Charting Progress Toward L.A. Compact Goals
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Welcome
Letter to the Community from the L.A. Compact Signatories

Since 2008, the L.A. Compact has convened Los Angeles' leading education, government, labor, business and non-profit institutions in an unprecedented collaborative dedicated to the education and career success of L.A. youth. Our common understanding is that effective solutions to the large-scale education and workforce readiness problems facing our region require a collective effort.

Today, 24 Los Angeles leaders have signed the L.A. Compact, a collaborative commitment to transform regional outcomes from cradle to career. We have pledged to put the interests of students first, to work together in support of the following ambitious, systemic goals and to regularly measure the progress of our youth:

**GOAL ONE**
All students graduate from high school

**GOAL TWO**
All students have access to and are prepared for success in college

**GOAL THREE**
All students have access to pathways to sustainable jobs and careers

We are excited to share our findings on youth progress toward these goals. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has shown substantial improvement on a number of indicators, most notably the high school graduation rate, which rose substantially in the past five years, primarily driven by increases among Latino and Black students. At the same time, the share of graduates who finish LAUSD eligible for admission to California's four-year public institutions has risen dramatically, from just over one-third in 2009 to more than one-half in 2015, an enormous increase that far exceeds progress of students in the county or statewide.

These impressive gains occurred despite substantial budget cuts in public education wrought by the most severe economic recession since the Great Depression. The results discussed here are inspiring: L.A. public school students have made incredible advances. However, there is still a long way to go to bridge the education gap, particularly for poor and minority students, who make up the vast majority of the LAUSD population.
This report showcases available education and workforce data to promote understanding of youth preparation and success in LAUSD and L.A. County. The impressive gains in high school graduation rates and several related measures reported here provide ample reason for optimism and suggest that strong regional partnerships and collective impact strategies can be vital in supporting student success.

Our city is rich, vibrant and full of opportunity. Yet, gross inequities persist among our students and demand concerted effort on multiple fronts. To mitigate regional inequality, the L.A. Compact has agreed on common goals and leveraged our resources in order to develop and implement successful strategies that prepare the next generation of L.A. residents to thrive in our global economy. We applaud the advances to-date and look forward to further progress in opening the doors of opportunity to all young Angelenos.
The L.A. Compact convenes cross-sector stakeholders, leverages limited resources, and pursues collaborative strategies to transform our education system from cradle to career. The initial creation of the L.A. Compact in 2008 stemmed from a shared belief that no program or institution could singlehandedly solve the complex, large-scale, education and workforce-readiness challenges facing our region.

Improving student outcomes at scale requires collective impact: the commitment to solve complex social problems by a coalition of actors from different sectors. The L.A. Compact represents an exceptional, collective commitment by L.A. leaders to transform education outcomes from cradle to career in order to provide youth with the skills necessary to compete and succeed in a 21st century global workforce. We aim to ensure that every L.A. public school student graduates from high school prepared for — and with access to — success in college and career.

Achieving this ambitious goal requires innovative and sustained collaboration that cuts across typical bureaucratic silos. It requires starting in early childhood, when 90 percent of a young child’s brain develops. It requires sustaining this learning through elementary, middle, and high schools to ensure that all students stay in school and graduate from high school ready for college and careers. It requires supporting students while they pursue the job skills and postsecondary credentials necessary for the careers that drive our regional economic growth.

Finally, effective cross-sector collaboration requires sustainable coordination. UNITE-LA, a non-profit affiliate of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, serves as the primary convener of the L.A. Compact, helping partners leverage resources, align services, improve policies and build bridges between previously siloed systems in order to benefit the children and young adults of L.A.

Since launching in 2008, the L.A. Compact has developed into a mature collective impact initiative with several collaborative workgroups that engage dozens of cross-sector institutions and community-based organizations to tackle issues along the cradle-to-career continuum. As new priorities have emerged, new partners have also stepped into the critical convening role to facilitate the L.A. Compact’s constellation of collaborative working groups.
Workgroups of the L.A. Compact

**STEWARDSHIP GROUP**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Senior staff and deputies representing the L.A. Compact signers provide guidance to the L.A. Compact. Members serve as stewards of the larger community interest and serve the L.A. Compact’s broader collective vision.

**INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHE) COLLABORATIVE**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Consortium of 12 colleges and universities that advances cross-system strategies to increase student success from cradle to career.

• **L.A. Educator Pathways Partnership (LAEPP)**
  (convened by UNITE-LA)
  A unique collaboration between the L.A. Compact, its IHE Collaborative, other higher education institutions and LAUSD to drive continuous improvement in teacher prep programs to enhance student success in LAUSD.

• **Student Success Workgroup**
  (convened by UNITE-LA)
  Newly re-launched collaborative of higher education administrators cooperating to coordinate efforts that promote college student success; identify policies and practices that limit student success and impede students’ inter-institutional transitions; and increase college completion.

**JOINT ADVOCACY WORKGROUP**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Unites cross-sector government relations staff to advocate strategically on state and federal policy issues that affect young people from cradle to career in the L.A. region.

**L.A. CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE LEVEL READING**
(convened by Families in Schools)
Targets reading improvement for low-income students of color by advancing collaborative strategies to increase primary drivers of third grade reading proficiency: school attendance, summer learning, and school readiness.

• **School Readiness Workgroup**
  (convened by First 5 LA)
  Seeks to improve third grade reading proficiency by increasing the number of L.A. County children who enter kindergarten ready for school. The workgroup has adopted three priorities: a common Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for L.A. County, increasing the number of Early Childhood Education (ECE) sites participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System, and engaging families in school readiness.

**L.A. COMPACT DATA WORKGROUP**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Cross-sector workgroup to identify optimal progress and outcome measures that span early education through college and career for L.A. youth, with the goal of promoting accountability and continuous improvement. Representation includes researchers and data professionals from early education, K-12, community colleges, public and private universities, workforce development, labor, opportunity youth, county and philanthropy.

**L.A. OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COLLABORATIVE**
(convened by Alliance for Children’s Rights)
Aims to improve pathways to education and employment for foster youth, ages 16-24, by coordinating services, leveraging community resources, aligning strategies and improving policies across siloed sectors serving transition-age youth.

**L.A. REGIONAL STEM HUB**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Serves 80 districts with more than 700,000 students and works to expand student access to high-quality STEM education and provide pathways for STEM workforce and skills development.

**L.A. WORKFORCE REGIONAL SYSTEMS COLLABORATIVE**
(convened by UNITE-LA)
Committed to developing a robust economic and workforce development system to meet the needs of underserved youth by creating pathways to high-demand, high-growth and sustainable careers.

• **L.A. Health Sector Collaborative**
  (convened by UNITE-LA)
  Innovative collaboration to create and strengthen healthcare pathways by convening health care employers, public postsecondary, and workforce development partners to train health care workers for high-demand occupations in the L.A. region.
Los Angeles Context

We begin by describing the LAUSD student population on several dimensions, including size and demographics. The demographic comparisons of LAUSD, L.A. County, and the State of California afford a better understanding of the unique makeup of the district and provide context for results presented throughout the report for these three nested geographic areas.

L.A. is the second largest city in the United States, and LAUSD and is the second-largest district nationally, with nearly 640,000 students. (L.A. is second to New York on both fronts.) Figure 1 provides 2014-15 enrollment figures for LAUSD, L.A. County, and California — including breakouts for Latinos and Blacks — and underscores the importance of LAUSD and L.A. County to overall trends in California.

Figure 1: K-12 Population - All Students, Latino, and Black
LAUSD, L.A. County and California, 2015-16

Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest
LAUSD is home to 10 percent of all California public school students (and more than 40 percent of students in L.A. County). Its importance to minority populations is even more pronounced: the district includes 14 percent of Latino and 15 percent of Black students statewide. The larger area of L.A. County comprises 25 percent of the state’s K-12 public school students, including 30 percent Latino and 33 percent of Black students. Because of its scale, trends in L.A. heavily influence statewide shifts, and progress by disadvantaged minority students in L.A. has a powerful impact on California outcomes.

Just as L.A. weighs heavily in California developments, California’s educational outcomes have a disproportionate impact on nationwide trends. California is a behemoth — far and away the largest state, with a 2015 population estimate of 39 million, followed distantly by Texas’ 27 million. Our public K-12 student population numbers 6.3 million out of 49.5 million nationally: More than one out of eight K-12 students in the U.S. resides in California.

