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Enrollment & Demographic Snapshot of Students in Schools included in California's Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS), 2021-22 School Year

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This brief provides a state-level snapshot of the size and demography of student enrollment in schools on the state accountability dashboard for schools with alternative school status (DASS) during the 2021-22 school year. These schools include Continuation High Schools, county and district-operated Community Day Schools, Court Schools, and other public schools, including charters, that obtain "alternative school" status by application to the [California Department of Education](#).

Key Takeaways

- In 2021-22, DASS schools enrolled 11.4% percent of all high school students in grades 10-12.
- Census Day (first Wednesday of October) enrollment captures only about 64% of cumulative enrollment in DASS Schools over the course of a school year.
- English learners represent a higher proportion of DASS enrollments (16%) than they do in the all high schools group (11% for grades 10-12).
- One quarter (24%) of students in DASS schools are Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP).
- DASS schools have twice the proportion of students identified as foster youth or homeless compared to enrollments in the all high schools group.
- DASS schools enroll proportionally more students identified for special education services than in the all high schools group.
- More than one-third of youth enrolled in Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools are identified for special education services. Taken together, youth in foster care and those identified for special education services account for more than half (52%) of youth in Court and Youth Authority Schools.

About the California Alternative Schools Data Series

The California Department of Education (CDE) identifies more than 970 public alternative schools across the state. Most of these are high schools designed to meet the needs of credit-deficient and other youth, over age 16 who are vulnerable to dropping out of school before completing minimum requirements for a diploma or completion certificate. In the 2021-22 school year, California's alternative schools enrolled approximately 11.4% of youth in public school grades 10-12 (9th graders are generally not eligible for voluntary enrollment in alternative schools). Some alternative schools, including Continuation Schools, District or County Community Day Schools and Court Schools are legislatively defined, while others may apply for alternative school status if they meet the minimum criteria set by the State Board of Education (SBE) for the enrollment of youth at risk of dropping out of school. California law stipulates that alternative schools will offer more intensive services and accelerated credit-earning opportunities that will afford high school students a renewed path to graduation. Currently, the SBE is considering new or additional accountability metrics for alternative schools that align with federal law, Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs), and promote continuous learning and program improvement.

Series Editor: Jorge Ruiz de Velasco

Number of Students (Grades 10-12) and High Schools, by School Type

Table 1. Number of Students and Schools in California during the 2021-22 school year

