



Raising African American Student Achievement: California Goals, Local Outcomes

Race and public education are deeply intertwined in American history. Educators in California negotiate this relationship every day in their schools and classrooms as they work to provide all students in the state—including California's nearly half-million African American students—a K–12 education that enables them to meet their full potential.

The year 2007 brought many reminders of this long and troubled history. It marked the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, several years after the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation policies unconstitutional. That year also brought a new Supreme Court decision that overturned voluntary school desegregation policies in Seattle and Jefferson County, Kentucky. And here in California, questions about persistent achievement gaps among student groups, which the state's educators have long worked to address, became a vigorous topic of policy debate. This debate raised difficult and uncomfortable questions about such matters as the distribution of school resources, the meaning of cultural differences for public education, and the improvement of general education for all California students.

African American students often get lost in California's policy debates about improving student achievement, in part because they represent less than 8% of K–12 students. But as the state looks forward to

new prospects for a common future that benefits all students, this is an opportune moment to consider: How are African American students in California's public K–12 system doing? What do we know about how and where these students are succeeding academically?

This report asks these questions to raise broader public awareness and interest in better serving California's African American students. It begins by offering a geographic look at where these students go to school in California. The report then provides a state-level overview of their academic achievement in English language arts and mathematics in the elementary grades through the high school years, plus a brief look at community college attainment. This overview shows that although African American student achievement in our state is improving, California still has much to do.

This report also provides good reason to believe that more is possible. A close look at the districts and schools that serve California's African Americans shows that these students excel academically in many

places. The second part of this report provides a broad introduction to some of the variations in African American student achievement that exist across our state at the district and school levels, in the hope that local practices and policies that are working might become a greater topic of research and policy action, and a greater resource for all California students and educators. The report also points to organizations that are directly involved with these issues and additional research in this area.

This brief publication is not intended to cover all the difficult issues raised by the topic of African American student achievement in California. And the state-level data presented will not be a surprise to those who work every day—whether as educators, advocates, or policymakers—to ensure that African American students in our state receive a K–12 education worthy of their potential. But a shared basis for understanding how they are doing academically is one crucial element for a broader policy dialogue about how to educate these students more effectively and consistently.



CALIFORNIA GOALS

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California’s African American students are concentrated in relatively few counties and districts

In 2006–07, 7.6%—or about 477,800—of California’s K–12 students were African American. This percentage has declined relatively steadily for the past decade and is small compared with the nation as a whole. About 17% of students nationally were African American in 2005–06, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (These NCES data do not include students identified as “Multiple” or “No Response.”)

Five counties are home to two-thirds of California’s African American K–12 students

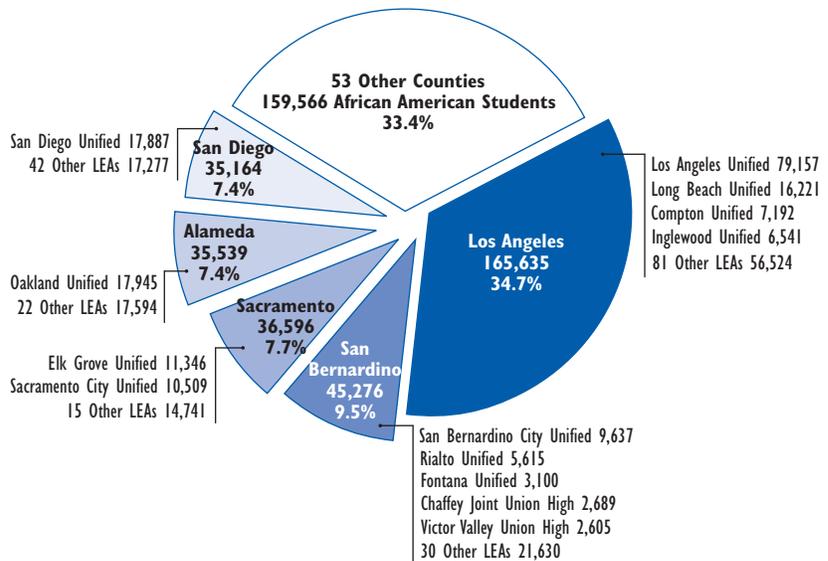
African American students are not evenly distributed across the state. Five counties are

home to two-thirds of California’s African American students even though only about half of all students in the state live in those same counties. As Figure I shows, a relatively small number of counties and districts are responsible for the academic progress and success of the majority of California’s African American students.

By virtue of its large student population generally, Los Angeles County serves more African American students than any other county. It is home to almost 27% of all K–12 students in California, but serves an even higher percentage—35%—of the state’s African American students.

As in the other counties shown in Figure I, African American students in Los Angeles County are concentrated in a handful of districts. Two-thirds of all African American students in Los Angeles County go to school

figure 1 Two-thirds of California’s African American students live in five of the state’s 58 counties



Note: Enrollments and the numbers of local education agencies (LEAs) in each county include county offices of education, state-approved charter schools, California Youth Authority, and state special schools.

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in just four of the county’s 80 elementary, unified, and high school districts: Los Angeles Unified, Long Beach Unified, Compton Unified, and Inglewood Unified. Half of these students are in Los Angeles Unified. San Bernardino County, which has the second-highest number of African American students in the state, is home to fewer African American students than in Los Angeles Unified alone.

By contrast, 44 of California’s 58 counties each educated less than 1% —at most 4,100—of the state’s African American students in 2006–07. Of those, 25 counties had no more than 500.

African Americans are more than 7.6% of K–12 students in eight California counties

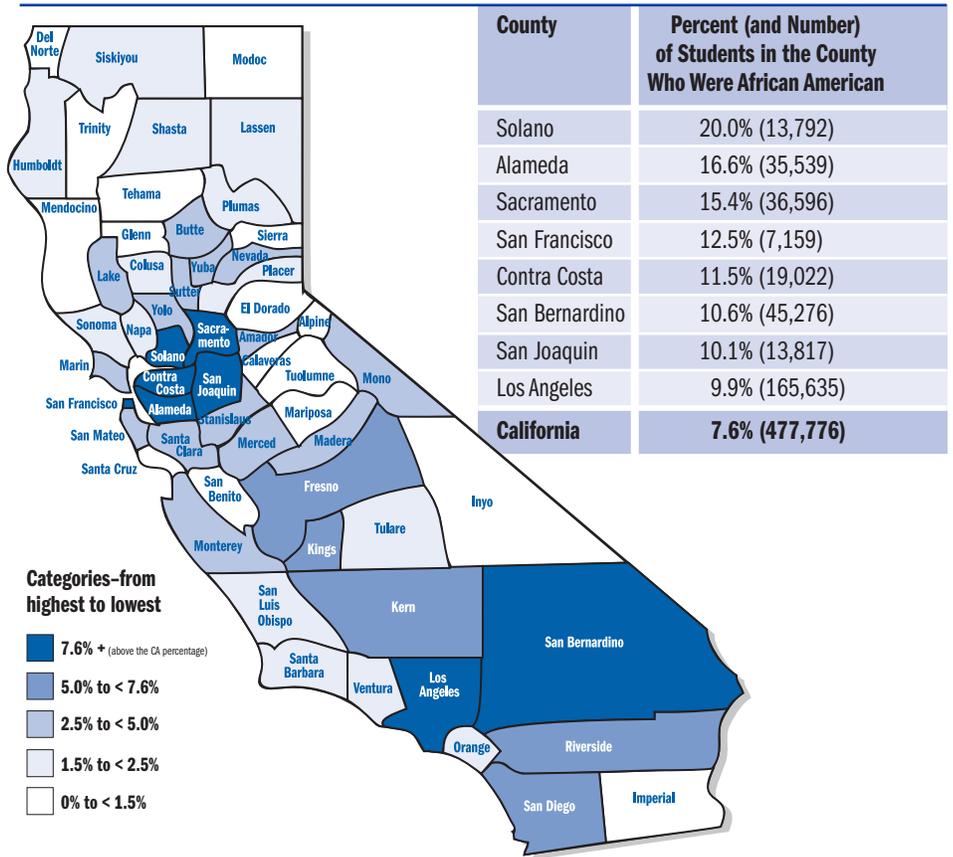
The number of African American students who live in different counties and attend different districts is only one way to characterize the geographic distribution of African American students throughout California. Another way is to consider which counties and districts serve the highest concentrations of African American students.

Only eight counties are home to student bodies that have a higher concentration of African Americans than the state as a whole. (See Figure 2.) African Americans were 2% or less of students in 25 counties.

Although more African American students live in Los Angeles County than any other California county by far (in terms of numbers), the five counties that rank at the top in terms of concentration are located in the northern part of the state. But even these overall concentrations mask significant variation among the school districts within these northern counties.

- Overall, 16.6% of students in Alameda County were African American in 2006–07, and about half of these students went to school in Oakland Unified School District. But Oakland Unified did not serve the highest concentration of African American students among districts in the county. Emery Unified School District (in nearby Emeryville) served a student body that was 61% African American—higher than any other California district—compared with

figure 2 | Only eight of 58 counties have student bodies that are more than 7.6% African American (the statewide percentage) in 2006–07



DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), CBEDS

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To enrich our understanding of the issues related to supporting African American student achievement in California, EdSource interviewed principals from a number of elementary, middle, and high schools that received African American Growth Academic Performance Index (API) scores that were substantially above average in 2007. These schools represented a broad range of types, sizes, locations, and demographic configurations. The principals discussed the practices and policies that, from their perspectives, contribute to the higher than average academic outcomes among African American students in their schools.

Selected quotes from these principal interviews are dispersed throughout this report. Full transcripts of the interviews are available on the EdSource website (see the “Selected Stories: EdSource Online” box on page 18). For more information on schools that received African American Growth API scores that were substantially above average in 2007, see page 17.

38% in Oakland Unified. Emery Unified served 802 total students in 2007.

- African Americans were only 3.4% of students in Marin County in 2006–07. But Sausalito Marin City School District served a student body that was 55.5%

African American—the second-highest percentage in the state. This small district served 147 African American students in 2007, or almost 15% of the African American students in Marin County.

- Overall, 11.5% of students in Contra

Data Limitations of this Report

This report explores how African American students are faring in California's public schools in part by discussing these students' academic achievement as measured by standardized tests and the state and federal accountability systems. However, these data are limited in important ways that readers should keep in mind.

