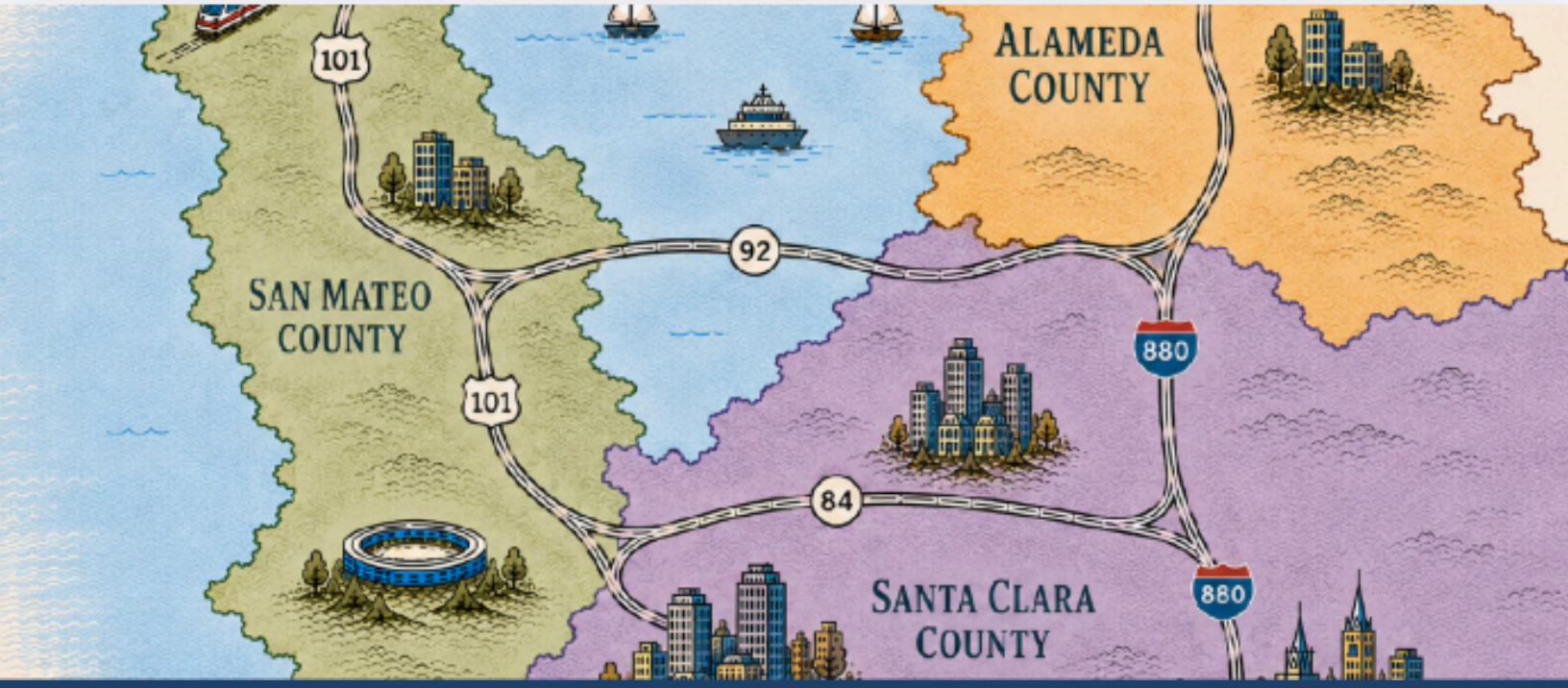

THE STATE OF EDUCATION REPORT
K-12 Edition

An Examination of Data Across Alameda, San Mateo & Santa Clara Counties

A visual regional look at readiness, achievement, postsecondary pathways and the conditions that shape opportunity. In support of the State of Opportunity Report.

Silicon Valley Equity in Education Institute (SVEEI)

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The State of Education at a Glance

A front-facing companion to The State of Opportunity Report

Across the three counties, graduation rates are high, but college readiness and academic proficiency remain sharply unequal by socioeconomic status. The data point to a broader question than whether students graduate: are students leaving school prepared to access the postsecondary and economic opportunities available in the Bay Area?

