

# CRITICAL CHOICES IN POST-RECESSION CALIFORNIA

INVESTING IN THE EDUCATIONAL AND  
CAREER SUCCESS OF IMMIGRANT YOUTH



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, and Michael Fix

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June 2014

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## Executive Summary

California's success in integrating immigrant youth<sup>1</sup> is critical not just to the state but the nation. Sheer numbers demonstrate this significance: the state is home to one-quarter of the nation's immigrants, and educates more than one-third of U.S. students designated as English Language Learners (ELLs). California has the largest population of youth eligible for the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.<sup>2</sup> It has also been one of the top refugee-receiving states for decades.<sup>3</sup>

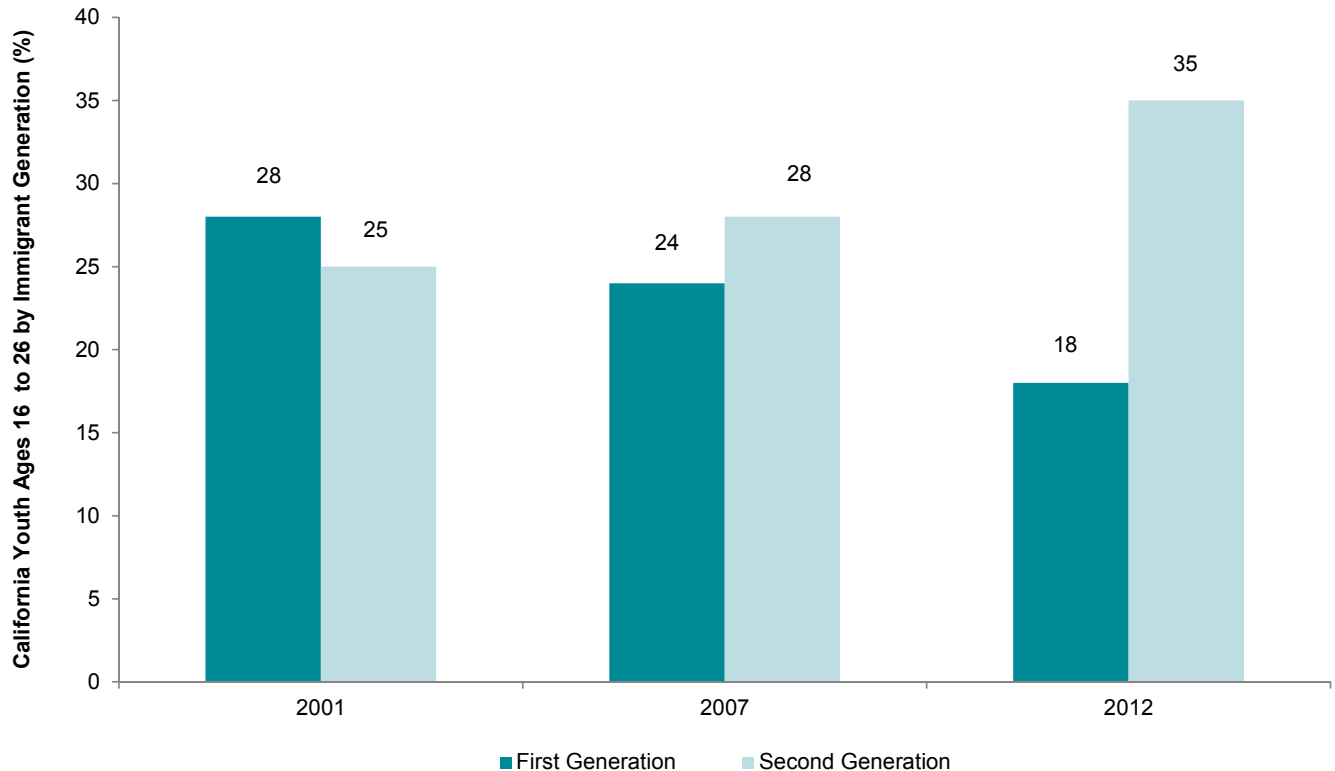
Integrating immigrant young adults into postsecondary education and the labor force is also critical for California's economic competitiveness. Over the past six years, California has fallen into and emerged from arguably the most severe state budget crisis in the nation—with grave implications for the state's capacity to produce college-educated workers at the rate it requires. General Fund expenditures fell from \$103 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2007-08 to a low of \$86 billion in FY 2011-12.<sup>4</sup> Budget cuts forced California's community colleges to reduce enrollment by nearly half a million students during the same period. California's adult education system—once the largest and most robust in the nation—lost more than half of its state funding. Meanwhile, K-12 school districts cut teachers and counselors, and eliminated summer school programs that provided a safety net for students who needed extra time to meet graduation requirements. The challenges arising from reduced capacity were compounded by population growth, as California's youth population grew by 600,000 between 2000 and 2012.<sup>5</sup>

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### *California's success in integrating immigrant youth is critical not just to the state but the nation.*

As of 2012, more than half of young adults in California ages 16 to 26 were first- or second-generation immigrants—3.3 million individuals—compared to one-quarter of youth nationwide.<sup>6</sup> In fact, immigrants and the children of immigrants have comprised more than 50 percent of California youth for more than a decade. However, the relative composition of this group has shifted in recent years (see Figure 1). The number of first-generation youth declined significantly from 2007 to 2012, reflecting a recession-driven, nationwide slowdown in new immigration.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the number of second-generation youth (the U.S.-born children of immigrants) grew rapidly, to almost twice the size of the first generation by 2012.

- 1 Throughout this report, we include both the first- and second-generation young adults (ages 16 to 26, unless otherwise noted) when we use the term “immigrant youth.” The term “first generation” refers to those who are foreign born; “second generation” refers to those who are U.S. born with at least one foreign-born parent.
- 2 Launched in August 2012 by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is available to young adults ages 15 to 30 who came to the United States before age 16, and who are currently enrolled in school or workforce training, have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. armed forces.
- 3 In fiscal year (FY) 2012, Texas was the top refugee-receiving state, and California received the second-highest number of refugees. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), “Fiscal Year 2012 Refugee Arrivals,” [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2012-refugee-arrivals](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2012-refugee-arrivals).
- 4 California Department of Finance, “Chart B: Historical Data, Budget Expenditures, All Funds,” January 2014, [www.dof.ca.gov/budgeting/budget\\_faqs/information/documents/CHART-B.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/budgeting/budget_faqs/information/documents/CHART-B.pdf).
- 5 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) for 2000 and 2012.
- 6 MPI analysis of CPS 2011-13 pooled data.
- 7 Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, *Up for Grabs: The Gains and Prospects of First- and Second-Generation Young Adults* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/prospects-first-second-generation-young-adults-up-for-grabs](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/prospects-first-second-generation-young-adults-up-for-grabs).

**Figure 1. Rapid Generational Shift Among Immigrant-Origin Youth in California, 2001-12**

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of data from Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC), 2000-02 pooled, 2006-08 pooled, and 2011-13 pooled.

California's policy responses to immigration flows have fluctuated widely over the past several decades. The 1990s saw the passage of restrictive measures such as Proposition 187, which required police, educators, and health-care professionals to verify immigration status (though its implementation was subsequently blocked by a federal court); and passage of Proposition 227, which put restrictions on bilingual education in K-12 schools.<sup>8</sup> The political winds have shifted in recent years, however, with legislation limiting local law enforcement's collaboration with federal immigration authorities, granting unauthorized immigrants drivers' licenses, and expanding access to in-state tuition as well as state-funded financial aid for unauthorized immigrant youth.

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*California's education systems are at a watershed,  
with critical choices to be made at all levels.*

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The state's economic forecast has also brightened considerably over the past few years, and analysts now predict an operating budget surplus of nearly \$10 billion by 2017-18.<sup>9</sup> The passage of Proposition 30 in November 2012 was a turning point, averting further cuts to education spending by increasing income tax rates for the highest-earning groups over seven years and raising the sales tax for four years.<sup>10</sup>

While California's economy has stabilized, its educational institutions remain in flux. Recent legislation substantially altered the state's method of financing K-12 education by delegating greater authority to

8 Approved by voters in 1998, Proposition 227 requires English Language Learner (ELL) education to take place "overwhelmingly" in English, unless parents signed a waiver allowing native-language instruction.

9 Mac Taylor, *The 2014-15 Budget: California's Fiscal Outlook* (Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst's Office, 2013), [www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2013/bud/fiscal-outlook/fiscal-outlook-112013.pdf](http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2013/bud/fiscal-outlook/fiscal-outlook-112013.pdf).

10 California Budget Project, *Budget Brief: What Would Proposition 30 Mean for California?* (Sacramento, CA: California Budget Project, 2012), [www.cbpp.org/pdfs/2012/120911 Proposition\\_30\\_BB.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/pdfs/2012/120911 Proposition_30_BB.pdf).