California is a key driver of national improvements in high school graduation rates, particularly national gains for Latino youth (De Paoli et al. 2015). Progress has been uneven across states and districts, with heavy influence from some of the big states and big districts. Other dominant drivers of nationwide increases include improved graduation rates for low-income students and minority students (ibid). Both groups are overrepresented in L.A. and in California.

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1 https://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2015/index.html
Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Population Served by the L.A. Compact’s Efforts

More than four of every five LAUSD students (83%) are either Latino or Black (considered “disadvantaged minority”). Data in Figure 2 provide the race/ethnicity of K-12 public school students in 2014-15 for LAUSD, L.A. County, and California. The LAUSD population is predominantly Latino (74%), even more so than the county (65%) or the State (54%). LAUSD also has a disproportionate representation of Black students (9% vs. 8% in L.A. County, and 6% in California), with correspondingly smaller shares of White and Asian students.

Figure 2: Ethnicity in California Public Schools
K-12 Students in LAUSD, L.A. County, and California, 2015-16

In reporting outcomes, we provide data for key measures disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Attention to progress for disadvantaged minorities will be critical in the L.A. region. Given the majority-minority demographics of L.A., the success of the region as a whole is contingent on lifting all boats. In our rainbow metropolis, reducing racial/ethnic disparities and attending to the success of disadvantaged minority youth will be critical to regional prosperity.

Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest
What Share of Our Students is at High Risk for Poor Outcomes?

Low income, English learner, and special education students face increased obstacles and challenges to their educational success. These three groups of at-risk youth exhibit low high school graduation rates nationally (Stetser and Stilwell 2014).

Figure 3: At-Risk K-12 Students in California Public Schools

Figure 3 illustrates the representation of these at-risk students in LAUSD, L.A. County and statewide. The vast majority of LAUSD students lives in poverty (76%). This preponderance of economically disadvantaged students is greater for LAUSD than for the county, which still has a disproportionate share of low income youth (67%) relative to the State overall (59%). Similarly, LAUSD has a somewhat larger share of English learners (typically from immigrant families) than is true county- or statewide (25% in LAUSD vs. 23% in L.A. County and 22% in California). Special education composition is only slightly higher in LAUSD than in the County or State (13%, 12%, and 12%, respectively). In sum, LAUSD has a disproportionate concentration of at-risk students, particularly low-income students, and therefore must address the challenges of this population and mitigate obstacles that can result in lower performance.

Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest

Footnote: Poverty is proxied by residence in households that meet income criteria for the national free and reduced price meal program.
How Has the Share of At-Risk Students Changed Over Time in L.A. Schools?

Longitudinal data show recent trends for at-risk student subgroups in LAUSD (Figure 4). Low-income youth have made up approximately three-fourths of students since the 2008-09 school year, with fluctuations of one or two percentage points, ending at 76 percent in 2014-15. By contrast, the share of English learners shows a fairly consistent falloff, from 35 percent in 2008-09 to 25 percent in 2014-15. (This is consistent with the declining share of first-generation immigrant Latinos and the corresponding increase in the second and third generations.) The special education student population remained at 12 percent of all LAUSD pupils for the first four years, then rose to 13 percent in 2012-13, where it remains today.

![Figure 4: At-Risk Student Subgroups](source)

Despite the decline in the share of English language learners (ELLs) in LAUSD (Figure 4), impoverished and ELL students are still overrepresented in the district relative to the county and state (Figure 3). LAUSD must address the particular needs of at-risk youngsters in order to fulfill the mission of preparing all students for success in college and careers.
GOAL 1: All Students Graduate from High School

High school graduation is a critical educational milestone – one that unlocks multiple avenues of individual growth, including postsecondary education opportunities, career prospects, and earnings potential. On the flip side, dropping out of high school represents a significant handicap for individual success and a tremendous loss of civic and economic potential for the communities in which dropouts reside.

The goal of maximizing high school completion is especially challenging for large cities like L.A. High school completion is considerably less prevalent in cities than in suburbs, towns, or rural areas, prompting concern with a crisis in urban education. Low graduation rates have been particularly problematic in the biggest U.S. metropolitan areas (Swanson 2008). Recent progress is therefore encouraging, not just in L.A., but also in a number of other large, urban districts. (While progress may not have been as pronounced as in L.A., large districts in the following cities posted recent gains in high school graduation rates: Chicago, Las Vegas, Miami, Tampa, Houston, New York and San Diego, among others [Chicago Public Schools 2015; Clark County School District 2015; Florida Department of Education 2015; Governing Magazine 2014; New York City Department of Education 2016; San Diego Office of Education 2014; Tennessee Department of Education 2015; Texas Education Agency 2015; US Department of Education 2013].)

Disadvantaged minority students have faced further obstacles to high school completion. As late as 2010, leading scholars reported that the substantial majority-minority gap in graduation rates had remained stubbornly constant, with no narrowing over the previous 35 years (Heckman and LaFontaine 2010).

The good news: persistence has finally changed student outcomes. In recent years, Latino, Black and Native American youth have made considerable strides. Their increases in high school completion from 2011 to 2013

4 The disadvantage for central city school districts holds even after taking into account other district-level factors such as poverty, racial/ethnic segregation, and district size (Swanson 2004).
outpaced those for whites and thereby narrowed the formerly tenacious racial/ethnic graduation gaps in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, per Bidwell 2015).

How have these trends affected the aggregate U.S. high school graduation rate? Advances by disadvantaged minority students have contributed greatly to an overall rise in the high school graduation rate nationally. That is, gains by disadvantaged minority students have driven gains in the national rate for all students. The U.S. Secretary of Education recently reported that high school completion hit a record highpoint of 81 percent in 2013 (per Amos 2015). Current improvements follow a troubling stall in progress on overall graduation rates for the mid-2000s, which left the 2007 U.S. graduation rate at just under 69 percent (and well below the 1969 peak of 77 percent) (Swanson 2010).

Recent years have witnessed a corollary decline in the dropout rate, which was similarly driven by minority students’ improvements and hit a record low in 2013 (Fry 2014). That said, high school graduation and dropout rates remain a significant cause for concern in an increasingly competitive global economy, where the United States’ ranking in high school completion has dropped significantly and is now very low relative to other OECD countries (Cardoza 2012). Drops represent a tremendous loss of productivity both at the individual and aggregate levels. Adults with less education experience higher unemployment rates, lower earnings, poorer health, lower civic engagement and higher crime rates than their more educated peers. Supporting all students through high school completion will serve the best interests of communities, regions and the nation.

The L.A. Compact partners are dedicated to high school graduation for all Angelenos and recognize the crucial role a high school diploma plays in college readiness and career preparation. Through effective collaboration, the Compact strives to provide the resources and support necessary for each and every student to succeed. Our efforts are in line with those in other communities that have promoted an “every student counts” culture and have therefore shown gains in high school graduation. According to the 2015 report, Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, “States, districts, and communities that put focused and sustained effort into improving graduation rates saw them rise, while those that have not, did not” (DePaoli et al., 2015, p.8).

The L.A. Compact has committed to reporting on changes in high school graduation and dropout rates as well as on progress toward high school completion. Here we describe recent shifts for LAUSD and the larger regions of L.A. County and California.

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5 Note that higher graduation rates in other countries are related to the prevalence of vocational programs (Cardoza 2012).
Indicator 1: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION IS KEY
Graduating within four years means that a student has met all necessary course and credit requirements to earn a diploma. High school graduation is a critical first step in attaining the types of jobs and careers that allow entry to the middle class. More than 90 percent of jobs in California will require at least a high school diploma by 2030 (Johnson, et al. 2015). In general, high school graduates tend to achieve greater success on a range of economic, health and civic outcomes than do dropouts.

TRENDS IN THE SHARE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATING WITHIN FOUR YEARS
Figure 5 provides 2010-15 data from the California Department of Education (CDE) on the proportion of students graduating within four years. Gains in LAUSD, L.A. County and California were impressive; the district exhibited the largest increase — a full 12 percentage points, from 62 percent to 72 percent of students. While high school completion continues to be lower in the area served by LAUSD than in the County or the State (72%, 79%, and 82%, respectively, in 2015), recent progress in the district has narrowed these gaps.

Figure 5: Four-Year Graduation Rate
LAUSD, L.A. County and California, 2010-15

Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest

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7 Fifth-year high school students are not counted in this measure.
Data reported by LAUSD (Figure 6) show consistently lower four-year graduation rates than the CDE data, with the 2014 graduation rate at 67 percent (vs. 70% in CDE reports, Figure 5), and a steep improvement in high school completion, from just over half of students in 2009 (52%) to two-thirds in 2014 (67%). The discrepancy between LAUSD and CDE-reported data may reflect the state’s ability to better track students who left LAUSD but transferred to, and graduated from, another school district.

