

Top Los Angeles County Public Schools 2018-19 Report Methodology

How we identify Top Public Schools

Our annual Top Public Schools report examines how well schools in Los Angeles County are preparing students for the futures they choose. We consider multiple factors, including math and reading scores, college eligibility data, and suspension data to identify schools that are closing the opportunity gap and ensuring students, regardless of race or income, are on track for college.

How schools are included on the list

In order to make our list as a Top Public School for low-income Latino or low-income African American students, schools must meet the following inclusion criteria:

- *Schools must successfully close the opportunity gap for low-income Latino or low-income African American students.* The school's proficiency rates in English and/or math for these two student groups have to be at or above the statewide proficiency rate for all students in English and/or math in a given school type (elementary, middle, or high).
- *High schools must demonstrate that they are preparing low-income Latino or low-income African American students for college.* Schools' graduation and UC/CSU eligibility rates for low-income Latino and low-income African American students must be at or above the statewide average for all students.
- *Schools have to test at least 95% of their students.* Schools also have to have at least 20 students tested in the given student group and subject in order to be considered. This is key to ensuring their data paints a true picture of their performance and how well they're serving all of their students.
- *Schools have to enroll a representative proportion of underserved students.* Schools must enroll at least 4% low-income African American students and/or at least 43% low-income Latino students, which are the statewide enrollment averages, in order to be considered. In Los Angeles County, there are 1,346 schools serving at least 43% low-income Latino students and 510 schools serving at least 4% low-income African American students.

How schools get removed from the list

After identifying schools that meet the set of inclusion criteria outlined above, we eliminate schools that meet one or more of the following exclusion criteria:

- *Schools with low academic performance on the California Dashboard.* We eliminate schools that performed poorly on the California Dashboard’s Academic indicator for the African American or Latino subgroup. Like proficiency rates, this indicator is based on student results on state exams. However, it also measures how a school improved from one year to the next overall, and it measures how far every single student is from mastering the standards.
- *Schools with high suspension rates.* We eliminate schools that have high suspension rates (as indicated by “red” performance or “very high status” on the California Dashboard Suspension Rate indicator) for either all students or for the given group of students. High suspension rates can serve as an important indicator that a school has more work to do in order to build a strong, welcoming culture and a positive learning environment that nurtures all students. Students of color are suspended at higher rates than their White peers. Research has shown that these high suspension rates can ultimately track these students into a school-to-prison pipeline. We believe it is important to celebrate high-performing schools that do not overly rely on harsh discipline policies in order to achieve their results.
- *Schools with selective admissions.* Schools that are selective in choosing which students to admit are not eligible for inclusion in this report. Public schools should be expected to serve all children, and that is especially important for the schools we lift up as examples of what is possible in public education.

Data Sources

- 2018-19 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics results. (The files are available for download here: <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2017/ResearchFileList>.)
- California Department of Education (CDE) Public School Directory database. (The file is available for download here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubschls.asp>).
- Student Enrollment in School Year 2018-19 through the California Department of Education’s website. (The downloadable enrollment files are available here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp>.)
- 2018-19 California State Dashboard. We incorporated elements of the state of California’s dashboard accountability system into our exclusion criteria as a check on academic performance and suspension rates. (The dashboard information is available here: <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/Home>.)
- 2018-19 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) and Outcome Data through the California Department of Education’s website. (The downloadable enrollment files are available here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesacgr.asp>.)

School Sample

The school sample includes traditional public district, charter schools and alternative schools of choice at the elementary, middle, and high school level (2,075 schools in total across the districts of Los Angeles County). The sample does not include juvenile court schools, schools that have selective admissions, or other schools considered by the CDE to offer non-traditional education (e.g., continuation schools).¹ We reviewed each school’s website to ensure that no school (278 in total) on the Top Schools list practiced selective admissions.

Table I: School Sample by School Designation or Governance Type, 2018-19 (Los Angeles County and Top Schools)

School Designation/ Governance Type	Number of Los Angeles County Public Schools	Number of Top Public Schools
District	1,646	194
Charter	376	75
Alternative school of choice	53	9
Total	2,075	278

Inclusion Criteria

Academic performance

In order to meet the academic performance criteria, schools’ proficiency rates in English and/or math on the CAASPP Smarter Balanced Assessment for low-income African American or low-income Latino must be at or above the statewide proficiency rate for all students in English and/or math for their school type (elementary, middle, or high).

High schools, specifically, must demonstrate that they are preparing low-income African American or low-income Latino students for college. Schools’ graduation and UC/CSU eligibility rates for these student groups must be at or above the statewide average for all students. High schools must also demonstrate that they are successfully closing the opportunity gap. Schools’ proficiency rates in English and/or math on the CAASPP Smarter Balanced Assessment for these two student groups have to be at or above the statewide proficiency rate for all students in English and/or math.