*California ranks 46th in the nation in its share of the young adult population with a high school diploma or its equivalent.*

the local level and requiring districts to spend extra resources on their highest-need groups, including ELLs. At the same time, schools are also implementing challenging new academic standards, including the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. The adult education system is refocusing to promote college-going among adult learners; community colleges, meanwhile, have a new mandate to provide support services that promote timely degree completion. In sum, California's education systems are at a watershed, with critical choices to be made at all levels—choices that hold significant implications for the state's first- and second-generation young adults.

*For California to join the top ten states, in terms of the share of the workforce with a college degree, the state would have to produce an additional 2.3 million college graduates...by 2025.*

These decisions come at a time when the state faces clear educational challenges: California ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation in its share of the young adult population with a high school diploma or its equivalent.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, new job growth in the state is increasingly concentrated in positions requiring a postsecondary degree. For California to join the top ten states, in terms of the share of the workforce with a college degree, the state would have to produce an additional 2.3 million college graduates—on top of the 3.2 million already expected—by 2025.<sup>12</sup> Reaching this goal will require raising the educational attainment of California's immigrant youth, who currently lag behind their nonimmigrant peers at the different levels of the educational pipeline. If current trends persist, the underperformance of first- and second-generation immigrants could imperil the state's future workforce competitiveness.

## A. Study Description

Part of a multistate series, this report examines the educational experiences and outcomes of first- and second-generation immigrant youth ages 16 to 26 across California's educational institutions, encompassing secondary schools, adult education, and postsecondary education.<sup>13</sup> ELLs were a central focus of the analysis at all levels, as this group—largely comprised first- and second-generation immigrants—has unique educational needs.

The findings draw from qualitative fieldwork and quantitative analyses of the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau and state education agencies. The authors conducted interviews with 125 respondents in California, including school

### Study Districts

- Anaheim Union High School District
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Oakland Unified School District
- Sanger Unified School District
- San Francisco Unified School District

### Study Colleges

- Fresno City College
- Fullerton City College
- Los Angeles Trade-Tech College
- City College of San Francisco

11 Data are for individuals ages 25 to 34. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=232&year=2011&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=232&year=2011&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0).

12 This figure represents additional postsecondary credentials needed on top of the 3.2 million that are already projected following current trends. College graduates include completers of certificates, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees. California Competes, *The Road Ahead: Higher Education, California's Promise, and our Future Economy* (San Francisco, CA: California Competes, 2012), [http://californiacompetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CaCompetes\\_Report\\_Final-2.pdf](http://californiacompetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CaCompetes_Report_Final-2.pdf).

13 This scope of work was supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The other states included in the project are Florida, Georgia, New York, and Washington. For previous products in this series, see Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps, *Shaping Our Futures: The Educational and Career Success of Washington State's Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/immigrantstudents-Washington\[1\].pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/immigrantstudents-Washington[1].pdf); Sarah Hooker, Michael Fix, and Margie McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia: Promoting High School and College Success for Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/education-reform-changing-georgia-promoting-high-school-and-college-success-immigrant-youth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/education-reform-changing-georgia-promoting-high-school-and-college-success-immigrant-youth).



district and college administrators and faculty, as well as leaders of community-based organizations that serve immigrants. The fieldwork focused on five school districts and four community colleges, which were chosen to seek to reflect the state’s demographic and regional diversity.

The district- and state-level analysis documents the patterns of low educational attainment among students from immigrant families, and identifies barriers to their progress. The report also documents innovative efforts to support immigrant youth, and highlights significant district-wide commitments to improving their outcomes.

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## **B. High School Achievement and Completion**

More than half of California’s high school students are Latino,<sup>14</sup> and 13 percent are Asian, Pacific Islander, or Filipino.<sup>15</sup> ELLs represent 12 percent of high school students, and 22 percent of all students in grades K-12. Across the districts visited for this study, student demographics varied greatly, as did the most common languages spoken by ELLs. For example, Cantonese-speakers comprise one-third of ELLs in San Francisco Unified School District; Sanger Unified School District—a small, majority-Latino district in the Central Valley—has a substantial number of Hmong speakers. However, the vast majority of California’s ELLs speak Spanish.

In 2013, California’s four-year high school graduation rate was 80 percent. Ninety-two percent of Asians and 88 percent of white students graduated in four years, compared to 75 percent of Latinos and 68 percent of Blacks.<sup>16</sup> The ELL graduation rate was 63 percent.<sup>17</sup> There was a wide variation in ELL graduation rates across the study districts, ranging from 94 percent in Sanger to 47 percent in Los Angeles and 49 percent in Oakland.<sup>18</sup>

*In 2013, California’s four-year high school graduation rate was 80 percent. The ELL graduation rate was 63 percent.*

Beyond the state’s minimum graduation requirements, the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) systems have established a set of 15 courses—collectively known as the “A-G” requirements, in reference to seven required subject areas<sup>19</sup>—that high school students must pass for admission to a public, four-year college. Latino and Black high school graduates are the least likely to meet this measure of college readiness: 29 percent of each of these groups completed A-G requirements, compared to 39 percent of all graduates and 68 percent of Asian graduates. In recent years, many of California’s largest school

districts have adopted the A-G requirements as the default curriculum for all students. Completing these requirements is challenging for ELLs, however, who must also take required English Language Development courses during the tight high school timeline.

At the same time that districts are raising their graduation requirements, California (like many states) is

14 Throughout this report, the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably. Most sources of national data cited in this report used the term “Hispanic,” and we have used the corresponding term in tables and figures.

15 The California Department of Education disaggregates data on Filipino students—who comprise 3 percent of high school students—from other Asian ethnic groups.

16 Unless otherwise specified, the term “Black” includes individuals who are African American as well as those who are Black immigrants.

17 California Department of Education, “Class of 2013 Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates,” [www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr14/yr14rel42att.asp#tab2](http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr14/yr14rel42att.asp#tab2).

18 California Department of Education, “DataQuest,” <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dataquest.asp>.

19 The “A-G” subject areas are history/social science, English, mathematics, laboratory science, “language other than English,” visual and performing arts, and “college-preparatory elective.” University of California, “A-G Guide,” [www.ucop.edu/agguide/a-g-requirements/](http://www.ucop.edu/agguide/a-g-requirements/).





also in the process of implementing the rigorous Common Core State Standards<sup>20</sup> and Next Generation Science Standards.<sup>21</sup> These new standards involve complex language tasks such as argumentation and analysis. They require strong academic language skills from all students, and will prove demanding for ELLs.

California's new funding mechanism for K-12 education, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), also presents new opportunities and critical choices related to ELL education. Introduced in the 2013 Budget Act, the LCFF collapses many state funding streams into a base grant that districts receive for each student, with extra funds allocated based on the number and concentration of ELLs, low-income students, and students in foster care.<sup>22</sup> The LCFF gives districts considerable autonomy in deciding how to use funds, but it also requires that they develop Local Control and Accountability Plans to specify how their investments will improve services and outcomes for targeted subgroups. The planning process must involve the input of parents of ELLs and other community members. These plans must be developed by July 2014 and updated annually.

The districts included in this study have already undertaken promising reforms to improve outcomes for ELLs and immigrant students, including:

- **Tailored approaches** that offer a range of programs for ELLs with varied strengths and needs
- **Enhanced training for teachers** to support ELLs in all subject areas
- **Creative solutions for time pressures** that high school students face as they learn English and strive to meet increasingly rigorous standards
- **Exposure to college- and career-preparatory programs** and assistance navigating the post-secondary planning process.

The following subsections address each of these in turn.

## I. Tailored Approaches for Diverse ELL Needs

Several districts included in this study have recently diversified the range of program models offered to high school ELLs, based on students' varying language proficiency, academic skills, and length of time in U.S. schools. In both San Francisco and Los Angeles, judicial oversight played a key role in prompting these changes. San Francisco developed the Lau Action Plan to improve its ELL programs following the landmark Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, and revised it in 2008.<sup>23</sup> In the years since, the district has expanded and clarified the "pathways" (sets of linked courses) available to ELLs with particular characteristics. Secondary-level offerings include a newcomer pathway serving students who have been in the United States for less than two years and may have had interrupted schooling. Similarly, Los Angeles' new English Learner Master Plan—adopted in 2012 as a condition of a Voluntary Resolution Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights—created a new set of courses for various subgroups of ELLs.

In both districts, these subgroups include *long-term ELLs*—students who have been in U.S. schools for more than six years but have not gained sufficient English skills to be reclassified as English proficient.<sup>24</sup> The focus on long-term ELLs is part of a broader statewide effort to identify and address the specific

20 Common Core Standards Initiative, "In the States," accessed January 15, 2014, [www.corestandards.org/in-the-states](http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states).

