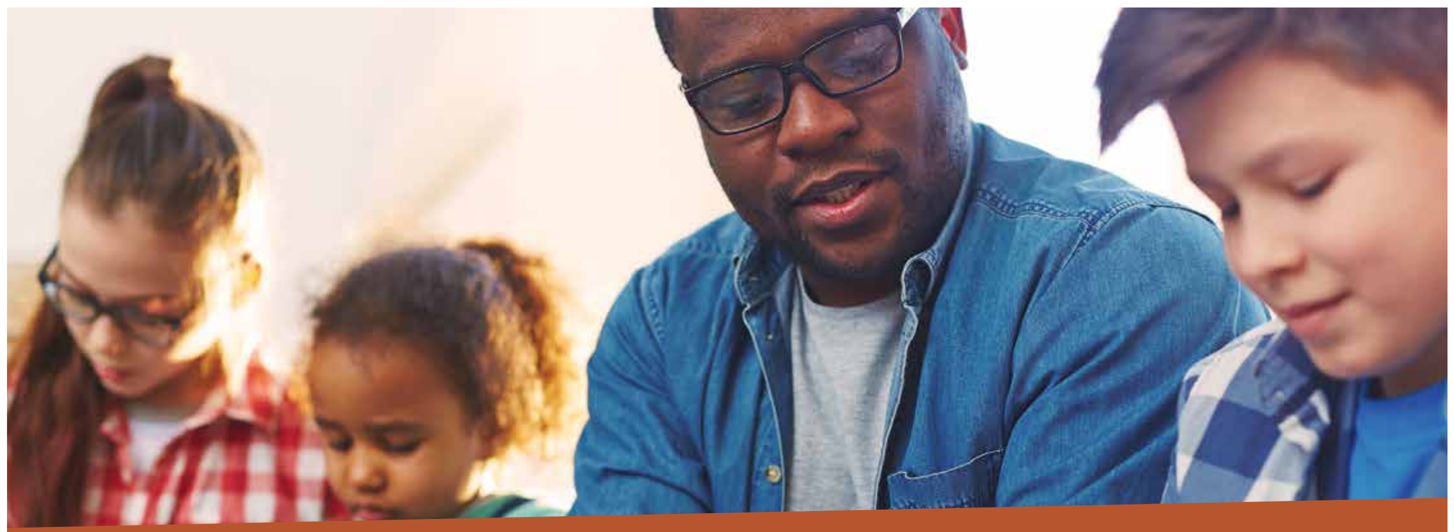
California public schools need to hire 22,315 teachers during the 2016-17 school year, more than double the estimated teacher hires from the 2010-11 school year.

25% DROP IN NUMBER OF CREDENTIALS ISSUED

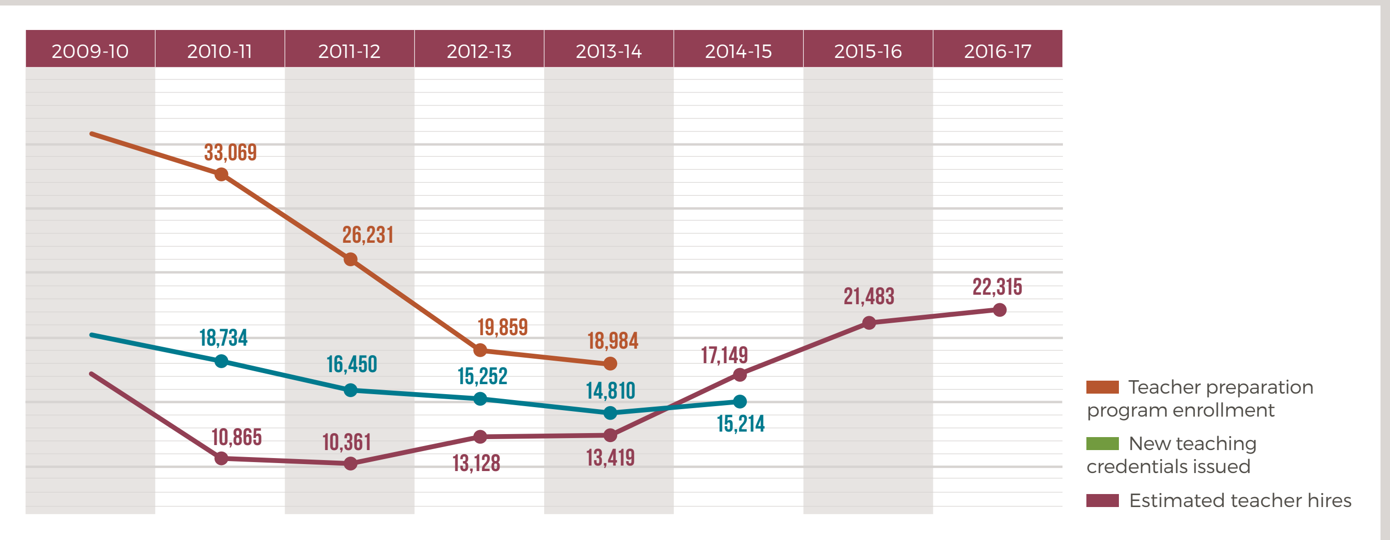
Only 15,214 new teaching credentials were issued in 2014-15, a 25 percent drop from those issued just five years ago.

