The African-American Student Profile: San Diego Unified School District

October 2011
The African-American Student Profile

San Diego Unified School District

October 2011

The African American Student Profile

San Diego Unified School District

Center for Education Policy and Law • University of San Diego
A non-partisan, university-based, educational research center

Author
Julie Zoellin Cramer, Senior Research Associate

October 2011

This study was commissioned by an independent philanthropist and conducted by the Center for Education Policy and Law (CEPAL), a research entity operating under the auspices of the School of Leadership and Education Sciences and the School of Law at the University of San Diego.

Established by a grant from the William D. Lynch Foundation in 2007, CEPAL’s mission is to foster better linkage between educational research, policymaking, and practice. To this end, CEPAL undertakes empirical and legal research on educational policy issues, enhances communication between education leaders and state-level policymakers, and facilitates understanding among USD law students and education graduate students about the policymaking process through courses, internships, and research opportunities. Additional information about CEPAL is available at www.sandiego.edu/cepal.

This report was prepared in consultation with Professor Frank Kemerer, Associate Director for Legal Research and Academics at the Center for Education Policy and Law.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The San Diego Unified School District is the seventh largest urban K-12 school district in the nation and the second largest in California. During 2010, its 222 district-operated and charter schools provided education services to 131,785 students. Eleven percent of district students in 2010 were ethnically identified as African-American. The purpose of this study is to better understand the African-American condition within the school district, both over time and in relation to the overall student population. This study encompasses school years 2002-03 to 2010-11. It consists of four research phases: (1) student enrollment, demographics, and representation; (2) student performance on national and state tests; (3) students in underperforming schools and student suspensions; and (4) student high school performance and opportunity.

Section I: African-American Student Enrollment, Demographics, and Representation

- African-American student enrollment between 2002-03 and 2010-11 declined 30%. The biggest decline in enrollment was between 2008-09 and 2009-10, although changes in how students were to be classified by race/ethnicity may have accounted for some of this 12% drop.

- The percentage of students in the district who are African-American declined from 15% to 11.3% between 2002-03 and 2010-11.

- In 2010-11, 78% of African-American students were identified as socio-economically disadvantaged. This is significantly higher than at the state level, where 62% were identified as socio-economically disadvantaged.

- In comparison to the percentage of African-American students in the district, African-American staff members were underrepresented as teachers and pupil services personnel. The percentage of African-American administrators and classified staff were slightly overrepresented.

Section II: African-American Student Performance on National and State Tests

- The percentage of district African-American students achieving proficiency or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in mathematics and reading in grades four and eight has increased slightly since 2003. However, over four-fifths of the sample of district students tested still failed to reach proficiency in 2009, the latest year for which NAEP test data are available. Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, NAEP is known as the nation’s report card.

- In 2009, NAEP test score gaps between White and African-American students ranged from 33% in fourth grade reading to 47% in fourth grade math. Further, with the exception of fourth grade reading, the test score gap has been widening since 2003 by as much as 15%.

1 As noted in the report, in some instances the data encompass both district-operated schools and charter schools within its borders and in some instances not.
On the recently released NAEP 2009 science test, African-American students performed much lower than San Diego students overall, with 10% proficient or higher in fourth grade and 8% in eighth grade.

The same test score gaps evident on the National Assessment of Educational Progress are evident among subgroups in the San Diego school district on the California Standards Test. For example, on the sixth grade English language arts CST test in 2010-11, 80% of White students, 72% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, 48% of African-American students, and 44% of Hispanic students achieved proficiency or higher as compared with 59% of all students.

With all grades combined, less than half of African-American students were proficient on the English language arts CST test in 2010-11.

Section III: African-American Students in Underperforming Schools and Suspensions

Almost one-third of all African-American students in grades K-8 in the district attend a school with an Academic Performance Index ranking of 1-3 (1 is at the bottom and 10 at the top). Nearly half of the African-American high school students in the district attend an underperforming school.

In 2009-10, African-American students in grades 7-12 had a suspension rate of 30.6 suspensions per 100 hundred students. Suspension rates for African-American students were consistently 50% higher than other ethnic groups.

Section IV: African-American Student High School Performance and Opportunity

A high percentage of all students in the district pass the California High School Exit Examination for those who persist to graduation, though the passage rates in 2010 were not as high for African-American students. The cumulative pass rate for the African-American 2010 cohort of students was 88% in literacy and 86% in mathematics.

The cohort graduation rate for African-American students in 2010 was 68.6%. District-wide, the 2010 cohort graduate rate was 74.9%.

The four-year dropout rate for African-American students in the 2010 graduating cohort was 16.5%. An additional 10.6% of the cohort was still enrolled in the school district after four years. As a percentage of the total number of dropouts, African-American students represented 14.5%, while constituting 11.7% of the district population in 2009-10.

