

FactSheet October 2018

Latino Students in California’s K-12 Public Schools

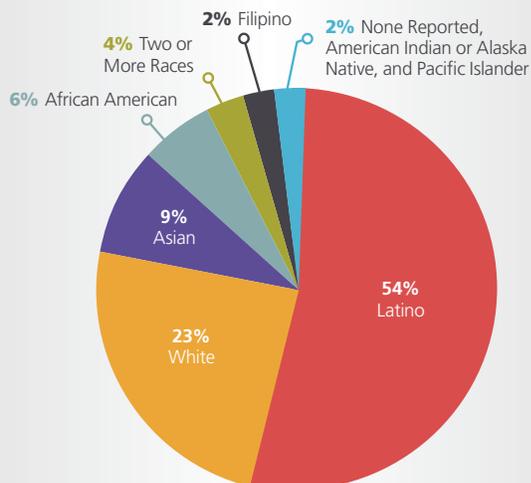
by Manuel Buenrostro

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 student characteristic and achievement data as part of an effort to highlight the opportunities and challenges facing Latino students. Additional CSBA briefs offer information about research-supported strategies and recommendations for board members to promote Latino student achievement.

Enrollment

Of the 6.2 million K-12 students who attend California public schools, just over half—3,376,591 million (54 percent)—are Latino.¹ This student population has grown steadily and has constituted the majority of public school students since the 2009–10 school year.

Figure I. 2017-18 California Statewide K-12 Public School Enrollment, by Ethnicity²



In this fact sheet you will find:

- » **An overview of the enrollment trends of Latino students and their enrollment and concentration by county and school district level.**
- » **Information about Latino student characteristics, including socioeconomic, English learner, and special education status.**
- » **A summary of Latino student outcomes, including academic achievement and high school graduation rates.**
- » **Questions for board members to consider.**

While Latino students attend school in all of California’s 58 counties, their numbers vary considerably, ranging from 5 percent of students in Alpine County to 92 percent of students in Imperial County. In 22 counties, the majority of students are Latino, while fewer than one-fourth are Latino in 17 counties.³

The concentration of Latino students also varies considerably at the school district level. Nearly 40 percent of school districts have a majority Latino student population—and in half of these, 75 percent or more of students are Latino. The largest of these high-concentration Latino school districts (those with 75 percent or more Latino students) is the Santa Ana Unified School District, which enrolls 49,372 students, 93 percent of whom are Latino. To put this in perspective, most high-concentration Latino school districts enroll fewer than 3,000 students.⁴

Table 1. 2017-18 Latino Student Enrollment, by County⁵

County	Latino Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Percent Latino	County	Latino Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Percent Latino
Imperial	34,800	37,716	92%	Solano	24,413	63,481	39%
Monterey	61,593	77,954	79%	Santa Clara	104,429	272,132	38%
Tulare	80,655	104,049	78%	San Mateo	35,771	95,155	38%
Colusa	3,569	4,627	77%	Sutter	8,735	23,690	37%
San Benito	8,341	11,253	74%	Yuba	5,396	14,619	37%
Madera	23,414	31,728	74%	Lake	3,459	9,549	36%
Merced	42,906	58,812	73%	Contra Costa	63,229	178,060	36%
Kings	20,285	29,203	70%	Alameda	77,425	228,356	34%
Santa Barbara	48,344	69,752	69%	Modoc	478	1,411	34%
Fresno	132,755	204,418	65%	San Francisco	18,983	60,898	31%
Kern	123,343	189,949	65%	Sacramento	76,566	245,906	31%
Los Angeles	969,055	1,492,652	65%	Marin	10,005	33,741	30%
San Bernardino	261,777	403,137	65%	Butte	7,595	31,760	24%
Riverside	273,491	428,992	64%	Del Norte	920	4,228	22%
Stanislaus	66,227	109,990	60%	Amador	880	4,147	21%
Ventura	81,099	137,758	59%	El Dorado	5,789	27,875	21%
Glenn	3,234	5,581	58%	Calaveras	1,070	5,461	20%
Santa Cruz	22,580	40,393	56%	Placer	14,471	74,063	20%
Napa	11,320	20,402	56%	Mariposa	353	1,865	19%
San Joaquin	78,002	148,948	52%	Nevada	2,122	11,424	19%
Mono	985	1,890	52%	Humboldt	3,369	18,501	18%
Inyo	2,324	4,497	52%	Lassen	663	3,791	18%
Orange	238,661	485,835	49%	Tuolumne	1,037	6,076	17%
San Diego	244,753	508,169	48%	Siskiyou	997	5,934	17%
Yolo	14,242	30,067	47%	Plumas	341	2,169	16%
Sonoma	32,086	70,449	46%	Shasta	4,093	26,935	15%
Mendocino	5,672	13,203	43%	Sierra	59	407	15%
Tehama	4,421	10,958	40%	Trinity	172	1,584	11%
San Luis Obispo	13,833	34,733	40%	Alpine	4	80	5%

