

FactSheet October 2016

Latino Students in California’s K-12 Public Schools

by Manuel Buenrostro

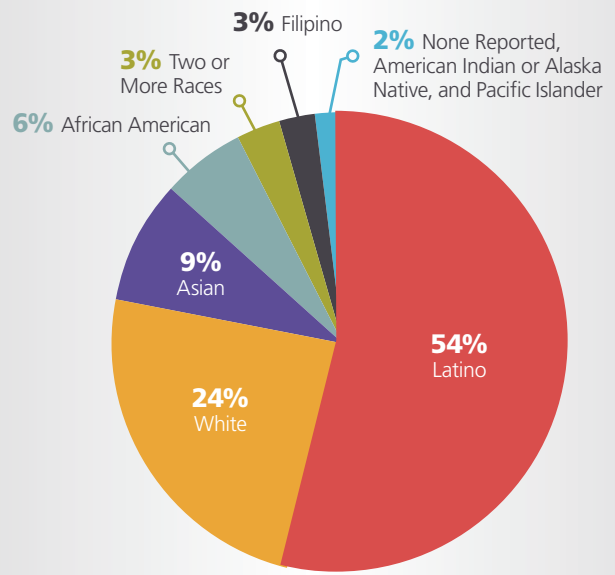
Latinos are an important part of California’s cultural fabric and are central to the state’s future economic prosperity. Critical to this prosperity is how California’s K-12 public schools prepare Latino students for success in college, career, and civic life. This fact sheet summarizes key demographic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

Enrollment

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

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

Figure I. 2015-2016 California Statewide K-12 Public School Enrollment, by Ethnicity¹



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

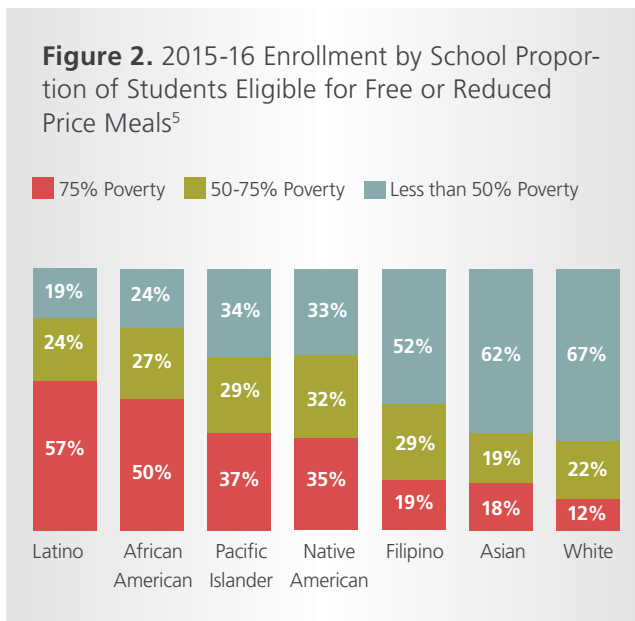
Table 1. 2015-2016 Latino Student Enrollment, by County³

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

Economic, English Learner, and Special Education Status

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

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



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

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

Academic Achievement

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

- » Among sixth grade students that met or exceeded standards in math, there is a 30 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 49 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their Asian peers.
- » Among sixth grade students that met or exceeded standards in English language arts, there is a 27 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 40 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their Asian peers.