Figure 6: Four-Year Graduation Rate
LAUSD, 2009-14

By either the LAUSD or CDE measure, high school completion has improved markedly in the district. We laud the District’s progress to-date. Gains in the high school graduation rate in LAUSD compare very favorably with those in other large urban districts. For example, New York City public schools showed a 3.3 percentage point increase from 2010-2014 (New York City Department of Education 2016).

At the same time, we recognize that graduation rates in L.A. can and should be much higher. There is ample room for further progress: the L.A. Compact aims to ensure that each and every student graduates from high school.
HOW HAVE MINORITY STUDENTS FARED WITH RESPECT TO HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION?

Recent developments in LAUSD mirror national trends for minority students. Graduation rates for different racial/ethnic groups demonstrate a significant, yet narrowing achievement gap (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Four-Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity**

**LAUSD, 2010-2015**

Latino and Black students achieved more impressive gains than did their Asian and White counterparts in LAUSD. Disadvantaged minorities increased their graduation rates by 10 and 9 percentage points from 2010 to 2015, compared with gains of 5 percentage points for Whites and 3 percentage points for Asians. In the class of 2015, 71 percent of Latinos, 67 percent of Blacks, and 77 percent of Whites completed their diplomas on time. Asian students exhibited the highest graduation rates (87% in 2014), as well as the flattest trend over time.

*Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest*
Indicator 2: Four-Year Cohort Dropout Rate

Dropout prevention and recovery are essential to improving school graduation rates and long-term student success. Schools, districts, and communities cannot be successful if students are falling to the margins and, ultimately, dropping out of school. High school dropouts face significant disadvantages in attaining jobs and careers that can sustain a reasonable standard of living, particularly in competitive urban markets like L.A. Dropouts experience higher unemployment rates (Johnson et al. 2015) and lower earnings than do high school graduates.

DID DROPOUT RATES IMPROVE IN RECENT YEARS?

Figure 8 provides longitudinal data on the percentage of youth who dropped out of high school instead of graduating with their cohort in LAUSD, L.A. County and California as a whole. Just as graduation rates improved from 2010 to 2015, so did dropout rates.

Figure 8: Four-Year Cohort Dropout Rate
LAUSD, L.A. County, and California, 2010-2015

The share of high school dropouts decreased substantially in a short period of time for all three geographic areas (Figure 8). The LAUSD dropout rate declined most sharply, from 25 percent of students in 2010 to 17 percent in 2013 (where it stalled until 2015), an impressive decrease of almost one third. Progress has not been constant and will not continue without proactive measures; we still have a long way to go to achieve a zero dropout rate.
HOW DID CHANGES IN DROPOUT RATES COMPARE FOR DIFFERENT RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS IN LAUSD?
As was true nationally, LAUSD 2010-2015 improvements in the dropout rate were sharp for disadvantaged minorities and more modest for Asians and whites (Figure 9). The share of dropouts declined for each group, as follows: from 25 percent to 17 percent of students among Latinos; from 30 percent to 22 percent for Blacks; from 11 percent to 9 percent for Asians; and from 21 percent to 16 percent for whites. The sharp declines in dropping out for disadvantaged minorities drive the overall improvement in LAUSD (seen in Figure 7), both because Latino and Black students showed greater improvement than did other groups and because they comprise more than four-fifths of the student population.

Figure 9: Four-Year Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity
LAUSD 2010-15

Latino students fared well relative to other groups in LAUSD. By 2012, Latinos had effectively closed the gap with Whites, which started at four percentage points in 2010 and close to within one percentage point.

Black youth narrowed the gap relative to Whites from nine percentage points in 2010 to five percentage points in 2015 (and from a 19 to a 13 percentage-point gap with Asians). While this is excellent headway, Blacks continue to have the highest dropout rates of any group in L.A. More than one in five Black students in LAUSD who should have graduated with their cohort in 2015 dropped out instead.

Progress on reducing dropout rates stalled from 2013 to 2015. Eliminating dropouts entirely for each group of students will require concerted effort in L.A. and elsewhere to reinvigorate the trends of the previous three years. Recent data suggest that substantial gains can indeed be achieved in a relatively short time. Tracking the trends for each large racial/ethnic group affords the community clear information that can sharpen our focus as we work toward improving outcomes for all of the region’s youth in the coming years.
Indicator 3: On-Track Rates for Meeting A-G Requirements

WHAT ARE THE A-G REQUIREMENTS, AND WHY DOES MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS MATTER?
The A-G requirements are the rigorous set of courses students must complete in high school in order to be eligible for admission to California public four-year colleges or universities without remediation. Being on-track to meet these requirements is an indicator of preparedness for four-year postsecondary institutions.

A-G has also become an important pipeline indicator for high school graduation. In 2005, the LAUSD Board of Education passed the “Resolution to Create Educational Equity through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence as part of the District’s High School Graduation Requirement.” The A-G Resolution sought to ensure all LAUSD students had equitable access to the 15-course sequence required for admission to California’s public four-year postsecondary institutions. Beginning with the Class of 2016, completion of the A-G curriculum with a D grade or better would be required for high school graduation. Beginning the following year (2017), all students would be required to complete the A-G sequence with a C grade, thus fully meeting California’s public university preparatory requirements.

Yet by the Spring of 2015, 10 years after the Board passed the A-G resolution, the District projected that nearly 22,000 students in the Class of 2017 would fall short of completing the A-G requirements and would be denied a high school diploma. The Board moved to ease the requirements by reverting to the earlier requirement of a passing grade of D instead of C. Students with Ds in these courses could still earn their diplomas; however, C grades in A-G courses are still required for admission at a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) (Gilbertson 2015).

IMPRESSIVE LAUSD GAINS IN A-G COMPLETION
The share of LAUSD students on track to completing their A-G requirements with a C or better rose dramatically from 2009 through 2015 (Figure 10). LAUSD showed an overall gain from 29 percent of students in 2009 to 41 percent in 2015 (12 percentage points). While this amounts to an impressive increase of two-fifths, the share of students passing their A-G courses with grades sufficient for public, four-year university eligibility is still relatively low.

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*a Requirements include grades of C or better in: (a) two years of History/Social Science; (b) four years of English; (c) three years of Math; (d) at least two years of Laboratory Science; (e) two years of Foreign Language; (f) one year of Visual or Performing Arts; and (g) one year of a College Preparatory Elective.*
After years of rising graduation rates — reaching 72 percent for the class of 2015 — LAUSD projected in fall of 2015, that less than 50 percent of seniors in the class of 2016 were on track to graduate, due to implementation of the new A-G requirements (even with a passing grade of D rather than C) (Clough 2015). The district responded by rolling out a $15 million credit recovery program that placed seniors in special classes after school and during breaks to help them pass courses they previously failed (Clough 2016a). By March 2016, the success of the credit recovery program led LAUSD to project that the 2016 graduation rate may rise above 70 percent (Clough 2016b). An A-G Task force also produced a comprehensive report in September 2015, outlining longer-term strategies to ensure all LAUSD students meet the A-G requirements, while decentralizing implementation to the six local district superintendents.
New Standardized Tests Gauge Proficiency and Preparedness

NEW STANDARDIZED TESTS
Starting in 2013, schools began using the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), a suite of computer-based Common Core-aligned assessments from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) to test students in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The CAASPPs are based on California’s new, more challenging academic standards. They measure critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that will contribute to students’ success in college and in the 21st century workforce. Students who meet or exceed CAASPP standards are considered on pace to be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate high school.

Spring 2015 marked the first time CAASPP results were reported in California (as 2013-14 was a practice year). We now have two years of CAASPP data, allowing for assessments of short-term change in test results.

(The CAASPP scores are not comparable to previous scores on other standardized tests. They may be compared only with other CAASPP results.)

Indicator 4: English Language Arts Proficiency

WHY DOES ENGLISH PROFICIENCY MATTER?
The English Language Arts (ELA) CAASPP measures key literacy skills in both reading and writing. We use proficiency on the ELA CAASPP as a proxy for academic preparedness and likelihood of high school graduation, due to the expectation that students who perform well on these tests are more likely to achieve good grades and graduate in four years.

