



# Education Equity in Silicon Valley: Donor Pathways to Impact



Issue Brief

August 2021

Magnify Community





Education can provide the foundation for every child to reach their full potential in life. We all benefit from a well-educated, productive community. Yet here in Silicon Valley—the epicenter of innovation that has transformed the world—our public education system is at once failing too many of our children, while providing others with a world-class education that prepares them for a meaningful career. Statistically speaking, you can predict a Silicon Valley child’s educational opportunity based on their household income, zip code, and the color of their skin.

It doesn’t have to be this way. And it isn’t a zero-sum game. We can provide a high-quality education to EVERY child. Philanthropic dollars can play a catalytic role in making this possible. But would-be donors often find our complex local education system overwhelming. With so many needs, it is hard to know where to begin. And how can you ensure that your investment will make a positive impact? This education brief can help answer those questions.

To get started, it’s helpful to consider the local education system in a framework of three broad and intersecting categories:

1

## PEOPLE

The people who impact students’ trajectories

2

## PROGRAMS & SYSTEMS

The programs within systems that focus on educating children and supporting their development

3

## POLICIES

The policies that shape systems and programs, and support and hold people accountable

A deep dive into the entire vast educational landscape is beyond the scope of this brief. In an effort to make this brief as actionable as possible, we highlight five levers of intervention within the three categories above that research tells us offer a particularly significant return on investment. There are many ways to make a difference in the local education system, at a wide range of investment levels. We hope this brief will help you identify your ideal way to get started.





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# Background

**Philanthropic investment has the potential to dramatically accelerate the most promising solutions.**

Access to a high-quality education can transform a person's life trajectory. Research shows it can lead to higher-paying, more satisfying jobs, as well as support a healthier and longer life. All Silicon Valley students deserve an excellent education, yet this is too often inaccessible to local Latinx, Black, Pacific Islander, and Vietnamese students experiencing poverty. This results in significantly lower educational attainment, and therefore fewer opportunities and limited economic mobility throughout their lifetimes. COVID-19 made inequities worse, as low-income students lacked access to adequate technology, connectivity, and quiet spaces for distance learning. They were often the last to return to in-person school, while also suffering greater positivity rates in their communities and resulting disproportionate health and economic impacts. As a result, these students lost academic ground, compounding pre-existing achievement gaps. All of this creates greater urgency to do whatever it takes now to support all our students, and both public and private investment have a critical role to play.

## Education Equity

**Achieving education equity**—successfully conceiving and resourcing a fair and just education for all students—is a complex and long-term challenge. Many local school districts and nonprofits are actively working to address the deeply rooted inequalities upon which our educational system was built. In Silicon Valley, greater public and philanthropic investment has the potential to dramatically accelerate the most promising solutions, as there are many accessible and effective ways local donors can impact different dimensions of this problem.

Student : **Teacher** Ratio

**15:1**

**LAS LOMITAS SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Menlo Park, Portola Valley & Atherton



**22:1**

**RAVENSWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
East Palo Alto & eastern Menlo Park/Belle Haven



Source: Education Data Partnership (EdData)



## Silicon Valley Education Landscape

**Systemic racism** and **unequal funding** are among the **root causes of educational inequities** in our country and our region, tracing back centuries and still prevalent today. Racial segregation in schools was enshrined in American law for generations, creating separate but deeply unequal systems. While the US Supreme Court ruled more than 60 years ago that this was unlawful, schools today may be more segregated than before—even here in Silicon Valley. The disparity in access to quality housing and schools between the rich and poor and along racial lines remains a fixture in the Bay Area.



Government-sponsored policies and practices in housing and school financing have allowed educational inequities to persist and even worsen over time. In Silicon Valley, housing segregation is still rampant, and because schools here are funded in part by local property taxes, and can be augmented by parent donations and locally-approved taxes, schools in low-income areas—which students of color are more likely to attend than White students—are historically the least resourced. Parents with means can choose to move to well-resourced districts or send their children to private school, while low-income families have fewer choices. Tax policies like Proposition 13, which passed in 1978, resulting in a reduction in local funding for schools and making statewide tax increases more difficult, exacerbated opportunity and achievement gaps. While attempts to mitigate the funding disparity have made public spending somewhat more equitable, they still have not closed the funding or achievement gaps.

Moreover, California still underspends in education relative to other states, which results in less per-pupil funding in a state that has the most K-12 students in public schools and the highest poverty rate in the country (when accounting for the cost of living). For high-poverty schools, with greater student needs and inadequate budgets, it's even harder to attract and retain top talent and resources, and available student services are insufficient. Funding is not the only factor impacting educational excellence, but it's a significant one.

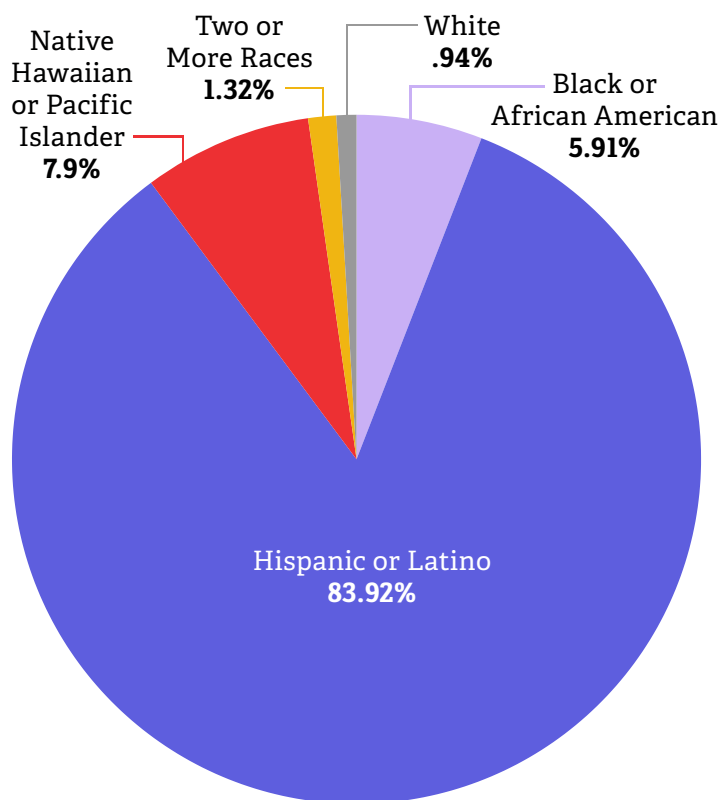
**English Language Learners (ELLs):** Students whose first language is not English and who have not yet achieved proficiency in English according to district standards on state testing comprise 20% of the K-12 student population in Silicon Valley. ELLs need the most support academically and therefore represent significant potential for success with the right support, as 80% of them in Silicon Valley are not currently meeting grade level standards on statewide English language arts and mathematics assessments.



