

# STATE OF BLACK EDUCATION REPORT CARD

## **SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seventy years after *Brown v. Board of Education* declared that separate education is inherently unequal, Black students in San Diego and Imperial counties continue to experience disparities in access, opportunity, and outcomes. The State of Black Education: San Diego & Imperial Counties (SDIC) Report Card examines how these inequities manifest locally across nine districts, using state and federal data alongside student and community voices.

Across 15 key indicators (academic performance, college readiness, school climate, discipline, mental health and more) the data reveal a consistent pattern: Black students face worse outcomes than their white peers in nearly every domain. These disparities are both systemic and interconnected.

### KEY FINDINGS AND TRENDS

**GRADUATION WITHOUT EQUAL PREPARATION:** Black students are graduating at relatively high rates in several districts, yet this progress is not matched by equal access to postsecondary preparation. For example, in San Diego Unified, approximately 80% of Black students graduate compared to 95% of white students, but only 47.4% of Black students are considered college ready compared to 79% of white students. This reflects a broader pattern across districts where diplomas do not translate into equitable opportunity.

**PERSISTENT ACADEMIC GAPS:** Large disparities in English Language Arts (ELA) performance persist across districts. In multiple districts, Black students perform 50–100+ points below white students, reflecting long-standing inequities in access to rigorous instruction and academic support.

**UNEQUAL ACCESS TO ADVANCED OPPORTUNITIES:** Black students are significantly less likely to access Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment opportunities. In some districts, white students are two to six times more likely to enroll in these courses, limiting pathways to college readiness and postsecondary success.

**DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES AND SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION:** Black students are disproportionately suspended across all reporting districts. In several cases, Black students are three to four times more likely to be suspended than white students, with even higher disparities in smaller districts.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE AND BELONGING:** Student-reported data show that Black students experience lower levels of school connectedness and higher rates of racial harassment and bullying. In some areas, nearly half of Black students report experiencing bullying or harassment, underscoring the importance of safe and supportive learning environments.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPROPORTIONALITY:** Black students are overrepresented in special education across multiple districts. In some cases, Black students are more than twice as likely as white students to be identified for special education services.

**REGIONAL CONTEXT AND OUTLIERS:** San Diego County shows a mix of progress and persistent inequality. While some districts demonstrate improvement in academic outcomes, significant gaps remain in college readiness, discipline and school climate. Meanwhile, Imperial County presents a distinct context. Black students make up only 0.5% of total enrollment, yet the data reveal meaningful disparities. Small cohort sizes often result in suppressed or incomplete data, but where data are available, disparities are still evident. For example, Calipatria Unified shows some of the lowest academic performance outcomes, while also illustrating how small student populations can mask systemic issues.

**COMMUNITY VOICE:** Student and community perspectives reinforce the data. Some quotes included:

- “Racism is just a joke... it’s fun, and it’s funny, and it’s online, and I can post it.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “From K-12 in SDUSD, I never had a Black teacher” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- “We need support from people who understand what we’re going through.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “I have a toxic relationship with education ...classroom settings have stripped... I hated school and everything about me” - Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** The findings of this report make clear that disparities and inequalities affecting Black students are systemic, persistent and interconnected. While there are examples of progress and resilience across districts, the overall pattern remains one of unequal access and opportunity.

# INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

Seventy years after *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate education for Black students was inherently unequal, deep disparities persist across California. The [State of Black Education California Report Card](#) documented 24 areas of educational inequality affecting Black students.<sup>1</sup> This San Diego-Imperial Counties Report Card builds upon that framework to examine local trends and highlight both progress and persistent inequities across districts and counties. Fifteen areas in education are explored across the nine school districts and two counties.

This report highlights persistent disparities and inequities impacting Black students throughout San Diego and Imperial counties. It also highlights areas of improvement, opportunities and perspectives for community-driven transformation. Through analysis of state and federal data combined with community and student voices, this report contextualizes how local school districts are serving Black students and families. The report also attempts to understand factors contributing to the significant decreases in Black student enrollment in the region. Black students account for 4% of student enrollment across San Diego County, but account for 22% of the decrease in student enrollment from 2015-2025.<sup>2</sup> In Imperial County, Black student enrollment has dropped by 47% over the same 10 years while total student enrollment has only decreased by 5%.

**Nine districts** (out of 58 total) were selected to reflect diversity across the two counties.

## SAN DIEGO COUNTY DISTRICTS

1. San Diego Unified School District [K-12]
2. Sweetwater Union High School District [K-12]
3. Cajon Valley Union School District [K-8]
4. Escondido Union High School District [9-12]
5. Grossmont Union High School District [9-12]

## IMPERIAL COUNTY DISTRICTS

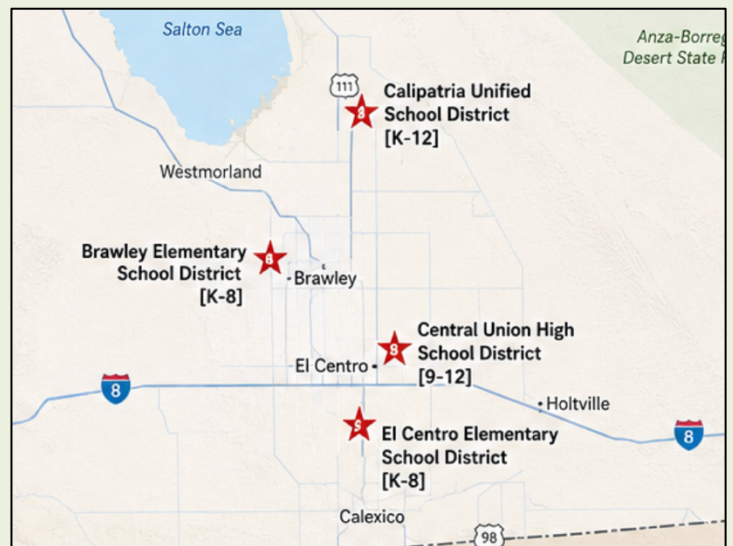
6. Brawley Elementary School District [K-8]
7. Calipatria Unified School District [K-12]
8. Central Union High School District [9-12]
9. El Centro Elementary School District [K-8]