BASELINE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CAASPP SCORES
Figure 11 shows the 2015 and 2016 shares of third grade students who met or exceeded grade-level standards on the ELA CAASPPs for LAUSD, L.A. County, and California. Well under half of third graders in all three geographic areas were apparently sufficiently proficient in English. In both years, LAUSD trailed the County and State in the proportion of third graders who met or exceeded ELA standards (34 percent in 2016 against 41 percent and 43 percent, respectively), with greater disparity in the top rank — students who exceeded standards. All geographic areas made small one-year gains, ranging from 5 to 6 percentage points, with most of the gains at the higher level—for students exceeding standards. Despite progress, California students—especially those in LAUSD—have a long way to go to rate “on track” for college and career.
The ELA results for eighth and 11th graders show successively larger shares of students meeting or exceeding standards in each older cohort. Thirty-seven percent of eighth graders were on track in LAUSD, 47 percent in L.A. County, and 48 percent in California by 2016, while more than half of 2016 11th graders in all three geographic areas were on track.

LAUSD scores trailed the County and California in all grades. However, LAUSD 11th graders’ one-year gains exceeded those of the county and state (6 percentage points vs. 3), especially at the highest level — exceeded standards. By 2016, LAUSD juniors closely approached the readiness levels of their peers in L.A. County and California (54% vs. 58% and 59%, respectively). (See Figures 12 and 13.)

**Figure 12: 8th Grade English, Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards**


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**Figure 13: 11th Grade English, Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards**


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<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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Source: California Department of Education, CAASPP

The ELA results differ widely between racial/ethnic groups in LAUSD. Figure 14 shows the proportion of third grade LAUSD students who met or exceeded grade-level standards on the ELA CAASPPs, disaggregated by race/ethnicity for 2015 and 2016. LAUSD’s disadvantaged minority third graders trailed their peers by significant margins in 2015 (22 percent for both Latinos and Blacks versus 61 percent for Asians and 59 percent for Whites), and the gaps either widened or remained constant from 2015 to 2016, with Black students showing the smallest gains (3 percentage points) and Asian students the largest (9 percentage points). Among Asian and White third graders, larger shares of exceeded than met standards; the reverse was true for Latinos and Black pupils.

LAUSD eighth graders showed a very similar pattern (Figure 15): significant racial/ethnic gaps for Latino and Black students relative to Asians and Whites, as well as one-year gains that were smallest for Black students and largest for Asians—thus widening the ELA gaps. Eighth graders had slightly higher rates of meeting or exceeding ELA standards than their third grade counterparts, but showed less proficiency at the higher level (exceeding) for every race/ethnic group.

The pattern of racial/ethnic difference and one-year gains was similar for high school juniors as for younger students. Asians showed the highest rates of meeting/exceeding standards (80% by 2016), followed by Whites (69%), Latinos (53%), and Blacks (41%).

Among 11th graders, Asians were the only group with a larger share of students exceeding than just meeting standards.
Figure 14: 3rd Grade English by Race/Ethnicity
Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards, LAUSD, 2015 vs. 2016

Figure 15: 8th Grade English by Race/Ethnicity
Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards, LAUSD, 2015 vs. 2016

Figure 16: 11th Grade English by Race/Ethnicity
Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards, LAUSD, 2015 vs. 2016

Source: California Department of Education, CAASPP
**Indicator 5: Math Proficiency**

**WHY IS MATH PROFICIENCY IMPORTANT?**
Student scores on the CAASPP are a good indicator of overall academic performance in math, as they measure key skills related to number sense, algebraic thinking, recognition of numerical patterns and functions, measurement and geometry, and statistics and probability. Math achievement functions as a “gatekeeper” to postsecondary education, and math courses continue to be the ones that students are most likely to fail in high school.

**BASELINE MATHEMATICS CAASPP SCORES**
The 2015 and 2016 math CAASPP results for LAUSD, L.A. County, and California show that, as with English proficiency: less than half of students in third, eighth and 11th grades met or exceeded standards; proficiency rates improved for students in all three geographic areas; and LAUSD students were behind their County and State peers in meeting the new, more challenging math standards. (See Figures 17, 18, and 19.)

In general, performance against standards was better in the lower grades across all geographic areas. This is troubling for the current cohort of high schoolers, but bodes well for the future. Third graders were more likely to meet or exceed mathematics standards than eighth graders, who in turn scored better than 11th graders, across LAUSD, the county, and the state. By 2016, third graders’ rates of meeting or exceeding math standards were 38 percent in LAUSD, 45 percent in L.A. County, and 46 percent in California. Comparable figures were 26 percent, 33 percent and 36 percent for eighth graders, and 25 percent, 30 percent and 33 percent among 11th graders.

Third graders also made the greatest one-year gains (6-7 percentage points vs. 3 percentage points for eighth graders, and 2-5 percentage points for high school juniors). Only among 11th graders did LAUSD students narrow the gap with the county and state, with one-year gains of 5 percentage points relative to 2 percentage points in the county and 4 statewide.

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**Figure 17: 3rd Grade Math, Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards**

**Figure 18: 8th Grade Math, Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards**

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*Source: California Department of Education, CAASPP*
Math performance is particularly troubling for high school juniors across all geographic areas, but especially in LAUSD (Figure 19). Despite disproportionate gains, by 2016, only 25 percent of LAUSD 11th graders met or exceeded standards. At the county and state levels, mathematics CAASP scores were only slightly better, at 30 percent for the County, and 33 percent statewide. The top ranking — exceeded standards — eluded all but 7 percent of LAUSD juniors, 11 percent in L.A. County and 13 percent statewide.

Within LAUSD, there are large racial/ethnic disparities in meeting the new math standards (Figures 20, 21, and 22). Black and Latino students fared much worse than did Asians and Whites. In general, the share of disadvantaged minority students meeting or exceeding standards is roughly comparable to—or less than—the share of Asian and White students in the lower category of simply meeting standards, and extremely small shares of Latino or Black students exhibited proficiency at the highest level in any grade. Further, progress for Black students as a group was problematic. 2015-16 changes gains for Black students were smaller than for other groups (and nonexistent for eighth graders), which exacerbated racial gaps in all three grades.

Among LAUSD third graders, 2016 gaps were enormous: only 32 percent of Latinos and 26 percent of Blacks met or exceeded math standards in 2016, compared with 77 percent of Asians and 69 percent of Whites (i.e., spreads of 37 to 51 percentage points). Gains for 2015-16 were uneven (3 percentage points for Black pupils vs. 6 percentage points for other groups), widening the divide for Black students.

Racial/ethnic gaps were more pronounced for eighth graders than for third graders, especially for Black and Asian students. The shares of students meeting or exceeding math standards in 2016 were 21 percent and 14 percent for Latinos and Blacks versus 70 percent and 52 percent for Asians and Whites. The largest gap was 56 percentage points (between Blacks and Asians). Asian eighth graders performed far better than all other students including whites (Asian-White gap of 18 percentage points). Both Asians (especially) and Whites posted larger one-year gains than did disadvantaged minority eighth graders.

**Figure 19: 11th Grade Math, Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards**


**Figure 20: 3rd Grade Math by Race/Ethnicity**

Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards, LAUSD, 2015 vs. 2016
Math performance in high school was poorer overall than among younger cohorts. Twenty-one percent of Latino LAUSD 11th graders and 14 percent of Blacks met or exceeded math standards versus 65 percent and 42 percent of their Asian and White peers, respectively. Racial/ethnic disparities were especially pronounced at the highest levels of proficiency, i.e., exceeding standards: only 5 percent of Latino and 3 percent of Black high school juniors excelled at this level versus 34 percent of Asians and 17 percent of Whites.

Underpreparedness in Math is particularly troubling, given the growth of jobs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and their importance to the regional economy. In an effort to transform education and inspire students to be excited about STEM careers, the Los Angeles STEM Hub (a Workgroup of the L.A. Compact) seeks to improve the quality of, and access to, STEM education in L.A. The STEM Hub (a) works to engage students in their learning through hands-on learning experiences and exposure to industry professionals and (b) provides educators with professional development support in STEM.
Indicator 6: 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

**WHY DOES READING MATTER SO MUCH FOR 3RD GRADERS?**

Third grade literacy is recognized as a key benchmark for student success. Students below grade level in reading at this point are at risk of falling behind in all subjects over time, as learning becomes more reading-based in the upper grades. Research suggests that students who are not at least moderately proficient in reading by third grade are unlikely to graduate high school (National Research Council 1998). State standards are designed to ensure that students master foundational literacy by the end of third grade in order to mitigate against future problems and promote student achievement.

**CAASPP BASELINE 3RD GRADE READING PROFICIENCY**

Test scores for the Reading subscale of the English Language Arts CAASPP are published only in aggregated form, where the category of “met standard” is collapsed with “near standard.” Third grade reading proficiency increased from 2015-2016; by 2016, 56 percent of LAUSD third graders, 61 percent in the county, and 63 percent in California could be considered at least moderately proficient (exceeded, met or near standards) (Figure 23). While LAUSD 3rd graders were still at a disadvantage relative to the rest of the County and State, the gap narrowed slightly.