- First and foremost, readers should take care to not attribute differences in achievement among different ethnic subgroups to racial differences per se. Many factors relate to differences in academic achievement, most notably socioeconomic status. Policies and practices in place in different districts and schools also make a difference. Data that differentiate African American students based on socioeconomic status are not yet widely available. The California Department of Education (CDE) is currently working on collecting such data as part of its newly developed Annual Statewide Student Identifier (SSID) Maintenance Data collection.
- In addition, the uneven geographic distribution of African American students across California schools greatly affects how these students' academic achievement is reported, especially at the school level. African American students often attend schools in numbers that are too low for their results on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) to be published, or for their schools to receive an African American Academic Performance Index (API) score. For more on how enrollment patterns affect which schools receive an African American API, see the section "African American students in some California schools are doing very well on the API" on page 17.
- Finally, the accurate calculation of dropout and graduation rates has become an important topic of policy discussion in California and nationally, and a key focus of several California organizations. Concerns about the reliability of these data remained at the time of this publication. As a result—although there is broad agreement that African American students are likely to attend high schools with lower completion rates and drop out at high rates—this report does not attempt to summarize trends in African American graduation and dropout rates in California. These topics are discussed briefly in the "California has more to do to foster postsecondary success for African American students" and "African American students are overrepresented in Special Education and alternative education programs" sections, beginning on page 11. The CDE is expected to release new dropout statistics, based on individual student data, in June 2008.

It's not like we draw from a different clientele from everybody else. We're pretty typical of a California school. We are just really committed to the kids and seeing that every single one of them, if possible, will make it to that proficient line.

—Rick Aleksak, Principal, Victoriano Elementary (Val Verde Unified)

Costa County were African American in 2006–07. But West Contra Costa Unified School District, which served more African American students than all

but eight districts in California, had a student body that was 24.5% African American—more than double the percentage for the county as a whole.

Such local variations are not limited to the northern half of the state. For example, although 9.9% of students living in Los Angeles County were African American in 2006–07, the student bodies of Inglewood Unified and Compton Unified were 41.0% and 25.2% African American, respectively.

State and federal accountability measures provide a statewide summary of African American achievement

California's various state-level measures of academic achievement tell a similar story: achievement among the state's African American students is often lower than their peers in other subgroups. African American achievement in mathematics appears to be a particularly challenging area. However, these students' achievement is improving.

California's Academic Performance Index (API) provides a statewide summary of African American student achievement

The Academic Performance Index (API) is one accountability measure that California uses to judge the academic progress of its schools. The API summarizes a great deal of achievement data into a single number. The state's goal is for all schools to eventually reach and maintain an API of at least 800 (out of a possible 1000), across all student subgroups.

Statewide API data reveal that, in the aggregate, the achievement of African American and Hispanic/Latino students on various standardized assessments remains lower than that of their Asian and white peers, and below the overall state average. (See Figure 3.) (At the state level, the 2007 Growth API is heavily weighted to summarize achievement on standardized tests in English and mathematics.)

California's adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports summarize proficiency in English language arts and math

Every year, the California Department of Education (CDE) also files an Accountability Progress Report (APR) for the state with the federal government. This is similar to what is reported for districts and schools. The APR focuses on student proficiency in

figure 3 Overall, African American student achievement in California is improving, but frequently it remains below that of other student subgroups

Academic Achievement in California, as Measured by the Academic Performance Index (API) and for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), by Ethnicity						
Ethnicity	Academic Performance Index (API)		Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*			
	2006 Base	2007 Growth	Percent Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts		Percent Proficient or Advanced in Mathematics	
			2002-03	2006-07	2002-03	2006-07
African American	635	643	24%	33%	22%	31%
Asian	847	852	57%	69%	66%	77%
Hispanic/Latino	656	665	21%	31%	26%	37%
White	801	805	55%	64%	54%	63%
All Students	721	728	37%	46%	39%	49%

* Under NCLB, the CDE considers only proficiency on the annual California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts and math in the elementary and middle grades, and for high schools, 10th grade performance on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRESS REPORTING

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English language arts and mathematics as they relate to “annual measurable objectives” (AMOs), and it compares the achievement of the state’s major student subgroups, including African American students. It is required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Although not an exhaustive measure of student achievement, these AMO data provide a broad summary of how California students are doing on standardized assessments in English language arts and math in the elementary

and middle grades, and on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

- In English language arts, 33% of African American students scored proficient or advanced in 2006–07, compared with 46% of students statewide. As Figure 3 shows, their overall achievement in English has improved notably since 2002–03.
- In mathematics, African American students scored proficient or advanced at a lower rate (31%) than their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or white peers in

2006–07. But their overall math achievement has improved since 2003.

African American 10th graders passed the CAHSEE less frequently than others in 2006–07

In its 2007 independent evaluation of the CAHSEE, the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) found that, in 2006–07:

- African American 10th graders in the class of 2009 were less likely than their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white peers to pass either the English language arts or mathematics sections of the exam: 62% passed the English, and 54% passed the math.
- 85% of African American students in the class of 2007 passed the CAHSEE by May 2007.

These results provide a summary measure of the extent to which students’ achievement in these subjects has reached a level that the state considers adequate for graduation from high school. The English language arts section of the CAHSEE is based on California’s academic content standards for grades 9 and 10 and includes one writing exercise. The mathematics section covers the standards for grades 6 and 7 and Algebra I. Tenth graders who do not pass one or both sections of the exam can try two more times in 11th grade and three more times in 12th grade. The class of 2006 was the first class that was required to pass the exam.

We inform students of the goal of achievement and the measures that are used from a big-picture standpoint. We do classroom visitations where we discuss what subgroups are with respect to our API and High School Exit Exam. What is their purpose? To close the achievement gap, but what is that? Why does it exist?

—Todd Haag, Principal, Rancho Cucamonga High (Chaffey Joint Union High)

African American student achievement in English language arts is improving, but more slowly than for other groups

Grade-level achievement data provide a more nuanced summary of trends in African American achievement at the state level. First, consider the K–12 academic achievement of African American students in English language arts. California assesses students in English through annual California Standards Tests (CSTs) in grades 2–11. These are administered as part of the state’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program.

In the interest of simplifying an otherwise voluminous amount of data, this section summarizes African American achievement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels by focusing on CSTs in grades 4, 7, and 11. (CST data for all grades are provided in the table below.)

Higher percentages of African American students are scoring advanced or proficient in English language arts

Between 2002–03 and 2006–07, the percentages of African American students in grades 2–10 who scored advanced or proficient on the English language arts CSTs improved notably. Among 4th grade students, the percentage increased from 27% in 2003 to 39% in 2007. In grade 7, the percentage of African American students who scored advanced or proficient increased from 20% to 32%. These improvements were less pronounced in grade 11 (19% to 22%). The mean scale scores received by African American 4th and 7th graders also improved. (See Figures 4a and 4b.)

Moreover, in grades 4 and 7, the percentages of African American students scoring below or far below basic also decreased by 7 and 8 percentage points, respectively, between 2003 and 2007. This was not the case in grade 11, however: The percentage of African American students scoring below or far below basic increased by 1 percentage point.

Much higher percentages of Asian and white students scored proficient or advanced on these CSTs in 2007 than did their African American and Hispanic/Latino

How California Compares: African American Student Achievement on the NAEP

Results from the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national standardized test that is often called “the nation’s report card,” show that there was no statistically significant difference between the average African American scale scores for California and the nation in 4th grade reading in 2007. In 4th grade math, African American students in California performed below their national peers. The average African American scale score in California was 4 points lower. But African American student performance on the math section in California has also improved. The percentage of African American students scoring proficient or above nearly doubled between 2003 and 2007, from 8% to 15%.

For a detailed discussion of issues involved in interpreting NAEP results, see EdSource’s May 2008 report, *NAEP and the California Standards Tests: A Case of Apples and Oranges* (www.edsource.org/pub_abs_NAEP08.cfm).

peers (see Figure 4), with achievement improving for all four subgroups since 2003. African American and Hispanic/Latino achievement were similar in grades 4 and 7 in 2007, but African American students fared less well in grade 11.

Average achievement in English language arts has improved more slowly for African American students and remains relatively flat in grade 11

Mean scale scores offer another way to consider achievement on CSTs. Rather than showing the proportion of students that achieves a score that qualifies as proficient or higher, mean scale scores show the average achievement of an entire student group.

In general, mean scale scores in English language arts have tended to increase more slowly among African American students than among their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white peers. This pattern is particularly notable in grade 11. (See Figure 4c.) Although the percentage of African American students scoring proficient or advanced increased between 2003 and 2007, their mean scale scores remained largely flat. By contrast, the scores for Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white 11th graders all more clearly increased. (For all subgroups, performance on the English language arts CST in grade 11 is lower than on the 4th and 7th grade CSTs, likely reflecting the rigorous standards it tests.)