## San Mateo County (2019-20)

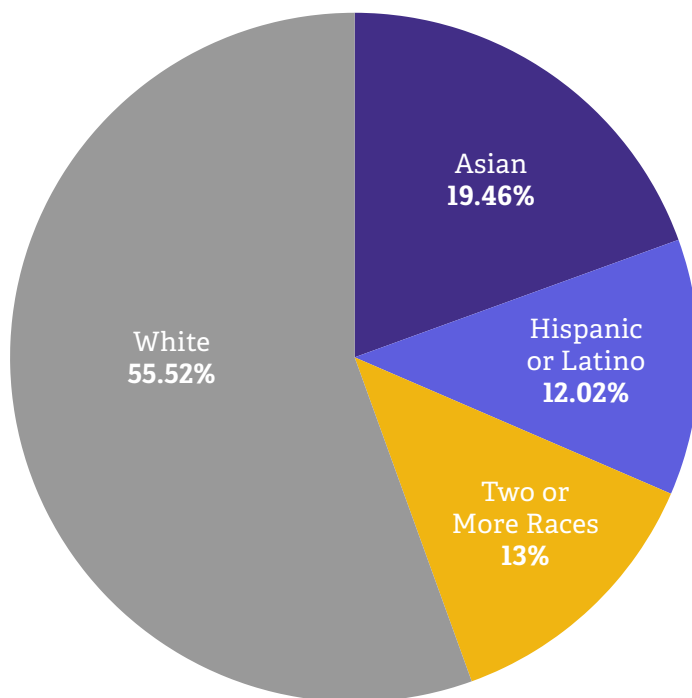
### Ravenswood City School District

East Palo Alto & eastern Menlo Park/Belle Haven



### Las Lomas School District

Menlo Park, Portola Valley & Atherton



	Ravenswood City School District	Las Lomas School District
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
<b>Economically Disadvantaged*</b>	89%	7%
<b>Student : Teacher Ratio</b>	22:1	15:1
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency**</b>	15%	87%
<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Proficiency***</b>	10%	73%

\*Percentage of students from households that qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, i.e., households that fall under 185% of federal poverty levels (\$47,638 for a family of 4) for Reduced-Price Lunch, and under 130% of federal poverty levels (\$33,475 for a family of 4) for Free Lunch.

\*\*Met or exceeded California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) standards for Grade 3

\*\*\*Met or exceeded CAASPP Mathematics standards for Grade 8

Source: Education Data Partnership, (EdData)

Dig into school, district, and county data by visiting [EdData](#) and [California School Dashboard](#).

Stay abreast of education news and learn more about leading issues by subscribing to [EdSource](#) (CA-wide) and/or [EdWeek](#) (national).





In Silicon Valley, more than 20% of students are English language learners (ELLs); 10% have learning differences (often categorized as Special Education, or SPED); and nearly 40% are socioeconomically disadvantaged and may need additional support in school. California does allocate additional funds to try to meet diverse student needs, but would need to spend 46% more than it currently does to adequately meet those needs. This is why philanthropic support for effective interventions and systems-change efforts are so important. In the wake of COVID, there will be historic, but non-recurring state and federal funding that school districts will receive to recover, in addition to California's bold new 2021-22 budget. Private dollars to community-based nonprofits and local schools will help in ensuring that funding and services flow effectively to the communities that need them most.

Before COVID hit, too many **Silicon Valley students were not reaching some of the key educational milestones** that lead to graduation and success after high school: reading at grade level by third grade and achieving math proficiency in middle school. Some 40% of Santa Clara County and 41% of San Mateo County third graders did not meet the English/language arts standard, and 45% of Santa Clara County and 50% of San Mateo County eighth graders did not meet the math standard. Drilling deeper shows a significant gap between White, Asian, and non-economically-disadvantaged students at the more proficient end; and low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color (excluding non-Pacific Islander Asians) at the other. COVID-related learning loss from lost instructional time, structure, and interaction may exacerbate these deficits and gaps.

Because California doesn't yet provide universal preschool, **inequities begin even before children enter K-12**. Those inequities grow over time, which is why investments in early childhood development, care, and education are needed to prevent gaps from widening for low-income children.





Once students enter the K-12 system, the **climate and policies within those schools can have a significant impact** on their learning and even on whether they remain in school. Harsh discipline policies with disproportionate impact on low-income students of color can result in what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline. That plays out here in Silicon Valley, where Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Native American students are suspended at dramatically higher rates than their White peers, and low-income students are suspended at even higher rates than their wealthier peers.

**Administrative fragmentation across the region** presents additional challenges. San Mateo and Santa Clara counties together have roughly 54 school districts, serving 350,000 students across more than 550 schools. (Contrast this with one unified district in San Francisco or Oakland.) The sheer number of districts and schools within our two counties duplicates overhead spending, decreases efficiencies, and makes systemic innovation, collaboration, and broad policy change across the region difficult. This makes Silicon Valley less attractive for regional and national philanthropy and partnerships. Accountability, efficient data collection, and accurate reporting is harder due to the fragmentation, as well. Voters have been apprehensive about approving mergers and unifying districts because of the potential rise in taxes, but also because in well-resourced, high-achieving districts, there hasn't been a real incentive to change what is already working for their communities.



Private school tuition in the Bay Area can be nearly **\$50,000** per year, per student, while some publicly-funded high school districts spend just **\$13,000** per year per student.



In addition to the in-school advantages that greater resources and a more welcoming school climate can provide, wealthy students have greater **access to opportunities outside of school** that enhance what they do and learn in school. This includes out-of-school enrichment such as private tutoring, engaging trips, top-quality after-school and summer activities, and access to meaningful internships through their parents' social networks. All these can help students see what is possible for them, and help them discover new passions and purpose.





## At-A-Glance

Silicon Valley students do not have equal access to a top-quality education. Inequities begin early, and our students enter public schools today that may be more racially segregated than in decades past. Nearly 40% of local students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and may require additional support in school. Yet they are the most likely to be attending under-resourced schools that are the least equipped to adequately meet those needs. Even before COVID hit, far too many students—particularly low-income students of color—were not reaching key educational milestones. Systems-level change remains difficult in a highly fragmented and geographically broad region.

Achieving educational equity—providing a fair and just education for all students—is a complex and long-term challenge in Silicon Valley. But greater public and philanthropic investments have the potential to dramatically accelerate the most promising solutions.

Explore the [giving portfolios](#) of experienced funders who have made long-term investments in local out-of-school-time programs, like the [Leo M. Shortino Family Foundation](#) or the [David & Lucile Packard Foundation](#).





A photograph of children playing in a schoolyard. In the foreground, a girl in a blue and pink patterned jacket is looking down. To her right, a boy in a green hoodie is jumping over a tire. In the background, other children are playing on a wooden structure. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple box containing the title.

# Framework & High-Impact Levers of Intervention

As noted above, it's helpful to consider the local education system in a framework of three broad and intersecting categories:

## PEOPLE

The people who impact students' trajectories

## PROGRAMS & SYSTEMS

The programs within systems that focus on educating children and supporting their development

## POLICY

The policies that shape systems and programs, and support and hold people accountable

## High-Impact Levers of Intervention

With input from educators, nonprofit leaders, funders, and policy experts, we have identified five particularly effective levers of intervention within the framework that can positively alter the trajectory of a student's life, and that have the potential to scale impact effectively with additional investment. They are:



Teacher & leader talent & development



College access, college success, & career readiness



Family engagement



Policy, advocacy & organizing across education issue areas



High-quality early care & education

We acknowledge that there are many effective points of intervention that are beyond the scope of this brief. In addition, immediate action is needed to help address the negative impacts of COVID-19 on low-income students, but such investments will have the most positive effects if paired with short- and long-term interventions that are proven to mitigate the persistent and growing inequities embedded in the current system.

In selecting five data-driven levers, we hope to provide a manageable entry point for further exploration. An overview of each lever is provided below.



“Adult mindsets matter. Teachers need to believe in the potential of all students by holding high expectations and these expectations shouldn’t vary by student. All students deserve to have access to a rigorous, high-quality curriculum. And teachers need support in how to be effective in the classroom.”

Natalie Walrond, [WestEd](#)

## People



### Teacher & Leader Talent & Development

Teachers are the most influential factor in student achievement in schools. Attracting and retaining strong teachers and leaders, and investing in their talent and development, is critical to student achievement. Providing teachers and leaders with consistent, high-quality professional development and appropriate pay could have profound impacts on student learning and help to decrease inequities.

Teacher development supports teachers in becoming more effective, through engaging students in learning, and using data regularly (read: relevant data) to drive instructional practice. Student engagement is critical for student success in school and beyond, and is a driver of school attendance. Training and professional learning communities among teachers can demonstrate what effective teaching strategies look like, generate innovation, and help teachers craft culturally relevant pedagogy that engages students in learning, especially students of color. Bay Area youth who are disconnected from school are disproportionately Black and Latinx students, so investing to make teaching and learning more compelling to them can lead to greater achievement and equity.