21 Next Generation Science Standards, "Lead State Partners," accessed January 15, 2014, [www.nextgenscience.org/lead-state-partners](http://www.nextgenscience.org/lead-state-partners).

22 Each unduplicated ELL, low-income student, or student in foster care generates "supplemental grant" funding, which is set at 20 percent of the base grant. Districts with a high share of students in these groups also receive "concentration grant" funds, set at 50 percent of the base grant.

23 San Francisco Unified School District, *Services to English Learners: The New Lau Action Plan* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Unified School District, 2008), [www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/programs/files/english-learners/Lau-action-plan.pdf](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/programs/files/english-learners/Lau-action-plan.pdf).

24 California districts develop their own policies for "reclassifying" students as "Fluent English Proficient" when they have reached a certain threshold of English proficiency. Reclassification policies must be based on four general criteria: an assessment of English proficiency, an assessment of academic skills in English, a teacher's evaluation, and a parental consultation.



needs of this large group in California's secondary schools. A 2010 study<sup>25</sup> found that long-term ELLs comprised approximately 60 percent of the state's secondary-level ELL students, indicating that the instruction they have received has not adequately addressed their language needs. Many of these students are U.S.-born. Long-term ELLs generally have below-average academic performance and may be stuck in remedial courses, leading some students to become discouraged and drop out.

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In September 2012, California became the first state to pass legislation establishing a common definition of the criteria that qualify students as long-term ELLs and requiring the state education agency to disaggregate data on this group of students, as well as those "at risk of becoming a long-term English learner."<sup>26</sup> According to advocates, this legislation creates a new sense of urgency for schools and districts to identify this vulnerable group of students and provide targeted support for their language development.

Still, interviewees frequently cited capacity constraints that limit the implementation of reforms focused on long-term ELLs and newcomers. For example, small schools—and large schools that have been redesigned into "small learning communities"—face challenges in providing a range of courses and support for their ELLs. Education experts are still grappling with the challenge of how to extend the benefits of these schools—e.g. increased personalization and relevance—to ELLs. In addition, some districts and schools still have limited data capacity and continue to offer the same instructional program for all high school ELLs despite their varied needs.

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### *Dual language programs and efforts to foster biliteracy have recently expanded across California.*

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Finally, dual language programs and efforts to foster biliteracy have recently expanded across California. The organization Californians Together developed the Seal of Biliteracy in 2008 as a way for districts to honor students who had attained a high level of proficiency in two languages.<sup>27</sup> State legislation establishing the California State Seal of Biliteracy in 2011<sup>28</sup> made California the first state to officially recognize biliterate graduates with a special seal on their diploma.<sup>29</sup> More than 21,000 California high school graduates received this seal in Spring 2013.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Training Educators to Provide Effective Instruction for ELLs

National education experts caution that for ELLs to meet the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards, states and districts must train a wider spectrum of teachers to promote

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25 Laurie Olsen, *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's English Learners* (Long Beach, CA: Californians Together, 2010), 2.

26 Assembly Bill No. 2193, Chapter 427, [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201120120AB2193](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB2193).

27 MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy recognized Californians Together for this work with an *E Pluribus Unum* award for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives. For more information, see <http://integrationawards.migrationpolicy.org/winners-CATogether.cfm>.

28 Assembly Bill 815 (Brownley, Chapter 618, Statutes of 2011), [www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_0801-0850/ab\\_815\\_bill\\_20111008\\_chaptered.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0801-0850/ab_815_bill_20111008_chaptered.html).

29 New York State followed California's lead and passed legislation creating a similar State Seal of Biliteracy in 2012.

30 Californians Together, "The California Campaign for Biliteracy is Launched and Two School Districts are Honored with a New Prestigious Award," (news release, April 2, 2014), [http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50412/p/salsa/web/press\\_release/public/?press\\_release\\_KEY=138](http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50412/p/salsa/web/press_release/public/?press_release_KEY=138).



students' English language development in all subject areas.<sup>31</sup> All teachers must be able to teach language and course content (such as math or history) at the same time.

Since 2002, California has required *all* new teacher candidates to complete ELL-focused coursework. Incumbent teachers were required to earn an additional certification—most commonly the Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certificate—if they taught at least one ELL student in their classes.<sup>32</sup> In large districts, holding this certification has become a near-universal requirement for hiring. Still, interviewees across the state cautioned that this certificate does not ensure teachers have adequate skills to make their classes accessible to ELLs.

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*All of the districts included in this study have expanded their professional development efforts focused on effective instructional practices for ELLs.*

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Faced with the imperative of raising ELL performance in recent years, all of the districts included in this study have expanded their professional development efforts focused on effective instructional practices for ELLs. As part of the revised Lau Action Plan, San Francisco trained school-level teams of teachers, counselors, and administrators to use ELL data to tailor instruction and incorporated a new emphasis on educators' skills in supporting ELLs in teacher evaluations. In Los Angeles, all teachers and principals received training in the new ELL Master Plan during 2013, and 800 school-based ELL program coordinators completed a more intensive summer institute. Interviewees in both San Francisco and Los Angeles noted that federal oversight elevated the authority of the districts' central offices responsible for ELL programs, allowing them to undertake more systemic efforts to improve ELL instruction at all schools.

*Since 2002, California has required all new teacher candidates to complete ELL-focused coursework.*

Anaheim Union High School District, meanwhile, used peer coaching to implement a homegrown professional development program, the Lesson Design Initiative (LDI), which helps teachers build a focus on academic language development into everyday instruction. Oakland has offered training in the nationally recognized Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL)<sup>33</sup> model for high school math, science, and English language arts teachers every summer since 2011, and school leadership teams in Sanger received training on the language skills required by the Common Core throughout 2012-13.

Across California, ELL-focused professional development still competes with other initiatives for scarce funding and teachers' limited time, however, and is not always given priority in the absence of a judicial mandate. The state budget crisis further complicated efforts, as most districts lacked the resources to fund additional staff training time and, in some cases, the days reserved for professional development were replaced by furlough days. Now that funding has increased, districts may choose to expand investments in ELL-focused professional development.

31 Delia Pompa and Kenji Hakuta, "Opportunities for Policy Advancement for ELLs Created by the New Standards Movement" (paper presented at the Understanding Language Conference, Stanford University, California, January 13-14, 2012), [ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/academic-papers/12-Pompa%20Hakuta%20Policy%20Principles%20FINAL.pdf](http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/academic-papers/12-Pompa%20Hakuta%20Policy%20Principles%20FINAL.pdf); Mariana Haynes, *The Role of Language and Literacy in College- and Career-Ready Standards: Rethinking Policy and Practice in Support of English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012), [www.all4ed.org/files/LangAndLiteracyInStandardsELLs.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/LangAndLiteracyInStandardsELLs.pdf).

32 California Department of Education, "FAQs for English Learner Teacher Authorizations," [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/elteachersfaq.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/elteachersfaq.asp).

33 For more information about QTEL, see WestEd, "Quality Teaching for English Learners," [www.wested.org/project/quality-teaching-for-english-learners/](http://www.wested.org/project/quality-teaching-for-english-learners/).



### 3. Expanded Learning Time for ELLs

High school ELLs must increase their English proficiency, complete required credits, and prepare for college and careers in a short timeframe. They must perform “double the work” of native English speakers, since they are “learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English.”<sup>34</sup> Summer school and other expanded learning opportunities play a key role in helping ELLs build their skills and complete credits needed for high school graduation—unfortunately, however, these options were sharply curtailed during the state budget crisis. In Los Angeles, summer school spending fell from \$51 million in 2008 to \$3 million in 2011.<sup>35</sup> In Spring 2014, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) announced a significant restoration of summer school funding, bringing the budget up to \$29 million—three-quarters of which will be dedicated to helping high school students earn required credits.<sup>36</sup> Still, these restorations only partially restore earlier capacity and come too late for the cohort of students who were in high school during the worst years of the recession.

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*Many California school districts also allow students who are off-track for graduation to co-enroll in adult education courses offered after school or at night.*

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Over the past several years, districts and schools have also leveraged partnerships with government agencies and external organizations to continue providing out-of-school-time programs for the most vulnerable students. The City of San Francisco Board of Supervisors, for instance, has funded summer school courses for high school ELLs since 2012. Oakland Unified School District, meanwhile, has embraced the “community schools” model as a centerpiece of its strategic plan, with the goal of bringing community-based organizations providing academic and socioemotional support services—including afterschool programs—onto the campus of every school. Many of the districts’ key partners, including the East Bay Asian Youth Center, have a strong reputation for providing bilingual, culturally relevant services for immigrant youth and their families.