Despite incremental gains in the UC/CSU eligibility rates for African-American students between 2003 and 2010, the percentage of eligible students was 20% lower than those of White students. In 2009-10, 35% of African-American graduates had fulfilled the course requirements necessary to attend a UC or CSU institution. A consistently higher percentage of female African-American students were eligible than their male counterparts.
The African-American Student Profile

San Diego Unified School District

October 2011

The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is the seventh largest urban K-12 school district in the nation and the second largest in California. Nationally, it is 20th in size when all forms of school districts are included.² Eleven percent of SDUSD students were ethnically identified as African-American. The purpose of this study is to better understand the African-American condition within the school district, both over time and in relation to the overall population of students.

This study encompasses school years 2002-03 to 2010-11. It consists of four research phases: (1) student enrollment, demographics, and representation; (2) student performance on national and state tests; (3) students in underperforming schools and student suspensions; and (4) student high school performance and opportunity.

Section I: African-American Student Enrollment, Demographics, and Representation

This phase focuses on data collection related to the African-American population in the following categories:

- Student enrollment in district-operated schools and charter schools within the district³
- Student demographics
- Personnel representation

To allow for longitudinal analysis, statistics have been gathered wherever possible for the school years 2002-2003 to 2010-11.

Headcount Enrollment

Statistics on student enrollment in SDUSD are available from the California Department of Education for district and charter schools. These data are submitted by districts to the Department on one day in October known as “Information Day.” In this section of this report,

³ The term “district-operated schools” means those schools that are directly administered by the district. In some data reporting, charter schools located within school district boundaries are included in the statistics for the district as a whole, because these schools were authorized by the district and the district is legally required to monitor their operation. In other data reporting, charter schools are not included. Clarification is provided in this report when charters are and are not included in statistics.
data include information on students attending both district-operated schools and charter schools authorized by the district.

In the 2010-11 school year, the number of African-American students in SDUSD was 14,842 with a gender balance of 51% male and 49% female. The number of African-American students declined 30% since 2002-03 when students numbered 21,108 students. Figure 1 shows enrollment of African-American students in the district over the nine-year time span. The biggest decline in enrollment was between 2008-09 and 2009-10, a 12% drop.

While the decline in SDUSD African-American student enrollment is clearly a trend, it may have been exacerbated in 2009-10 by a reclassification of ethnic categories. For that year an additional ethnic category, “Two or More Races, Not Hispanic” was added to the data collection methods. For the first time, a significant number of students—3% of the total SDUSD students—placed themselves within this category.4 Further, the designation of “African American” was expanded to include the words, “African American, not Hispanic.”

African-American student enrollment at the state level also declined in numbers during the past nine years, a 19% decrease since 2002-03. Total student enrollment at the state level has declined less than 1%.

---

4 In only one other year, 2006-2007, did a small number of SDUSD students (.1% of total) identify in the “multiple” category.
**Student Demographics**

As Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate, student enrollment in 2010-11 for both SDUSD and for the state as a whole is racially diverse. Data include enrollment at both district-operated and charter schools. In 2010-11 the district as a whole enrolled approximately 46% Hispanic students, 24% White, 15% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 11% African-American. However, it is important to note that most schools in both the district and the state do not mirror this degree of diversity. In fact, racial isolation in traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools throughout the state is more the rule than the exception. SDUSD has almost twice the percentage of African-American students as the state.

![Figure 2](image1.png)  
**2010-2011 SDUSD Students By Ethnicity**

- **African-American** 11.26%
- **Hispanic** 45.62%
- **American Indian/Alaskan Native** 0.36%
- **Asian-American/Pacific Islander** 14.83%
- **Multi-race/No Report** 4.04%

![Figure 3](image2.png)  
**2010-11 California Students By Ethnicity**

- **African-American** 6.70%
- **Hispanic** 51.43%
- **Asian-American/Pacific Islander** 14.83%
- **American Indian/Alaskan Native** 0.70%
- **Multi-race/No Report** 2.89%

**Source: California Department of Education**

Over the past nine years, some change in the ethnic mix of SDUSD has occurred. The African-American student population as a percentage of the overall population declined 3.7% during this period. White and Asian/Pacific Islander student populations also declined, 2.3% and 2.6% respectively. The percentage of Hispanic students as a percentage of the overall population has increased 5%, growing steadily from 41% to 46%.

Figure 4 on the following page shows the decline overtime in the percentage of African-American students compared to total enrollment. As a percentage of the total enrollment in the district, African-American student enrollment declined from 15% in 2002-03 to 11.3% in 2010-11.
The 2009-10 school year accounted for the biggest single year decline in percentage of African-American students, dropping 1.5% of the total population from the previous year, and, as previously noted may be partially accounted for by ethnicity reclassifications in that year. Statewide, as a percentage of total student enrollment, African-American enrollment also declined from 8.3% of the total population in 2002-03 to 6.7% in 2010-11.

According to the California Department of Education, a total of 11,603 African-American students in SDUSD, or about 78%, were identified as socio-economically disadvantaged in 2010-11. At the state level, 62% of African-American students were identified as socio-economically disadvantaged. Table 1 shows the percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students within each ethnic category in the district.