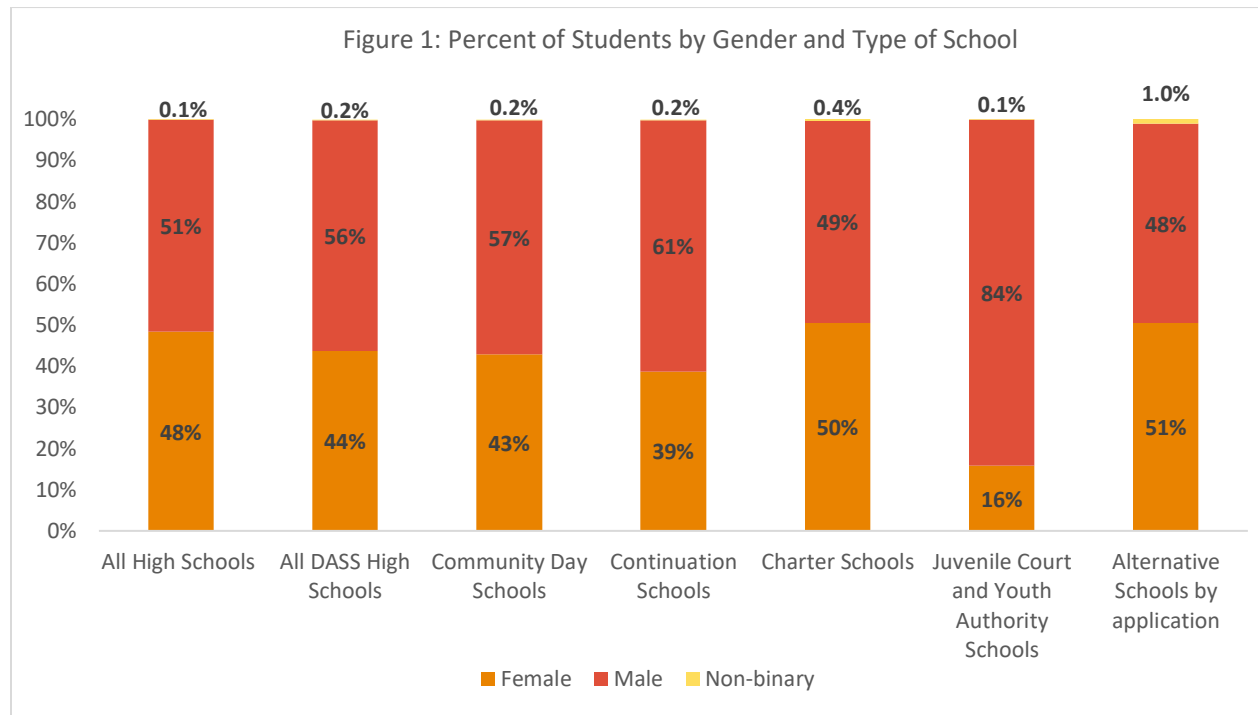
	All High Schools	All DASS High Schools	Community Day Schools	Continuation Schools	Charter Schools	Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools	Other Alternative Schools by Application (non-Charter)
Number of Students on Census Day Enrollment	1,467,023	109,321	10,031	45,496	34,659	1,756	287
Number of Students Cumulative Enrollment*	1,507,534	171,752	17,232	74,368	55,320	6,150	483
Increase in Cumulative Enrollment from Census Day	2.8%	57.1%	71.8%	63.5%	59.6%	250.2%	68.3%
Census Day Enrollment as a percentage of Cumulative Enrollment	97.3%	63.7%	58.2%	61.2%	62.7%	28.6%	59.4%
Number of schools	2,629	859	150	418	103	54	4
Average number of students by school type	619.88	215.94	120.60	181.18	567.37	136.27	121.50
Average calendar days of enrollment for students by school type							
All Students	224.29	164.37	142.45	168.69	161.99	67.67	172.98
Only Students Enrolled between 1-44 days	21.29	21.94	21.87	22.59	21.21	15.92	24.63
Only Students Enrolled for 45 days or more	238.40	187.99	170.47	186.42	194.60	126.45	189.67

Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2021-22 school year and who were enrolled from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022 (excluding summer school). Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository. The Census Day Enrollment Data can be retrieved at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filesenr.asp>. Census Day enrollment in the Continuation High Schools includes only those students enrolled on census day at a school with a CDS Code registered as a Continuation School. *To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.

In the 2021-22 school year, California reported 2,629 active high schools, including charters; out of these, there were 859 DASS high schools. On average, California high schools, including charters, enrolled 620 students per school, while there were 216 students per DASS school. On average, California high school students in grades 10-12 are enrolled in school for 224 days from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022. Meanwhile, in the DASS schools, students were enrolled on average for 164 days. Average days of enrollment are lowest for youth in Juvenile Court, Youth Authority, and Community Day schools.

In addition, Table 1 shows the variance between Census Day Enrollment (First Wednesday of October) and the Cumulative Enrollment of each school type. In the all high school group, grades 10-12, the cumulative and Census Day enrollments varied by about 3% in 2021-22. By contrast, DASS schools face a 57% variation in their cumulative enrollment relative to their Census Day enrollment. This inflow and outflow of students is especially high in DASS Charter Schools, which encounter a variation of almost double their Census Day enrollment, and in Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools, where the number of new students enrolled in a year is almost four times higher than their Census Day Enrollment.

Gender



Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2021-22 school year and who were enrolled from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository.
 *To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.

Gender representation in DASS and non-DASS high schools appear to be generally comparable, except in Continuation High schools, where about 3 out of 5 students identify as male (61%), and in Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools, where more than 4 out of 5 students identify as male (84%).

