



PORTRAIT OF PROMISE:

The California Statewide Plan to Promote Health and Mental Health Equity

Report to the Legislature and the People of California
by the Office of Health Equity,
California Department of Public Health,
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Child Development and Education: Addressing Lifelong Disparities in Early Childhood

Many of the basic foundations for lifelong health, prosperity, and well-being are formed in early and middle childhood. That observation, increasingly recognized in policy, research, and clinical practice,¹ means that, as a society, we can minimize many of the health inequities featured in this report by focusing attention and resources on ensuring that our children – all our children – are provided with the strongest possible foundations for future success.

Getting a Head Start

In purely financial terms, early investment in childhood education is a winner. The rate of return on a \$1 investment is 7 to 10 percent annually “through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, [and] economic productivity and [through] reduced crime,” according to University of Chicago economist and Nobel laureate James Heckman. Over a lifetime, the

MORE THAN HALF OF THE CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA AGES 3 TO 4 DO NOT ATTEND PRESCHOOL

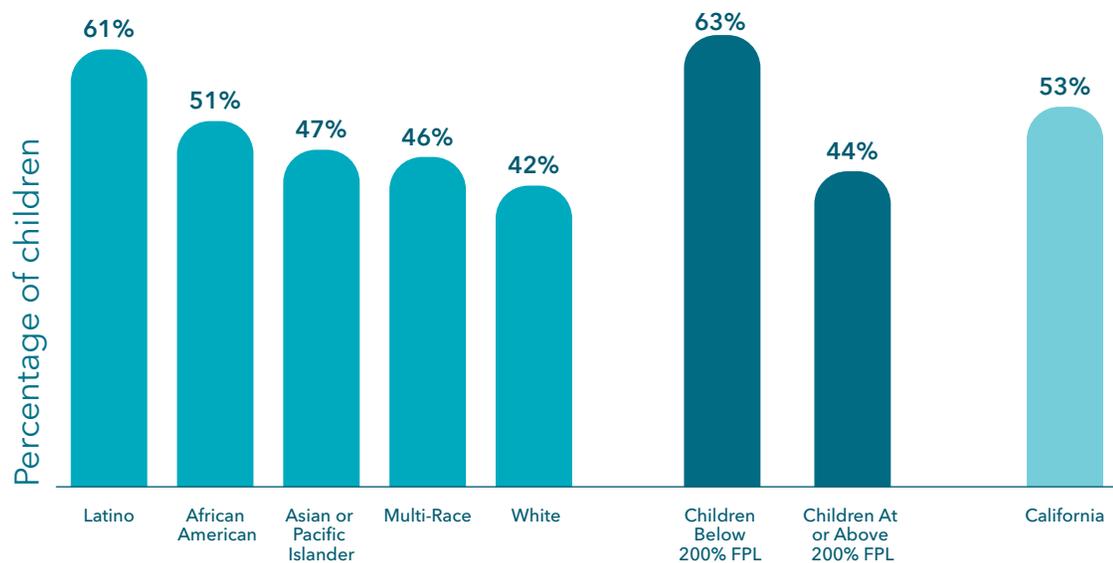


FIGURE 9: Percentage of children in California ages 3 to 4 who are not attending preschool, by race/ethnicity and federal poverty level (FPL), 2009-2011. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates (2009-2011). Analysis by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center.

A HIGHER PROPORTION OF ASIAN AND WHITE THIRD-GRADERS ARE READING AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL COMPARED WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINOS

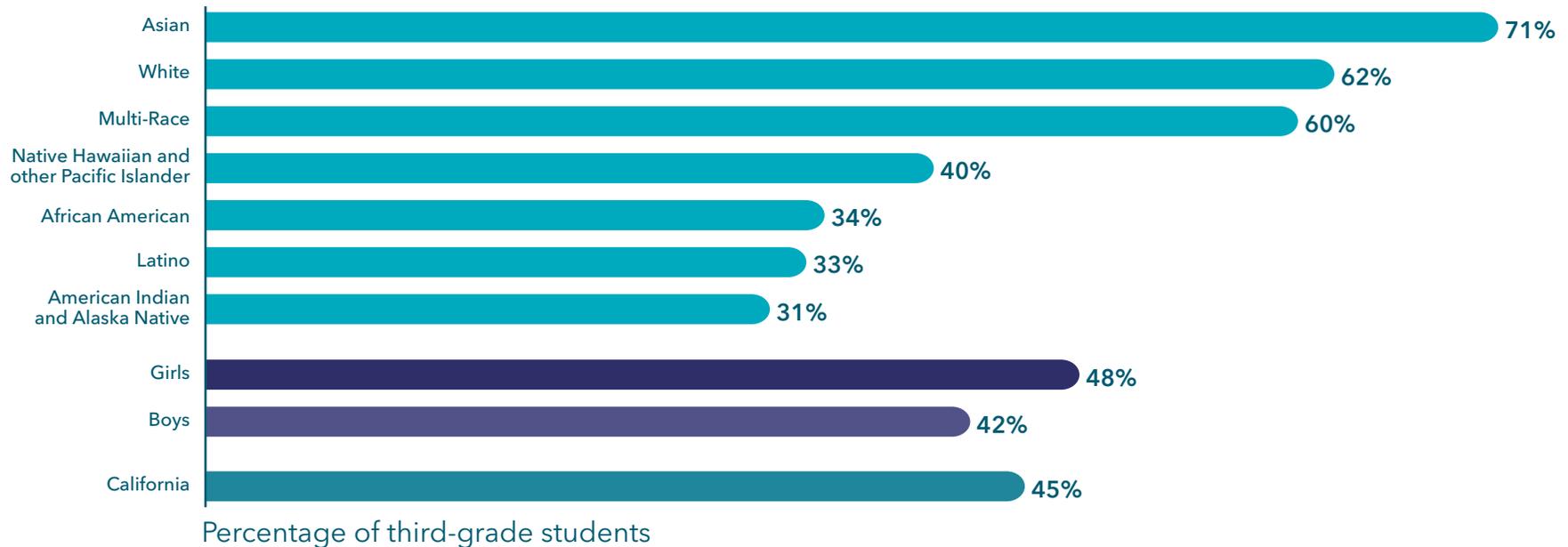


FIGURE 10: Percentage of third-grade students scoring proficient or higher on English Language Arts California Standards Test (CST), by race/ethnicity and gender, California, 2013.

Source: California Department of Education, Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Results, 2013. Analysis by www.kidsdata.org, a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

return on that \$1 adds up to \$60 to \$300.²

One of the most successful ways of supporting healthy early childhood development is through high-quality infant and toddler care, whether provided by parent(s) who feel prepared and supported, or by family or outside day care providers, Head Start, or preschool programs.³ Getting ready to learn is especially important for the nearly half of all California children who live in low-income families (less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level),⁴ a disproportionately large share of whom are non-White. Despite the evidence demonstrating the importance of

early childhood care and enrichment, only 6 percent of income-eligible children under age 3 are served by any publicly supported program.⁵ Some reasons proposed for this are transportation barriers, especially for rural areas; cultural, language, or literacy barriers; lack of awareness; and staffing or facilities issues. As shown in Figure 9, about three in five low-income children ages 3 to 4 are not attending preschool, including three out of five Latinos and more than half of African Americans.

Third-Grade Reading Proficiency as a Predictor of Future Performance

When children do not participate in early developmental and educational opportunities, the impact is seen in later educational performance. In a hopeful trend, the latest data shows that the percentage of reading-proficient California third-graders increased between 2003 and 2013 for all subgroups. However, despite this overall improvement, significant gaps remain between English learners; economically disadvantaged children (those eligible for reduced-price lunch programs); boys and girls; and some of the largest racial or

MALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

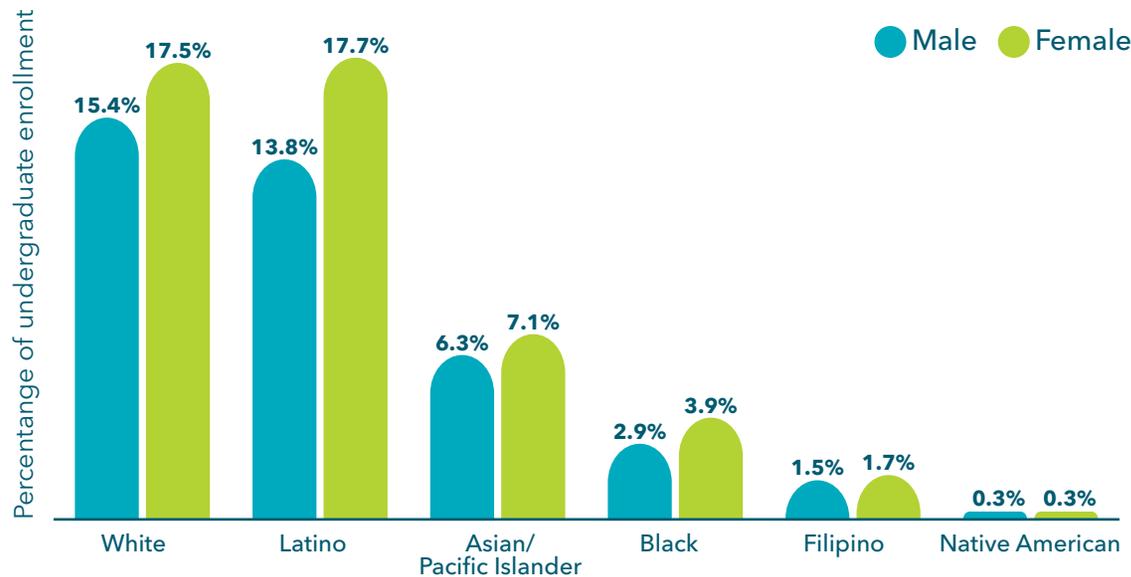


FIGURE 11: Percentage of undergraduate enrollment, by race/ethnicity and gender, California Public Higher Education, 2010.

