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Governance Brief

Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander Students in Focus

by Manuel Buenrostro

The Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander communities are an important part of California's cultural fabric and include people from many cultures and experiences. Considering a range of data on these diverse student populations is essential to support efforts to make K-12 public education more effective and equitable.

This brief summarizes key demographic and achievement data as part of an effort to highlight the opportunities and challenges facing Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students. School district and county board members can use this information to better understand the diversity of these students in their schools and identify strategies to support them.

Importance of Reviewing Disaggregated Data

While this brief presents an overview of statewide results, more specific data is available within each county, district, and school. California law requires state agencies, boards, and commissions to collect data for at least 11 groups, including Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Laotian, Cambodian, Hawaiian, Guamanian, and Samoan.¹ The California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) collects data for these 11 student groups, in addition to Hmong, Other Asian, Tahitian, and Other Pacific Islander students.

A local review of this data is critical to ensure that all Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students receive the educational supports and resources that they need. Moreover, a more detailed analysis of data from each county, district, and school can help board members and other education leaders to make more informed decisions about how to best serve their communities and students, including in

In this brief you will find:

- » **Information about the importance of analyzing local data and disaggregating it further so that the needs of student groups are not hidden.**
- » **An overview of the enrollment trends of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students.**
- » **An analysis of their enrollment and concentration by county and Local Educational Agency (LEA).**
- » **Information about their demographics, including socioeconomic, English learner, and special education status.**
- » **A summary of their outcomes, including academic achievement, attendance, and high school graduation rates.**

the development of their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

Enrollment Trends

Of the 6.2 million K-12 students who attend California public schools, 9.2 percent are Asian, 2.4 percent are Filipino, and 0.5 percent are Pacific Islander. These populations are composed of students from many cultural backgrounds:

- » 569,744 are Asian, including Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, and Vietnamese students;
- » 151,650 are Filipino; and
- » 28,920 are Pacific Islander, including Guamanian, Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tahitian students.²

Data from the 1997–98 to the 2017–18 school years shows different trends for Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students:

- » California’s Asian student population has experienced slow but consistent growth, both in total numbers and percentage of all students. Over the 20-year period, the proportion of Asian students has increased from 8.1 percent to 9.2 percent, and their total population has grown by over 100,000 students (from 466,399 to 569,744 students).
- » The proportion of Filipino students has remained at or near 2.5 percent over the past 20 years. The enrollment of Filipino students in California public schools reached its height during the 2008–09 school year (at 168,112 students) and has since declined to its current enrollment of 151,650 students during the 2017–18 school year.
- » Enrollment of Pacific Islander students was relatively stable in both proportion and number of students in the early to late 2000s (from the 2000–01 to the 2008–09 school years), making up approximately 0.6 percent of all students, with enrollment hovering around 40,000 students. However, their enrollment has since steadily declined to 28,920 students during the 2017–18 school year (their lowest recorded enrollment over the past 20 years). Pacific Islander students have made up 0.5 percent of all students over the past six years.³

Enrollment by County and LEA

While Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students attend school in 57 of 58 California counties, their concentration varies considerably by county—ranging from 0.5 percent (two students) in Sierra County to 36 percent in San Francisco County (Alpine County has none). Ten counties have an Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander student enrollment that is above the statewide average (12.1 percent), while 38 counties have an enrollment at or below 6 percent (half of the statewide average).⁶ A list of all counties arrayed by percentage of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students can be found [here](#).

The concentration of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students also varies considerably at the LEA level (which

Growth of Asian Population Nationally and in California

Nationwide, the Asian population has been increasing, including the numbers of Asian students in our public schools. According to the Pew Research Center, “the U.S. Asian population grew by 72% from 2000 to 2015 (from 11.9 million to 20.4 million), the fastest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group.” Across the 19 groups in the analysis, about half nearly doubled in size, with Bhutanese, Nepalese, and Burmese populations showing the fastest growth. Looking at the overall U.S. Asian population, no single group makes up a majority, but the largest groups include those of Chinese origin (24 percent), Indian origin (20 percent), and Filipinos (19 percent). About one third of all U.S. Asians live in California.⁴

