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Women's Fund
OF SANTA BARBARA

Education: A Basic Need

A snapshot of south Santa Barbara County
public schools

A Report by the Women's Fund
Research Committee

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Frequently Asked Questions:

What are the enrollment numbers and demographics of local south Santa Barbara County public schools? 5

Are all local public schools funded uniformly? 7

What is the configuration of local schools? Which elementary and junior high schools feed into which high schools? 9

What is the role of the Santa Barbara County Education Office? 13

Who votes on which school-related issues?..... 14

What is the relationship between local education foundations and the school districts? 15

What are the mandates for public schools regarding special education? How are special education services funded? 18

What early childhood programs are offered locally and how are they funded? 19

What is a charter school and how is it funded?..... 20

What are the Common Core Standards and how are they being implemented locally? 22

Introduction

Last year, the Women’s Fund Research Committee produced a report titled “The Impact of Poverty on Local Women and Families” to assist both our researchers and members in evaluating and selecting agencies on the ballot. Following the 2014 balloting, the Research Committee surveyed the membership to gather input on areas of particular interest for funding.

When survey respondents rank ordered topics from a list of critical needs, **education** rose to the top. As a result, this year the Research Committee decided to create a report focusing just on education. We’ve framed the report as a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** about local education. We recognize there are many other areas of need in our community and hope in subsequent years to be able to provide additional targeted reports such as this one.

Education as a lever out of poverty

Research shows that education plays a key, if not the single most important role, in lifting people out of poverty. Individuals with college degrees (bachelor’s or higher) on average earn two to three times as much as individuals with high school degrees or less. According to a recent report funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation¹ more than 60 percent of American children live in families whose highest educational degree is a high school diploma or less. Family income for those with a four-year degree was more than \$100,000—nearly double the \$57,000 for those with some college, and more than **four** times the annual income for those without a high school diploma.

Disturbingly, the income/education gap is widening. “One of the most robust findings of contemporary social scientific inquiry is that as the gap between high-income and low-income families has increased, the educational and employment achievement gaps between the children of these families has increased even more.”²

Local numbers

Public schools in south Santa Barbara County have long struggled with the fact that low-income and Hispanic students have been disproportionately under-represented in advanced and higher level coursework, although local school boards continue to address the problem. Last year, 30% of Hispanic students in the Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD) graduated having completed the University of California/California State University required entrance courses. Seventy percent of white students had completed these courses. More than 50% of students in south Santa Barbara County Schools are eligible for free and reduced lunch.³

Education completion levels and wage earning disparity, not unexpectedly, can be linked to academic achievement in elementary and secondary school. This problem is worsening as well. Stanford’s Sean Reardon notes, “The achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40 percent larger among children born in 2001 than among those born 25 years earlier.”⁴

¹ http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2014kidscountdatabook-2014.pdf?utm_source=FES+KIDS+COUNT+Press+Release&utm_campaign=KIDS+COUNT+Press+Release&utm_medium=email

² <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138844/jerry-z-muller/capitalism-and-inequality>

³ <http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2013/2013GrowthDstApiDC.aspx?allcds=4276786>

⁴ <http://cepa.stanford.edu/content/patterns-and-trends-raciaethnic-and-socioeconomic-academic-achievement-gaps-1>

Women, children & education

According to the Casey report, student success is correlated most closely and accurately with the **education level of the mother**. “Children whose mothers had not graduated from high school were 13 times more likely to be poor than children whose mothers had a bachelor’s degree.”⁵ Locally, in the Santa Barbara Unified School District, 23% of parents report not having completed high school. Another 18% have high school degrees, and 17% have some college. Only 23% report having college degrees or higher.⁶

Education is good for the economy

Researchers note that better educational opportunity, not surprisingly, is also better for the economy. Standard & Poor’s recently reported “higher educational achievement would fuel faster economic growth and help shrink income disparities.” Further, “Thomas Piketty, the French economist whose exploration of tax data helped expose the wealth gap, has argued that education ‘is the most powerful equalizing force in the long run.’”⁷

National trends in school funding

Since the 1960s, school spending across the country has dramatically increased, but in the last 40 years, the disparity in funding state by state has grown significantly. In 1969, only \$4,000 separated per-pupil spending by state, but 40 years later, the inflation-adjusted difference shows that nearly \$15,000 separates states at the top from states at the bottom of per-pupil funding.

California currently ranks 35th in the nation in per pupil state spending, according to the latest figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. Our state’s ranking drops to 49 out of 50 when cost-of-living adjustments are calculated.⁸

General note on sources of data

The statistics cited in this report were necessarily derived from various government agencies and other entities that use their own data sources, hence the use of different reporting years, terms and definitions. Every attempt was made to use the most relevant data and disclose the sources and definitions used. The contents of this report are not intended to support or verify the statistical information referenced from other sources. Accordingly, no representations are made concerning the accuracy of the data presented.

Acknowledgements

The Women’s Fund Research Committee would like to thank the numerous local school officials, administrators and teachers who generously provided their help in the creation of this report.

⁵ http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2014kidscountdatabook-2014.pdf?utm_source=FES+KIDS+COUNT+Press+Release&utm_campaign=KIDS+COUNT+Press+Release&utm_medium=email

⁶ <http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2013/2013GrowthDstApiDC.aspx?allcids=4276786>

⁷ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0141196e8ab84220b50827211fedd8e9/school-spending-affluent-widening-wealth-gap>

⁸ <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/01/09/16sos.h33.html?qs=per+state+pupil+funding>

What are the enrollment numbers and demographics of local South Santa Barbara County public schools?

