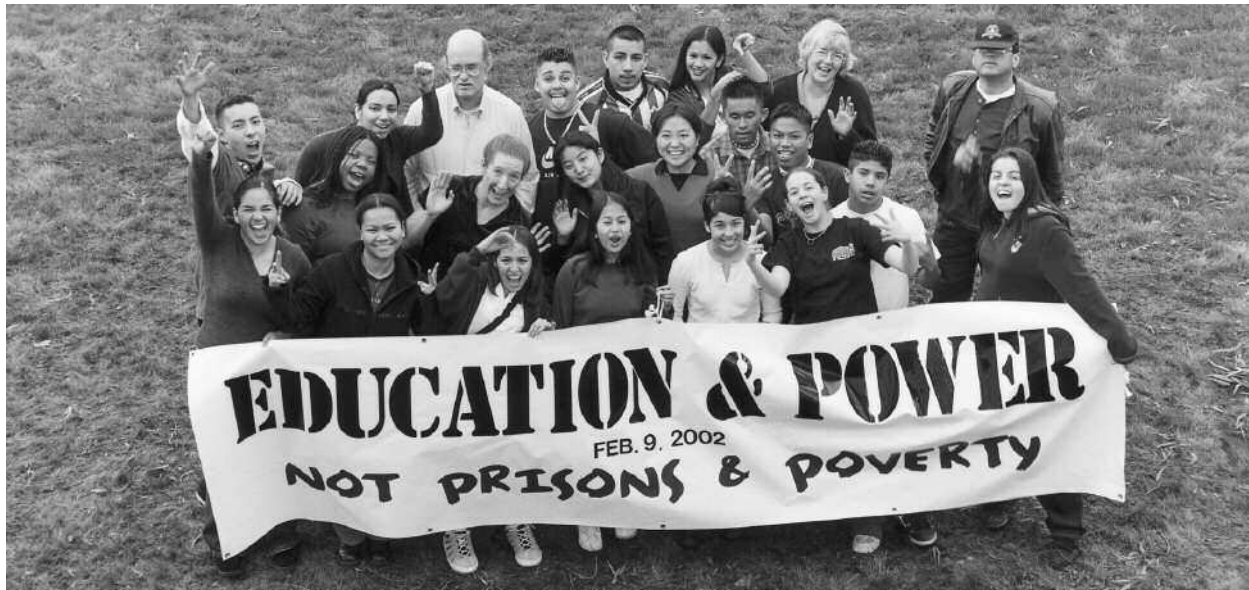


# EYES ON EDUCATION

*A Proposal for East Side Union High Schools*



*San Jose*

*April 2002*



**Californians  
for Justice**

## **Californians for Justice**

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## Introduction

East Side Union students have our eyes on our education — and we see much needed change.

Over the past three months, Californians for Justice students and staff have conducted research with over 1,000 ESUHSD students and with many East Side Union district staff. This report, “Eyes on Education,” summarizes what we have learned about three main issues:

- Clearing the path to college
- Teachers’ multicultural competency
- Language access and diversity.

Our research has included surveys, district data, and interviews with district staff. We have found evidence of major disparities and inequalities for students of color on the East Side. This report includes both our findings and our recommendations for racial justice in district policy.

Victor Arredondo, a student from Mount Pleasant High, experienced racist namecalling by another student that his teacher completely dismissed. Nick Delte, a student from James Lick, learned about the A-G requirements a month before he graduated, and only through Californians for Justice. He now works for minimum wage. Alma Mora fell behind in math because there were no advanced classes that were also bilingual.

Many other students in the East Side Union High School District continue to experience inequalities. They see an imbalance between the ethnicities of teachers and those of students. They do not receive the college counseling they deserve. Their home languages are seen as problems, not assets and skills.

I am a senior at Independence High. As students, all of us have played a big role in investigating problems in our district and helping to create change. We have collected 1,028 surveys from our

peers. These surveys asked students about the inequalities they experienced and their own thoughts regarding such issues. We surveyed students in all grades at Independence, James Lick, Mt. Pleasant, and Overfelt. These students reflected the racial, ethnic, and language diversity of those schools and the district.

We have also conducted meetings with many district and school officials to gather information on established policies relating to problems in college access, multicultural competency, and language access and diversity. Furthermore, students have worked closely with educational experts such as California Tomorrow in Oakland. With perseverance and great leadership, students are working to achieve equality and justice in our schools.

— *Leonie Dacuycuy, Independence High*

*Special thanks to California Tomorrow for being an active partner in this project, particularly in developing and researching the Language & Culture Issues. We want to especially recognize California Tomorrow staff Mamie Chow, Jesus Solorio, and Laurie Olson for their hard work and commitment.*

## **Report Recommendations**

### ***Options to Opportunities: Clearing the Path to College***

- Guarantee that every student develops and follows a 4 year plan to fulfill the A-G requirements.
- Hire more counselors.
- Expand programs such as AVID and Puente.
- Improve current advertising of the A-G requirements and other laws, such as AB 540 which allows all students to go to college regardless of their immigration status.
- Create a long term plan with student input and follow-up to ensure that students from all racial groups meet the requirements for college entrance.