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the majority (53 percent) of immigrants arriving in California between 2011 and 2015 came from Asia, including sizable populations from China (914,000), the Philippines (859,000), India (581,000), and Vietnam (507,000). Overall, 39 percent of all California immigrants were born in Asia. This has implications for public schools, especially when we consider that half of California’s children have at least one immigrant parent.⁵

includes school districts, charter schools, county offices of education, and state special schools). About 11.5 percent of California LEAs have no Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander students; 58.9 percent have significantly fewer than the state average; 19.8 percent meet or are near the state average;⁷ and just 9.8 percent have significantly more than the state average. A list of all LEAs by percentage of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students can be found [here](#).

The majority of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students in the state attend school in just 37 school districts. This makes them more concentrated than White and Latino students (over half are enrolled in 82 and 58 school districts, respectively), but less than African-American students (over half are enrolled in 22 school districts).⁸

Figure 1. 2017-18 Enrollment of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander Students by LEA

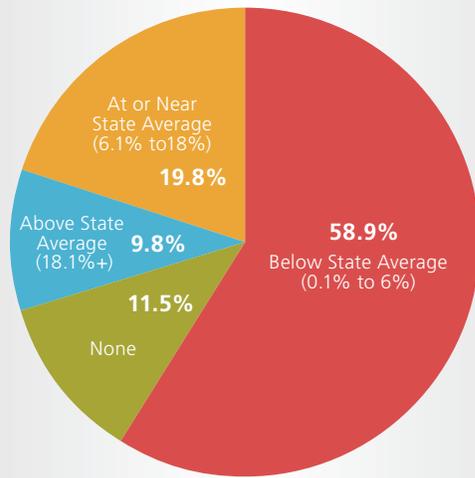
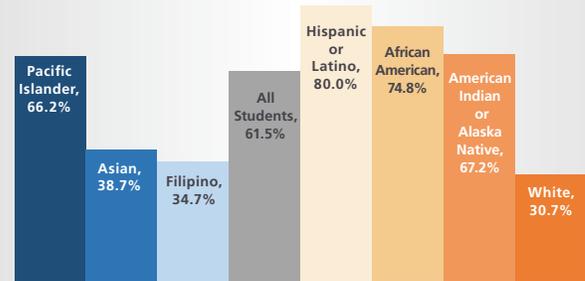


Figure 2. 2017-18 Percentage of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students, by Ethnicity



Socioeconomic, Language, and Special Education Status

When looking at specific demographics of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students, there are multiple factors that impact their educational attainment. These include their socioeconomic, English learner, and special education status.

Socioeconomic Status

Only slightly over one third of Asian and Filipino students are socioeconomically disadvantaged—well below the state average of 61.5 percent. In contrast, 66.2 percent of Pacific Islander students are socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁹ Given the diverse background of these students, averages can hide significant differences. For example, there are populations included in the Asian group (such as Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian) and the Pacific Islander group (such as Tongan and Samoan) who have among the lowest per capita income, and highest poverty and unemployment rates in California.¹⁰

Language Status

Many Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students also come from households where a language other than English is spoken at home. Vietnamese, Mandarin (Putonghua), and Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog) are among the home languages of these students.¹¹ While bilingualism is an asset in college, career, and life, it also means that students and families might need extra instruction and services that can allow them to fully participate in school. A list of all languages spoken at home by students can be found [here](#).