South County Public School student enrollment numbers 2013–2014

Santa Barbara Unified School District	15,508
• Elementary (13)	
• Junior Highs (4)	
• High Schools* (5)	
Goleta Union School District	3,642
• Elementary (9)	
Hope School District	1,008
• Elementary (3)	
Cold Spring School	169
• Elementary (1)	
Montecito Union School District	492
• Elementary (1)	
Carpinteria Unified School District	2,286
• Elementary (4)	
• Middle (1)	
• High Schools* (3)	
Santa Barbara County Education Office	
• Juvenile Court School (1) (countywide)	94

***Besides traditional high schools, Santa Barbara and Carpinteria each have one alternative high school and one continuation high school.**

- Continuation and alternative high school diploma programs are alternatives to traditional high school and typically are much smaller than traditional high schools.
- They serve students who are 16 years of age or older, who have not graduated from high school, are still required to attend school and who are at risk of not graduating.
- Students in continuation education programs are often behind in high school credits or need a flexible school schedule because they have jobs outside of school. Some students choose continuation education because of family needs or other circumstances.
- Students who attend continuation/alternative high schools must spend at least 15 hours per week or three hours per day at school and take courses that are required for graduation.
- Students also receive guidance and career counseling. Some programs offer independent study, job–placement services and concurrent enrollment in community college.⁹

Dropout rates: Local Cohort 9 – 12th grade¹⁰

- California State Average: 11.4%
- Santa Barbara Unified: 7.1%
- Carpinteria Unified: 6.9%

⁹ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/ce/>

¹⁰ <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/welcome.asp>

Determining Dropout rates

We offer this explanation of how dropout rates are calculated because “dropping out” of school is a more complex construct than might appear at first glance. Students are typically grouped into cohorts in order to make reasonable conclusions about school completion levels:

A cohort is the group of students that could potentially graduate during a four-year time period (grade 9 through grade 12). This cohort is then "adjusted" by adding students who transfer in to the cohort and subtracting the students who transferred to another school that offers a high school diploma, emigrated to another county, or died during the years covered by the cohort rate. Students who drop out during the four-year period remain in the adjusted cohort, as well as students who complete 12th grade and exit the educational system without graduating. Students who take longer than four years to graduate or remain enrolled after four years are also included as part of the cohort.¹¹

Truancy and its costs

Local school districts are well aware of the human and financial costs of truancy. A Santa Barbara County Grand Jury revisited this historically challenging problem in 2012, and issued a report¹² calling for truancy programs to be revisited and new strategies be implemented, especially because many prevention programs had been cut or eliminated during the recession. School districts, the County Education Office and the District Attorney’s office were encouraged to collaborate to reduce truancy. All unexcused student absences result in a financial loss to districts, generally to the tune of \$50–\$60 dollars per day. While average daily attendance numbers (ADA) vary within and between districts, generally speaking districts can anticipate total lost ADA at about 5% of their student population. The new Restorative Justice approaches being implemented to address student discipline have shown to help reduce truancy, particularly because the numbers of suspensions and expulsions have also dropped.

Homeschooling

Some families in south Santa Barbara County choose to homeschool their children, and there are a number of public school options available to them—most of them from charter schools (see page 20 for more information about charter schools). Santa Barbara Charter School, which is a charter within the SBUSD has recently provided the largest program and enrolls up to 75 students a year in a kindergarten–eighth grade program. Olive Grove, a charter based in the Santa Ynez Valley has a south SB County satellite that serves students through 12th grade, and Trivium Charter, which has established programs in the Tri-County area, has recently opened a Santa Barbara branch. The programs differ in the extent to which curriculum is provided by teachers or parents. SB Charter, for instance has students on campus one day a week, while others may have more teacher–directed learning, or less. Trivium students may attend the school site two–three times a week. The homeschool providers are funded by the state, and receive the same amount per student attending regular public schools. This amount may be pro-rated depending upon the number of student/teacher contact hours the charters provide. Santa Barbara Charter receives the full 100% funding per student. Charter school students do not need to live in the attendance area of the school’s site.

¹¹ <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/welcome.asp>

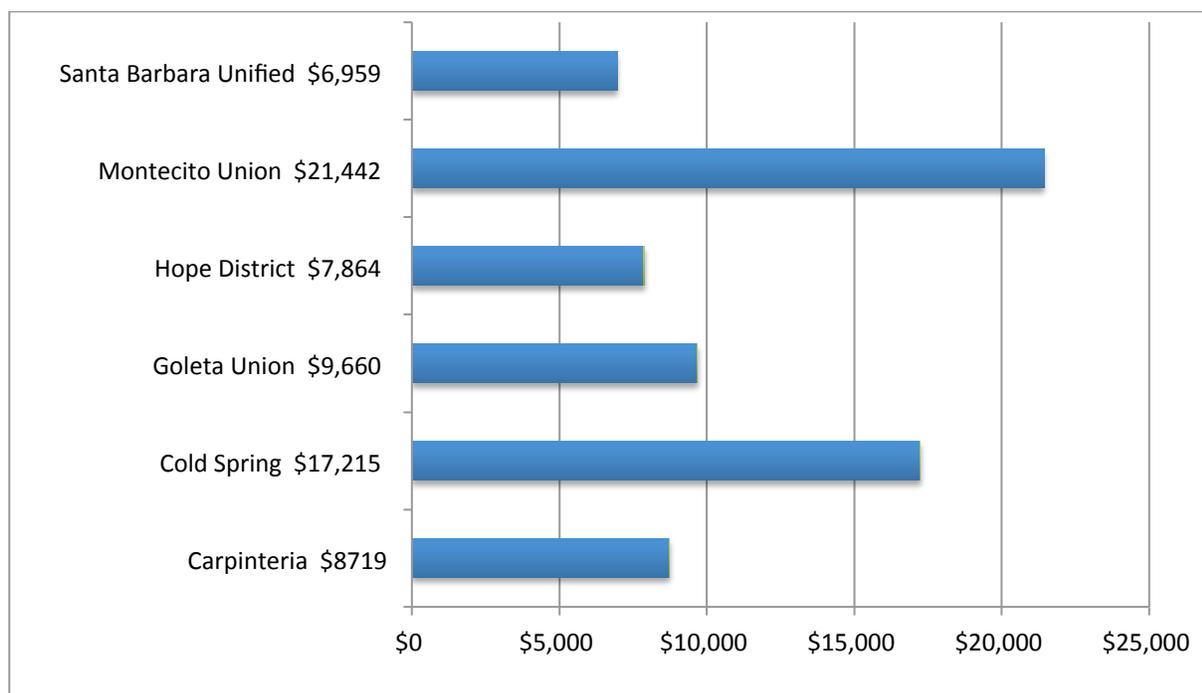
¹² <http://www.sbcgj.org/2012/Truancy.pdf>

Are all local public schools funded uniformly?

No. Because California schools are funded based on a formula linked to local property tax revenues collected within a given school district, there is a large disparity in per pupil state funding in south Santa Barbara County Schools.

