

Every Student Counts

Student Achievement Through
Educational Opportunity and Awareness





CCISCO CREDENTIAL

CCISCO helps everyday people win extraordinary victories, not by speaking for them, but by providing a vehicle for them to speak, act and engage in the public arena for themselves. Since 1996, we have been organizing a voice for justice and equity in Contra Costa. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, interfaith federation of 25 congregations and youth institutions representing over 35,000 families. We believe that by empowering parents and students and building strong relationships between the school and family, we can create schools where every student graduates prepared for life. For this reason, CCISCO parent and youth leaders are working to develop local campaigns to improve parent engagement and increase student achievement.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION:

- Supported 9 schools in receiving funding for home visitation program and helped to train over 120 teachers to conduct home visits (2008)
- Helped to improve after-school programming at Los Medanos Elementary (2007)
- Secured funding for vocational training program for Bay Point youth (2007)
- Worked with PICO California affiliates and California Home Visitation Project to successfully lobby for Nell Soto home visitation program (2006)
- Helped to pass Equity Plan for Pittsburg Unified School District (2006)
- Implemented Williams Settlement at Liberty HS resulting in facility improvements; new credentialed teachers; and new textbooks (2006)
- Reformed policy for English Language Development classes at Mt. Diablo Unified School District to improve access to A-G requirements for students of color (2004)
- Helped to lobby for funding for development of new athletic field at Riverview Middle School (2005)
- Helped to successfully lobby for funding for additional credentialed teachers at Kennedy High School (2001)
- Helped to pass school bond measure which resulted in the construction of Lavonya DeJean Middle School (1999)



PICO California

PICO CALIFORNIA CREDENTIAL

PICO California is a faith-based community organizing network representing 450,000 families throughout the state. We have 20 affiliates working in 73 cities and in 30 school districts in Northern, Central, and Southern California. We are part of the PICO National Network

For more than 10 years, PICO California has worked to improve opportunities for low-income and working families in the state.

In the area of education, our work focuses on ensuring that *all* students graduate high school prepared for college and for meaningful employment. We believe several important conditions must exist in order to realize this goal, including: equitable and consistent funding for schools, equitable distribution of qualified and effective teachers, improved collection and reporting of data, and supports for diverse programs and schools to better meet the needs of all students.

We believe that respectful partnerships between parents and school staff are key to successful students and successful schools. To that end, we developed a Parent-Teacher Home Visit project in Sacramento more than 10 years ago, which has since become a model throughout California and the country.

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BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH



Over the past eighteen months, CCISCO Leaders have met with hundreds of students, parents, and teachers in East Contra Costa County to listen to their concerns and hopes for the future. CCISCO Leaders held dozens of research meetings with teachers, administrators, school board members, district officials, education experts, and state legislators to understand best practices and learn how to develop real solutions to improve our public schools.

A quality education is essential to being prepared for the future. Education is the key to opportunity and has become one of the most important civil right issues of our time. The following report will present our findings, compare California in relation to Contra Costa County and propose real solutions which will lay out the actions necessary to begin the work of reforming our public education system.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Schools in East Contra Costa are not serving the needs of our young people, especially young people of color. There has been much time spent on pointing fingers and blame over the low achievement level of students, this report seeks to highlight potential solutions to increase student achievement.

In order to understand the severity of the problem, one must look at the current College Opportunity Ratio (COR) to see clearly how our current educational system is broken. Since its inception, the COR has been able to give a snapshot of East Contra Costa students in relation to the rest of California. Examining the COR of high schools across California and Contra Costa County underscores the urgency and magnitude of the problem.

California's College Opportunity Ratio:

CCISCO and PICO California have built a strong partnership with UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access which developed the "College Opportunity Ratio" as a way to understand educational equity. In the "California Educational Opportunity Report 2007" published UCLA/IDEA identified five key findings that emerged from these analyses:

- **A national opportunity gap.** California lags behind most other states in providing fundamental learning conditions as well as in student outcomes.

