

Strengthening the Road to College

California's College Readiness Standards and Lessons from District Leaders

During the past decade, education leaders and policymakers have made significant investments to better align California's K-12 and postsecondary education systems and to address persistent disparities in educational attainment by race and socioeconomic status. Our research distills important lessons based on interviews with public district leaders about their specific efforts to improve students' college readiness, access, and success, and analysis of statewide quantitative data used by policymakers, school and district leaders, and higher education systems to evaluate students' postsecondary readiness.

District leaders view college and career readiness synonymously—preparing students for college and career require the same set of activities and expectations.

“ There is not a job with a livable wage in our current economy that does not require some sort of postsecondary training.”

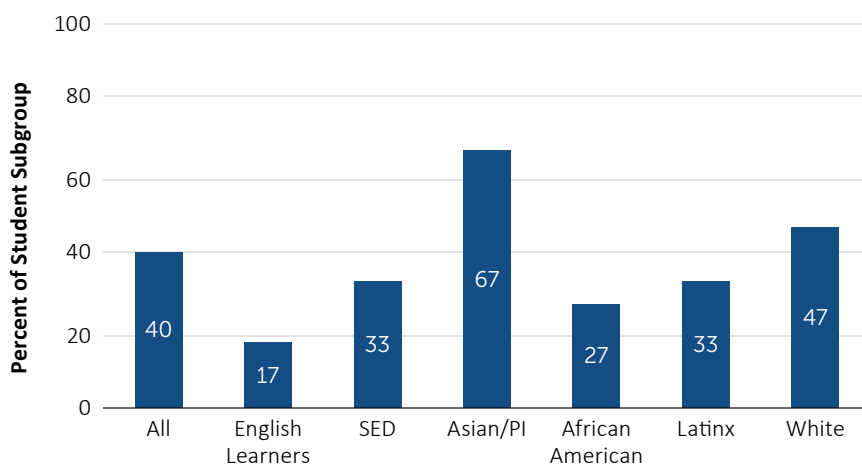
DISTRICT LEADER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Recent analysis of the College/Career Indicator (CCI) on the California School Dashboard reveals that **42 percent** of the 2017-18 public high school graduates were **prepared** for college and/or career and an additional **17 percent** were **approaching prepared**.

Substantial inequality exists across all measures of college and career readiness by racial/ethnic subgroups, socioeconomic disadvantaged (SED) status, and for students who are English learners.

District leaders underscore that rigorous academic preparation – including through A-G courses, Advanced Placement, and dual enrollment – is critical to future success.

Percentage of Students Successfully Completing A-G Coursework



Note: Statistics calculated from student-level College/Career Indicator data for the 2017-18 cohort using only the A-G completion indicator.

“ I've actually seen students receive the most opportunity for college access by the scores on their AP exams. . . it just seems like our students with strong AP exam scores appear to have more opportunity in the postsecondary realm. And it seems to me like it's the perfect mixture between rigorous coursework on a regular basis, followed with that demonstration of their ability in a formal assessment format.”

DISTRICT LEADER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

District leaders believe that participation and performance on college admissions exams (SAT or ACT) are key indicators of college readiness, despite their exclusion in the CCI.

Student Participation and Performance on the SAT

	All	English Learners	SED	Asian/PI	African American	Latinx	White
% Cohort Participation Rate	45	18	38	65	42	39	46
Math							
Average Score	535	436	489	614	468	484	576
% SAT-takers above Benchmark (530)	48	15	30	75	23	27	68
ERW							
Average Score	538	417	495	589	489	494	583
% SAT-takers above Benchmark (480)	70	15	57	85	51	54	88
Average Total Score	1073	853	983	1203	957	978	1160
% SAT-takers above Math and ERW Benchmarks	48	11	30	73	24	28	67

Note: Statistics calculated from SAT test data for 2016-17 and 2017-18 provided by the California Department of Education with permission from the College Board.

Many districts engage students in college readiness activities from an early age and track progress towards college and career readiness.

“ We implement that curriculum starting from middle school. And it embeds that college knowledge gradually through students as they progress through middle school. And then once they are in high school, we talk about the four-year graduation plan, we introduce the A-G requirements, we introduce what college application requirements are.”

DISTRICT LEADER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

“ We provide our high school students a letter twice a year that tells them if they’re on track to graduate, if they’re on track for college. That letter is kind of [a] personalized letter that uses things like their grades, and their AP/IB tests, their PSAT/SAT scores, things like that, and it’s calculating their college index, CSU index, which then . . . it gives them information that you’re on track to get into . . . [CSU], or you’re on track to get into UC, based on their own scores.”

DISTRICT LEADER, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

District leaders believe supporting college readiness and postsecondary success among their students requires engaging students’ families and the broader community.

“ This does a lot for your school and it does a lot for your students, but it also changes your community, too. We’re lifting up the entire community and actually creating a condition for future economic prosperity because we believe that the more education one receives, the better their income will be throughout their lifetime. I think that’s a big deal. It’s not something to be played with. This is the real passion of the work.”

DISTRICT LEADER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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