Table 1
Total Enrollment for Students Identified as Socio-economically Disadvantaged
SDUSD 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7,913</td>
<td>31,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>50,208</td>
<td>60,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>11,603</td>
<td>14,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>10,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>3,429</td>
<td>7,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,215</td>
<td>6,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>82,909</td>
<td>131,785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5The socio-economically disadvantaged subgroup are students who participate or are eligible to participate in the federal Free and Reduced lunch program or where neither parent is a high school graduate.
**African-American Personnel Representation**

To obtain a more complete picture of the African-American condition in SDUSD, it is necessary to include not only information about the African-American students, but also some information regarding the African-American adults within the learning environment. Data from this section are from the California Department of Education. Data for certificated staff are not yet available for 2010-11.

Table 2 shows the number of African-American certificated and classified staff employed in the school district during the 2002-03 and 2009-10 school years. The decrease in African-American personnel was greater than the overall decrease in personnel during the eight-year period. SDUSD certificated and classified staff decreased 10%, while African-American certificated and classified staff decreased by 16%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificated Staff</th>
<th>2002-03 School Year</th>
<th>2009-10 School Year</th>
<th>Net (Decrease)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers(^6)</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators(^7)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Services(^8)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL Certificated</strong>(^9)</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Classified\(^10\) | 1,011 | 13.5% | 963 | 14.4% | (48) |

African-American Students as a % of Total Students

|                      | 15.0% | 11.7% |

---

\(^6\) While the definition of teachers is self-evident, this category does not include adult education, Regional Occupation Programs (ROP), child care, and preschool teachers.

\(^7\) Administrators are defined as those certificated employees who are not teachers or pupil services professionals, and include superintendents, principals, assistant superintendents, assistant principals, program directors or coordinators, and other certificated staff not providing direct services to students.

\(^8\) Pupil services personnel are defined as those certificated employees who provide direct services to students but are not teachers, and include counselors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, librarians, speech specialists, and other medical personnel.

\(^9\) Subcategories of certificated staff do not equal the Total Certificated because of a few multiple classifications. The Total Certificated does not include duplications.

\(^10\) Classified staff includes teaching assistants, teacher aides, pupil service aides, library aides, clerical and administrative support staff, custodians, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers.
In terms of representation, the figures in Table 2 show an underrepresentation of African-American teachers and pupil services personnel compared to the percentage of African-American students in the district and a slight overrepresentation of administrator and classified personnel.

**Section II: African-American Student Performance on National and State Tests**

This phase focuses on data collection related to African-American students in the following categories:

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing performance
- California Standardized Testing and Performance (STAR) testing performance

To allow for longitudinal analysis, statistics have been gathered wherever possible for the school years 2002-2003 to 2010-11.

**Student Achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress**

Student achievement data are presented in this and following sections. First is the performance of the district’s students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and administered through its National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP is the nation’s only representative and continuing assessment of what students know and can do in various subject-matter areas. It is known as “the nation’s report card” because it is administered to a sample of students in all 50 states in various subject areas at various grade levels. It thus offers a common metric for comparing states and selected urban districts on the performance of their students.

While the findings are revealing, it is important to note that the tests are administered to a sample of students at a particular grade level, not to the entire student population. No test scores are available for individual students or schools. Additionally, the tests are not directly reflective of a particular state’s curriculum content in the subject-matter area, though it can be asserted that knowledge and skills in such areas as math and reading should not differ that much from state to state and district to district. Thus, student performance will vary some between NAEP and state assessments such as California’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system. At the same time, it is important to note that under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the degree of rigor of state assessment tests is based in part on their comparison with NAEP.

The math and reading tests are administered every two years to students in grades four and eight. The latest scores are from 2009. The test results for fourth graders who perform at or above proficient on the math and reading tests are presented in the following figures for all students in the district in comparison with the SDUSD African-American students, California
African-American students, and African-American students in large city schools (those located in cities with more than 250,000 population). Note that because the percentage of students reaching proficiency or higher remains low, the vertical percentage scale on the left side of these figures only goes to 40%. All test score results are taken from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics.

As Figure 5 and 6 above show, while SDUSD African-American students in 2009 did somewhat better than the African-American sample in the state and other urban districts, they lagged significantly behind the general population sample of students in SDUSD. Even with the improvement, only 15% of the sample of SDUSD African-American fourth graders performed at the proficient or higher level in math (a decline from 21% in 2007) and only 18% was proficient or higher in reading in 2009. However, it is important to note that NAEP tests are given only to a sample of district students, and it may be that the sample of African-American students was very small and not representative of the population as a whole.

Test results on NAEP for the sample of the district’s eighth graders (Figures 7 and 8 on the following page) show that SDUSD African-American eighth graders do better than California and large urban districts on math, but not as well in reading. In both math and reading in eighth grade, African-American students continue to significantly underperform compared to the general population sample of students in the district. The percentage of district African-American eighth grade students reaching proficiency or higher was 16% in math and 8% in reading in 2009.