### ***Multicultural Competency for Teachers***

- Implement a district wide anti-racist teacher training to equip teachers with the tools necessary for their multicultural competency.
- Develop voluntary student evaluations of teachers and advertise existing anti-discrimination policies and the current student complaint process.

### ***Language Access and Diversity***

- Initiate a bilingual certification program to recognize students for their abilities.
- Hire more bilingual aides in classrooms and open bilingual aide positions to students at all schools.

### ***About Californians For Justice (CFJ)***

CFJ is a statewide, community-based organization that believes in building power for people of color, low income people, and youth of all colors. CFJ believes students have the right to be heard and to have our opinions listened to.

CFJ and students in San Jose celebrated a victory last fall when ESUHSD Superintendent Joe Coto signed a pledge to send to each student his or her transcript clearly showing what requirements he or she needs to go to college. The students were also able to win changes within their own schools, which included improving basic bathroom conditions. Last May, CFJ also released a report, “Still Separate, Still Unequal,” which addressed racial inequality in districts across the state, including San Jose’s East Side Union.

By building power, students are able to fight for a quality education that each student deserves.

## Teacher Diversity & Multicultural Competency

Students on the East Side see diversity reflected in their friends, classmates and community every day. But do they see it reflected at the front of the class — among their teachers?

And what are teachers' attitudes towards students? Are teachers prepared to deal with the many cultures and ethnicities represented in their classrooms? Do teachers model the respect, understanding, and awareness that will build a strong community and state?

Though the East Side strives for a diverse teaching corps, district teachers remain out of sync

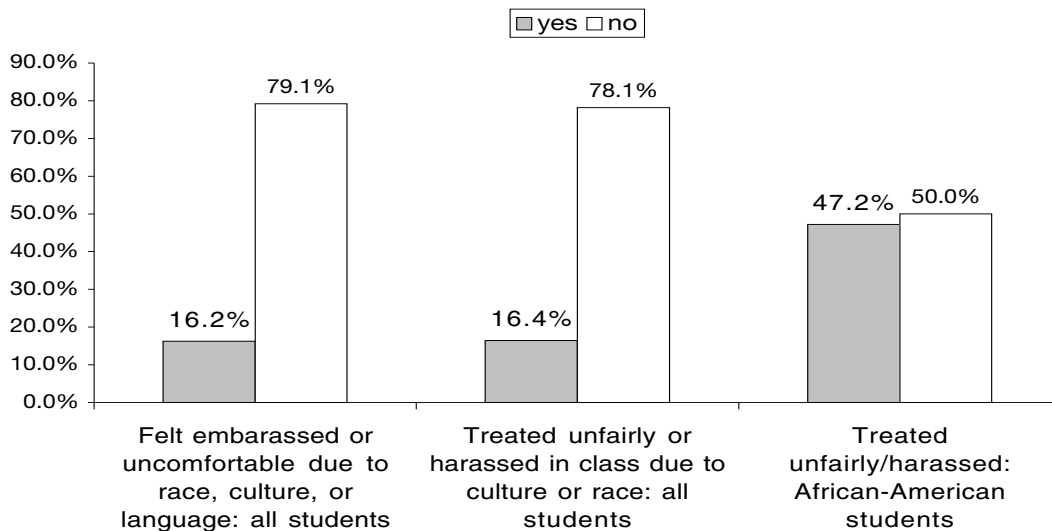
lack the kind of training to model respect for people of different backgrounds.

### *Negative Experiences at School*

Sixteen percent of students we surveyed stated that they had been treated unfairly or harassed in the classroom due to their culture or race. This represents 4 out of every 25 students – a significant chunk of students in any given classroom.

Moreover, one group of students was particularly likely to experience this kind of treatment: over 47% of the African-American students we

**Negative Experiences at School**



Source: CFJ Survey

with the composition of the student body. Disparities are particularly evident in some groups: Asian, Filipina/o, and Latina/o students are especially underrepresented, and the teaching corps is disproportionately white.

This misrepresentation becomes especially troubling in light of the many students who experience harassment at school based on their race, culture, or language, and who state that teachers

surveyed reported racial harassment or other unfair treatment in class. Thus, African-Americans experienced this treatment at three times the rate of all students, and they represented 10% of all those who answered "yes," even though they were only 3.5% of survey respondents overall.

Finally, though 64% of all students stated they had seen a teacher do something positive to help

students from diverse backgrounds feel good about their identities, 54% believed that teachers did not get enough support and training to work with students from many different cultural and racial backgrounds.