## MAPS OF THE 9 DISTRICTS ACROSS BOTH COUNTIES

### SAN DIEGO COUNTY



### IMPERIAL COUNTY



**TABLE 1: STUDENT ENROLLMENT CHART ACROSS THE DISTRICTS/COUNTIES (2025)**

|                            | Total Students | % Black Students | # of Black Students | % Latinx Students | % White Students | % Native American | % Asian/Pac Islander | % Two or More |
|----------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| San Diego Unified          | 113,787        | 7.5%             | 8,534               | 47.2%             | 22.8%            | 0.2%              | 13.3%                | 8.7%          |
| Sweetwater Union High      | 35,774         | 3.4%             | 1,203               | 72.2%             | 9.5%             | 0.3%              | 12.4%                | 3.5%          |
| Cajon Valley Union         | 18,527         | 5.7%             | 1,056               | 37.4%             | 40.8%            | 0.3%              | 9.3%                 | 2.3%          |
| Escondido Union High       | 8,751          | 1.7%             | 149                 | 65.8%             | 23.7%            | 0.5%              | 5.3%                 | 2.3%          |
| Grossmont Union High       | 21,694         | 5.8%             | 1,258               | 44.4%             | 37.0%            | 0.5%              | 5.4%                 | 6.5%          |
| <b>SAN DIEGO COUNTY</b>    | 476,844        | 4.1%             | 19,551              | 49.3%             | 27.6%            | 0.4%              | 10.8%                | 7.1%          |
| Brawley Elementary         | 3,883          | 0.7%             | 27                  | 95.1%             | 3.2%             | 0.0%              | 0.6%                 | 0.2%          |
| Calipatria Unified         | 1,080          | 2.3%             | 25                  | 90.7%             | 5.4%             | 0.1%              | 0.5%                 | 1.0%          |
| Central Union High         | 4,070          | 0.7%             | 28                  | 95.9%             | 2.5%             | 0.0%              | 0.7%                 | 0.1%          |
| El Centro Elementary       | 5,387          | 0.7%             | 38                  | 96.0%             | 1.9%             | 0.0%              | 0.4%                 | 0.3%          |
| <b>IMPERIAL COUNTY</b>     | 35,390         | 0.5%             | 184                 | 94.0%             | 3.5%             | 0.7%              | 0.5%                 | 0.3%          |
| <b>STATE OF CALIFORNIA</b> | 5,806,221      | 4.9%             | 284,505             | 56.1%             | 20.0%            | 0.4%              | 12.7%                | 4.8%          |

These districts were selected based on (1) Black student enrollment numbers, (2) geographic diversity across San Diego and Imperial counties and (3) variation in district size. San Diego and Imperial counties are also compared to each other and to statewide averages. The data analysis focuses on **15 KEY AREAS** drawn from earlier Report Cards. Each area is defined later in the report.

- English/ELA Academic Performance
- Graduation Rate
- College Readiness
- Advanced Placement (AP) Enrollment
- Dual Enrollment/College Courses
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Racial Harassment and Bullying
- School Connectedness
- Black Teacher Representation
- Parent Engagement/Participation
- Suspensions
- Expulsions
- Special Education Identification
- Special Education Segregation
- Suicide Consideration/Ideation

These outcomes and variables collectively illuminate how inequity manifests in access, opportunity and outcomes for Black students locally. Overall, the key findings show:

- Across nearly every domain in the report, Black students have worse outcomes than white students.
- The most consistent and severe disparities appear in English/ELA performance, college readiness, suspensions, special education identification and special education segregation.
- The same districts showing opportunity gaps often also show climate, discipline and representation gaps. This suggests academics, belonging and punishment are connected rather than separate issues.

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Understanding historical and regional contexts is essential to interpreting current student outcomes. Social and educational inequities impacting Black students in San Diego and Imperial counties are influenced by policy decisions that have shaped residential patterns, school boundaries and access to opportunity. In San Diego County, decades of racially exclusionary housing practices including redlining, restrictive covenants, freeway construction and redevelopment-driven displacement have concentrated Black families in Southeast San Diego, particularly in the neighborhoods of Skyline, Encanto, Lincoln Park, Oak Park and Valencia Park.<sup>3</sup> In 1967, the ACLU filed a lawsuit against San Diego Unified arguing schools were still segregated and that white children were favored academically.<sup>4</sup> By 1977, a Superior Court judge ordered the integration of San Diego Unified public schools and allowed for [voluntary busing](#), as well as [magnet schools](#).<sup>5</sup>

Recent reports confirm that despite the county's progressive reputation, San Diego remains one of the most residentially segregated regions in California.<sup>6</sup> Rising housing costs, gentrification and declining enrollment have further accelerated the displacement of Black families from historically Black neighborhoods while contributing to shrinking Black student populations and increased isolation. Although some Black middle-class and military families succeeded in integrating, many Black families still encounter socio-economic and educational separation.

Imperial County reflects a different, yet related, history of exclusion. As a border-region county and rural center of agriculture, Imperial Valley experienced chronic underinvestment in public infrastructure and schools. Black residents represent a small proportion of the population and have often been rendered invisible in data, policymaking and resource allocation. Only two of the county's eighteen school districts enroll more than a one percent Black student population. The small size of these cohorts frequently results in suppressed or incomplete public data. This structural invisibility limits accountability and reinforces inequities even in the absence of overt segregation. Nonetheless, the exclusion and segregation of Black students in Imperial Valley was and remains systematic, with high school education being unavailable to Black families in some communities until 1925.<sup>7</sup> In 1929, Douglass High School was founded in El Centro as a segregated school for Black students who had been denied access to local white high schools. This school was the only option for Black high school students in the Imperial Valley for years. Historical accounts of El Centro's Eastside community confirm that Black families built strong social, cultural and educational networks despite segregation.<sup>8</sup> In the 1950's, the ACLU also filed a lawsuit challenging school segregation for Black and Mexican students in El Centro.<sup>9</sup>



*Douglass High School in El Centro*



"Imperial County, CA, reminds me of the place that 'could have been,' if it had more equitable policies and better leadership. There are abundant natural resources here, but none more valuable than our Black and brown youth. Generational disinvestment and marginalization have given them the motivation to push back against the systems designed to stifle their growth. As parents and teachers and community leaders, it is our job to provide our youth diverse educational opportunities and build infrastructures that prepare them to take leadership roles in their schools, communities and local governments. When the people in positions of power not only look like us but also live with us and share our experiences, current systems will experience tangible and lasting change."

-William Cooper, Executive Director, BECOMING PROJECT INC.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

To better understand the current state of education for Black students across San Diego and Imperial counties, this Report Card utilizes federal, state and district data for the most recent years available (2021–2025). The three data sets included in this analysis are listed below. Data were extracted, cross-checked and summarized at the district, county and state levels. When student group counts were below the California Department of Education’s public-reporting threshold (fewer than 11 students), data were treated as suppressed and therefore excluded to protect student privacy.

