

data brief

January 2024

Positive Transition Rates for Schools on California’s Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS)

Jaymes Pyne

This brief provides an overview of positive transition rates among California high schools eligible for inclusion in the [Dashboard Alternative School Status \(DASS\)](#). Both state and federal law rely on high school graduation rates as a key indicator of high school accountability and performance. The California Department of Education (CDE) uses a combined four- and five-year graduation rate for the [Graduation Rate Indicator](#) on the state school accountability dashboard; this includes both comprehensive (or traditional) high schools and DASS schools. The CDE also tracks the [one-year graduation and completion rates](#) of DASS-eligible schools for information only.

In September 2020, the California Advisory Task Force on Alternative Schools (Task Force) [recommended](#) consideration of a “positive transition rate” for DASS-eligible schools that would provide a more complete picture of those youth who exit alternative schools each year, whether they are completing the requirements for graduation, continuing on an education path, or are dropping or aging out altogether.

In Figures 1 through 5, we consider all students enrolled for at least 45 days in a DASS school in the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. CALPADS exit codes serve as a guide to understand whether those exiting a DASS school in each identified school year experience a positive or negative transition (see Table 1). Positive transitions include a DASS completion code (e.g., graduating high school or earning a GED) or

About the California Alternative Schools Data Series

The California Department of Education (CDE) identifies more than 970 public alternative schools across the state. Most are alternative 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 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 enrolled 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 program improvement.

Series Editor: Jorge Ruiz de Velasco

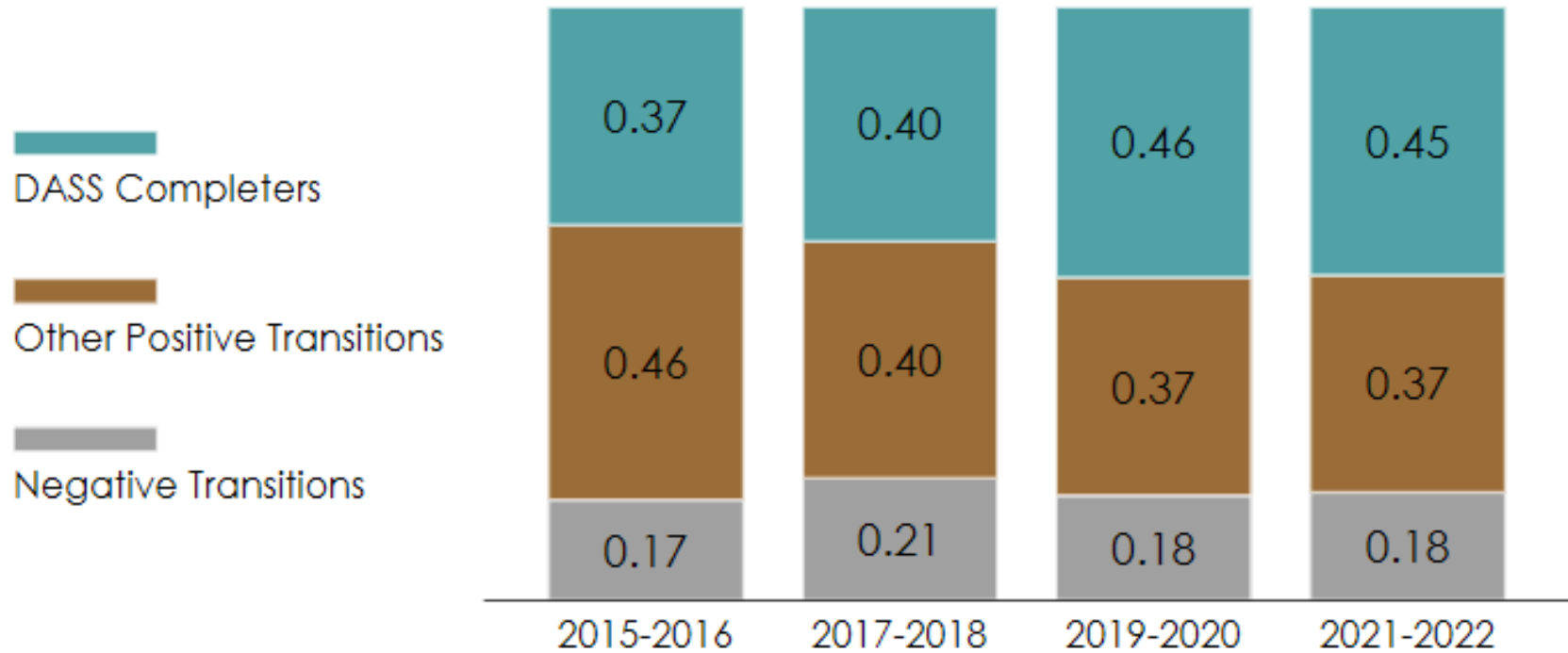
transfer code (e.g., transferring to another school, moving to home schooling, enrolling in college, or joining the military). Negative transitions include truancy, expulsion, no-shows, dropout, or aging out without a diploma. Following the recommendations of the Task Force, certain exit types are excluded from our analyses, including exiting for medical reasons, a no-show from another school, and death.

