Extended Top Schools 2016 Updated Report Methodology

Main Data Sources
- 2015-2016 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (English) and mathematics results. The data were accessed from the downloadable research files on the California Department of Education website. The files were posted by CDE on October 18, 2016 and downloaded on October 20, 2016. (The files are available for download here: http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2016/ResearchFileList).
- 2014-2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (English) and mathematics results were used to calculate the difference in proficiency rates between the two years of test data. The data file that was referenced in this report was published on March 4, 2016 and accessed from the downloadable research files on the California Department of Education website. The files were downloaded from the CDE website on May 20, 2016 (The files are available here after selecting school year 2015 from the dropdown menu: http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2016/ResearchFileList).
- California Department of Education (CDE) Public School Directory database. This file was downloaded on August 12, 2016 (the file is available for download here: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubschls.asp).
- Student Enrollment in School Year 2015-16 through the California Department of Education's website. The downloadable research file was originally posted on May 17, 2016, and was downloaded on August 6, 2016 (The downloadable enrollment files are available here: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp).
- Student Enrollment Breakdown by Racial/Ethnic Group and Economic Status for School Year 2015-16. This information was obtained through a data request to the California Department of Education on June 21st, 2016, which was returned on August 5th, 2016.

Criteria for Inclusion
The schools highlighted in our lists of top-performing schools for low-income African-American and low-income Latino students meet the following criteria:
- The percentage of low-income African American or low-income Latino students tested in the school was equal to or higher than the state's percentage of low-income African American (4.3%) or low-income Latino students (43.3%); and
- The participation rate (the number of students tested divided by the number of students enrolled in a school) was at least 95% when rounded.
- The school's proficiency rate, calculated for each school type, for low-income African American students in math or English meets or exceeds the state average proficiency rate for all students, OR
- The school's proficiency rate, calculated for each school type, for low-income Latino students in math or English meets or exceeds the state average proficiency rate for all students.

Proficiency Rate Cutoffs for the 2016 Top Schools Report:
The state average proficiency rate for all students, calculated by school type, was used as the minimum proficiency rate to be included in the *Top Schools* lists. These numbers are included below, along with the difference from the cutoffs used in the 2015 report.

School Type	English	English Difference from 2014-15	Math	Math Difference from 2014-15
Elementary	45%	+4	39%	+4
Middle	48%	+4	36%	+3
High	62%	+3	35%	+3

School Sample
The school sample is limited to traditional charter and public district schools serving students between grades K-12, as defined by CDE. For example, the sample does not include juvenile court schools, schools determined to have selective admissions, or other schools considered by CDE to serve nontraditional populations (continuation schools, etc.). Our team checked the websites for all of the schools on our lists to confirm that none of the schools use selective admissions to enroll students into their school. One of the schools that originally appeared on the lists of "top schools" was dropped from the lists for this reason.

Consistency Across School Levels
To allow for fair student achievement comparisons across all schools, particularly schools with irregular grades served, we used schools' grade spans served to break out their rates of meeting or exceeding the state standard into elementary, middle and/or high school grade levels.

School Type Breakdown by Grade Levels	
School Type	Included Grades
Elementary	K-5, K-6 (and no higher grade)
Middle	6-8, 5-8 (and no lower grade), 5-9 (no lower or higher grade), 6-9 (no higher grade)
High	9-12, 8-12 (no lower grade)

Elementary was defined as schools that served grades K-5 or grades K-6 and no higher grade. Middle was defined as schools that served grades 6-8, or schools that served grades 5-8, 5-9, or 6-9 and no lower or higher grades. High schools were defined as schools with grades 9-12, or schools that served grades 8-12 and no lower grades. Schools that served grades in more

than one school-level category were included in comparisons for each of those school types as separate school records.

These separated school records were based on student performance in the grades relevant to that school type. For example, a K-8 school would be considered as both an elementary and middle school, using the scores for grades 3-5 to rank the elementary school and the scores for grades 6-8 for the middle school. Note that only grades 3-8 and 11 are tested in English and math so only these grades are represented in schools' achievement results. The majority of schools were categorized into one school level. Table 1 (below) shows the distribution of school levels in the Bay Area and the rest of the state.

Distribution of School Levels, by California Region		
School Level Categories	**Number of Bay Area Schools**	**Number of non-Bay Area Schools**
Elementary	720	4,034
Middle	211	1,123
High	165	1,037
Elementary & Middle	96	930
Middle & High	15	160
Elementary, Middle & High	6	166
Total	**1,213**	**7,449**

After applying our inclusion criteria, remaining schools were examined to ensure consistent performance across all grade levels served. All schools with grades spanning more than one traditional school type (e.g. K-8, 6-12, etc.) were checked to make sure that performance in other grades at that school did not disqualify it from being a "top school". The criteria we used to evaluate this was that the performance for the listed subgroup still had to be at or above the percentage of students proficient at the state level for that subgroup. Note that this criteria is distinct from the criteria used for inclusion on the Top Schools list, which is that the performance for the listed subgroup had to be at or above the percentage of students proficient at the state level for all students (not just that subgroup). None of the schools that were on the Top Schools lists ended up being excluded for this reason, though one of the middle schools, Orchard Park, barely met this criteria for low-income African American students when all grades were taken into consideration.