Many California school districts also allow students who are off-track for graduation to co-enroll in adult education courses offered after school or at night, in order to make up missing credits. In Sanger Unified School District, for instance, up to one-quarter of all high school students co-enroll. The adult education division in LAUSD provides a wide variety of programs for youth who have dropped out of the district’s traditional high schools. These programs are credited with “recovering” 8 percent of the previous year’s dropouts in 2011-12.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, districts preserved adult education courses serving current high school students and recent dropouts even in a time of deep reductions in their overall adult education spending.

Extra time is critical for youth who immigrate in late adolescence, many of whom have had interrupted formal education. While students are legally entitled to remain in high school through age 21 as long as they are making progress and earning required credits, interviewees noted that some schools are reluctant to enroll students who are unlikely to earn a diploma by age 18 or 19, due to potential impact on their graduation rates. Oakland International High School offers a fifth-year program including academics and internships for late-arriving ELLs who need extra time. Expanding the school day and awarding credit

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34 Debra J. Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007), [www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf).

35 EdSource, “Down but Not Out: School Districts Struggle to Provide Summer Programs,” August, 2011, <http://edsources.org/wp-content/publications/pub11-insight-summer-school-FINAL2-RB.pdf>.

36 Vanessa Romo, “With Huge Boost in Budget, LAUSD Expands Summer School,” *LA School Report*, May 6, 2014, <http://laschoolreport.com/lausd-expands-summer-school-bigger-budget/>.

37 These students were enrolled in an adult education program or had completed a diploma or GED by the following October.



for courses students took in their home country can also provide vital solutions to the time crunch faced by late-arriving immigrants, who have a legal right to stay in school.

#### 4. College and Career Preparation for Immigrant Youth

While high school graduation itself can be a significant hurdle, youth also need access to college-preparatory academic courses and career-oriented programs. Career and technical education (CTE) programs, in particular, have the potential to increase students' engagement in education by building connections between high school courses, postsecondary degree and certificate programs, and jobs paying a family-sustaining wage.

California's Linked Learning school reform model combines academics with career knowledge, work-based learning, and support services. Linked Learning is typically implemented as part of a shift toward smaller schools, or the reorganization of larger high schools into themed "career pathways." A growing evidence base supports the success of the model in helping students stay on track for high school graduation and college enrollment.<sup>38</sup>

*As of 2011-12, California's guidance counselor-to-student ratio was the second-highest in the nation, with more than 800 students in grades K-12 per counselor.*

However, due to the pressing demands on their time, ELLs may face barriers to reaping the full benefits of Linked Learning and other career-focused programs, as demonstrated in a prior external evaluation of the Linked Learning model and through this study.<sup>39</sup> Interviewees noted that ELLs often miss out on interdisciplinary projects and work-based learning—key components of the model—because they must take required language courses.

First- and second-generation youth also need to build "college knowledge" to navigate the complex college-planning process. Several California school districts and colleges have recently launched large-scale college access initiatives, sometimes with the support of local government and philanthropic partners. San Francisco's Bridge to Success initiative, for instance, offers mentoring and career exploration for middle school students, a college planning curriculum for ninth graders, and the promise of scholarships to San Francisco State University for low-income students. A separate partnership between San Francisco Unified School District and City College of San Francisco allows students at four high schools to complete career-focused "dual enrollment" courses at CCSF. In Orange County, California State University-Fullerton and Anaheim Union High School District use a federal GEAR UP<sup>40</sup> grant to build college-going aspirations and academic skills for long-term ELLs.

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*Extra time is critical for youth who immigrate in late adolescence, many of whom have had interrupted formal education.*

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Partnerships that provide college planning assistance, mentoring, and exposure to higher education are especially critical given the reduced capacity of counseling programs in school districts across California. As of 2011-12, California's guidance counselor-to-student ratio was the second-highest in the nation, with more than 800 students in grades K-12 per counselor—compared to a national average of approximately

38 R. Guha, et al., *Taking Stock of the California Linked Learning District Initiative: Fourth-Year Evaluation Report* (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 2014), <http://irvine.org/images/stories/pdf/grantmaking/year4linkedlearningevaluationreportfeb2014.pdf>.

39 Ibid.

40 GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a discretionary grant program that aims to increase the college preparation and enrollment rates of low-income students. GEAR UP funds college outreach and early intervention activities for cohorts of students starting at the middle school level and continuing through high school.





470 students.<sup>41</sup> Interviewees reported that in many cases, counselors do not have time to provide the individualized assistance that many students from immigrant families need with the college search and application process.

Efforts to close gaps in the pipeline from high school to college and careers are also complicated by a lack of data on students' postsecondary outcomes. Unlike some states,<sup>42</sup> California does not have a statewide longitudinal data system that can track individual student records from preschool through the K-12 and postsecondary levels and into the workforce, and efforts to build this data capacity have stalled.<sup>43</sup>

### C. Adult Education

Adult education can be a critically important stepping stone to economic mobility for youth from immigrant families, including those who dropped out of U.S. high schools and those who arrived in late adolescence and may have never “dropped in.” Most importantly, adult education programs can support these young adults in earning a high school diploma or its equivalent and in learning English, thereby providing a pathway into postsecondary education and training.

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*California's urgent need for adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a Second Language programs is borne out by data.*

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California's urgent need for adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs is borne out by data. Among young adults ages 21 to 26, 29 percent of first-generation immigrants lacked a high school diploma or its equivalent during the 2009-13 time period—more than twice the state average (13 percent) for this age group.<sup>44</sup> Low rates of high school completion were most common among California's first-generation Hispanic youth, as 43 percent of this population—approximately 230,000 individuals—lacked a high school diploma or GED (see Figure 2).

At the same time, Figure 2 demonstrates considerable generational progress: by the second generation, the share of Hispanics without a high school diploma dropped to 13 percent, a rate still substantially higher than that of second-generation non-Hispanics (5 percent) but far better than foreign-born Hispanics. It is important to note, however, that these data are based on youth born between 1983 and 1992. It remains to be seen whether the second-generation children of immigrants who arrived during the 1990s and 2000s will have the same outcomes by the time they reach their twenties.

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41 Arizona had the highest guidance counselor-to-student ratio in 2011-12. MPI analysis of National Center for Education Statistics, “Common Core of Data,” “Elementary/Secondary Information System,” <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx>.

42 Florida and Washington, which were also included in this study, have each developed a “P-20W Data Warehouse,” which is a central repository for data from the early childhood, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems. For more information, see [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/centralized\\_warehouse.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/centralized_warehouse.pdf).

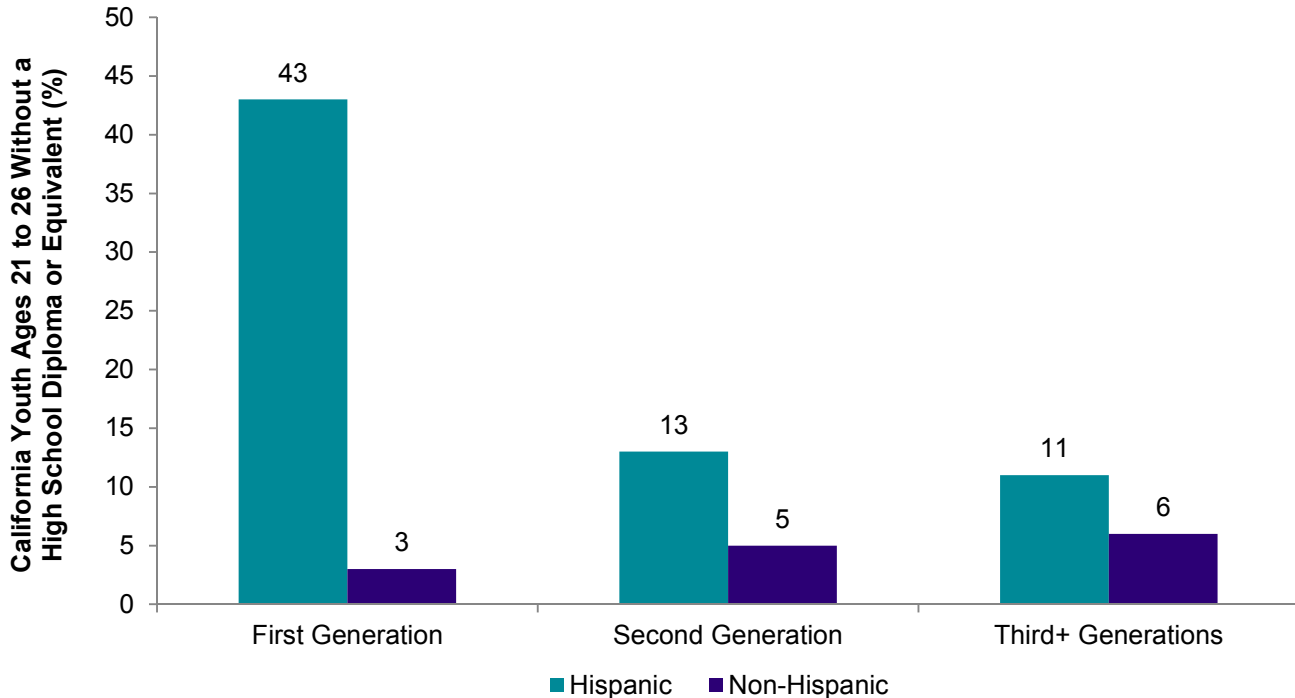
43 Paul Warren and Heather Hough, *Increasing the Usefulness of California's Education Data* (San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 2013), [www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_813PWR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_813PWR.pdf).