Aside from quantitative data analysis, this Report Card shares qualitative insights from interviews and youth focus groups. Specifically, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) San Diego Youth Council and Mid-City CAN (Community Advocacy Network) students shared perspectives to ensure lived experiences and community voices that are reflected in the report. These insights were analyzed and placed into themes for interpretation.

**TABLE 2: DATA SOURCES**

| SOURCE   | LEVEL   | INDICATORS / DATA POINTS   |
|--|---------|--|
| California Department of Education (CDE, 2025) | STATE   | Standardized Test Performance (CAASPP), Graduation Rates, College/Career Indicator (CCI), Chronic Absenteeism, Suspensions, Expulsions and Black Teacher Percentage. |
| California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS, 2022–24) | STATE   | Student-reported measures of belonging, bullying/harassment and connectedness; parent/family engagement indices.   |
| Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC, 2021–22)   | FEDERAL | Access to Advanced Placement courses (AP) and Dual Enrollment data.  |

Quantitative data analyses were impacted by the small number of Black students in some areas. There are roughly 184 Black students across Imperial County. The four Imperial districts featured in this report (El Centro Elementary, Calipatria Unified, Brawley Elementary and Central Union High) collectively account for 64% of all Black students in the county. Because of small numbers, some variables could not be analyzed for Imperial districts. For example, Calipatria Unified did not report a graduation rate for Black students because only two students graduated in the year of analysis.

Each school district's Black student outcomes were compared to those of white students. County and state-level outcomes were included to allow for additional comparison on contextualization.

The 15 variables and indicators were organized into three domains:

1. **STUDENT OUTCOMES:** Test Scores, Graduation, College Preparedness, AP Enrollment, Dual Enrollment
2. **SCHOOL CLIMATE:** Absenteeism, School Connectedness, Parent Participation/Engagement, Bullying/Harassment, Black Teacher Representation
3. **DISCIPLINE, DISABILITY AND WELLNESS:** Suspensions, Expulsions, Special Education Overrepresentation, Suicide Risk

**TREND AND GAP ANALYSIS-** Variables include up to four measures and indicators:

- **BLACK:** Data or outcomes related to Black students.
- **[WHITE]:** The comparison value for white students.
- **{GAP}:** The difference between the two groups, measured in percentage points or points below/above the state standard.
- **(TREND):** The year-to-year (2 year) change for Black students, indicated by  $\pm$  and  $\uparrow/\downarrow$  symbols.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: DATA ACROSS 15 AREAS

Across San Diego and Imperial counties, the data reflect a range of outcomes. Local gains in some academic and climate indicators exist alongside enduring inequities. This section presents the findings across the 15 variables defined below. Across the 15 data indicators, disparities cluster across academics, school climate, discipline and mental health. Districts with large opportunity gaps often also show weaker connectedness, fewer Black teachers and harsher discipline. Some districts like Calipatria Unified were outliers with suspension and chronic absenteeism rates several times higher than other districts.

- **ENGLISH/ELA ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:** Average difference (number of points) between students' scores and the lowest possible score for Level 3/Proficient on either the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment or the California Alternate Assessment. (2025)<sup>10</sup>
- **GRADUATION RATE:** Percentage of students who graduate with a standard high school diploma within four years of entering ninth grade. (2025)<sup>11</sup>
- **COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS/READINESS:** Percentage of students meeting college and career preparation benchmarks based on coursework, assessments, or career pathway completion. (2025) At the county level, it is the percentage of A-G completion which relates to the courses required for entry into state universities in California.<sup>12</sup>
- **ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) ENROLLMENT:** Percentage or number of students enrolled in

Advanced Placement courses that offer college-level curriculum in high school. (2022)<sup>13</sup>

- **DUAL ENROLLMENT / COLLEGE COURSES:** Participation in programs allowing high school students to earn college credit through courses offered with postsecondary institutions. (2022)<sup>14</sup>
- **CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM:** Percentage of students missing 10% or more of instructional days during the school year. (2025)<sup>15</sup>
- **RACIAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING:** Student-reported experience of harassment, intimidation or bullying (physical, verbal, cyber, etc.) at school. (2023-2024)<sup>16</sup>
- **SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS:** Student-reported sense of belonging, safety and support from adults and peers at school. (2023-2024)<sup>17</sup>
- **BLACK TEACHER REPRESENTATION:** Percentage of teachers who identify as Black or African American within the overall teacher workforce. (2025)<sup>18</sup>
- **PARENT ENGAGEMENT/PARTICIPATION:** Percentage of parents/caregivers that agree with three questions (feel welcomed to participate, receive communications and have concerns heard by school staff.) (2023-2024).<sup>19</sup>
- **SUSPENSIONS:** Percentage of students temporarily removed from school as a disciplinary response to rule violations lasting up to 10 days. (2025)<sup>20</sup>
- **EXPULSIONS:** Percentage of students removed long term from their school or district following a formal disciplinary hearing. (2025)<sup>21</sup>
- **SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE:** Percentage of students who are enrolled in special education. (2025)<sup>22</sup>
- **SPECIAL EDUCATION SEGREGATION:** Percentage of students who spend 60% or more of the school day outside regular school classrooms. (2025)<sup>23</sup>
- **SUICIDE CONSIDERATION/IDEATION:** Percentage of students reporting that they have seriously considered attempting suicide within the past year. (2023-2024)<sup>24</sup>

Some data are from 2022-2024 instead of 2025 because it is the latest available. Also, some county-level data is reported differently than the district and state levels because of how the data are collected.