For example, for the 2013–2014 school year, schools in the Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD) received \$6,959 per student, while Montecito Union Elementary School received \$21,442 per student. Such discrepancies between districts exist statewide, and date back over 40 years. In a relatively small number of California school districts, property tax revenues exceed the state’s targeted funding formula allotments, and the state allows those districts (called “basic aid”) to keep the excess amount. All local school districts, with the exception of SBUSD, are basic aid districts, although the excess funds they receive beyond the state allotment differ widely.

STATE FUNDING PER STUDENT BY DISTRICT¹³
2013-2014 School Year



Local Control Funding – a new state budget formula

Governor Brown and the state legislature introduced a new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that went into effect last year (2013–2014). This formula released local districts from many restrictions on state monies that flowed to schools, hence the “Local Control.” It replaced what was previously referred to as the revenue limit formula. However, it did not alter in any significant way the **amount** districts received. In fact, schools still get less than they did pre-recession. Under the LCFF, districts with

¹³ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>

more than 55% low-income students receive some additional funding that must be directed toward programs targeting those students, specifically increased services for English Learners, low-income students and foster youth.

Other Funding Sources

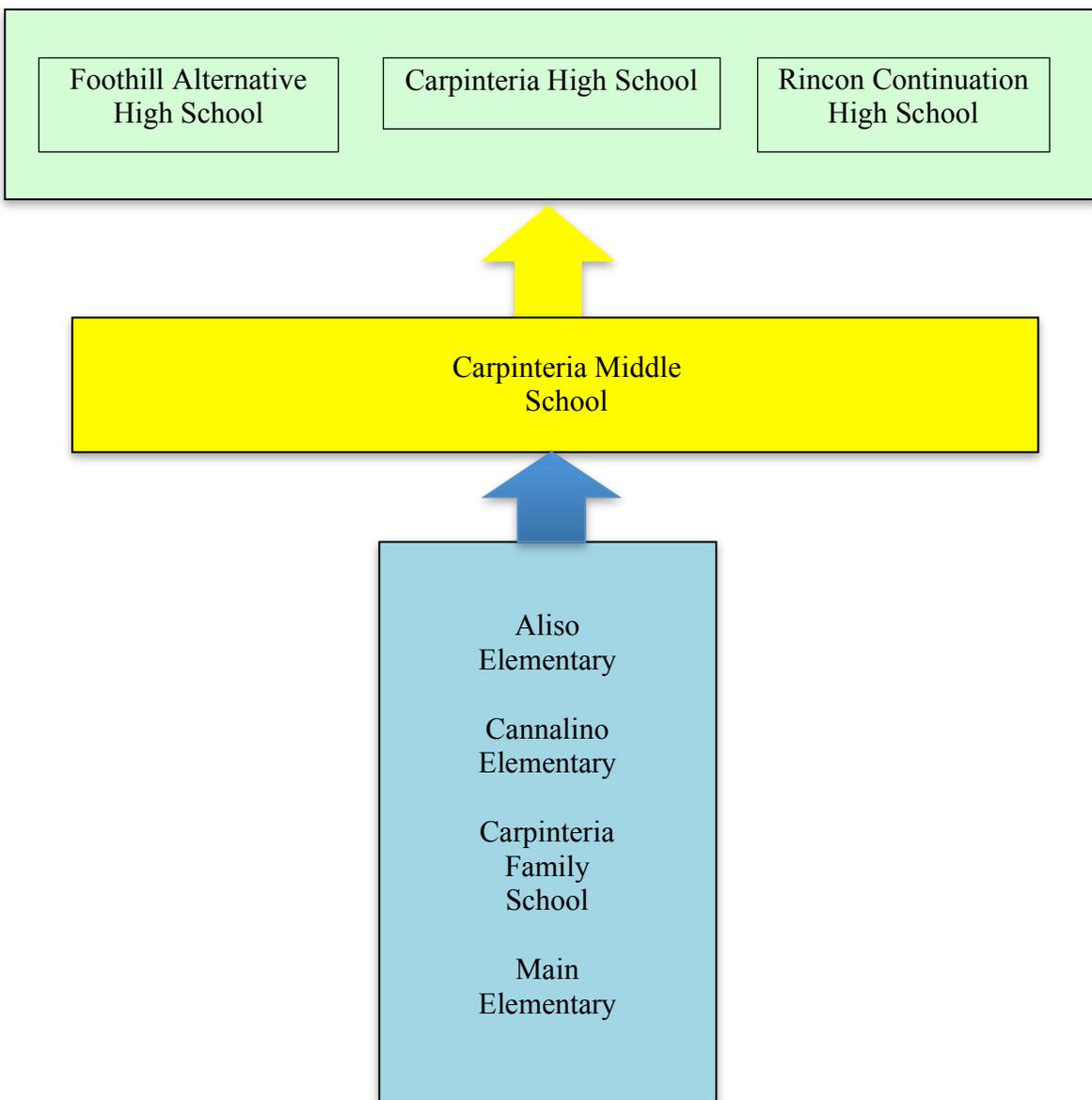
California schools also receive some lottery money (about 1.5 percent of their total budget) and schools with a large percentage of low-income students may be eligible for Federal Title I funds. There are 22 Title I schools in south Santa Barbara County, including all public high schools and all junior highs. Nine elementary schools in the SBUSD qualify for Title I funding, as do two elementary schools in the Goleta Union School District and two in Carpinteria. Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40% of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school. Unless a participating school is operating a school-wide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. Public Local Education Agencies (LEAs) also must use Title I funds to provide academic enrichment services to eligible children enrolled in private schools¹⁴.

Local and national nonprofits and parent groups also generate additional funding for schools, but such amounts generally represent less than a fraction of a percent of a district's budget.