Additionally, research suggests students perform and behave better when they have at least one same-race teacher, which has strong implications for a region as diverse as Silicon Valley. While the student population in Silicon Valley is nearly 40% Latinx, the teacher workforce is less than 15% Latinx. Investing in racially and ethnically diverse teacher pipelines in Silicon Valley thus may generate stronger outcomes for students of color. Philanthropic dollars deployed to fund

#### Special Education (SPED):

Students with disabilities or learning differences can qualify for **special education (SPED)** and have an **individualized education program (IEP)** designed for them. Services for students with IEPs can vary from school to school. These students represent about 10% of the K-12 student population in Silicon Valley and need more support as they are greatly underperforming in statewide assessments in Silicon Valley. Here, too, these students’ potential for success with the right supports is tremendous.

Enhancing the skills of teachers and school leaders improves education for students today and strengthens the system over the longer term. For inspiring examples of donors who fund this strategy, [view profiles of Michelle Boyers, Tammy Crown, and Kelly Pope](#), who make long-term investments in organizations like the New Teacher Center, New Leaders, and Alder Graduate School of Education.





“In order to make change, we really need to have strong teachers and leaders. It starts with strong and relevant teacher prep programs, and then investments need to be made in high-quality ongoing professional development. We need excellent teachers and excellent leader talent to have excellent schools.”

Tammy Crown, local donor

innovation and partnerships can help expand the pipeline of talented and diverse teachers and school leaders.

Keeping talented teachers in the classroom is also critical. Teacher turnover is more frequent at high-poverty schools, where pay is often lower than at schools serving affluent students. This negatively impacts student achievement, and this turnover is costly, too (~\$20,000/teacher). Privately-funded education foundations in wealthier districts help to pay for additional staffing, which can make the job less taxing and contribute to teachers choosing to stay in the profession. Investing in education foundations in under-resourced districts could do the same.



### Opportunities for donors to make a difference:

- Fund education foundations that partner closely with low-resourced districts, or fund districts directly to provide quality teacher professional development
- Fund nonprofits that specifically partner with schools to develop teachers and leaders
- Fund nonprofits that diversify teacher pipelines
- Fund local advocacy efforts to increase teacher salaries

Education foundations that partner closely with under-resourced districts can help fund a variety of school needs. In Santa Clara County, these include Eastside Education Foundation and Gilroy Foundation, and in San Mateo County, Cabrillo Education Foundation, Ravenswood Education Foundation, and Redwood City Education Foundation.





“Engaging parents and families—you can’t do that if you’re not from the community, know the families, speak the language. So we need to invest in the people that do this, and there are plenty.”

Armando Castellano, [Castellano Family Foundation](#)



## Family Engagement

Investing in more culturally relevant family engagement strategies can support significantly higher student achievement, improved student behavior and emotional functioning, stronger peer relationships, and better school attendance. This investment in people provides a significant return. Family engagement is a dual responsibility and commitment shared by schools and families to work together in culturally appropriate ways to support students along the cradle-to-career education pipeline. It also can empower families to advocate for their students’ needs, and for systemic improvements in schools. Building trust and relationships with families in order to understand barriers to their involvement can help educators build programs that are culturally relevant and delivered at times and places that make sense for families.

In Silicon Valley, nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs) are championing this work. These organizations provide resources and training to families and educators to leverage the power of families to support their children’s education, and help strengthen communication between schools and families. The most effective programs reflect each community’s unique needs, and incorporate local community staff and volunteers to create a more inviting environment for educators and families to build trust and create authentic relationships. These CBOs partner with families to get to know who they are as people, in order to create opportunities and resources to meet their needs. More regular communication between schools and families, meetings and trainings scheduled during times that work for families, and supporting families to navigate school and community resources can help increase family engagement. Engaging with parents who



“Our families are resilient and strong. Approach the work as a partnership and show up as an equal partner. Opportunities for learning and resources are needed so that teachers and parents can effectively work together and understand each other better.”

Veronica Goei, [Grail Family Services](#)





themselves did not attend college plays a particularly vital role in supporting their children to and through college, as well.



### Opportunities for donors to make a difference:

- Fund CBOs that train educators and families in how to support students
- Fund CBOs that are developing programs and tools to increase communication between schools and families
- Fund local education foundations in districts that work to increase family engagement

## STUDENT WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

Student Wellness programming—programs supporting students' social, emotional, and mental development—is a lever that can help advance educational equity, particularly for students dealing with the trauma that flows from experiencing poverty or discrimination. Many schools have embraced Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), the knowledge and skills needed to develop into a healthy being and create positive social relationships, by incorporating SEL into their curriculum or enhancing counseling services. An investment in this lever can support all students because it can lead to better academic outcomes and improved behaviors, as well as support healing and healthy development. In the wake of the COVID pandemic and racial reckoning, investment in student mental health has become an even more urgent need.



## Programs & Systems



### High-Quality Early Care & Education

The opportunity gap starts early and widens during the K-12 years, so investing in high-quality Early Care and Education (ECE) is an effective long-term prevention strategy. ECE is the umbrella term used to encompass many programs, from private and government-run preschool and transitional kindergarten programs, to child care centers and family day care homes. **Eighty-five percent of the brain is developed by age 5**, and high-quality ECE during this critical early period yields positive long-term impacts.

Access to ECE varies drastically in Silicon Valley. Some children participate in high-quality care and education at a very early age, particularly those whose parents can afford it. But a variety of access barriers, local capacity, and cost limit access for many. In Santa Clara County, fewer than 30% of Latinx children or low-income children enter kindergarten prepared behaviorally and academically to learn. If they're behind in kindergarten, they will likely remain behind in third grade, and for the rest of their academic journeys. The gap in kindergarten readiness in Santa Clara County between White and Latinx children is 38%, despite the fact that Black and Latinx families spend a significant portion of their income on the limited childcare and early learning options available to them. Quality programming is available in the region—including Head Start programs in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties—and San Mateo County is home to a successful cross-sector, county-wide early learning initiative called The Big Lift, but strong ECE programming is not universally available to all.

Staff are critical for creating a strong ECE program. Turnover for ECE staff can reach up to 40% in licensed centers, negatively impacting the quality of ECE programs. Nearly one in five California ECE educators are living in poverty, due to extremely low wages caused by insufficient budgets, and they exit the field at higher rates than other educational sectors. COVID-19 has compounded the already high turnover in ECE, as the entire industry shrank by 20%. Many centers had to shut down during the pandemic, which meant a loss in revenue. Those centers that did stay open struggled with increased operating costs due to reduced capacity as a result of social distancing mandates, along with additional COVID-related expenses.

Now more than ever, quality ECE is a crucial part of our childrens' recovery and development. ECE staff need ample support and liveable wages to deliver excellent programs. Donors can support the field by funding ECE programs and centers directly, and by getting involved with advocacy efforts to make critical changes to ensure ECE educators have the resources they need to educate the youngest students.

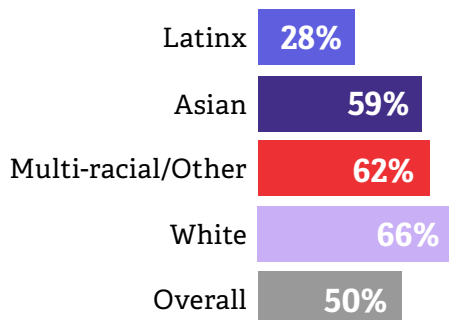
For a list of effective, equity-focused ECE organizations, see the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Early Childhood Care and Education Giving Guide.

For inspiring examples of donors who fund early childhood education, view profiles of Shannon Hunt-Scott and the Castellano Family Foundation, who fund organizations like Grail Family Services and Educare California at Silicon Valley.





## Percentage of Children Ready for Kindergarten Fall 2018



The gap in kindergarten readiness in Santa Clara County between **White** and **Latinx** children is **38%**.

