

Building What We Deserve:

*EdTrust-West's Vision for Education
Equity in Los Angeles County*



Introduction

Los Angeles County (LA County)—with its remarkable talent, diversity, and influence—has both a responsibility and an opportunity to lead the state and the nation in advancing educational equity. Yet in recent years, LA County schools, colleges, and students have faced profound challenges: from pandemic-related disruptions and budget cuts to wildfires and ongoing attacks on racial equity efforts in education. Now, renewed federal threats risk deepening these inequities and causing further harm to educators, students, and families. These challenges are especially urgent given the scale of LA County's education system.

LA County is home to one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the nation—1.3 million TK–12 students¹ and more than 600,000 undergraduates at public two- and four-year colleges.² It boasts some of the largest education systems in the state and country, including the Los Angeles Unified School District and the California State University (CSU) system.

LA County's TK–12 public schools and undergraduate institutions serve student populations that are overwhelmingly composed of students of color (see the pie charts in Figure 1 for the TK–12 racial/ethnic breakdown and Figure 2 for the undergraduate breakdown).^{3, 4, 5}

To meet the needs of these students, LA County also supports one of the most extensive higher education ecosystems in the state. This ecosystem includes a mix of community colleges, CSUs, and a UC campus serving hundreds of thousands of students (see Figure 3).^{6, 7, 8}

Among these institutions, one system in particular demonstrates the reach of LA County's higher education landscape. The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), with approximately 194,000 students, is the largest community college district in California—and one of the largest in the nation.⁹

Figure 1. TK–12 Student Enrollment in Los Angeles County by Race/Ethnicity, 2024–25



Note: TK–12 students are 65% Latinx, 8% Asian, 7% Black/African American, 3% Multiracial, and 2% Filipino. Additionally, seven in ten students come from low-income households, and 16% are multilingual learners.

Data reflect enrollment in public and charter TK–12 schools in Los Angeles County for the 2024–25 school year. Pacific Islander and Native American students each represent 0.2% of total enrollment. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: California Department of Education. (2025). *Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, Los Angeles County, 2024–25* [Data table]. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cde=19&aggllevel=county&year=2024-25>

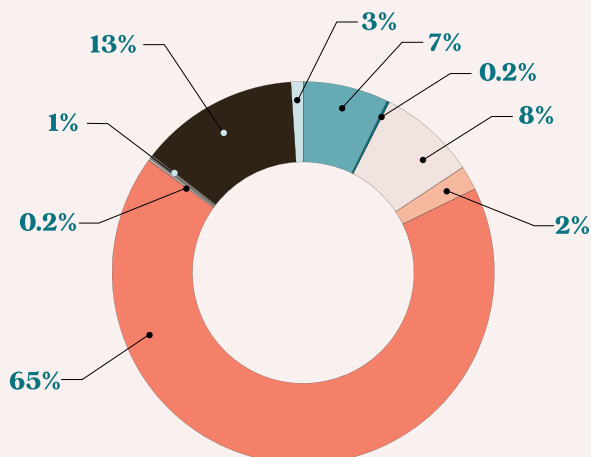


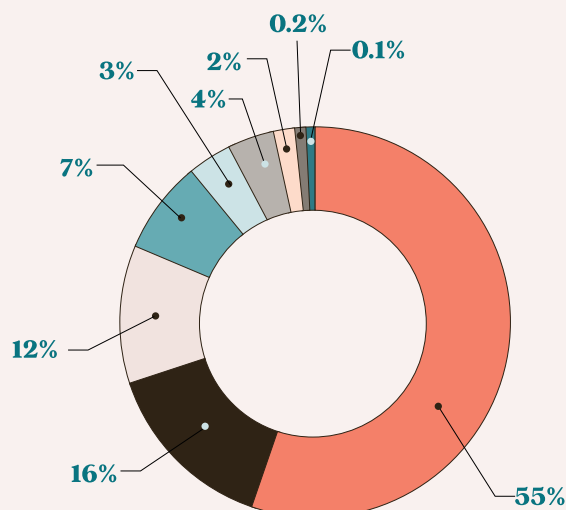
Figure 2. Undergraduate Student Enrollment in Los Angeles County by Race/Ethnicity, 2023



Note: Undergraduate students are 55% Latinx, 12% Asian, 7% Black/African American, 3% Two or more races, 0.2% Pacific Islander, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native.