- **A racial opportunity gap.** Within California, African American and Latino students are far more likely to attend schools that lack fundamental learning conditions than their white and Asian peers.
- **A restricted flow through the “mathematics pipeline.”** The flow of students through California’s middle school and high school math curriculum is slowed by students’ lack of access to reasonably-sized classrooms, rigorous coursework, and well-trained teachers.
- **Systemic problems.** Inadequacy and inequality are found throughout California. The state’s educational problems are most severe in schools serving the highest proportions of African American and Latino students.
- **Worse outcomes for the Class of 2006.** The consequences of poor learning conditions were greater for young people in the Class of 2006 in part because they were the first class to face the California High School Exit Exam’s “diploma penalty.” In 2006, California graduated a smaller proportion of its 9th grade cohort than the proportion of any cohort of 9th graders graduating since 1997.

<i>COR for the State of California</i>	<i>100:66:25</i>
<i>COR for underrepresented students across California</i>	<i>100:54:15</i>

The opportunity gap can be defined as a ratio. For example, in 2007 for every 100 students of color (Latino, African-American, Native-American) who started 9th grade, only 54 graduated and only 15 of those who graduated were ready for college.

California’s Student to Teacher Ratio

The state of California has a higher student to teacher ratio. During the 2003-04 school year, California had on average 6 more students than the U.S. median at the time.

	U.S. Median	CA Median
Middle Schools	15.8	23.5
High Schools	15.4	21.8

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/>

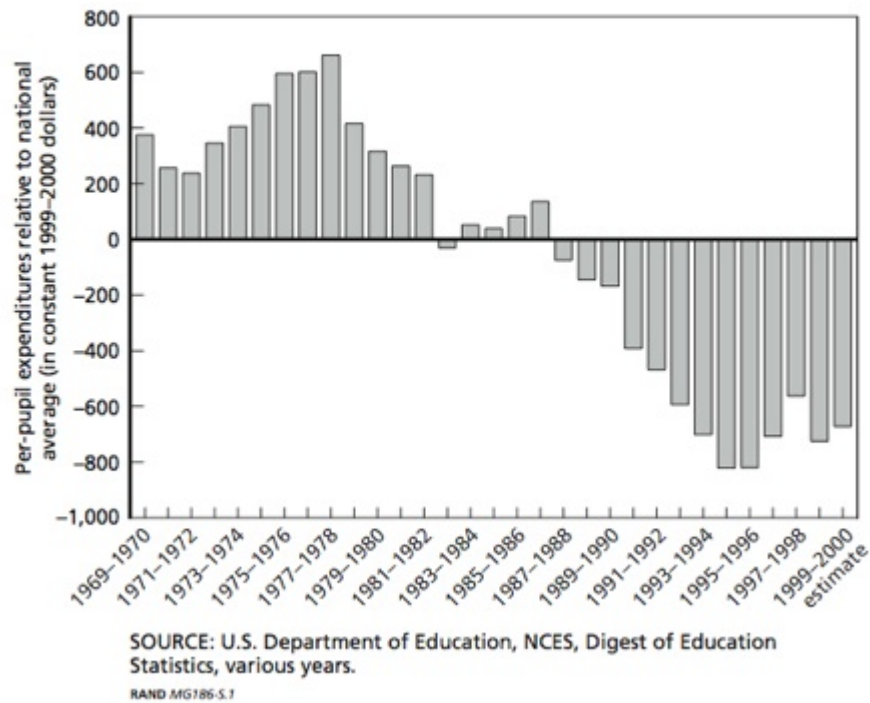
"No football coach in his right mind would try to teach 150 players one hour per day and hope to win the game on Friday night. No, the team is limited to 40 or 50 highly motivated players, and the coach has three or four assistants to work on the many skills needed to play the game. The 'student-teacher' ratio is maybe 15:1. But the English teacher--all alone--has 150 'players' of the game of composition (not to mention literature, language, and the teaching of other matters dropped into the English curriculum by unthinking enthusiasts)."