90%

Approximate high school graduation rate across the three counties

48.3%

Average A–G completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students

79.8%

Average A–G completion among non-SED students

The central pattern

Students facing socioeconomic disadvantage are not demonstrating lower potential. They are experiencing lower access to the preparation, supports and conditions that preserve future options. That gap is visible in A–G completion, English Language Arts, mathematics, attendance and other indicators.

Five strategic priorities organize the findings that follow: strengthen readiness, build seamless pathways, invest earlier, measure opportunity broadly, and treat educational opportunity as an economic development strategy.

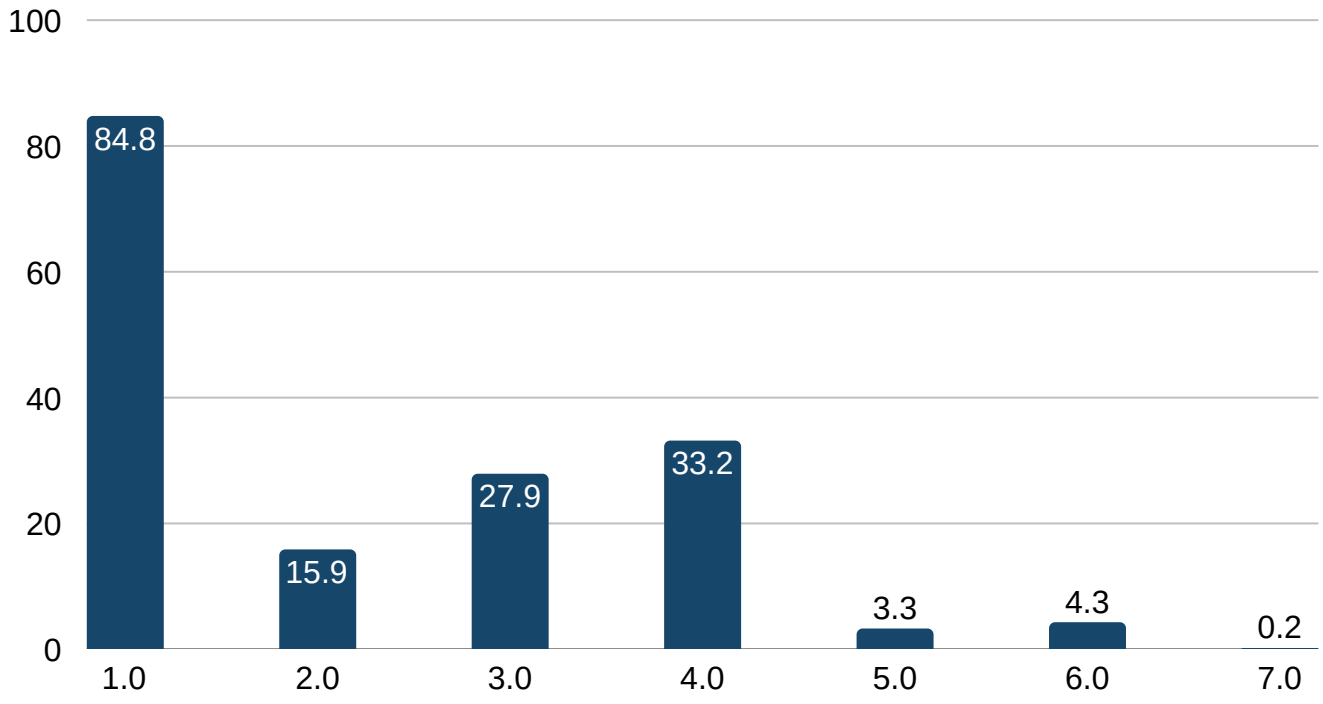
College and Career Readiness

Preparation creates options.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

Strengthen College and Career Readiness

Although roughly nine in ten students graduate across Alameda, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, fewer than two-thirds are academically prepared for four-year public university pathways. Among SED students who do complete A–G requirements, however, college participation is strong.



What the data show

Average college-going among SED students who completed A–G is 84.77%. Community colleges account for 33.17%; CSU 27.90%; UC 15.87%. The overall pattern shows that when students preserve access to college-preparatory pathways, they use those options.

