



PATHWAYS
TO
**POSTSECONDARY
SUCCESS**

Maximizing Opportunities
for Youth in Poverty

PATHWAYS to Postsecondary Success is a series of mixed-methods studies of the educational pathways of California's lower income youth. Through a series of research briefs and reports, the project aims to advance research on poverty, produce useful tools that improve educational practice, and inform the U.S. policy agenda on the relationship between poverty and education.

Unequal Experiences and Outcomes for Black and Latino Males in California's Public Education System highlights the experiences of young men of color as they travel through K–12 schools and, in some cases, into higher education. The brief draws attention to the various factors that can impede this journey and to some of the ways that schools can facilitate student success.

RESEARCH BRIEF

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Unequal Experiences and Outcomes for Black and Latino Males in California's Public Education System

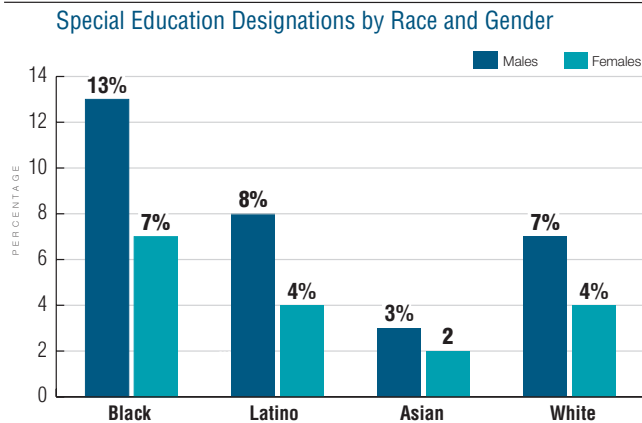
John Rogers and Rhoda Freelon

Across the nation there is growing interest in improving the situation of young men of color, who are underrepresented in higher education and dramatically overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Lee & Ransom, 2011). Numerous studies have documented that black males enrolled in school often lag behind their peers academically, have less access to rigorous coursework, experience racial bias from school personnel because of lower expectations for boys of color, and are more likely to drop out (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2011; Holzman, 2010; Howard, 2008; Jackson & Moore, 2006; Sharon et al., 2010). Although it would be reasonable to expect that Latino males face similar challenges, there are few comparable studies that reveal their experiences. Given the new demographic realities facing the nation—and facing California in particular—it is important that we gain a better understanding of how both groups fare in the state's public K–12 and postsecondary education system.¹

The research described in this policy brief is part of a larger study, *Pathways to Postsecondary Success*, which examines the educational pathways of America's low-income youth, especially in California. We focus here on young black and Latino males because they are nearly 3.5 times as likely as white children to live in poverty (Davis, Kilburn, & Schultz, 2009) and, in comparison to many other California youth, experience relatively low high school and college graduation rates.² With these issues in mind, we sought answers to the following questions:

- What inequities do Latino and black males encounter in California's public schools?
- What disparities in educational outcomes do Latino and black males in California face?
- Are some public high schools better than others at promoting the achievement and success of these particular subgroups? What characteristics do successful schools share?

Figure 1



Source: 2006 Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, U.S. Department of Education

To answer these questions, we drew from several publicly available datasets that provide education data by race, gender and other key variables.³ Together, they offer us insight into the experiences of Latino and black males in California's public education system.

Unequal Experiences in K–12 Education

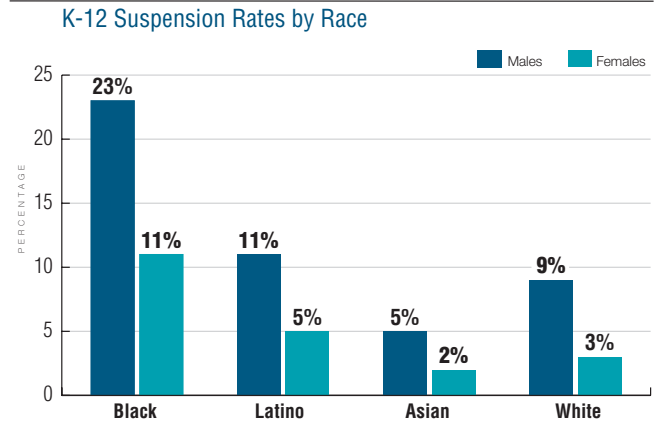
Young men of color are more likely than their peers to have difficulties in school and they are less likely to participate in high status educational programs that can lead to college enrollment. The extent and consistency of these patterns suggest a significant role for bias in shaping the educational experiences of black and Latino males.