Student Achievement on English Language Arts CSTs in 2006–07, by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percent Proficient or Advanced									
	Grades									
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
African American	39%	27%	39%	32%	29%	32%	27%	33%	23%	22%
Asian	73%	60%	73%	68%	67%	71%	64%	71%	58%	57%
Hispanic/Latino	35%	23%	37%	30%	28%	32%	26%	32%	23%	23%
White	66%	56%	71%	64%	61%	66%	62%	66%	55%	52%
All Students	48%	37%	51%	44%	42%	46%	41%	47%	37%	37%

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (STAR)

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figure 4 | African American students are doing better on the English language arts CSTs than in 2003, but average performance in grade 11 has remained flat

■ African American ● Asian ▲ Hispanic/Latino ◆ White ◆ All Students ■ % Advanced ■ % Proficient ■ % Basic ■ % Below Basic ■ % Far Below Basic

figure 4a | Grade 4 English CST

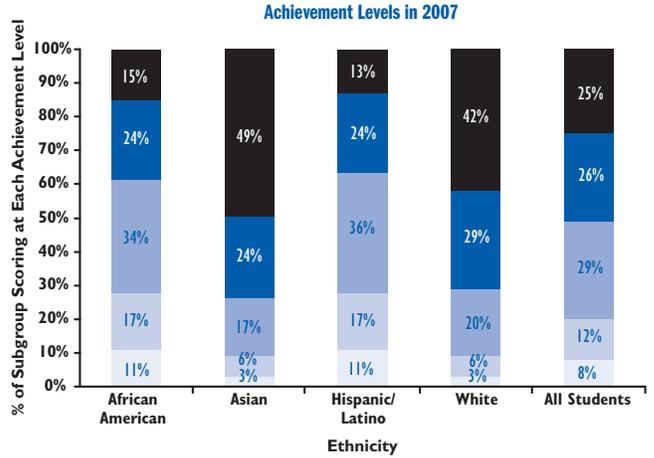
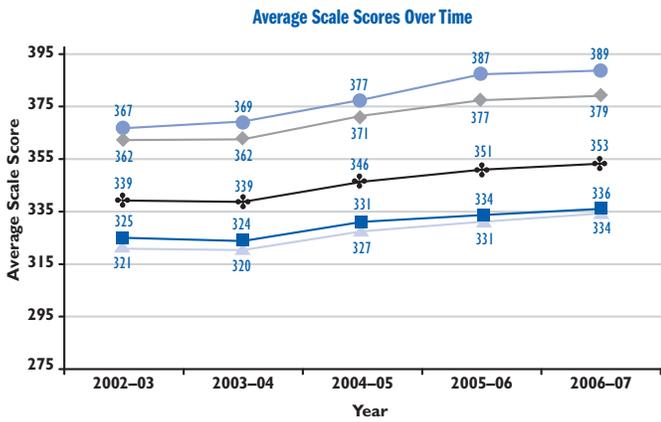


figure 4b | Grade 7 English CST

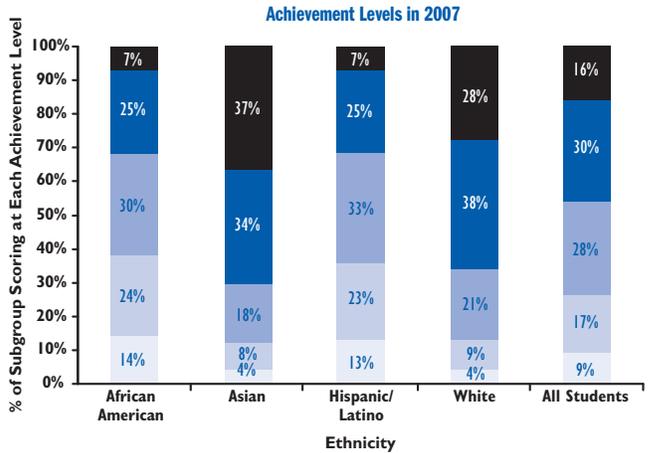
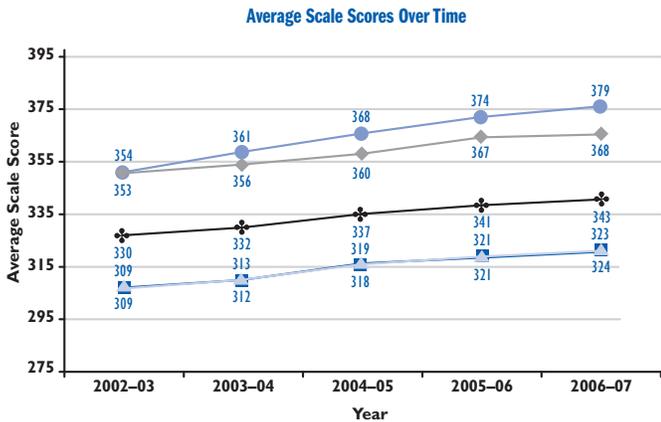
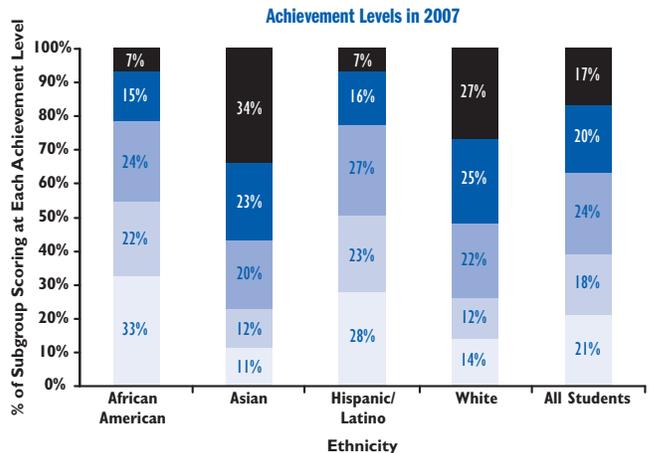
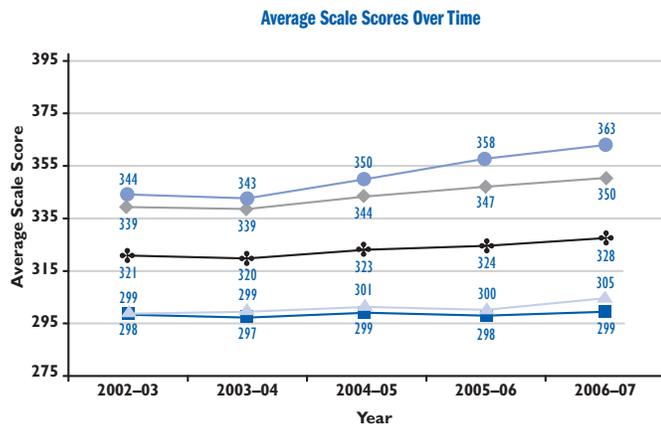


figure 4c | Grade 11 English CST



DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (STAR)

figure 5 | African American achievement on the math CSTs in grades 4 and 7 is improving, but it remains behind that of other groups

■ African American ● Asian ▲ Hispanic/Latino ◆ White ✱ All Students ■ % Advanced ■ % Proficient ■ % Basic ■ % Below Basic ■ % Far Below Basic

figure 5a | Grade 4 Math CST

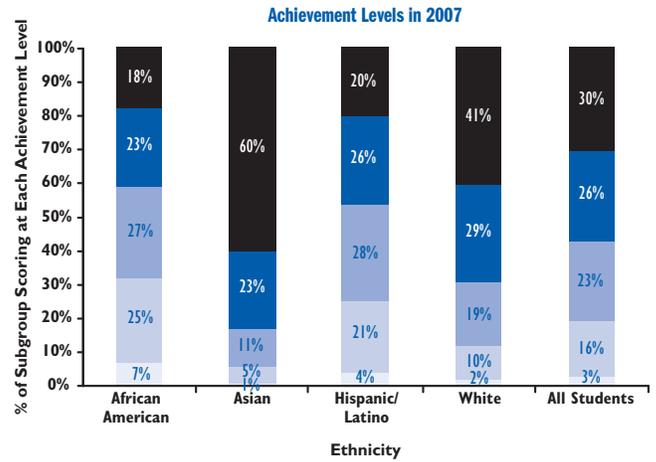
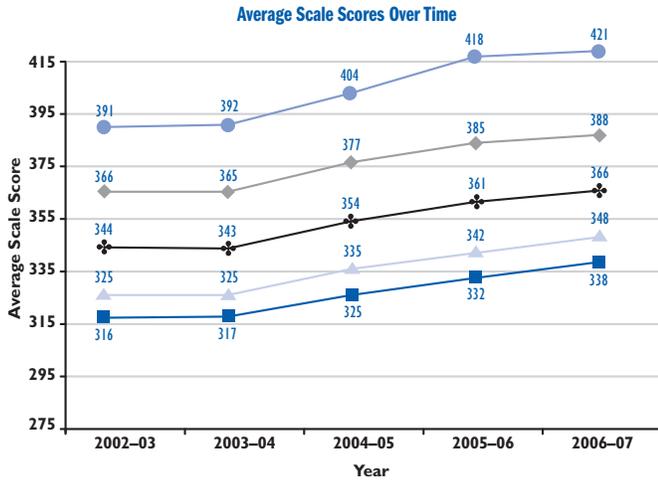
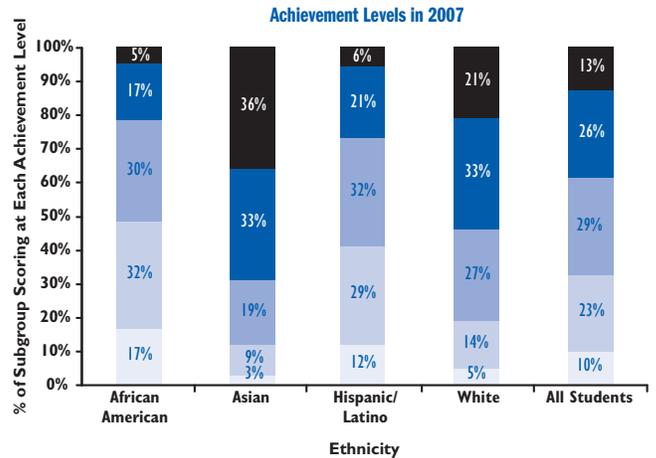
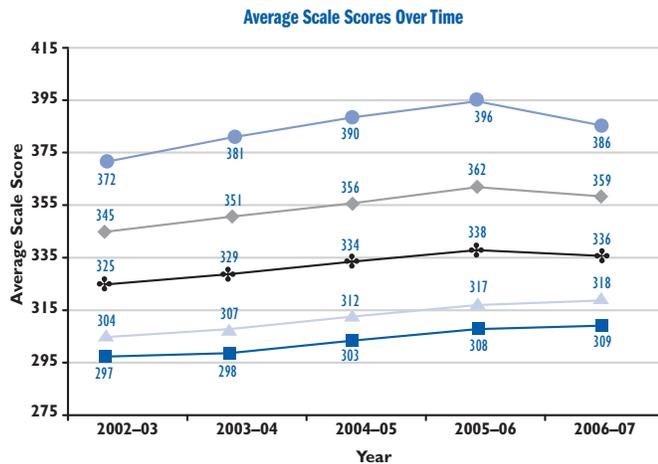


figure 5b | Grade 7 Math CST



DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (STAR)

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African American student achievement in mathematics has improved, but it remains below that of other groups

In general, African American student achievement in mathematics remains below that of Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white students. Far more African American 8th graders now take Algebra I, however, with a growing proportion of them scoring advanced or proficient. But few African American students complete Algebra II by the end of grade 10.