2018-19 Santa Clara County School Readiness Assessment Report,  
Santa Clara County Office of Education

## OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST) PROGRAMMING

Out of School Time (OST) programming—structured programs for children and youth that exist outside of the typical school day or school year—is an additional lever for addressing education equity, as it mitigates systemic gaps and failures. The robust and varied array of OST providers range from traditional childcare, to extended learning and enrichment opportunities like art, music, and sports, as well as youth development and leadership. OST can be both a prevention and intervention strategy as it can prevent summer slide and support increasing literacy and math skills, as well as increasing graduation rates. Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality, affordable OST programs by supporting the nonprofits providing high-quality programs and advocating for resources for a strong OST sector can be a powerful lever for equity.





“It’s not equity when certain kids get access to high-quality early education and others don’t, when some families need to choose between paying for food for their families and financing enriching experiences that promote brain development—and other families don’t need to make that kind of choice.”

Christine Thorsteinson, [Big Lift](#),  
[Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)



### Opportunities for donors to make a difference:

- Fund nonprofit programs, centers, and schools that provide high-quality ECE for low-income families
- Fund advocacy for universal access to ECE
- Fund advocacy for living wages for ECE providers

## CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter Schools are specialized public schools that receive state funds, designed to provide choice to families of students who were being underserved by traditional public schools and to be able to experiment in the design and operations of the school. In exchange for meeting performance targets, charters have greater flexibility than traditional district schools and are exempt from some government mandates around curriculum and management. Nonprofit charter management organizations launched to grow and manage multiple schools, including several in Silicon Valley that operate some of the region’s highest performing schools for underserved students. In Silicon Valley, 8% of San Mateo County public school students and 12% of Santa Clara County public school students attend charters. Charter schools have grown here over the past 10 years, primarily serving students of color from low-income families who lack access to high-quality schools. Charter school growth slowed in recent years, however, and recent legislation designed to increase accountability and factor in financial impacts on districts might effectively halt the creation of charters that haven’t already been approved in Silicon Valley.



College Access, College  
Success, & Career Readiness

The ultimate return on all the investments made in students from early learning through the K-12 system comes after the students graduate high school and continue to and through college or training and into a career. Higher education is tied to higher earnings, better employment prospects, greater civic engagement, and health benefits. But those returns do not come automatically or equally. Students experiencing poverty and students of color do not have the same opportunities as their wealthier peers. While Silicon Valley high school graduation rates have increased by 16% in the past decade, students of color still trail behind their White peers. Graduating from high school with the coursework required for University of California or California State University (UC/CSU) eligibility also varies dramatically by race and ethnicity, which places four-year college out of reach for many students of color, particularly those from low-income families.

Navigating the pathway to and through college can be particularly challenging for students who are the first generation in their family to attend college ("first-gen"). Low-income, first-gen students still need support after college admission to matriculate to college, and academic and social-emotional support to persist and graduate from college in order for them to reach their full potential. After admission, the cost of college and the complex nature of understanding college finances can keep first-gen students from attending. Once first-gen students matriculate to college, many continue to experience hardship as they try to balance work and school, find a sense of belonging, and get the academic support they need to thrive in their courses. Only one in five first-gen, low-income students who enter college will graduate in six years. And as they prepare to enter the professional world, low-income students of color need particular support accessing career-advancing paid internships and learning to navigate the workplaces where they can build a career. Just 25% of first-gen students who graduate from college go on to graduate school or land a career-focused first job.

High School Graduates  
Meeting Course Requirements  
for UC/CSU Admission  
2019-2020

Santa Clara County

San Jose Unified School District

55.3%

Palo Alto Unified School District

91.6%

San Mateo County

Sequoia High School, SUHSD

58.6%

Burlingame High School, SMUSD

76.1%

Sobrato Family Foundation's robust postsecondary success portfolio of grantees can provide a model for other donors. It includes 10,000 Degrees, ACE Charter School, Braven, Center for Educational Partnerships, UC Berkeley (Destination College Advising Corps), COOP Careers, Cristo Rey San Jose, Downtown College Prep, Eastside College Preparatory School, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, KIPP Public Schools Northern California, Latino Education Advancement Foundation, Peninsula College Fund, Pivotal, Rivet School, and uAspire.







**Only one in five students from low-income communities and first-generation students who enroll in college will graduate.**

Source: [Pell Institute](#) (2021)



#### **Opportunities for donors to make a difference:**

- Fund college and career prep CBOs that support first-gen students in preparing for, applying to, and succeeding in college
- Fund CBOs that match students to meaningful paid internships in high school and college
- Fund scholarships that support college expenses that other grants and loans don't cover
- Partner with local colleges to support on-campus services for first-gen students

View the profiles of donors [Kathy Kwan](#), [Tammy Crown](#), and [Shannon Hunt-Scott](#) for inspiring examples of donors who invest in college access, college success, and career preparation for under-resourced students, by funding public districts and universities directly; funding charter schools like [KIPP Public Schools Northern California](#), [ACE Charter Schools](#), and [Voices College-Bound Language Academies](#); and funding college access and success nonprofits like [OneGoal](#), [Breakthrough Silicon Valley](#), [Peninsula Bridge](#), [Aim High](#), [Foundation for a College Education](#), [Pivotal](#), and [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula](#), as well as career preparation nonprofits like [Braven](#) and [JobTrain](#).



“We need to scale what works. Large-scale policy needs to get at the underlying issues causing the inequities and so that we can build sensible data systems, have accountability and improve teacher quality and diversity.”

Ted Lempert, [Children Now](#)

## Policy



### Policy, Advocacy & Organizing

**Investment in policy, advocacy and organizing can help tackle root causes so educational inequities don't persist, impacting entire systems.** Public schools rely mainly on public funds, and their operations are dictated by statewide and local policies that determine what schools can do, how much money schools receive, and how they spend it. Inequitable policies—from curriculum development, to student supports, to school discipline—can lead to inequitable practices, and therefore inequitable student outcomes. However, when policy, advocacy, and organizing groups succeed in getting more just and equitable policies passed—as seen at a regional level in examples like [Bay Area mathematics placement](#) and [district boundary maps](#)—educational equity advances across whole schools and districts, magnifying impact and creating lasting change.

Robust advocacy and organizing efforts can amplify the effectiveness of all the other levers for change, ensuring, for example, that state policy makes high-quality pre-K more available to all students, or that teachers in low-resource schools have access to consistent and high-quality professional development, or that districts make the courses required for admission to public universities the default curriculum. Opportunities for policy improvement exist in every segment of the education system and at the local, regional, state, and national levels. In Silicon Valley, supporting the nonprofit organizations addressing education policy is particularly important and challenging because the multiplicity of school districts requires working piecemeal, rather than at a broad and systemic level across the region. This requires expertise, vigilance, persistence, and resources.



### Opportunities for donors to make a difference:

- Fund organizations that work on equitable education policy and systems-level change
- Become an advocate for equitable policies and practice at the local and state levels
- Fund and join local campaigns to support bond and parcel tax measures for schools

See profiles of [Kelly Pope](#), [Tammy Crown](#), and [Michelle Boyers](#), who fund systems-change organizations like [Innovate Public Schools](#). Other nonprofits leading education advocacy in Silicon Valley and beyond for ECE include [Early Edge California](#) and [Kidango](#), and organizations that span all ages include [Children Now](#), [The Education Trust-West](#), and [WestEd](#).





# Donor Profiles

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**Giving in Action:** Many donors in Silicon Valley are generous and strategic in supporting education. They are learning from peers and from the experts on the ground. They listen to understand. They revise what they give to and more importantly, how they give, as a result. They realize that this work is complex, that change takes time, and that they are not the experts. They've learned to give with trust, engage with grace, and offer hope.

Here are six Silicon Valley donors who shared their local education giving approach with us.

Note that the issue areas we associate with organizations are based on donor strategy, not necessarily the strategy or mission of the nonprofit.

