

Stopping the Flood Waters: A Call to Transform California's Schools in Support of Native American Students

California's Native students learn and grow amid a fundamental contradiction: while their families and Tribes embrace education as central to their ways of life, California's school systems frequently fail to provide an equitable and inclusive education. Inadequate reporting systems render thousands of Native American students invisible, making it difficult to document their experiences in schools, while the available accountability metrics reveal vast educational disparities.

In 75% of reporting districts, American Indian/Alaska Native students had significantly lower statewide academic assessment scores in English and math.

FIGURE 1A. Percent Meeting or Exceeding Grade Level Standards on Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments—Statewide

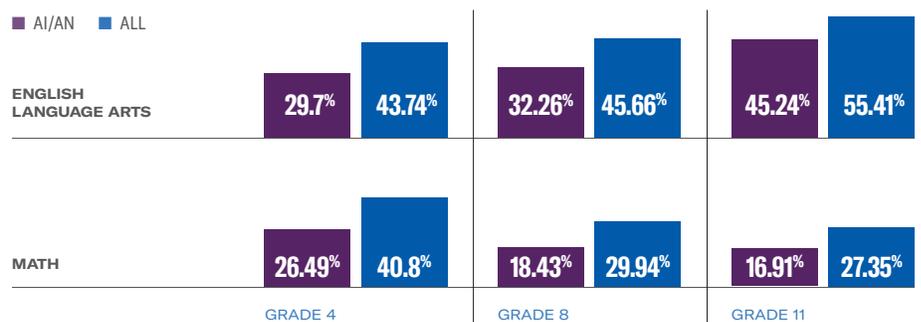
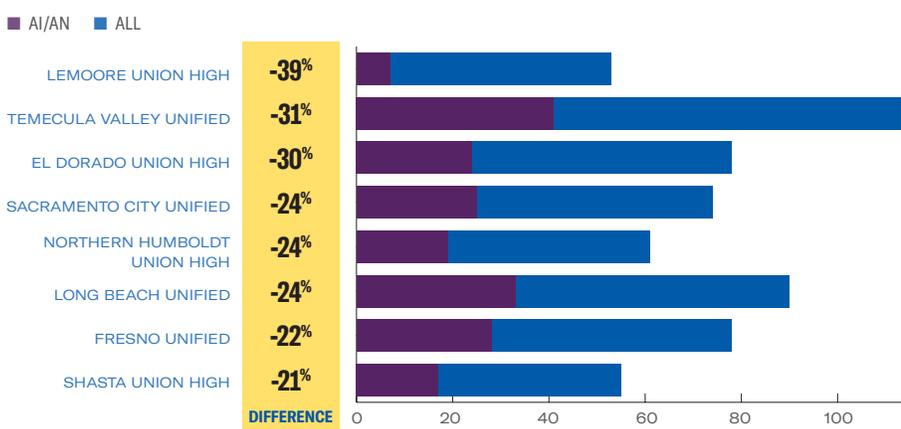


FIGURE 1B. Districts showing the greatest disparities in A-G completion



These educational gaps extend to graduation and college preparation. **Sixty-seven percent of districts reported lower graduation rates for American Indian/Alaska Native students.** And in 18 California school districts, **fewer than one in five American Indian/Alaska Native students were eligible to attend a four-year UC/CSU college after graduating high school.**



During history class in high school, my teacher claimed that the only genocide in United States' history was against enslaved Black people. I raised my hand and told my class about the genocide inflicted upon Native Americans. In response, the teacher kicked me out of class and told me not to return for the rest of the year. The Indian Education coordinator stood up for me and, while she was unable to get me back into class, she made sure I could still complete assignments. However, the teacher gave me a failing grade for every assignment I submitted.

—Jasmine Griffith (Navajo, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe Nation)

Discipline disparities are equally concerning, with the statewide suspension rate for American Indian/Alaska Native students (7.5%) more than double the overall student rate (3.6%).

American Indian/Alaska Native students are also disproportionately likely to attend schools that have no counselors, no nurses, no social workers, or no psychologist.

- **No Counselor:** Over 5,000 (or 54%) of American Indian/Alaska Native primary students are in schools with no counselor, and over 2,600 (13%) of American Indian/Alaska Native secondary students attend schools with no counselor.
- **No Nurse:** 29% percent of American Indian/Alaska Native primary students and 35% of American Indian/Alaska Native secondary students are in schools with no nurse.
- **No Social Worker:** 81% of American Indian/Alaska Native primary students and 78% of American Indian/Alaska Native secondary students are in schools with no social worker.
- **No Psychologist:** 20% of American Indian/Alaska Native primary students and 28% of American Indian/Alaska Native secondary students are in schools with no psychologist.

Native American students and families in California have a strong history of resistance and resilience in the face of systemic oppression, and school systems can change when held accountable and given clear direction. There are proven ways to improve outcomes for Native students: increasing tribal consultation and educational oversight; using culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum in the classroom; improving culturally competent professional development opportunities for school staff; and conducting inclusive data counts. California must acknowledge the systemic harm inflicted on Native American students by its public school system and take immediate action to implement essential reforms.

Stopping the Flood Waters: A Call to Transform California's Schools in Support of Native American Students was published by the ACLU Foundations of California and the Northern California Indian Development Council.

For more information, read the full report and citations at www.aclunc.org/StoppingTheFloodWatersReport.