This section summarizes African American achievement in general math in the

elementary and middle grades by focusing on CSTs in grades 4 and 7. It also reports on 8th graders who take Algebra I and on 11th graders who take the Summative High School Math CST. (More extensive math CST data for grades 2–7 are provided in the Appendix on page 22 of this report.)

Higher percentages of African American students are scoring advanced or proficient in mathematics in grades 4 and 7

The percentages of African American students in the elementary and middle grades who scored advanced or proficient

on mathematics CSTs improved notably between 2002–03 and 2006–07. In grade 4 the percentage of African American students who did so increased from 28% to 41%. In grade 7, the percentage nearly doubled from 12% to 22%. The mean scale scores of these 4th and 7th graders also increased. In addition, the percentage who scored below or far below basic decreased during this time: by 11 percentage points in grade 4, and by 9 percentage points in grade 7. (See Figure 5.)

But African American math achievement in the elementary and middle grades remains below that of Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and

figure 6 | Participation in and Performance on the Grade 8 Algebra I CST

figure 6a The percentage of African American 8th graders taking the Algebra I CST nearly doubled between 2003 and 2007, with 20% of these students scoring proficient or advanced in 2007...

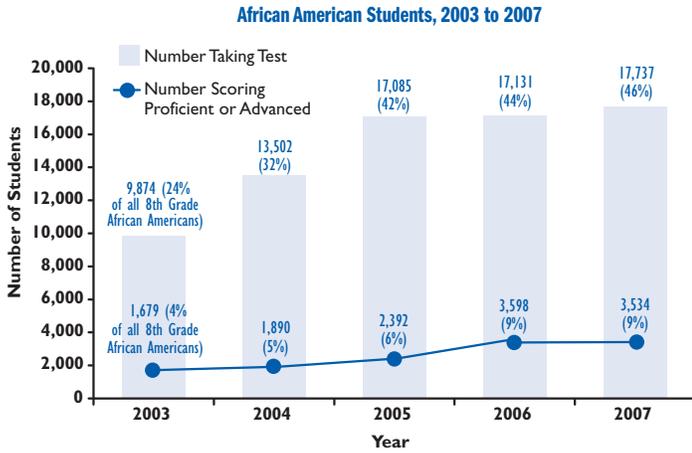
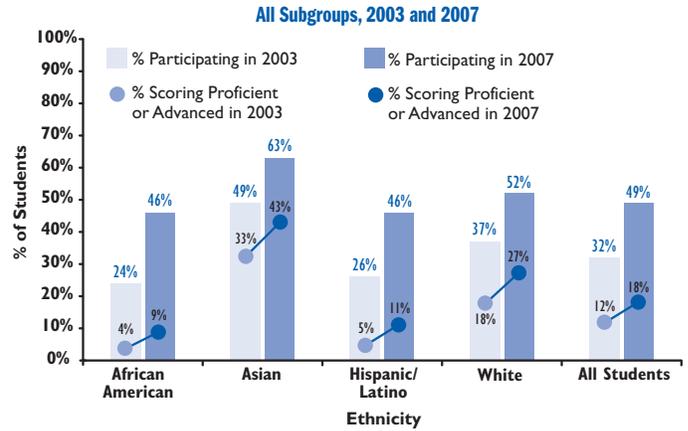


figure 6b ...but African American 8th graders are less likely than others to score advanced or proficient on the Algebra I CST



Note: 2007 figures for percent proficient or advanced of all 8th graders in each group are calculated by first multiplying the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced by the number of students with scores to find roughly how many students scored proficient or advanced, then dividing the result by CBEDS enrollment figures. The number of students with scores was not reported in prior years, however, so those

figures are based on the number of students tested. (Students whose scores are not counted for some reason, such as testing irregularities, are not included in the number of students with scores group but are included in the number of students tested group.) For both 2003 and 2007, figures for percent in each group participating are calculated using the number of students tested in each year.

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (CBEDS, STAR)

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white students. Asian students were about two times more likely than African American students to score advanced or proficient on the grade 4 math CST in 2006–07, and about three times more likely to do so on the grade 7 math CST. Compared to their Hispanic/Latino peers, African American students were more likely to score below or far below basic.

The proportion of African American 8th graders taking Algebra I has nearly doubled since 2003, with achievement also improving

Algebra I has been a key focus of recent California education policy. In 2000 lawmakers made the completion of Algebra I a graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2004. California’s academic content standards further recommend that students take Algebra I in the 8th grade. (For more information, see EdSource’s January 2008 publication, *Math and Science Education for the California Workforce: It Starts with K–12* at: www.edsource.org/pub_abs_mathscience0108.cfm)

The proportion of African American 8th graders taking Algebra I nearly doubled

We try to be real careful about who we put in Algebra I, based on test scores and teacher recommendation and grades. And within that course, we really try to build their skills so they will be able to grasp the concepts of algebra.

—Travis Collier, Principal, Rudecinda Sepulveda Dodson Middle (Los Angeles Unified)

between 2002–03 and 2006–07. (See Figure 6a.) About 24% of African American 8th graders took the course in 2003, and almost 46% did so in 2007. Participation also improved significantly among Hispanic/Latino students.

Even more notably, the percentage of African American 8th grade algebra-takers who scored advanced or proficient on the Algebra I CST also increased during this time, from 17% to 20%. This was also true for Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white students. This combination of higher participation and higher achievement is an important accomplishment for the state’s students and educators.

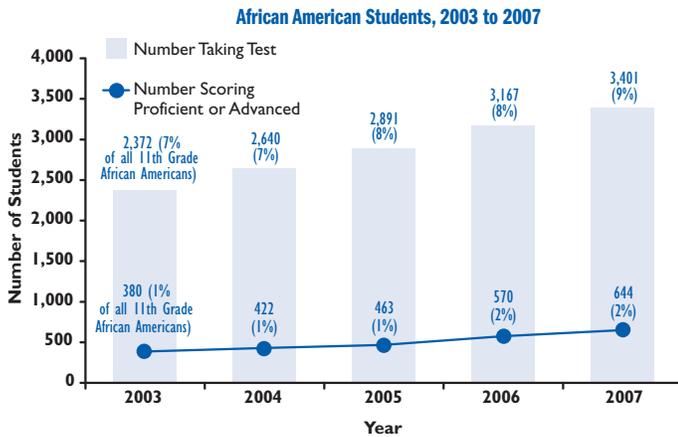
Even so, the percentage of African American 8th grade algebra-takers who score

proficient or advanced on the CST remains below that of their peers in other subgroups. (See Figure 6b.) In addition, among the four subgroups, African Americans are the only subgroup for whom more than half (55%) of 8th grade algebra-takers scored below or far below basic on the Algebra I CST in 2006–07—slightly higher than in 2002–03 (54%). This percentage also increased slightly for Asian students during this time (to 12%), but decreased for Hispanic/Latino and white students (to 47% and 20%, respectively).

Unfortunately, available state data cannot tell the full story behind African American participation in Algebra I. Data that follow the achievement of individual students from year to year on a longitudinal

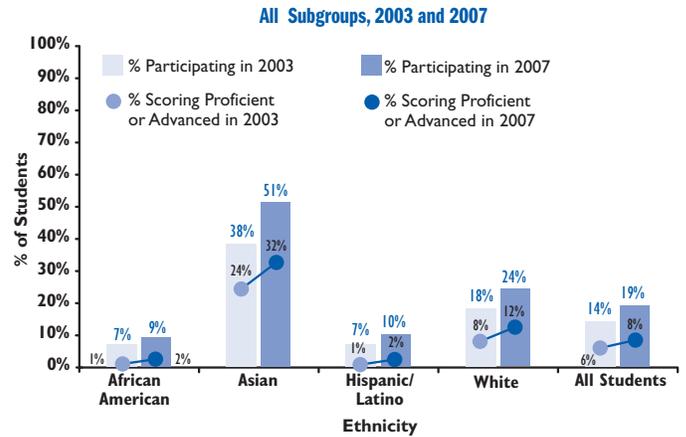
figure 7 | Participation in and Performance on the Grade 11 Summative High School Math CST

figure 7a More African American 11th graders are taking the Summative High School Math CST, and 19% of these scored proficient or advanced in 2007...



Note: 2007 figures for percent proficient or advanced of all 11th graders in each group are calculated by first multiplying the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced by the number of students with scores to find roughly how many students scored proficient or advanced, then dividing the result by CBEDS enrollment figures. The number of students with scores was not reported in prior years, however, so those

figure 7b ...but to date, relatively few African American students complete Algebra II by the end of grade 10



figures are based on the number of students tested. (Students whose scores are not counted for some reason, such as testing irregularities, are not included in the number of students with scores group but are included in the number of students tested group.) For both 2003 and 2007, figures for percent in each group participating are calculated using the number of students tested in each year.

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (CBEDS, STAR)

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basis are not yet readily available, so this analysis cannot clarify precisely how many African American 8th graders are unsuccessful in Algebra I and repeat the course in subsequent grades. But the data do show that, to date, relatively few African American students complete Algebra II by the end of grade 10, as the state recommends.

Despite some improvements, few African American students complete Algebra II by the end of grade 10

California requires students (with the exception of 12th graders) to take the Summative High School Math CST the year after they complete Algebra II successfully, regardless of whether they go on to take more advanced math courses. In other words, students who take this CST in grade 11 are those who have completed the college preparatory math sequence of Algebra I, geometry, and Algebra II by the end of grade 10 or earlier. Data on 11th graders who take the CST provide a window into whether African American students are among this group.

Participation in the Summative High School Math CST among African American 11th graders increased between 2002–03

and 2006–07 but remains low compared to their peers in other subgroups. (See Figures 7a and 7b.) The percentage of African American 11th graders taking the exam increased from 7% to 9%, with the number increasing from about 2,400 to about 3,400. A slightly higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino 11th graders took the test in 2007, but this percentage was also low. By contrast, about half of Asian 11th graders took the exam, as well as almost a quarter of white 11th graders.