In the 2017–18 school year, 23.5 percent of Asian, 10.9 percent of Filipino, and 13.9 percent of Pacific Islander students were English learners—and many others are former English learners. The proportion of students who are English learners is greater for those in the earlier grades:

- » 46.7 percent of first-grade Asian students are English learners, compared to 17.7 percent in sixth grade and 11.8 percent in ninth grade;
- » 18.4 percent of first-grade Filipino students are English learners, compared to 10 percent in sixth grade and 6.9 percent in ninth grade; and
- » 19.4 percent of first-grade Pacific Islander students are English learners, compared to 13.9 percent in sixth grade and 9.2 percent in ninth grade.¹²

Other Important Student Characteristics

Homeless students. Of the state's 204,085 homeless students, 3 percent are Asian (6,036), 1.6 percent are Filipino (3,166), and 0.6 percent are Pacific Islander students (1,281). A lower proportion of Asian and Filipino students, and a higher proportion of Pacific Islander students are homeless, compared to the overall student population.¹⁴

Foster youth. Of the state's 34,426 foster youth, 1 percent are Asian (340), 0.5 percent are Filipino (167), and 0.4 percent are Pacific Islander (146). A lower proportion of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students are identified as foster youth compared to the overall student population.¹⁵

Migrant students. Of the state's 48,636 migrant students, 1.2 percent are Asian (580), 0.1 percent are Filipino (41), and only two students are Pacific Islander. A higher proportion of Asian, and a smaller proportion of Filipino and Pacific Islander students are migrant, compared to the overall student population. However, their overall numbers and percentage are small when considering that 98 percent of migrant students are Latino.¹⁶

Special Education Status

Within special education programs, Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students are identified at considerably lower rates than students from all other student groups. While 11.3 percent of all students are identified for special education services, only 5.8 percent of Asian, 7.1 percent of Filipino, and 9 percent of Pacific Islander students are identified.¹³

Academic Achievement

Looking at the 2016–17 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results in math and English language arts, we see significant differences in the achievement levels of Asian, Filipino, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students (CAASPP reports data on “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students,” while enrollment data from the California Department of Education reports on “Pacific Islander students,” which includes Native Hawaiian students).

In math, Asian students score higher than any other group: 72.7 percent of Asian students met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 57.1 percent of Filipino, and 31.2 percent of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students.

Figure 3. 2016–17 CAASPP Math Percent of Asian, Filipino, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Students that Met or Exceeded Standards