When SED students are prepared, they pursue postsecondary education.

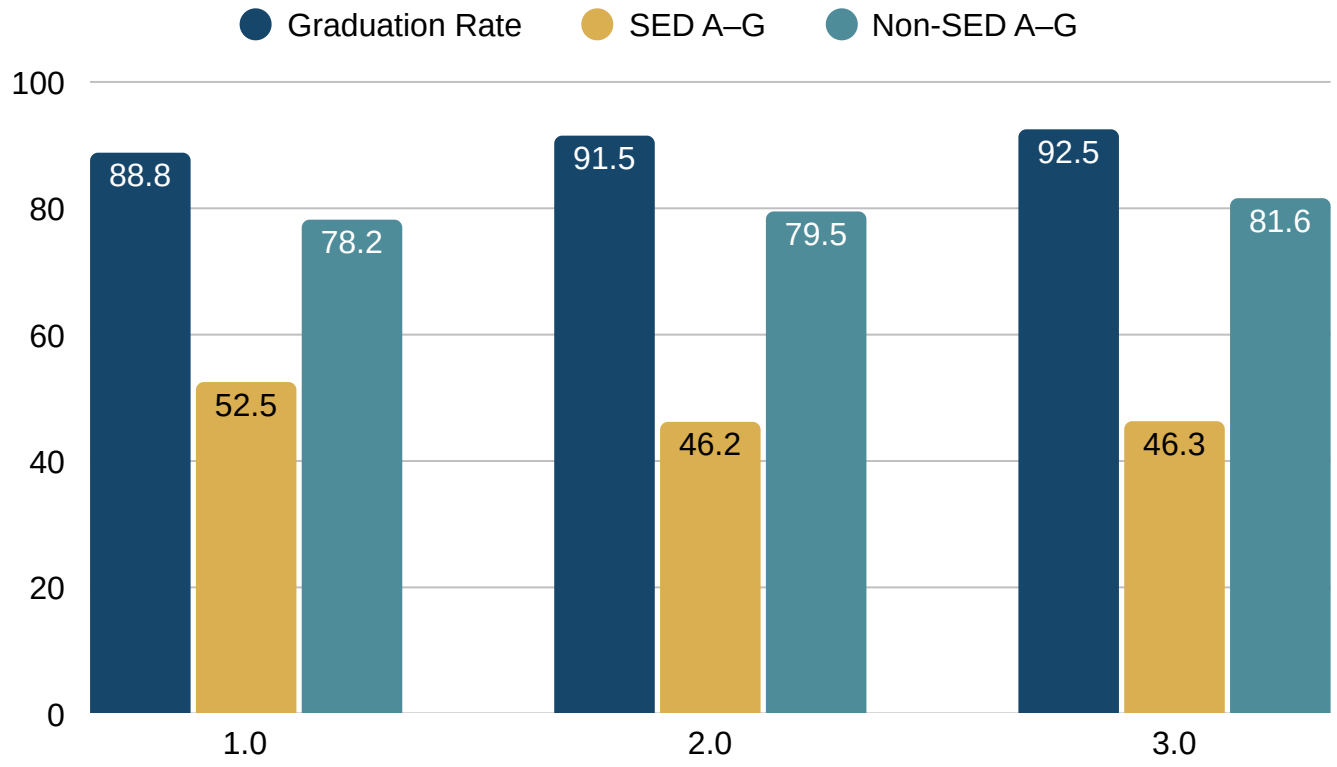
From Graduation to Readiness

A diploma does not automatically equal access.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

Build Seamless Education-to-Workforce Pathways

Graduation rates are high across the region, yet A–G completion tells a very different story. The gap between SED and non-SED students ranges from approximately 26 to 35 percentage points across the three counties.



A seamless pathway means students leave high school with access to college, credentials, apprenticeships, high-value careers and other routes to mobility. That requires coordination among K–12 systems, higher education, workforce organizations, employers and community partners.

But SED students are substantially less likely to reach A–G readiness.