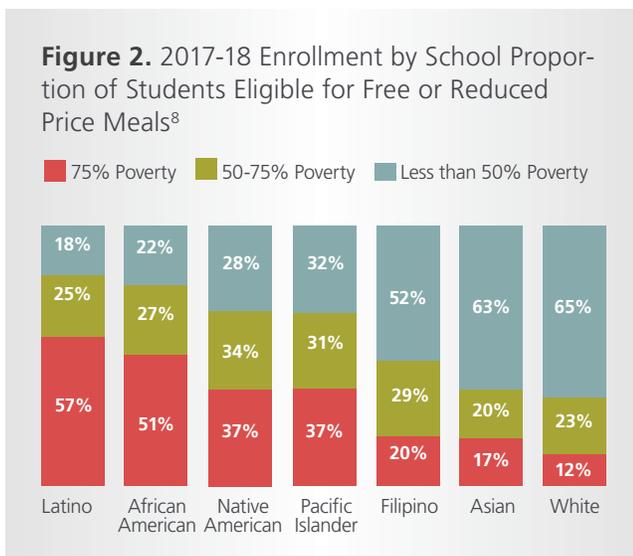
Student Characteristics

When looking at specific characteristics of Latino students, there are multiple factors that contribute to their educational attainment. Understanding these characteristics in their counties, districts, and schools can help board members better meet the needs of Latino students. All data in this section are from the 2017–18 school year.

Socioeconomic Status

Latino students are the most socioeconomically disadvantaged student group in California—80 percent of Latino students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, compared to 31 percent of white students and 75 percent of African American students.⁶ Socioeconomically disadvantaged students are those for whom neither of their parents received a high school diploma or those who are eligible for the free and reduced-price meals program.

Latinos are more highly concentrated in high-poverty schools than any other student group. These high-poverty schools have less access to resources that create educational opportunity including the most experienced teachers, modern facilities, libraries, and other key resources. Over half (57 percent) of Latino students attend schools where at least 75 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price meals program, which is the most common barometer for measuring poverty among student groups.⁷



Language Status

Most Latino students come from households where a language other than English is spoken at home. This can be 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.

Nearly one in three (31 percent) Latino students are English learners, defined as students whose native language is not English and who need instructional supports to fully access the regular classroom program. The proportion of Latino students who are English learners drops as they move up the grade levels—48 percent of first-grade Latino students are English learners, compared to 29 percent by sixth grade and 19 percent by ninth grade.⁹ Addressing the learning needs of these older English learners as well as ensuring that those who have been reclassified continue to achieve requires ongoing attention and expertise. For more resources from CSBA about English learners, visit bit.ly/2Mg36ku.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities have learning or physical differences that may range from minor to severe. Schools provide a vital service by ensuring that all students have the opportunity to meet challenging objectives. In fact, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to identify all students in their jurisdiction who have a disability, and ensure the provision of “resources, adapted instruction, and specialized assistance to mitigate the effects of [their] disability.”¹⁰

A similar proportion of Latino students are identified as students with disabilities as white students—12 percent of Latinos compared to 11 percent of their white peers. By comparison, 17 percent of African American and 15 percent of Native American students are identified.¹¹

Homeless Students

Homeless students are “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”¹² Of the state’s 204,085 homeless students, 73 percent are Latino (149,115). Latino students, along with their African American and Native American peers, are over three times more likely to be homeless than white and Asian students.¹³ Such students are more likely to repeat a grade, score lower on both math and language arts assessments, have a higher number of suspensions and expulsions, and drop out of school.¹⁴

Migrant Students

While migrant students make up less than one percent of the overall student population, nearly all the state's 48,636 migrant students are Latino (98 percent).¹⁵ Migrant students require extra support to ensure their continuity of education. As they move from one residence to another due to economic necessity, they often change their attendance zone within a district, move to another district, or even to another state.¹⁶

Foster Youth

Of the state's 34,426 foster youth, 54 percent are Latino (18,592)—comparable to the group's proportion of the overall student population.¹⁷ Students in foster care face many challenging circumstances. For example, almost half of students in foster care changed school midyear in their first year of foster care and 34 percent of 17- and 18-year-olds in foster care had attended five or more schools.¹⁸ For more resources from CSBA about foster youth, visit bit.ly/2NsnYp4.

