

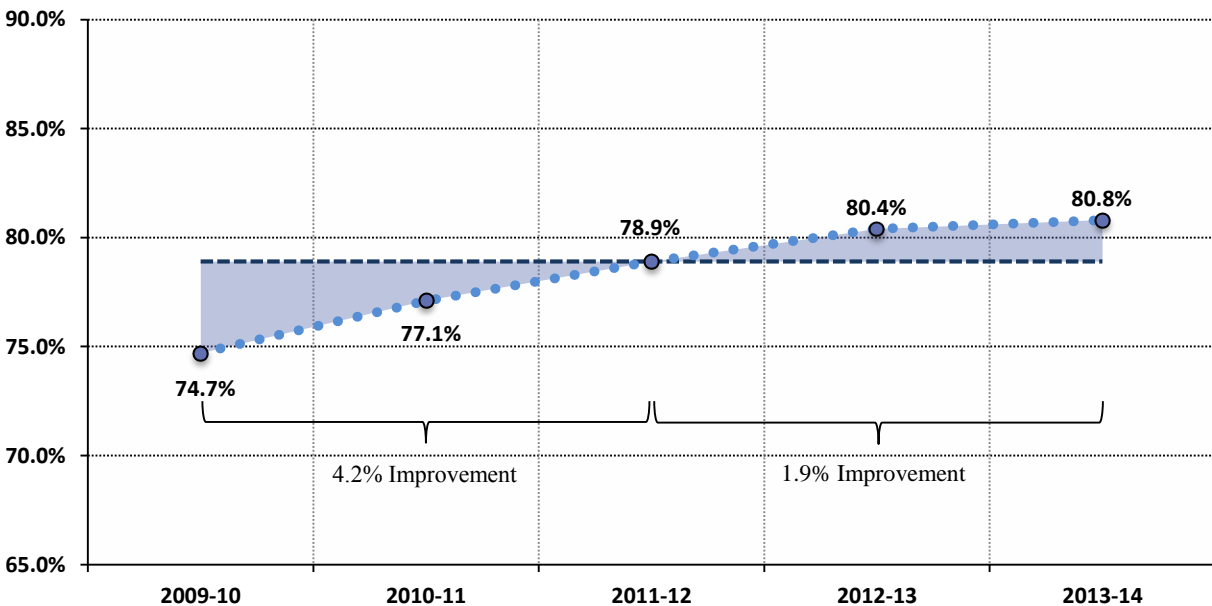
Improvement in California's Cohort Graduation Rate Leveling Off

By Cameron Sublett

The latest California Department of Education cohort graduation data reveals that the overall high school graduation rate for the 2013-14 academic year was 80.8%. This represents a 6.1% increase in the state's overall graduation rate from 2009-10, the first year that cohort graduation data was made available. However, the 2013-14 state graduation rate represents only a modest increase over the previous two academic years and a mere .4 percentage point increase in the last year. This suggests that the observed improvement in the California state graduation rate has begun to level off. The current California Dropout Research Project (CDRP) statistical brief explores this possibility and in the process updates a previous CDRP statistical brief.¹

Figure 1 presents the state's overall cohort graduation rates for academic years 2009-10 through 2013-14. The shaded area depicts two observed 2-year increments in graduation rates, one from 2009-10 to 2011-12 and the other from 2011-12 to 2013-14. In the first 2-year period, the graduation rate increased by 4.2% while in the second 2-year period it increased just 1.9%, less than half as much. The cause for the slowdown in the state's overall graduation rate is less clear. Future CDRP analyses will explore this trend.

Figure 1. California State Cohort Graduation Rates 2009-10 thru 2013-14²



¹ See CDRP State Brief #19: http://www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/pubs_statbriefs.htm

² Source: California Department of Education Dataquest: <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

Table 1 shows the California school districts with the 10 highest and 10 lowest 4-year improvement rates in the state³. As we documented before⁴, there is a strong relationship between a district's 2009-10 cohort graduation rate and their 4-year improvement such that districts with lower initial cohort graduation rates were more likely to experience greater gains and vice versa.⁵

Table 1. California School Districts with the Highest and Lowest 4-year Change in High School Graduation Rates

	High Schools In District 2013-14	9th-12th Grade Enrollment 2013-14	Grad Rate 2009-10	Grad Rate 2013-14	4-year Change
State	-	1,957,917	74.7%	80.8%	6.1%
Barstow Unified	2	1,604	46.7%	74.4%	27.7%
Fullerton Joint Union	8	14,500	70.6%	93.4%	22.8%
Vallejo City Unified	3	4,181	54.0%	72.0%	18.0%
San Bernardino City Unified	9	15,601	62.2%	79.9%	17.7%
Moreno Valley Unified	5	10,401	65.7%	82.8%	17.1%
Sacramento City Unified	14	13,167	68.0%	85.1%	17.1%
Wasco Union High	2	1,730	74.6%	90.3%	15.7%
Hanford Joint Union High	5	3,827	75.1%	90.5%	15.4%
Hayward Unified	4	6,132	64.6%	79.6%	15.0%
Paramount Unified	3	5,192	71.3%	85.5%	14.2%
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Los Banos Unified	2	2,967	92.0%	89.1%	-2.9%
Dixon Unified	2	1,239	80.6%	77.5%	-3.1%
Sonora Union High	1	1,127	91.0%	87.7%	-3.3%
Calexico Unified	5	3,138	76.8%	73.4%	-3.5%
Fallbrook Union High	3	2,625	83.9%	80.2%	-3.7%
West Covina Unified	3	4,851	95.1%	91.0%	-4.0%
Soledad Unified	1	1,418	83.7%	79.6%	-4.1%
Fillmore Unified	3	1,107	85.2%	79.3%	-5.9%
Sonoma Valley Unified	2	1,367	91.3%	85.0%	-6.3%
Inglewood Unified	4	3,677	79.8%	72.4%	-7.5%

Overall, there were 36 districts with 4-year improvements greater than 10% and 84 districts with 4-year improvement rates equal to or greater than the state average of 6.1%. Forty-one districts experienced a decrease in graduation rate, 18 of which saw decreases of greater than or equal to 2%.

³ The analytic sample was restricted to districts with high school enrollments greater than 1,000 ($N = 264$)

⁴ See CDRP Statistical Briefs #s 17 and 19: http://www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/pubs_statbriefs.htm

⁵ View an interactive graph on 3-year change in graduation rates: <http://www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/graphics.htm>