Slightly higher percentages of 11th graders in all four subgroups scored advanced or proficient on the Summative High School

Math CST in 2007 than in 2003, with African Americans the least likely to do so. The percentage of 11th graders scoring below or far below basic on the CST also decreased for all four subgroups during this time—in the case of African Americans, from 63% to 56% of test-takers.

Although these improvements are good news, California schools still have much work to do to support African American students through college preparatory math. Many more African American students are beginning the college preparatory math sequence in grade 8, but to date few complete the sequence by the end of grade 10.

Requiring all students in 8th grade to take Algebra I is absolutely challenging. Most of us did not take algebra until high school. The good news is that by holding high expectations and giving students the time and support they need, most students can do quite well.

— Bob Rowe, Principal, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle (Oceanside Unified)

California has more to do to foster postsecondary success for African American students

How successful is California at preparing African American students who aspire to go on to postsecondary education? This section focuses on data pertaining to eligibility for admission to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems, participation in advanced placement (AP) courses and the SAT (college admissions exam), and college-going and academic success in the California community college system in particular.

Two contexts for approaching these data—both beyond the scope of this report—are important to keep in mind. First, many researchers draw attention to disparities in the allocation of resources among California schools that put African American students and others at a disadvantage. For example, the African American Educational Opportunity Report—published in 2007 by the University of California All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (ACCORD) at UC and the UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA)—cited disparities affecting 107 California high schools that served half of the state's African American high school population in 2005–06. The disparities were in such areas as access to college preparatory curricula taught by qualified teachers. (These 107 high schools each enrolled at least 370 African American students.)

Second, the data in this section are complicated considerably by the difficulty of reliably estimating student dropout rates in California. (See the “Data Limitations of This Report” box on page 4.) This difficulty confounds any effort to summarize high school achievement. As a result, the data presented here may overstate California's success in preparing African American students for college. The California Department of Education is expected to release new dropout statistics based on individual student data in June 2008.

Trends in the high school and postsecondary achievement of African American students vary by gender

Data from a variety of different sources show that African American male students experience less high school and postsecondary success than their female peers.

- **CAHSEE:** African American females do better on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in grade 10 than males, according to HumRRO. The first-time passage rates for females were 15 percentage points higher in English language arts and 4 percentage points higher in math.
- **SAT:** In 2007 about 1,800 more female than male African American high school students in California took the SAT, a college entrance exam, according to the College Board. Altogether about 13,000 African American students took the test. More female than male students took the test across all ethnic subgroups.
- **High School Graduation:** About 2,100 more female than male African American high school students graduated from high school in 2005–06, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). Altogether about 25,300 African American students graduated. (Similarly, more female than male Hispanic/Latino and white students graduated.)
- **Postsecondary Enrollment:** Among first-time freshmen in the fall of 2006, female and male African American students enrolled in the California community college system in similar numbers—but about two-thirds of African American first-time freshmen in either the UC or CSU systems were women, according to CPEC.
- **Degree-earning:** Compared with the percentage of state high school graduates who were African American women in 2006, African American women earned a more than proportional percentage of associate's degrees and pre-baccalaureate and professional certificates in California that year, according to CPEC. They also earned a nearly proportional share of master's degrees. However, African American males were underrepresented among earners of all degree types in 2006. (They were most successful at earning associate degrees and pre-baccalaureate certificates that require one or two years.)

Several measures of college readiness show modest progress among African American students

Increasing numbers of California's African American students are eligible for admission to a UC or CSU campus and are taking advanced placement (AP) exams and the SAT. But their achievement in these areas is frequently below that of their California peers in other subgroups, suggesting that the state still has much further to go to support the high school success and later postsecondary prospects of African American students.

African American eligibility for UC and CSU has improved somewhat

California high school students who want to attend a UC or CSU campus after

graduation must complete a set of courses—known as the “a–g” requirements—with a grade of at least a “C.”

- 26% of African American high school graduates fulfilled the course requirements in 2005–06, up from 24% in 2002–03.
- The percentage of all California graduates fulfilling the requirements also increased slightly from 34% to 36%, with Asian and white graduates being the most likely to do so.

More African American students are taking advanced placement (AP) courses, but they continue to be underrepresented among participants

Advanced placement (AP) courses, which culminate in an AP exam offered by the

College Board, provide students the opportunity to take advanced coursework in a variety of subjects. Students who pass an AP exam with a score of 3 (out of 5) or higher may be able to earn college credit for the course when they enroll in a college or university.

- In total, about 2,000 more African American students in California took an AP exam in 2007 than did so in 2003.
- The mean AP test score for these students was 2.12 in 2007—lower than for any other California subgroup.

African American students in California and elsewhere are less likely to participate and succeed in AP courses, according to the College Board's fourth annual *Advanced Placement Report to the Nation*. The College Board reports that African American students were 7.4% of all students in California's graduating class of 2007, but only 3.7% of those who took at least one AP exam during high school and only 1.8% of those who scored 3 or higher on at least one exam. (California is not alone in this regard: similar patterns take place nationally and in the four next-largest states—Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas.)

More female than male African American students take the SAT

In California, the SAT Reasoning Test (formerly the SAT I) is a rite of passage for students who plan to go on to four-year colleges or universities. Taking the SAT, a voluntary exam, is an important indicator of whether a student aspires to do so. (In 2007 only about 15% of California's graduating seniors took the ACT, another college entrance exam.)

Overall, the numbers show that:

- Roughly 13,000 African American students in California took the SAT in 2007—about 3,200 more than in 2003.
- African American students were 7% of all California SAT participants in both years—slightly less than proportional to the overall 11th and 12th grade population in 2007.
- The mean scores for African American students on the critical-reading (437) and

mathematics (429) sections of the exam in 2007 were lower than for any other California subgroup.

As was the case for all other ethnic subgroups, more African American female than male students took the SAT in 2007, according to the College Board—in total, 1,835 more. (Nationally, nearly 24,000 more female than male African American students participated in 2007.) For more information on gender differences in African American student achievement in California, see the “Trends in the high school and postsecondary achievement of African American students vary by gender” box on page II.

High college-going rates for African American high school graduates often do not translate into community college success

African American high school graduates in 2006 had among the highest college-going rates in California when community colleges are included, according to college-going data from CPEC. These data do not make clear what studies these students pursued upon entering a community college, whether for credit or part- or full-time. But they show that 48% of California's roughly 25,300 African American graduates enrolled in one of the state's three public postsecondary systems directly after high school in 2006 (compared with 47% of all state high school graduates), most often at a CSU or community college campus. (African Americans were among the least likely to attend a UC campus immediately after high school graduation.)

Although California's community colleges offer many students—including one-third of California's African American high school graduates in 2006—access to higher education, recent research suggests that community college students often struggle to complete a two-year credential or transfer to a four-year university.

A 2007 report by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy (IHELP) classified 60% of community college students as degree seekers. Slightly

less than 25% of these students transferred to a four-year university or completed an associate's degree or certificate within six years. The study defined “degree seekers” as students who:

- Were between 17–19 years old when they enrolled in 1999–2000;
- Indicated community college completion as a goal;
- Completed at least 12 units; and
- Attempted “a transfer- or degree-level English or math course.”

African American students had the lowest completion rate (15%) among these degree-seekers, according to IHELP, compared with Hispanic/Latino (18%), white (27%), and Asian students (33%). A 2007 analysis by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) corroborates these findings, reporting that between 2001 and 2005 African American students completed community college degrees and certificates at a lower rate than other subgroups.

Research published in 2007 by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) suggests further that student persistence in community college beyond the first semester is a strong indication of whether students will successfully transfer to a four-year university. This study found that of the roughly 64% of 17- to 20-year-olds who entered a California community college in fall 1998 with the intention of transferring to a four-year university, only about 41% returned for their second semester still intending to do so.

This rate was lowest among African American students (about 38%). African American students were also less likely to return for their second semester than their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white peers: about 31% did not return. In addition, African American and Hispanic/Latino students—especially those who did not return for their second semester—were less likely to transfer to a four-year university within six years. (For other data on college success among California's African American students, including degree-earning, see the box on page II.)

African American students are overrepresented in Special Education and alternative education programs

The previous sections focused on African American student achievement in general education programs in California, from elementary through high school and beyond. But information about the assignment of African American students to such additional programs as Special Education and (in the high school years) alternative education is also important for a full perspective on these students' education. In California, African American students are overrepresented within certain Special Education categories and are also overrepresented among alternative high school enrollments.

African American students are overrepresented in particular Special Education categories in California

The phenomenon of overrepresentation of student subgroups among Special Education enrollments is often called “disproportionality.” African American students were 11.4% of California’s Special Education enrollments in 2006–07, compared with 7.6% of all students, according to the California Department of Education (CDE). The proportion of Special Education students who are African American gets larger as students grow older. For instance, African American students were 7.7% of 5-year-olds enrolled in Special Education, but 15.1% of 17-year-olds.

African American students were especially overrepresented in particular Special Education categories. These include:

- Emotional Disturbance (22.3%)
- Specific Learning Disability (13.7%)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (12.3%)
- Other Health Impairment (11.8%)
- Mental Retardation (11.7%)

The overrepresentation of African American students in the Emotional Disturbance category is particularly striking. To put this in perspective, Asian students—who were 8.1% of all California K–12 students in 2006–07—were only 2% of students in this category. African American students were represented in

lower proportions (between 6.6% and 9.0%) in such categories as Hard of Hearing, Deaf, Speech or Language Impairment, Visual Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, and Blind-Deafness.

The overrepresentation of African American students in such Special Education categories is also a national issue. A 2002 report published by the National Research Council (NRC) noted that African American students in the United States faced a greater risk of being classified in Special Education categories that are typically identified after students begin general education, such as Mental Retardation, Developmental Delay, and Emotional Disturbance. These findings—based on national data for 1998–99 from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs—raised questions for the NRC panel about whether general education programs in the United States are prepared to adequately address the needs of a diverse student population before later academic problems arise.

Alternative programs serve students who are not succeeding in comprehensive high schools

State law also requires every school district and county office in California to provide alternatives to the comprehensive high schools for students “vulnerable to academic or behavioral failure.” For the most part, these programs are offered in three different kinds of schools for which data are available:

- Continuation schools and community day schools, which are usually run by school districts, and
- County community schools, which are run by county offices of education.