***Policies & Solutions***

Just as it is important to recruit and maintain a diverse teaching corps in ESUHSD, it is crucial to provide teachers with training and support in multicultural competency. Such training helps teachers, no matter their own background, to foster success in all students. In addition, multicultural competency helps teachers model the respectful attitudes that all students should show one another.

The East Side Union High School District currently has several policies related to this topic, most notably the Multicultural Education policy (6141, see appendix for text). Other related policies are the one prohibiting name calling and the

**One Student’s Story:**

“In my biology class another student called me a Navajo B\_\_\_\_d, and after that started making war calls. I told him to stop but he didn’t, so I called the teacher. The teacher said "What’s the problem?" and right after I stated my problem she said "Deal with it because I don’t care." We need teachers who realize that all ethnicities are equal and special in their own way.”

— Native American *Sophomore at Mount Pleasant High School.*

one that prohibits harassment and discrimination for students as well as staff (P5353). In addition, the district’s Teacher Evaluation Guidelines call for teachers to demonstrate awareness of community diversity and students’ needs.

However, our survey with students, our discussions with district staff, and the information we

**Student Evaluations: A Model**

Student evaluation and feedback is an essential piece of any plan to bring all teachers to Multicultural Competency. In some nearby schools, including Los Altos and Mountain View High Schools, an innovative student evaluation process allows teachers to hear feedback from students and address teaching effectiveness and style.

Key elements:

- Students and Teachers together design an evaluation tool;
- Teachers participate voluntarily;
- Teachers results are confidential: they often share them with their supervisor, but are not required to;
- School-wide and Department results are discussed broadly;
- Most teachers found the evaluations so helpful that after a few years, nearly all teachers were participating.

*Developed by June E. Thompson, Ph.D., California Association of Student Councils, 510.834.2272*

received from the district office all make it clear that these policies are not fully implemented. Indeed, the Multicultural Education policy has laid dormant since shortly after desegregation funds, which mandated the policy in the 1970's, ended. Yet the policy is clearly still relevant and necessary today.

Policy 6141 states that "staff development is essential to prepare all certificated and classified staff personnel to carry out effectively multicultural education; to understand and relate effectively...and to improve their instructional, counseling, and human relations skills."

While each school is supposed to have a professional development plan, district information provided directly to CFJ states that "With the exception of site collaboration time, there are no mandatory in-service days." Each school plans three in-service days a year, but they are voluntary. Topics such as diversity are only one of many possible topics that may be addressed on these days. Inexperienced teachers are provided training on Classroom Organization and Management, but there is no indication that issues of multicultural competency are addressed in this setting, though such issues strongly relate to classroom management problems. And, while new teachers for the past 6 years have been required to complete the CLAD training to be certified to teach sheltered and ESL students, the multicultural content included in CLAD fails to reach a significant portion of the teaching corps.

Furthermore, students have no formal input in teacher evaluations, and the student grievance process is difficult to navigate. This leaves students with few channels to express concern about teacher behavior or give positive feedback to teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION: Multicultural Competency and Anti-Discrimination**

Create and implement an anti-discrimination plan for the 2002-03 school year and beyond, including:

**Multicultural competency trainings for all teachers** with a focus on anti-racist approaches to teaching and classroom management. This would give teachers a better understanding of their students' cultural backgrounds as well as specific ways to create a classroom environment free of racism and discrimination.

**Voluntary student evaluations of teachers** can be used as a means for teachers to receive feedback on their teaching style and efforts to create a safe and multicultural classroom.

**Advertising of current anti-discrimination policies and the student complaint process.** Many students do not know about or understand the complaint process or their rights in East Side Union schools. Publicizing these policies will empower students to maintain a safe learning environment.

# Languages: From Barriers To Assets

## Language Diversity

Languages are assets, not problems. Yet when teachers lack the skills to communicate with students – whether due to simply not knowing the language, or due to negative attitudes – language becomes a barrier and an obstacle, rather than a skill.

The East Side district serves over 10,000 non-native English speakers, meaning that more than 2 out of every 5 students have a primary language other than English (41.6% or 10,105 students). As of 2000-2001, these included 4,612 English Learners (19%) and 4,857 Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP) students (20%). Students who have a home language other than English, but for whom that home language is not a "primary" one, are not included in these numbers. The district also encounters a tremendous language diversity: at least 30 languages are spoken in the home among

English Learner students (and at least 36 among FEP students).

Of the 1,028 ESUHSD students that we surveyed, nearly two-thirds (59.5%) stated they spoke a language other than English at home.