Table II: CAASPP Smarter Balanced Assessment Proficiency Cut Points by Grade Level and

¹The school sample in this report is labeled “traditional schools” throughout this document. This includes the full sample of 2,075 schools (traditional and alternative schools of choice).

Subject, 2018-19

School Type	ELA	Math
Elementary	50%	44%
Middle	50%	33%
High	57%	32%

Table III: UC/CSU Eligibility and Graduation Cut Points, 2018-19 (applied only to high school methodology)

UC/CSU Eligibility	Graduation Rate
51%	85%

Participation

In order to meet the participation criteria, schools were required to test at least 95% of their students and have at least 20 students tested in the given subgroup and subject. Only schools testing at least 95% of their students, including the student groups in our report, are included because this testing threshold indicates that the school is testing the majority of their students (i.e., the school makes a concerted effort to test all of its students and therefore test results are a reflection of the school's full student population). We also use the threshold of at least 20 students tested because it is a standard, best-practice threshold to ensure validity in testing data. The 20-student threshold is used by a vast majority of states and districts as the minimum threshold for testing accountability purposes.

Enrollment

Schools included in the Top Public Schools sample are those whose enrollment meets the statewide average enrollment for the subgroups included in the report. For the low-income African American students subgroup, schools must enroll at least 4% low-income African American students. For the low-income Latino students subgroup, schools must enroll at least 43% low-income Latino students. In Los Angeles County, there are 1,346 schools serving at least 43% low-income Latino students and 510 schools serving at least 4% low-income African American students (see diagrams and tables below). This ensures that the report focuses on highlighting schools that serve a sizable and representative proportion of low-income students of color.

Few schools in Los Angeles County are closing the opportunity gap for low-income Latino and African American students

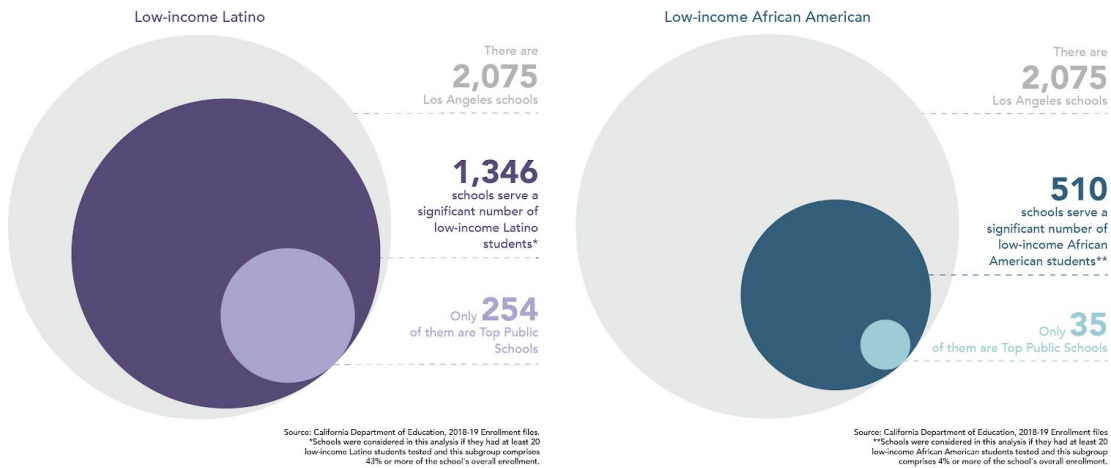


Table IV: Top Schools Enrollment Thresholds by subgroup, 2018-19

Subgroup	State Enrollment (Number of Students)	State Rate (Percent of Students Enrolled)	Top School Los Angeles Threshold	Number of Schools that Met the Top Schools Enrollment Threshold
Low-income & African American	248,175	4%	4%	510
Low-income & Latino	2,670,044	43%	43%	1,346

Table V: Los Angeles Enrollment Summary Statistics by subgroup, 2018-19

Subgroup	Total Los Angeles County Enrollment (Number of Students)	Average Percent of Students Enrolled per School in Los Angeles County	Minimum (Percent Enrolled)	Max (Percent Enrolled)
Low-income & African American	84,162	6%	0%	81%
Low-income & Latino	795,611	54%	0%	99%

Exclusion Criteria

Low Performance on the California Dashboard

Schools with “orange” or “red” performance on the California dashboard in English Language Arts (ELA) or math for the given subgroup and subject are excluded.² Like proficiency rates, this indicator is based on student results on the CAASPP Smarter Balanced Assessments. However, it also measures how a school improved from one year to the next overall, and it measures how far every single student is from mastering the standards. We want to recognize schools that not only met the bar for proficiency rates, but also support students of all levels to reach or exceed mastery. See the [California Dashboard page](#) for more information on this indicator. The tables below outline the cut points used in this report.³