In addition, 48 of California’s 58 counties operated juvenile court schools with an average daily attendance of about 16,200 students in 2006–07, according to the CDE.

This segment of the education system has received little attention until recently. Even basic enrollment data are uncertain because of high student mobility. Data collected by the CDE indicate that the number of African American students who attend alternative high schools is out of proportion to the general student population: for example, 11% of students in continuation schools in 2006–07 were African American, compared with 8% of 11th graders (the most comparable age cohort to continuation school students) in the general population. However, this data—which is collected each year in October—may underestimate this difference because of the high mobility of students in these programs and the tendency for students to transfer into alternative schools midway through a school year.

In its 2007 evaluation of the CAHSEE, HumRRO reported similar data for 10th graders based on the schools students attended when they took the exit exam. According to their report, African American students were 13.6% of 10th graders in “non-regular” high schools in 2006–07—up from 11.5% in 2003–04. Only 22% and 29% of these students passed the CAHSEE math and English language arts sections, respectively. (HumRRO’s definition of “non-regular high schools” includes continuation, alternate, community day, and juvenile court schools, whereas the enrollment data cited above does not include juvenile court schools.)

For further information on alternative high school education programs in California, see EdSource’s May 2008 research summary, *California’s Continuation High School* at: www.edsource.org/pub_abs_continuation08.cfm

We counsel our kids about academics, and we also counsel them regarding their personal and emotional concerns. We work it like a big family. Everyone looks out for each other.

—Thelma Brown, Principal, City Honors High (Inglewood Unified)



LOCAL OUTCOMES

African American student achievement varies widely across California districts

The state-level data discussed so far in this report provide a complex and often sobering picture of African American student achievement in California. But looking more closely at districts and schools reveals wide variation in African American student achievement depending on where students live and go to school.

This section considers the variation among 13 California school districts that

enroll the largest numbers of African American students in the state. Although this number is in some sense arbitrary, these 13 districts in nine different counties represent the northern, southern, and central regions of the state.

Together these 13 districts serve 43% of California's African American student population. The percentage of students who participate in free or reduced-price meal programs (FRPM) is well above the statewide total (50%) in all but one of them.

The percentage of African American students in each of these districts who come from low socioeconomic status households is unclear from the available data, however.

Two views of African American student achievement in the 13 districts

Districts are complex organizations, and different characteristics and stories emerge depending on how they are compared. Consider the following two ways of thinking about African American student achievement

figure 8 | 2007 African American Student Achievement in the 13 California Districts—All of Them Unified—That Serve the Largest Numbers of African American Students

(District data that meet or exceed the California total for each column are printed in blue italics.)

The 13 Unified Districts Serving the Most African American Students (listed in order of number served)	Percent of All Students Participating in Free/Reduced-price Meals in District	Percent (Number) of Students in District Who Are African American	African American Student Achievement in District: Percent Proficient and Above in 2007					2007 African American Growth API in District	2007 Growth API for All Students in District
			4th		7th		11th		
			English	Math	English	Math	English		
1. Los Angeles	73%	11.2% (79,157)	35%	38%	25%	15%	22%	614	664
2. Oakland	69%	38.2% (17,945)	33%	33%	21%	15%	11%	602	658
3. San Diego	61%	13.7% (17,887)	41%	42%	35%	22%	25%	660	735
4. Long Beach	68%	17.9% (16,221)	40%	46%	36%	24%	21%	668	729
5. Elk Grove	44%	18.3% (11,346)	41%	47%	35%	24%	21%	673	764
6. Sacramento City	63%	21.3% (10,509)	34%	40%	30%	24%	18%	642	715
7. San Bernardino City	78%	16.8% (9,637)	28%	31%	23%	20%	19%	605	640
8. Fresno	81%	11.1% (8,632)	27%	29%	24%	18%	14%	621	666
9. West Contra Costa	60%	24.5% (7,720)	33%	35%	22%	13%	15%	592	672
10. Moreno Valley	65%	19.7% (7,371)	33%	36%	23%	14%	17%	633	669
11. Compton	100%	25.2% (7,192)	28%	30%	19%	17%	6%	580	608
12. San Francisco	56%	12.2% (6,824)	28%	26%	26%	17%	17%	581	763
13. Inglewood	74%	41.0% (6,541)	35%	45%	27%	16%	16%	652	671
California	50%	7.6% (477,776)	39%	41%	32%	22%	22%	643	728

The 13 districts are listed in descending order by the number of African American students each served in 2006–07, beginning with Los Angeles Unified, which had almost 79,200 African American students—more than any other California district by far.

figure 9 | Change in Growth API Scores for African American and All Students Across the 13 Unified Districts, from 2003 to 2007

13 Unified Districts	African American Students			All Students		
	2003 Growth API	2007 Growth API	2003 to 2007 API Change	2003 Growth API	2007 Growth API	2003 to 2007 API Change
Compton	536	580	+44	560	608	+48
West Contra Costa	548	592	+44	620	672	+52
San Francisco	556	581	+25	712	763	+51
Oakland	559	602	+43	596	658	+62
Fresno	562	621	+59	610	666	+56
San Bernardino City	568	605	+37	610	640	+30
Los Angeles	580	614	+34	626	664	+38
Sacramento City	594	642	+48	669	715	+46
Moreno Valley	598	633	+35	638	669	+31
Long Beach	625	668	+43	685	729	+44
San Diego	631	660	+29	697	735	+38
Inglewood	632	652	+20	643	671	+28
Elk Grove	663	673	+10	740	764	+24
California	N/A	643	N/A	686	728	+42

The 13 districts are listed in ascending order based on their respective African American Growth API scores in 2003. Because improvements in API scores tend to be larger at the lower end of the scale than at the higher end, districts whose API scores fall within a similar range are grouped together. In general, if a district or subgroup that had a *higher* API in 2003 also achieves greater API gains than another, then that district or subgroup has clearly improved more rapidly.

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRESS REPORTING

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in the 13 districts. Each presents achievement data differently and provides a more nuanced picture of how African American student achievement varies across California.

- Figure 8 focuses on African American student achievement *only in 2007*, providing comparisons within and across the 13 districts. The figure shows how African American students in each district did on the English language arts CSTs in grades 4, 7, and 11, and the math CSTs in grades 4 and 7. It also shows the African American Growth API and the overall Growth API for each district.
- Figure 9 focuses on *improvements* in each district's Growth API scores for African American and all students between 2003 and 2007. The figure allows comparison of these improvements among districts—*but only within certain important limits*. In order to encourage schools and districts to devote themselves to helping their

lowest-achieving students, the API is designed so that test score gains among students at the lower end of the scale result in larger API increases than do similar test score gains among students at the higher end. In general, if a district or subgroup that had a *higher* API in 2003 also achieves greater API gains than another, then that district or subgroup's achievement has improved more rapidly. To make interpretation easier, Figure 9 sorts the 13 districts in ascending order based on their respective African American Growth API scores in 2003, grouping together districts whose API scores fell within a similar range.

These two views illuminate the variation in African American student achievement across districts

Taken together, these two views show how much African American student achievement and improvement varies across local

California contexts. In addition, certain districts stand out as potential resources for educators and advocates who hope to document and share promising policies and practices for supporting African American student achievement.

I. Inglewood: Above-average achievement in a high-poverty district

Inglewood Unified has one of the highest poverty rates among the 13 districts, with 74% of students participating in FRPM. The district also consistently receives African American Growth API scores that exceed the African American API for the state. In 2007 Inglewood's score was fourth-highest among the 13 districts. The percentage of African American students in Inglewood Unified who scored advanced or proficient on the grade 4 math CST also exceeded the percentage for all African American students in the state.

Especially high-performing Inglewood elementary schools that serve high percentages of low-income students have been the focus of a great deal of attention, and the principals who led these schools have become prominent figures in state discussions about school improvement. *They Have Overcome*, a report published in 2002 by the Pacific Research Institute, focused on curricula, teaching, and leadership in four of these Inglewood elementary schools. And in January 2008, Randy Ross—who serves as board director of Education Policy in Los Angeles Unified—noted that practices developed in Inglewood elementary schools have been a resource for educators in other places, such as Bunche Elementary in Compton Unified, which had one of the highest African American Growth API scores in California (836) in 2007.

2. San Diego, Long Beach, and Elk Grove: Consistently above-average achievement in very different districts

African American students in Elk Grove Unified, Long Beach Unified, and San Diego Unified routinely performed above the average for African American students in the state on the academic measures shown in Figure 8. The Growth API scores earned by these students in 2007 were the highest among the I3 districts.

Elk Grove, in particular, is quite different from Long Beach and San Diego, however:

- **Student poverty:** Although the percentage of students in Elk Grove who participated in FRPM in 2006–07 (44%) was below the state percentage—unique among the I3 districts—the percentages in Long Beach (68%) and San Diego (61%) were well above.
- **Largest student subgroup:** Elk Grove is the only district among the I3 in which white students formed the largest ethnic subgroup in 2007. Hispanic/Latino students were the largest subgroups in Long Beach and San Diego, as in most of the other districts. (The only district among the I3 in which African Americans were the largest ethnic subgroup in 2007 was Oakland Unified.)

In addition, these districts vary greatly with respect to how much their African American Growth API scores have improved since 2003. (See Figure 9.) Overall African American achievement in Elk Grove improved only slightly during this time. However, improvement in African American achievement in Long Beach stands out compared with districts that had similar African American Growth API scores in 2003.

3. Fresno and Sacramento City: Notable achievement gains compared with districts that had similar African American API scores in 2003

Both Fresno Unified and Sacramento City Unified are notable for how much their respective African American Growth API scores have improved compared with districts in which African American students performed similarly in 2003. (See Figure 9.)

- **Fresno Unified:** Improvements in African American student achievement in Fresno Unified outpaced gains in Oakland Unified and far outpaced gains in San Francisco Unified. These improvements are especially noteworthy because 81% of all students in Fresno Unified participated in FRPM in 2006–07—second only to Compton Unified among the I3 districts.
- **Sacramento City Unified:** Improvements in African American student achievement in Sacramento City Unified outpaced gains in Los Angeles Unified and Moreno Valley Unified. In addition, the percentage of African American students who scored advanced or proficient on the

grade 7 CST in math in 2007 exceeded the average for all African American students in the state. (See Figure 8 on page 14.)