44 MPI analysis of 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data.





**Figure 2. Shares of California Youth Ages 21 to 26 Without a High School Diploma or Equivalent, by Generation and Hispanic Origin, 2009-13**



*Note:* The first generation is defined as those who are foreign born; the second generation includes those who are U.S. born with at least one foreign-born parent; and the third+ generation includes those who are U.S. born with U.S.-born parents.

*Source:* MPI analysis of 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data.

Overall, California is home to 4.1 million adults (ages 18-64) who lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, and 5.1 million adults with limited English proficiency (LEP).<sup>45</sup> The barriers to labor market success are the most acute for the 2.5 million individuals who fall in both categories. The state's adult education services attempt to meet the needs of these individuals and, as noted earlier, are often now being deployed to help high school students meet graduation requirements.

Access to adult education courses has also become increasingly important due to the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, as applicants must have a high school diploma or equivalent, be enrolled in school, or be enrolled in an education, literacy, or workforce training program at the time of their application. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that there were 122,000 young adults in California who would otherwise have been eligible for DACA, but did not meet these education requirements at the time of the program's launch—a substantially higher number than any other state.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, adult education programs across the state saw a spike in demand after DACA was announced in 2012. Access to adult education for California youth who are potentially DACA-eligible thus holds significant implications not just for the state's unauthorized immigrant youth, but for the national success of the deferred action initiative.

*43 percent of California's first-generation Hispanic youth lacked a high school diploma or GED.*

Unfortunately, DACA's enactment coincided with unprecedented cuts and program closures in California's adult schools, which are operated primarily by K-12 school districts and County Offices of Education. During the budget crisis, the state Legislature granted school districts the flexibility to redirect state fund-

<sup>45</sup> MPI analysis of 2010-12 ACS data. Limited English proficiency is defined as those who report speaking English "less than very well."

<sup>46</sup> Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark: A Profile of Currently Eligible Youth and Applicants* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/CIRbrief-DACAatOneYear.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/CIRbrief-DACAatOneYear.pdf).



ing from dozens of categorical programs, including adult education, towards other purposes in 2009.<sup>47</sup> This resulted in a dramatic reduction in adult education services. In response, some districts, including Anaheim Union High School District, closed their adult education programs completely.<sup>48</sup> Recent estimates indicate that 50 to 60 percent of the state’s categorical funding for adult education was redirected to other purposes in 2011-12.<sup>49</sup>

*Access to adult education courses has also become increasingly important due to the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.*

Providing a full picture of the scope of these startling losses is challenging, as many districts have not reported data on their state-funded adult education programs since flexibility was introduced. Data on programs receiving federal funds from Title II of the *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA)—the primary federal funding stream for adult education—offer a partial picture of the statewide drop in adult education enrollment (see Table 1). Total enrollment fell by 300,000 students (more than 50 percent) from 2008-09 to 2012-13, with declines in all three types of WIA-funded adult education programs.

**Table 1. California Enrollment in Workforce Investment Act Title II Adult Education Courses, by Program Type, 2007-13**

	Enrollment in Adult Basic Education	Enrollment in Adult Secondary Education	Enrollment in English as a Second Language	Total Enrollment
2007-08	122,601	71,579	408,657	602,837
2008-09	134,422	77,501	406,844	618,767
2009-10	97,976	37,192	299,260	434,428
2010-11	98,721	33,013	261,184	392,918
2011-12	95,891	32,266	225,909	354,066
2012-13	85,347	31,079	185,743	302,169

Source: Office of Vocational and Adult Education, National Reporting System, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/reports/>.

In addition to adult schools, some California community colleges (CCCs) also offer free, noncredit “basic skills” courses in ESL, ABE, and ASE, albeit on a more limited scale. Overall, there were approximately 100,000 noncredit basic-skills students in CCC in 2010-11.<sup>50</sup>

Policymakers have recently called into question the rationale and effectiveness of providing adult education through two separate systems,<sup>51</sup> and have promoted efforts to move more adult education students into postsecondary education. These efforts could address problems such as lengthy ESL course

47 The 2009 state legislature granted school districts the flexibility to use certain categorical funding streams—including adult education funds—for general purposes, in an effort to help school districts weather budget cuts, and removed reporting and other statutory requirements attached to these programs.

48 Little Hoover Commission, *Serving Students, Serving California*.

49 Mac Taylor, *Restructuring California’s Adult Education System* (Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2012), [www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/adult-education/restructuring-adult-education-120412.pdf](http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/adult-education/restructuring-adult-education-120412.pdf).

50 California Community Colleges’ Chancellor’s Office, *Basic Skills Accountability: Supplement to the ARCC Report* (Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges’ Chancellor’s Office, 2012), [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/TRIS/Research/Accountability/Basic%20Skills/2012/REPORT\\_BASICSKILLS\\_FINAL\\_110112.pdf](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/TRIS/Research/Accountability/Basic%20Skills/2012/REPORT_BASICSKILLS_FINAL_110112.pdf).

51 Edmund G. Brown Jr., *Governor’s Budget Summary 2014-2015* (Sacramento, CA: California State Government, 2014), [www.ebudget.ca.gov/2014-15/pdf/BudgetSummary/HigherEducation.pdf](http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2014-15/pdf/BudgetSummary/HigherEducation.pdf).



sequences that often prevent LEP students from accessing career-focused training or attempting college-level courses. However, while adult students with higher levels of English proficiency and academic preparation will be well-positioned to make a transition into postsecondary degree and certificate programs, these reform efforts may leave out adult learners who have different goals or who are generally less prepared. Additionally, practitioners and advocates raise concerns that community colleges can be inaccessible to low-educated adults because of their physical locations as well as complex registration processes, placement criteria, and course requirements.

The *2013-14 State Budget Act* (AB 86) protects adult schools from further cuts by requiring districts to maintain their 2012-13 level of adult education spending for the next two years. AB 86 also encourages collaboration between the various types of adult education providers, allocating \$25 million for regional consortia of school districts and community colleges to develop plans to coordinate services and streamline students' transitions from basic skills into postsecondary education and the workforce.<sup>52</sup> The resulting regional plans will inform the future level and structure of California's adult education funding.

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*California still faces major challenges in meeting the enormous need for adult education services and is nearing a critical juncture.*

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Our site visits found several examples of innovative programs designed to help bridge the gap between adult education and college-level instruction. For instance, some community colleges offer programs that combine English-language learning with workforce skills training leading to a postsecondary certificate, using a model based on Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program.<sup>53</sup> City College of San Francisco, for instance, offers a Community Health Worker pathway program for ESL students. Courses are co-taught by ESL instructors and health faculty. The California Community Colleges and California Department of Education have encouraged the development of similar models as part of the regional planning process funded through AB 86.<sup>54</sup> Still, these programs remain limited in scope, and often serve only the most academically prepared ESL students. Interviewees stressed the need to create and expand integrated models for lower-skilled learners, as well as to provide basic literacy and numeracy instruction in immigrants' native languages to build a stronger foundation for them to succeed in college-level courses.

California still faces major challenges in meeting the enormous need for adult education services and is nearing a critical juncture in the effort to create a well-aligned, coherent set of adult education system bridging school districts and community colleges. As state resources improve, choices with lasting impacts will be made regarding both overall levels of funding for the badly battered adult education system, as well as the relative balance of services available to meet the needs of learners with higher and lower levels of basic skills and English proficiency.

#### **D. Postsecondary Education**

While California's postsecondary education policies reflect a strong state commitment to postsecondary education access dating to the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education,<sup>55</sup> sizeable gaps in college enroll-

52 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, *Certification of Eligibility Instructions, Terms & Conditions: AB86 Adult Education Consortium Planning Grant* (Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges' Chancellor's Office, 2013), <http://ab86.cccco.edu/portals/7/docs/AB86%20Certification%20of%20Eligibility.pdf>

53 For more information the role of I-BEST in serving immigrant youth in Washington State, see Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping our Futures*.

54 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, *Certification of Eligibility Instructions*.

