

## Profile of Students in California's Underperforming Middle Schools



When California's students enter the workforce, they will face intense competition for jobs at every level. But as numerous reports have documented, California's students are not learning the skills they need today for the workforce they will join tomorrow. Nowhere is this more evident than in the state's underperforming schools—those identified by the California Department of Education as having failed to meet criteria established by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The School2Home program will target the 539 underperforming middle schools located throughout California as a logical first step to providing California's students with the digital tools they need at home to be successful at school. These students come from households that, for the most part and for a variety of reasons, have not yet acquired computers or adopted broadband. This makes it difficult for schools and teachers to effectively incorporate technology into the classrooms to teach 21st Century skills. Data from the California Department of Education provides some important insights into these schools and the students attending them.

### Schools Primarily Located in Urban Areas and the Central Valley

All 539 underperforming middle schools are Title One schools, and many are concentrated in urban areas and the Central Valley, as shown on the map in Attachment A. Approximately 520,665 students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade attend these schools (an average of 174,000 per grade).

### High Concentrations of Low-Income Students

Students attending these schools typically come from low-income families. The average percentage of students eligible for free or reduced school lunch is 62.5 percent, substantially higher than the state average of 50 percent. As is clear from the map included as Attachment B, some schools have much higher percentages of low-income students—students who do not perform as well as their higher income and White counterparts on standardized tests.<sup>1</sup>

### Ethnically Diverse Student Population

When broken down by race and ethnicity, 63 percent of the students in these targeted schools are Hispanic, 12 percent are White, 8 percent are Black, 4 percent are Asian, and the rest are Filipino, American Indian, and Pacific Islander. Research has shown that California's low-income youth and youth of color are at greater risk of dropping out of high school. In fact, low-income students drop out of school at six times the rate of their high-income peers.<sup>2</sup>

### Special Teaching Challenges

The teachers and administrators at these schools face a variety of educational challenges. Approximately 31 percent of students attending these schools are English learners, approximately five percent are in migrant education programs, and about 10 percent are students with disabilities. Almost nine percent of the students are in gifted or talented education programs.

## Students Lack Digital Tools at Home

A home computer can enhance a student's education, and increasingly children of all ages have them. However, students attending these schools are among the demographic groups least likely to have a computer or broadband. According to recent research from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), less than half of Latinos (48%) have home computers compared to about eight in 10 or more for Whites (86%), Asians (84%) and Blacks (79%). Just four in ten Latinos (40%) have Internet access and a third (34%) have a broadband connection in the home compared to majorities in other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

## Parents Face Challenges, Too

Often, parents of low-income students work multiple jobs with long hours, have tight family budgets, and possess limited English proficiency. These challenges not only make it difficult to acquire and use a computer, they can also prevent parents from being as involved in their child's education as they would like.

The Public Policy Institute of California's survey mentioned above found that while about half of all parents use the Internet to access their school's Web site and three out of ten get homework assignments through the Internet or e-mail, clear divisions exist among demographic groups. Whites (34%) report receiving their children's homework electronically much more often than do Latinos (20%). Similarly, parents with annual household incomes of \$80,000 or more are nearly three times as likely as parents with household annual incomes of under \$40,000 to use the Internet or e-mail for a child's homework.

## About School2Home

School2Home, a project of the California Emerging Technology Fund's Digital Literacy Initiative with The Children's Partnership, is focused on bringing digital tools to the homes of low-income students attending underperforming middle schools.

In addition, it will equip parents with basic digital literacy skills so they can become more involved in their child's education, and take advantage of digital opportunities, including electronic access to job opportunities, health information and public services. In addition to increasing digital literacy of two generations, this large statewide program will bring marketplace attention to a group of California consumers who are often off the radar screen of market innovators.

### For Further Information

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<sup>1</sup> NAEP 2007 *Mathematics Report for California*, NAEP 2007; *Reading Report for California*, NAEP 2007; *Science Report for California*, NAEP 2005; and *Grade 8 Writing Report for California*, NAEP 2007

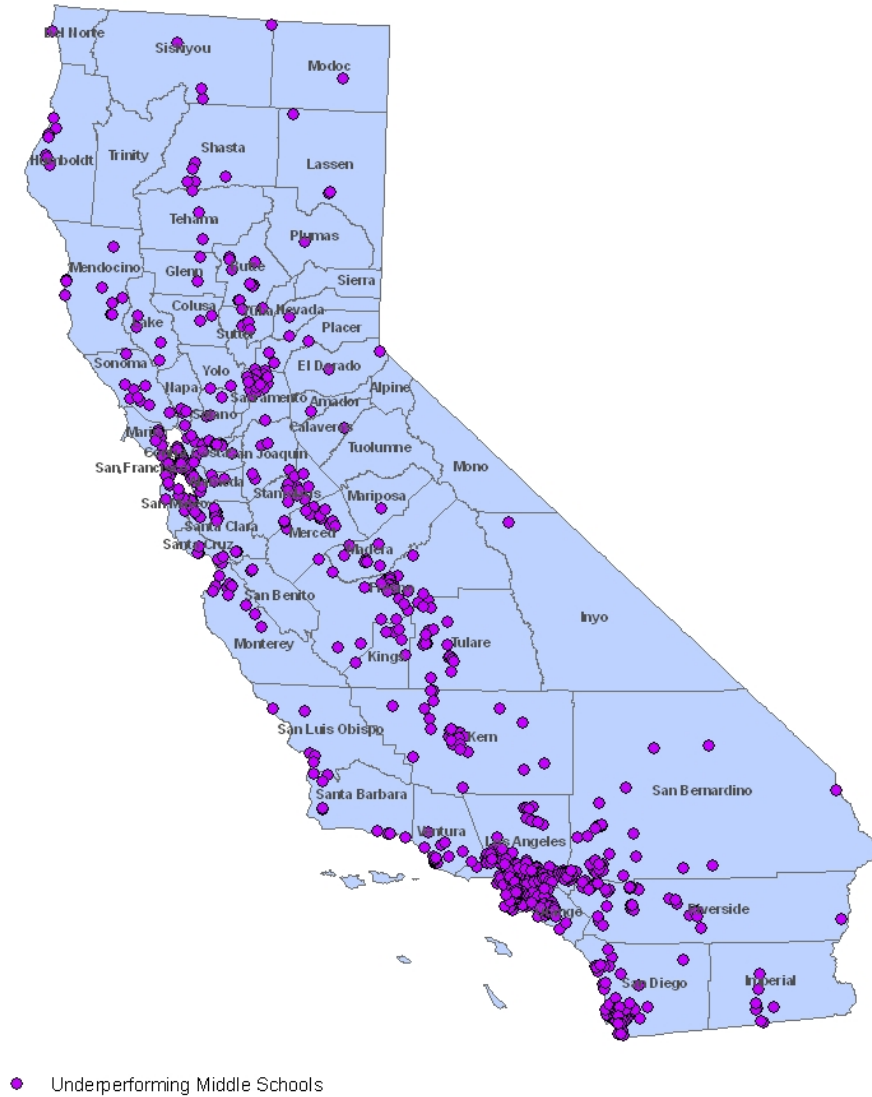
<sup>2</sup> *The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools*, Alliance for Excellent Education, October 2007

<sup>3</sup> Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Jennifer Paluch and Sonja Petek, *Californians & Information Technology*, Public Policy Institute of California, June 2008

# Attachment A

Location of Underperforming Middle Schools in California, 2007

## Underperforming Middle Schools in CA



Source: California Department of Education  
Map by The Children's Partnership

Attachment B

Percent of Students on Free/Reduced Meal Plans by Schools, 2007