Higher Special Education Designation Rates, Higher Suspension Rates

In their K–12 years, black male students are overrepresented in special education courses as well as in rates of suspension from class.

- While 3% of Asian males and 7% of white males in California schools are designated as special education students, the rate nearly doubles to 13% for black male students. Latino males fare slightly better at 8% (Figure 1).
- Black and Latino male students are nearly twice as likely as their female counterparts to be placed in special education.
- Black males experience higher rates of suspension in primary and secondary schools.

Figure 2



Source: 2006 Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, U.S. Department of Education

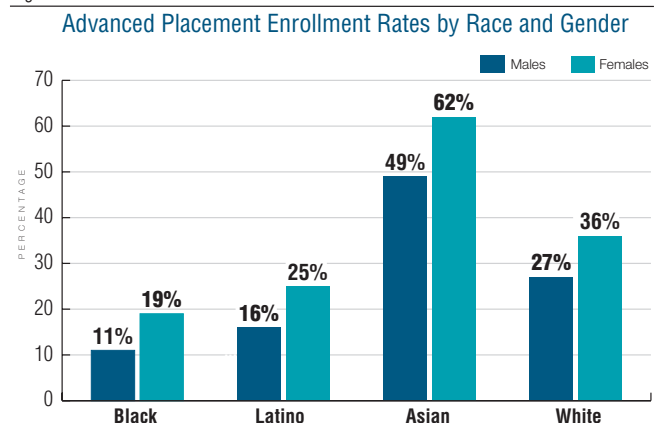
Twenty-three percent of black males were suspended at least one time during the 2005–2006 school year, compared to 9% and 5% of white and Asian male students, respectively (Figure 2).

- Black and Latino males are more than twice as likely as their female counterparts to be suspended from school. This trend is consistent across racial and ethnic groups.

Lower Enrollment Rates in Advanced Placement Classes

Black and Latino males enroll in demanding advanced placement (AP) classes at lower rates than male students in other racial and ethnic groups and less frequently than female students (Figure 3).

Figure 3



Source: 2006 Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, U.S. Department of Education and California Department of Education Enrollment Data

- While 49% and 27% of Asian and white California male students in grades 11 and 12 take at least one AP class during high school, only 11% of black males and 16% of Latino males do so.
- Black and Latino males are less likely than their female counterparts to be enrolled in AP classes.

Fewer Students Taking SAT

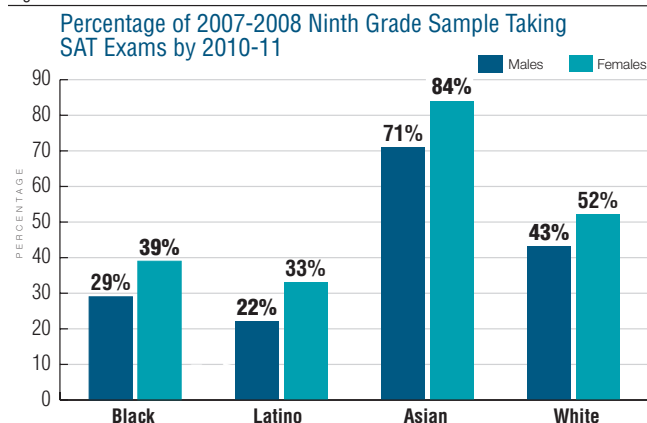
High schools can take various steps to promote a culture of high expectations that motivates students to fulfill requirements for four-year college admission. For example, the percentage of students who take the SAT in their senior year can indicate whether or not school officials are encouraging a broad cross-section of students to prepare for college. As **Figure 4** shows, there are significant racial/ethnic and gender discrepancies in the percentages of California students who take the SAT by their senior year.

- Fewer black and Latino males take the SAT by grade 12 (29% and 22%, respectively) than Asian (71%) and white (43%) male students.
- Black and Latina females are more likely to take the SAT than their male counterparts (39% and 33%, respectively). This trend is consistent across racial and ethnic groups.