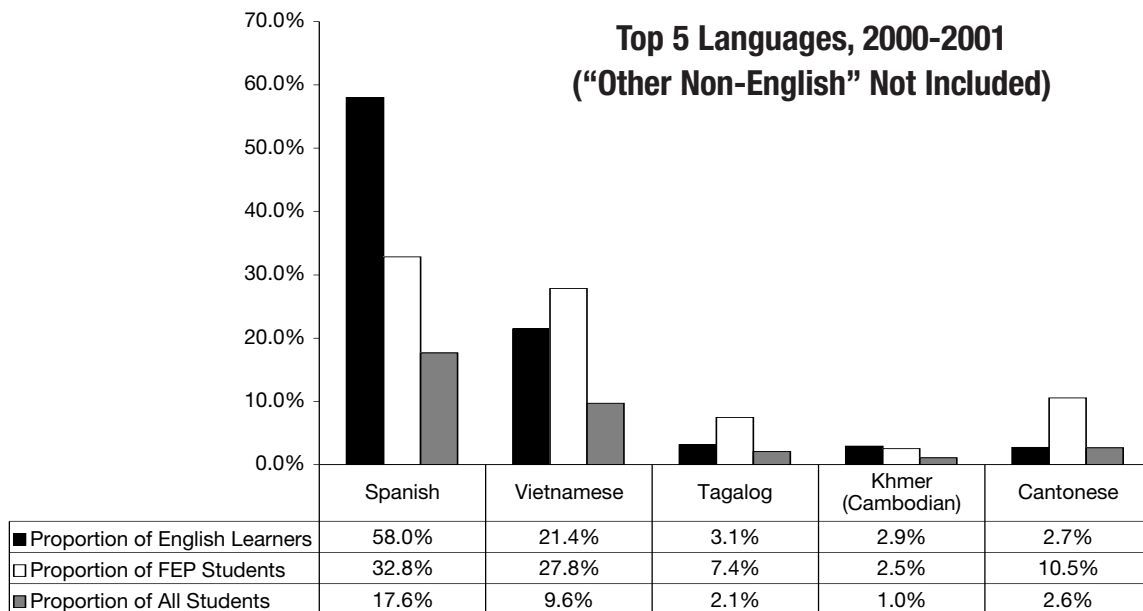
More than half (53%) said they were either "Fluent in English and another language" (46.5% of all respondents) or "Learning English" (6.9% of all respondents). Our survey also reflected the language diversity in the district; students listed 28 home languages other than English.

With all these assets from home and from the community, thousands of students on the East Side graduate fluent in both English and another language. Yet most have little to show for it - nothing to prove their fluency to colleges or employers, and little recognition from their school. Since academic courses are available in only a few languages, many students lack any

### One Student's Story:

I was speaking Spanish in class and the teacher said "If you want to speak Spanish, go back to Mexico."  
—*Sophomore at Independence*

**Top 5 Languages, 2000-2001**  
**("Other Non-English" Not Included)**



Source: DataQuest (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

vehicle to demonstrate their fluency in a home language.

All students deserve recognition for maintaining and enhancing their language skills. Bilingual Certification for students would emphasize that all languages are valuable assets. It would encourage students to maintain and develop their skills in multiple languages – whether they learn them first at home or in the classroom.

Bilingual graduates have tremendously expanded job options, educational possibilities, and abilities to serve their community in a vast number of fields – whether health, social service, business, or

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Bilingual certification for students**

**Develop a pilot program of Bilingual Certification for a limited number of students and languages for the 2001-2002 School year.**

**Fully implement Bilingual Certification in all schools for the 2002-2003 School Year.**

This should include a formal bilingual assessment for the 5 major languages spoken among students, with an informal assessment available for other languages. Certification should be recognized on students' diplomas and transcripts, thus validating students' language and culture and providing them with a strong asset for future college admissions processes or employment opportunities.

education. Bilingual certification would provide recognition for students' skills in both English and their home languages, and give them a concrete tool to prove their fluency after graduation.

**Language Access**

In addition to recognition of their home languages, students need full access to academic coursework.

Teachers and aides who speak a student's home language provide a crucial link for students who are still learning English. But more than half of the students we surveyed who are learning how to speak English did not have access to

teachers who spoke their home language.

Yet only 24 bilingual aides work in ESUHSD. That's an average of fewer than 1 aide for 192 English Learners! This ratio is even lower for some groups: the Vietnamese aide-student ratio is 1 aide for 82 students, but the Spanish ratio is much higher at 1 aide for 297 students. And only one aide in the district speaks something other than Spanish or Vietnamese, so most others – those who speak Mandarin or Ilocano, Khmer or Punjabi – have zero aides to serve them.

And how are aides distributed among schools? Many East Side schools, even those with significant populations of English Learners, have absolutely no bilingual aides working in them.

Overfelt High has 662 English Learners, yet no

**SURVEY QUESTION:**

**If you are learning how to speak English, do you have teachers who speak to you in your home language?**

**ENGLISH LEARNER RESPONDENTS:**

**45% YES**

**52% NO**

(3% no response.)