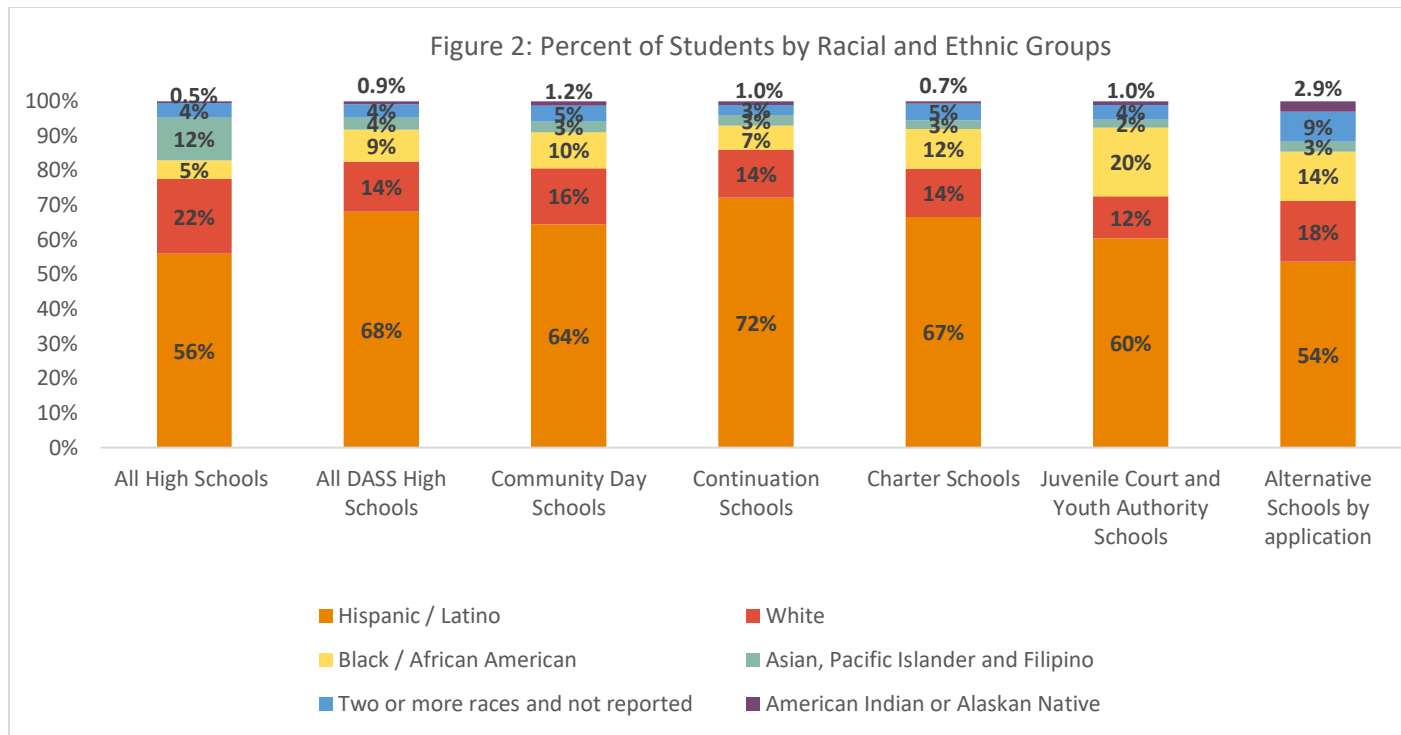
Race/Ethnicity

Table 2. Percent of Students by Race and School Type

Race/Ethnicity	All High Schools	All DASS High Schools	Community Day Schools	Continuation Schools	Charter Schools	Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools	Other Alternative Schools by Application
Black / African American	5.4%	9.3%	10.4%	6.8%	11.6%	19.9%	14.3%
Hispanic / Latino	55.9%	68.1%	64.5%	72.1%	66.7%	60.5%	53.6%
Asian	9.3%	2.1%	2.0%	1.7%	1.5%	1.2%	1.5%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%
Filipino	2.7%	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	0.6%	0.4%	1.0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.5%	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%	0.7%	1.0%	2.9%
Two or more races	3.6%	2.8%	3.1%	2.4%	3.5%	2.9%	4.1%
White	21.6%	14.5%	16.3%	14.0%	13.8%	12.1%	17.6%
Not Reported	0.7%	1.0%	1.5%	0.5%	1.3%	1.5%	4.6%

Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2021-22 school year and who were enrolled from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository.

*To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.



Compared to the all high schools group, alternative schools enroll a higher percentage of Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students, and a smaller percentage of Asian and White students. Specifically, Continuation high schools have the highest statistical overrepresentation of Hispanic/Latinx students (72%) compared to 56% in grades 10-12 of the all high schools group, while Juvenile Court and Youth Authority schools have the highest statistical overrepresentation of Black students (20%) compared to 5% in the all high schools group.