RAPID DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has been declining rapidly — enrollment in 2013-14 was half of enrollment in 2009-10.



TEACHER DEMAND AND SUPPLY: ESTIMATED TEACHER HIRES, NEW TEACHING CREDENTIALS ISSUES AND TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM ENROLLMENT



2 TEACHER EXPERIENCE AND ATTRITION

THE RETIREMENT OF TEACHERS FROM THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION HAS CONTRIBUTED LARGELY TO TEACHER ATTRITION OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

- A large proportion of California teachers are at or near retirement age. During the 2014-15 school year, more than one in three California teachers were age 50 or older, while nearly one in 10 were age 60 or older.
- With these shifts, California has become more dependent on teachers in their first two years of experience. From the 2010-11 to the 2014-15 school years, the proportion of all California teachers with two or fewer years of experience more than doubled (from 5 percent to 12 percent).

- The attrition of newcomers is also of concern.
  - A 2006 study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that over a quarter of California's teachers left the profession within five years.
  - Studies have also indicated that turnover and transfer rates are higher amongst teachers in high-poverty schools and school districts.

County offices of education and school districts should consider the distribution of their teachers. An equitable distribution of veteran and less experienced teachers can create a positive school environment — veteran teachers can provide mentoring, support and stability, while less experienced teachers can contribute fresh ideas.

PROPORTION OF CALIFORNIA TEACHERS IN THEIR FIRST OR SECOND YEAR

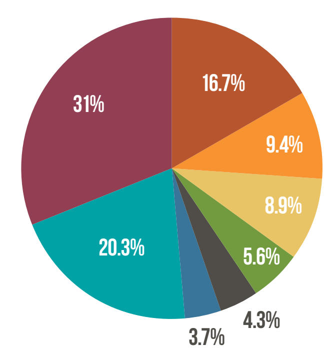
3 TEACHER DIVERSITY MATTERS

As we consider the impact of the shortage and strategies for recruiting new teachers, we should also focus on efforts to increase diversity within the ranks. The demographics of the teaching workforce in California do not represent the diversity of the students. This matters as teachers serve as powerful role models and research has shown that teachers with similar backgrounds of their students have higher expectations and can contribute to positive student outcomes.

ETHNICITY	STUDENT %	TEACHER %
Latino	53.6%	18.6%
White	24.6%	65%
Asian	8.8%	5.4%
African American	6%	3.9%
Two or More Races	2.8%	0.8%
Filipino	2.5%	1.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.5%
None Reported	0.6%	4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.3%

❹ THE SHORTAGE IS NOT THE SAME EVERYWHERE

The shortage is not the same in every county office of education or school district. Moreover, even within counties and school districts, it is important to consider the impact across subject areas. There is a shortage for the most in demand subject areas, although the impact will vary by county and district.



% OF TOTAL ESTIMATED HIRES 2016-17 BY SUBJECT AREA

- Self-Contained Classroom (Multiple Subject)
- Special Education (Education Specialist)
- English/Drama (Single Subject-English)
- Mathematics (Single Subject-Mathematics)
- Social Sciences (Single Subject-History/Social Sciences)
- Life Sciences (Single Subject-Biology)
- Physical Sciences (Single Subject-Chemistry, Geosciences and Physics)
- Other

CONCLUSION

If we do not make changes in teacher recruitment, preparation and retention, things will not get any better. As county offices of education and school districts look at their staffing needs in the coming years, they should think about their role in attracting and retaining a highly skilled and diverse education workforce. Moreover, there is also a role for the Legislature to explore and act on proposals that can support county offices of education and school districts in these efforts.

