

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

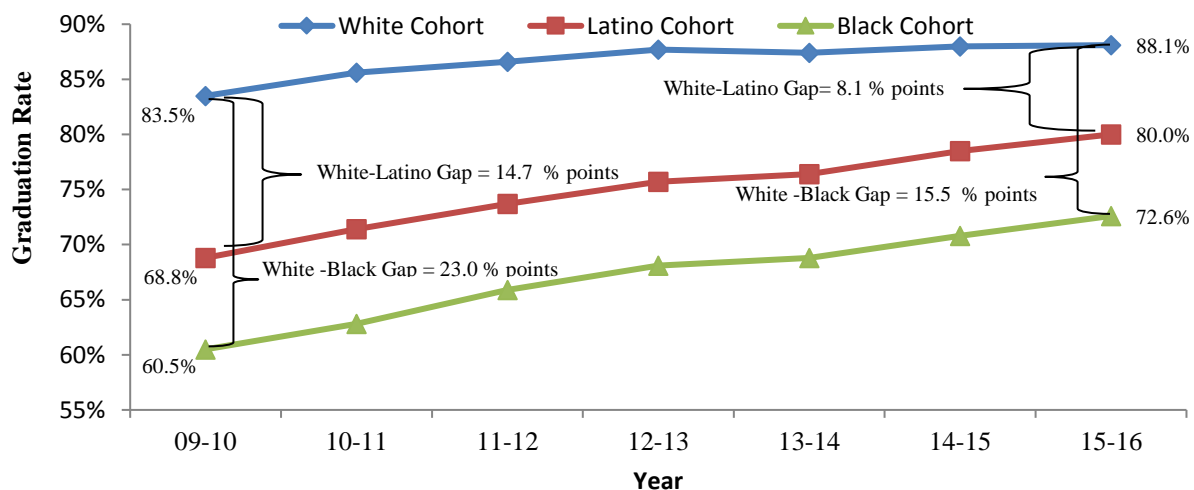
By Daniel Katz

The latest release of state data show that high school graduation rates are continuing to increase across California, with Black and Latino students showing the largest gains. Between 2009-10 and 2015-16, the 4-year cohort graduation rate for White students increased from 83.5% to 88.1%, an increase of 4.6 percentage points (see Figure 1).² In contrast, the graduation rate for Black students increased from 60.5% to 72.6%, a gain of 12.1 percentage points, while the graduation rates for Latino students increased from 68.8% to 80.0%, an 11.2 percentage point increase. Put differently, the high school graduation rates for Black and Latino students have increased more than twice as fast as for White students over the last seven years.

As a result, the graduation gaps between Black, Latino, and White students has narrowed. 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 seven-year graduation rate gap change is computed by subtracting the 2009-2010 graduation gap from the graduation gap in 2015-16.

The California-wide graduation gap between White and Black students narrowed by roughly 7.5 percentage points over the last seven years, while the White-Latino graduation rate gap narrowed by 6.6 percentage points, though, the gap itself is a lot smaller than the White-Black graduation gap. It should be noted that, as rates continue to increase, the room for continual increase for the particular cohort is reduced, which may explain the slowing White graduation rate.³

Figure 1. California Graduation Rates for Black, Latino, and White Students, 2009-2010 through 2015-2016



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

² An interactive graph on the CDRP website shows seven-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, 19 and 23: http://cdrpsb.org/pubs_statbriefs.htm

We have highlighted districts with the largest cohorts of Black and Latino students.⁴ As depicted in Table 1 below, among large districts, Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) White-Black graduation gap narrowed by 8.5 percentage points over the last seven years (2009-10 to 2015-16). LAUSD Black graduation rates have matched the state average. Long Beach had a gap decrease of roughly 5.2 percentage points, with higher grad rates than their respective cohort state averages. Oakland School District is also worth noting. Despite cohort graduation rates improving, the White-Black graduation gap has not changed. However, the Black graduation rate has grown significantly.

Table 1. White-Black Graduation Rate Gap Reduction for Districts with the Largest Black Cohorts

District Name	2015-16 Black Cohort	2009-10 White Grad Rate	2009-10 Black Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 09-10	2015-16 White Grad Rate	2015-16 Black Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 15-16	Gap Percentage Point Change ⁵
Los Angeles	3,127	71.5%	58.2%	13.3	77.3%	72.5%	4.8	-8.5
Long Beach	1,031	87.9%	75.7%	12.1	88.7%	81.8%	6.98	-5.2
Antelope Valley	875	79.3%	63.1%	16.2	87.7%	76.2%	11.5	-4.8
Elk Grove	773	88.7%	73.7%	15.0	93.0%	85.6%	7.4	-7.7
Oakland	768	64.6%	53.1%	11.5	75.3%	64.1%	11.2	-0.3

Districts with the greatest White-Latino graduation gap narrowing are presented in Table 2 below. Fullerton Joint Union, which had a 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 10.4 percentage points since 2009-2010. Additionally, the White and Latino graduation rates are now nearly equal in the Los Angeles and Kern districts.

Table 2. White-Latino Graduation Rate Gap Reduction for Districts with the Largest Latino Cohorts

District Name	2015-16 Latino Cohort	2009-10 White Grad Rate	2009-10 Latino Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 09-10	2015-16 White Grad Rate	2015-16 Latino Grad Rate	Percentage Point Difference 15-16	Gap Percentage Point Change
Los Angeles	26,076	71.5%	60.5%	11.1	77.3%	76.6%	0.7	-10.4
Kern High	5,788	85.5%	76.7%	8.8	87.8%	86.6%	1.1	-7.7
Sweetwater Union	5,522	82.0%	77.0%	4.9	84.9%	81.0%	3.9	-1.0
Chaffey Joint Union	3,818	89.5%	78.1%	11.4	94.5%	89.6%	4.9	-6.5
Santa Ana Unified	3,372	85.3%	79.4%	5.9	91.7%	91.5%	0.2	-5.7

This brief does not speak to changes in policy or practice that may have brought about these changes, such as the increased use of credit recovery and alternative schools.⁶

⁴ See CDRP Statistical Brief #23 for information on districts with largest gap reductions http://cdrpsb.org/pubs_statbriefs.htm

⁵ Negative values indicate gap reduction for this column in Tables 1 and 2.

⁶ See NPR story: <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/06/09/412939852/high-school-graduation-rates-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ambiguous>