Academic Achievement

According to the 2017–18 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (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 28 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 47 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 26 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their white peers, and a 39 percentage-point gap between Latino students and their Asian peers.

Moreover, 11th-grade results suggest that only 19 percent of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math coursework, compared to 44 percent of white and 69 percent of Asian students. In English language arts, 47 percent of Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework, compared to 69 percent of white and 79 percent of Asian students.²¹ 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, 11th-grade CAASPP scores have only been included in the college and career readiness index as part of the state accountability system since the 2016–17 school year.

Figure 3. 2017–18 CAASPP Math Percent of Latino, Asian, and White Students that Met or Exceeded Standards¹⁹

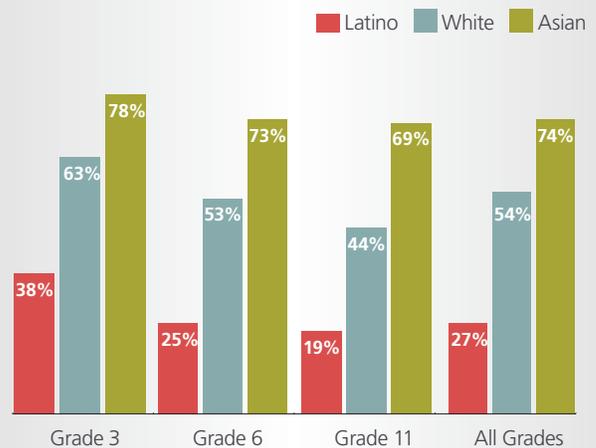
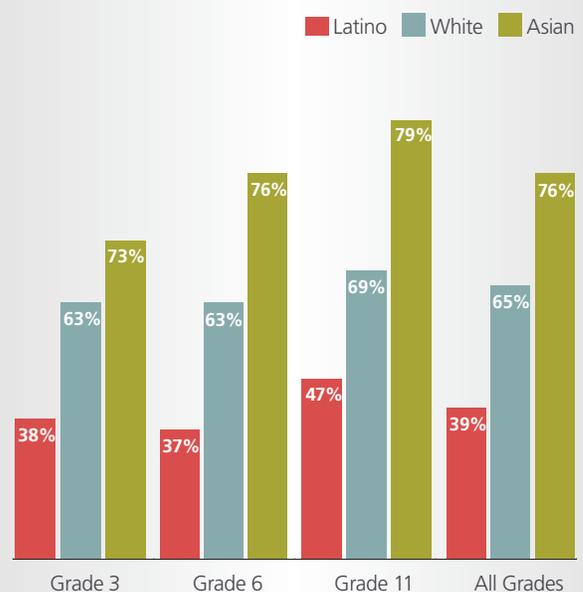


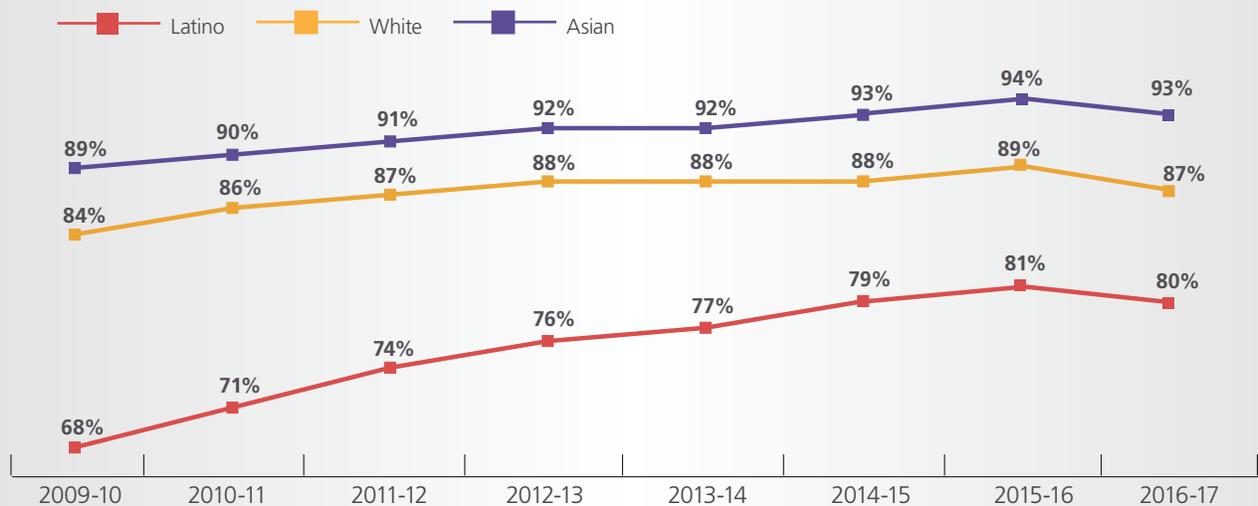
Figure 4. 2017–18 CAASPP English Language Arts Percent of Latino, Asian, and White Students that Met or Exceeded Standards²⁰