Board members should understand how the above statistics look like in their counties, districts, and schools. While the data are statewide, specific county, district and school data can be found through the CCTC's California Educator Supply and Demand Data Dashboards and their Teacher Supply in California Annual Report to the Legislature, 2014-15. The Ed-Data Education Data Partnership also provides relevant fiscal, demographic and performance data by county, district and school.

from the field

BY MAGALY LAVADENZ, PH.D.

Supporting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers of English Learners

California, along with the rest of the nation, is experiencing an era of tremendous education policy reform, much of it focused on teacher preparation and professional development. An important focus of credentialing reforms over the last three decades has been on providing new teachers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to address the needs of the state's almost 1.4 million English learners.

Nationwide, in addition to focusing on the latest research-based practices and theory, reforms have emphasized taking a different approach to teacher candidates' field experience: new national and state teacher preparation standards call for training to include increased field experiences in communities where teacher candidates will most likely teach.[1]

Even with good initial training, learning to be a competent and effective teacher is complex. As a result, highly effective teacher preparation continues beyond the credential (preservice) period through induction and mentoring during teachers' initial classroom experience. It also includes the ongoing professional development — needed by all professionals — to remain up-to-date on developments in the field and to continuously improve skills.

Providing this continuum of preparation in order to focus on the unique needs of English learners requires collaboration between systems of teacher preparation, school districts and research. To address persistent achievement gaps between English learners and their native English-speaking peers, school districts can develop and implement policies and practices that are based on what research and practice tell us about factors that truly matter with regard to teaching English learners. These factors are: 1) the school, district and classroom context that includes supports for teaching; 2) the relationships and connections that teachers build with their English learner students; and 3) teachers' knowledge, skills and pedagogic ability in both teaching English and their content or discipline. The next sections address what research tells us about these three factors.

Context matters: Support from school and district leadership is needed to ensure high-quality teachers of English learners and effective learning environments for EL students

A key aspect of a school's context is the quality of its teachers, and an important instrument for ensuring that a school has the best teachers to meet the needs of its students is the Local Control Funding Formula. The stated goals of LCFF are to provide both more local control over the use of funds and a more equitable school finance system by providing additional financial resources to meet the academic needs of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. A key way for school board members and other leaders to contribute to achieving this equity is to design policies and practices to ensure that the most highly qualified teachers possible are assigned to teach English learners in both designated English Language Development (ELD) and integrated (also known as sheltered content) courses. School districts can achieve this by dedicating resources to helping teachers develop and continually improve their skills for addressing the needs of English learners, by adopting recruitment and assignment policies that support hiring teachers who have strong EL instructional skills and by supporting policies that place strong teachers in classrooms with these students. Several analyses of the first two years of Local Control and Accountability Plans indicate this is an area of opportunity in which districts can improve: many of the analyzed plans did not provide support to increase teachers' expertise for meeting the needs of English learners.[2]

How a school and district foster good working relationships among teachers is another key element of school context: teachers' ability to work together is important to student learning. In addition, in order to be effective in supporting teacher professional growth, the quality of teacher collaboration matters. This collaboration is particularly effective when it is 1) structured around explicit questions about student learning; 2) focused on curriculum and instruction; 3) a frequent schoolwide practice.[3]

The curriculum, what teachers teach, is another important aspect of school context. In 2014, California adopted the English Language Arts/ELD Framework, which includes a new interconnected approach to guide ELs' language instruction. It links content and language in a way that is intended to prepare English learners, like their non-EL peers, in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and communication across the content areas. This new framework is the result of an intersection of policy and research to inform teaching and learning for English learners and provides school board members and other education leaders a renewed

opportunity to consider how to provide access and equity in programs and practices for English learners.

Finally, the context of the overall school atmosphere also matters for students. Research has noted that students' experiences within and outside of school, school environments and school structure all influence students' school connectedness or disconnectedness, which in turn influence students' academic performance.[4]

Knowledge about language and culture matter: High-quality teachers of English learners are bridge builders

Over the last several decades, scholars have documented the importance of teachers' use of English learners' culture and language as resources and assets for their learning a new language. This is the opposite of an earlier perspective that ELs' native language is a deficit. Effective teachers of English learners are able to construct bridges between languages and cultures by building supportive and caring relationships with their EL students, while at the same time holding high expectations for their learning. A substantial body of research finds that teachers of color and bilingual teachers, who reflect the diversity of California's students, are especially able to create these cultural and linguistic connections between home and school, and to provide instruction that takes positive advantage of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.[5] In addition, a growing body of research finds that students' academic performance is influenced by the extent to which teachers and other adults in schools actively provide guidance to students in developing interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging and institutional connectedness. Teachers who have a deep understanding of students' backgrounds are particularly equipped to help students develop these relationships and this sense of connectedness.