English Learner Status

Table 3. Percent of Students by English Learner Status

EL Status	All High Schools	All DASS High Schools	Community Day Schools	Continuation Schools	Charter Schools	Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools	Alternative Schools by Application
English Only	49%	49%	50%	44%	53%	59%	59%
Reclassified As Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)	29%	24%	20%	28%	21%	16%	25%
English Learner	11%	16%	18%	20%	11%	19%	9%
Not Reported	11%	11%	13%	8%	16%	6%	7%

Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2021-22 school year and who were enrolled from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository. *To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.

Figure 3: Percent of Students by English Learner Status in All High Schools

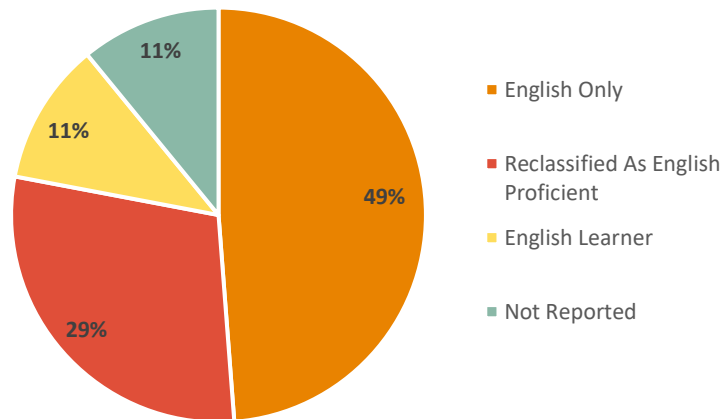
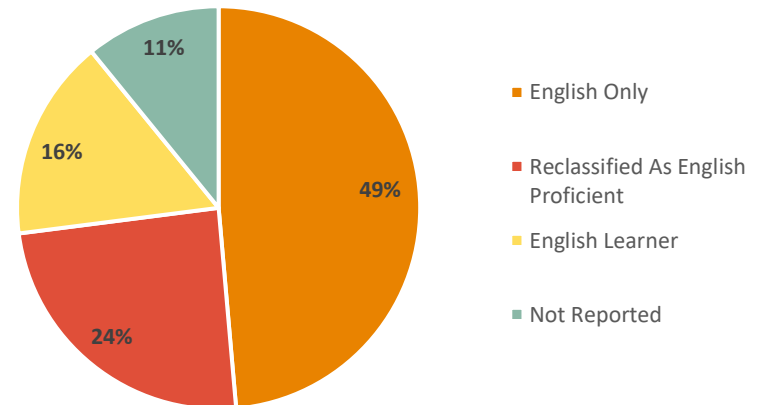


Figure 4: Percent of Students by English Learner Status in DASS Schools



Community Day, Continuation, and Juvenile Court and Youth Authority schools enroll the highest proportion of English Learners, ranging from 18% to 20% of the students classified as English learners compared to 11% in the all high schools group. Taken together,