Unequal Educational Outcomes

Given the unequal experiences of young men of color during their high school years, it is not surprising that their educational outcomes vary considerably from those of other students who attend public schools. In

Figure 4



Source: The College Board (2011), College-Bound Seniors State Profile Report; California and California Department of Education, 2007–2008 Enrollment Data

comparison to students from other racial and ethnic groups, fewer black and Latino males graduate from high school and dramatically fewer graduate having completed the A–G requirements that make them eligible for admission to the University of California or California State University. Disparities in graduation rates continue through the postsecondary level. Additionally, most measures indicate significant gender gaps in outcomes.

Black and Latino Males Suffer High Attrition Rates

Figure 5 shows the educational pathways of youth who were ninth graders in public California high schools in 2004–2005. More precisely, the figure shows how many out of 100 students went on to graduate from high school and to postsecondary enrollment. The numbers decline steadily as the students follow their individual pathways, with an especially sharp drop-off between high school and college.

- Fewer than half of the original cohorts of 100 black males (47) and 100 Latino males (49) had graduated from high school four years after entering, compared to 79 out of 100 Asian male students and 72 out of 100 white male students.
- Only 10 of 100 black and Latino males graduated from high school having fulfilled A–G requirements, compared to 31 out of 100 Asian male students and 28 out of 100 white male students across the state.

Young men and young women of color move through the community college system at roughly comparable rates.

- Black females fare better than their male counterparts at nearly every point in their educational journeys, with the notable exception of enrollment in California community colleges where the gender difference is essentially erased.
- Latinas are slightly more likely to enroll in California community colleges than are Latino males (20 versus 17 out of 100 students, respectively) but, in general, no significant gender gap exists between male and female students.

Figure 5

Educational Pathways of California Students Who Entered California Public High Schools in 2004

Out of 100 students ...	Black Students		Latino Students		Asian Students		White Students	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
# began 9 th grade	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
# began 10 th grade	87	88	88	90	98	98	95	96
# began 11 th grade	74	77	75	79	94	95	88	89
# began 12 th grade	64	68	64	70	92	93	81	84
# graduated from high school	47	57	49	59	79	85	72	78
(# graduated and completed A–G reqs.)	(10)	(17)	(10)	(17)	(31)	(41)	(28)	(37)
# attended California public colleges	25	29	23	30	38	42	31	35
Types of California colleges attended:								
Community College	18	17	17	20	22	21	20	20
California State University	5	9	4	7	8	11	7	10
University of California	2	3	2	3	8	10	4	5

Source: California Department of Education and California Postsecondary Education Commission

Gender Gap Widens in the University of California System

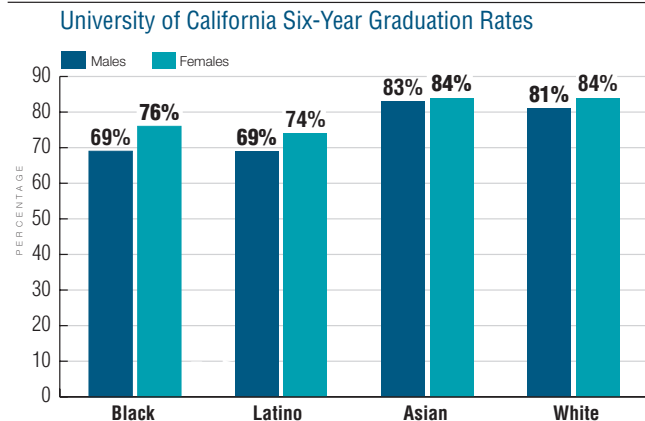
The most pronounced gender gaps in postsecondary outcomes lie within the University of California (UC) system. Female students, in general, graduate within six years of enrollment more often than their male counterparts do; the greatest gender gap is found in the six-year graduation rates of black male and black female students, though the disparity exists across racial categories (Figure 6).

There are significant discrepancies between black and

Latino males and other students in the UC system. It should be noted, however, that students of color graduate from the UC system at a higher rate than their peers at public universities in other states.

- The six-year graduation rates for Asian and white male students in the UC system stand at 83% and 81%, respectively. This percentage is much lower for black and Latino males: only 69% of these students graduate from the University of California within six years. Nationally, the six-year graduation rate for first-time black and Latino students at public universities is 55%.