4. San Francisco and San Bernardino City: Inadequate yearly progress with African American students under NCLB

Although 12 of the 13 districts did not make AYP in 2006–07—the exception was San Diego Unified—San Francisco Unified and San Bernardino City Unified were the two districts among them that made inadequate academic progress with African American students under NCLB. This was the case in mathematics in San Francisco (22.3% of African American students scored proficient or advanced under NCLB), and in both English language arts and mathematics in San Bernardino City (22.9% and 23.4%, respectively).

Although all 13 districts had higher districtwide than African American Growth API scores in 2007, this difference was most startling in San Francisco. (See Figure 8.) San Francisco's overall Growth API score (763) was well above the state average and second only to Elk Grove among the I3 districts. But San Francisco's score for African American students (581) was the second-lowest. This score was only 1 point higher than in Compton Unified, which serves an almost entirely low-income student population. By contrast, only 56% of San Francisco's overall student population participated in FRPM in 2006–07. What percentage of the district's African American students are of low socioeconomic status is unclear.

We went on a lot of what we called 'excellent-school visits.' We would find schools with similar demographics as ours, but that had high APIs.... My teachers would react: 'Okay, I see it. It's not rocket science. It really can be done.'

—Mikara Solomon Davis, Former Principal, Bunche Elementary (Compton Unified)

African American students in some California schools are doing very well on the API

Looking closely at the school-level data reveals even more clearly that African American student achievement varies substantially from place to place. In some schools, African American students are doing very well academically. This section explores this diversity in achievement at the school level by using school API data.

Doing so presents challenges, however. African American student achievement is difficult to summarize at the school level because frequently there are not enough African American students in a school for their subgroup achievement results to be reported publicly. This is the case for both school-level API and grade-level CST results. Thus, the limitations inherent in exploring African American student achievement at the school level warrant clarification.

Altogether 43% of African American students attended schools that did not receive an African American Growth API in 2007

Under California's school accountability rules, schools receive API scores only for "numerically significant" student subgroups. These are subgroups with at least 100 students with valid STAR scores or, alternatively, 50 students who contribute at least 15% of the school's valid STAR scores. (Prior to the 2004 Base API, the rule for numerical significance was at least 100 students with valid STAR scores, or 30 students who contribute at least 15% of a school's valid STAR scores. Senate Bill 722 changed the rule to make California's requirements consistent with NCLB.)

Only about 13% of all California K–12 public schools received an African American Growth API in 2007. These schools served 57.5% of the state's African American students. As a result, nearly 43% of California's African American students attended a school in which they were not part of a numerically significant subgroup.

figure 10 African American students are more likely than their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white peers to attend schools in which they are not part of a numerically significant subgroup

Percentage of Statewide Subgroup Population Served by Schools That Did Not Receive a Growth API Score for That Subgroup in 2007				
	African American	Asian	Hispanic/Latino	White
All California Schools	43%	31%	4%	8%
Elementary Schools	52%	40%	4%	10%
Middle Schools	35%	29%	2%	5%
High Schools	34%	19%	6%	7%

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), CBEDS SCHOOL INFORMATION FORM (ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL), 2007 API GROWTH DATA FILE

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We're very committed to goal setting: having a goal; having a plan to get to that goal; checking to see if you reached the goal, and if you did, why, and if you didn't, why not.

—Karen Williams, Principal, Signal Hill Elementary (Long Beach Unified)

This does not mean that these African American students go entirely uncounted for state accountability purposes. Their achievement is still included in the school's overall API score. The achievement of some may also be included in other measures, such as the API score that a school receives for students of low socioeconomic status or who receive Special Education services. Their achievement is also likely to be reported at the district level, where the same rules for numerical significance apply. About 95% of California's African American students attended a district that received a 2007 African American Growth API score.

Compared to their Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white peers, African American students are most likely to attend a school in which they are not part of a numerically significant subgroup. (See Figure 10.) But this likelihood varies by location. For example, although about two-thirds of African American students in Los Angeles County attended a school that received an African American Growth API in 2007, none of Orange County's approximately 9,000 African American students did. (Overall,

only 20 of California's 58 counties had at least one school that received an African American 2007 Growth API.)

The schools with the highest African American Growth API scores in 2007 are diverse

Looking more closely at California schools that *did* receive an African American Growth API in 2007 reveals that African American students do well academically in many different types of schools and at all grade levels. These include regular public schools, magnet schools, and charter schools in which students and their families choose to enroll. They also represent different sizes and demographic patterns.

The following discussion focuses on schools in which the 2007 African American Growth API was especially high. Altogether, 45 elementary, 18 middle, and 16 high schools received African American API scores that were well above the average: at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean for their respective school levels. (A standard deviation is the average of how much these schools' African American Growth API

scores in 2007 differed from the mean for all schools that received one. On average, about 6.7% of these schools at each of the elementary, middle, and high school levels would be expected to receive a score that was 1.5 standard deviations above the mean.) Further data on schools that received particularly high African American Growth API scores in 2007 are available from the EdSource website at www.edsource.org/stu_AAachievement08.cfm.

This section offers a brief summary of these schools. Neither this summary nor the data on which it is based control for student or school characteristics statistically. The goal is not to offer an exhaustive analysis of the many places where African American students might be succeeding academically, but to show that many African American students are doing well academically and highlight characteristics that their schools seem to share.

Forty-five elementary schools had an African American Growth API of 785 or higher

In 2007, 615 elementary schools received an African American Growth API. These ranged from 484 to 882—a difference of almost 400 points. The mean African American API among these schools was about 684, compared with an average schoolwide API of about 725.

Of these, 45 schools received an African American Growth API in 2007 that was at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean, the lowest being 785. African American students were the largest ethnic subgroup in 10 of these elementary schools, of which seven were located in Los Angeles County. Only four of the 45 elementary schools were public charter schools.

These 45 elementary schools:

- Are located across seven counties and 21 districts, including eight districts in Los Angeles County alone.
- Varied widely in size, ranging from 221 to 1,161 students.
- Tended to serve lower percentages of students who participated in FRPM than in the state overall.

Selected Stories: EdSource Online

As a supplement to this report, the EdSource website (www.edsource.org/stu_AAachievement08.cfm) includes:

- Further data on schools that received particularly high African American Growth API scores in 2007; and
- Edited transcripts from interviews that EdSource conducted with principals at some of these schools—representing a diverse range of school types, school sizes, demographic patterns, and locations—to discuss these leaders' perspectives on the strategies they think play a key role in outcomes for the African American students at their schools.

We have an extended day, and we use that time carefully and creatively to best meet students' needs.

—Lydia Glassie, Principal, KIPP San Francisco Bay Academy
(Grades 5–8, San Francisco Unified)

- Had higher concentrations of African Americans students than the state percentage and also tended to serve higher or equivalent concentrations of African American students compared with their home districts.

These elementary schools show how much variation in African American student achievement can exist even within a single district. Consider two examples.

- Two of the elementary schools with the highest African American achievement in the state—Bursch Elementary and Bunche Elementary—are located in Compton Unified. This district received an African American Growth API score of 580 in 2007, but Bursch and Bunche received scores of 849 and 836, respectively. Both schools served student populations that were entirely low-income (as measured by participation in FRPM), and more than half of the students at Bunche Elementary were African American in 2006–07.
- Four of the 45 elementary schools were located in Oakland Unified. These schools received African American Growth API scores that ranged from 791

to 882 in 2007, compared to a score of 602 for the district as a whole.

Eighteen middle schools had an African American Growth API of at least 748

In 2007, 275 middle schools received an African American Growth API. These ranged from 435 to 865—a difference of 430 points. The mean African American API among these schools was about 634, compared with an average schoolwide API of about 682.

Of these, 18 middle schools received an African American Growth API in 2007 that was at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean, the lowest being 748. African American students were the largest subgroup in three of the middle schools—in each case, a public charter school.

These 18 middle schools:

- Are located across eight counties and 14 districts, and one is a State Board of Education–authorized charter.
- Varied dramatically in size, ranging from 257 to 1,925 students, but generally served more than 1,000 students.
- Included five public charter schools that served no more than 341 students each,

of which three are part of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) charter management organization. (KIPP schools serve students in grades 5–8.)

- In most cases, had a similar or higher percentage of African American students than in their respective home districts. All served a higher percentage than the state overall.

The two middle schools with the highest African American Growth API scores in the state in 2007 were both part of the KIPP program, including KIPP Adelante Preparatory Academy in San Diego Unified (865) and KIPP San Francisco Bay Academy in San Francisco Unified (834). The latter serves a student body that is 40% African American.

Sixteen high schools had an African American Growth API of 736 or more

In 2007, 297 high schools received an African American Growth API. These ranged from 307 to 916—a difference of more than 600 points. The mean African American API among these schools was about 612, compared with an average schoolwide API of about 662.

Of these, 16 schools received an African American Growth API in 2007 that was at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean, the lowest being 736.

These 16 high schools:

- Are located across seven counties and 13 districts, including five districts in Los Angeles County alone.
- Varied dramatically in size, from 318 to 3,942 students.

- Contrary to the elementary and middle schools already described, included six high schools that each served a lower percentage of African American students than the state overall in 2006–07.

- Tended to serve a larger percentage of African American students than their respective home districts.
- Had smaller percentages of students who participated in FRPM than the state overall in all cases but one.

In addition, four of the six highest-performing high schools—whose African American API scores were two or more standard deviations above the mean, ranging from 774 to 916 in 2007—were not comprehensive high schools. The four included high schools in which students may earn college credit or even an associate's degree.

A student knows when they're welcome or not. If they don't feel welcome on campus or they don't feel that this is their school, then it can be easy to become unmotivated. So our job is to make sure that we see all students.

—Ben Drati, Principal, Clovis West High (Clovis Unified)

We teach to the state of California standards and expect all children to achieve to those standards. We constantly tell them that they are scholars, that they are college-bound, and that we are preparing them for their future.

