

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN CALIFORNIA: 2010 CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST RESULTS



The Education Trust–West

## California's newest statewide data reveal modest growth, pervasive gaps, and glimmers of hope.

The 2010 California Standards Test (CST) results reveal modest statewide improvement in English-Language Arts and mathematics across grade levels, yet large and pervasive gaps between subgroups remain. While there have been measured gains, the slow and incremental progress is not sufficient to close the achievement gaps plaguing low-income students and students of color.

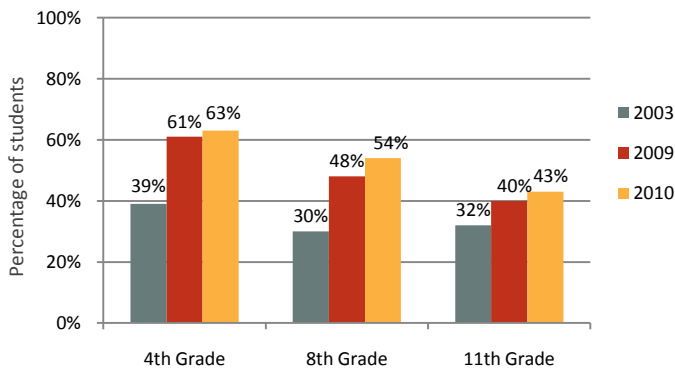
### STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

Across California, proficiency rates in English-Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics have increased by 2 percentage points since 2009, and have improved substantially since 2003 – the year when content standards became fully aligned with state assessments. However, we cannot be satisfied with the reality that half of California's elementary, middle, and high school students failed to achieve proficiency in ELA (48 percent) and mathematics (52 percent) in 2010. As students progress through grade levels, performance significantly declines, leaving fewer high school students prepared for college and career.

#### English-Language Arts (Figure 1)

- 63 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders reached proficiency in ELA, an increase of 24 percentage points since 2003.
- Although 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA proficiency rates grew by 6 percentage points since 2009, only 54 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders achieved proficiency.
- High schools have demonstrated less dramatic growth: ELA proficiency rates for 11<sup>th</sup> graders have increased only 11 percentage points since 2003, leaving more than half below grade level proficiency (43 percent).

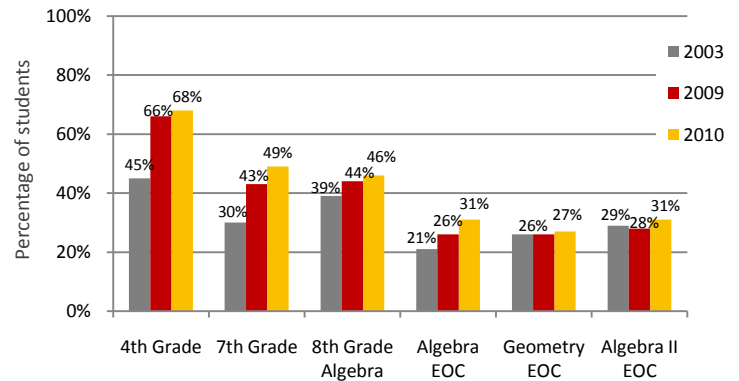
FIGURE 1: CST ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS PROFICIENCY, BY GRADE (2003, 2009 & 2010)



#### Mathematics (Figure 2)

- 68 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders achieved proficiency in math and 46 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored at the proficient level in Algebra I. Rates have improved in both areas by 2 percentage points since 2009.
- Algebra II end-of-course proficiency rates (grades 8-11) improved by 3 percentage points since 2009 (from 28 percent to 31 percent), while no real progress has been made in Geometry since 2003 (26 percent compared with 27 percent).

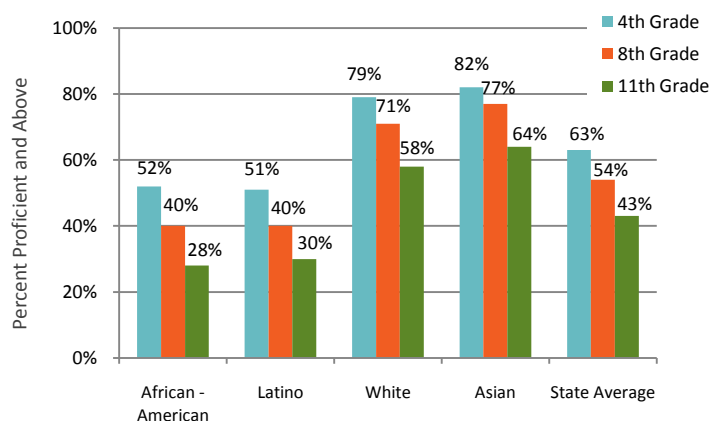
FIGURE 2: CST MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY, BY GRADE AND COURSE (2003, 2009 & 2010)



### SUBGROUP PERFORMANCE, GROWTH, AND GAPS

African-American, Latino, low-income and English learner students have demonstrated some improvement in CST scores across subject areas. For example, Mathematics proficiency rates for 4<sup>th</sup> grade English learner students improved by 5 percentage points, and ELA proficiency rates increased by 6 percentage points for Latino and African-American 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

FIGURE 3: CST ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS PROFICIENCY, BY ETHNICITY (2010)