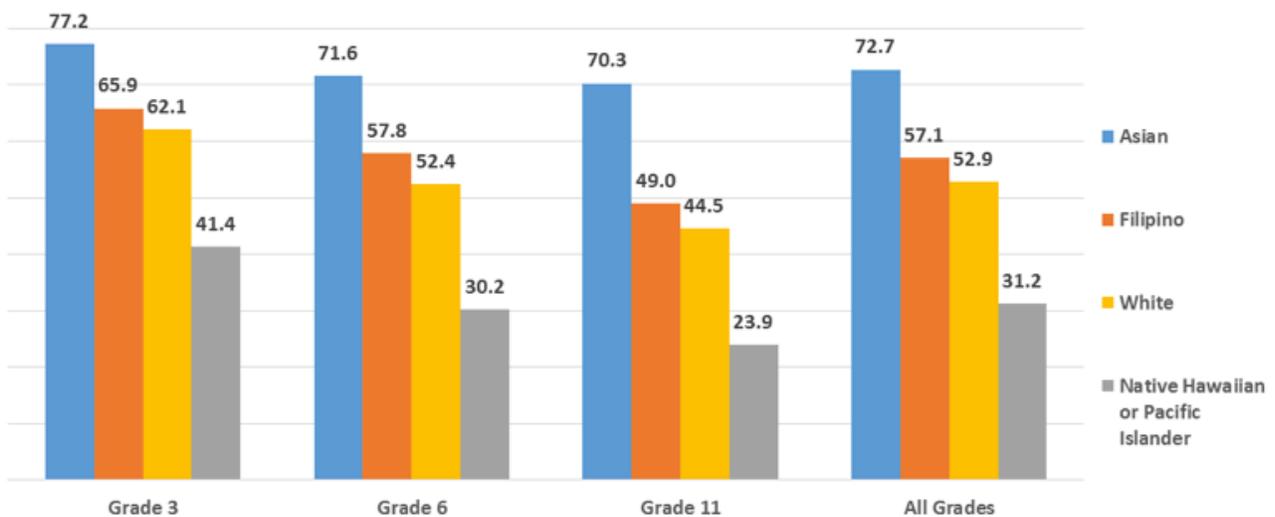
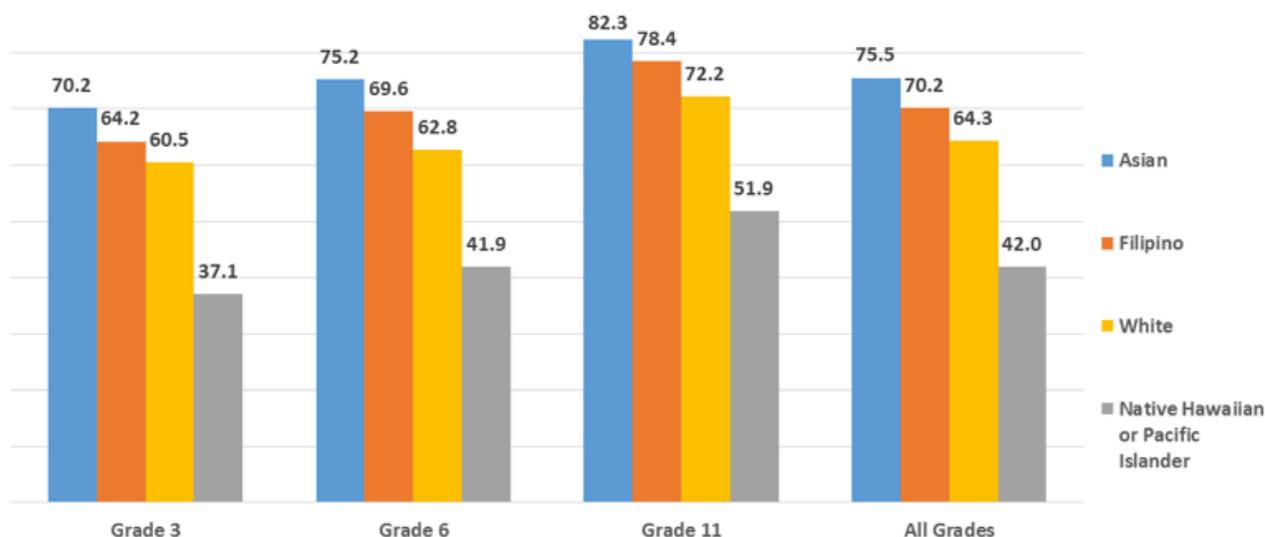


Figure 4. 2016–17 CAASPP English Language Arts Percent of Asian, Filipino, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Students that Met or Exceeded Standards



Hidden Gaps

Achievement data should be analyzed with caution, as averages for Asian or Pacific Islander students can mask the academic needs of some students within these groups. For example, while the achievement of Asian students is high overall, these students include Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong students, whose achievement scores are often lower. It is essential that local leaders disaggregate their local data for all of their student populations in order to understand and meet their needs.

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 and going forward, 11th-grade CAASPP scores will be included in the college and career readiness index as part of the California School Dashboard. Given this approach, 11th-grade results suggest that only 23.9 percent of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level work in math, compared to 49 percent of Filipino and 70.3 percent of Asian students.¹⁷

Asian students overall also score higher than any other group in English language arts: 75.5 percent of Asian students met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 70.2 percent of Filipino, and 42 percent of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students. Based on 11th-grade results, 51.9 percent of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level English language arts coursework, compared to 78.4 percent of Filipino and 82.3 percent of Asian students.¹⁸

Suspensions, Expulsions, and Attendance

Keeping all students in school is critical to their achieving a quality education. In meeting this goal, county offices, school districts, and schools should consider data on student attendance and the types of students affected by disciplinary practices. Information on suspensions, expulsions, chronic absenteeism, and high school dropout rates is critical to understanding the level of connectedness that Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students have to their schools.