**TABLE 3: STUDENT OUTCOMES**

LEGEND/KEY: BLACK STUDENTS (YTY TREND) [WHITE STUDENTS] {BLACK - WHITE GAP}

|                              | English/ELA Test Score   | Graduation Rate                          | College Preparedness                         | AP Enrollment                     | Dual Enrollment                   |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>San Diego Unified</b>     | 44.5 Pts Below (+4.1↑)<br>[58.7 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -103.2}     | 86.9% (+6.8↑)<br>[95.3%]<br>{Gap = -8.4} | 51.4% (+4.2↑)<br>[83.4%]<br>{Gap = -32.0}    | 9.6%<br>[14.7%]<br>{Gap = -5.1}   | 13.4%<br>[35.3%]<br>{Gap = -21.9} |
| <b>Grossmont Union High</b>  | 53.1 Pts Below (+4.7↑)<br>[19.4 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -72.5}      | 78.5% (+3.2↑)<br>[86.2%]<br>{Gap = -7.7} | 29.4% (-4.1↓)<br>[52.3%]<br>{Gap = -22.9}    | 10%<br>[21.7%]<br>{Gap = -12.0}   | 0.1%<br>[0.5%]<br>{Gap = -0.4}    |
| <b>Escondido Union High</b>  | 18.7 Pts Below (-49↓)<br>[84.9 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -103.6}      | 87.5% (-6↓)<br>[94.6%]<br>{Gap = -7.1}   | 53.1% (-0.2↓)<br>[76.8%]<br>{Gap = -23.7}    | 19.1%<br>[35.9%]<br>{Gap = -16.8} | 3.7%<br>[5.3%]<br>{Gap = -1.6}    |
| <b>Cajon Valley Union</b>    | 75.7 Pts Below (-1.1↓)<br>[40.7 Pts Below]<br>{Gap = -35.0}      | No Data                                  | No Data                                      | No Data                           | No Data                           |
| <b>Sweetwater Union High</b> | 1.7 Pts Below (+13.9↑)<br>[35.6 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -37.3}      | 86.1% (+2.5↑)<br>[92.8%]<br>{Gap = -6.7} | 45.5% (+6.4↑)<br>[59.5%]<br>{Gap = -14}      | 20.2%<br>[30%]<br>{Gap = -10.2}   | 1.6%<br>[2.3%]<br>{Gap = -0.7}    |
| <b>El Centro Elementary</b>  | 52.9 Pts Below (-7.8↓)<br>[5 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -57.9}         | No Data                                  | No Data                                      | No Data                           | No Data                           |
| <b>Calipatria Unified</b>    | 87.6 Pts Below (-23.3↓)<br>[9.1 Pts Below]<br>{Gap = -78.5}      | No Data                                  | No Data                                      | No Data                           | No Data                           |
| <b>Brawley Elementary</b>    | 25.9 Pts Below (+18↑)<br>[11.1 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -37.0}       | No Data                                  | No Data                                      | No Data                           | No Data                           |
| <b>Central Union High</b>    | No Data  | No Data                                  | No Data                                      | 3.7%<br>[25.2%]<br>{Gap = -21.5}  | 3.7%<br>[2.4%]<br>{Gap = +1.3}    |
| <b>San Diego County</b>      | 39.5% at Grade Level<br>[66.2%] at Grade Level<br>{Gap = -26.7%} | 80%<br>[90.5%]<br>{Gap = -10.5%}         | 51% (A-G)<br>[67.5%] (A-G)<br>{Gap = -16.5%} | Not Reported                      | Not Reported                      |
| <b>Imperial County</b>       | 31.5% at Grade Level<br>[58.8%] at Grade Level<br>{Gap = -27.3%} | 100%*25*<br>[92.7%]<br>{Gap = 7.3%}      | 43.8% (A-G)<br>[57.8%] (A-G)<br>{Gap = -14%} | Not Reported                      | Not Reported                      |
| <b>State of California</b>   | 51.3 Pts Below (+7.5↑)<br>[23.8 Pts Above]<br>{Gap = -75.1}      | 82.6% (+3.5↑)<br>[89%]<br>{Gap = -6.4}   | 35.7% (+3.1)<br>[58.6%]<br>{Gap = -22.9}     | 10%<br>[21.1%]<br>{Gap = -11.1}   | 3.8%<br>[6.2%]<br>{Gap = -2.4}    |

The academic outcome data highlights a recurring pattern of graduation without equal preparation. In all high school districts, while there were still differences between the graduation rates of Black and white students, differences across indicators of college readiness, AP enrollment, or dual enrollment were even larger. This suggests that diploma completion is not translating into equal access to college preparation or postsecondary opportunity. There are a few notable areas of progress, especially in San Diego Unified (SDUSD) and Sweetwater Union High. However, these improvements often coexist with large racial gaps across most indicators, which demonstrate overall gains for some students but have not yet produced equity.

Among districts with reported English Language Arts (ELA) test scores, Sweetwater Union High had the strongest Black student performance with Black students averaging 1.7 points below standard. Calipatria Unified had the weakest ELA scores for Black students who averaged 87.6 points below the standard in the district. Black students in Cajon Valley Union had the second lowest ELA scores with an average of 75.7 points below standard. Escondido Union High saw the biggest gap and decline as Black students averaged 103.6 points lower than white students in the district, a decrease by 49 points from the previous year. San Diego Unified also demonstrated a massive 103.2 point gap between Black and white students.

When it comes to graduation rates, Escondido Union High had the highest Black graduation rate at 87.5%, followed closely by San Diego Unified (86.9%) and Sweetwater Union High (86.1%). Grossmont Union High had the lowest (78.5%). In San Diego County overall, Black students had an 80% graduation rate compared to 90.5% for white students. This 10.5% gap is larger than the statewide Black-white graduation gap of 6.4%. Imperial County is an outlier with a Black graduation rate of 100%. However, this should be interpreted cautiously because of small numbers and cohort instability. For some Imperial districts, no graduation data are available due to fewer than three graduates in the cohort.

Escondido Union High also had the highest college readiness rate of Black students at 53.1%, slightly above San Diego Unified (51.4%) and San Diego County (51%). Grossmont Union High had the lowest at 29.4%, significantly below the statewide rate of 35.7% for college readiness of Black students. Despite San Diego Unified's higher college readiness rate for Black students, the district also had the largest gap when compared to white students (-32%), followed by Escondido (-23.7%), Grossmont (-22.9%) and Sweetwater (-14%).

Sweetwater Union High had the highest AP enrollment rate for Black students at 20.2%, followed by Escondido Union High (19.1%). Central Union High had the lowest at 3.7%. White students are 1.5 to 6.6 times as likely to be enrolled in AP across the districts.

- SDUSD: White students are 1.54 times more likely than Black students to be enrolled in AP courses.
- Grossmont Union High: 2.17 times more likely.
- Escondido Union High: 1.89 times more likely.
- Sweetwater Union High: 1.49 times more likely.
- Central Union High: 6.67 times more likely.

San Diego Unified had the highest dual enrollment rate for Black students at 13.4%, which is more than three times the statewide rate for Black students of 3.8%. However, San Diego Unified's Black-white student dual enrollment gap is -21.9%, which is the highest of all districts in this report. Grossmont Union High has the lowest Black student dual enrollment rate at 0.1% and white students were five times as likely to participate in dual enrollment for this district. Central Union High is the only district where Black students appear to outperform white students in dual enrollment (3.7% vs. 2.4%). However, the small numbers in the district should be interpreted cautiously.