Data reflect undergraduate enrollment in public colleges—including 19 California Community Colleges (CCC), 5 California State Universities (CSU), and the University of California, Los Angeles (UC)—located in Los Angeles County for the 2023 reporting year.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, 12-month unduplicated headcount by race/ethnicity, gender, level, and degree/certificate-seeking status of student [Custom data table]. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.

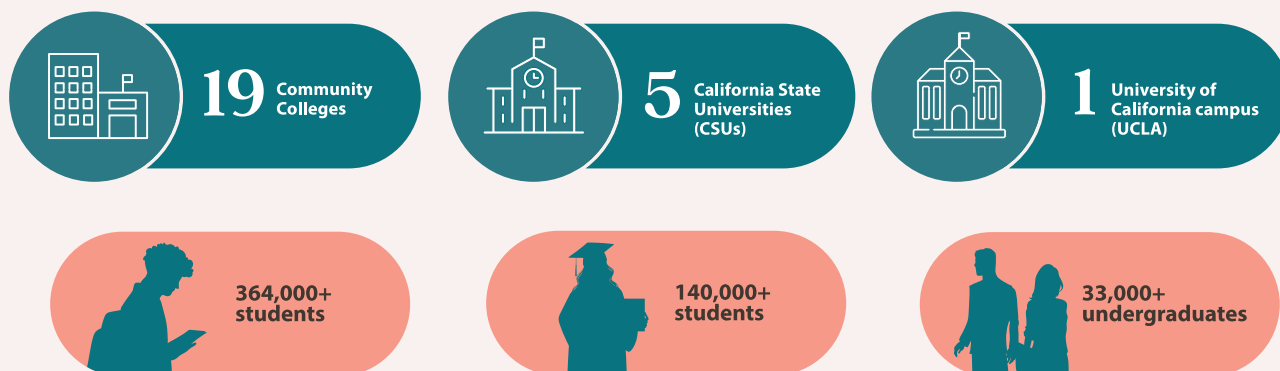


In this context, leaders in LA County must commit to building a just and equitable education system. This will require urgent action, courageous leadership, and a willingness to confront the systems that have historically marginalized students of color.

At EdTrust-West, we believe every student in LA County deserves access to high-quality educational opportunities that prepare them for college, career, and a future of their choosing. In this pivotal moment, we remain unwavering in our commitment to advancing racial justice.

The vision that follows calls for courageous leadership and systemic change. It offers concrete actions education leaders must take to ensure every student thrives. We stand ready to partner with communities, educators, and local and state leaders to bring this vision to life—one rooted in **bold leadership, a diverse teaching workforce, expanded college access, and race-conscious policies**. The time for decisive action is now.

Figure 3. Public Higher Education Institutions in Los Angeles County



Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, 12-month unduplicated headcount by race/ethnicity, gender, level, and degree/certificate-seeking status of student [Custom data table]. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>
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Bold Leadership to Integrate Systems for Student Success

With diversity, equity, and inclusion under attack, leaders across LA County—including those at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), California State Universities, the University of California, community colleges, and school districts—must take decisive action. Now is the time to remain steadfast in our commitment to meet students’ needs by building the infrastructure necessary for their success as they transition from TK–12 to higher education, and achieve the [state’s higher education attainment goals](#).

Transformative leadership demands an unwavering commitment to systemic change and advancing racial equity. It also calls for a deep investment in strategic collaboration. By working together across sectors, systems, and institutions, we can build stronger

bridges to help students access and succeed in college, creating opportunities for them to pursue futures of their own choosing.