Figure 6



Source: University of California, Statfinder

- Black females and Latinas fare slightly better than their male counterparts; their six-year graduation rates are 76% and 74%, respectively.

High Schools Can Attain Greater Parity in Achievement

Our findings underscore the reality that a great majority of California's high schools have much room for improvement as they work to promote the educational success of young men of color. Black and Latino males in many of California's secondary institutions are not provided the rigorous curriculum necessary for college and career success. Moreover, higher rates of suspension, coupled with a greater likelihood of enrollment in special education programs, serve as major barriers for these young men. Yet, unequal experiences and outcomes are not inevitable: a small number of California's schools have achieved relative success with black and Latino males, and these schools and programs deserve a closer look.

Some High Schools Achieve Stronger Outcomes

The College Opportunity Ratio shows how many out of every 100 entering ninth grade students in California's public high schools graduate, and how many graduate having completed the A–G coursework required for admission to the state's four-year universities. While not many schools achieve high College Opportunity Ratios for black and Latino males, success is possible.

- In 2007–2008, the combined College Opportunity Ratio for all schools across the state was 100:65:25, meaning that for every 100 ninth graders who entered in fall 2004, 65 graduated, and 25 graduated having completed A–G requirements by 2008.⁴
- Out of more than 1,200 schools, only 10 achieved College Opportunity Ratios for black males comparable to the state average, and only 32 achieved them for Latino males. These 42 schools are listed in **Appendix A**.

College Preparatory Courses Must Be Accessible

Offering rigorous coursework may not ensure that a high school achieves broad-based student success, but it is arguably a necessary condition. Schools that offer high proportions of college preparatory courses can potentially incorporate the whole student body into the ambitious curriculum, thereby fostering high expectations for every group. The schools listed in **Appendix A** have been particularly effective for black and Latino males, and they typically provide ample access to rigorous college preparatory courses.

- In most of the schools that do a superior job of promoting success for either black or Latino males, 80% of the courses meet the A–G standards.
- Of these 42 schools that show promise, only seven offer a smaller proportion of A–G courses than the state average.

Conclusion: Effective Intervention Requires Better Data

More than a half century after the United States Supreme Court declared in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that states must provide education “on equal terms,” clear patterns of racial and gender disproportionality prevail in California public schools. Young men of color are more likely than their peers to be identified as problems or as in need of additional help, and are less likely to participate in high status educational programs that can create pathways to four-year degrees. The publicly available data on how black and Latino males fare in California's public

educational system reveal that they are more likely than their high school peers to be suspended, to be placed in special education programs, and to be excluded from college preparatory courses. These inequalities impede their educational progress, as they enroll in California's public universities less often than their peers and, when they do enroll, graduate within six years less often.

Among the primary causes of the disparity between the educational outcomes of black and Latino students and their peers from other ethnic and racial groups is a very real opportunity gap. Researchers at UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA) and UC/ACCORD have found, for example, that California public schools where black, Latino, and American Indian students represent more than 90% of the student body are more likely than other public schools to: a) offer an insufficient number of college preparatory classes; b) assign teachers to college preparatory classes outside of their subject matter expertise; and c) pack students into campuses designated by the state as "critically overcrowded" (Fanelli et al., 2010). Unequal course offerings across racially segregated schools, together with racialized patterns of tracking within multi-racial schools, undoubtedly contribute to the disparities highlighted in this brief (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). The extent and consistency of these patterns at the individual and institutional levels suggest a significant role for bias in shaping the educational experiences of young men of color. Such educational disparities threaten the state's economic future, as members of this large and growing segment of the population are denied the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

We need continued analysis of the academic landscape faced by young men of color across California's educational institutions at all levels. It is particularly important to gain a fuller understanding of the K-12 and higher education environments that have demonstrated success in helping California's black and Latino males to successfully prepare for and attend college. Many publically available data sources disaggregate data by race and gender, but it is less common for such sources to provide data on race and gender in combination. For example, publicly accessible data from the State of California show the number of black students or male students

enrolled in physics at each high school, but not the number of black males enrolled. Likewise, graduation rates for black and Latino males are publicly available for the University of California but not for the California State University system. As such, it is currently possible to illuminate the status of young men of color across only a relatively small number of indicators. Given the powerful interplay of race and gender revealed in these findings, it is clear that this limitation needs to be addressed.