In Figures 6 through 8, we separately consider the exit patterns of students who exit a DASS school within 45 days of enrollment (generally less than one six-week marking period) and who were not included in initial positive transition rate calculations.

Key Takeaways

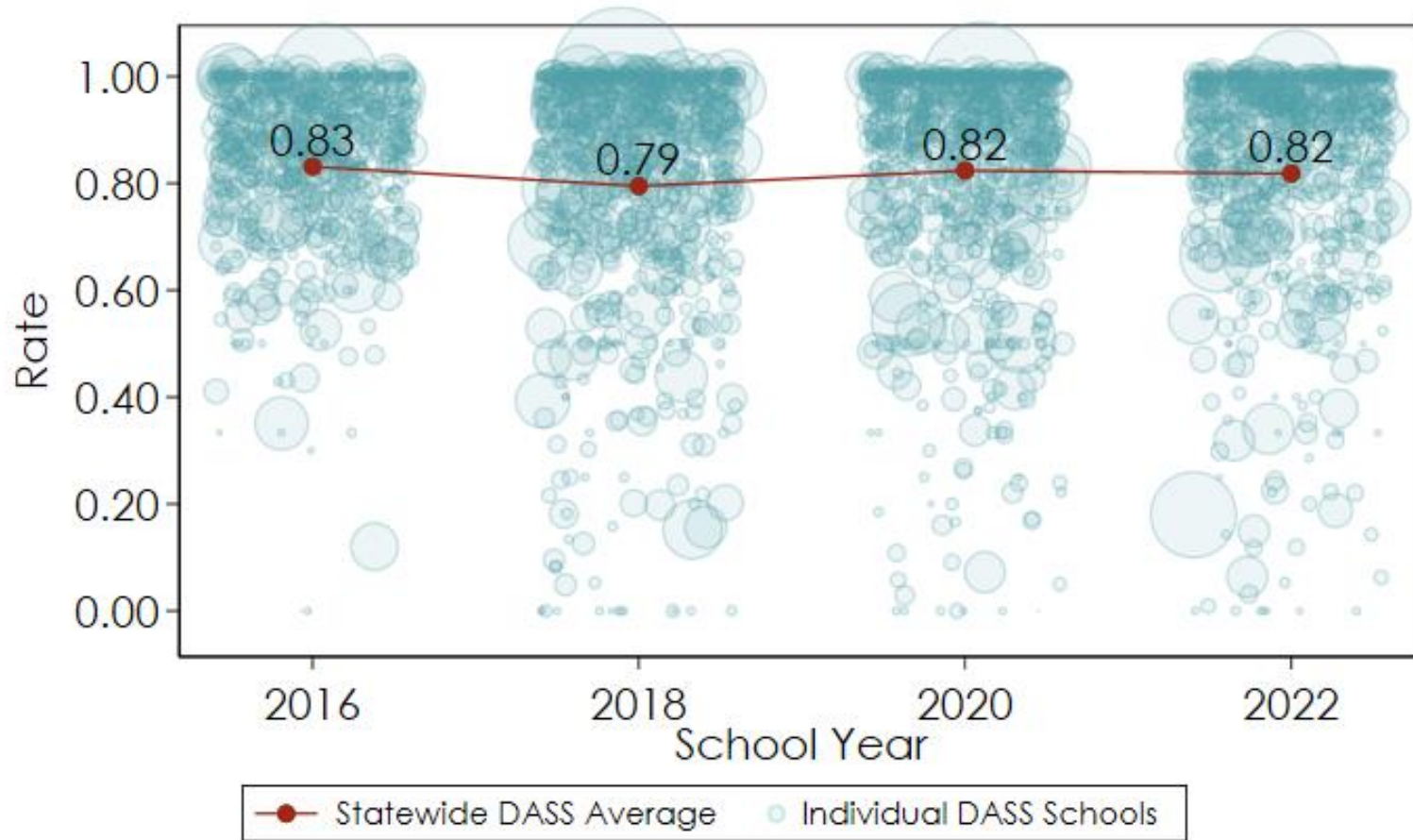
- Positive transition rates for students enrolled in DASS schools for at least 45 days are relatively high and steady—approximately 82% for students across the seven years examined.
- About two-thirds of students who exit DASS schools after more than 45 days of enrollment transfer back to traditional high schools or to other completion certificate-granting institutions.
- Continuation High Schools have higher (89%) and less variable positive transition rates across schools than DASS Charter Schools (75%), which have a comparable target population.
- When considering school exits for reasons other than graduation/completion, DASS Charter Schools exhibit lower positive transfers on average (60%) and a greater variation in performance on this metric across schools than Continuation and Community Day DASS Schools.
- In the years examined, 20%-29% of youth in DASS schools exit within 45 days of enrollment.
- The proportion of students exiting within 45 days of enrollment has steadily declined in recent years, from a high of 29% in 2017-18 to 20% in 2021-22.
- In 2022, 28% of students enrolled in DASS schools for less than 45 days exited those schools with a diploma or other completion certificate.
- In 2022, 30% of those enrolled less than 45 days at DASS Charter Schools experienced a negative transition, much higher than in other DASS school types, while nearly half of those attending Continuation DASS Schools exit with a diploma or other completion certificate.
- Less than 1 in 5 DASS students drop or age out of high school without a diploma or certificate of completion in a given school year. This 1 in 5 negative transition rate held true among students enrolled at a DASS school for less than 45 days in the most recent year examined, 2022.