---

11 For this section, charter school data are included in the large city, state, and national statistics. At the district level, however, charter schools were not included in 2009. In previous years charter schools were included in the district sampling though were not statistically significant given their small enrollment numbers.
The following figures present the test results for fourth graders who perform at or above proficient on the math and reading tests in the district by ethnicity. Note that the vertical percentage scale has been increased to 70% to accommodate performance rates.

These figures reveal that between 2003 and 2009 the performance of the four ethnic subgroups in the district has improved, though some faster than others. Figure 9 shows that in 2009 15% of African-American and 19% of Hispanic fourth grade students in the sample performed at or above proficiency in math while over 60% of the White students and 50% of Asian-American students did so. For both African-American and Hispanic students the performance level was lower than in 2007.
Figure 10 (see previous page) shows that in 2009 on the NAEP fourth grade reading test, the percentage of African-American students reaching proficiency or higher increased from 9% in 2003 to 18% in 2009. White students again performed at significantly higher levels than other ethnic groups with 51% of fourth graders in the district testing at or above proficiency. For Asian-Americans, 41% did so. Hispanic student performance was little changed over this six-year period, with about 11% at or above proficiency.

For eighth graders, Figure 11 below shows that the percentage of African-American students reaching proficiency or higher in mathematics increased from 7% in 2003 to 16% in 2009. In reading, the increase was 1% with a dip from 2007 performance. Despite some improvement in NAEP math test scores from 2003 onward across ethnic groups, only White students in the sample had more than 50% reaching proficiency or higher in 2009. No ethnic group in the district performed at this level in reading (Figure 12).

Another trend is noticeable. The slow rate of improvement of African-American and Hispanic subgroups over time has resulted in a test score gap between them and White and Asian-Americans students in the district. In fourth grade math (look back at Figure 9), the percentage of White students achieving proficiency or higher in 2003 was 41% as compared with 8% for African-American and 9% for Hispanic students, a gap of 33% and 32%, respectively. In 2009, 62% of White students reached the proficiency or higher level, compared with 15% of African-American and 19% Hispanic students, a gap of 47% and 43%, respectively. Thus, the gap increased by 14% between White and African-American students and 11% between White and Hispanic students during this time span.

In fourth grade reading (look back at Figure 10), however, the test score gap between African-American fourth graders and White students went from 34% in 2003 to 33% in 2009, a decline of 1%.
An increasing test score gap also is evident between White students and both African-American and Hispanic students on the eighth grade tests in math and reading (see Figures 11 and 12). The biggest increase in the test score gap in eighth grade for African-American students was in math. Here the gap with the White students increased from 28% in 2003 to 39% in 2009.

This spring, the U.S. Department of Education released figures for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress test in science for grades four and eight. Because of recent changes to the assessment, the results from 2009 cannot be compared to those from previous assessment years. And because only one year of data is displayed, this figure is formatted differently from the previous NAEP figures on mathematics and reading. As noted in Figure 13 below, a little less than one-third of students nationally in public schools reached proficiency or higher on this test at both the fourth and eighth grade levels. The San Diego student sample was about the same in fourth grade but 9% percentage points below eighth graders nationally. San Diego students did considerably better than both California as a whole and large city districts at the fourth grade level but about the same at the eighth grade level.

Figure 14 shows the percentage of San Diego Unified students at or above the proficiency level by ethnicity. Nearly 60% of White students achieved proficiency or higher at the fourth grade level, falling off to 36% at the eighth grade level. Asian-Americans were next in levels of performance—39% proficient in fourth grade and 26% in eighth grade. Both African-American and Hispanic students lagged far behind at both grade levels, with 10% proficient in fourth grade and less than 10% proficient in eighth grade.
Student Achievement on the California Standardized Testing and Reporting System

The state’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system consists of multiple measures of student performance. Its core component is the California Standards Test (CST) that assesses student progress in grades two through eleven in achievement on the state’s curriculum content standards. Though parents can opt out of the test, fully 95% of every student subgroup (there are many) must participate in state assessments for the school not to be classified as low-performing. California has indicated to the U.S. Department of Education that it expects to have all students at or above the proficient level on the state’s English language arts and mathematics standards tests by school year 2013-2014 in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). And as noted earlier, the degree of rigor of state assessment tests is determined in part by their comparison with the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Data from this section, unless otherwise noted, are from the California Department of Education and includes students in both district-operated and charter schools.

The next two figures show the percentage of students in San Diego schools achieving proficiency or higher on the 2010-11 CST second grade and sixth grade math test (the last year most students take general math) and on the second grade and sixth grade English language arts test. Included in both figures is the performance of students by racial and ethnic subgroups.

---

12 At this writing, the reauthorization of this federal law is pending in Congress. The Obama administration has issued guidelines for states to secure waivers from various provisions of NCLB because of Congress’s reauthorization delay. To secure waivers, states must agree to certain conditions such as changing student assessment to focus more on college- and career-readiness. Whether California will seek a waiver remains uncertain at this time.