CAASPP Data Quality It is possible that some performance statistics in the Bay Area may change as the CDE updates its data files periodically. Although some of the numbers may change, we are confident that the main takeaways from this report are still correct.

New This Year
The inclusion criteria used in this report have been modified since last year's report. This year's enrollment and performance criteria are very similar to that used in the first Top Schools report; however, the actual cutoffs changed based on the average enrollment and proficiency changing at the state level. The enrollment data source also changed, as actual enrollment numbers were used this year instead of the number of students tested in each student group. The participation rate criterion used for this report was not used last year. Even though many of these changes were minor, it is worth noting that due to these modifications in methodology, the results in this report may not be fully comparable to those from the previous year.

The percentages of low-income African American and Latino students in the state of California in school year 2015-16 were very similar to the rates in the previous school year, but the percentage of low-income African American students decreased slightly while the percentage of low-income Latino students increased slightly. These differences were only a few tenths of a percent. The data source for this criterion was modified from the previous year to use disaggregated student enrollment instead of students tested. The reason students tested was used the previous year was due to the fact that the California Department of Education does not make enrollment numbers disaggregated by racial/ethnic group AND economic status available in its downloadable research files. In order to feature disaggregated enrollment numbers in this report, our organization needed to submit a data request to the CDE, which allowed us to obtain the number of low-income African American and low-income Latino students (as well as those numbers for other related subgroups).

Proficiency rates were calculated by summing the percentages of students that were included in the two categories considered to signify proficiency in the material: "standard met" and "standard exceeded". These numbers are already rounded when they are reported, so summing the rounded numbers from these two categories implies a margin of error of up to one percentage point in either direction.

Proficiency rates for schools with nontraditional grade spans were calculated internally after splitting the appropriate grades to match the correct school type. Although these numbers did have decimal places when calculated, these numbers were also rounded to ensure consistency with the rest of the school's reporting. In the case of two schools on a Top Schools list with the same proficiency rate, the school with the larger subgroup enrollment percentage was ranked higher. Similar to the enrollment thresholds above, the minimum required proficiency rates differed due to the changes seen at the state level; however, the differences in proficiency rates were much larger than the ones for enrollment. The proficiency rates increased for each school type in both subjects (ELA and math), with the increases ranging from three to four percentage points in all cases.

State Average % of Student Groups Meeting or Exceeding the State Standard in Traditional Schools, by Subject and School Level							
Student Group	School Level	Subject	Number	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Low-income & African American	Elementary	English	1,508	24%	15%	0%	91%
		Math	1,507	16%	12%	0%	87%
	Middle	English	808	26%	14%	0%	83%
		Math	805	14%	11%	0%	72%
	High	English	389	39%	19%	0%	91%
		Math	387	12%	10%	0%	55%
Low-income & Latino	Elementary	English	4,897	32%	13%	0%	91%
		Math	4,899	25%	12%	0%	94%
	Middle	English	2,052	33%	13%	0%	91%
		Math	2,050	20%	11%	0%	90%
	High	English	1,208	49%	17%	0%	98%
		Math	1,208	19%	12%	0%	98%

The criterion of a participation rate of 95% or higher (when rounded) was not used in last year's version of the Top Schools report. After applying this rule, three unique schools (five records on the Top Schools tables) that would have otherwise been included were dropped. A threshold of 95% was chosen in order to be consistent with federal standards set under No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act (which replaced NCLB in late 2015).

Schools with the Largest Change in Proficiency Since Last Year
This year we featured four schools experiencing the largest gains in proficiency since last year, one for each subject and subgroup combination (low-income African Americans in English, low-income African Americans in math, low-income Latino students in English and low-income Latino students in math). These schools were selected using the same enrollment criteria as the schools in the *Top Schools* tables, but required the biggest difference in proficiency rate from last year's as the proficiency criteria. In addition, a 95% participation rate (when rounded) was required for both years (2014-15 and 2015-16) in order to be featured. Using this criteria, one school that would have otherwise been featured was excluded because its participation rate was below 95% for school year 2014-15.

There were a couple of schools that appeared to have the strongest growth in proficiency since last year, but had a proficiency value of zero for school year 2014-15. These cases were flagged, and our staff confirmed that the 2014-15 numbers for these schools were indeed inaccurate. In all of the cases where these schools would have had the largest increases in proficiency, the accurate data showed that another school had experienced a larger increase in proficiency, and the schools with the largest change in proficiency were featured in the report.

It is important to note that the change in proficiency since last year for these schools cannot be attributed fully to student growth. Although it is convenient shorthand to refer to these schools as the "most-improved" schools, other factors such as demographic changes can also affect the percentage of students meeting standards from one year to another.

That said, despite the inherent limitations, the change in percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards from last year to this year is considered to be a valuable proxy for whether a school is experiencing improvement over time.