-John C. Maxwell-



Since the late 1970s and with the passage of Proposition 13, California has gone from having one of the best funded and highest performing public school systems to having one of the worst in the country.

Figure S.1
California's K-12 Public School Per-Pupil Spending Relative to the National Average, 1969-1970 to 1999-2000



The problem, however, appears to be much more severe in many East Contra Costa high schools. CCISCO Leaders researched the COR of three cities (Antioch, Brentwood, Oakley and Pittsburg) and found some startling data. Though the COR for the number of

students graduating from high school were around the state average, the number of college ready graduates were significantly lower.

In Brentwood and Oakley:

COR for Liberty High	100:80:37
COR for Liberty High School underrepresented students	100:69:22

In Antioch:

COR for Antioch High School	100:54:11
COR for Antioch High School underrepresented students	100:54:5

In Pittsburg:

COR for Pittsburg Senior High School	100:57:9
COR for Pittsburg Senior High School underrepresented students	100:54:7

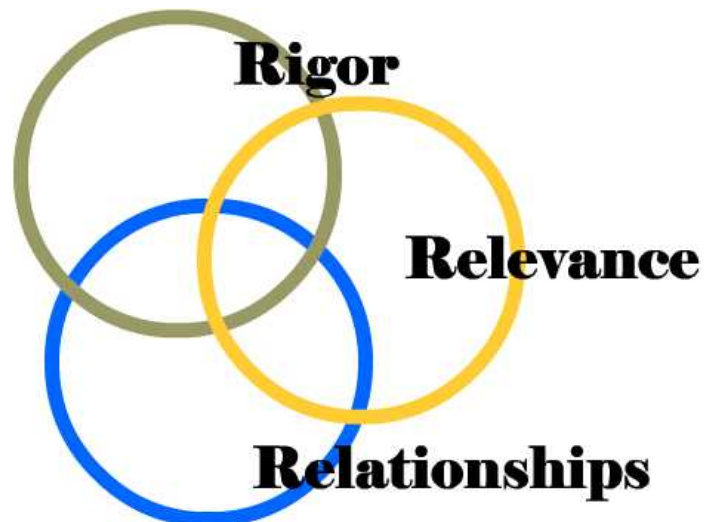
In many cases, CCISCO Leaders found that students and families did not have access to basic information to help them succeed. In addition, CCISCO Leaders found that students did not have access to many of the classes they needed or adequate support to succeed in the few classes available.

CCISCO conducted a survey with over 165 Liberty High School students, 65% said that their parents were not sufficiently informed about college information.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The proposed solutions can be defined in what is referred to as the “Three R’s” which are critical to transforming our schools:

- Rigor
- Relevance
- Relationships



Education needs to be **Relevant** and capable of preparing students for the future. Students need to know how their education impacts their life and how it can prepare them for the future—especially how it will help them graduate, go to college, and be prepared for meaningful work.

We need to ensure that the curriculum is **Rigorous** so that our students are put to the challenge and are stimulated to learn. All students deserve access to a challenging credit that will prepare them for life. Advanced placement courses are an essential part of this rigor.

A strong emphasis needs to be made on **Relationships** so that everyone: students, parents, and teachers are all of one accord and moving in the same direction. Communication and respect is key to building strong relationships. Small class sizes and innovative programs like parent-teacher home visits are ways to build and sustain strong relationships.

CALIFORNIA

During the course of the past year, the notion of improving our schools remained a priority. The state of California deemed this year as the Year of School Reform. The current economic crisis, however, has created the consciousness necessary to bring to light the worst possible case scenario in our schools. This economic situation, though extreme in comparison to past economic disasters has created the impetus for a positive change in education.



LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Each community is unique. For this reason, CCISCO Leaders have developed unique solutions for change in each of the three school districts highlighted in this report. The solutions are described in detail by city below:

Antioch:

Antioch High School has seen class sizes grow exponentially each year and essential classes have been cut. The youth organizing committee at Antioch High School has conducted over 100 relational meetings with their peers to understand their concerns and aspiration. During those meetings, youth leaders have identified reducing class size and improve the teacher to student ratio as a primary concern for improving academic achievement and the graduation rate. Students report many classes having more than forty students and have to sit on the floor for lack of space and desks. As for essential classes, the curriculum seems to have changed from teaching and learning to

completion of “recovery packets” for students who fail. Rigor is quickly becoming a missing component in their academic experience.

Students and teachers are forging partnerships to work with the administration and school district to ensure that class sizes stay down so that students can get the kind of personalized instruction they deserve. This is a step in the right direction, however, core classes must not be cut as English and Math classes are the foundation for all jobs once leaving high school.

Pittsburg:



In Pittsburg, the Pittsburg Education Committee, made up of students, teachers, and parents at Pittsburg High School and Pittsburg Unified, have developed a ten point plan to build a culture where every student graduates prepared for life: be it work or college. A greater emphasis has been placed on shifting the frequency and weight of assessments so that there is more time spent on teaching and learning in the classroom. By shifting the weight of assessments to 50/50 and decreasing the frequency these assessment, students can focus on learning in the classroom.

Also part of the solution is real mentoring readily available to all students. This would ensure that the current ratio of 40 students to one teacher is decreased so that students who need help actually get it.

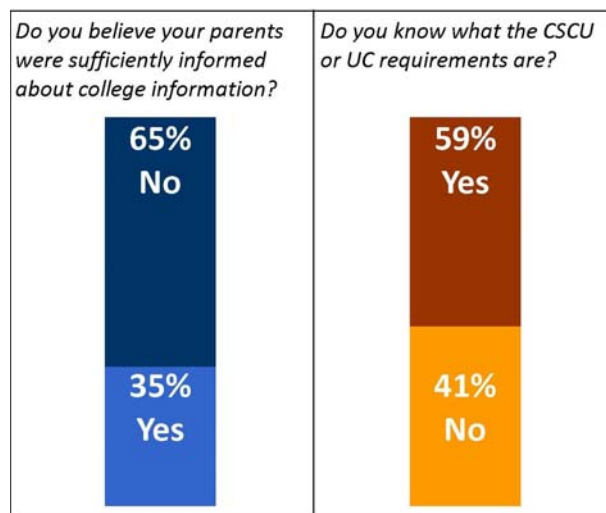
Finally, the Pittsburg Education Committee is developing a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure that all parents are engaged and informed about what is happening at school and increase the academic support of their children. Hundreds of parents and students have mobilized in support of these proposals and have made great progress in building support among administrators, district officials, and the Pittsburg Unified School District Board of Trustees. However, it is important that these measures are implemented in a clear and transparent fashion to build trust and support for parents and students.

Brentwood:

In Brentwood, the CCISOC Youth Organizing Committee has developed a series of recommendations to help improve access to information, better curriculum and improve family-school relationships to ensure that every student and family are informed and prepared about their opportunities for higher education.

Through CCISCO’s community needs assessment of individual interviews we have observed that often time’s students are not receiving the information early enough. Although there are some students who are exceedingly prepared and who have taken the initiative to seek all of the help, other students are left behind. A most essential piece of student success is parent engagement; in this area we have identified cultural and linguistic barriers that prevent parents from understanding the opportunities available to their students.

In a student survey of 165 students, when asked, “Do you believe your parents were sufficiently informed about college information?” 65% (108) answered “No.” Similarly, it was noted that 41% (69) of students reported not knowing the eligibility requirements for a CSCU or UC.



Liberty High School Survey of 165 students.

CCISCO Youth were instrumental in establishing a bilingual back to school and financial aid events. Immaculate Heart of Mary has been a force in helping to turn out to these events and inform families of their academic opportunities.

CCISCO Youth met with hundreds of students, conducted extensive surveys, and held dozens of meetings with teachers, school officials, district staff and education experts.