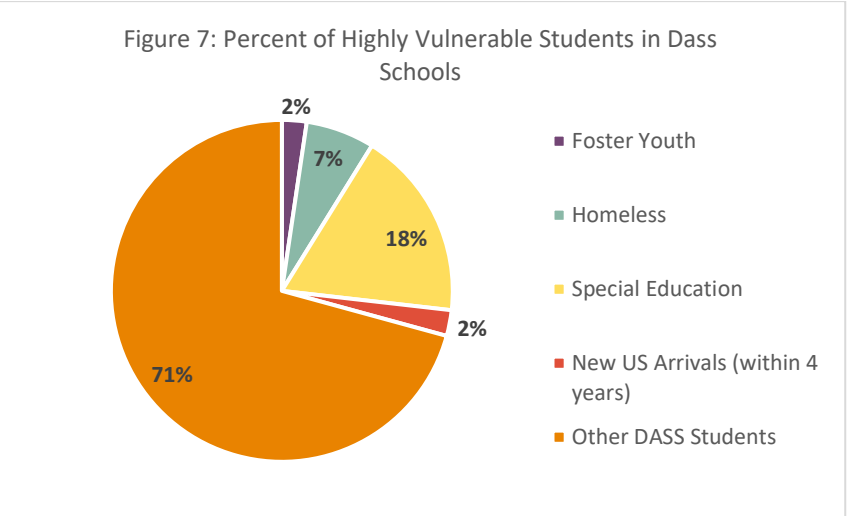
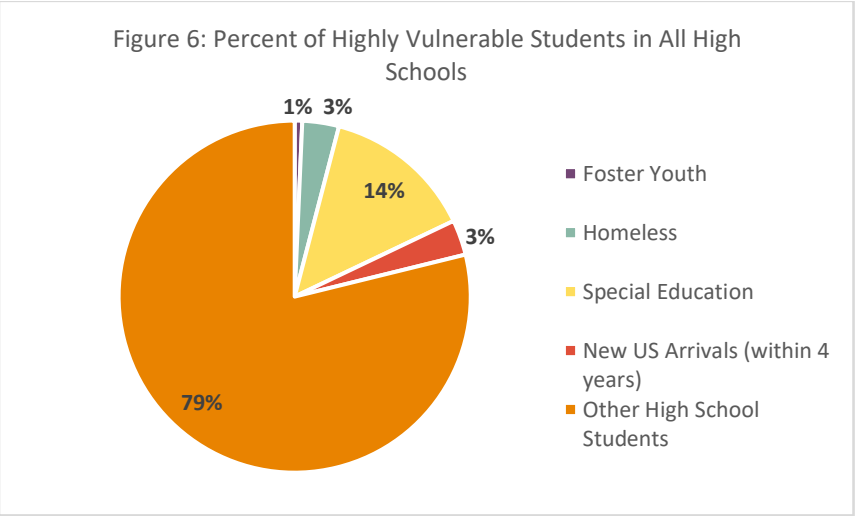
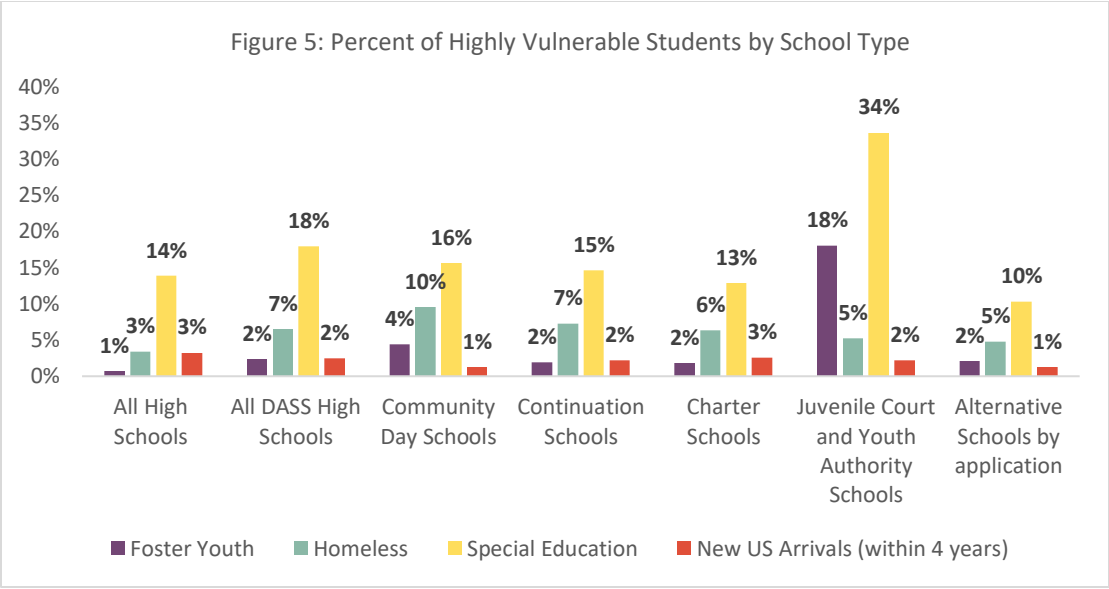
English Learners and RFP students comprise almost one-half (48%) of students in Continuation High Schools compared to 40% of all California public school students in grades 10-12.

Highly Vulnerable Students

Table 4. Percent of Highly Vulnerable Students by School Type

	All High Schools	All DASS High Schools	Community Day Schools	Continuation Schools	Charter Schools	Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools	Alternative Schools by Application
Foster Youth	1%	2%	4%	2%	2%	18%	2%
Homeless	3%	7%	10%	7%	6%	5%	5%
Special Education	14%	18%	16%	15%	13%	34%	10%
New US Arrivals (within 3 years)	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
New US Arrivals (within 4 years)	3%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	1%

Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2021-22 school year and who were enrolled from August 16th, 2021 to June 30th, 2022. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository. *To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.