Future research must make available more comprehensive race- and gender-specific data to monitor a broader set of educational indicators. For example, knowing how many students in each high school, by race and gender, have enrolled in and received a grade of "C" or better in rigorous courses—including A-G courses, higher-level math and science courses, and AP classes—will provide us a much richer understanding of how race, ethnicity, and gender interact to influence educational pathways. Data that allow for this type of analysis must be made available system-wide. The existing gaps in the data limit our ability to investigate and understand these highly relevant issues. In general, a deeper, more complete understanding of the educational experiences of black and Latino males will provide the critical information that educators and policymakers need in order to tailor evidence-based interventions for these vital populations.

Notes

We thank Karen Jarsky for her research and copyediting assistance.

- 1 Public institutions serve the vast majority of California students. According to the California Department of Education (2009), 92% of California's K-12 students attend public schools. Likewise, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (2012), 91% of California postsecondary students attend public colleges and universities.
- 2 Although educational outcomes for American Indian youth are equally troubling, we do not include them in this brief because they represent less than 1% of California's public school enrollment.
- 3 We used data from the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which collects education data from public school districts by race, gender, English proficiency, and

disability status; the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES); the California Department of Education (CDE); the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC); the College Board; and the University of California Office of the President (UCOP).

- 4 The College Opportunity Ratio is based on cross-sectional data, comparing the number of students enrolled as ninth graders and the number of students who graduate four years later. It would be preferable to follow students longitudinally, but California's public data system does not yet allow for this type of analysis.

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APPENDIX A:

Public California High Schools Where Black and Latino Males Graduate Prepared for College

Table A.1

Public California High Schools Where Black Males Graduate Prepared for College

School (District)	Total High School Enrollment (2009–2010)	Number of Black Males in 9 th Grade Cohort	Black Students as % of Overall High School Student Population (2009–2010)	% of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals (2009–2010)	Percent of Courses that are College Prep (A–G)	2007–2008 College Opportunity Ratio for Black Males	2008–2009 College Opportunity Ratio for Black Males	2009–2010 College Opportunity Ratio for Black Males
Buchanan High (Clovis Unified)	2,720	13	3%	19%	72%	100:100:33	100:69:38	100:84:26
California Academy of Mathematics and Science (Long Beach Unified)	625	10	16%	45%	89%	100:80:80	100:100:100	100:89:89
Canyon High (Orange Unified)	2,405	11	2%	7%	76%	100:67:44	100:73:27	100:100:71
Clovis West High (Clovis Unified)	2,442	14	5%	24%	73%	100:90:52	100:100:64	100:97:47
Diamond Ranch High (Pomona Unified)	1,815	28	12%	38%	81%	100:93:30	100:75:26	100:100:60
Franklin High (Elk Grove Unified)	2,802	53	15%	31%	61%	100:75:28	100:75:26	100:88:44
Martin Luther King, Jr. High (Riverside Unified)	3,062	43	10%	29%	80%	100:71:26	100:77:26	100:94:38
Mission Hills High (San Marcos)	2,482	12	4%	38%	82%	100:83:25	100:92:58	100:93:86
Santiago High (Corona-Norco Unified)	3,303	55	8%	30%	83%	100:69:31	100:75:35	100:84:27
Stockdale High (Kern Union High)	2,192	25	8%	66%	73%	100:82:27	100:88:32	100:81:30