**Figure 23: 3rd Grade Reading: Nearly Met/Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards LAUSD, L.A. County, and California, 2015 vs. 2016**

Source: California Department of Education, CAASPP
Within LAUSD, pronounced racial/ethnic disparities persist in 3rd grade reading proficiency. While the gaps narrowed a bit from 2015-16, Latino and Black youngsters still had poorer literacy scores than their Asian and white counterparts by a large margin, especially at the highest level of proficiency. Less than one in 10 disadvantaged minority students ranked in the top category (exceeded reading standards) in 2016: 9% for Latinos, 10% for Blacks) versus 37% of Asians and 36% of White pupils (upper bars, Figure 24). Combining this top category with students who were near or at standards results in a total of approximately half of disadvantaged minority third graders (51% of Latinos, 47% of Blacks), but well over three-quarters of Asians (83%) and whites (80%). This leaves about 1 in 2 Latino and Black third graders and about 1 in 5 Asian and White third graders far from meeting even moderate proficiency standards. The CAASPP results underscore significant early literacy gaps that must be addressed to improve longer-term student success.

**Figure 24: 3rd Grade Reading by Race/Ethnicity**

*Nearly Met/Met or Exceeded CAASPP Standards, LAUSD, 2015 vs. 2016*

Source: California Department of Education, CAASPP
Indicator 7: English Proficiency for English Learners

SERVING STUDENTS WITH PRIMARY LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Upon enrollment in public school, every family is asked to complete a Home Language Survey. If this survey shows that a language other than English is spoken in the home and that a student is not proficient in English, the child is classified as an English Learner (EL) and is required to take the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). This test measures listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. EL students are expected to improve one CELDT level annually (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1=Beginner, 5=Advanced). Because literacy in English is foundational to academic success, these data are a critical measurement to identify and address how well we are doing in meeting the needs of one of the most vulnerable student populations.

HOW WELL DO LAUSD STUDENTS LEARN ENGLISH?

Between 2009 and 2015, the percentage of LAUSD EL students making sufficient annual progress in English proficiency increased markedly: 54 percent of English Learners advanced at least one level on the CELDT in 2015 (vs. 47% in 2009). A related and encouraging development is that the share of students not making sufficient progress (not reclassifying within five years) dropped from 34 percent to 24 percent. (See Figure 25.)

Figure 25: English Learners’ Progress toward Proficiency in English
LAUSD, 2009-15

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District Scorecard and Performance Meter
THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Students with high absence rates do not learn effectively. Further, high quality teaching and learning are rare in classrooms staffed by substitute teachers. Low student and staff attendance are costly for students, an issue that is especially important when school funding is tight. Improvements in student attendance include reductions in both voluntary absences and in suspensions. Efforts to increase student and staff attendance are meant to facilitate achievement gains and maximize returns on financial investments in education.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AT LAUSD

Figure 26 demonstrates that, from 2008 to 2015, the proportion of students and staff meeting LAUSD’s target of 96 percent attendance increased to 73 percent (a rise of 11 percentage points) for students and to 71 percent for staff (up 6 percentage points). Meeting the 96 percent attendance goal means missing seven or fewer days over the school year. Improvements among students have been steady and dramatic since 2010.

Figure 26: Students and Staff Meeting 96% Attendance Goals

LAUSD, 2008-2015

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District Scorecard and Performance Meter
WHY IS REDUCING SUSPENSIONS IMPORTANT FOR YOUTH SUCCESS?

Suspended students lose valuable instructional time and are at increased risk of negative, life-changing outcomes. Balfanz (2013) demonstrates that even one suspension for a ninth grader doubles the student's likelihood of dropping out of high school. At an even younger age, middle schoolers who are suspended or expelled in one year are significantly more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system in the subsequent year (Fabelo 2011).

Suspension policy has become a social justice issue, as suspensions are disproportionately meted out to students of color, particularly to Black boys (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights 2016). Black pupils comprise only six percent of California public school students, but 16 percent of suspensions (Nittle 2016). In 2012, Black students were four times more likely than White students to be suspended for acts of “willful defiance,” a subjective category that includes minor infractions such as failing to do homework, cursing, and talking back (Jackson et al. 2013). This disparity has consequences not just for individual students, but also for overall school climate and the degree to which students, families and the community perceive the school as punitive versus supportive.

DECLINE IN SUSPENSIONS IN LAUSD

The LAUSD Board of Education adopted a School Climate Bill of Rights in May 2013, which banned suspensions for willful defiance and directed all schools to implement positive behavior interventions and supports, as well as restorative justice programs. The motivation behind this policy shift was to promote student access to caring, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environments (Edelman 2016). The following year, LAUSD directed school police to stop citing pupils for minor infractions such as fighting, petty thefts, vandalism and possession of marijuana or alcohol (Nittle 2015).

These discipline reform efforts have driven dramatic reductions in suspensions. The number of LAUSD instructional days lost to suspension plummeted by almost 90 percent in a few short years—from nearly 60,000 in 2009 to just over 6,000 in 2015, as shown in Figure 27. LAUSD schools are working to retain students with disciplinary issues on school campuses, where they can be monitored and supported. The district has made tremendous progress on this front.
LAUSD’s efforts and outcomes set it apart from the county and state. The suspension rate in LAUSD dropped to 0.9 percent in 2015, less than half of L.A. county’s rate of 2.2 percent and less than one-fourth of the California rate of 3.8 percent (Figure 28).
GOAL 2: All Students Have Access to and are Prepared for Success in College

In today's increasingly competitive economy, postsecondary education is critical to obtaining a sustainable career. Whether it's the growth of an educated, global workforce, technological advances, or access to innovative information, new economic realities make a postsecondary education essential to attaining the American dream.

The nation is currently experiencing a pronounced skills gap, where more than 3 million jobs go unfilled due to a dearth of sufficiently skilled workers. By 2020, the number of jobs requiring postsecondary education will exceed the number of workers by 5 million if the current attainment rate in higher education continues (Carnevale, et al. 2015); 65 percent of the 55 million projected job openings nationally will require some postsecondary education (ibid). California alone will have to produce an additional 2.5 million graduates with postsecondary credentials (A.A., B.A., and beyond) by 2025 to fill workforce demands (Bohn 2014).

Without significant improvements in high school and postsecondary completion rates, our students risk a lifetime of lower earnings, higher unemployment, dependency on social services and lower levels of civic engagement. Additionally, our state and nation risk substantial losses in economic competitiveness. College access, enrollment, retention and completion are essential to a successful transition into the 21st century global workforce.

The L.A. Compact’s cradle-to-career approach strives to serve LAUSD and L.A. County students by opening doors to high-quality postsecondary education opportunities as well as to promising careers. Success on these fronts offers pathways to individual success and to regional economic growth.

Indicator 1: Graduates Completing A-G Requirements with a C or Better

WHY ARE THE A-G REQUIREMENTS IMPORTANT FOR GRADUATING SENIORS?
Completion of the A-G requirements with a grade of C or better signifies that students have achieved the minimum standard for entry to a public four-year college or university. High school graduates who wish to pursue a four-year degree but haven’t met this pre-requisite must first attend a community college before becoming eligible for a public, four-year institution.

A-G COMPLETION SURGES AMONG LAUSD GRADUATES
From 2011 to 2013, LAUSD schools posted UC/CSU eligibility rates that lagged L.A. county and California by two to three percentage points and registered at 37 percent of graduates in 2013 (Figure 29). But in 2014, the eligibility rate for LAUSD graduates jumped to 46 percent, easily surpassing the county and statewide rates. 2015 witnessed a further jump ahead for LAUSD: 52 percent of graduates were prepared for public four-year institutions (vs. 47 percent in the county and only 43 percent statewide). The District’s UC/CSU eligibility rate now exceeds the statewide rate by a very significant margin of nine percentage points.