- » **Suspensions.** Compared to the suspension rate for all students (3.6 percent), Asian and Filipino students have considerably lower suspension rates (1.1 percent and 1.4 percent respectively). Moreover, among the

students suspended that are Asian and Filipino, only one in five face multiple suspensions, compared to nearly one in three for all students. However, the suspension rate for Pacific Islander students is significantly higher (5 percent), than the rate for all students and is only surpassed by that of African-American (9.8 percent) and American Indian or Alaska Native (7.4 percent) students.¹⁹

- » **Expulsions.** Expulsions are less common and are considerably lower for Asian (0.02 percent) and Filipino (0.04 percent) students when compared to that of all other student groups. The rate for Pacific Islander students, although slightly higher (0.08 percent), is also relatively low and falls below the average for all students (0.09 percent).²⁰
- » **Chronic absenteeism.** When looking at the proportion of students who are chronically absent (those that are absent for 10 percent or more of the days they are expected to attend), the rate for Asian (3.6 percent) and Filipino (5 percent) students is significantly lower than the average of all students and all other student groups (10.8 percent). Pacific Islander students have among the highest rate of chronic absenteeism (15.5 percent), a rate that is greater than the statewide average, and is only surpassed by that of African-American (18.8 percent) and American Indian or Alaska Native (20.9 percent) students.²¹

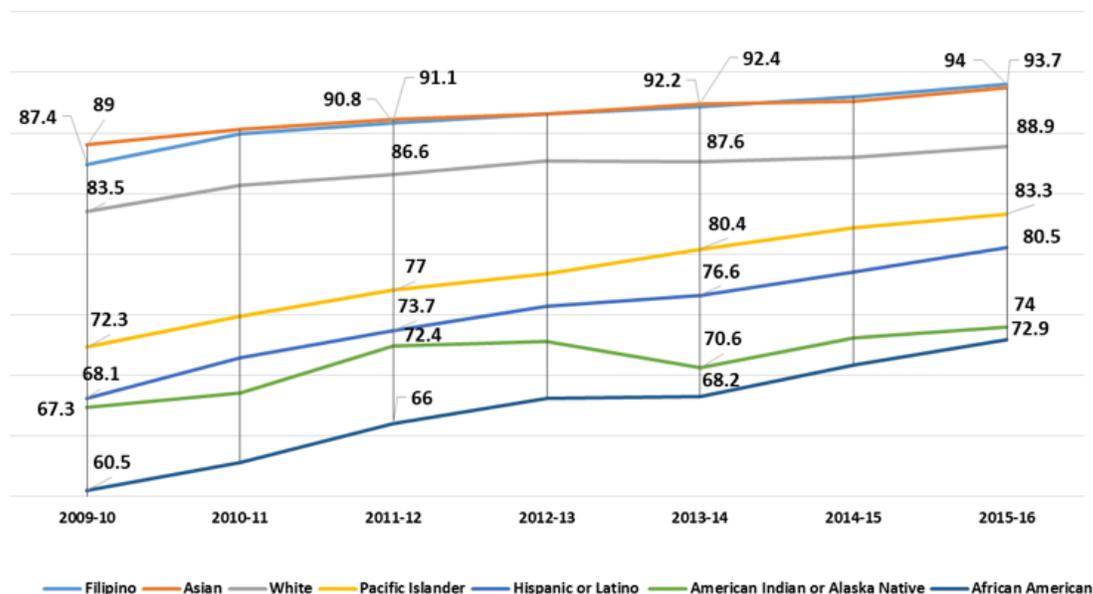
- » **High school dropout rates.** Asian and Filipino students have the lowest high school dropout rates (0.6 and 0.7 percent, respectively), of any student group. The dropout rate for Pacific Islander students (2.3 percent) is higher than that of white students (1.3 percent) but near the average for all students (2.4 percent).²²

High School Graduation Rates

According to 2015–16 four-year cohort graduation data, 93.7 percent of Asian students graduated from high school, compared to 94 percent of Filipino, and 83.3 percent of Pacific Islander students. For all student groups, cohort graduation rates have improved since the 2009–10 school year, with the gap closing slightly between all ethnic student groups (see Figure 5).²³