## Kelly Pope

Partner and Strategic Advisory Board Member, Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2) (local giving community)



"I wish I would have had a systems mindset earlier. Even though systems-level work is harder to measure, it's really important. I have also realized that we need to support and advocate for the celebration and elevation of the entire teaching profession while also ensuring that ALL of our very young ones get a healthy start. How can the philanthropic sector innovate to help impact those key education levers?"

### Why Fund Education?

Kelly chose to invest in education after a 25-year career as a software executive developing interactive media and educational technology products. Adjusting her giving strategy through experience, ongoing donor education, and a commitment to "moving the needle," she currently focuses on early learning, mental health, and trauma-informed approaches within early childhood education.

### Giving Guidance

- Work in collaboration with others, to achieve more.
- Develop a systems-level mindset in order to address root causes of inequities in education, in tandem with supporting impact at an individual student level.
- Study programs that have worked in other places to get ideas and map those to the local context.

## PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**ECE:** Bring Me A Book

**Student Wellbeing:** Center for Youth Wellness • YMCA Project Cornerstone | YMCA Silicon Valley

**Teacher & Leader Talent & Development:** New Teacher Center • Alder Graduate School of Education

**Family Engagement:** SOMOS Mayfair

**Out-of-School Time:** Citizen Schools

**K-12:** Communities in Schools • Science is Elementary

**Policy, Advocacy & Organizing:** SOMOS Mayfair • Children Now



# Kathy Kwan

## The Eustace-Kwan Family Foundation



“I look for connected leaders who understand the needs of their community, know how to manage their resources and have the capacity to adapt and drive change. When I find the right partners, I get out of the way and try not to overwhelm them with large data requests. Many of my partners lead large, complex organizations and I want them to focus on maximizing their impact, not making reports to me.”

### Why Fund Education?

Kathy funds education because of the powerful role it played in her own family’s journey. Growing up in San Francisco’s Chinatown during the 1950s, Kathy’s parents endured discrimination, significant family challenges and limited opportunity. Education was their ticket to greater social and economic mobility.

Inspired by her parents’ story, Kathy invests in a wide range of initiatives focused on skill building and educational equity. She takes a hands-on, flexible, and responsive approach while building strong relationships with local leaders and actively learning through site visits, volunteering and meeting the beneficiaries of her grants.

### Giving Guidance

- Invest in the strategic plan of the organization or the school rather than creating a new project or area just for yourself.
- Make a commitment to fund the community, not the person—leaders can come and go.
- Expect at least a 3-5 year investment, if not longer, to see change.
- Learn to weather changes and the storms, as grantees must and do.

### PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**Teacher & Leader Talent & Development:** East Palo Alto Academy • Redwood City School District • Sequoia Union High School • Menlo Park City School District

**Out-of-School Time:** St. Francis Center • Menlo-Atherton High School • Sequoia Union High School District

**College & Career:** Foundation for a College Education • JobTrain • UC Berkeley: Data Sciences initiative & Berkeley Basic Needs Fund • Stanford University: Education Partnerships Program • SF State: Career Services & Leadership Development Program & Health Career Connection

**Family Engagement:** Menlo Park City School District

## Tammy Crown

Philanthropist; Board Chair, Teach for America – Bay Area; Director, World Wildlife Fund; Director, The Nueva School



“Try to give general operating support funds rather than program funds. You have to trust an organization’s leaders, trust they know what they’re doing and putting your money to its best possible use to advance their mission. If you can, also give multi-year grants. And don’t wait until the end of the year to make all your giving; allow organizations to make longer-term plans and focus time on their work rather than fundraising. Finally, make a plan for giving. You can’t solve every problem; if you have a strategy, even if it’s high level, you will have far greater impact and you will save yourself time over the long-term.”

### Why Fund Education?

Tammy and her husband Bill invest widely across the K-12 educational spectrum to foster equity, opportunity, and economic mobility. They currently prioritize investments addressing pandemic-related learning loss as well as systemic challenges, including tutoring, high-quality summer programming, talent recruitment and development, and systems redesign and improvement.

### Giving Guidance

- Support non-profits holistically; once you have done your due diligence, trust their leadership and give general operating funds whenever possible to create maximum flexibility.
- When you start to “date” a new nonprofit, it works well to start small and get to know the organization, and then don’t be afraid to make big bets.
- I would rather give one six-figure grant to an outstanding organization I believe in, than 10 smaller sized ones. You may make a lot of people happy with the latter strategy, but you will really limit your impact.
- Don’t penalize an organization if they have a set-back one year, are facing a challenge or experience a failure in one of their strategic bets; ask thoughtful questions and see how to best support them.

### PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**Teacher & Leader Talent & Development:** [Teach For America Bay Area](#) • [Alder Graduate School of Education](#) • [New Leaders](#) • [Surge Institute](#) • [Instruction Partners](#)

**Family Engagement:** [Springboard Collaborative](#) • [Innovate Public Schools](#)

**College & Career:** [OneGoal](#) • [Pivotal](#) • [Braven](#) • [Tipping Point](#) • [JobTrain](#)

**Student Wellbeing:** [Child Mind Institute](#)

**K-12:** [KIPP: Northern California](#) • [Voices College-Bound Language Academies](#) • [Silicon Schools Fund](#) • [Ravenswood Education Foundation](#) • [Woodside High School](#) • [New Schools Venture Fund](#)

**Out-of-School Time:** [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula](#) • [StreetCode Academy](#)

**Policy, Advocacy & Organizing:** [Innovate Public Schools](#)



# Castellano Family Foundation



“What other people see as small successes, we see as critical successes. We don't give a lot of money. We are looking at consistent funding, and to see impact in both the short and long term. We do local, place-based, community-based giving. These things will have an impact on eliminating racism over time.”

Armando Castellano

## Why Fund Education?

Inspired by family matriarch Carmen Castellano, a deeply devoted champion for equity in education through both investment and advocacy, the Castellano family funds across the educational spectrum, including ECE, parent engagement, and college. Led by second-generation family members Carmela Castellano-Garcia and Armando Castellano, a founding member of the Donors of Color Network, the foundation partners with local, BIPOC-led community-based organizations to support their success and long-term sustainability. The Castellano Family Foundation's Blueprint for Change initiative, informed by over 65 such organizations, was the catalyst for creation of the [LatinXCEL Fund](#), a partnership with Silicon Valley Community Foundation to foster greater investment in Silicon Valley's Latinx leaders, organizations, and communities.

## Giving Guidance

- Fund BIPOC-led, BIPOC-driven solutions—they have earned trust from communities.
- BIPOC-led organizations are a great asset to the region, employing effective cross-sector approaches that generate impact on multiple fronts for communities of color. Start with a strength-based approach which acknowledges that.
- Scaling up is not a “one size fits all” approach, and broader is not always better. “Scale down” in a place by going deep.
- Give consistent, long-term funding to organizations. This allows them to spend more of their time on meeting community needs.

## PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**ECE:** [Grail Family Services](#) • [SOMOS Mayfair](#)

**Family Engagement:** [PIQE-San Jose](#) • [Sunday Friends](#)

**Student Wellbeing:** [Alum Rock Counseling Center](#) • [New Hope for Youth](#)

**College & Career:** [South County Cal-SOAP](#) • [Chicana Latina Foundation](#)

**Out-of-School Time:** [Youth Alliance](#) • [Third Street Community Center](#) • [ConXion to Community](#)



## Shannon Hunt-Scott

President and Co-Founder, The Scott Foundation; Board, Educare California at Silicon Valley; Board Chair, Hillbrook School; Board, The Tech Interactive



“These are intractable issues that will take a long time to solve, so stick with it, through the hard times. Give your organizations the kind of support and patience they need to do the work. Nonprofits need to know the funding will carry through to preserve programs they launch and people they hire.”

### Why Fund Education?

Shannon funds educational equity as a springboard for opportunity and an investment in lifelong student success. She uses a hands-on, place-based approach to giving, focusing on East San Jose and a suite of organizations serving young people, as well as supporting policy reform at the national level.