9 For an explanation of A-G requirements, see previous discussion of Goal 1, Indicator 3.
LAUSD’s impressive progress from 37 percent in 2011 to 52 percent in 2015 (an increase of almost 1.5 times the earlier rate) represents a significant victory for the district in preparing students for four-year universities. LAUSD’s push to ensure that all students take and pass the A-G course sequence certainly contributed to the considerable increase in UC/CSU eligibility and will continue to be a significant driver into the future. LAUSD’s high school graduation requirements are not yet aligned with admission requirements for the UC and CSU systems (as students may still graduate with a minimum grade of D instead of C in these courses). However, simply requiring students to complete all A-G courses is a huge step toward removing barriers to college for a significant number of youth. The district’s change in orientation—effectively putting all students on a college “track” — has had a formidable impact on the eligibility of graduates and therefore, on their college prospects. It remains to be seen whether LAUSD’s bold commitment to universal A-G completion will be replicated as a key college readiness strategy by other districts in L.A. County or California.
WHAT DOES THE EARLY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM TELL US?

The Early Assessment Program (EAP) provides information on how well prepared 11th grade students are for a public four-year college or university. Until 2014, the EAP used augmented English and Math California Standards Tests (developed in collaboration with the CSUs) to provide students with a measure of their readiness for college-level English and Math in their junior year of high school. While this report utilizes the 2015-16 CAASPP data, we also present the EAP data from 2009-2014 here. Results serve as an early warning to guide and motivate students to meet additional requirements during their senior year so they can enter a public, four-year college or university immediately following graduation, rather than being required to take remedial classes at a two-year community college.

Lowering remediation rates will save money for both students and the State. At the national level, the Alliance for Excellent Education suggests that reducing the need for remediation could save an estimated $5.6 billion per annual student cohort: $3.6 billion from decreased spending on “direct remedial education costs for students who did not have the skills to succeed in postsecondary coursework” during their time in college and another $2 billion in lifetime wages for underprepared students who currently do not complete degrees (Alliance for Excellent Education 2011, p.1). In California, the savings and earnings benefits from reducing the need for remediation amount to an estimated $1.1 billion per cohort--$780 million from remediation savings and $352 million in lost earnings (ibid, p.9).

In the near future, students deemed not ready for college coursework may be turned away from UCs and CSUs, forcing them to enroll in two-year community colleges. This constitutes a significant individual setback and an indicator of lower probability of ultimate college completion, as the successful transfer rate from two-year to four-year institutions is only about 10 percent in California (PPIC 2014).

MODEST GAINS FOR LAUSD STUDENTS IN COLLEGE READINESS

Data on EAP results from 2009 to 2014 provide a marker for the percentage of 11th graders deemed ready for coursework in the CSU system. Rates for LAUSD juniors were lower than for the County and State overall, and LAUSD students did not close the achievement gaps relative to their peers in 2009-14. LAUSD changes in college readiness in English and Math roughly tracked shifts for juniors across the county and state in those years.

Figure 30: High School Graduates Ready for CSU Coursework in English
LAUSD, L.A. County and California, 2009-2014

Source: California State University, Educational Testing Service
The share of LAUSD juniors prepared for college-level English language arts coursework rose from 9 percent in 2009 to 16 percent in 2014. While progress was encouraging, the share of LAUSD 11th graders who were college ready in English was still quite low—well under one in five students. Juniors in the county and state were only slightly better prepared by 2014, at 22 percent and 25 percent, respectively (Figure 30).

Figure 31: High School Graduates Ready for CSU Coursework in Math
LAUSD, L.A. County and California, 2009-2014

College readiness in mathematics was strikingly poor in all geographic areas, and dropped in the last couple of years. By 2014, only 4 percent of LAUSD juniors were ready for CSU coursework in math; aggregate figures for L.A. County (9%) and California (10%) were also quite problematic (Figure 31). The low levels of math proficiency and decline in math achievement for 11th graders across the state in the years prior to 2014 suggest a systemic need to focus on preparedness for college-level mathematics.
WHY SHOULD L.A. YOUTH ATTEND COLLEGE?

Increasingly, the careers and jobs with the greatest growth potential will require some education or training beyond high school. In California, this is true of both high-skill jobs that require a bachelor's degree or higher and of “middle skills” jobs that require a sub-baccalaureate credential, such as an associate's degree or a certificate. For L.A. youth, postsecondary attainment offers the surest path to the middle class; it is well documented that college graduates experience higher rates of employment, higher lifetime earnings, and greater job security than do individuals with just a high school diploma.

In light of these realities, LAUSD is focused on increasing the number of students who graduate from high school with a concrete plan for continuing their education. Compiling data on the number and percentage of graduates who not only demonstrate college readiness but who actually attend postsecondary institutions is an important measure of the long-term success of the K-12 educational system.

TRACKING POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

LAUSD has utilized the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to track enrollment in postsecondary institutions for recent cohorts of graduates (Lim 2016). Figure 32 provides rates of postsecondary enrollment within one year of high school graduation (or its equivalent) for the classes of 2010-2014. The top line shows that total enrollment was 65 percent for the class of 2010, dropped to 63 percent for the next cohort, and then inched up to 66 percent for 2014 graduates, i.e., a very modest gain.

Figure 32: 2- and 4-Year College Enrollment in First Year after High School
LAUSD, classes of 2010-2014

Source: National Student Clearinghouse, in Lim 2016

10 The NSC data were not originally collected for this purpose and are not optimal, but they are currently the best and only option (Dynarski 2013). We have no comparisons for L.A. county or California, as NSC data are expensive and not publicly available. Until 2010, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) tracked enrollment into public postsecondary institutions. The last wave of CPEC data, reported in our Baseline Report (L.A. Compact 2011), showed that 61% of LAUSD graduates attended California public postsecondary institutions in 2008-09, including 24% at four-year institutions and 37% at two-year community colleges. Note that these data are not strictly comparable to the NSC data.
The bigger story of Figure 32 is in the distribution of graduates across four-year versus two-year institutions. The share of LAUSD grads attending four-year institutions increased steadily, from 20 percent for the class of 2010 to 24 percent for the class of 2014, while enrollment in two-year institutions dipped from 45 percent to 42 percent. This is a positive trend, as ultimate completion of Bachelor’s degrees is more likely for students who enroll in four-year than in two-year institutions right out of high school.

Differences in enrollment by race/ethnicity are pronounced (Figure 33), yet do not follow the same pattern as high school achievement or attainment. While Asian students test better and are more likely to graduate high school than White students, their college enrollment rates are substantially lower. White students show the highest rates, at 77 percent for the classes of 2010 and 2014, with a dip in between. For Asian students, college enrollment inched from 73 percent to 74 percent. Unfortunately, Black students showed a troubling drop in postsecondary enrollment—from 68 percent to 66 percent.

Clearly, it is Latinos who are driving the overall gains in college attendance for LAUSD. They comprise almost three-quarters of the student population and showed the largest gain in college enrollment, from 61 percent to 63 percent of graduates.

Figure 33: College Enrollment in First Year After High School, by Race/Ethnicity
LAUSD, classes of 2010-2014

College enrollment is the first step toward postsecondary completion. A major challenge is to increase degree attainment at both two-year and four-year institutions. The first prong of this strategy is to raise the low community college completion and transfer rates to four-year institutions. LACCD reports that 38.9 percent of students enrolled across its nine community colleges complete either a two-year degree or transfer-ready curriculum within six years (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office 2016b.). While these rates compare very favorably with those in other parts of the Country (Harrington 2016), improvements in both degree completion and transfer will be critical for future labor market outcomes—for L.A.’s young adults individually and for the regional economy as a whole.
THE IMPORTANCE OF EARNING A POSTSECONDARY CERTIFICATE OR DEGREE

Increasingly, earning a degree or certificate from a college, university or accredited trade school is the prerequisite to joining the middle class. Obtaining a postsecondary degree or certificate broadens career opportunities for youth. In particular, completing a bachelor’s degree provides the foundation for a myriad of professional opportunities and significantly increases lifetime earnings. Both unemployment rates and earnings are directly related to educational attainment. In 2013, California’s unemployment rate was 5.9 percent for those with at least a bachelor’s degree, 9.6 percent for those with an associate’s degree, and 10.9 percent for high school graduates (Public Policy Institute of California 2014). Earnings generally rise with education and degree completion: Californians with some college typically earn 20-30 percent more than high school graduates, and those with bachelor’s degrees earn 60 percent more than high school graduates (Bohn 2014). The value of a four-year degree over the course of a lifetime is pronounced: college graduates can expect to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars more than non-graduates, even after accounting for student debt (Johnson et al. 2013). In addition to higher earnings, college graduates are more likely than non-graduates to have employer-provided benefits, like health insurance and retirement savings plans (Baum, Kurose, and Ma, 2013)—which add significantly to their monetary advantage.