13 At or Above Proficiency figures are obtained from the CDE website by combining CDE percentages for % Advanced and % Proficiency.
As indicated in the two figures on the preceding page, both White and Asian-American\textsuperscript{14} students exceeded overall student performance, while African-American and Hispanic students lagged behind. For example, on the sixth grade English language arts CST test in 2010-11, 80% of White students, 72% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, 48% of African-American students, and 44% of Hispanic students achieved proficiency or higher as compared with 59% of all students.

However, there has been an increase in the performance of African-American students on the CST over the nine year time span. In 2002-03, just 16% of African-American students in the district achieved proficiency or higher on the sixth grade CST math test. By 2010-11, that percentage rose to 37% for African-American students. The same upward trend is apparent on the CST English language arts test at the sixth grade level. In 2002-03, 25% of African-American students scored proficient or above and by 2010-11 the proficiency scores had nearly doubled. With that said, half or more of all African-American second and sixth grade students continue to fail to reach proficiency or higher on the CST math and English language arts tests in 2010-11.

The performance improvement of African-American students in second and sixth grades in CST math and English language arts tests, on average, has failed to reduce the test score gap between them and White students since 2002-03. The gap increased by between 2-3% in English language arts (2\textsuperscript{nd} grade) and in mathematics (2\textsuperscript{nd} and 6\textsuperscript{th}). The gap has closed in sixth grade English language arts proficiency by 6%. Overall, the test score gap between White students and students of color remained large, averaging 35% across the two grade levels and subjects.

Figures 17 and 18 on the following page show the African-American student performance on the California Standards Test across grade level for English language arts in grades 2-11 and for mathematics in grades 2-7 and for Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry, which are courses that students take during different grades, depending upon the students’ math track. At the eighth grade and high school levels, students not enrolled in Algebra or Geometry course take other CST examinations in general, integrated, or summative mathematics (data not shown).

Despite gains over the past nine years, just slightly more than one-third of African-American student were performing at or above proficiency in mathematics. With all grades and all types of math combined, in 2010-11, 34.8% of African-American students scored at or above grade level.\textsuperscript{15} African-American students made performance gains in Algebra 1 with proficiency scores increasing from 4% in 2002-03 to 24% in 2010-11. Geometry proficiency increased over the time period from 4% in 2002-03 to 12% in 2010-11. Algebra II proficiency increased from 7% in 2002-03 to 10% in 2010-11.

\textsuperscript{14} Asian-American percentages are weighted figures including students identified as either Asian, Filipino, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander.

\textsuperscript{15}Summative statistic from the SDUSD Office of Accountability report, 2007-2011 California Standards Test Results: Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient or Advanced Levels by Grade Level.
With all grades combined, in 2010-11, less than half—45.8% to be exact—of African-American students scored at or above grade level in English language arts (data not shown).\footnote{Summative statistic from the SDUSD Office of Accountability report, 2007-2011 California Standards Test Results: Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient or Advanced Levels by Grade Level.}
The fall-off in performance between second and eleventh grade in reading and between second and seventh grade must be viewed with caution. Academic standards become more rigorous as student move through grade levels, and tests are not well aligned across grades. Lack of alignment means that later tests may not incorporate material from earlier tests along with more advanced material to show the extent to which a student progresses from grade to grade. Other factors include smaller class sizes in kindergarten through three, lack of sufficient grade-to-grade curriculum coordination, ineffective implementation of the state’s curriculum content standards at certain grade levels, student migration in and out of school at higher grade levels, the influence of student peer groups, and so on.

Section III: African-American Students in Underperforming Schools and Expulsions

Underperforming Schools

As part of a statewide accountability system, each year California reports the academic success of its public schools through an Academic Performance Index (API). It is an improvement model that measures academic growth on assessment measures such as the California Standards Test and the California High School Exit Examination. Scores on the API range from a low of 200 to a high of 1,000. To calculate statewide rankings, schools are first sorted by type (elementary, middle, and high) and then divided into ten equal groups or deciles.¹⁷ A statewide ranking from 1-10 thus shows a relative placement by school type. Schools with statewide rankings of 1-3 are considering underperforming schools. In 2009-10, 31% of the schools in the district using 2010 base data had API 1-3 rankings.

Table 3 on the following page shows the percentage of African-American students attending underperforming schools during the 2009-10 school year using the 2010 statewide base rankings. Data are from the California Department of Education.

¹⁷ There is some exception to this for schools with small enrollment.
Table 3
SDUSD African-American Students
School Year 2009-10
In 2010 API Statewide Ranked Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of African-American Students Attending API 1-3 Schools</th>
<th>% of African-American Students Attending API 1-3 Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools, K-8, K-12</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools, 9-12,6-12</td>
<td>2,238</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All School Grade Levels</td>
<td>5,376</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table shows, nearly one-third of all African-American students in grades K-8 and over one-half of the high school students attended underperforming schools in 2009-10. With all school grades combined, K-12, 36.4% of African-American students attended schools with API statewide rankings of 1-3.