The end result of these research meetings was a set of very basic recommendations which include:

1. Review college entrance requirements and financial aid information beginning in 9th and 10th grade back to school night and to provide them in multiple languages;

2. On a year round basis, encourage students of color to enroll in Advanced Placement courses that prepare them for college;
3. Increase parent involvement by having school district and school officials implement an outreach program such as the parent teacher home visit program or AVID program to educate students and families about college requirements; and
4. Expose students to college entrance exams such as having the pre-ACT PLAN testing be administered to all 10th grade students during regular school hours.

ACTION

The time to act is now. There has never been a more critical moment in history to change the failing culture of our educational system. Our future and our children's future depend on our commitment to create as many opportunities for academic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION AT LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL

Antioch Unified School District

Collaboration between Antioch High School youth organizing committee, Antioch High School teachers, administration, and district officials to discuss proposals to reduce classroom size, preserve core classes and improve recovery programs.

Liberty Union High School District

Improve college access and high school graduation by adopting the following policy proposals:

1. Review college entrance requirements and financial aid information beginning in 9th and 10th grade back to school night and to provide them in multiple languages;
2. On a year round basis, encourage students of color to enroll in Advanced Placement courses that prepare them for college;
3. Increase parent involvement by having school district and school officials implement an outreach program such as the parent teacher home visit program or AVID program to educate students and families about college requirements; and

4. Expose students to college entrance exams such as having the pre-ACT PLAN testing be administered to all 10th grade students during regular school hours.

Pittsburg Unified School District

Implement recommendations of Pittsburg Community Education Committee

- Assessment schedule and grading policy must be communicated clearly and frequently to students and parents in language that parents can understand;
- Students must be provided with resources to train them on taking standardized test;
- Accommodations for assessment testing will be given as is the case with STAR and CAHSEE Testing periods (i.e. reduced schedules, snacks, breakfast, announcements, etc);
- Reinstate " D 's " immediately with weight of 69-59%;
- Continue to test (i.e. common assessments), but lessen the weight (i.e. 50/50) and frequency of assessments;
- Develop and implement a written set of improved strategies for better parent and student communication in the next month to include assessment process, grading policy, parent-teacher-student engagement, and regular and effective feedback methods;
- Hire someone to effectively manage the Mastery Center and staff it at the ratio of 15 to 1;
- Develop accountability procedures for teachers with a large percentage of students failing in a semester;
- Provide regular reports to parents, students, board members and community leaders to substantiate the continuous of assessments;
- Integrate training for taking standardized test into the 9th grade (new entering students) and Mastery Center curriculum regularly;
- Continue to conduct better teacher supports and training; and
- Hire a consultant to review the Assessment Test for cultural equity

California Department of Education

Continue to work with PICO California and CCISCO to ensure that local students, parents, teachers, administrators and districts have a voice

Continue to utilize public leadership to advance statewide school funding reform.

State of California Legislature

Make school funding reform a priority and work with PICO California and local affiliates to ensure that policies are equitable and help to close the achievement gap and improve the graduation rate and access to college for low-income communities of color.

CCISCO conducted research meetings with the following people:

Tim Halloran, LHS Principal
Jim Bruce, LHS Assistant Principal
Kelly Perkins, LUHS Career Center Tech
Carrie Rose, Executive Director of The Parent / Teacher Home Visit Project
Johnny Rodriguez, ODAT Executive Director
Pat Boss, LUHSD EL Coordinator
Jesse Ortega, LHS Teacher
Summer Rodriguez, LHS Teacher
Kristina Busch, LHS Teacher
Roberta Furger, PICO California
Daniel Smith, Superintendent of Liberty Union High School District
Mary Vinciguerra - Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
Antioch High School Teachers
Louie Rocha, Antioch High School Principal
Todd Whitemire, Principal, Pittsburg High School
Dr. Barbara Wilson, Superintendent, Pittsburg Unified School District
Pittsburg Education Association
Pittsburg Unified School District Board of Trustees members
Linda Rondeau, Assistant Superintendent
Iris Contreras, PEA

Works Cited

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