At the regional level, completion of four-year degrees by young Angelenos will determine the future vitality of the economy. The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) estimates that, by 2025, 41 percent of California jobs will require at least a bachelor’s degree. At current rates, the state will experience a shortfall of one million college graduates to fill those jobs (PPIC 2014). “Middle skills” jobs that require some college (less than a bachelor’s degree) are also increasing faster than the supply of prepared workers in California, particularly in industries like health care, information technology and business services. This shortage is projected to include 1.5 million workers by 2025 (Bohn 2014), for a total workforce deficit of 2.5 million.

Thus, knowing how successful LAUSD’s graduates are in completing both two-year and four-year degrees will be critical. Attending college and obtaining a two-year degree can provide an immediate advantage in the workforce. California Community College graduates earn, on average, 25 percent more than those without associate’s (A.A.) degrees, and the wage premium is often larger for those earning A.A.s in high-demand fields such as healthcare (Stevens, Kurlaender, and Grosz, 2015)

Our community college system provides a vital entrance point to higher education for hundreds of thousands of students—

Indicator 4: Postsecondary Completion

LACCD enrolled 135,319 in the Fall 2015 semester, 51% of whom intended to transfer to 4-year institutions (Los Angeles Community College District 2016).
split almost evenly between those who aspire to complete a bachelor’s degree and those whose attainment goals are simply “some college.” Students who take courses that improve their skills and knowledge in specific areas—but do not complete a full certificate or degree program—still benefit from completing college coursework and increasing their human capital. Pursuing even a small number of college courses can improve career prospects. Of course, completion of a certificate or degree represents an important indicator of academic performance and human capital development and also signals employers that an individual possesses desirable traits such as perseverance and resilience (considered to be important contributors to worker productivity). The wage gain for A.A. completion is still considerably larger than for some college (e.g., Harrington 2016).

TRACKING COMPLETION OF CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES
Reliable data on degree and certificate completion are not currently available at the district or school level, though LAUSD will have access to degree completion data from NSC in the coming year. Until 2010, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) provided data on postsecondary completion rates by type of college or university and K-12 district of origin. The last wave of CPEC data indicated a clear necessity—particularly at the community college level, but also at the CSUs—to provide increased support so that students are better-equipped to succeed in and complete college. We need widely-accessible data on the trajectories of high school graduates as they enroll in and persist through college in order to determine whether investments in public education at the secondary level are, in fact, yielding results at the postsecondary level.

While we do not currently track the educational outcomes of former LAUSD students, the American Community Surveys (ACS) provide aggregate data on educational attainment for the population 25 years and older in the city of L.A. These data include a large number of former LAUSD students, but also capture many adult relatives and provide a perspective on L.A.’s workforce.

ACS data suggest a slight improvement in college completion among L.A. adults from 2009 to 2015. Figure 34 reveals very small increases in the attainment of Bachelor’s and graduate/professional degrees among Angelenos ages 25 and up (gains of 2 and 1 percentage points, respectively) to 22 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Unfortunately, the ACS data provide no insight on two-year degree completion, as they collapse “some college” with “associate’s degrees.”

Figure 34: Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years+
L.A. City, 2009 and 2015

Vast differences in adult educational attainment exist across race/ethnic groups (Figure 35). In 2015, the modal educational category for Latino adults in L.A. was “less than high school” (47%), and only 27 percent had any postsecondary education (including 9% with a bachelor’s or higher). For Blacks, the modal category was “some college or associate’s degree” (37%), and 25 percent completed at least a four-year degree, for a total of 62 percent with postsecondary education. Among Asians and Whites, the most common educational level is Bachelor’s degree (37% and 33%, respectively). Asians are less likely than Whites to have graduate or professional degrees (15% vs. 21%), and those with postsecondary education comprise 74 percent of Asian adults and 80 percent of whites.

11 Note that a large share of the Latino adult population in L.A. is foreign born.
GOAL 3: All Students Have Pathways to Sustainable Jobs and Careers

To create and sustain a thriving local economy, we need today’s students to become tomorrow’s well-prepared and successful workforce. California’s employers need better-educated workers to meet current and future demands; yet, too few students are graduating at every level—high school, two-year colleges and four-year institutions.

Students who graduate high school often lack the skills and knowledge to succeed in college and in the workforce. By integrating rigorous academics with work-based learning and real world experience, education can be transformed into a personally-relevant, engaging experience for all students, exposing them to previously-unimagined college and career opportunities. Job shadowing, apprenticeships, internships and professional skill-building can decrease the disconnect between education systems and career preparation.

Improving educational achievement and sustainable career pathways for all students will require help from the entire community – including business and civic leaders, parents, community organizations, and higher education partners; the L.A. Compact convenes all of these stakeholders to make this cradle-to-career transformation a reality.

At present, there is virtually no systematic data collection effort that would track career preparation and readiness,¹² making it impossible to determine or characterize how well LAUSD or other school districts perform on this dimension. We are hopeful that there may be a new focus on collecting such data, given (a) the emphasis of Common Core State Standards on ensuring students are “college-ready and career-prepared” and (b) the current expansion of Linked Learning, which is bringing career-based learning to an increasing number of California high school students.

As imperfect proxies for career-readiness (or the lack thereof) among 16-24 year olds, we track data on “disconnection.” Young adults are considered disconnected if they are neither in school nor in the workforce. We also provide data on employment and unemployment in the following sections.

¹² Although some pilot programs and initiatives collect such data, there is no system-wide effort.
“Disconnected Youth,” A.K.A. “Opportunity Youth”

Disconnected Youth,” young adults ages 16-24 who are out of school and work, represent a diverse population that requires tailored reconnection strategies. This population includes high school dropouts, as well as those who have earned a diploma or GED but have not gone on to pursue the postsecondary education or training needed to thrive in today’s labor market. Disconnected youth are disproportionately from low-income and disadvantaged minority backgrounds. They are also more likely to have current or past involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. They may be parents already, lack strong adult connections and mentors, or experience homelessness.

In recent years, this population of 16-24 year olds who are out of school and out of work has been reconceptualized as “opportunity youth,” both because of their own optimism about achieving economic stability and because of recognition that assisting these young adults represents a smart investment and immense opportunity for employers, their communities, and the country as a whole (Corcoran et al., 2012). In 2013, opportunity youth numbered over five and a half million nationally and represented almost 14 percent (13.8%) of all 16-24 year olds (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2015).

Efforts to understand and intervene with this at-risk population in L.A. date back to 2004 when the L.A. City Workforce Investment Board Youth Council commissioned the One Out of Five study—so branded because one out of five (approximately 100,000) young adults ages 16-24 in the City of L.A. was both out of work and out of school. This landmark report spurred regional civic institutions into action and resulted in the development of new, collaborative strategies over the following decade to address L.A.’s crisis of youth disconnection.

As part of its commitment to the L.A. Compact, the City of Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) led a major shift and redesign of its youth workforce services to focus on student dropout recovery. EWDD committed to use at least 70 percent of its funding to serve out-of-school youth (far exceeding the federal Workforce Investment Act requirement that 30 percent of funds be used for this population). In 2012, EWDD formally launched the new YouthSource system, opening 16 “Dropout Recovery Centers” in the City’s high-risk areas, where certified LAUSD attendance counselors are onsite to provide education assessments and develop individualized reengagement plans for youth.

The One Out of Five report (Fogg + Harrington 2004) also spurred the L.A. Area Chamber to engage the business community in creating direct on-ramps for young people into meaningful early work experiences. The Chamber developed the Work Readiness Certificate (WRC), which validates a young adult’s readiness for entry-level employment through a mock-hiring process, customer service assessment, and basic math skills test. WRC recipients receive a certificate signed by the Mayor of L.A. and the President & CEO of the L.A. Area Chamber, and are then connected to job and internship opportunities with Chamber employer partners.

Opportunity Youth in the Los Angeles Region

In L.A. County, more than one in eight 16-24 year olds was neither in school nor working in recent years, which puts these youth at heightened risk of poverty, unemployment and poor labor market performance in the future. Figure 36 provides longitudinal data on the large population of opportunity/disconnected youth in L.A. County.

14 We use ACS 5-year estimates for L.A. County as these estimates are more stable and reliable than for the city of L.A. For breakouts by race/ethnicity, we utilize the larger L.A. metro area (L.A. and Orange counties), again for stability of estimates.
The raw number of 16-24 year olds disconnected from both school and work grew by more than 20,000—from 171,395 in 2009 to 195,405 in 2013. Youth disconnection in L.A. rose from 13.6 percent in 2009 to 14.4 percent in 2013. We note that the continuing increase after 2010 is in marked contrast to the national trend, which dropped from a high of 14.7 percent in 2010 to 13.8 percent in 2013 (Burd-Sharps 2016). While the L.A. rate leveled off in 2012-2013, youth disconnection is still far worse in L.A. County than for youth nationally. It remains to be seen how the economic recovery will affect our region’s vulnerable youth going forward.