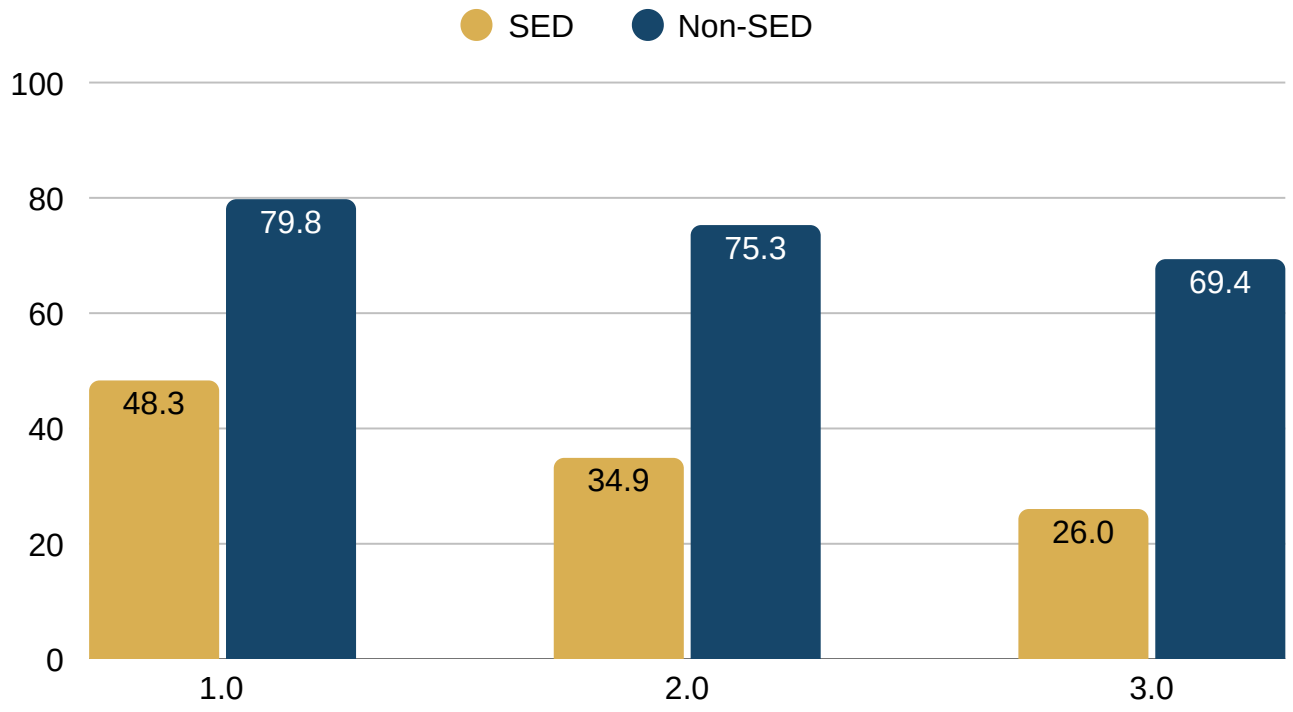
The Readiness Gap Starts Earlier

Differences visible in high school are already present in ELA and mathematics.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

Invest Earlier and More Strategically

Across the three counties, SED students trail their non-SED peers by more than 40 percentage points in both English Language Arts and mathematics proficiency. These earlier gaps are mirrored later in A–G completion.



Investment implication Waiting until high school to address college readiness is too late. Earlier investments in instructional quality, academic intervention, teacher development and access to rigorous coursework can change the trajectory before students reach the point of graduation.

Those disparities begin well before the end of high school, particularly in ELA and mathematics.

Measure Opportunity, Not Just Achievement

No single indicator tells the whole story.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

Measure Opportunity, Not Just Achievement

Different measures can produce very different pictures of school performance. Alameda charter schools, for example, show substantially higher A–G completion, while San Mateo and Santa Clara comparison groups show stronger ELA and mathematics proficiency, lower chronic absenteeism and more teacher experience.

Measure	Alameda Charter	San Mateo Non-Charter	Santa Clara Non-Charter
A–G Completion	86.3%	62.6%	63.6%
Chronic Absenteeism	19.5%	14.5%	14.7%
Teacher Experience	8.5 years	14.0 years	15.4 years
ELA Proficiency	45.98%	59.61%	60.97%
Math Proficiency	35.08%	52.55%	54.17%

The point is not that one model is categorically stronger. The point is that systems can perform well on one measure while revealing vulnerabilities on another. Opportunity needs a broader dashboard.