**On average, the district provides one bilingual aide for every 192 English learners**

**Overfelt has zero aides for 662 English Learners**

Source: DataQuest (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

bilingual aides at all. And Independence High – the district’s largest school — has only 4 aides to serve its 1,065 English Learners. This creates an average ratio at Independence of 1 aide for 266 English Learners – 1 to 89 for Vietnamese speakers and 1 to 520 for Spanish speakers, with 1 aide speaking an unspecified other language to serve 270 possible other English Learners at the school.

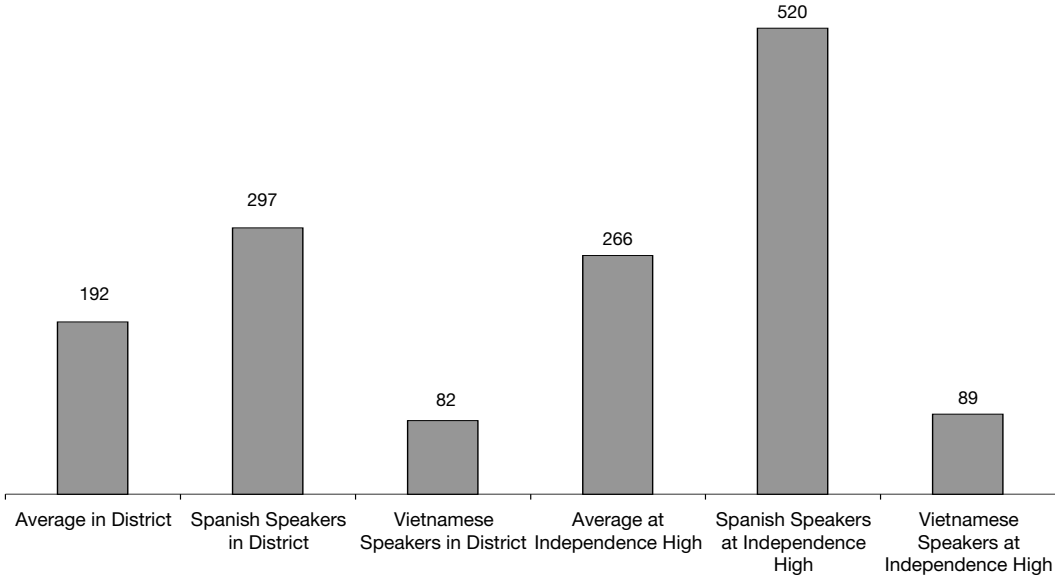
Bilingual classroom aides are invaluable in many ways – in helping students to access academic subject content, helping to develop English fluency, keeping students engaged in learning, serving as mentors, and even helping to prevent conflict based on linguistic or cultural differences. It is imperative that East Side Union expand the number of aides available, as well as the diversity of languages served by aides.

**RECOMMENDATION: *Bilingual Aides***

**Ensure that all money allocated for bilingual aides is used.**  
 Bilingual aides provide essential support to English Learner students. An important step in attracting adult candidates to bilingual aide positions would be to ensure that Aides are paid a living wage.

**Open bilingual aide positions to bilingual students at all schools.**  
 This would also be an added benefit to the bilingual certification process. By working as aides, students would gain training in educational careers and be able to help fellow students as both aides and informal mentors.

**Students per Bilingual Aide, 2000-2001**



Source: DataQuest (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

## Clearing the Path to College

East Side students have high aspirations, and believe in their own potential: 70% of the students we surveyed say that they plan to go to a four-year or community college after they graduate. They believe others have high expectations of them as well: nearly 80% state that their teachers and counselors also expect them to go to college. But how well prepared are they to get there?

While East Side district administrators and teachers express a strong commitment to college preparation for all students, district policies present serious obstacles to that success. The district currently provides only one counselor for every 505 students, employing 48 full time counselors for a 2000-01 enrollment of 24,243. District information states that "there is no policy around guaranteed services and no limit to the number of students that can be assigned to a counselor."

The consequences shine through in our survey:

- Nearly half of all students that we surveyed have not heard about the A-G requirements needed to attend college at Cal State and UC

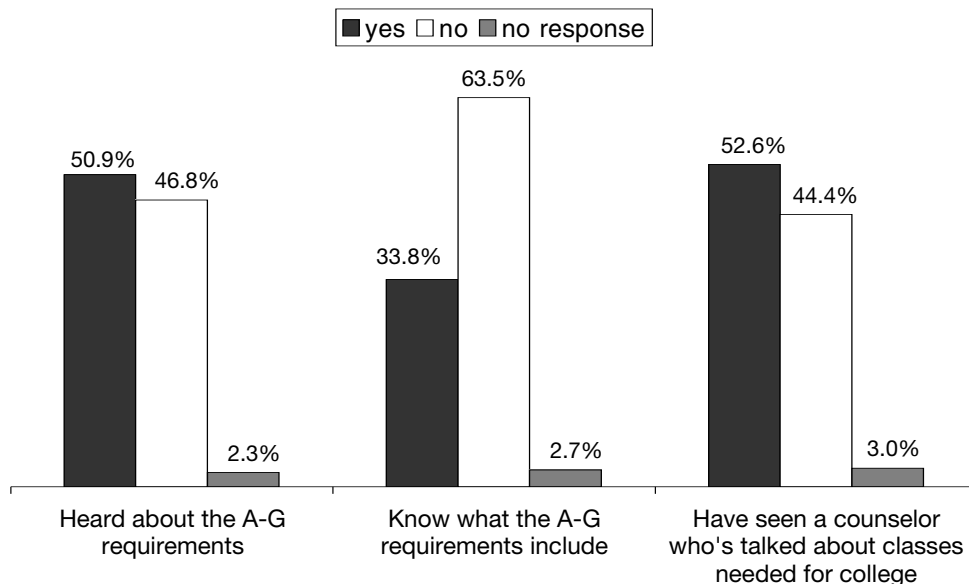
### One Student's Story:

One student is a sophomore at Mt. Pleasant who's in AVID, PUENTE, and the Animation Magnet, so one would think she would be able to talk to her counselor one-on-one. Instead the counselors talk to all of the students at once and ask if there are any questions at the end. She says, "Not everyone wants to ask personal questions in front of everybody else. So if they don't ask then, they don't find out."

schools.

- Nearly half have never had a counselor talk to them about what courses they, individually, need to take in order to be eligible for college.
- Nearly two thirds do not know what the A-G requirements

### Knowledge is Power



Source: CFJ survey.

include.

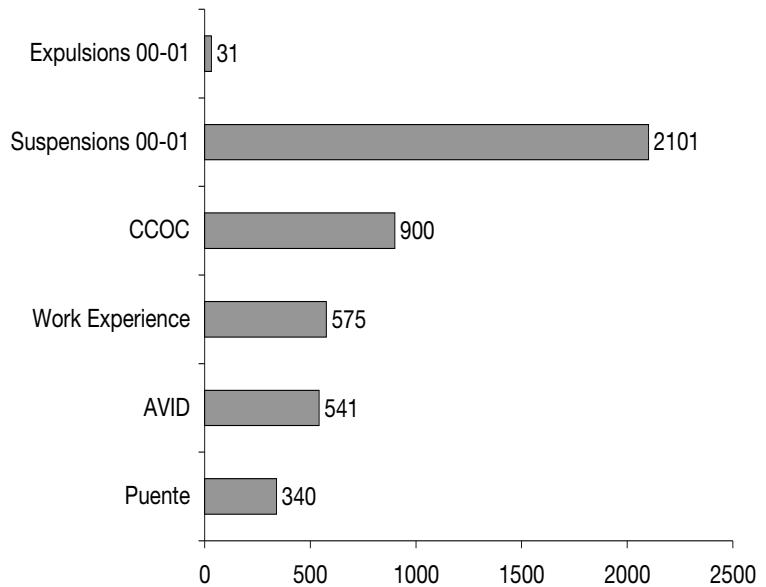
In addition, 307 students that we spoke with had met with a counselor but still did not know what the A-G requirements included. A third of all 12th graders we spoke with – 60 out of the 178 seniors that we surveyed – had never spoken with a counselor about college requirements.

The lack of A-G and other college information may be even worse in the general population than among the students we surveyed, since 9.8% of those we spoke with participated in either AVID or Puente. In the general population of ESUHSD, only 881 students, or 3.7% of the district’s student body, are involved in these programs.

By comparison to AVID and Puente, CCOC and Work Experience programs serve 1,475 students, or 6.1% of the student body. While worthwhile programs, CCOC and Work Experience track students directly into jobs – not college.

Meanwhile, students are more likely to find a

### Major Student Tracks

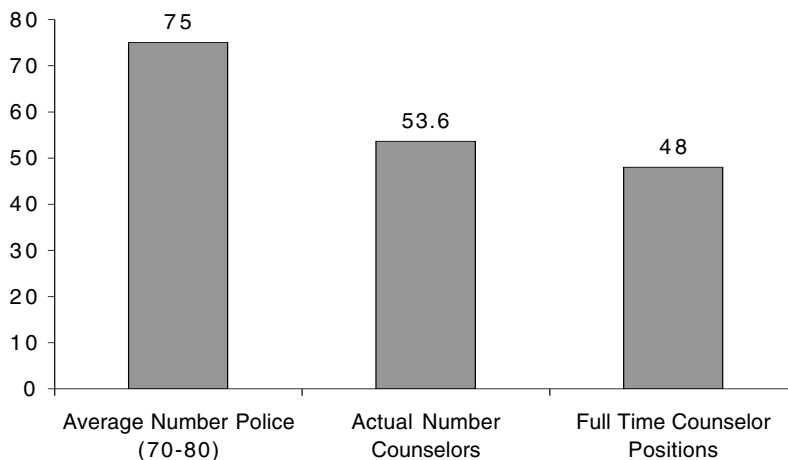


police officer than a counselor on campus: the district welcomes one officer for every 323 students (using an average figure of 75 police based on the district’s stated range of 70-80). That’s a much better ratio than for counselors!