Knowledge about content and pedagogy matter: High-quality teachers of English learners have the knowledge to provide students with appropriate and rigorous disciplinary content and language

A major shift in the new standards and ELA/ELD Framework is the emphasis on communication, collaboration and language production within and across the disciplines. This shift implies that teachers of English learners cannot wait for EL students' English language to fully develop before introducing rigorous content. The ELA/ELD Framework, based on a solid body of research, states that "full access to rigorous content for ELs requires specialized instructional support for English language development. This support ensures that ELs maintain steady academic and linguistic progress across the disciplines and [the support] varies based on individual ELs' language learning needs."

Providing this type of instructional support takes specialized training and understanding. For example, high-quality teachers of English learners are able to create classroom environments that are safe spaces for these students to use new and increasingly more complex oral and written language, without the embarrassment that often comes with learning a new language. These teachers evaluate the linguistic complexity of texts in relationship to English learners' language proficiency levels and clarify complex academic and disciplinary language found in texts, to facilitate students' understanding so that they learn new language and content simultaneously. Teachers who use culturally and linguistically relevant practices create instruction by building on what students already know: an approach that supports concept building across the two languages. High-quality teachers of English learners use proven practices that provide learning and interactive supports for ELs as they develop as autonomous learners who are able to think critically, communicate effectively and problem solve as required of all learners in a globalized society.

Supporting and retaining high-quality teachers of English learners: Considerations for California's school board members

Teaching and learning English are complex processes and school leaders' responsibilities include attending to the entire school system that addresses this complexity. As they look to improve outcomes for English learners, these leaders can use evidence-based decision making to consider a range of factors. These include, but are not limited to, looking at evidence related to issues such as school climate, types of instructional programs available to English learners and understanding the diversity among EL students. Ensuring that the most qualified teachers are assigned to teach English learners and that appropriate supports are provided to retain those teachers is an essential factor to consider when seeking to improve outcomes for English learners.

Emerging research provides guidance for how to achieve the goal of high-quality teachers for English learners. It points to learning networks that serve as problem-solving collaboratives.[6] An example of within school or district learning networks is the coaching structure. Coaching supports that include ongoing analysis to improve instruction, guided observation and reflection on practice have been identified as critical features in the teacher education literature and apply equally for teachers of English learners. In rural, urban and suburban districts, these learning networks are vital for retaining high-quality teachers of English learners. Building these networks for the entire teacher pipeline, from preservice through induction and beyond and in the face of looming teacher shortages will be necessary to ensure that all teachers of English learners are of the highest quality possible. **CS**

Dr. Magaly Lavadenz is a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Founding Director of the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University. She received her Ph.D. in Education, specializing in Language, Literacy and Learning from the University of Southern California.

Endnotes

1 Darling-Hammond, 2015; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC] 2015; Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation, [CAEP], 2013.

2 Armas, E., Lavadenz, M., & Olsen, L. (2015). *Falling Short on the Promise: A Report on Year 1 LCAPs*. Californians Together: CA.

3 Ronfeldt, M., McQueen, K. Grissom. (2015). Teacher Collaboration in Instructional Teams and Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52, 3, pp 475-514. DOI: 3102/0002831215585562

4 Nasir, N. S., Jones, A., & McLaughlin, M. (2011). School connectedness for students in low-income urban high schools. *Teachers College Record*, 113(8), 1755-1793.

5 Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Rethinking the Curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.

6 Bryk A. S., Gomez L. M., Grunow A. (2010). *Getting Ideas Into Action: Building Networked Improvement Communities in Education*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Stanford, CA, essay, retrieved from http://bit.ly/2gdd1HW.

FactSheet

January 2016

Concussions in Student Athletes and How to Reduce Risk

In the past decade, the increased attention to concussions has spread from the world of professional sports, particularly football, to that of youth athletics. California fields the second highest number of high school athletes — roughly 800,000 — among U.S. states. This fact sheet summarizes some current research on concussions and offers considerations for board members on how school districts can protect student athletes and reduce risk.

Irreparable harm

It is now known that sustained participation in high-impact sports can lead to a brain condition that can cause depression, dementia, and memory loss. This disease is known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy or CTE. At present, the extent of the biological changes that occur in the brain after blows to the head are received are still being determined, and researchers are continuing to make discoveries about the effects of such blows.

