

The Narrowing California High School Graduation Gap between Black, Latino,¹ and White Students

By Daniel Katz

Not only are high school graduation rates increasing in California, the graduation gap between Black, Latino, and White students has narrowed over the last six years. The graduation rate gap is calculated by subtracting the Latino and Black graduation rates for a given year from the White graduation rate in that same year. The six-year graduation rate gap change is computed by subtracting the 2009-2010 graduation gap from the graduation gap in 2014-15. These data are shown in Table 1.²

The California wide graduation gap between White and Black students narrowed by roughly 5.8 percentage points over the last six years, while the White-Latino graduation rate gap narrowed by a similar 5.9 percentage points. It should be noted that, as rates continue to increase, the room for continual increase is reduced, which may explain the slowing White graduation rate.³

Table 1. Changes in Black, White, and Latino Graduation Rates from 2009-10 to 2014-15

Year	Overall Grad Rate	White Grad Rate	Black Grad Rate	Latino Grad Rate	White-Black % Point Gap	White-Latino % Gap
2009-10	74.7%	83.5%	60.5%	68.1%	23.0	15.4
2014-15	82.3%	88.0%	70.8%	78.5%	17.2	9.5
Change	+7.6%	+4.5%	+10.3%	+10.4%	-5.8	-5.9

To understand where the graduation gap is changing, we have highlighted districts that have narrowed these gaps the most, as well as districts with the largest Latino and Black student cohorts in the state. We note that small districts tend to show more volatility due to cohort size.

The five districts with largest narrowing of White-Black graduation gap are presented in Table 2 below. Black graduation rates exceed White graduation rates in each of these five cases by 2014-15. Among large districts, Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) White-Black graduation gap narrowed by 4.1 percentage points over the last six years. However, LAUSD Black graduation rates are still below the cohort state averages. Long Beach had a gap decrease of roughly 4.7 percentage points, with higher grad rates than their respective cohort state averages. Oakland School District is worth noting. Despite cohort graduation rates improving, the White-Black graduation gap grew by 3.3 percentage points.

Districts with the greatest White-Latino graduation gap narrowing are presented in Table 3 below. Fullerton Joint Union, which had an impressively large Latino cohort of 1,800 students, narrowed the district-wide White-Latino graduation gap by 30 percentage points. Among the largest districts, LAUSD is worth noting, narrowing the White-Latino graduation gap by 6.6 percentage points.

¹ Latino is used in this document to represent Latino and Latina students.

² An interactive graph on the CDRP website shows six-year trends in grad rates for all districts in the state and for all major subgroups: <http://cdrpsb.org/graphics.htm>

³ See CDRP Statistical Briefs #s 17 and 19: http://cdrpsb.org/pubs_statbriefs.htm

Table 2. White-Black Graduation Rate Gap Reduction for Districts with the Largest Change and Cohorts

District Name	2014-15 Black Cohort Size	2009-10 White Grad Rate	2009-10 Black Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 09-10	2014-15 White Grad Rate	2014-15 Black Grade Rate	Percentage Point Difference 14-15 ⁴	Gap Percentage Point Change ⁵
Districts with the Largest Reduction								
John Swett	26	81.0%	53.8%	27.2	79.3%	88.0%	-8.7	-35.9
Fallbrook	16	88.0%	75.0%	13.0	85.1%	100.0%	-14.9	-28.0
Santa Maria Joint Union	21	87.7%	66.7%	21.0	90.0%	95.5%	-5.5	-26.5
Napa Valley	23	87.0%	65.2%	21.8	93.8%	97.3%	-3.5	-25.2
Beaumont	33	80.6%	66.75%	13.9	84.9%	93.3%	-8.4	-22.3
Districts with the Largest Black Cohorts								
Los Angeles	3,345	71.5%	58.2%	13.3	75.7%	66.5%	9.2	-4.1
Long Beach	1,091	87.9%	75.7%	12.2	90.0%	82.5%	7.5	-4.7
Antelope Valley	942	79.3%	63.1%	16.2	86.6%	73.9%	12.7	-3.5
Elk Grove	792	88.7%	73.7%	15.0	93.7%	79.4%	14.3	-0.7
Oakland	766	64.6%	53.1%	11.5	75.5%	60.7%	14.8	+3.3

Table 3. White-Latino Graduation Rate Gap Reduction for Districts with the Largest Change and Cohorts

District Name	2014-15 Latino Cohort Size	2009-10 White Grad Rate	2009-10 Latino Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 09-10	2014-15 White Grad Rate	2014-15 Latino Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 14-15	Gap Percentage Point Change
Districts with the Largest Reduction								
Sutter Union High	27	96.6%	60.7%	35.9	99.2%	96.3%	2.9	-33.0
Fullerton Joint Union High	1,810	91.0%	57.1%	34.0	96.7%	92.7%	4.0	-29.9
Monterey Peninsula Unified	322	88.4%	66.1%	22.3	89.3%	94.4%	-5.1	-27.4
Lassen Union High	26	85.2%	62.5%	22.7	96.7%	100.0%	-3.3	-25.9
John Swett Unified	38	80.9%	72.73%	8.2	79.3%	92.1%	-12.8	-21.0
Districts with the Largest Latino/a Cohorts								
Los Angeles Unified	27,456	71.5%	60.5%	11.0	75.7%	71.3%	4.4	-6.6
Kern High	5,679	85.5%	76.7%	8.8	89.2%	85.7%	3.5	-5.3
Sweetwater Union High	5,237	82.0%	77.0%	4.9	85.8%	83.0%	2.8	-2.2
Chaffey Joint Union High	3,657	89.5%	78.1%	11.4	93.6%	87.8%	5.8	-5.6
Santa Ana	3,460	85.3%	79.4%	-5.9	84.0%	88.7%	-4.7	-10.6

⁴ Negative values indicate Black (Table 2) or Latino (Table 3) graduation rates exceeded White graduation rates.

⁵ Negative values indicate gap reduction for this column in Tables 2 and 3