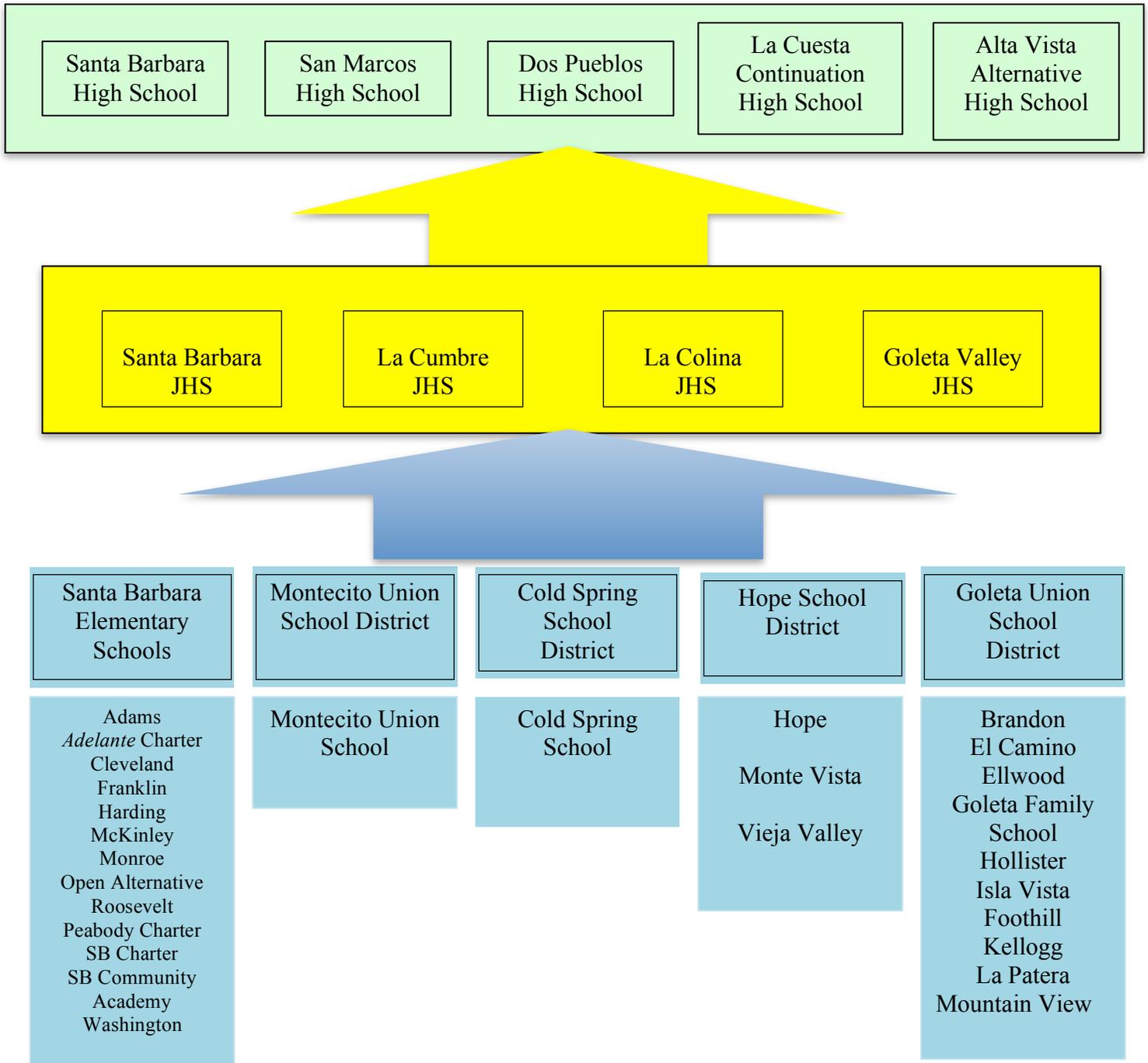
¹⁴ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

What is the configuration of local schools? Which elementary and junior high schools feed into which high schools?

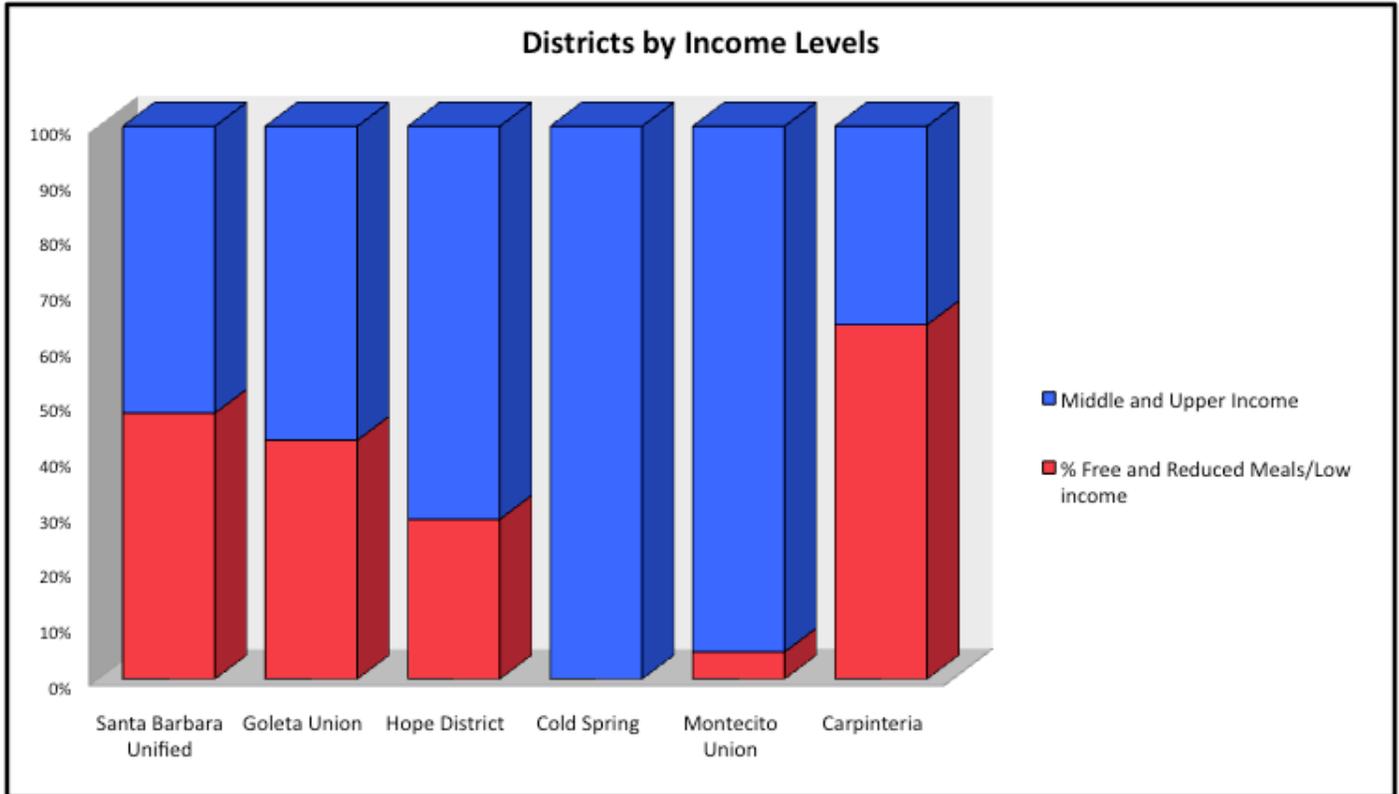
The majority of local students attend their neighborhood schools. If space is available, most districts allow families to petition to have students attend schools (within a given district) other than those in the attendance area where they reside. Consequently, some neighborhood elementary schools have waiting lists. Additionally, some children attend a mix of public and private schools throughout their schooling, and some go to charter schools not in their neighborhood or district, while others are homeschooled. High school aged students also have the option to attend alternative high schools or opt for “Middle College” at Santa Barbara City College where they take college-level courses.