**TABLE 4: SCHOOL CLIMATE**

LEGEND/KEY: BLACK STUDENTS (YTY TREND) [WHITE STUDENTS] {BLACK - WHITE GAP}

|                              | Chronic Absenteeism                                | Harassment & Bullying               | School Connectedness                | Black Teacher % | Parent Participation               |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>San Diego Unified</b>     | <u>22.7%</u> (-1.5%↓)<br>[10.9%]<br>{Gap = +11.8%} | <u>48%</u><br>[41%]<br>{Gap = +7%}  | <u>45%</u><br>[63%]<br>{Gap = -12%} | 4.6%            | <u>52%</u><br>53%<br>{Gap = -1%}   |
| <b>Grossmont Union High</b>  | No Data  | <u>31%</u><br>[25%]<br>{Gap = +6%}  | <u>48%</u><br>[55%]<br>{Gap = -7%}  | 2.6%            | <u>50%</u><br>43%<br>{Gap = +7%}   |
| <b>Escondido Union High</b>  | No Data  | No Data                             | <u>66%</u><br>[70%]<br>{Gap = -4%}  | 1.4%            | No Data                            |
| <b>Cajon Valley Unified</b>  | <u>28.7%</u> (-3.3↓)<br>[21.2%]<br>{Gap = +7.5%}   | No Data                             | <u>80%</u><br>[76%]<br>{Gap = +4%}  | 1.4%            | <u>44%</u><br>62%<br>{Gap = -18%}  |
| <b>Sweetwater Union High</b> | <u>23.4%</u> (+5↑)<br>[15.9%]<br>{Gap = +7.5%}     | <u>45%</u><br>[41%]<br>{Gap = +4%}  | <u>44%</u><br>[60%]<br>{Gap = -16%} | 2.3%            | <u>64%</u><br>[70%]<br>{Gap = -6%} |
| <b>El Centro Elementary</b>  | <u>11.8%</u> (-2.8↓)<br>[7.1%]<br>{Gap = +4.7}     | No Data                             | No Data                             | 0.7%            | No Data                            |
| <b>Calipatria Unified</b>    | <u>38.9%</u> (-6.1)<br>[41.5%]<br>{Gap = -2.6}     | No Data                             | No Data                             | 2.6%            | No Data                            |
| <b>Brawley Elementary</b>    | <u>9.4%</u> (-18.8↓)<br>[24.1%]<br>{Gap = -14.7}   | No Data                             | No Data                             | 0.8%            | No Data                            |
| <b>Central Union High</b>    | No Data  | No Data                             | No Data                             | 0.0%            | No Data                            |
| <b>San Diego County</b>      | <u>21.9%</u><br>[12.2%]<br>{Gap = +9.7%}           | <u>49%</u><br>[39%]<br>{Gap = +10%} | <u>66%</u><br>[78%]<br>{Gap = -12%} | 2.2%            | <u>43%</u><br>53%<br>{Gap = -10%}  |
| <b>Imperial County</b>       | <u>22.7%</u><br>[14.8%]<br>{Gap = +7.9%}           | <u>50%</u><br>[14%]<br>{Gap = +36%} | <u>66%</u><br>[70%]<br>{Gap = -4%}  | 0.5%            | <u>47%</u><br>63%<br>{Gap = -16%}  |
| <b>State of California</b>   | <u>29.8%</u> (-1.5↓)<br>[12.2%]<br>{Gap = +17.6%}  | <u>56%</u><br>[38%]<br>{Gap = +15%} | <u>66%</u><br>[77%]<br>{Gap = -11%} | 4.1%            | <u>48%</u><br>56%<br>{Gap = -8%}   |

The same districts showing opportunity gaps often also show climate, discipline and representation gaps. This suggests academics, belonging and punishment are deeply connected. Calipatria Unified has the highest chronic absenteeism rate for Black students at 38.9%, followed by Cajon Valley (28.7%), Sweetwater (23.4%)

and San Diego Unified (22.7%). Brawley Elementary has the lowest at 9.4%. In San Diego Unified, Black students are about 2.1 times more likely than white students to be chronically absent (22.7% vs. 10.9%). Black students in San Diego County are about 1.8 times more likely than white students to be chronically absent (21.9% vs. 12.2%). In Imperial County, Black students are 1.5 times more likely than white students to be chronically absent (22.7% vs. 14.8%).

San Diego Unified had the highest racial harassment/bullying rate of all districts with 48% of Black students reporting incidents. Grossmont had the lowest with 31%. The most alarming gap appears at the county level in Imperial County. Here, Black students report harassment/bullying at 50%, compared with 14% for white students, a 36-point gap. This is one of the single largest disparities presented in the report. Nonetheless, in San Diego County, Black students reported harassment/bullying at 49% versus 39% for white students. Across every district or county where this variable is reported, Black students report more bullying/harassment than white students, which makes this one of the few indicators with a completely consistent direction of racial disparity.

When it comes to school connectedness, Cajon Valley Unified had the highest rate for Black students at 80%. Sweetwater Union High (44%) and San Diego Unified (45%) reported the lowest connectedness for Black students. County-level data are much higher at 66% in both San Diego and Imperial counties. The largest Black-white student connectedness gaps appear in Sweetwater (-16 points) and San Diego Unified (-12 points).

Representation among teachers continues to be a defining factor as Black educators directly influence Black students' sense of belonging, motivation and protection from bias.<sup>26</sup> (CITE) In Central Union High Unified, there were no Black teachers. There were only 2.2% Black teachers across San Diego County which is nearly half the percentage of Black student representation. San Diego Unified has the highest Black teacher representation at 4.6%, however this is still significantly lower than their Black student population of 7.5%. Calipatria and Grossmont tied for the second highest at 2.6%.

Sweetwater had the highest Black parent engagement at 64%, while Cajon Valley reported the lowest at 44%. Black parent engagement is higher than white parent engagement in Grossmont (+7 points), but lower in San Diego Unified (-1), Sweetwater (-6), San Diego County (-10) and Imperial County (-16). All in all, these school climate indicators reveal both progress and disconnection.