**Student Suspensions**

Discipline and behavior problems detract from a successful learning environment. Out-of-school suspension from school is one of the serious consequences for disciplinary infractions such as use of alcohol, harassment, assault, defiance, or theft. According to SDUSD, a suspension is the “temporary removal of a student from ongoing instruction at the school site for purposes of adjustment and calling attention to the seriousness of his/her behavior. Students are not allowed on campus during the period of suspension except for official meetings related to their suspension”. Data from this section include both district-operated and charter schools.

Suspension behaviors vary across ethnic groups. In 2009-10, while African-American students constituted 12% of the population, they also represented 26% of the suspensions.

One measure used to track suspensions is the suspension rate, which measures the number of out-of-school suspensions per 100 students. African-American suspension rates have been consistently 50% higher than other ethnic groups. Figure 19 compares suspension rates across time for African-American students and for SDUSD students as a whole.

---

18 In 2009-10, fives schools did not receive a valid API score and therefore enrollment from those schools is not included in this table. There are a number of reasons why a school might not have a valid API score, including a special education school designation, too small enrollment, or invalidated scores.

20 Data from this section were drawn from the SDUSD Office of Accountability Research and Reporting Department report, Student Suspensions and Expulsions: 2008-2009.
Suspension rates in 2009-10 for African-American students in primary grades K-6 were 13.2 suspensions per 100 students, nearly three times the rate for all district students. The secondary suspension rate for African-American students in grades 7-12 was 30.6 suspensions per 100 students, almost double the rate for all district students.

Section IV: African-American Student High School Performance and Opportunity

This phase focuses on data collection related to African-American students in the following categories:

- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) passage rates
- Graduation and dropout rates
- Postsecondary preparedness and attendance rates

To allow for longitudinal analysis, statistics have been gathered wherever possible for the school years 2002-2003 to 2010-11.

Passage Rates on the California High School Exit Exam

In order to receive a diploma, California public school students must pass the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in mathematics and English language arts. The test is aligned with the state’s curriculum content standards. CAHSEE tests competency in English language arts through 10th grade content standards and in mathematics through 6th and 7th grade content standards and Algebra 1. Students can begin taking the exam in their sophomore year.
and are allowed to continue taking portions they fail until all have been passed. The cumulative passage rate for SDUSD’s Class of 2010 is shown in the next two figures. Data are from the SDUSD Research and Reporting Department and includes students at both district-operated and charter schools. This is the latest data available from the school district.

As is clear from these figures, upwards of 90% of all students in the Class of 2010 cohort eventually passed both portions of CAHSEE. These statistics encompass the 8,658 students in the Class of 2010 cohort but not the large number who left the cohort for various reasons. In its sophomore year, the Class of 2010 numbered 9,779 students.

The passage rate for White students was higher than both all students and African-American students. By their senior year, 88% of African-American students in the Class of 2010 passed the literacy portion of the CAHSEE and 86% had passed the mathematics portion. Following their senior year, students who do not pass the exam may seek supplemental remedial instructional in preparation for the test or other options to a diploma such as the General Educational Development (GED) test.

Another way to view results from the CAHSEE is to look at the performance level for each 10th grade class over time. To some degree, this can provide a competency snapshot of how 10th graders are performing in English language arts through 10th grade content standards and in mathematics through 6th and 7th grade content standards and Algebra 1. Moreover, scores from 10th graders are used in the compilation of the Adequate Yearly Progress designations, part of the statewide accountability system mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.
of 2001. Data for this section are from the California Department of Education\textsuperscript{21} and includes data from students in both district-operated and charter schools.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{high_school_exit_exam_literacy.png}
\caption{High School Exit Exam - Literacy Percent of 10th Grade Students Who Pass SDUSD Students 2003-04 to 2010-11}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{high_school_exit_exam_mathematics.png}
\caption{High School Exit Exam - Mathematics Percent of 10th Grade Students Who Pass SDUSD Students 2003-04 to 2010-11}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{21} 2004 data include a small number of 12\textsuperscript{th} graders (less than 1\% of all takers). 2002-2003 data do not disaggregate by ethnicity.
As figures 22 and 23 show, there has been improvement over time in performance of African-American 10th grade students on both portions of the CAHSEE. For 2010, 96% of White students passed on both portions of the test compared with 75% of African-American students in literacy and 74% in mathematics.

Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates

Beginning with the graduating class of 2010, the California Department of Education (CDE) began reporting graduation and dropout rates based on four-year cohort information22 collected about individual students using the state’s California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).23 A high school cohort is the group of students who enter the ninth grade together and could potentially graduate in four years time. The new system is able to track student mobility during the high school years and report on each cohort’s on-time graduation rate. It also includes specific data on non-graduating students within the cohort, meaning those who dropped out of high school, completed a special education program, passed the General Education Development (GED) test, or are still enrolled after four years in high school. The new cohort graduation and dropout rate calculation system, however, does not take into account students who drop out of the school system in the middle school years.