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission.
 Note: Unknown percentage is not included in the table.

A Green Education for a Green Economy

The East Bay Green Corridor’s Energy and Technology (GET) Academies were founded in 2008 to create high-quality jobs in green manufacturing and clean energy research among East Bay communities. The GET Academies, with support from the Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational and Environmental Design, are located in nine East Bay high schools, where they are pioneering an educational curriculum in green science, technology, engineering, and math to help students graduate with the 21st-century skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in the clean energy economy. The program is designed to support the development of multiple pathways by which California’s students can graduate high school, complete postsecondary education, attain industry-recognized credentials, and embark on a long and lasting career in a fulfilling, high-paying job.

Learn more at <http://iseeed.org/programs/east-bay-green-corridor/>.

Strong Public Support for Universal Preschool

Reflecting a growing public focus on preschool since President Obama proposed universal access to high-quality preschool for all low- and middle-income 4-year-olds, an April 2014 survey by the California Field Poll, a nonpartisan public opinion news service, registered strong voter support for extending California’s transitional kindergarten to include all 4-year-olds at an estimated cost of \$1.4 billion. The poll found that 56 percent of those without young children, and 57 percent of people overall, support the idea. Latinos registered the greatest support (75 percent), followed by African Americans, at 72 percent. The 2014-15 Budget Act allocates funding to support the expansion of California State Preschool Program for 3- and 4-year old children from low income families.

Sources: *The President’s 2015 Budget Proposal for Education*. U.S. Department of Education Website. <http://www.ed.gov/budget15>. Accessed July 2014.

DiCamillo M, Field M. *Majority of California Voters supports expanding pre-school to all four-year-olds despite its additional costs and regardless of parents’ incomes*. San Francisco, CA: *The Field Poll*; April 2014.

California State Budget 2014-2015. *California State Budget Website*. <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2014-15/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>. Accessed November 2014.

ethnic subgroups, including American Indians/Alaska Natives, Latinos, and African Americans, compared with higher-income, White, and Asian students (see *Figure 10*). For example, only 33 percent of economically disadvantaged third-graders in 2013 were reading at proficiency levels, compared with 67 percent of higher-income students.⁶ These educational inequities start early and have long-lasting implications (see *Figure 11*).

Similar disparities exist in terms of high school dropout and graduation rates, although here, too, there has been notable improvement in recent years. In 2012, more than 65,000 California students who started high school in 2008 dropped out – about one of every eight students. However, dropout rates vary widely by school district and among racial/ethnic groups. Generally, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students have significantly higher dropout rates than Asian American and White students.⁷ Research has shown that young people who do not complete high school are more likely

than those with higher education levels to be unemployed, live in poverty, be dependent on welfare benefits, have poor physical and mental health, and engage in more criminal activity.⁸ One national study estimated that if those who dropped out of high school in 2011 had graduated instead, the nation’s economy would benefit by about \$154 billion over their lifetimes.⁹

Implications for Lifelong Health

More than any other developmental period, early childhood development sets the stage for acquiring skills that directly affect children’s physical and mental health – health literacy, self-discipline, the ability to make good decisions about risky situations, eating habits, and conflict negotiation.¹ These same skills influence children’s health and mental health throughout adolescence, contributing to important public health and social problems, including increases in school violence, teen sexuality, and eating disorders, as well as the onset of many psychological disorders.¹⁰

The Mission Neighborhood Promise of Cradle-to-Career Education

Despite high and rapidly rising housing costs, San Francisco’s Mission District remains one of the poorest in the city, with a high teen birthrate, a high dropout rate, and more than three out of four of its 12,000 mostly Latino children living in low-income housing, according to the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA). But big changes are coming to the neighborhood, thanks to a five-year, \$30 million U.S. Department of Education grant recently awarded to MEDA to implement the Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN). The MPN is a citywide partnership of local agencies, the school district, colleges and universities, and 26 nonprofit service providers to integrate a host of cradle-to-college-to-career services that improve academic achievement and build family wealth for the families of children at four participating Mission District schools. The MPN integrated service model builds on the success of the Harlem Children’s Zone, which provides children and families with high-quality, coordinated educational, health, social, and community supports from cradle to career.

Learn more at www.missionpromise.org.



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