**TABLE 5: DISCIPLINE, DISABILITY AND WELLNESS**

LEGEND/KEY: BLACK STUDENTS (YTY TREND) [WHITE STUDENTS] {BLACK - WHITE GAP}

|                              | Suspensions                                      | Expulsions                                     | % of Students in Special Education        | Special Education Segregation             | Considered Suicide                 |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>San Diego Unified</b>     | <u>5.2%</u><br>[1.3%]<br>{Gap = +3.9%}           | <u>0.1%</u><br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +0.1%}           | <u>17%</u><br>[12.4%]<br>{Gap = +5.6%}    | <u>23.2%</u><br>[12.3%]<br>{Gap = +10.9%} | <u>13%</u><br>[10%]<br>{Gap = +3%} |
| <b>Grossmont Union High</b>  | <u>9.6%</u> (+ 1.1%↑)<br>[3.0%]<br>{Gap = +6.6%} | <u>0.2%</u> (-0.6↓)<br>[0.1%]<br>{Gap = +0.1}  | <u>18.6%</u><br>[13.9%]<br>{Gap = +0.1%}  | <u>22.1%</u><br>[19.6%]<br>{Gap = +2.5%}  | <u>9%</u><br>[10%]<br>{Gap = -1%}  |
| <b>Escondido Union High</b>  | <u>6.9%</u> (+0.6↑)<br>[2.5%]<br>{Gap = +4.4%}   | <u>0.9%</u> (+0.9↑)<br>[0.1%]<br>{Gap = +0.8%} | <u>22.8%</u><br>[6.6%]<br>{Gap = +16.2%}  | <u>20.5%</u><br>[26.3%]<br>{Gap = -5.8%}  | No Data                            |
| <b>Cajon Valley Union</b>    | <u>10.7%</u> (+0.1↑)<br>[4.8%]<br>{Gap = +5.9}   | <u>0.2%</u> (+0.2↑)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +0.2}    | <u>23.2%</u><br>[16.7%]<br>{Gap = +6.5%}  | <u>16.6%</u><br>[13.7%]<br>{Gap = +2.9%}  | No Data                            |
| <b>Sweetwater Union High</b> | <u>6.5%</u> (-1.9↓)<br>[2.8%]<br>{Gap = +3.7}    | <u>0.2%</u> (+0.1↑)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +0.2}    | <u>18.5%</u><br>[17.4%]<br>{Gap = +1.1%}  | <u>21.1%</u><br>[22.8%]<br>{Gap = -1.7%}  | <u>18%</u><br>[14%]<br>{Gap = +4%} |
| <b>El Centro Elementary</b>  | <u>8.3%</u> (-2.1↓)                              | <u>0%</u> (+/- 0)<br>[0%]                      | <u>29.1%</u><br>[10.7%]<br>{Gap = +18.4%} | <u>27.5%</u><br>[9.1%]<br>{Gap = +18.4%}  | No Data                            |
| <b>Calipatria Unified</b>    | <u>15.4%</u> (-9.6↓)<br>[3.3%]<br>{Gap = +12.1%} | <u>0%</u> (+/- 0)<br>[0%]                      | No Data                                   | No Data                                   | No Data                            |
| <b>Brawley Elementary</b>    | <u>5.9%</u> (-2.6↓)                              | <u>0%</u> (+/- 0)<br>[0%]                      | No Data                                   | No Data                                   | No Data                            |
| <b>Central Union High</b>    | <u>12.5%</u> (+8.9↑)<br>[0.9%]<br>{Gap = +11.6}  | <u>3.1%</u> (+3.1↑)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +3.1}    | No Data                                   | No Data                                   | No Data                            |
| <b>San Diego County</b>      | <u>5%</u> (-0.5↓)<br>[1.7%]<br>{Gap = +3.3%}     | <u>0.1%</u> (+/- 0)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +0.1}    | <u>21.7%</u><br>[15%]<br>{Gap = +6.7%}    | <u>18.4%</u><br>[11.2%]<br>{Gap = +7.2%}  | <u>11%</u><br>[9%]<br>{Gap = +2%}  |
| <b>Imperial County</b>       | <u>8.5%</u> (-0.4↓)<br>[2.2%]<br>{Gap = +6.3%}   | <u>1%</u> (+1↑)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +1%}         | <u>24.4%</u><br>[14.2%]<br>{Gap = +10.2%} | <u>20%</u><br>[6.8%]<br>{Gap = +13.2%}    | <u>8%</u><br>[7%]<br>{Gap = +1%}   |
| <b>State of California</b>   | <u>7.9%</u> (-0.7↓)<br>[2.5%]<br>{Gap = +5.4%}   | <u>0.2%</u> (+0.2↑)<br>[0%]<br>{Gap = +0.2}    | <u>20.9%</u><br>[14.1%]<br>{Gap = +6.8%}  | <u>25.2%</u><br>[15.5%]<br>{Gap = +9.7%}  | <u>15%</u><br>[18%]<br>{Gap = -3%} |

Disparities in disciplinary outcomes are among the most severe inequities across the region. In every district or county where rates for both Black and white students are available, Black students are suspended at substantially higher rates. Calipatria Unified had the highest Black suspension rate at 15.4%, followed by Central Union High (12.5%), Cajon Valley (10.7%) and Grossmont (9.6%). San Diego Unified has the lowest reported Black student suspension rate among districts at 5.2%, but this is still far above white students (1.3%). Black students are 3.9 times more likely than white students to be suspended in Imperial County and 2.9 times more likely in San Diego County.

- San Diego Unified: Black students are 4.0 times more likely than white students to be suspended.
- Grossmont: 3.2 times more likely
- Escondido: 2.8 times more likely.
- Cajon Valley: 2.2 times more likely.
- Sweetwater: 2.3 times more likely.
- Calipatria: 4.7 times more likely.
- Central Union High: 13.9 times more likely (small numbers often create larger disparities)

Expulsions are rarer than suspensions but often more unequal. Central Union High has the highest Black student expulsion rate at 3.1%, followed by Escondido Union High (0.9%). Several districts report 0% for Black students, but that may reflect small sample sizes. In Escondido Union High, Black students are 9 times more likely than white students to be expelled (0.9% vs. 0.1%). Countywide, Black students are expelled at higher rates than white students in both San Diego and Imperial counties.

Court cases and studies have repeatedly shown that special education is frequently used to separate Black students.<sup>27</sup> El Centro Elementary has the highest Black student special education enrollment rate at 29.1%, followed by Escondido Union High (22.8%) and Cajon Valley (23.2%). San Diego Unified has the lowest among reporting districts at 17%, but even that exceeds the white student special education enrollment rate (12.4%). The most severe disparity appears in Escondido Union High, where Black students are 3.45 times more likely than white students to be in special education (22.8% vs. 6.6%). In El Centro Elementary, Black students are 2.7 times more likely than white students to be in special education (29.1% vs. 10.7%). Throughout San Diego County, Black students are 1.45 times more likely than white students to be in special education, while in Imperial County they are 1.7 times more likely.