How do all these policies affect students’ educational outcomes?

Students of color are disproportionately under-represented among ESUHSD seniors who have met the A-G requirements — and they are overrepresented among students who are suspended every year. In particular, Latino, African-American, Pacific Islander, and Native American students are suspended at higher rates, and meet the A-G requirements at lower rates, than the general population.

### Counselors vs. Police on Campus



Source for both charts: District responses 10/18/01, 2/14/02.

In the 1999-00 school year, for example, Latino students — the largest group in the district at 40% of the student body — were 50% of all students suspended and only 18% of all seniors meeting the A-G requirements.

This disparity is unacceptable. When laid alongside the district’s data comparing police and counselors and our survey data regarding students’ awareness of A-G information, information on ESUHSD educational outcomes shows that district policies themselves place serious obstacles in college path for students of color.

In order to fully realize its commitment to all its students, East Side Union must develop and implement serious, extensive changes in college access policies.

**Inequality in Access to College**

*In 1999-2000, Latino students were 40% of the district’s students, yet 50% of all students suspended and only 18% of all seniors meeting the A-G requirements.*

*Source: District response, Spring 2001*

**RECOMMENDATION: *Clear the path to college***

**Guarantee that every student develop and follow a 4 year plan to fulfill the A-G requirements.** This will ensure that every student has the opportunity to pursue a college degree if they so choose, rather than being unknowingly tracked into a future with fewer options.

**Hire more counselors** to relieve the already overworked staff and enable them to develop the personal relationships with students that are essential to effective counseling.

**Expand programs such as AVID and Puente** to increase the numbers of students going to college, especially amongst traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups.

**Improve current advertising of the A-G requirements, and other laws such as AB 540** which allows all students to go to college regardless of their immigration status. This is an essential first step to addressing the fact that nearly 2/3 of students surveyed did not know what the A-G requirements included.

**Create a long term plan with student input and follow-up to ensure that students from all racial groups meet the requirements for college entrance.** A long-term vision with clear goals is essential to addressing this serious issue. Students are directly impacted by these issues, and therefore must be a part of crafting future solutions.

## **Conclusion**

We recognize that the issues we have raised in our report cannot be addressed overnight. The challenges facing our public schools today can be daunting, but we believe that through collective action, students, parents, community members, and decision makers can turn the tide of inequality in our schools. Together we can create an education system based on justice where students of all races are expected to succeed, where students' language and culture are recognized as assets rather than barriers, and where classrooms are safe spaces, free from discrimination and harassment.

Many of our findings have highlighted patterns that educators are aware of but have been unable to adequately address:

### ***Teacher Diversity and Multicultural Competency***

- 83% of students are students of color, whereas 38% of teachers are teachers of color.
- 4 out of 25 students have been treated unfairly or harassed in class due to their culture or race.
- Currently there is no district-wide training for teachers around multicultural competency.

### ***Languages: From Barriers Into Assets***

- 40% of students have a primary language other than English.
- The ratio of bilingual aides to English learners is 1:192.

### ***Clearing the Path to College***

- Nearly half of students surveyed have never had a counselor talk to them individually about a plan to meet the A-G requirements.
- Close to 2/3 of students in the district graduate without meeting the A-G requirements

As a result of our research and numerous meetings with students and other members of the the school community, we are asking that the Board and Superintendent prioritize the following recommendations:

### ***Multicultural Competency for Teachers :***

Implement a district-wide anti-racist teacher training to equip teachers with the tools necessary for multicultural competency.

### ***Language Access and Diversity***

Initiate a bilingual certification program to recognize students for their abilities.

### ***Clearing the Path to College:***

Guarantee that every student develop and follow a 4 year plan to fulfill the A-G requirements.

## Research Methodology and Overview

Between January and March 2002, Californians for Justice surveyed 1,028 students in the East Side Union High School District (ESUHSD). Our "Opportunity to Learn" survey asked students about their experiences and perceptions regarding three main areas: teachers' multicultural competency, language access, and college access. Students were surveyed on campus during lunch, during breaks, or in their classrooms. A copy of the survey used is attached to this report.

Most students surveyed attended one of four schools where Californians for Justice is active in San Jose: Independence, James Lick, Mt. Pleasant, and Overfelt. Most students were in the 10th and 11th grades, but 9th and 12th graders were also surveyed. Slightly more girls than boys responded.