Figure 1. DASS School Transition Types, by Year



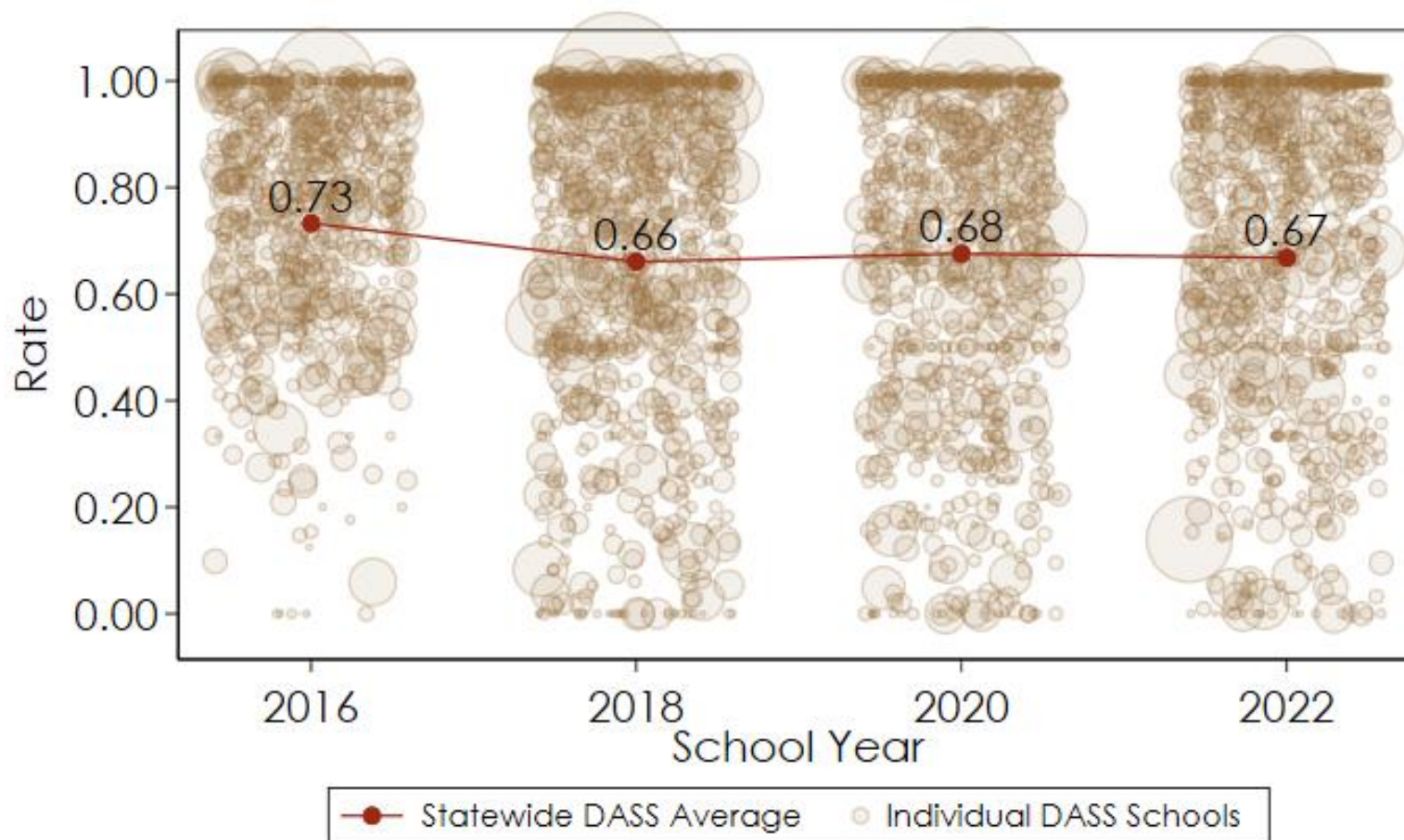
Note: Sample is based on 602,783 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days during the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. Other positive transitions include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent, consistent with calculation rules for the [DASS one-year graduation rate](#).