Table A.2

Public California High Schools Where Latino Males Graduate Prepared for College

School (District)	Total High School Enrollment (2009–2010)	Number of Latino Males in 9 th Grade Cohort	Latinos as % of Overall High School Student Population (2009–2010)	% of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Priced Meals (2009–2010)	Percent of Courses that are College Prep (A–G)	2007–2008 College Opportunity Ratio for Latino Males	2008–2009 College Opportunity Ratio for Latino Males	2009–2010 College Opportunity Ratio for Latino Males
Animo Leadership High (Lennox)	589	73	98%	92%	86%	100:77:77	100:78:78	100:83:50
Beverly Hills High (Beverly Hills Unified)	2,201	11	5%	5%	85%	100:100:25	100:100:55	100:100:46
Bonita Vista Senior High (Sweetwater Union High)	2,368	159	55%	19%	79%	100:90:26	100:100:43	100:92:36
Buchanan High (Clovis Unified)	2,720	75	16%	19%	72%	100:78:35	100:76:35	100:91:35
California Academy of Mathematics and Science (Long Beach Unified)	625	23	29%	45%	89%	100:94:94	100:78:78	100:89:83
Canyon High (Orange Unified)	2,405	37	14%	7%	76%	100:81:28	100:100:38	100:100:30
Carmel High (Carmel Unified)	726	12	12%	10%	98%	100:100:33	100:83:33	100:100:60
City Honors College Prep Charter (Inglewood Unified)	456	22	36%	54%	64%	100:67:67	100:95:95	100:85:85
Claremont High (Claremont Unified)	2,401	69	25%	24%	77%	100:65:26	100:90:41	100:89:53
Diamond Ranch High (Pomona Unified)	1,815	73	42%	38%	98%	100:94:31	100:100:40	100:100:35
Foothill High (Pleasanton Unified)	2,281	20	6%	4%	86%	100:72:33	100:75:45	100:78:35
Foshay Learning Center (Los Angeles Unified)	2,837	62	78%	90%	*	100:81:80	100:76:60	100:85:82
Granite Bay High (Roseville Joint Union High)	2,177	11	4%	2%	83%	100:100:31	100:100:91	100:100:56

Unequal Experiences and Outcomes for Black and Latino Males in California's Public Education System

Hilltop Senior High (Sweetwater Union High)	2,318	188	70%	45%	78%	100:82:30	100:79:29	100:80:27
Julian Charter (Julian Union Elementary)	2,113	11	16%	*	*	100:100:56	100:100:27	100:83:28
La Serna High (Whittier Union High)	2,518	190	59%	29%	89%	100:67:26	100:82:32	100:74:28
Leadership High (San Francisco Unified)	261	27	41%	63%	85%	100:100:100	100:74:74	100:100:100
Los Gatos High (Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High)	1,794	14	4%	2%	89%	100:77:46	100:86:29	100:100:90
Marshall Fundamental (Pasadena Unified)	1,804	77	57%	68%	66%	100:65:28	100:77:36	100:71:30
Mt. Carmel High (Poway Unified)	2,205	27	9%	12%	86%	100:72:38	100:70:41	100:67:30
Oak Ridge High (El Dorado Union High)	2,222	10	5%	4%	85%	100:100:33	100:100:30	100:100:36
Oakland Unity High (Oakland Unified)	227	13	82%	82%	81%	100:88:79	100:69:38	100:100:100
Palos Verdes High (Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified)	1,839	14	4%	1%	84%	100:100:44	100:86:43	100:100:50
Preuss School UCSD (San Diego Unified)	816	30	59%	100%	*	100:76:76	100:73:70	100:84:84
Rancho Bernardo High (Poway Unified)	2,570	29	9%	6%	86%	100:74:40	100:100:52	100:85:47
San Dieguito High Academy (San Dieguito High)	1,540	20	12%	11%	82%	100:88:42	100:75:35	100:79:35
San Ramon Valley High (San Ramon Valley Unified)	2,039	14	5%	1%	88%	100:100:78	100:86:36	100:100:100
Templeton High (Templeton Unified)	770	10	12%	10%	78%	100:79:36	100:100:40	100:92:38
Valencia High (William S. Hart Union High)	2,501	47	17%	54%	86%	100:84:36	100:79:30	100:94:40
West Campus (Sacramento City Unified)	833	26	27%	43%	91%	100:92:40	100:77:27	100:91:39
Westview High (Poway Unified)	2,366	17	8%	8%	83%	100:100:69	100:94:82	100:92:50
Woodcreek High (Roseville Joint Union High)	2,105	10	10%	14%	80%	100:77:31	100:100:90	100:100:25

*=Data not available

Contact Us

1041 Moore Hall, UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90095
Phone: 310-267-4462
Fax: 310-206-8770
pathways@ucla.edu
www.pathways-ucaccord.org

Media Queries

Claudia Bustamante
Communications Director
Direct: 310-267-4408
bustamante@gseis.ucla.edu

Authors:

John Rogers is an associate professor in the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Education and Information Studies and Director of UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access.

Rhoda Freelon is a doctoral student in the Urban Schooling Division of the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

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