Readiness for entrance and success in a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) is a critical measure of student success. Unfortunately, not all high school graduates have completed the A-G coursework requirements necessary for entrance to a UC or CSU campus. According to the most recent 2016–17 data, only 38.4 percent of Pacific Islander students graduated from high school having completed their A-G requirements. And while a higher proportion of Asian (73.5 percent) and Filipino (64.5 percent) students graduated

Figure 5. Cohort Graduation Rates for the 2009–10 to 2015–16 Classes



from high school meeting these requirements—higher than any other student group—these numbers are still lower than their overall high school graduation rates.²⁴

Conclusion

This brief is part of CSBA's continued effort to shed light on California's diverse student population. As Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students continue to contribute to the Golden State's cultural fabric, it is critical for governing boards to understand the backgrounds, contributions, and challenges of these students in order to provide them with the necessary supports to meet their potential. CSBA will continue to produce additional briefs, fact sheets, and articles to highlight research-supported strategies and recommendations for board members to consider.

Resources

Sample policies and administrative regulations are available to subscribers of CSBA's policy services through Gamut Online at <https://bit.ly/2jM5Ntz>. These include:

- » BP/AR 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements
- » BP/AR 6164.4 - Identification And Evaluation Of Individuals For Special Education
- » BP/AR 6173 - Education For Homeless Children
- » BP/AR 6173.1 - Education For Foster Youth
- » BP/AR 6174 - Education For English Learners
- » BP/AR 6175 - Migrant Education Program

Endnotes

- 1 Government Code 8310.5. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2H2fMYB>
- 2 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, DataQuest. 2017–18 enrollment by ethnicity, statewide report. Downloaded May 8, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2runvWt>
- 3 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, DataQuest. Selected statewide data for the year 1997–98, 1998–99, 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02, 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, 2007–08, 2008–09, 2009–10, 2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18. Downloaded May 8, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2jFV0ke>
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- 5 Hayes, J. (2017). *Just the Facts: Immigrants in California*. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2GIHzdr>
- 6 See endnote 2.

- 7 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, DataQuest. Enrollment in California public schools by ethnic designation, 2017–18. Downloaded May 7, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2rs0WBb>
- 8 See endnote 7.
- 9 See endnote 2.
- 10 Tseng, W., McDonnell, D. D., Takahashi, L., Ho, W., Lee, C., and Wong, S. (2012). *Ethnic health assessment for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in California*. San Francisco, CA: Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2H5CtLT>
- 11 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, DataQuest. English learner students by language by grade. Downloaded May 8, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/215EeG4>; and California Department of Education, DataQuest. Fluent-English-proficient students by language by grade. Downloaded May 8, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2KLOoim>
- 12 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, DataQuest. 2017–18 enrollment by ethnicity and grade. Downloaded May 8, 2018 from <https://bit.ly/2FUWIMY>
- 13 See endnote 2.
- 14 See endnote 2.
- 15 See endnote 2.
- 16 See endnote 2.
- 17 CSBA Analysis: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. 2017 California statewide research file. Downloaded October 27, 2017 from <https://bit.ly/2qc6Rte>
- 18 See endnote 17.
- 19 California Department of Education, DataQuest. 2016–17 suspension rate. Downloaded April 12, 2018 from <https://bit.ly/2HzoThy>
- 20 California Department of Education, DataQuest. 2016–17 expulsion rate. Downloaded April 12, 2018 from <https://bit.ly/2Hx2gdF>
- 21 California Department of Education, DataQuest. 2016–17 chronic absenteeism rate. Downloaded April 12, 2018 from <https://bit.ly/2EJG1OE>
- 22 California Department of Education, DataQuest. Dropouts by ethnic designation by grade: 2016–17 state of California. Downloaded April 12, 2018 from <https://bit.ly/2v4SbSk>
- 23 California Department of Education, DataQuest. Cohort outcome summary report by race/ethnicity. Downloaded April 2, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2G0hWDD>
- 24 California Department of Education, DataQuest. 12th grade graduates completing all courses required for U.C. and/or C.S.U. entrance: State of California 2016-17. Downloaded May 8, 2018, from <https://bit.ly/2FYyTy>

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