Five elementary districts/programs feed into the Santa Barbara Unified School District secondary schools

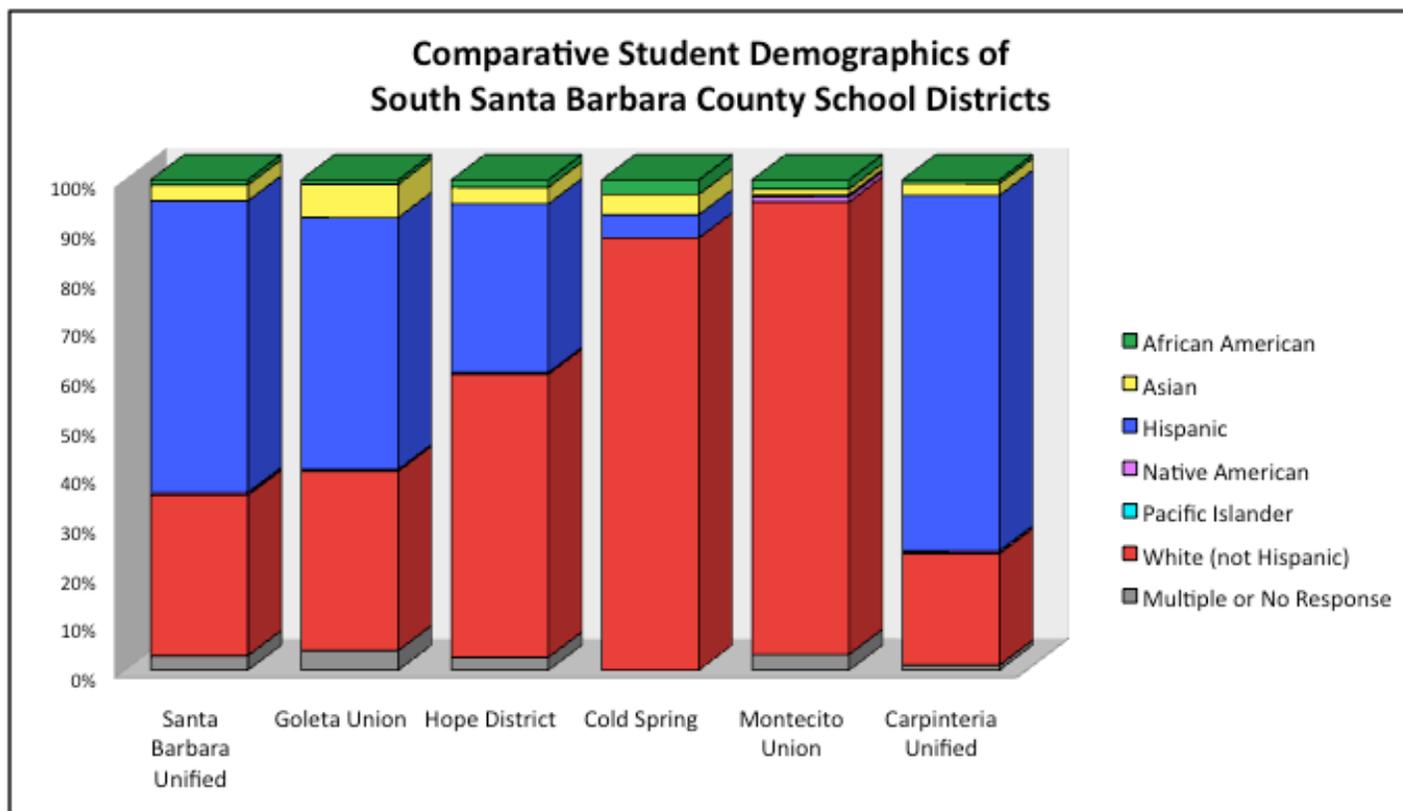


District Enrollment by Income Levels¹⁵



¹⁵ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/cw/>

District Enrollment by Ethnic Group 2013–2014¹⁶



¹⁶ <http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2013/2013GrowthDstApiDC.aspx?allcde=4276786>

What is the role of the Santa Barbara County Education Office?

Overview

The Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) serves 66,000 students enrolled in the 20 school districts and two community colleges located within the county of Santa Barbara. The SBCEO provides support for administrators, teachers and students countywide.¹⁷

Since 1982, Bill Cirone has served as the Superintendent of SB County Schools. His is an elected position. There is a Deputy Superintendent, in charge of Instructional Services, as well as four Assistant Superintendents: Administrative Services, Human Resources, Categorical and Special Programs, and Special Education. There is also an elected seven-member County Board of Education.

Financial Services¹⁸

- Process payroll and vendor payments for selected districts
- Approve school district budgets

Student Services

- Special Education – County Program
- Child Development Programs
- Children’s Creative Project
- Transitional Youth Services for homeless and foster youth
- Juvenile Court and Community Schools
- Migrant Education
- Nurses and psychologists for selected districts
- Regional Occupational Program/Career Technical Education
- Partners in Education

Teacher and Administrator Services

- Professional development and technical assistance
- Teacher Induction Program
- Teacher support and recognition programs (e.g., curriculum innovation grants, Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year, etc.)
- Educational Technology Services – Library and website hosting
- Technology Training and Demonstration Centers
- Credential services

Special Programs

- *I Madonnari*
- Ameri-Corps
- Computers for Families

¹⁷ <http://sbceo.org/publications/highlights.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://sbceo.org/publications/ProgramsServices2014.pdf>

Who votes on which local school-related issues?