Previously, the CDE calculated the graduation rate formula based on the Graduation Leaver Indicator (GLI). The GLI is a measure of departures rather than a measure of on-time graduation. This formula basically sums up the number of dropouts over four years to arrive by default at an on-time graduation rate percentage. Because of this change in the graduation rate formulation, comparisons cannot be made between 2010 data and previous years.

Table 4 on the following page includes cohort outcome data for the Class of 2009-10. These are students who entered 9th grade in the year 2006-07 and were scheduled to graduate in June 2010.24 Students from district-operated or district-funded charter schools are included in these figures. Direct-funded charter schools are not included in the district-wide cohort data.

---


24 CDE (2011). *4-year Adjusted Cohort Outcome Data Processing*. “The 4-year Adjusted Cohort forms the basis for calculating graduation rates, dropout rates, and other related rates. The cohort is the group of students that could potentially graduate during a 4-year time period (grade 9 through grade 12). The 4-year Adjusted Cohort includes students who enter 9th grade for the first time in the initial year of the 4-years used for the cohort. This cohort is then adjusted by: Adding students who later transfer into the cohort during grade nine (year 1), grade 10 (year 2), grade 11 (year 3), and grade 12 (year 4); and Subtracting students who transfer out, emigrate to another county, or die during the 4-year period. Students who drop out during the four year period remain in the cohort, as well as students that complete 12th grade and exit the educational system without graduating. Students that take longer than four years to graduate or remain enrolled after four years are also included as part of the cohort.”
Table 4
Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2009-10
San Diego Unified School District
Selected Subgroups by Ethnicity and All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class of 2010 Cohort</th>
<th>Number of Graduates</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Number of Dropouts</th>
<th>Dropout Rate</th>
<th>Still Enrolled</th>
<th>Special Education Completer</th>
<th>GED Completer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1,589</td>
<td>1,423</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3,694</td>
<td>2,430</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2,034</td>
<td>1,692</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All SDUSD Students</td>
<td>8,614</td>
<td>6,455</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
<td>1,094</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cohort Graduation Rate**

When calculated based on the new cohort formulation, the California statewide graduation rate for the Class of 2010 was 74.4%. The rate for San Diego Unified students as a whole was 74.9%. The 2010 cohort graduation rate for African-American students in the district was 68.6%. The total number of African-American students from the Class of 2010 cohort that graduated in 2009-10 was 788 or 12% of the 2010 graduating cohort. White and Asian/Pacific Islander students graduated at much higher rates, 83.2% and 89.6% respectively. Hispanic students graduated at a rate slightly lower than their African-American peers at 65.8%.

The California Department of Education also reports graduation rate by high school, and it is clear that rates are higher in some high schools within a district than in other high schools. For example, for the Class of 2010 graduation rates in San Diego Unified, typical senior high schools ranged from 39.2% at San Diego High School of Communication to 91.9% at Mira Mesa High School.

Student demographics have a lot to do with differential high school graduation rates, as do a host of other factors such as the influence of the peer group, parent involvement, the quality of the teaching and student services staff, the mission and culture of the school, the relevance of the curriculum to student interests, and so on.

---

25 Includes Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander.
26 The total number of African-American graduates (district-operated school 2010 cohort graduates, direct-funded charter school graduates, or other cohort graduates) in 2009-10 was 949.
Table 5 shows the cohort graduation rates for high schools within the district that had more than 25 African-American students graduate in the 2009-10 school year. This includes one direct-funded charter, the Charter School of San Diego.

Table 5
Class of 2010 Cohort Graduates in High Schools
With more than 25 SDUSD African-American Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th># of African-American Cohort Graduates</th>
<th>African-American Cohort Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Overall School Cohort Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln High</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morse High</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serra High</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira Mesa High</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoover High</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School of SD</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Bay High</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University City High</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Loma High</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripps Ranch High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twain High</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego SCPA</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort Dropout Rate

The difference among subgroups by ethnicity in graduation rates is mirrored in the cohort dropout rate (refer back to Table 4). The cohort dropout rate for African-American students in the district for the Class of 2010 cohort was 16.5% while the overall district rate was 12.7%. This is for district-operated or funded schools. It does not include dropouts from direct-funded charters. White and Asian/Pacific Islander students dropped out at lower rates than their African-American peers, 9.7% and 6.2% respectively. The Hispanic student dropout rate was slightly lower than African-American student rate at 16.1%.

Year-to-Year Dropouts

As previously noted, while the dropout rate is calculated using data from 9th through 12th grade, there are also a significant number of students who drop out during the 7th and 8th grades. Table 6 on the next page shows the number of African-American students in SDUSD who dropped out by grade level over the eight-year period from 2002-03 to 2009-10. These figures
include the adjustments in grades 9-12 for reenrolled dropouts and lost transfers. These figures include students who dropped out from charter schools.