—Rosella Jackson, Principal, Grass Valley Elementary (Oakland Unified)



CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES

Strategies for improving the learning and educational attainment of California's African American students should become a higher state priority

The goal of this report is to raise broader awareness about African American student achievement in California and to increase public interest in better serving these students. In one sense, this is a modest goal. The state-level data contained in this report will be unsurprising to some readers, and the promise and problems of American public education have been continuous topics of analysis and debate within the African American community for decades.

But a more broadly shared understanding of how African American students in California are doing academically, both overall and in different places, is essential if the state is to better and more consistently support these students in meeting their full academic potential. This is an opportune moment as California focuses renewed policy attention on academic achievement gaps.

State-level data tell one story

African American student achievement in California is improving thanks to the efforts of many. But California has much more to do on a more systemwide basis. State data contain both encouraging and sobering news.

- **English Language Arts:** African American student achievement in English language arts has improved, but less markedly than among Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white students, and average achievement in grade II has grown little since 2003. The reason for this is not entirely clear, but the state has already made one policy response. In its new criteria for the adoption of K–8 Reading/Language Arts/English Language Development instructional materials, the state calls for some instructional strategies aimed at improving the academic English language skills and literacy of English

language learners to also be available for African American students who are struggling readers and are learning standard academic English. The State Board of Education is scheduled to adopt new instructional materials that fit these criteria by the end of 2008.

- **Mathematics:** Math achievement among African American students has also improved, with increased participation and performance in Algebra I among African American 8th graders since 2003 of particular note. But African American achievement in math is lower than among Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white students, and few African American students currently complete Algebra II by the end of grade 10.
- **Gender:** On average, African American male students in California experience less high school and postsecondary success than female students. Available state data do not clarify how such differences might play out in earlier grades, or within particular courses.
- **Special Education and Alternative Education:** African Americans' representation in Special Education and alternative high school education programs is one gauge of the extent to which they may not be well served currently by California's general education programs. Although full exploration of these issues is beyond the scope of this report, African American students are clearly overrepresented in both cases.

District- and school-level data tell many other stories

State-level data are only one part of the story. This report's various looks at how African American students are doing in different California districts and schools show that much can be done—and is being done—to support these students academically. Indeed, African American students are doing well in a diverse range of schools across the state, particularly at the elementary level.

The key question for California educators and policymakers is:

What policies and practices contribute to variation in African American student achievement among California districts and schools?

Local policies and practices that appear to result in improved African American achievement need to be documented and widely shared. Inquiring deeply into these is beyond the scope of this report. But EdSource interviewed school principals from a number of the elementary, middle, and high schools described here, all from schools with African American Growth API scores that were substantially above average in 2007. The quotes from principals in this publication are from these interviews, and full transcripts are available on the EdSource website. (See the box on page 18 and the list of schools and principals on page 24.) The principals discussed the practices and policies that, in their estimation, contribute to the higher than average academic outcomes among African American students in their schools. These interviews provide a limited but suggestive look at how these leaders think about their schools' efforts to ensure that all students meet their full academic potential and their perspectives about how to do this.

The report also offers suggestions for exploring these issues further. (See the "Get Involved" box.) A growing number of organizations and research efforts are addressing African American student achievement in California. These reflect a broad range of perspectives and areas of focus and an important and ongoing conversation about how to provide African American students—and all students—in California a K–12 education that will enable them to better meet their potential.

Meeting this challenge requires that all who have a stake in California's education system—educators, policymakers, parents, and community members—work together and share responsibility for making African

American students' learning and academic attainment a priority in order to more effectively ensure their future prosperity and that of the state as a whole. Although state-level trends make clear that California has much to do to in this regard, the local variations summarized in this publication also make clear that it can be done. 

Local policies and practices that appear to result in improved African American achievement need to be documented and widely shared.

Get Involved

California Organizations

- African American Male Education Network & Development (A²MEND), www.a2mend.org
- California Alliance of African American Educators (CAAEE), www.caaee.org
- California Legislative Black Caucus, www.assembly.ca.gov/lbcweb
- California School Boards Association (CSBA) Student Issues Conference Group on African American Students, www.csba.org
- Council of Black Administrators (COBA), www.lausd.k12.ca.us/orgs/coba
- Los Angeles Urban League, www.laul.org
- Voices for African American Students (VAAS), www.vaasinc.org

California Publications and Other Resources

- *The Achievement Gap, School Well-Being, and Learning Supports*, Factsheet 8 (California Healthy Kids Survey), WestEd, 2007. www.wested.org/chks/pdf/factsheet_8.pdf
- *African American Educational Opportunity Report*, University of California All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (ACCORD) and UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), November 2007. www.edopp.org
- *Beyond Access: How the First Semester Matters for Community College Students' Aspirations and Persistence*, A. K. Driscoll, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), August 2007. pace.berkeley.edu/reports/PB.07-2.pdf
- *Course-taking Patterns and Preparation for Postsecondary Education in California's Public University Systems Among Minority Youth*, N. D. Finkelstein & A. B. Fong, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluations and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West, January 2008. ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs
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- *Rules of the Game: How State Policy Creates Barriers to Degree Completion and Impedes Student Success in the California Community Colleges*, N. Shulock and C. Moore, Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy (IHELP), California State University-Sacramento, February 2007. www.csus.edu/ihe
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National Publications

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- *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education*, National Research Council, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education (M. S. Donovan & C. T. Cross, eds.), Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002. www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10128
- *Public Education & Black Male Students: The 2006 State Report Card*, M. Holzman for the Schott Foundation for Public Education. www.schottfoundation.org/publications/Schott_06_report_final.pdf
- *Understanding the Link between Race and Academic Achievement and Creating Schools where that Link Can Be Broken*, P. A. Noguera, SAGE Race Relations Abstracts, 27(5), pp. 5–15, 2002.
- *What It Takes to Make a Student*, P. Tough, *New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 26, 2006. www.nytimes.com/2006/11/26/magazine/26tough.html
- *Yes We Can: Telling Truths and Dispelling Myths About Race and Education in America*, The Education Trust, September 2006. www.edtrust.org

Appendix

Student Achievement on Grades 2–7 Math CSTs in 2006–07, by Ethnicity

Percent Proficient or Advanced						
Ethnicity	Grades					
	2	3	4	5	6	7
African American	44%	42%	41%	32%	24%	22%
Asian	81%	82%	83%	77%	72%	69%
Hispanic/Latino	48%	48%	46%	37%	29%	27%
White	74%	72%	70%	63%	58%	54%
All Students	59%	58%	56%	49%	42%	39%

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (STAR)

EdSource 5/08

Student Participation and Achievement on the Grade 8 Algebra I CST in 2003 and 2007, by Ethnicity

Grade 8 Algebra I CST								
Ethnicity	Percent of 8th Graders in Each Group Participating		Percent Proficient or Advanced of All 8th Grade Test-takers in Each Group		Percent Proficient or Advanced of All 8th Graders in Each Group*		Mean Scale Score for Each Group	
	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007
	African American	24%	46%	17%	20%	4%	9%	302
Asian	49%	63%	67%	69%	33%	43%	386	390
Hispanic/Latino	26%	46%	20%	25%	5%	11%	306	314
White	37%	52%	49%	52%	18%	27%	352	357
All Students	32%	49%	39%	38%	12%	18%	337	337

* 2007 figures for percent proficient or advanced of all 8th graders in each group are calculated by first multiplying the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced by the number of students with scores to find roughly how many students scored proficient or advanced, then dividing the result by CBEDS enrollment figures. The number of students with scores was not reported in prior years, however, so 2003 figures are based on the number of students tested. (Students whose scores are not counted for some reason, such as testing irregularities, are not included in the number of students with scores group but are included in the number of students tested group.) For both 2003 and 2007, figures for percent in each group participating are calculated using the number of students tested in each year.

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (CBEDS, STAR)

EdSource 5/08

Student Participation and Achievement on the Grade 11 Summative High School Math CST in 2003 and 2007, by Ethnicity

Grade 11 Summative High School Math CST								
Ethnicity	Percent of 11th Graders in Each Group Participating		Percent Proficient or Advanced of All 11th Grade Test-takers in Each Group		Percent Proficient or Advanced of All 11th Graders in Each Group*		Mean Scale Score for Each Group	
	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007
	African American	7%	9%	16%	19%	1%	2%	279
Asian	38%	51%	62%	63%	24%	32%	374	375
Hispanic/Latino	7%	10%	20%	23%	1%	2%	291	305
White	18%	24%	47%	49%	8%	12%	345	348
All Students	14%	19%	44%	44%	6%	8%	338	341

* 2007 figures for percent proficient or advanced of all 11th graders in each group are calculated by first multiplying the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced by the number of students with scores to find roughly how many students scored proficient or advanced, then dividing the result by CBEDS enrollment figures. The number of students with scores was not reported in prior years, however, so 2003 figures are based on the number of students tested. (Students whose scores are not counted for some reason, such as testing irregularities, are not included in the number of students with scores group but are included in the number of students tested group.) For both 2003 and 2007, figures for percent in each group participating are calculated using the number of students tested in each year.

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE), DATAQUEST (CBEDS, STAR)

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- Rick Aleksak (Principal, Victoriano Elementary, Val Verde Unified)
- Thelma Brown (Principal, City Honors High, Inglewood Unified)
- Travis Collier (Principal, Rudecinda Sepulveda Dodson Middle, Los Angeles Unified)
- Mikara Solomon Davis (Former Principal, Ralph Bunche Elementary, Compton Unified)
- Ben Drati (Principal, Clovis West High, Clovis Unified)
- Lydia Glassie (Principal, KIPP San Francisco Bay Academy, San Francisco Unified)
- Todd Haag (Principal, Rancho Cucamonga High, Chaffey Joint Union High)
- Jeanne Hatfield (Former Principal, Clovis West High; currently Assistant Superintendent, Clovis Unified)
- Chuck Holland (Former Principal, Victoriano Elementary, Val Verde Unified; currently Program Improvement Administrator, Riverside County Office of Education)
- Rosella Jackson (Principal, Grass Valley Elementary, Oakland Unified)
- Synee Pearson (Principal, Ralph Bunche Elementary, Compton Unified)
- Bob Rowe (Principal, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle, Oceanside Unified)
- Karen Williams (Principal, Signal Hill Elementary, Long Beach Unified)



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