- Where voters live determines which school-related issues are on their ballot. Voters who live between Gaviota and Montecito vote on bond and parcel tax measures that are earmarked for the junior high schools and high schools in the Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD). They also vote for the school board trustees of the SBUSD, who govern both the secondary and elementary schools of SBUSD.
- However, within the larger secondary district area there are FIVE elementary districts with varying numbers of individual schools: Santa Barbara (13 schools), Goleta Union (nine schools), Hope District (three schools), Cold Spring (one school) and Montecito Union (one school). Individuals who live in the attendance areas of the latter four districts also vote for school board trustees in their respective elementary district. School board trustees are elected for four-year terms, and there are no term limits.
- Voters who live in Carpinteria vote for measures placed on the ballot for schools in the Carpinteria Unified School District and for members of the Carpinteria School Board.
- Over the years, many local districts have had success (although not always) with local voters in passing bond measures for construction or repair of schools, or in passing parcel taxes that support art, music, science, career technical education, etc. Senior citizens generally can request an exemption from the levies.
- The parcel taxes typically expire every four years, but taxpayers continue to finance the bonds over longer periods. The amount homeowners pay yearly on the bond measures appears on their property tax bills and depends upon the assessed value of the property. Because various bond measures have passed over the years, individuals will likely see multiple bonds listed on their property tax bills.
- The parcel taxes are a flat fee; for example the current SBUSD secondary school parcel tax is \$45 per parcel per year and expires in 2016. Voters who live in the attendance area of the former Santa Barbara Elementary District (before it unified with the high school district) also pay the elementary parcel tax. It is \$48 per annum and also expires in 2016.
- All residents of Santa Barbara County vote for the County Superintendent of Schools and Santa Barbara County Board of Education trustees. Individual school district superintendents are hired by their boards and do not hold elected office.

What is the relationship between local education foundations and school districts?

All six school districts in South Santa Barbara County have established education foundations for the purpose of raising funds to supplement local, state and federal public revenue sources. These foundations are independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations that conduct fundraisers and receive donations from parents, businesses and community members. The governing board of each foundation includes parents and community leaders, as well as representatives from the district—in most cases, the superintendent, a school board member and a teacher. The foundation board itself decides the allocation of funds, but it works directly with the school district's board of trustees to choose appropriate programs and determine areas of greatest need. The Santa Barbara Education Foundation has a paid executive director and the Carpinteria Education Foundation has a part-time administrator. All others are entirely governed and administered by volunteers.

Background

This section of the report explains the role of south Santa Barbara County district-wide foundations and provides a brief overview of the growing number of local site-specific foundations; i.e., school and program foundations. There are currently over 600 education foundations in California. The first education foundations in California were established in the early 1980s in response to severe funding cutbacks that resulted from state court rulings and legislation. The *Serrano v. Priest* rulings (early 1970s) made the state responsible for balancing and maintaining statewide funding across districts, and reduced the ability of individual districts to rely on their own local property taxes. In 1978, Proposition 13 further eroded the property tax revenues available to school districts by fixing that tax rate at 1% of assessed value and capping the growth of assessed value at 2% per year.¹⁹ Since that time, California school districts have turned to private fundraising sources—foundations, PTSA's and booster clubs—in an attempt to make up for funding inadequacies.

Fundraising and Disbursement

District foundations conduct annual fundraising events and receive donations and grants. They disperse funds to their district schools through grants and gifts. In this way, foundations provide cultural, social and arts programs, general operating grants, scholarships, teacher grants, playground equipment, technology, library services, etc. Local district education foundations have made possible many worthwhile programs: for example, the Santa Barbara and Goleta Education Foundations have purchased musical instruments and funded district-wide music and band programs; Carpinteria Education Foundation has supported its students over the years with more than \$2 million in scholarships and other educational opportunities; Cold Spring School Education Foundation raised funds for the construction of a school library and a computer lab. Local education foundations can also play a role in mobilizing the electorate to support schools at the ballot. The Santa Barbara Education Foundation spearheaded the campaigns to pass local bond and school parcel taxes, which brought in millions of dollars for construction and enrichment coursework to local secondary and elementary schools.

¹⁹ <http://ed100.org/state-education-bubbles/>

Impact of District Education Foundation Fundraising

The fundraising capacities of south Santa Barbara County's district education foundations are not the same. As *Just Schools California* points out in "The Crisis: Funding Essentials—California's School Funding is not equal," districts located in white and wealthier communities get more private donations than districts in poor communities.²⁰ In south Santa Barbara County, there is a clear correlation between the amounts district foundations raise per student and the relative wealth of their communities. For example, in 2012 (the most recent year for which confirmed data are available), the amounts raised range from \$1,258.15 per student by Cold Spring Foundation to \$4.61 per student by Goleta Education Foundation. [Complete table of data available upon request.] However, when any given local district foundation's annual revenue is compared to its own district's state funding, the percentage of donated funds ranges from less than 1% to 5% at most.²¹ A better way to measure the effectiveness of district education foundations is to look at the extent to which they are able to benefit the schools with programs and educational opportunities that would not otherwise be possible.

Other Local Education Foundations: School and Program Foundations

In south Santa Barbara County, as in much of the state, many schools and programs within schools set up their own independent education foundations. These foundations raise private funds for a target population within the larger district or school. Funds raised by school and program foundations vary considerably from foundation to foundation and year to year. While many of them raise hundreds of thousands of dollars each year, those funds are directed specifically toward students who attend or participate in a single school or program. In other words, these site-based foundations do not contribute significantly to the per student revenues of the overall school district.

School Education Foundations

Local schools that have set up their own foundations include Harding, Roosevelt, Washington, Mountain View, Peabody Charter, Santa Barbara High, San Marcos High and La Cumbre Junior High. These foundations conduct annual fundraisers, receive donations, and, in some cases, have endowments for future needs. They provide the same kinds of services and programs that district-wide foundations provide, but for one school only. The amount of monies raised ranges from the tens of thousands to several hundred thousand and varies from year to year, depending on economic conditions, circumstances within the school, and the foundation's focus, volunteers and energy.²²

²⁰ <http://justschools.gseis.ucla.edu/crisis/>

²¹ District Education Foundations and School Districts Data from Guidestar (guidestar.org) and Data Quest, California Department of Education (dq.cde.ca.gov)

²² Data from Guidestar (guidestar.org) indicate that school foundations in south Santa Barbara County raised between \$14,000 and \$500,000 per school last year.