### Table 6
**Number of Dropouts 2002-03 to 2009-10**
**African-American Students as Percentage of SDUSD Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>7th-8th</th>
<th>9th-12th</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Dropouts as % of District Dropout Total</th>
<th>Enrollment as % of District Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a percentage of total district dropouts, African-American students represented 14.5% of the dropouts, while their percentage of the total student population was only 11.7%. Figure 24 shows the percentage of number of dropouts by ethnic group in SDUSD for 2009-10.

### Figure 24
**2009-10 Dropouts - Grades 7 to 12 as Percentage of Total Dropouts**

---

27 Includes adjustments for reenrolled grade 9-12 dropouts and grade 9-12 lost transfers.
28 Dropout data for 2008-09 warrant closer inspection. The school district has reported to the California Department of Education a reporting error for that time period.
From year to year, there is no distinct pattern to the reported number of student dropouts by grade level in the African-American student population. However, taken over the nine-year period, approximately 9% of the dropouts were reported in 7th grade, 11% in 8th grade, 17% in 9th grade, 16% in 10th grade, 17% in 11th grade, and 30% in 12th grade.

**Postsecondary Preparedness and Attendance Rates**

According to data from the California Department of Education, the percentage of African-American students who graduated in 2010 from San Diego Unified with UC/CSU requirements fulfilled was 35.2%. These figures include students attending both district-operated and charter schools. Despite some incremental gains in UC/CSU eligibility between 2002-03 and 2009-10 for African-American students, the percentage of eligible students was 20% to 27% lower than those of White students. Figure 25 shows the percentage of African-American and White student graduates eligible for UC/CSU admission from the school years 2002-03 to 2009-10.

There was some gender imbalance in the eligibility of African-American students (data not shown). On average, the percentage of female African-American students with UC/CSU eligibility was 10% greater than their male counterparts. This imbalance was also evidenced within the total district population of graduates, but to a lesser degree.

---

29 CDE reports dropouts for in each grade level, but does not report grade enrollment or lost transfers by grade level. Instead, reenrollment and lost transfers are reported as a whole for the 9th-12th grades.
In this context, it should be noted that a recent educational opportunity study done in 2010 by The Education Trust-West and financed by SDUSD reported a significant gap in access to A-G course by ethnicity. African-American students were reported as having the least access to college preparatory classes. The study sets forth a number of recommendations for improving the percentage of students meeting the A-G requirements for admission to the UC/CSU system.30

**Advanced Coursework at the High School Level**

In addition to the “A-G” college preparatory classes, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes also provide rigorous course options for high school students. AP courses are recognized as equivalent to undergraduate courses at the college level. If a student receives a high enough score on a standardized AP test, a participating college may grant the student college level credit. IB courses are part of a larger curriculum program offered at two high schools (San Diego International Studies and Mission Bay High) within the school district. The number of AP or IB classes offered varies by school. The third column of Table 7 on the following page lists the number of AP classes offered during 2008-09 at fourteen schools with the greatest concentration of African-American student graduates (more than twenty-five in the graduating class). The Education Trust-West study also notes a significant gap in enrollment in AP and IB courses by ethnicity with African-American students being the most under-enrolled subgroup.

The California Department of Education has also begun to measure the college enrollment rates of graduating high school students. Using data from both the CALPADS student tracking system and the National Student Clearinghouse (NCS) college enrollment tracking system, CDE provides estimates for college enrollment in a postsecondary institution within sixteen months of graduating.31 Table 7 shows college enrollment estimates for African-American students graduating from San Diego Unified School District schools in 2009 as well as UC/CSU eligibility rates. Data are for schools with more than 25 African-American graduates.

The fourteen schools featured in the table vary considerably in both the estimated college attendance of the graduates and the percentage of graduates prepared for a four-year college experience. Depending on the high school of attendance, between 52% and 89% of the African-American high school graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within sixteen months of graduation. Again, depending upon the high school of attendance, between 0% and 37% of the African-American students graduated with the coursework necessary to enroll in a UC or CSU school.


31 The CDE data include a caveat that the data may underestimate the actual college-going enrollment because not all postsecondary institutions participate in the NCS, some students may opt out for privacy reasons, and there may be inaccuracies in the matching process if a student used a different name across institutions. The NCS database includes 93% of postsecondary institutions in the U.S.
Table 7
AP or IB Class Availability for African-American Students,\(^{32}\) UC/CSU Eligibility of African-American Graduates,\(^{33}\) and College Enrollment Estimates for African-American Graduates
Within Sixteen Months of 2009 Graduation from SDUSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln High</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morse High</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoover High</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serra High</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School Of San Diego</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira Mesa High</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego SCPA</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripps Ranch High</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry High</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield High</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University City High</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Bay High</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kearny Science</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All African-American Graduates 2008-09</strong></td>
<td>868</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{32}\) Number of AP or IB classes available to all students at the high school.

\(^{33}\) These are counts of African-American graduates during the school year. This table does not track four-year cohort graduates.