Disconnection from school and work has been especially pronounced for disadvantaged minority youth and young adults. Data on 2013 youth disconnection disaggregated by race/ethnicity for the L.A. metropolitan area are provided in Figure 37. The disconnection rate among 16-24 year olds was 17.2 percent for Latinos and 22.5 percent for Blacks, while White youth experienced a far lower rate of 10.5 percent—less than half that of Blacks.
As noted above, the One Out of Five report highlighted our youth crisis and promoted understanding by L.A. leaders of the importance of collaborative solutions to the joint problems of youth unemployment and high school dropouts. In 2013, the L.A. Compact launched the L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative (LA-OYC), which brings together public agencies, nonprofit organizations, education systems, and employers in a collective impact effort to improve education and employment outcomes for a particularly vulnerable subpopulation of opportunity youth: foster youth aging out of the child welfare system and as well as foster youth who have crossed over into the delinquency system.

In a wider effort to serve disconnected youth, the L.A. EWDD led a successful application to the federal government in 2015, resulting in the designation of L.A. as a Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) site (one of ten sites nationwide). L.A. P3 is now coordinating funds and securing waivers from federal programs under the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services to better align, coordinate, and integrate education, workforce, housing and social services (provided by dozens of city and county agencies) for L.A. disconnected youth.

Because of L.A.’s committed leadership and strategies established through the LA-OYC and L.A. P3, the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions recently selected L.A. to become one of five demonstration cities participating in the “100,000 Opportunities Initiative.” This Initiative has committed to train and hire 100,000 disconnected 16-24 year olds nationally by 2018. The L.A. initiative launched in February 2016, with a massive hiring fair that drew more than 5,000 opportunity youth and produced more than 1,000 on-the-spot job offers. The 100,000 Opportunities Initiative will continue through 2018 to engage businesses in developing job opportunities and training pathways for L.A.’s disconnected youth.

Together, these three initiatives—LA OYC, L.A. P3 and 100,000 Opportunities—represent critical components of a comprehensive, collaborative strategy to reengage the nearly 200,000 disconnected youth in the L.A. region over the coming years.
**Indicator 2: Graduates with at least one Part-Time, Work-Based Learning Opportunity**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY WORK EXPERIENCE**

Research has clearly established that students benefit from hands-on, experiential learning. This recognition is in line with the new CAASPP assessments, which emphasize critical thinking and problem solving over rote learning. An employment setting is one of the best environments for students to learn how to think critically, identify problems, and apply knowledge. Early work experience also allows youth opportunities to explore diverse careers, learn workplace etiquette and develop a strong work ethic. These experiences can put youth with otherwise limited labor market experience on a pathway to long-term economic opportunity. Therefore, it will become increasingly important to document student participation in early work-based learning experiences.

**YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN L.A.**

The 2004 One Out of Five report sparked a coordinated campaign to increase access to early work experiences in L.A. not just for opportunity youth but for all disadvantaged youth. Under then-mayor Villaraigosa, HIRE-LA’s Youth launched in 2005 as a partnership between the City and the L.A. Area Chamber to provide both subsidized summer jobs and private-sector commitments. The City increased funding for subsidized summer jobs and provided internships for youth at community non-profits, community colleges, and government agencies. For private-sector jobs, the L.A. Area Chamber recruited local companies to commit thousands of positions and interview inner-city youth for summer opportunities; thousands of youth have been hired into these summer positions, with wages provided by private employers (i.e., with no government subsidy).

While there is currently no systematic collection of data on work-based learning experiences specific to LAUSD students or graduates, we use annual enrollment data from the HIRE LA’s Youth program (the largest summer jobs program in the city of L.A.) to provide partial information on paid work-based learning experiences. HIRE-LA’s Youth served slightly less than 3,900 young adults when it first launched in 2005. With the onset of the Great Recession in 2008, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) brought substantial dollars to the region for subsidized work experience at a time when L.A.’s young adults were particularly affected by rising unemployment.

**Figure 38: Hire-LA’s Youth Summer Employment Program Hires 2009-2015***

* Fiscal Year end (i.e., 2015 = July 2014-June 2015)
Source: City of Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department
Figure 38 shows that the program grew to serve 13,694 young adults in 2009 and 15,734 in 2010. When ARRA funding expired, subsidized jobs declined as well, and enrollment dropped to 5,258 in 2013. Newly-elected Mayor Eric Garcetti made youth employment a central focus of his office, committing to hire more than 10,000 young adults in 2014 and 2015. The County of Los Angeles also significantly increased investments in summer jobs countywide in recent years, providing substantial financial support to the City’s HIRE-LA’s Youth campaign. In 2014, the program grew substantially to 6048 youth served, and in 2015 exceeded the 10,000 job goal set by Mayor Garcetti, reaching 10,935 youth with a paid work experience. In 2016, Mayor Garcetti announced a new goal of serving 15,000 youth.

In addition to enrollment in the City’s HIRE-LA’s Youth program, we use employment estimates for L.A. County from the ACS as another measure of early paid work experience. Figure 39 displays the percent employed (either part- or full-time) among 16-19 year olds from 2009-15; we also include employment rates for 20-24 year olds, and the combined group of 16-24 year olds.

**Figure 39: Youth Employment (16-24 Year Olds)**

L.A. County, 2009-2015

The trend in employment among teenagers, exhibited as the lower line in Figure 39, is worrisome. As the recession hit, employment for 16-19 year olds in L.A. County declined from 19.1 percent in 2009 to 14.8 percent in 2011, and only partially recovered thereafter to 14.4 percent as of 2015. The initial drop is consistent with 2000-2011 trends across large U.S. metropolitan areas, which Brookings scholars have labeled the “plummeting labor market fortunes of teens and young adults” (Sum et al. 2014a). According to this and a later Brookings report, the L.A.-Orange County area ranked at the bottom nationally for 16-24 year old employment: 100th out of the 100 largest metro areas in 2011 (ibid), and 98th in 2012 (Sum et al. 2014b) At the start of the millennium and prior to the recession, teen employment was far more promising than in recent years—31.5 percent in 2000 (ibid).

Employment rates for young adults, ages 20-24 were far better than for teens, but also declined from 2009 to 2011, (from 58.6 percent to 55.3 percent). Unlike the trend for teenagers, young adult employment rebounded and, by 2015, exceeded the pre-recession rate at 60.0 percent (top line of Figure 39). For 20-24 year olds, the L.A. region’s national ranking was somewhat better than for teens (86th out of 100 largest metro areas in 2012) (ibid). It is teen employment that is egregiously poor in our region.
Are employment rates low because L.A. area youth choose not to work? We track unemployment data to provide context and allow deeper understanding of labor market trends. These data indicate that a large share of the region’s youth would prefer employment but cannot find work.

**Figure 40: Youth Unemployment (16-24 Year Olds)**

L.A. County, 2009-2015

![Figure 40: Youth Unemployment (16-24 Year Olds)](chart)

Source: American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

Figure 40 provides unemployment rates for teens and young adults in L.A. County from 2009 through 2015. For both groups, unemployment rates increased as the recession worsened, but more than bounced back with the economic recovery, ending the period substantially better than in 2009. For workers in their early 20’s, the unemployment rate of 12.6% in 2015 was almost 5 percentage points lower than the 2009, pre-recession level (17.5%). For teens, the 2015 rate of 29.1 percent represents an improvement of almost 6 percentage points over the 34.8 percent of teens counted as unemployed in 2009. While unemployment has ostensibly improved, it continues to shape youth experience in our region, especially for teens. Almost three in every 10 working-age teenagers are actively and unsuccessfully pursuing paid employment.

Unemployment rates capture the share of individuals out of work and actively seeking employment (within the previous four weeks). These figures are widely recognized as underestimates of true unemployment because of the omission of discouraged workers—those who have stopped looking. We cannot discern whether the share of discouraged workers grew during or after the recession and should therefore regard the apparent rebound in the unemployment rate with a degree of caution.

Even with the apparent improvement in labor market outcomes for youth and young adults since the depth of the recession, trends in both employment and unemployment are cause for concern. L.A. has made significant efforts in recent years to address the continuing crisis of youth unemployment by ensuring access to early work experiences. However, much work remains to be done to create true pathways to full-time employment for the tens of thousands of youth and young adults seeking full participation in the region’s labor force.
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