DASS schools enroll twice the proportion of students identified as foster youth or homeless relative to the all high school group. Additionally, DASS high schools enroll a greater proportion of students identified in need of special education services relative to the all high school group. Students in need of special education services or in foster care are statistically overrepresented in Juvenile Court and Youth Authority schools. Taken together, youth in the foster care system and youth identified for special education services account for more than half (52%) of youth in Court and Youth Authority schools. Additionally, Community Day schools enroll a greater proportion of youth in foster care or who are identified as homeless relative to all the all high schools group and other DASS schools.

Comparing Student Enrollment, Grades 10-12, in the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years

Table 5. Cumulative Enrollment in the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years

	All High Schools (Grades 10-12)	All DASS High Schools	Percentage of Students Enrolled in DASS Schools
School Year 2018-2019			
Number of students Cumulative Enrollment*	1,503,843	195,835	13.02%
School Year 2021-2022			
Number of students Cumulative Enrollment*	1,507,534	171,752	11.39%

Note: Includes all high school students in grades 10 through 12 enrolled from August 16th to June 30th. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository. *To avoid counting the same student twice, we only consider the last DASS school the student attended.

In the 2018-19 school year, 1,503,843 California students were enrolled in grades 10-12, of whom 195,835 (approximately 13%) enrolled in DASS Schools at some point during the school year (not including summer school). By contrast, during the 2021-22 school year, 1,507,534 California students were enrolled in grades 10-12, of whom 171,752 (11.4%) were enrolled in DASS high schools at some point during that year.

Comparing the Number of Schools with Students in Grades 10-12 during the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years

Table 6. Number of Schools in the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years

School Type	Number of Schools		Decline in Number of Schools	Percentage Decline in Schools
	School year 2018-19	School year 2021-22		
All High Schools	2,665	2,629	-36	-1.4%
All DASS High Schools	937	859	-78	-8.3%
Community Day Schools	170	150	-20	-11.8%
Continuation Schools	430	418	-12	-2.8%
Charter Schools	114	103	-11	-9.6%
Juvenile Court and Youth Authority Schools	66	54	-12	-18.2%
Alternative Schools by Application	7	4	-3	-42.9%

Note: Includes all schools with students in grades 10 through 12 observed during the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years and who were enrolled from August 16th to June 30th. Data from the California Department of Education DataQuest and the CALPADS data reporting repository.

In the 2018-19 school year, there were 2,665 California schools (including charters) that enrolled students in grades 10-12. Of those schools, 937 schools were DASS high schools. However, in the 2021-22 school year, the total number of schools that enrolled students in grades 10-12 dropped to 2,629, (1.4%) fewer schools than in 2018-19. (Given that the All High Schools group includes DASS schools, there was actually a net gain in the number of non-DASS high schools reporting in CALPADS.) During the same three-year period, the number of DASS high schools experienced steeper declines relative to the all-schools group. There were, for example, 11.8% and 18.2% declines in the Community Day School, and Juvenile Court and Youth Authority School groups, respectively.

Notably, Pre-pandemic (2018-19) and post-pandemic (2021-22) cumulative high school enrollments in grades 10-12 remained stable or increased slightly statewide by the end of the 2021-22 school year. Enrollments in DASS schools (and more significantly) in the number of schools identified for inclusion in the DASS accountability dashboard declined across all DASS categories. We cannot, however, attribute the enrollment declines directly to pandemic effects.

Instead, the significant decline in the total number of DASS schools during the period examined is likely attributable, in significant part, to longer-term policy changes and enrollment trends that predate the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. For example:

- The decline in the number of Youth Authority and Court schools appears to be, in part, related to the legislative decision to close schools operated by the former California Division of Juvenile Justice and to return adjudicated youth to the supervision of County governments (S.B. 93: 2021).
- The decline in Community Day Schools may be attributed, in part, to legislatively mandated changes in school discipline policies designed to reduce the number of students who are suspended and ultimately expelled from traditional public K-12 schools and involuntarily referred to Community Day programs.¹

These enrollment trends bear watching over the next two years as secondary schools adjust to changes in school accountability and discipline policies set in motion since 2016.

¹ See e.g., [State Guidance for New Laws on Discipline](#), issued by the California Department of Education, August 19, 2021.