### Giving Guidance

- Just start!
- Be a great listener to organization leaders and program staff.
- Talk to five people with experience funding in the education space—each person will leave you with something to research or may be willing to make an introduction.
- Give general operating support dollars, make a multi-year commitment, and stay the course.

## PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**Teacher & Leader Talent & Development:** [Facing History and Ourselves](#) • [The Tech Interactive](#) • [Science is Elementary](#)

**College & Career:** [Peninsula Bridge](#) • [Breakthrough Silicon Valley](#)

**ECE:** [Educare California at Silicon Valley](#)

**K-12:** [Scott Center for Social Entrepreneurship at Hillbrook School](#) • [ACE Charter Schools](#) • [Vida Verde](#) • [BUILD Bay Area](#) • [Science is Elementary](#) • [The Tech Interactive](#)



## Michelle Boyers

CEO, Give Forward Foundation; Board Member, Ravenswood Education Foundation, Teach for America, Leading Educators, New Leaders, Teach Plus



“I encourage donors to try not to come in with solutions, but instead to listen to the local teachers, families, and school leaders and follow their lead in determining what type of support they need. Often the strategies required are more than enrichment or extra tutoring — but instead are the less sexy (but very hard!) improvements in the teachers' capacity to deliver rigorous instruction to students below grade level.”

### Why Fund Education?

Michelle is passionate about educational equity because of her own educational journey attending low-quality, rural schools, as well as her professional experience working in large urban school systems. She knows it is possible for public schools to enable all students to achieve at high levels because she has seen it and done it. She takes a highly-engaged, place-based, systems-change approach, focusing on school leadership, teacher development for improved instructional quality, and internal capacity building in districts.

### Giving Guidance

- Listen more than you talk. You'll be surprised about what you learn from the people doing the work on the ground.
- Embrace a long-term view and give patient, unrestricted capital that can help leaders weather the inevitable storms. Changing public education is a long game.
- Remember that data and metrics are important, but capacity building is just as important.

### PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

**Systems & Schools:** [Ravenswood Education Foundation](#) • [Redwood City Education Foundation](#) • [Tipping Point](#)

**Out-of-School Time:** [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula](#) • [StreetCode Academy](#) • [Citizen Schools](#)

**Family Engagement:** [Innovate Public Schools](#)

**Policy, Advocacy & Organizing:** [Innovate Public Schools](#)

**Teacher & Leader Talent & Development:** [Teach for America Bay Area](#) • [Alder Graduate School of Education](#) • [Leading Educators](#) • [TNTP](#) • [New Leaders](#) • [Instruction Partners](#) • [Reach University](#) • [Education Resource Strategies](#) • [Teach Plus](#) • [Educators for Excellence](#)

# Call to Action

## Silicon Valley Students Need You

The pandemic has put a spotlight on the educational inequities that have always existed in Silicon Valley. Although our public education system is funded by public dollars, those dollars flow into inequitable systems. We see this most visibly when parents in affluent districts raise millions each year to fund supplemental arts and STEM education, while teachers in impoverished districts struggle to pay for basic supplies out of their own pockets. It affects children from cradle-to-career, manifesting in unequal access to high-quality ECE, vast disparities in the quality of teachers, and whether schools effectively engage parents to support their children's success. The result is an education system where academic achievement—and, by proxy, life trajectories—can be predicted too often by the zip codes where students reside. Temporary infusions of public funding to mitigate the devastating effect of COVID on low-income students will not erase the impact of decades of inequity.

Although it is easy to say that our education system needs to be fixed by the government, the reality is that government isn't solving this alone, and this generation of students can't wait.

**Philanthropic dollars can play a catalytic role in ensuring that every student, regardless of race or household income, has access to a high-quality education to support their full potential from cradle-to-career.**

The education system in Silicon Valley is unusually complex. But we have never been a region that shies away from complex challenges. And Silicon Valley has the potential to be a model for other regions in the way it educates its students. Don't let the complexity discourage you from getting started. There are many ways to make our local education system fulfill its promise for all, and **you don't need to be an expert to make a difference.** The expertise is here in our community. If there was an intervention lever or donor story or community-based organization highlighted in this brief that resonated with you, follow that spark. Start there. **Your investment matters.**

### Get Started

- Give to an organization and follow their updates.
- Join a giving community such as SV2, The Philanthropy Workshop, or a local giving circle through Philanthropy Together or Latino Community Foundation.
- Give to local education foundations addressing educational inequities.

**If you're ready to go deeper, visit the [Magnify Community website](#) for more resources and inspiration from foundations investing in education in Silicon Valley.**





**Magnify Community is a nonprofit philanthropic innovation lab that inspires, connects, and informs Silicon Valley donors to catalyze more giving to local nonprofits. We do not aggregate or distribute capital; we connect donors with opportunities to make Silicon Valley a better place for all. Magnify acts with urgency and purpose, since we are a time-limited initiative, funded by the David & Lucile Packard, Sobrato, Grove, Heising-Simons, Sand Hill, and Sunlight Giving foundations to test novel approaches that can be shared and scaled by partner organizations after our initiative sunsets in September 2021.**

#### **Researched & written by Avani Patel**

Avani is a consultant with 15 years of experience in education, nonprofits, and philanthropy. Most recently, she was the Co-Chief Executive Officer of the Peery Foundation, where she developed the organization's local giving strategy and increased its giving exponentially over time. She is a Bay Area native, a former teacher, and holds her doctorate in Educational Leadership from San Francisco State University.

Additional contributions by Alisa Tantraphol, Magnify Community. Designed by Kelsey Linder, Spoke Consulting.

#### **Acknowledgments | Interviewees & Reviewers**

Thank you to the following education practitioners, allies, donors, and community members for sharing your invaluable insights with us:






June Afshar & Marshall Lott, *College Track*; Lisa Andrews, *Silicon Valley Education Foundation*; Chris Bischof, *Eastside College Preparatory School*; Michelle Boyers, *Give Forward Foundation*; Angie Briones & Armando Castellano, *Castellano Family Foundation*; Rebecca Castaldo & Lizzie Redman, *ICONIQ Capital*; Tammy Crown, *local donor*; Mary Ann Dewan, *Santa Clara County Office of Education*; Lauren Dutton, *Sobrato Family Foundation*; Veronica Goei, *Grail Family Services*; Matt Hammer, *Innovate Public Schools*; Shannon Hunt-Scott, *The Scott Foundation*; Kathy Kwan, *Eustace-Kwan Family Foundation*; Ted Lempert, *Children Now*; Greg Lippman, *ACE Charter Schools*; Nancy Magee, *San Mateo County Office of Education*; Jennifer Min, *Teacher & SV2 Partner*; Christina Mireles, *Peninsula College Fund*; Scott Moore, *Kidango Inc.*; Kelly Pope, *local donor*; Nora Razón, *nonprofit consultant*; Gina Sudaria, *Ravenswood City School District*; Carol Thomsen, *All Five*; Christine Thorsteinson, *The Big Lift, Silicon Valley Community Foundation*; Jenna Wachtel-Pronovost, *Ravenswood Education Foundation*; Anna Waring, *formerly with Foundation for a College Education*; Natalie Walrond, *WestEd*

#### **Photo Credits**

(Cover) Peninsula Bridge [top]; Breakthrough Silicon Valley [bottom]; (i) Eastside College Preparatory School; (ii) Peninsula College Fund; (1) Breakthrough Silicon Valley; (2) Grail Family Services; (4) All Five [left]; Peninsula Bridge [middle]; Eastside College Preparatory School [right]; (5) ACE Charter Schools; (6) All Five; (7) All Five; (9) The Big Lift, SVCF; (10) 10,000 Degrees; (11) Springboard Collaborative; (13) All Five; (14) The Big Lift, SVCF; (16) Peninsula College Fund; (25) Peninsula College Fund; (26) Upward Scholars