Patterns of exclusion often continue within special education. El Centro Elementary also has the highest Black student special education segregation rate at 27.5%. This is triple the rate for white students of 9.1%. In San Diego Unified, Black students are nearly 1.9 times more likely than white students to be placed in segregated special education settings (23.2% vs. 12.3%). Throughout Imperial County, Black students are nearly 3 times more likely than white students to be in segregated settings (20% vs. 6.8%).

Sweetwater Union High has the highest suicide consideration rate for Black students at 18%, followed by San Diego Unified (13%) and Grossmont (9%). In San Diego Unified, Black students are 1.3 times more likely than white students to report having seriously considered suicide (13% vs. 10%). Countywide, Black students are 1.22 times more likely in San Diego County and 1.14 times more likely in Imperial County.

# QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Numbers or quantitative data alone cannot capture the full scope of Black students' experiences. Focus groups and interviews with the NAACP San Diego Youth Council and Mid-City CAN student organizers were conducted to add depth to the understanding of contemporary inequalities and opportunities. Student testimonies illustrate how isolation, bias and limited access intersect to define daily school life and how representation, belonging and safety transform it. Students described daily conditions that shape whether they feel safe, seen and able to learn.

## QUALITATIVE THEMES & QUOTES

**1. SAFE, WELCOMING SCHOOLS:** Students repeatedly emphasized that safety extends beyond physical harm to include psychological safety and respect. Racist comments, cultural stereotyping and inconsistent adult responses were common themes. Across interviews and focus groups, youth consistently linked academic outcomes to belonging, protection and representation. Where students felt seen and supported, engagement and persistence increased. Where harm went unchecked, academic disengagement followed. Students reported racialized taunts and "jokes" that escalated online and in hallways. The deeper issue named by students is the normalization of problematic behavior and weak responses that focus on the target's reaction rather than the harm. Many students described schools where harm is normalized and accountability is rare.

- "Racism is just a joke... it's fun, and it's funny, and it's online, and I can post it." – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- "I had students try to hate crime me and take off my hijab." "You're a slave and I hope you die in a hole." "No one came to my rescue." – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- "I felt dehumanized and unsafe in class after racist, Islamophobic comments." – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- "Teachers didn't believe a Black kid could speak Spanish fluently." – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member

## 2. REPRESENTATION AND TRUST:

Representation was cited as a critical factor in student engagement and mental health. Students and families repeatedly called for the hiring and retention of Black teachers, counselors and administrators as a foundation for safety, trust and academic persistence. Having Black teachers and counselors changes classroom culture, academic expectations and whether students seek help.

- "She is ... the first Black teacher that I've ever had... only one of two Black teachers on our campus." – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- "From K-12 in SDUSD, I never had a Black teacher" – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer



- “Counseling from folks that look like them... is very helpful.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council

When the curriculum reflects Black histories and contributions, students report stronger identity, motivation and campus pride. Youth called for more ethnic studies, Black student leadership spaces and visible recognition of Black excellence across campuses.

- “Having AP African American Studies changed the way our school reacted to Black culture.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “Programs that center us keep us motivated.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

**3. ACCESS, GUIDANCE AND ACADEMIC BELONGING:** Opportunities for advanced coursework are expanding, but without targeted outreach and advising, access remains uneven. Students described the absence of proactive academic guidance as a systemic form of exclusion, compounded by rigid attendance and grading policies that penalize students balancing family or work responsibilities.

- “I have a toxic relationship with education ...classroom settings have stripped my joy... I hated school and everything about me” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- “They just introduced AP African American Studies... there’s more access every year, but the disparities continue.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “I had to figure A-G on my own.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

Commute time and family duties affect punctuality and attendance in both San Diego and Imperial counties. Students asked teachers to incorporate flexibility, mastery-based make-ups and realistic attendance policies so that one tardy doesn’t snowball into failure.

- “You’re late because you had to take the bus – teachers should understand that.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “Outside responsibilities don’t fit the bell schedule.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

**4. WELLNESS, FAIRNESS AND PROTECTION:** Students expressed a need for counselors and staff who not only listen but actively intervene when harm occurs. Wellness supports that acknowledge racial stress and family responsibilities were described as essential.

- “If I speak up about something wrong, I don’t want to be punished for it.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “I needed adults who would actually protect me.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- “We need support from people who understand what we’re going through.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “Give us a vote, not just a mic.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “My family needed clearer ways to report and resolve issues.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

**5. RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE, STUDENT POWER AND HOPE:** Students expressed frustration with punitive systems that discipline reaction rather than cause. Students described inconsistent enforcement and bias that penalizes Black students’ reactions to harm. They called for restorative justice, greater transparency in discipline data and meaningful student roles in decision-making. Despite systemic barriers, youth voices reflected profound resilience and vision. Students consistently expressed belief in their schools’ potential when leadership, curriculum and climate align with equity and humanity.

- “Discipline sometimes goes at the person reacting, not the person causing harm.” – NAACP San Diego Youth Council Member
- “We need approaches that fix harm, not just punish.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer
- “Through community... that was the first time I felt visible...Programs that center us keep us motivated... The UMOJA- Learning cohort taught me how to be self-sufficient at SD City College.” – Mid-City CAN Student Organizer

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The inequalities and disparities reflected in this report are long-standing despite decades of reform, lawsuits, organizing and more. Black students and families have been marginalized across generations. This section outlines recommendations and opportunities that emerged from the findings of this report.

### 1. GUARANTEE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

- Districts with Black-white student gaps in AP enrollment, dual enrollment and college readiness should adopt Black student access plans that include annual targets, outreach and progress reporting.
- Every high school district should publish Black student enrollment and success rates in AP, A-G (required courses for state college admission), dual enrollment and CCI annually.
- Build College Access Agreements that may exist already in Calipatria and other districts. The partnerships between colleges and school districts can increase access.
- Ensure Black students and families have access to high quality pre-K programs.

### 2. REDUCE DISCIPLINE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPROPORTIONALITY

- Districts where Black students are significantly more likely as white students to be suspended or identified for special education should conduct corrective equity reviews and publish action plans.
- Invest in evidence-based responses to school discipline like restorative/transformational justice, Positive Behavioral Support and Interventions (PBIS), pupil personnel staff and more. Implement standards-aligned Tier 1 instruction with MTSS and targeted Tier 2 supports at schools with the highest gaps.
- Special education disproportionality must address identification and restrictive placement.
- Ensure that students are supported with well-trained staff (behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals).