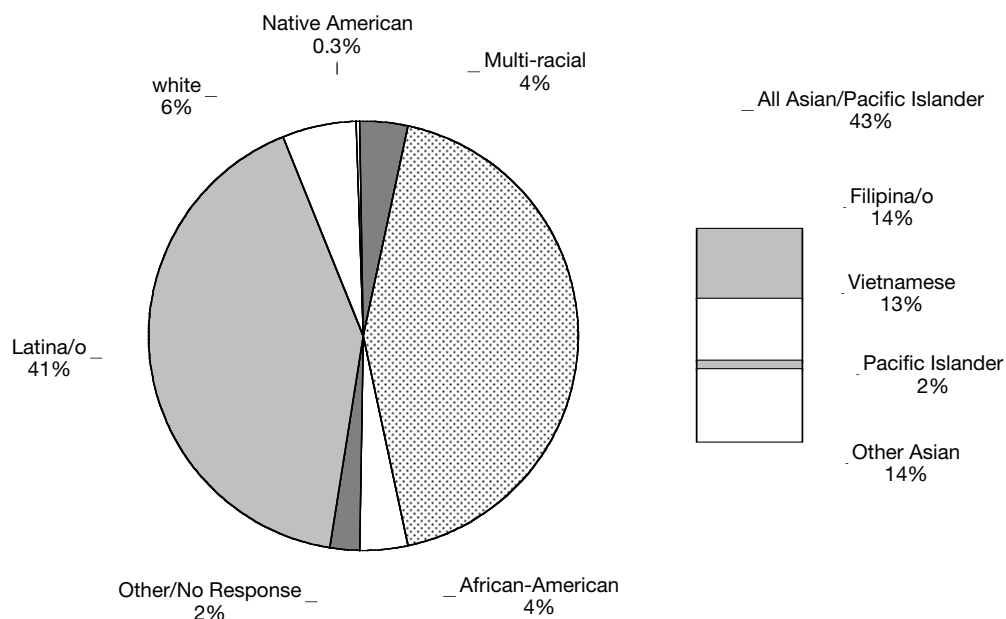
By race and ethnicity, the students surveyed were representative of their schools and district. Students were asked to identify both their race (by

checking a box) and their ethnicity (by writing it down). In order to analyze the data accurately, we categorized all students who checked more than one "race" box as Multiracial. All students grouped as "African-American," "Latina/o," etc. checked that box only. Among all races, students listed 66 different ethnicities, reflecting the tremendous diversity of the district.

Students were also asked what languages they spoke at home. A third (33%) listed English only, while nearly two thirds (59.5%) listed another language either instead of or in addition to English. Students identified 29 languages in all, including English, as home languages.

Nearly half of students surveyed (46.5%) stated that they were fluent in English and another language, while 6.9% described themselves as learning English. A large portion, 41.4%, stated that they were fluent in English, but not in another

### Survey Respondents by Race



language.

Finally, a third (33.2%) of all students stated that they were part of an official track or academy within their school. These included everything from AVID to Sheltered English to JROTC.

Notably, one in ten of the students we surveyed said they were part of either AVID or Puente, the district's biggest college preparation programs; this is a significantly higher percentage than in the district's student body as a whole, where only 3.7% of students participate in AVID or Puente. This should be kept in mind in analyzing our results, as it implies that the students we spoke with were better, not worse, prepared than the district's students as a whole.

*Contact Californians for Justice at 408-292-9476 for a copy of the complete survey data.*

### ***District Data and Other Research***

Over the past six months, students and staff at Californians For Justice have been collecting information throughout the district. Together, students and staff conducted interviews with experts in the education system ranging from students and teachers to Board members. Through these interviews, District staff including Superintendent Joe Coto, Dan Ordaz, Rafael Renteria, and Beth Reese shared their knowledge and opinions on issues we raised. Two Board members, Jeff Ota and Juanita Ramirez also provided us with helpful feedback on Board policies and priorities. And numerous counselors, teachers, and a few principals shared their invaluable knowledge of the day-to-day reality of the school system with us.

In addition to our interviews, we requested data from the district covering topics such as:

- Professional Development
- Race and Gender of School Staff
- AVID and Puente
- School Security
- CCOC and Work Experience
- Student Demographics

To develop our recommendations we took this information and conducted weekly meetings at schools to gather further input and feedback from students.

## **Acknowledgments**

*Californians For Justice would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this research and report.*

Special thanks to those who took the time to share their wisdom:

### ***School District Officials***

Joe Coto  
Ms. Darron  
Mr. Key  
Dan Ordaz  
Rafael Renteria  
Beth Reese  
Cari Vaeth

### ***East Side Teachers Association***

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### ***Board Members***

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Juanita Ramirez

### ***Data Center***

Charisse Domingo

### ***California Tomorrow***

Mamie Chow  
Jesus Solorio  
Laurie Olson

### ***California Association of Student Councils***

June Thompson

### ***Thanks to those who put this report together:***

Emily Hobson for analyzing the survey data and writing.  
Leonie Dacuycuy for writing the introduction.  
Mike Chavez for layout and technical support.  
Bill Ramirez for databasing most of the surveys.  
Cathy Rion and Janelle Ishida for editing and coordinating.

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