Measure the broader conditions that create opportunity, rather than relying on graduation or any other single measure.

Education Is an Economic Development Strategy

The talent pipeline begins in classrooms.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5

Treat Educational Opportunity as an Economic Development Strategy

Educational opportunity is often discussed as a school-system issue. In the Bay Area and Silicon Valley, it is also a workforce, competitiveness and regional prosperity issue. Every pathway that expands access to credentials and degrees strengthens the region's future talent base.

$116K

Example median wage five years after a bachelor's degree, Santa Clara data in the source handout

$104K

Example median wage five years after a bachelor's degree, San Mateo data in the source handout

$86.6K

Example median wage five years after a bachelor's degree, Alameda data in the source handout

What this means for the region

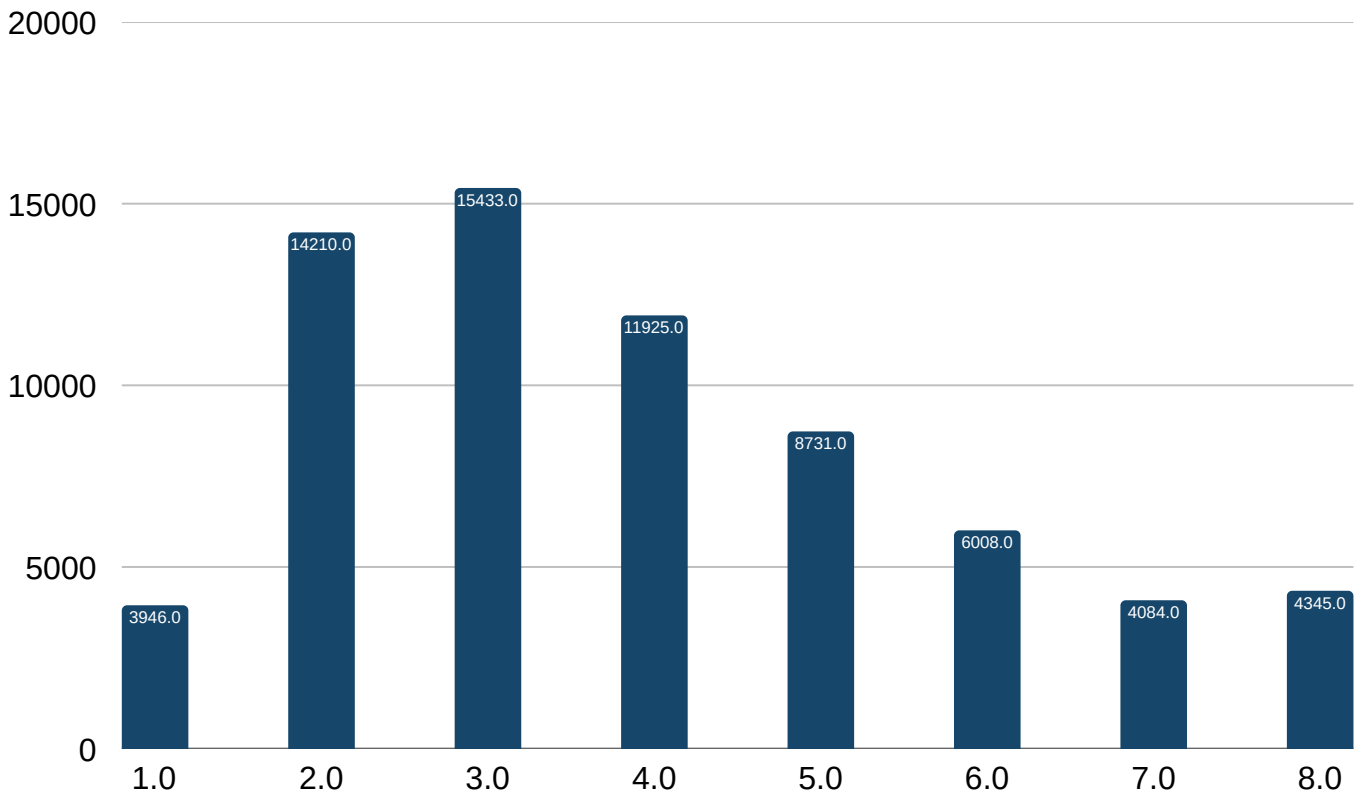
A stronger education-to-workforce pipeline affects more than individual earnings. It influences employer access to talent, public revenues, household stability, innovation capacity and the long-term resilience of communities. For business and government leaders, education investments are long-term economic investments.