Athletes who have experienced concussions liken the sensation to a snow globe being shaken, or the yolk in an egg being tossed around. Depending on the hit, the brain can slam against the skull, and brain cells can be twisted and damaged, leading to structural and chemical changes. This sloshing of the brain, which floats in the skull, occurs in different ways. A linear hit causes the head to snap directly back upon impact. A rotational hit (one not well-protected by most football helmets), causes the head and shoulders to change direction rapidly. Athletes can also simply knock heads, or be hit by the ball or other object such as an elbow.

Concussed athletes can experience both short- and long-term symptoms such as, dizziness, headaches, nausea, difficulty concentrating, sleep loss, moodiness, irritability, memory loss, and depression, as well as other health problems. In addition, evidence of more sustained effects is emerging. The effects of blows to the head can add up, especially if an initial injury has not had time to heal properly and a subsequent injury is sustained. A seemingly minor hit, for example, can make an athlete's brain more susceptible to concussions over time.

Emerging research is revealing that youth are at particular risk for lasting effects. A recent study reported in the journal, *Neurology*, found that retired professional football players are more likely to have long-term health problems from brain trauma if they started playing football before the age of 12.[1] Researchers report that children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to head injuries because the onset of puberty is a key period for brain development. These findings are of major concern for educators and show a great need to tackle the concussion issue.

Not just a football problem

Athletes of all ages who participate in a range of sports are susceptible to head injuries. For boys, football is the most concussion-prime sport, as well as hockey, lacrosse, soccer and wrestling. Although girls do not generally play football, they are at risk as well. Some studies have shown that girls who play certain high-risk sports, including soccer, lacrosse, volleyball and basketball, more frequently suffer concussions than boys.

Protecting students

The California Interscholastic Federation recommends a multifaceted approach that stresses concussion-awareness education among teachers, parents, coaches, administrators, athletes, and athletic directors. CIF also advocates rethinking current athletic techniques, such as how to tackle in football.

High-quality equipment can reduce risk, but does not remove it completely. For example, helmets, while critical for the safety of student football athletes, are not concussion-proof.

A significant problem school districts face is the lack of athletic trainers. About 80% of California schools do not have athletic trainers who are considered vital to helping with on-site injuries and monitoring symptoms of concussion.[2] Nearly 30% of athletic coaches in California high schools are not full-time teachers. This may mean that they have less contact with the district than a full-time employee, which can lead to gaps in ensuring coaches are adequately trained and certified.

California is the only state that does not require athletic trainers to be licensed, although they must be certified. And while football is one of the sports that by law must have a qualified physician and emergency services available for games, other sports that bring risk of concussion are unlikely to have similar services available.

In addition to being a safety issue, the access to athletic trainers can be an equity issue. Private schools and more affluent public schools might generate resources for athletic trainers through non-public means such as booster clubs.

A positive trend

California is making progress in addressing this risk. Over the last 10 years, California's schools have taken steps to increase concussion awareness and safety. School districts and educators looking for guidance are encouraged to stay informed via the CIF.

Questions for boards

1. Do we have a policy on health and safety for student athletes? If so, when was it last reviewed?
2. Do students have access to an athletic trainer? If not, can community partnerships be forged to fill this gap?
3. How up-to-date is our athletic equipment such as helmets?
4. What kind of training and professional development is provided for the coaching staff? How is compliance with safety policies monitored and enforced?
5. How are we ensuring that our teachers and coaches are aware of the risks of participating in some sports and how to minimize these risks for both boys and girls?

Resources

Brain Injury Research Institute
http://www.protectthebrain.org/

Boston University Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy
http://www.bu.edu/cte/

California Interscholastic Federation
www.cifstate.org/sports-medicine/concussions/index

California Schools: New Playing Field: Schools and Educators Tackle Concussions
http://mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?i=266433&p=21

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/headsup/highschoolsports/

National Federation of State High School Associations: Concussion Task Force Recommendations
www.nfhs.org/articles/concussion-task-force-recommendations-to-be-implemented-in-2015/

Endnotes

1 Lehman, E. J., Hein, M. J., Baron, S. L., and Gersic, C. M. (2012). Neurodegenerative causes of death among retired National Football League players. *Neurology*, 79(19).