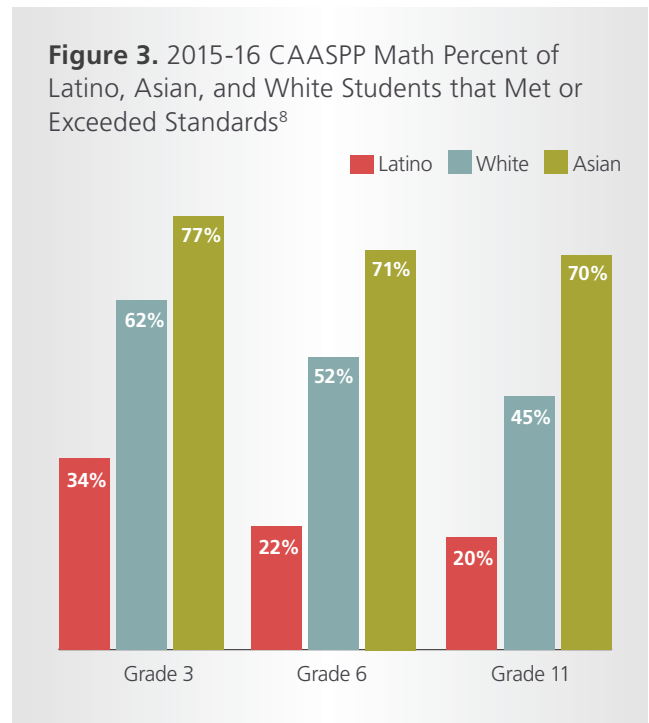
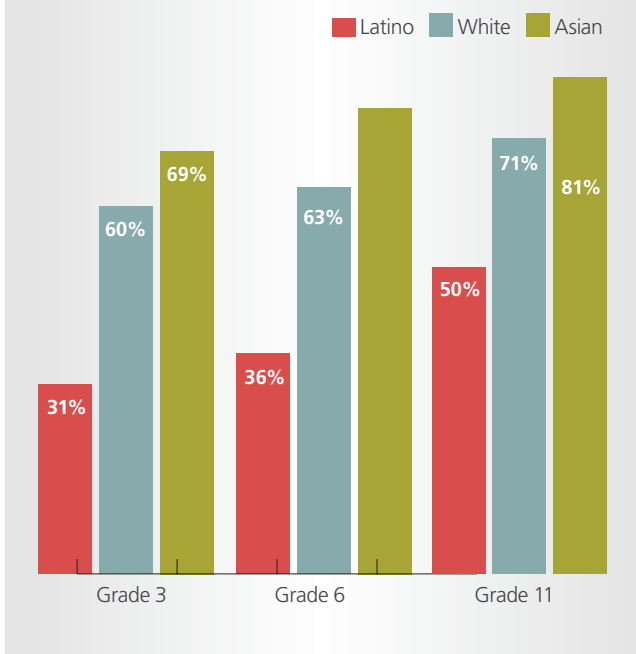


Figure 4. 2015-16 CAASPP English Language Arts Percent of Latino, Asian, and White Students that Met or Exceeded Standards⁹

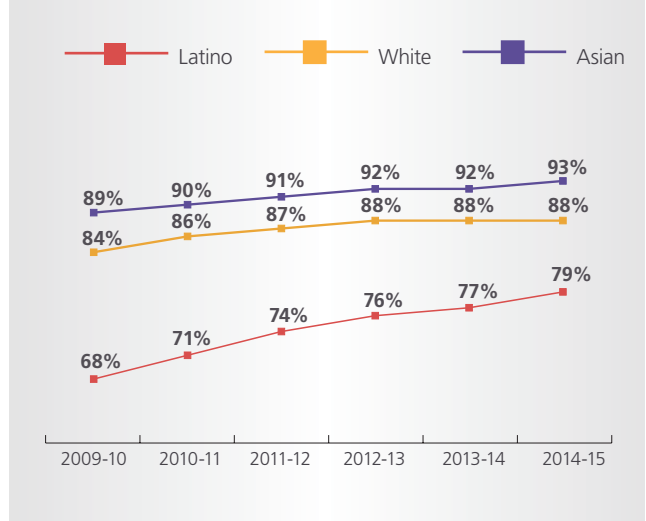


Moreover, Grade 11 results suggest that only 20% of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math coursework, compared to 45% of white and 70% of Asian students. In English language arts, 50% of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework, compared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

High School Graduation Rates

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

Figure 5. Cohort Graduation Rates for the 2009-10 to 2014-15 Classes, by Latino, White and Asian Students¹¹



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

Conclusion

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

Endnotes

- 1 California Department of Education. Statewide enrollment by ethnicity with county data. California Department of Education. September 28, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2dxYeDC>
- 2 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Enrollment in California public schools by ethnic designation, 2015-16. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2dVyqnQ>
- 3 See Endnote 1
- 4 See Endnote 1
- 5 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Unduplicated student poverty – free or reduced price meals data 2015–16. September 28, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2dhLZsO>
- 6 California Department of Education. Enrollment by gender, grade and ethnic designation. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2e5XqrN>
- 7 CSBA analysis: California Department of Education. Special education enrollment by age and major ethnic group. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2dVswj7>
- 8 CSBA analysis: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. 2016 California statewide research file. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2cV6yiC>
- 9 See Endnote 8
- 10 See endnote 8
- 11 California Department of Education. Cohort outcome data report by race/ethnicity. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2dNMZWp>
- 12 California Department of Education. 12th grade graduates completing all courses required for U.C. and/or C.S.U. entrance. September 29, 2016. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1TO3fZX>

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