The practical shift: connect educational metrics to the outcomes leaders care about, including credentials, earnings, career mobility, workforce participation and regional competitiveness.

Postsecondary Pathways Are Not Linear

Time to degree and credential varies widely.

California's public college pathways include certificates, associate degrees and bachelor's degrees, with students taking different amounts of time to complete credentials. The source data reinforce the importance of tracking progress beyond initial enrollment.



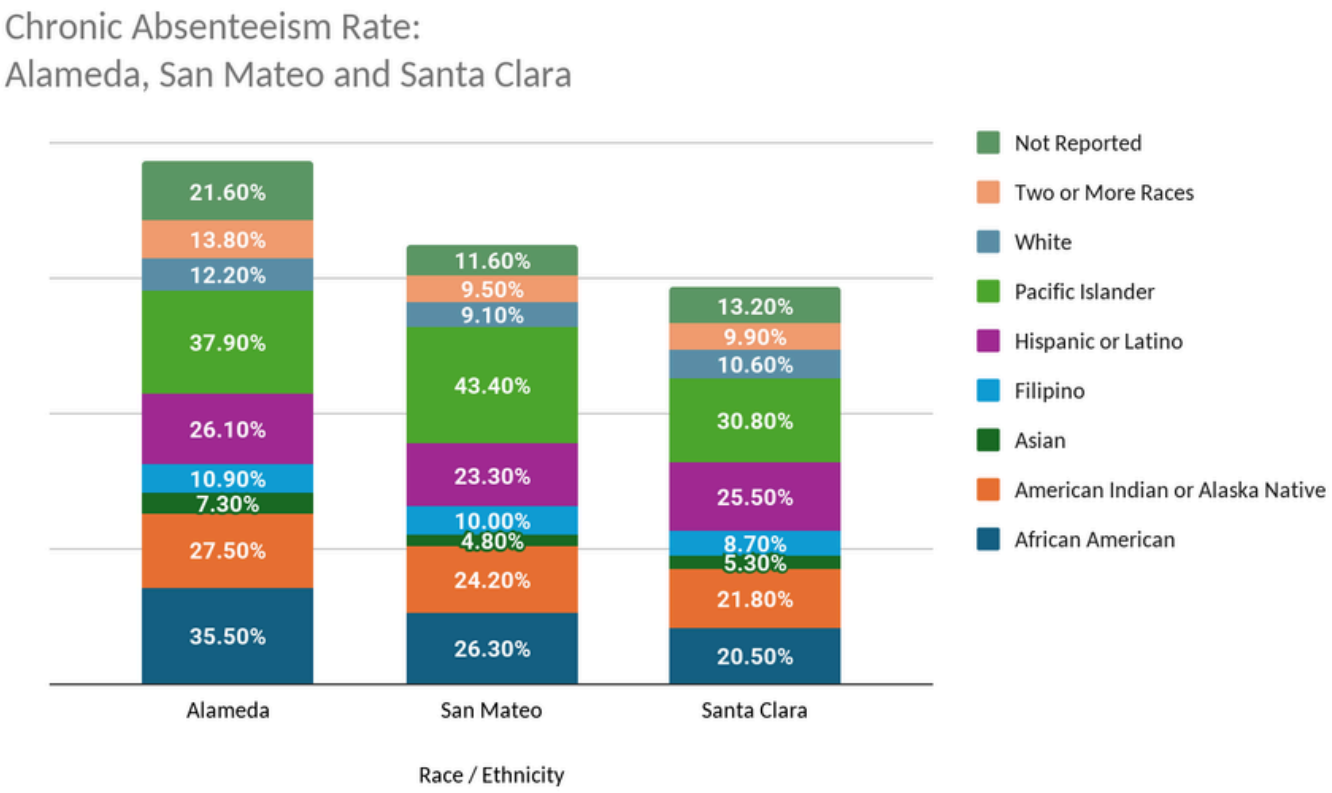
Why this belongs in a State of Education report

Enrollment is only the beginning. A complete picture of opportunity must also examine persistence, transfer, time to credential, completion and what happens to students after they enter the labor market.