High School Graduation Rates

According to 2016–17 four-year cohort graduation data (the most recent available), 80 percent of Latino students graduated from high school, compared to 87 percent of white students and 93 percent 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 2016–17 Classes, by Latino, White and Asian Students²²



However, despite the progress in high school graduation rates, only 39 percent 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 52 percent of white students and 74 percent of Asian students.²³

Questions for Board Members to Consider

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

1. What are the student demographics in my district or county and how do they compare to the demographics of individual schools?
2. Within individual schools, do Latino students have access to and enroll in rigorous coursework? What supports are provided to help Latino students succeed in these rigorous courses?
3. What is the achievement of Latino students across the district or county and within individual schools? What is the achievement gap countywide, district-wide, and in each school?
4. What additional supports are available for students in poverty provided by the county office of education, the district, or through other organizations? Are there additional partnerships that can be leveraged to enhance supports?
5. Is the school environment relevant to all students based on their backgrounds and cultures? Does the course content relate to the experiences and backgrounds of Latino students (for example, does the history curriculum highlight the achievements of Latinos)?

6. Is the district or county staff equipped to relate to students' experiences and background? Does the teaching and administrative staff reflect the diversity of the student population?

Conclusion

The information in this fact sheet is an overview of statewide results for Latino students. However, a more detailed analysis of data from each county, district, and school can help board members and other education leaders make more informed decisions about how to best serve this student population. As part of CSBA's continued efforts to shed light on California's diverse students, we 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 bit.ly/2jM5Ntz. These include:

- » BP 0415 – Equity
- » BP/AR 0460 – Local Control and Accountability Plan
- » BP/AR 3553 – Free and Reduced Price Meals
- » 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 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, Data-Quest. 2017-18 enrollment by ethnicity. Retrieved on September 19, 2018, from bit.ly/2runvWt.
- 2 See endnote 1.
- 3 See endnote 1.
- 4 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, Data-Quest. Enrollment in California public schools by ethnic designation, 2017-18. Retrieved on September 19, 2018 from bit.ly/2rs0WBb.

- 5 See endnote 1.
- 6 See endnote 1.
- 7 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education. Student poverty FRPM data. Retrieved on September 19, 2018 from bit.ly/2NWmYJh.
- 8 See endnote 7.
- 9 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, Data-Quest. 2017-18 enrollment by ethnicity and grade. Retrieved on September 19, 2018, from bit.ly/2FUWIMY.
- 10 Hibel, J., Farkas, G., & Morgan, P. L. (2006). Who is placed in special education? *Sociology of Education*, 83(4): 312–332. Available at bit.ly/2xnCnc2.
- 11 See endnote 1.
- 12 California Department of Education. Definition of homeless children and youths. Available at bit.ly/2PQkdGL.
- 13 See endnote 1
- 14 Hartman, C. (2009). *Homelessness and Student Learning*. Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Washington, D.C. Available at bit.ly/2NqKoY2.
- 15 See endnote 1.
- 16 California Department of Education. Overview of migrant education in California. Available at bit.ly/2PQ7LXw.
- 17 See endnote 1.
- 18 California School Boards Association. (2016). Our foster youth: What school boards can do. Available at bit.ly/2O1orhs.
- 19 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. 2018 California statewide research file. Retrieved on October 3, 2018 from bit.ly/2DWPk2A.
- 20 See endnote 19.
- 21 See endnote 19.
- 22 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, Data-Quest. 2016-17 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. Retrieved on September 19, 2018 from bit.ly/2wlm88y.
- 23 CSBA Analysis: California Department of Education, Data-Quest. 12th grade graduates completing all courses required for U.C. and/or C.S.U. entrance, all students. Retrieved on September 19, 2018 from bit.ly/2FYyTyv.

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