Program Education Foundations

Separate education foundations also exist to support specific programs within a particular school. Most common at the secondary level, these foundations are often started and maintained by concerned parents to support programs that serve only a limited number of the school's students. Local examples include the Dos Pueblos Engineering Academy Foundation, Santa Barbara High Theatre Foundation, Santa Barbara High Computer Science Academy Foundation, California Academy Foundation (to support the Multimedia Arts and Design Academy at SBHS) and San Marcos AAPLE Academy. The local high schools also have booster organizations that support athletics, band, theater, etc., such as the San Marcos High Royal Band Boosters. While not technically registered as such, booster organizations operate like foundations by fundraising in support of programs that serve a specific segment of the student body.

Fiscal Sponsorship

Some of the local education foundations also operate as fiscal sponsors for other agencies/groups that want to provide programs in the schools. As a fiscal sponsor, the foundation itself does not run a program, but lends its legal and tax-exempt status to the outside agency, receives grants on its behalf and then distributes the revenue to the agency and/or district to cover the costs of operating the program. In some cases, the foundation oversees and provides administrative support for a program to ensure that the requirements of a given grant are being met. Santa Barbara Education Foundation currently acts as the fiscal sponsor for over a dozen programs that provide support for at-risk youth, violence and gang prevention, and parent education.²³

Further Reading

Robert Reich, NY Times, August 25, 2014, "Back to School, and to Widening Inequality."

Robert Reich, NY Times, Op-Ed, September 4, 2014, "Not Very Giving."

²³ <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/fiscal-sponsorship>

What are the mandates for public schools regarding special education? How are special education services funded?

An individualized, appropriate educational program for students with identified disabilities is mandated by federal legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and by state law.²⁴ In California, services are mandated from age 3 to age 22 or until the student has graduated from high school.²⁵

If a student is suspected of being in need of special education services, a full evaluation is given. After the evaluation is conducted, an interdisciplinary team together with the parent determines if special education services are necessary and, if so, which services might best meet the student's needs. If services are determined necessary, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed which defines the goals and objectives of the student's special education program.

Appropriate placement and delivery of services follows a wide spectrum—from a fully self-contained special education classroom to partial or full inclusion in general education with special education support. The current federal mandate is for 'inclusive services'—allowing students with disabilities to be placed with the student's peers in the general education environment to the greatest extent possible. Students who are identified to have special needs can receive related services in addition to their special education instructional program or can receive related services only—such as speech language therapy, counseling, behavioral therapy or adaptive physical education. There must be a primary identified disability to be eligible for any special education services.

In Santa Barbara County 10.5% of total student enrollment K–12 is special education classified. Statewide, enrollment K–12 in special education services is 10% with the highest proportion 4.4% with specific learning disabilities. English Learners and low-income students, to a greater extent than the general student population, can be incorrectly classified as having a disability and placed in special education programs. The state is monitoring this issue with local school districts.

Services are funded by a cost sharing of federal, state, and local funding and funding is administered locally by SELPA (Special Education Local Program Area).²⁶ Local Education Agencies (LEA) use federal and state special education categorical funds to provide services for students with disabilities beyond those that mainstreamed students receive. Typically, federal and state special education funds are not sufficient to cover the costs of all mandated services. In the SBUSD, the unfunded cost of special education is 14% of the \$114 million district budget for the 2014–15 school year, requiring the district to tap unrestricted general funds to make up the difference.

²⁴ <http://idea.ed.gov>

²⁵ <http://lao.ca.gov>

²⁶ <http://www.sbcselpa.org>

What early childhood programs are offered locally and how are they funded?

Full- and half-day preschool programs are offered to children ages 2 ½ to 5 years meeting state eligibility and income guidelines in Goleta Union, Santa Barbara Unified and Carpinteria School Districts. These programs are provided in eight SBUSD locations, three Goleta Union locations, and six in the Carpinteria School District.

Head Start, a federally funded program, also provides full- and half-day programs for preschoolers from birth to age 5 who meet federal poverty guidelines. The Head Start preschool programs are housed in four locations in south Santa Barbara County: one in Goleta, two in the City of Santa Barbara, and one in Carpinteria. Other preschool programs are offered privately at faith-based and private school locations.

Transitional kindergarten (TK) is a state initiative funded with state dollars providing an optional two-year kindergarten program for children turning age 5 whose birthdays fall between September 2 and December 2.²⁷ The transitional year program offers a modified curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. Although the state mandates that every district provide TK, that mandate does not require a transitional kindergarten at every elementary school. In the SBUSD, eight of 13 elementary schools offer TK, in Goleta Union, six of 10 schools, and in Carpinteria, one of four.

Enrollment in a school program is not mandatory until the child reaches age 6.

A Kindergarten Readiness report to the SBUSD released in the spring of 2014 stated that of nearly 600 children entering kindergarten who were tested, only 37% were found ready to enter kindergarten in September 2014. Among low-income English Learners, only 19.2% females and 11.2% males were kindergarten ready. Recent strides have been made in this area, but there is still much room for improvement.

The need for quality early childhood education programs for socially and economically disadvantaged children is a critical component in reducing inequality for children raised in disadvantaged environments. Early childhood programs more than pay for themselves in better education and better economic outcomes.²⁸ Local school districts in south Santa Barbara County are addressing the critical need for preschool education but are doing so with limited funds. There has been no increase in state funding for preschools since 2007–2008.

²⁷ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp>

²⁸ <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/lifelines-for-poor-children>

What is a charter school and how is it funded?

A charter school is a public elementary or secondary school created, organized and operated by a group of teachers, parents or community members, or by a charter management organization (such as KIPP and Aspire), under a “charter” or contract that is approved by a local or state education agency. Within its charter, a school sets out its own governance structure, goals, teaching methods and measures for student learning. Charter status frees the school from many of the state statutes and regulations that apply to school districts. Attendance is free and open to any student who lives within the district that approved its charter. (When space is limited, students are selected by lottery.)

South Santa Barbara Charter Schools

Nonprofit boards of directors operate all three charter schools in south Santa Barbara County. Adelante Charter was chartered by the state in 2010 and is a K–6 dual language (Spanish/English) immersion school located on the Franklin campus; Peabody Charter was chartered by the state in 1993 as a conversion from a traditional neighborhood public school; and Santa Barbara Charter was chartered by Santa Barbara School Districts in 1993 as a start-up charter and is a K–8 school located on the Goleta Valley Junior High School campus. The curriculum at all three schools is being aligned to Common Core standards (for further description see the Common Core section). Funding for all three schools follows the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) described on page 7 and all monies pass through the Santa Barbara Unified School District. Peabody has established a separate foundation, the Peabody Foundation, to raise additional funds, and Santa Barbara Charter School has 501(c)3 status, enabling it to raise additional funds for itself.²⁹

Charter School Funding

Funding to set up a charter school is provided through the Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP), which was created by legislation in 1994 as an amendment to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Under this program, funding is available to state and local agencies for the planning, design and implementation of charter schools.