Chronic Absenteeism in All Three Counties

Time to degree and credential varies widely.

Chronic absenteeism is not experienced equally across student populations in Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties. Hispanic/Latino students represent the largest share by volume, accounting for 52,541 of the region's 87,725 chronically absent students, or 59.9 percent, reflecting both their larger representation in the student population and an above-average chronic absenteeism rate of 25.4 percent. However, when examining risk by rate, Pacific Islander students experience the highest chronic absenteeism rate at 36.0 percent, followed by African American students at 32.8 percent, more than double the overall county averages. In contrast, Asian students have the lowest chronic absenteeism rate at 6.1 percent, followed by Filipino students at 9.9 percent and White students at 11.1 percent.



Why this belongs in a State of Education report

These differences demonstrate why regional averages alone are insufficient for understanding educational opportunity; examining outcomes across student populations reveals where barriers to consistent school participation are most concentrated and where targeted intervention and resources may be needed most.

Education and Earnings

Postsecondary attainment is connected to workforce outcomes.

The source handout includes California public-college wage data following graduates for up to five years after earning a credential. The examples below show the scale of earnings differences across credential types and over time.

County / Example	Credential	Years Since Award	Median Wage
Santa Clara	Bachelor's, no transfer	5	$116,143
San Mateo	Bachelor's, no transfer	5	$104,447
Alameda	Bachelor's, no transfer	5	$86,604
Santa Clara	Associate Degree	5	$50,820
San Mateo	Associate Degree	5	$58,260
Alameda	Associate Degree	5	$44,224

Interpret with care

These examples are descriptive, not causal comparisons. Earnings vary by field, geography, labor-market conditions, student characteristics and other factors. Their value here is to connect educational pathways to the economic outcomes that follow them.

What the Data Tell Us

Five conclusions for education, workforce and regional leaders.

1 Graduation is necessary, but not sufficient.

High graduation rates can coexist with much lower access to A–G readiness and four-year public university pathways.

2 Readiness gaps are large and persistent.

SED students experience substantially lower A–G completion and academic proficiency across all three counties.

3 The gaps emerge before high school ends.

ELA and mathematics data indicate that the conditions shaping later readiness are present earlier in the educational pipeline.

4 No single metric is enough.

A–G, attendance, teacher experience, academic proficiency and postsecondary outcomes reveal different strengths and vulnerabilities.

5 Education outcomes shape the regional economy.

Educational pathways influence credentials, earnings, talent supply, economic mobility and long-term regional competitiveness.

A Regional Action Agenda

The five strategic priorities provide a practical framework for action.

01

Strengthen College and Career Readiness

Expand access to A–G coursework, academic preparation and the supports that allow students to preserve postsecondary options.

02

Build Seamless Education-to-Workforce Pathways

Coordinate K–12, higher education, employers, workforce organizations and community partners around high-value pathways.

03

Invest Earlier and More Strategically

Intervene before readiness gaps harden, especially in ELA, mathematics and middle-grade preparation.

04

Measure Opportunity, Not Just Achievement

Use a broader dashboard that includes readiness, attendance, instructional capacity, postsecondary transitions and economic mobility.

05

Treat Educational Opportunity as Economic Development

Connect education investments to talent, earnings, tax base, business competitiveness and regional prosperity.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The State of Education

Alameda, San Mateo & Santa Clara Counties

This report synthesizes publicly available education and postsecondary data to provide a regional picture of readiness, achievement, educational pathways and economic opportunity. It is designed as a decision-making tool for educators, policymakers, employers, funders and community leaders.

Primary data sources represented in the underlying analysis include the California Department of Education, California School Dashboard, Stanford Education Data Archive and California postsecondary pathway datasets.

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A companion publication to The State of Opportunity Report