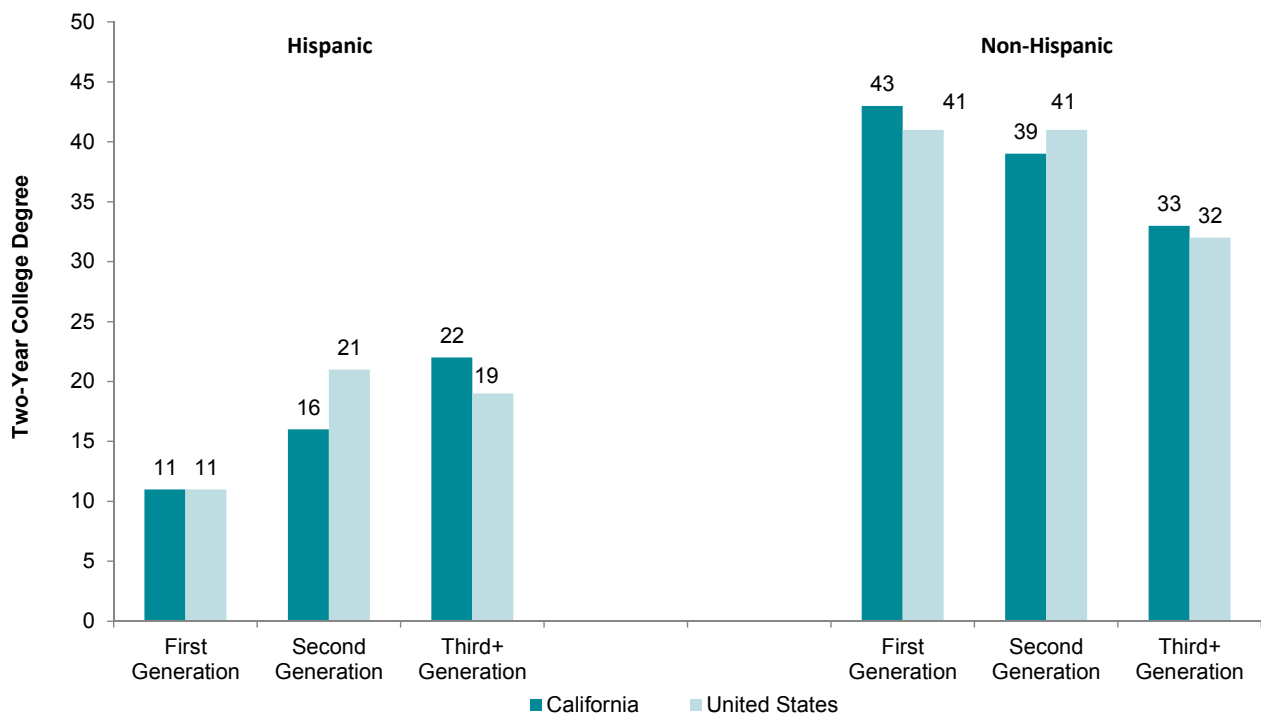
55 The Master Plan for Higher Education delineated the functions and target populations of the state's three systems of higher

ment and completion remain. In Fall 2012, while Hispanic students comprised 51 percent of high school students, they were only 39 percent of community college students, 33 percent of California State University (CSU) undergraduates, and 20 percent of University of California (UC) undergraduates.<sup>56</sup> Black students were also underrepresented in the most selective four-year colleges, making up 7 percent of high school students but 4 percent of UC undergraduates. Meanwhile the enrollment of Asian students showed the opposite trend, as this group comprised 9 percent of high school students and 33 percent of UC students.

*While Hispanic students comprised 51 percent of high school students, they were only 39 percent of community college students, 33 percent of CSU undergraduates, and 20 percent of UC undergraduates.*

Hispanic students also have lower rates of college degree attainment by age 21 to 26, compared to their non-Hispanic peers (see Figure 3). While the same trend is seen nationally, it is worth noting that California's second-generation Hispanic youth—the U.S.-born children of immigrants—lag behind other second-generation Hispanics nationwide: 16 percent of California's second-generation Hispanics had earned at least a two-year college degree, versus 21 percent nationwide in 2009-13.

**Figure 3. Share of Youth Ages 21 to 26 with at least a Two-Year College Degree, by Generation, 2009-13**



*Note:* The data on the first generation include youth who received a degree in their sending country prior to immigrating, as well as those who completed degrees from public and private colleges in the United States.

*Source:* MPI analysis of 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data.

For the subset of immigrant youth who are DREAMers—unauthorized immigrants who came to the United States as children—postsecondary education is more than a stepping stone to jobs paying a

education: the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and the California Community Colleges (CCC). The University of California, Office of the President, “California Master Plan for Higher Education: Major Features,” [http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/ca\\_masterplan\\_summary.pdf](http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/ca_masterplan_summary.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> California Department of Education, 2012-13; California Community Colleges’ Chancellor’s Office, “Management Information Systems Data Mart,” [http://datamart.cccco.edu/Students/Enrollment\\_Status.aspx](http://datamart.cccco.edu/Students/Enrollment_Status.aspx); California State University System, “Table 3.0: CSU Enrollment by Ethnic Group and Student Level, Fall 2012,” [www.calstate.edu/as/stat\\_reports/2012-2013/feth03.htm](http://www.calstate.edu/as/stat_reports/2012-2013/feth03.htm); University of California, *Statistical Summary of Students and Staff: Fall 2012* (Oakland, CA: University of California, 2012), <http://legacy-its.ucop.edu/uwnews/stat/statsum/fall2012/statsumm2012.pdf>.



family-sustaining wage. Since previous versions of the federal *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act* have required at least two years of postsecondary education, it is also a likely prerequisite for citizenship under future immigration legislation.<sup>57</sup> Nationwide, MPI estimates that only 10 percent of those eligible for DACA at the time of the program's launch had completed at least an associate's degree.<sup>58</sup> Given California's large share of the country's DACA youth, the challenge of raising the college completion rates of this group to meet the DREAM Act threshold falls disproportionately on the state's public higher education institutions.

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*For the subset of immigrant youth who are DREAMers...  
postsecondary education is more than a stepping  
stone to jobs paying a family-sustaining wage.*

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Like other sectors, California's colleges and universities have experienced overwhelming capacity challenges in recent years due to the combined effects of the recession and population growth. CCC cut approximately 25 percent of course sections and reduced enrollment by nearly half a million students between 2007-08 and 2011-12,<sup>59</sup> and placed an extraordinary number of enrolled students on lengthy waiting lists for required courses. Enrollment began to rebound slowly in 2012-13, with an additional 40,000 students accepted; still, a significant backlog remains and new cohorts continue to age into the system.

In addition to addressing the problem of college access, state policymakers and administrators are increasingly focused on promoting the timely degree completion of CCC students. Recent policies and institutional practices aim to increase the support services provided to all students, with a particular focus on equity for underserved groups.

*CCC reduced enrollment  
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and 2011-12.*

## I. College Affordability and Tuition Support for Immigrant Students

California has historically had a generous need-based financial aid program.<sup>60</sup> Community college costs have risen substantially in recent years<sup>61</sup> but still remain the lowest in the nation<sup>62</sup> at \$46 per credit, and low-income students can receive Board of Governors (BOG) fee waivers exempting them from this cost. Approximately 40 percent of CCC students attend cost-free.<sup>63</sup>

California also stands out in its tuition support for unauthorized immigrant students and DACA recipients. Since the passage of AB 540 in 2001, California has offered in-state tuition rates for unauthorized immigrants meeting specific requirements, including having attended a California high school for at least three years and having earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. In 2011, the legislature passed two additional bills (AB 130 and AB 131) that are collectively known as the *California Dream Act*, extending access to state-funded financial aid (CalGrants), BOG fee waivers, and institutional scholarships to this population. California is one of only four states that currently provide state-funded financial aid for unauthorized immigrant youth.<sup>64</sup>

57 In prior versions of the *DREAM Act*, applicants for permanent residency could substitute two years of U.S. military service for the postsecondary education requirement. For more information, see Jeanne Batalova and Margie McHugh, *DREAM vs. Reality: An Analysis of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dream-vs-reality-analysis-potential-dream-act-beneficiaries](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dream-vs-reality-analysis-potential-dream-act-beneficiaries).

58 Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark*.

59 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, "Key Facts about California Community Colleges," updated February 5, 2014, <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/PolicyInAction/KeyFacts.aspx>.

60 Washington State Institute for Public Policy, State Need Grant: Student Profiles and Outcomes (Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2012), [www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/12-12-2301.pdf](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/12-12-2301.pdf).