2 Biggar, H. (2015). New playing field: Schools and Educators Tackle Concussions. *California Schools*.

FactSheet

January 2016

Recent Legislation on Vaccines: SB 277

In June 2015, Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 277 into law. The legislation stipulates that parents/guardians will no longer be able to refuse to vaccinate their children based on a personal belief exemption if their children attend public or private school. Senator Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), who is also a pediatrician, and Senator Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica), a former president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District board, coauthored this bill and CSBA supported the measure. SB 277 will go into effect for the 2016-2017 school year. Parents/guardians can still file for a temporary vaccine exemption for their children based on their personal beliefs until January 1, 2016. This fact sheet explains how SB 277 will be implemented. CSBA sample board policy and administrative regulation BP/AR 5141.31 - Immunizations and AR 5112.2 - Exclusions from Attendance, were updated in October 2015. Also see CSBA's March 2015 Governance Brief, Measles (and other infectious diseases.)

What does not change under SB 277

As a condition of school enrollment, current law requires students at specified age and grade levels to provide documentation that they have been immunized against certain diseases. However, exemptions have been available based on the beliefs of parents/ guardians or due to medical reasons.

Personal beliefs exemption

Until January 1, 2016, students can receive exemptions for immunizations based on the beliefs of their parents/ guardians. If parents/guardians choose not to vaccinate their children because of personal beliefs, they must work with a health care provider to submit a Personal Beliefs Exemption Form (http://bit.ly/1gZXI0X) in place of immunization records.

Medical exemption

If a student is exempted for medical reasons, parents/ guardians need to submit a letter from a health care provider documenting the medical exemption in place of immunization records.

Students with individual education programs

Students who have an individual education program (IEP) should continue to receive all necessary services identified in their IEP regardless of their vaccination status.

Immunization record checkpoints

State regulation sets two checkpoints for districts to ensure that students are receiving the proper immunizations and therefore protecting public health. Districts should have a process in place for checking immunization records for students when they enroll in the district, when they enroll in transitional kindergarten/kindergarten (if already enrolled in preschool), and when they advance to seventh grade (if already enrolled).

Exclusions from school

Students who are exempted from being immunized may be required to stay away from school following a confirmed case of an infectious disease at their school for which they have not been vaccinated.

Conditional enrollment

If students cannot show proof of immunization, or have not submitted an exemption form, they may be conditionally enrolled for 30 days. When necessary, a transfer student may be conditionally admitted for up to 30 school

days while his/her immunization records are being transferred from a previous school. In addition, state and federal law require districts to immediately enroll homeless students, foster youth, and students of military families even if their immunization records are missing or unavailable at the time of enrollment.

Conditionally enrolling students who have not been vaccinated or who opted for but have not completed the exemption magnifies the need to have good administrative procedures in place. If a school conditionally admits a student who has not been vaccinated but does not follow up to ensure the immunization has been received, that student's health, as well as the health of other students, could be at risk.

What is new under SB 277

Effective July 1, 2016, students who have a personal belief exemption on file before January 1, 2016 and who attend public or private school can no longer be exempted from vaccinations because of the beliefs of their parents when they hit a mandated checkpoint for ensuring immunizations: kindergarten and seventh grade. For example, a first grader who has a personal belief exemption on file before January 1, 2016, may remain in school without being vaccinated until he or she starts seventh grade. An eighth grader who has a personal belief exemption on file before January 1, 2016, may remain in a school without being vaccinated for the remainder of schooling. Unless otherwise exempt, all other students must have their vaccines up to date at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Home-based private school and independent study programs

SB 277 provides that a student can go without vaccinations if he or she is enrolled in a home-based private school or independent study program and does not receive classroom-based instruction. Some online-based programs require some classroom based work. Vaccinations would be required in order to participate in the classroom component.

Coming soon

More detailed guidance is expected from the California Department of Education, which will collaborate with the California Department of Public Health in 2016.

Role of the board

"The health and safety of students are always a board's first priority," said CSBA Assistant Executive Director Naomi Eason. "This must be the foundation of a district's guiding vision." Boards adopt policies that set expectations for healthy practices and ensure compliance with law. It is crucial that board members fully support the district's overall message on health and safety.

Districts should consider the following questions:

Does our district have sound plans and policies in place for health and safety, and do our plans include strategies for preventing the spread of infectious diseases?

What is the status of our medical records and what staff resources have we committed to maintaining those records?

What is our protocol for providing services to students who are excluded from attendance?

What are our policies regarding non-classroom based independent study options and how will we communicate them to our students and their families?

What is our relationship with local and state public health agencies? Who is our key contact? What resources do they have that we need to help us ensure the health and safety of our students?

3251 Beacon Blvd.
West Sacramento, CA 95691