## Appendix

### Opportunities to Advance Education Equity

Framework	High-Impact Levers of Intervention	Who & What to Fund
<b>PEOPLE</b>	 <p>Teacher &amp; Leader Talent &amp; Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-resourced districts (or their education foundations) to provide quality teacher professional development</li> <li>• Nonprofits partnering with schools to develop teachers and leaders</li> <li>• Nonprofits that diversify teacher pipelines</li> <li>• Local advocacy nonprofits and campaigns to increase teacher salaries</li> </ul>
	 <p>Family Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofits that train educators and families on supporting students</li> <li>• Nonprofits developing programs and tools to increase school-family communication</li> <li>• Local education foundations helping districts increase family engagement</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAMS &amp; SYSTEMS</b>	 <p>High-Quality Early Care &amp; Education (ECE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofits providing high-quality ECE for low-income families</li> <li>• Advocacy nonprofits and campaigns for universal access to ECE</li> <li>• Advocacy nonprofits and campaigns for living wages for ECE providers</li> </ul>
	 <p>College Access, College Success, &amp; Career Readiness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofits supporting first-gen students in accessing and succeeding in college</li> <li>• Nonprofits matching low-income students to meaningful internships</li> <li>• Scholarships that support college expenses beyond tuition</li> <li>• Local colleges to support services for first-gen students</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY</b>	 <p>Policy, Advocacy &amp; Organizing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofits advocating for equity and systems change</li> <li>• Campaigns to support school bond and tax measures</li> </ul> <p><i>...and become an advocate yourself!</i></p>



## Comparing Districts: One Valley, Two Realities

### Elementary School Districts (2019-20)

The dramatic differences in school districts in our region illustrate the depth and prevalence of education inequity in Silicon Valley. The following district snapshots highlight the impact that a few miles can make.

#### Santa Clara County

	Alum Rock	Los Altos
DEMOGRAPHICS		
Students Enrolled	10,264	3,999
English Language Learners	3,745 (36.5%)	444 (11.1%)
Low-Income Students*	8,325 (81.1%)	235 (5.9%)
STUDENT PERFORMANCE		
Met or Exceeded 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Standard**	34.4%	80.94%
Met or Exceeded 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Standard***	28.71%	82.99%

#### San Mateo County

	Ravenswood City	San Bruno Park	Las Lomitas	Hillsborough City
DEMOGRAPHICS				
Students Enrolled	3,269	2,454	1,208	1,290
English Language Learners	1,723 (52.7%)	763 (31.1%)	70 (5.8%)	16 (1.2%)
Low-Income Students*	2,902 (89%)	878 (35.8%)	78 (6.5%)	24 (1.9%)
STUDENT PERFORMANCE				
Met or Exceeded 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Standard**	15.39%	48.33%	86.96%	86.9%
Met or Exceeded 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Standard***	9.54%	34.25%	72.92%	77.71%

\*Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

\*\*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for English Language Arts/Literacy

\*\*\*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for Mathematics

## Comparing Districts: One Valley, Two Realities

### High School Districts (2019-20)

#### Santa Clara County

	San Jose Unified	Palo Alto Unified
DEMOGRAPHICS		
Students Enrolled	30,172	11,745
English Language Learners	7,032 (23.3%)	1,099 (9.4%)
Low-Income Students*	12,778 (42.4%)	1,165 (9.9%)
STUDENT PERFORMANCE		
Met or Exceeded 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade English Standard**	52.78%	85.59%
Met or Exceeded 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Standard***	37.42%	79.97%
COLLEGE READINESS		
Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Course Requirements (2018-19)	1,322 (55.3%)	878 (91.6%)

#### San Mateo County

	Sequoia Union	San Mateo Unified
DEMOGRAPHICS		
Students Enrolled	10,238	9,885
English Language Learners	1,516 (14.8%)	994 (10.1%)
Low-Income Students*	3,833 (37.4%)	2,333 (23.6%)
STUDENT PERFORMANCE		
Met or Exceeded 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade English Standard**	69.81%	70.55%
Met or Exceeded 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Standard***	52.34%	50.36%
COLLEGE READINESS		
Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Course Requirements (2018-19)	1,487 (68.8%)	1,528 (68.3%)

\*Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

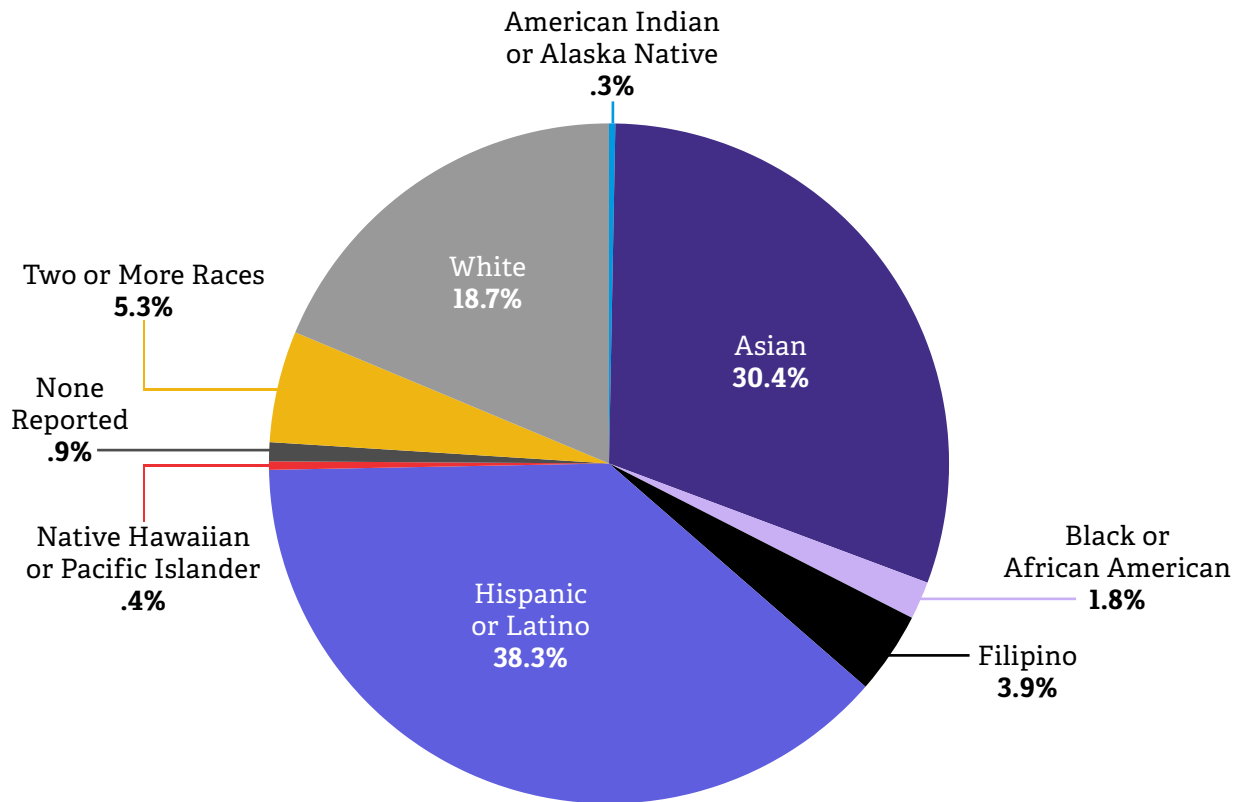
\*\*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for English Language Arts/Literacy