61 California community college fees rose from \$20 per unit in 2008-09 to \$46 per unit in 2012-13.

62 The College Board, "In-State Tuition and Fees by State Sector, 2013-14."

63 Carla Rivera, "College Students Must Soon Meet Academic Standards to Get Fee Waiver," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2014, <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/13/local/la-me-in-college-waivers-20140113>.

64 The other states are New Mexico, Texas, and Washington State—which passed legislation extending financial aid eligibility





## 2. Changes to Matriculation Services and College Placement Testing

The *Student Success Act* (SB 1456) of 2012 aimed to accelerate completion and transfer for CCC students and reduce excess course taking. According to its provisions, colleges must provide certain matriculation services to all new students, including orientation, assessment, counseling, and assistance in developing an educational plan. Students who complete these requirements will be given the opportunity to register early for classes—considered to be a powerful motivator during a time of high demand—starting in Fall 2014. Some community colleges have already begun partnering with local K-12 school districts to offer early placement tests, education planning, and counseling before students begin their first semester of college. Meanwhile, continuing students who are not in good academic standing or who have accumulated an excess number of credits without completing a degree will lose their priority enrollment privileges.<sup>65</sup>

The *Student Success Act* also directed CCC to develop and implement a new, common assessment system to determine whether students need developmental (remedial) education courses in math, English, or ESL before enrolling in transfer-level courses. Across the CCC system, approximately 70 to 90 percent of students taking placement tests require developmental education in at least one subject.<sup>66</sup> Nationwide, first- and second-generation youth are especially likely to require developmental education due to gaps in their language proficiency and academic preparation.<sup>67</sup> New CCC placement tests, which will be introduced in Fall 2015, will be portable across institutions and provide a clearer definition of college readiness. Some colleges are also incorporating alternative measures into course placement decisions, with the goal of minimizing the time students need to spend in developmental education.

As in other states studied in this series of reports,<sup>68</sup> interviewees in California noted that college placement tests are generally poor measures of the college readiness of ELLs, as they were designed for native English speakers. While there is a separate version of the placement test for ELLs, many students avoid taking this test because they feel that there is a stigma associated with being in ESL courses, yet they may perform poorly on mainstream English tests. These tests may fail to distinguish between students with generally low literacy skills and those who have specific gaps in grammar that could be addressed relatively quickly through targeted remediation. Additionally, interviewees reported an ongoing need for targeted counseling and registration assistance to inform ELL students' choices about which assessments and courses to take. To address this issue, recently adopted CCC regulations require colleges to ensure that matriculation services (including orientation, assessment and placement, counseling, advising, and education planning services) are "accessible to English language learners and are appropriate to their needs."<sup>69</sup>

*Community college costs have risen substantially in recent years but still remain the lowest in the nation at \$46 per credit.*

The CCC Chancellor's Office has also called on colleges to examine the impact of new programs and policies on student subgroups and create new Student Equity Plans by November 2014. These plans must describe the steps that institutions will take to address gaps in student enrollment, progress, and out-

on February 26, 2014. Information current as of the time of this report's writing.

65 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, "California Community Colleges Board of Governors Approves System-wide Enrollment Priorities to Increase Student Success," (press release, September 10, 2012), [www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/DocDownloads/PressReleases/SEP2012/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_BOGPRIORITY\\_091012x\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/DocDownloads/PressReleases/SEP2012/PRESS_RELEASE_BOGPRIORITY_091012x_FINAL.pdf).

66 California Community Colleges' Student Success Task Force, *Advancing Student Success in California Community Colleges: The Recommendations of the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force* (Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges, 2012), [www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/StudentSuccessTaskForce/SSTF\\_FinalReport\\_Web\\_010312.pdf](http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/StudentSuccessTaskForce/SSTF_FinalReport_Web_010312.pdf). Some students are able to bypass college placement tests and automatically enroll in transfer-level courses, due to their scores on college admission tests such as the SAT or ACT or prior completion of college-level courses.

67 Sandra Staklis and Laura Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education: A Profile of Immigrant and Second-Generation American Undergraduates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012213.pdf>.

68 See Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping Our Futures*; and Hooker, Fix, and McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia*.

69 Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, "Revisions to Title 5 Regulations: Student Success and Support Program" (Sacramento, CA: State of California Office of Administrative Law, 2013), [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/Legal/Regs/Student\\_Success\\_Filed\\_Regs.pdf](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/Legal/Regs/Student_Success_Filed_Regs.pdf).





comes based on race/ethnicity, gender, or disability. To aid in this process, the Chancellor's Office produced a guide to help colleges assess any disproportionate impacts of assessment policies, development education requirements, and orientation and counseling procedures on particular groups of students.<sup>70</sup>

### 3. Academic and Social Support Services: Effective but Difficult to Scale

Beyond registration, educational planning, and assessment, many students from immigrant families need ongoing advising, mentoring, and tutoring. First- and second-generation immigrants are more likely than their peers to be “nontraditional” college students, as they often enroll in postsecondary education at older ages, attend college part time,<sup>71</sup> and need to balance work and school schedules, find child care, and navigate the bureaucratic aspects of college life.<sup>72</sup> The colleges highlighted in this study have implemented innovative programs to support retention and completion for immigrants and other students from underrepresented groups.

In many institutions, “learning communities” place small cohorts of students together in linked courses and provide extra counseling and tutoring. For example, Fresno City College (FCC) offers a learning community program targeting low-income Latino students, with support from a federal grant for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Students in FCC's *Camino* (Pathway) program participate in a six-week summer bridge session that includes accelerated versions of developmental education courses and a counseling course focused on college success, and they continue to take classes together during the fall semester. FCC has similar learning community programs that target students from other racial/ethnic groups, including Southeast Asian Americans.

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The *Puente* (Bridge) Program is a learning community and wrap-around support program serving a large number of Latinos at 61 community colleges throughout California that aims to prepare low-income students to transfer to four-year colleges. *Puente* has documented strong outcomes, including a transfer rate of 56 percent in 2009-10 (compared to a CCC system average of 44 percent).<sup>73</sup> The Metro Academies initiative at City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University is a unique partnership between a two-year and a four-year college to improve transfer rates through learning communities focused on health, early childhood education, and STEM<sup>74</sup> careers. Participants in early cohorts had higher persistence, transfer, and degree completion than similar peers.<sup>75</sup>

All of these examples involve comprehensive efforts to personalize the college experience and help students address obstacles that may arise. However, given resource limitations and rising pressure to demonstrate improvements in student outcomes, college administrators are focused on identifying

70 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, *Ensuring Equitable Access and Success: A Guide to Assessing and Mitigating Disproportionate Impact in Student Success and Support Programs* (Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges, 2013), [http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/Matriculation/REPORT\\_DisportionateImpactCombined\\_09.17.13\\_FINAL.pdf](http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/Matriculation/REPORT_DisportionateImpactCombined_09.17.13_FINAL.pdf).

71 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2003-04, With a Special Analysis of Community College Students” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006), as cited in Robert T. Teranishi, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, “Immigrants in Community Colleges,” *The Future of Children* 21, no. 1 (2011): 153-65.

72 Jennifer Engle and Vincent Tinto, *Moving Beyond College Access: College Success for Low-income, First-Generation Students* (Washington, DC: The Pell Institute, 2008), [www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Moving\\_Beyond\\_Access\\_2008.pdf](http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Moving_Beyond_Access_2008.pdf).

73 Puente, “Accomplishments,” <http://puente.ucop.edu/accomplishments.html>.

74 STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math.

75 Metro Academies Initiative, “Updated Student Outcomes, 2013,” [http://metroacademies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/updated062413-All\\_SFSU\\_MetroCCSF\\_Health\\_Outcomes\\_updated\\_June2013.pdf](http://metroacademies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/updated062413-All_SFSU_MetroCCSF_Health_Outcomes_updated_June2013.pdf).



strategies that can be expanded effectively and these comprehensive approaches are difficult to scale. Interviewees also spoke of the challenge of maintaining the benefits of learning communities after the cohort-based program has ended, and suggested extending the length of these programs, especially for students with lower levels of academic preparation and LEP immigrants who may need ongoing support throughout college, again raising questions of balancing institutional priorities.

## **E. Conclusions and the Road Ahead**

This report provides numerous examples of ways in which some California school districts, adult education providers, institutions of postsecondary education, and community partners have kept immigrant youth and ELLs at the center of their innovative education reform efforts—while also identifying areas where these students have been left out or fallen behind. It also identifies policy levers to support the educational and career success of immigrant young adults, and offers recommendations for moving forward.