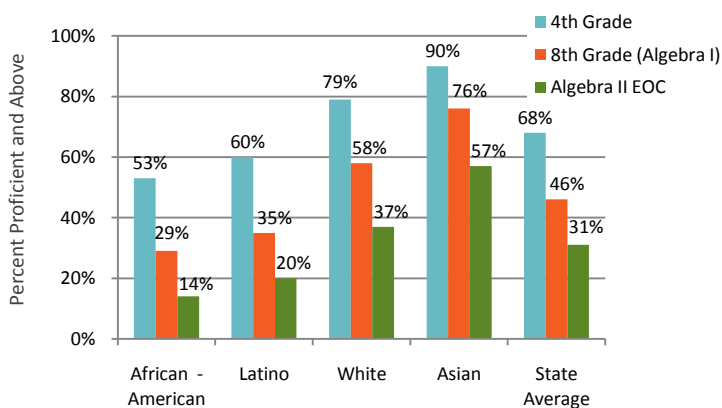


Yet, far too many African-American, Latino, and low-income students are performing below grade level:

- Sixty-one percent of African-American and 54 percent of Latino students did not achieve “basic” levels of proficiency in Algebra I in 2010.
- In Algebra II, a course required for entrance into California’s public universities, only 14 percent of African-American and 20 percent of Latino students achieved proficiency.

Despite statewide achievement growth, students of color and low-income students continue to trail their white and more affluent peers in all content areas (See Figures 3 and 4). The largest gaps in proficiency occur in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and continue to widen by 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

FIGURE 4: CST MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY, BY ETHNICITY (2010)



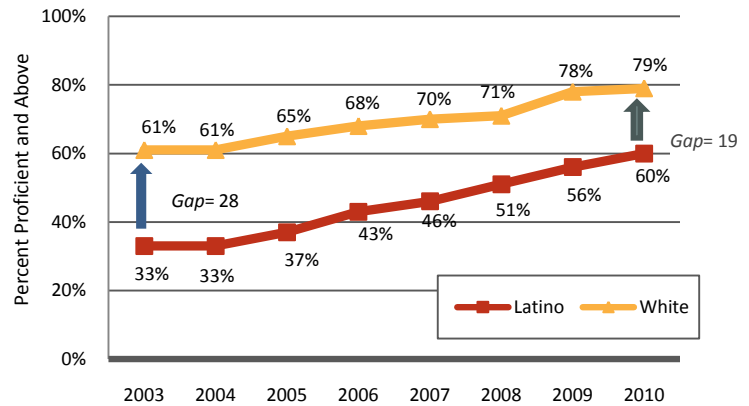
- Fifty-two percent of African-American students, 51 percent of Latino students were proficient in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA in 2010, compared to 79 percent of white 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Economically disadvantaged students trail their more affluent counterparts by 29 points in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA.
- By eighth grade, the ELA gap is 31 percentage points: 40 percent of African-American, Latino, and low-income students reached proficiency, compared to 71 percent of their white and more affluent peers.
- 34 percent of English learners were proficient in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA compared to 74 percent of their English-speaking peers.

Some achievement gaps appear to be narrowing at a faster rate than others. Most notably, Latino 4<sup>th</sup> graders have steadily improved their performance in mathematics, increasing 27 percentage points since 2003 and narrowing the Latino-white achievement gap to 19 points (See Figure 5).

While there is some evidence of gap-closing, many gaps have remained stagnant or grown wider over the past 8 years.

- Achievement gaps have not narrowed for African-American and low-income students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade ELA. They have actually widened by 3 percentage points since 2003.
- African-American 11<sup>th</sup> graders, on average, have improved less than one point per year in ELA. Only 28 percent reached proficiency in 2010.

FIGURE 5: CST 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE MATHEMATICS LATINO-WHITE GAP



## MOVING BEYOND THE RHETORIC

Although the data offer glimmers of hope in the increasing proficiency rates across subject areas and the slight decrease in gaps affecting Latino students, the pace at which the achievement gaps are narrowing is unacceptably slow. At a rate of one percentage point per year, it will take decades to close gaps and achieve equitable outcomes in California’s public schools. Even that goal will be difficult to meet if California continues to deny its highest-need students adequate and equal resources, such as access to highly-effective teachers, rigorous coursework, and high-quality facilities.

If we expect to see substantial gains in achievement outcomes, we must move beyond the rhetoric and implement concrete solutions that will close the gaps in opportunity, access, and achievement for California’s low-income students and students of color.

Recommendations include:

- ❖ **Teacher Effectiveness:** Research shows that the quality of teaching is the most important factor in improving student achievement. All students must have access to highly-effective teachers, particularly the African-American, Latino, and poor students who need them most.
- ❖ **Access to Rigorous Coursework:** We know that students who are taught at high levels can achieve at high levels. All students must receive the rigorous curriculum and effective instruction needed to reach and exceed rigorous standards, like those included in the Common Core. At the high school level, all students must have access to coursework that prepares them for success in college and career.
- ❖ **Great Neighborhood Schools:** Students of color and low-income students are overwhelmingly concentrated in the lowest-achieving schools. We must provide additional resources to the state’s lowest performing schools in exchange for greater accountability and the flexibility necessary to aggressively turn around low-performing schools.

Source: All data accessed from the California Department of Education, 2010.