Table VI: Academic Indicator: English Language Arts Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (By more than 15 points)	Declined (by 3 to 15 points)	Maintained	Increased (by 3 to less than 15 points)	Increased Significantly (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	Low (-5.1 to -70 points)						
	Very Low (-70.1 points or lower)						

Table VII: Academic Indicator: Math Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (By more than 15 points)	Declined (by 3 to 15 points)	Maintained	Increased (by 3 to less than 15 points)	Increased significantly (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	Low (-25.1 to -95 points)						

² Schools with no color had either between 20 or 30 students (the CDE Dashboard threshold for inclusion is 30 students tested and our threshold is 20 students). In order to determine whether a school in each category met the dashboard criteria, we looked at their status and change results. If those results were outside our band of inclusion (Table V and VI) we kept the school on the list.

³ These tables show the cut points that were relevant to our report. The full five-by-five grids are available on the [California Dashboard page](#).

	Very Low (-95.1 points or lower)					
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High Suspension (Dashboard)

Schools with “red” performance or “very high status” on the dashboard suspension rate indicator for either all of their students or the individual subgroup. Our methodology breaks out schools that span multiple grade bands (K-8, 6-12, etc.) into two separate schools (elementary/middle in the case of a K-8 and middle/high in the case of a 6-12) in order to effectively and fairly compare schools of similar grade levels.⁴ Conversely, the CDE aggregates suspension rates and reports one single rate for schools that serve multiple grade bands as one school record based on how it is reported in the state’s School Directory File. This means that schools in our analysis that span multiple grade bands are held to one suspension rate for both grade bands-- whichever band they are officially recorded under according to the state’s database. See the [California Dashboard page](#) for information on this indicator.

Table VIII: School Suspension: Elementary School Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Increased Significantly (> 2.0%)	Increased (0.3% to 2.0%)	Maintained	Declined (0.3% to less than 1.0%)	Declined Significantly (1.0% or greater)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (3.0% to 6.0%)						
	Very High (> 6.0%)						

Table IX: School Suspension: Middle School Five-by-Five Color Grid

		STATUS					
		Level	Increased Significantly (> 4.0%)	Increased (0.3% to 4.0%)	Maintained	Declined (0.3% to 3.0%)	Declined Significantly (3.0% or greater)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (8.0% to 12.0%)						
	Very High (> 12.0%)						

⁴ More details on this breakdown are available in the “Low Performance for a Grade Band” section of the methodology on page 9.

Table X: School Suspension: High School Five-by-Five Color Grid

		STATUS				
		Level	Increased Significantly (> 3.0%)	Increased (0.5% to 3.0%)	Maintained	Declined (0.5% to 3.0%)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (6.0% to 10.0%)					
	Very High (> 10.0%)					

Selective Admission or Non-traditional School Status

Only public schools serving a traditional student population are eligible to be included in the Top Public Schools report. We defined traditional using the CDE’s educational option variable in the public school directory file. Any traditional public district, charter, or alternative school of choice at the elementary, middle, and high level offering a traditional educational option (based on the CDE public school directory) is included in the sample.

Schools with selective admissions criteria, such as academic school entrance exams used to determine admissions, are not included in this report. Alternative schools of choice with an application and/or district referral and academic selection process were also excluded from our sample.

Schools were excluded based on the following:

1. If they had an application process that required students to demonstrate a skill or academic proficiency.
2. If the school required a certain grade point average or academic performance level to qualify for registration.
3. If there is an interview process of any kind for interested students.
4. If enrollment in the school required a referral from the district or a traditional school setting.

Non-traditional schools were also not included in this report (i.e. county community schools, continuation schools, juvenile court schools, opportunity schools, youth authority schools, state special schools, special education schools, regional occupational programs, and home and hospital schools).

Low Performance in a Grade Band (for Schools that Otherwise Meet Top Schools Criteria for One or More Grade Bands)

Some schools included in the report sample serve a band of grades that do not align to the CDE’s typical grade-band breakdown (see grade band table below for more information on grade bands by school type). For schools in that category, data is separated into multiple grade bands. For example, a K-8 school’s data would be included in the elementary school sample for their lower grades (K-5) and separately, in the middle school sample for their upper grades (6-8). The split grade band school would be eligible in each of those respective lists if it met or exceeded all other criteria. If a school meets all criteria for one grade band but is low-performing (below the state proficiency rate for the given subgroup and subject) for their other grade band, they do not qualify as a Top School.

Table XI: 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)