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### **I. Looking Ahead: Levers for Change**

Coming out of a historic recession, California's public education system is at a transformative moment. Policymakers and taxpayers are anxious to see increased student achievement, college degree completion, and better workforce preparation as evidence of returns on their investments. The state's K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and adult education programs are all in the midst of significant changes affecting their funding, structure, governance, and accountability requirements. The overall success of these reforms will depend on the extent to which local communities and educational institutions use existing reform levers to better serve the state's immigrant youth. These levers for improving system outcomes include:

- **Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).** The LCFF gives K-12 school districts greater autonomy in their spending of state funds, while providing extra resources based on the number and concentration of ELL students, low-income students, and students in foster care. As districts develop and annually update their plans to improve achievement, they have the opportunity to analyze detailed data on their ELL students and identify research-supported instructional strategies. While this flexibility can spur innovation, it also relaxes state accountability requirements, relying instead on oversight from county-level education offices and local stakeholders, including the parents of ELLs. Investments in training and translation services will be needed to help build the capacity of immigrant parents to fulfill this role. Depending on the effectiveness of its implementation, the LCFF may prove a powerful engine for improving the educational outcomes of ELLs and in turn improving the overall long-term economic and civic integration of immigrants in the state.
- **Adult Education Regional Consortia.** After several years of dramatically declining capacity, the 2013 budget averted further cuts to adult education. The legislature also dedicated funding for school district and community college consortia to align their adult education services. These regional consortia could help create programs that offer more direct pathways to postsecondary credentials for immigrant youth with relatively high skill levels, and the comprehensive



plans they create can demonstrate the multi-level needs of adult learners in local communities. Depending on the scope and quality of these efforts and the choices made by state leaders, current efforts to align systems' services could result in expanded and better-targeted state investments in adult education.

- ***Student Success Act of 2012.*** The *Student Success Act* appropriated funding for matriculation services, including counseling and educational planning, and for an improved, web-based report card for community college data. Community colleges are also required to evaluate the impact of new programs and policies on students from underrepresented groups and develop Student Equity Plans to address disparities. Colleges can apply these resources to students from immigrant families and intensify the academic and personal support they receive.

## 2. Recommendations for Action

As California begins to reinvest in its education systems, state and local leaders will face many critical choices. As these policy and budget choices unfold, they can heed the imperative to improve educational access and quality for first- and second-generation immigrant youth.

### ***Recommendations at the High School Level***

- ***Reinvest in expanded learning time.*** Districts could choose to use LCFF funds to expand the school day and rebuild summer school opportunities for ELLs, and more broadly implement “fifth-year” programs for late-arriving immigrant youth. Without such innovative and explicit strategies, these students will likely face even lower odds of earning a diploma as California implements the Common Core and many districts adopt more challenging high school graduation requirements.
- ***Improve teacher professional development and establish an expectation that all teachers are teachers of language.*** Raising ELL achievement requires an educator workforce that is trained in strategies for supporting academic language development. While California has made great strides in requiring all teachers with at least one ELL student in their classes to have a special authorization in English Language Development, our interviewees stressed that this authorization alone is not enough to ensure that teachers have the skills to help ELLs meet new, language-rich academic standards. District leaders stand to play a critical role in keeping ELLs at the forefront of their professional development agendas for all teachers and by ensuring that principals also have the skills to evaluate classroom instruction for ELLs and support effective practices.
- ***Restore support for college counseling and increase guidance for immigrant youth.*** California's guidance counselor caseloads are among the largest in the nation, leaving counselors limited capacity to provide the personalized college planning assistance needed by many immigrant students and families. While nonprofit college access organizations and emerging technology-based initiatives play a vital role in supplementing school-based counseling services, these efforts are limited in scope. Though California has recently expanded state-funded financial aid to unauthorized immigrants through the *California Dream Act*, accessing these funds and navigating other complex aspects of college admissions and registration depends, for many youth, on the assistance of well-trained counselors.

### ***Recommendations for Adult Education***

- ***Rebuild the capacity of the adult education system to meet the needs of learners across the basic skills spectrum.*** California's adult schools attempted to meet a range of adult education, workforce preparation, family literacy and immigrant integration needs prior to the recession—all of which remain critical to the state's longer-term economic and civic vitality. Continuing to improve the basic skills of the state's adults will require different approaches for diverse types of learners, ranging from recent high school dropouts to parents with young children and older



immigrants preparing for naturalization.

Statewide investments in accelerated program models that integrate basic skills with postsecondary training and support services could significantly increase credential completion for immigrant youth at the upper levels of ESL and ASE. Other state and federal investments could support the expansion of effective models for serving immigrants with lower English proficiency and limited prior education. Newly formed adult education consortia can play an important role by illuminating the full range of adult education needs in their region and designing strategies to expand effective, high-quality programs for various groups—particularly, those that would support immigrant youth in progressing to two- and four-year degrees.

- ***Increase capacity to serve youth seeking deferred action.*** Adult education programs hold the key to DACA eligibility for unauthorized immigrant youth who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and are no longer enrolled in school. Yet demand for these programs far exceeds supply—and while they are stuck on waiting lists for courses, many youth face the risk of deportation. The quantity and range of programs offered by adult schools and community colleges for youth seeking deferred action should be expanded. Philanthropic organizations interested in supporting DACA youth can invest in local system coordination and navigation initiatives that identify appropriate adult education services for these youth, and also in expanding programs for those with high barriers to education success, especially in areas of the state that experienced the most severe program cuts and school closures.

These investments are critical to the success of applicants for DACA as well as potential beneficiaries of future immigration reform legislation. Not only would federal *DREAM Act* legislation likely require at least two years of postsecondary education for individuals to qualify for an expedited path to citizenship, but broader legalization measures would likely require unauthorized immigrants to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for legal residency.

### ***Recommendations at the Two-Year College Level***

- ***Provide incentives for colleges to enroll and retain students with multiple barriers to success.*** While the *Student Success Act* aims to accelerate college degree completion, interviewees expressed concern that underprepared students will be the most likely to face penalties for lack of degree progress or excess accumulation of credits. Community colleges already offer a range of academic and social support programs for underrepresented students, though findings from California’s Learning Community programs suggest that interventions will be most effective if they are intensive and long-term. To maintain the community colleges’ open access mission while also improving student outcomes, California could provide innovation funding for colleges that demonstrate systematic progress for students with limited English proficiency and former adult education students pursuing college degrees and certificates. In Washington, for instance, community colleges are able to earn additional funding by accumulating “momentum points” based on student success in achieving critical milestones on the way to college completion or transfer—including English proficiency gains for ESL students.
- ***Improve Assessment and Counseling for English Learners.*** Students with limited English proficiency have unique needs in the college assessment and placement process. These students often avoid taking the ESL placement test, even though they may be less successful in developmental English classes designed for native speakers. Meanwhile, students entering college from the adult education system encounter new assessments and enrollment requirements, and may be required to repeat ESL courses they have already taken elsewhere. English learners would benefit from targeted advising to inform their assessment and course registration decisions and ensure they have access to Learning Communities and other programs that can accelerate their progress.



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### **Recommendations Across Systems**

- **Improve longitudinal data capacity and track ELL outcomes.** Unlike the other states included in this study, California does not have a statewide longitudinal data system that can track individual students from early childhood into postsecondary education and the workforce.<sup>76</sup> Such a longitudinal data system would significantly expand the evidence available to educators, policymakers, and the general public on the effectiveness of their investments. The system's value will be higher if it disaggregates information in meaningful ways, including ELL and Former ELL status, and incorporates data from adult education programs.

In sum, California is at a critical juncture in its efforts to raise high school graduation rates and pursue postsecondary success for all youth—more than half of whom are first- or second-generation immigrants. At the K-12 level, standards, assessments, accountability requirements, and funding mechanisms are in transition. Meanwhile, regional adult education consortia have embarked on a planning process that will shape the future of basic skills instruction, and community colleges have redoubled their focus on retention, completion, and equity. The results of these reforms across the education system hold critical implications for the success of ELLs and immigrant youth in California and—by virtue of the state's sheer demographics—the United States as a whole.

The Obama administration has set a goal of leading the world in college completion by seeking a 60 percent college degree attainment rate among young adults by 2020. Currently, 40 percent of Californians ages 25 to 34 hold at least an associate's degree.<sup>77</sup> Undeniably, California's 3.3 million first- and second-generation youth are positioned to play a vital role in shaping the competitiveness of the state and nation's workforce in coming years. Addressing educational challenges and expanding opportunities for this group is critical to California's future success and meeting the nation's higher education goals, and therefore should be an area of intense focus for policymakers at all levels of government.

To download the report in full, visit  
**[bit.ly/ImmEdCA](http://bit.ly/ImmEdCA)**

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<sup>76</sup> Florida, Georgia, New York, and Washington annually link K-12 and postsecondary education data. In Florida and Washington, K-12 data are also annually matched with workforce data. Data Quality Campaign, "State Progress," <http://dataqualitycampaign.com/your-states-progress/#chart>.

<sup>77</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "ACS Educational Attainment by Degree-Level and Age-Group."



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