### 3. BUILD BELONGING THROUGH REPRESENTATION

- Black teacher representation should be prioritized as a core equity strategy within other improvements.
- Districts with no Black teachers or representation far below Black student enrollment must develop recruitment and retention plans with public benchmarks.
  - Support mentorship and professional affinity networks (e.g., Black Educator Networks, student-led affinity groups) across all districts.
- Implement professional development on anti-Black racism, implicit bias and more.
- Embed culturally relevant curriculum (including Ethnic Studies, African American Studies and diaspora history) into graduation and middle school promotion requirements.

### 4. ADDRESS STRUCTURAL ABSENCE, NOT JUST ATTENDANCE

- Attendance strategies should prioritize transit access, flexible academic recovery, student support staffing and climate improvement over punitive responses.

- Districts must treat chronic absenteeism as a structural indicator of barriers (transportation barriers, housing instability, caregiving burdens, school climate and disengagement) instead of evidence of family failure.
- Conduct root-analysis investigations into the reasons why Black students have lower attendance rates than their peers. Create a task force to address the issues.

## 5. MOVE FROM CONSULTATION TO SHARED POWER

- Students and families should feel welcomed, engaged and should hold formal power in the Local Control and Accountability Plan/LCAP budgets, climate and Black student achievement planning.
- Improve engagement and participation with Black parents through intentional initiatives.
- Fund Black Family Advisory Councils in each district to support students and families.

## 6. BLACK STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND REPARATORY JUSTICE:

- Implement programs that meaningfully support Black students. This has been done in Los Angeles, Oakland and other cities.
- Create programs for reparatory justice that address the generations of harm and discrimination against Black students and families documented in this report.

### CALIFORNIA PROGRAMS SUPPORTING BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS

- **Oakland Unified-** African American Male Achievement
  - Black Students and Families Thriving Task Force
- **LA Unified-** Black Student Achievement Plan
- **Berkeley Unified-** African American Success Framework
- **Pasadena Unified-** Black Student & Family Task Force
- **Long Beach-** Black Student Achievement Initiative

## 7. FUTURE DATA PRIORITIES

- Further research and investigation into the areas listed below.
  - County offices of education must provide data monitoring and technical assistance for districts missing targets
  - School-level analysis/ dashboards of the same data point in this report
  - Academic: Grade 3 reading and Grade 8 math
  - FAFSA/CADAA (student financial aid for higher education)
  - LCFF dollars
  - Continuation transfers
  - Other indicators selected by community
  - Further research into why Black students and families are exiting the public school system at faster rates than other students



# TOOLKIT: HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report can also be an advocacy tool. It can be used for school board advocacy, budget hearings, LCAP input, community organizing, education and media briefings.

For a step-by-step guide into meeting with your school boards, see the full Meet Your School Board Members Community Action Toolkit at [www.aclu-sdic.org/campaigns-initiatives/meet-your-school-board-members/](http://www.aclu-sdic.org/campaigns-initiatives/meet-your-school-board-members/).

**WHY SCHOOL BOARDS MATTER:** School boards are one of the most powerful levers for change in education. They are responsible for: approving district budgets, setting policies (discipline, safety, curriculum), influencing curriculum and school culture, hiring and evaluating the superintendent and more. School board decisions directly shape student outcomes, learning conditions and equity gaps.

**SCHOOL BOARD ADVOCACY:** Use this report to 1) present district-specific disparities (ELA, discipline, college readiness, etc.) 2) connect data to specific board decisions and accountability, and 3) highlight Black student enrollment declines and inequities. School board engagement tactics can include:



- Identify your issue(s)
- Request a meeting via email or phone
- Be clear on your specific ask
- Assign roles if going as a group
- Set a clear agenda for the meeting (see full toolkit)
- Debrief meetings internally and send follow-up email

**BUDGET & LCAP ADVOCACY:** Through LCAP plans, school boards decide how funding is distributed and whether equity gaps are addressed. Use this report to 1) identify resource inequities across districts 2) push for specific investments (academic supports, mental health & counseling, Black student achievement strategies) and 3) track whether LCFF funds are being used for intended student groups

Key questions to ask: 1) How are funds addressing disparities identified in this report? 2) How are Black students being specifically supported?

**ISSUE-BASED ADVOCACY:** The Meet Your School Board Members toolkit outlines core issue areas school boards control – use this report to bring data into each one:

- **COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS.** Advocate for A-G aligned curriculum, AP/dual enrollment access and career readiness programs.
- **CURRICULUM & LEARNING ACCESS.** Advocate for inclusive, accurate curriculum, access to books and materials, and protection against censorship.
- **WELCOMING & SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS.** Advocate for protections for immigrant students, LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and safe/supportive school climates.
- **DISCIPLINE & SCHOOL CLIMATE.** Advocate for restorative justice policies, reduced suspensions and policing, and investment in student supports.
- **FUNDING & RESOURCE ALLOCATION.** Advocate for no budget cuts to key programs/staffing, smaller class sizes, more counselors/nurses/support staff and expanded after-school/enrichment programs.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING & EDUCATION:** Use this report to host community forums, teach-ins and student organizing spaces. Translate data into talking points, flyers and social media campaigns. Contact the media to pitch op-eds, media stories, community perspectives and data points.

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<sup>17</sup> Id.

<sup>18</sup> California Department of Education, Teacher and Staff Data (2025)

<sup>19</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey, California Department of Education, WestEd. (2023-2024)

<sup>20</sup> California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Id.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>24</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey, California Department of Education, WestEd. (2023-2024)

<sup>25</sup> This should be interpreted cautiously because of small numbers and cohort instability. For some Imperial districts, no graduation data are available due to fewer than three graduates in the cohort.

<sup>26</sup> Jill Barshay, "For Better Student Outcomes, Hire More Black Teachers," [The Hechinger Report](https://hechingerreport.org/for-better-student-outcomes-hire-more-black-teachers/) (October 16, 2023). Available online at <https://hechingerreport.org/for-better-student-outcomes-hire-more-black-teachers/>

<sup>27</sup> See *Larry P. v. Riles*, 495 F. Supp. 926 (N.D. Cal. 1979), See also <https://pubintlaw.org/cases-and-projects/lower-merion-school-district-segregation-through-special-education/>