\*\*\*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for Mathematics

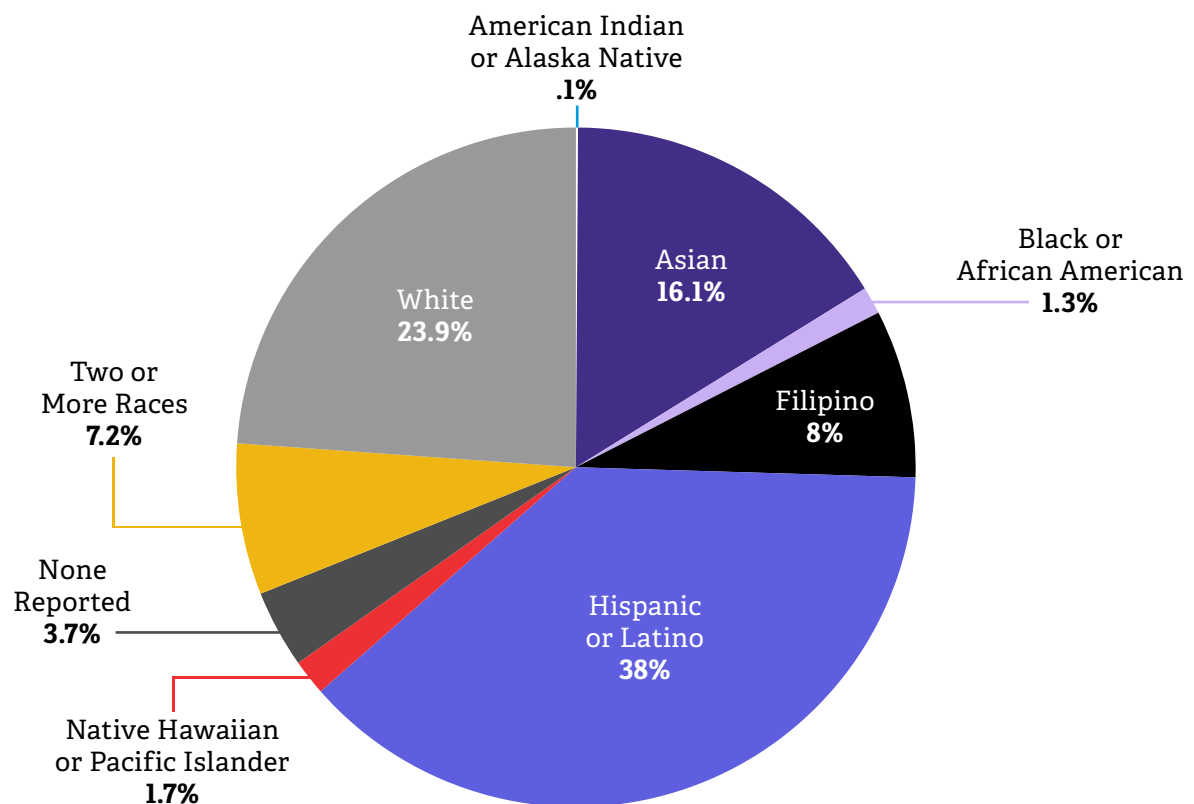


## Public School Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity (2019-20)

### Santa Clara County

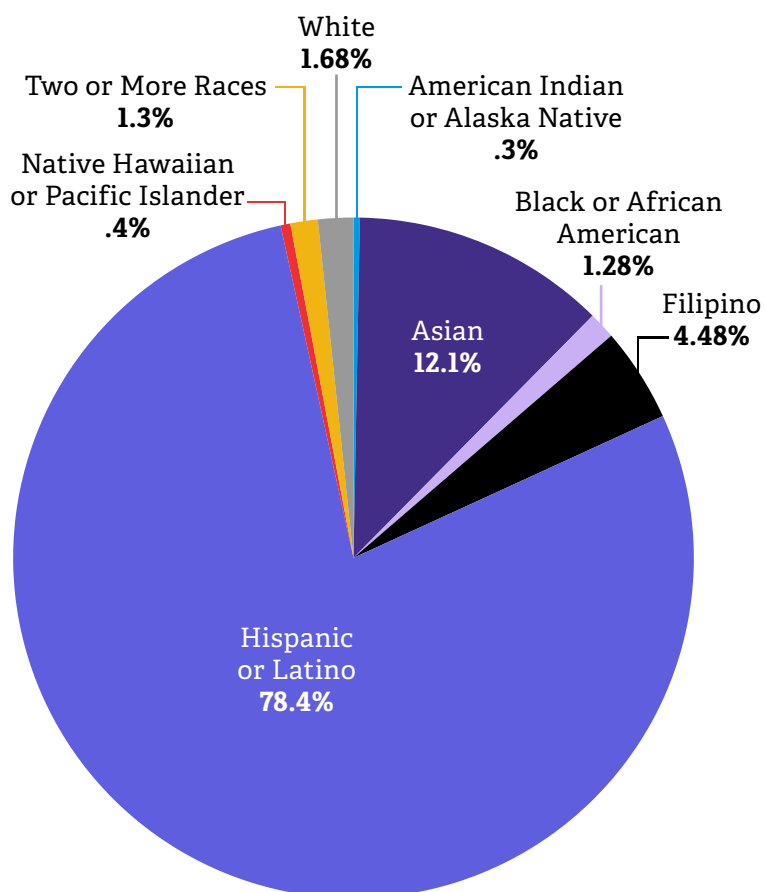


### San Mateo County

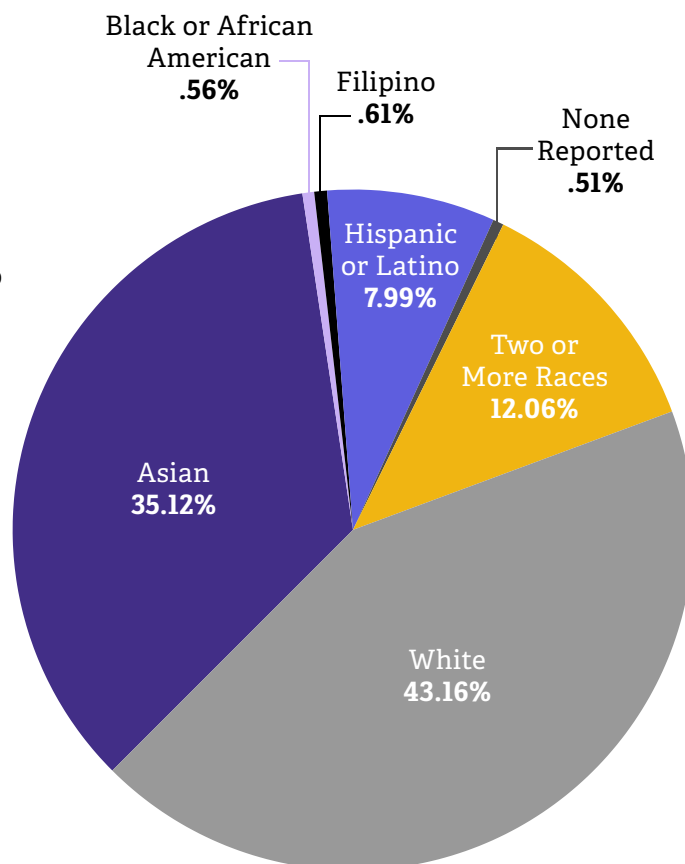


## Santa Clara County (2019-20)

### Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (San Jose)



### Los Altos Elementary School District



	Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (San Jose)	Los Altos Elementary School District
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
<b>Economically Disadvantaged*</b>	81%	6%
<b>Student : Teacher Ratio</b>	20:1	18:1
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency**</b>	34%	81%
<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Proficiency***</b>	29%	83%

\*Percentage of students from households that qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, i.e., households that fall under 185% of federal poverty levels (\$47,638 for a family of 4) for Reduced-Price Lunch, and under 130% of federal poverty levels (\$33,475 for a family of 4) for Free Lunch.

\*\*Met or exceeded California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) standards for Grade 3

\*\*\*Met or exceeded CAASPP Mathematics standards for Grade 8



The logo for Magnify Community features a stylized white 'M' on a dark blue background. The 'M' is composed of several overlapping, rounded shapes in varying shades of blue, creating a sense of depth and movement. The word 'Magnify' is written in a white, sans-serif font, with the 'M' being significantly larger and more prominent than the rest of the word. Below 'Magnify', the word 'Community' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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