Once a charter has been accepted and the school is up and running, local, state and federal public funding is provided through the education agency that granted its charter. In California, charter schools fall under the same LCFF that determines funding for the state’s traditional public schools. This means that both charters and traditional schools receive the same amounts per average daily attendance (ADA) in base funds without categorical restrictions; and both receive supplementary and bonus funding for their “high-needs” students (primarily low-income, English learners or foster youth). However, bonus funding for concentrations of “high-needs” students (which kicks in when the district’s percentage of such students reaches 55%) is capped for charter schools at the district percentage.*³⁰

History and Purpose of Charter Schools

²⁹ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/cefcharterschools.asp>

³⁰ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcfffaq.asp#CS>

The original idea behind charter schools (first proposed in 1974 and expanded into a schools movement in the late 1980s) was to give teachers opportunities to try innovative teaching methods that could be used as models for improving all public schools. Through the 1990s, most charters were promoted for the purpose of carrying out this original idea. In recent years, however, charters have also been promoted as a way to offer parents greater school choice, to create a competitive incentive for improvement in traditional public schools, and to promote accountability in schools.³¹

Approximately 2.5 million students are currently enrolled in 6,400 charter schools in 41 states and Washington, D.C. In California, 1,000 charters (11% of public schools) serve 8% of the state's 6.2 million K–12 students. Nonprofit boards of directors run most California charter schools. In Michigan, Florida, and Arizona, for-profit companies dominate the charter school movement; 65% of Michigan's charter schools are run by for-profit educational management organizations.³²

*If a district as a whole has 55% or more high-needs students, all of its traditional schools will receive extra bonus funds for every one of its high needs students; however, its charter schools' eligibility for the bonus funds will be limited by the district-wide percentage of such students. In this way, discrepancies may develop between per pupil funding at traditional and charter schools under the new funding formula.

Further Reading

EdSource: <http://edsource.org/topic/charter-schools#.VDw310vWr7B>

Center for Public Education: <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/Charter-schools-Finding-out-the-facts-At-a-glance/Charter-schools-Finding-out-the-facts.html>

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Charter_school_program

³² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/charter-school-executive-profit_b_5093883.html

What are Common Core Standards and how are they being implemented locally?

Overview

Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core Standards (CCS). The Common Core initiative was led by state governors and adopted by state legislatures, not the federal government. Amid some political pushback, a few states that initially adopted the standards have modified them or reverted to their prior state-specific standards. California has embraced the Common Core, but some districts have moved more quickly than others to implement it. South Santa Barbara County districts have generally been more pro-active than their statewide counterparts in laying the groundwork for successful implementation.

The Common Core standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college and/or careers, as well as life in the 21st century. The new standards outline what any student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade (K–12) in both mathematics and English language arts. The CCS focus on critical thinking and problem solving. Additionally, they are based on the premises that learning is complex and literacy skills should be integrated into all subject areas.

Mathematics

In mathematics, there is more emphasis on “depth versus breadth.” Students are expected to understand and explain a problem, as well as use math to solve real-world problems. The CCS approach to math education is more comprehensive and integrative than before. As may be expected, this shift in focus has sparked controversy. There are gaps in student backgrounds as they commence the new curriculum. As well, they may perceive that they are not advancing as they revisit curriculum that they may have already studied.

English Language Arts

In English language arts, there is an increased focus on teaching students to read informational texts in addition to literature. Literacy skills (reading and writing) are now integrated across all subject areas, most explicitly in science & technology, as well as history/social studies. Students are expected to apply critical thinking skills to the reading of both informational and narrative texts. As well, the new standards are broadly framed, no longer prescriptive or focused on discreet skills that are readily assessed. This also has generated concern from some segments.

Science

Science educators and lead state partners have developed common science standards, dubbed the Next Generation Science Standards. These are separate from the CCS, and to date, only 12 states (including California) and the District of Columbia have adopted them. Like the CCS, the new science standards focus on experiential learning and critical thinking. They provide for consistent science education through all grades, with an emphasis on engineering and technology.

Local Implementation of Common Core Standards

Local districts are taking up the CCS with implementation plans across multiple academic years. Costs for implementing the new standards include professional development, purchasing new curriculum materials, and administration of assessments.

Local districts have been providing professional development by enlisting the services of the Santa Barbara County Education Office and/or by creating TOSA positions (Teachers on Special Assignment). Curriculum materials, aligned with the CCS, have yet to be adopted by the state. Local districts are therefore supporting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) whereby grade level teams collaborate on curriculum development. However, teachers report there is not enough time, resources, or administrative support for this additional professional responsibility.

Assessing Student Learning

The “Smarter Balance Assessment” is a performance-based assessment that is aligned with the new CCS. Students are assessed on their ability to engage in problem solving and articulate an evidence-based argument, in lieu of rote memorization. Smarter Balance was piloted this year and is on schedule to be rolled out this academic year (AY 2014–15).

An initial dip in scores across most schools and school districts is inevitable because the Smarter Balance assesses a different skill set than previous assessment models.

A final concern is the digital divide. Smarter Balance creates a new assessment environment in that it is an online assessment. In one local classroom, for example, there are students who come from homes that have multiple computers. They sit alongside other students whose only access to technology (besides television and gaming) is at school. The first group of students will likely be very facile at the online assessments, whereas the second group of students will not. Keyboarding skills required for the new assessment format is therefore yet another issue that is being addressed by local school districts. Furthermore, the assessment format alone is posing potential technological challenges as school sites must ensure capacity for multiple simultaneous users.

Sources

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Interviews with teachers in the Goleta Union School District

Interviews with teachers in the Santa Barbara School District

Interviews with Dr. Paul Cordeiro, Superintendent of the Carpinteria School District
Carpinteria School District Strategic Plan

Interviews with Dr. David Cash, Superintendent of the Santa Barbara School District
SBSD Strategic Plan

Noozhawk article by Rae Liguria (October 1, 2014)