We call on LA County education system leaders to:

- ▶ Use disaggregated data to identify and address the unique needs of students of color, multilingual learners, and parenting students, especially those experiencing poverty.
- ▶ Expand partnerships across California’s TK–12 public schools, community colleges and public four-year institutions to ensure they are resourced to serve diverse student populations effectively.





A Teaching Workforce Reflective of LA County's Diversity

TK–12 students benefit when they see themselves reflected in their educators. [Research shows](#) that teacher diversity benefits all students and students of color perform better academically, have improved attendance, and benefit socially and emotionally when they have at least one teacher who shares their racial and/or ethnic identity.^{10,11} Yet, while most students in LA County are students of color (86%),¹² only 57% of teachers are people of color.¹³ This gap must be closed.

By investing in recruitment, retention, and professional growth strategies, districts can create a pipeline of diverse, culturally responsive educators who mirror the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the students they serve.

We call on LA County education system leaders to:

- ▶ Expand and fund educator preparation pathways—such as Grow Your Own programs and teacher residencies—that prioritize candidates of color and multilingual candidates.
- ▶ Provide incentives and mentorship supports to recruit and retain educators of color and multilingual educators in high-need schools.
- ▶ Create inclusive working school environments by investing in leadership development and offering professional learning on culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices.



Remove Barriers to College Access and Success

Currently, too many high schools are not preparing students of color for college—not because students lack potential, but because systems are not doing right by them. In LA County, Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander students experience the lowest UC/CSU eligibility and college-going rates.¹⁴ Nearly half (47%) of Black students, 45% of Latinx students, 47% of Pacific Islander students, and 40% of high school graduates are **not eligible** to apply to a UC or CSU.¹⁵

LA County high schools, colleges, and universities share a critical responsibility to remove barriers and support students' college access and success, including making college more affordable. In 2024, only 68%¹⁶ of eligible high school students in LA County completed a financial aid application, despite its significant impact on increasing college access.

Closing opportunity gaps requires courageous action from education leaders and systems to create supportive, empowering environments where all students—

especially Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander students—can become college-eligible and access multiple pathways to postsecondary education and careers.

We call on LA County education system leaders to:

- ▶ Make A-G the default curriculum and ensure all students have the resources and support they need to successfully complete the A-G requirements.
- ▶ Expand universal access to dual enrollment opportunities so students can gain college credit early, reduce the time and cost of completing a degree, and build confidence in their postsecondary potential.
- ▶ Dismantle barriers to financial aid and provide targeted supports to help students of color experiencing poverty access higher education and earn a degree or credential.





Adopt Race-Conscious Policies and Practices

Opportunity gaps persist across student groups, revealing deep inequities in educational outcomes. In LA County, only 3 in 10 Black students, and 4 in 10 Latinx and Pacific Islander students have the support to reach grade level in English Language Arts (ELA).¹⁷ These disparities are not accidental—they are the result of systemic racism that must be confronted and dismantled.

Racial disparities require race-conscious solutions. District and school leaders must implement race-conscious policies and practices that confront systemic inequities head-on. These policies must be rooted in data, community engagement, and a commitment to eradicating the racist structures that harm Black, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities.

We call on LA County education system leaders to:

- ▶ Direct resources—including funding, targeted investments, academic and social-emotional support—where disparities are the greatest.
- ▶ Take an honest accounting of opportunity gaps and commit to concrete changes, including educational reparations for Black students.
- ▶ Adopt high-quality, culturally affirming instruction that centers students' diverse identities, cultures, and contexts.
- ▶ Engage parents and caregivers of color as partners in creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

Conclusion

This is a defining moment. The future of education in LA County will either reflect our highest values or reinforce our deepest inequities. We call on leaders, educators, and communities to choose justice, take transformative action, and partner with those closest to the solutions—our students and families.

Endnotes

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