Figure 2. Yearly DASS School Positive Transition Rates (Including DASS Completers)



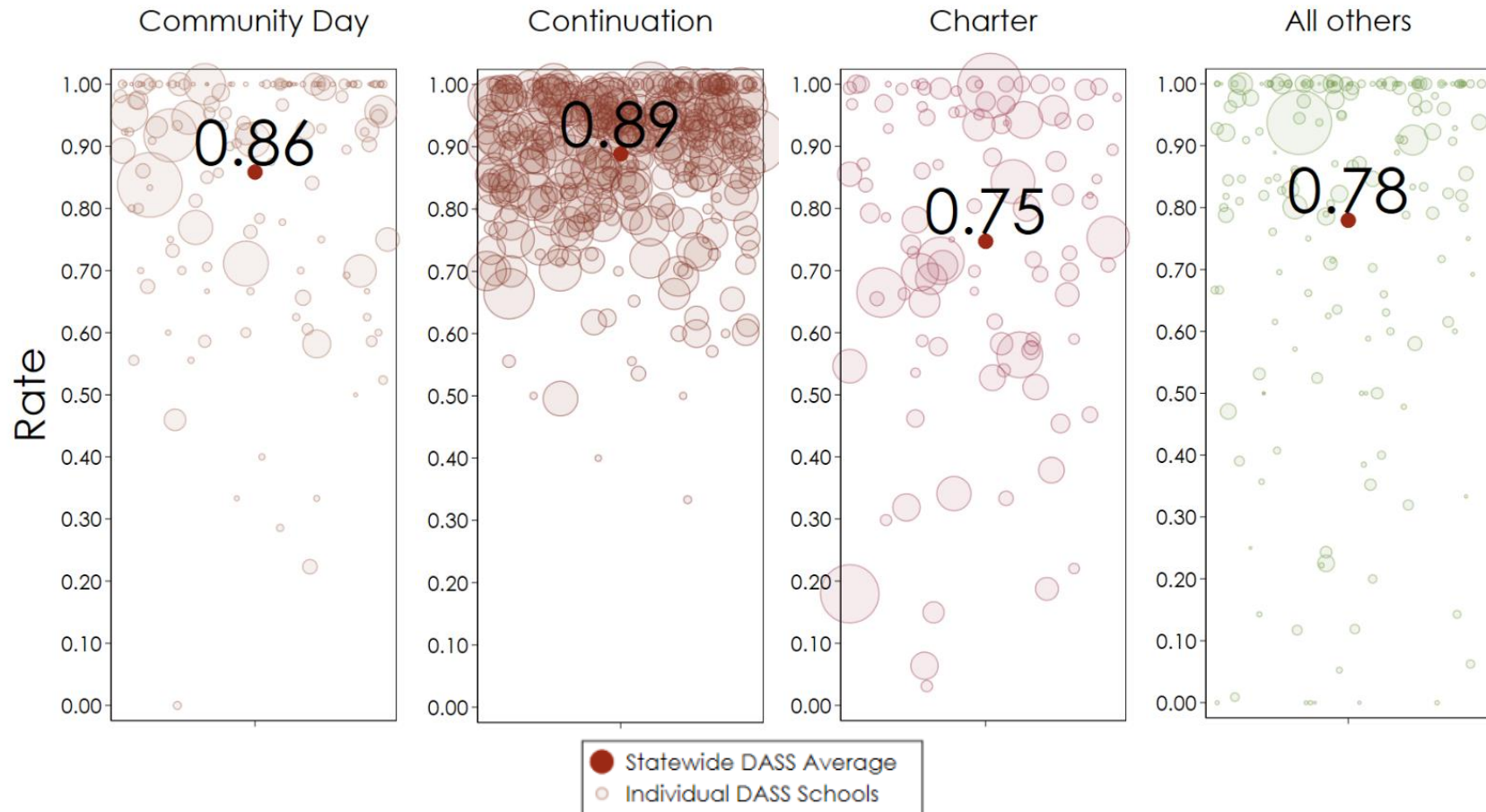
Note: Sample is based on 602,783 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days during the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. The solid red line connecting circles is the overall positive transition rate that includes high school diplomas and their equivalents, along with other positive transitions documented in Table 1. Each translucent blue circle represents the positive transition rate of each DASS school, with the size of circles weighted by school student population size (i.e., larger circles represent schools with larger student populations). Positive transitions are considered receiving a high school diploma or its equivalent, or some other positive transition including: transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 3. Yearly DASS School Positive Transition Rates (Excluding DASS Completers)



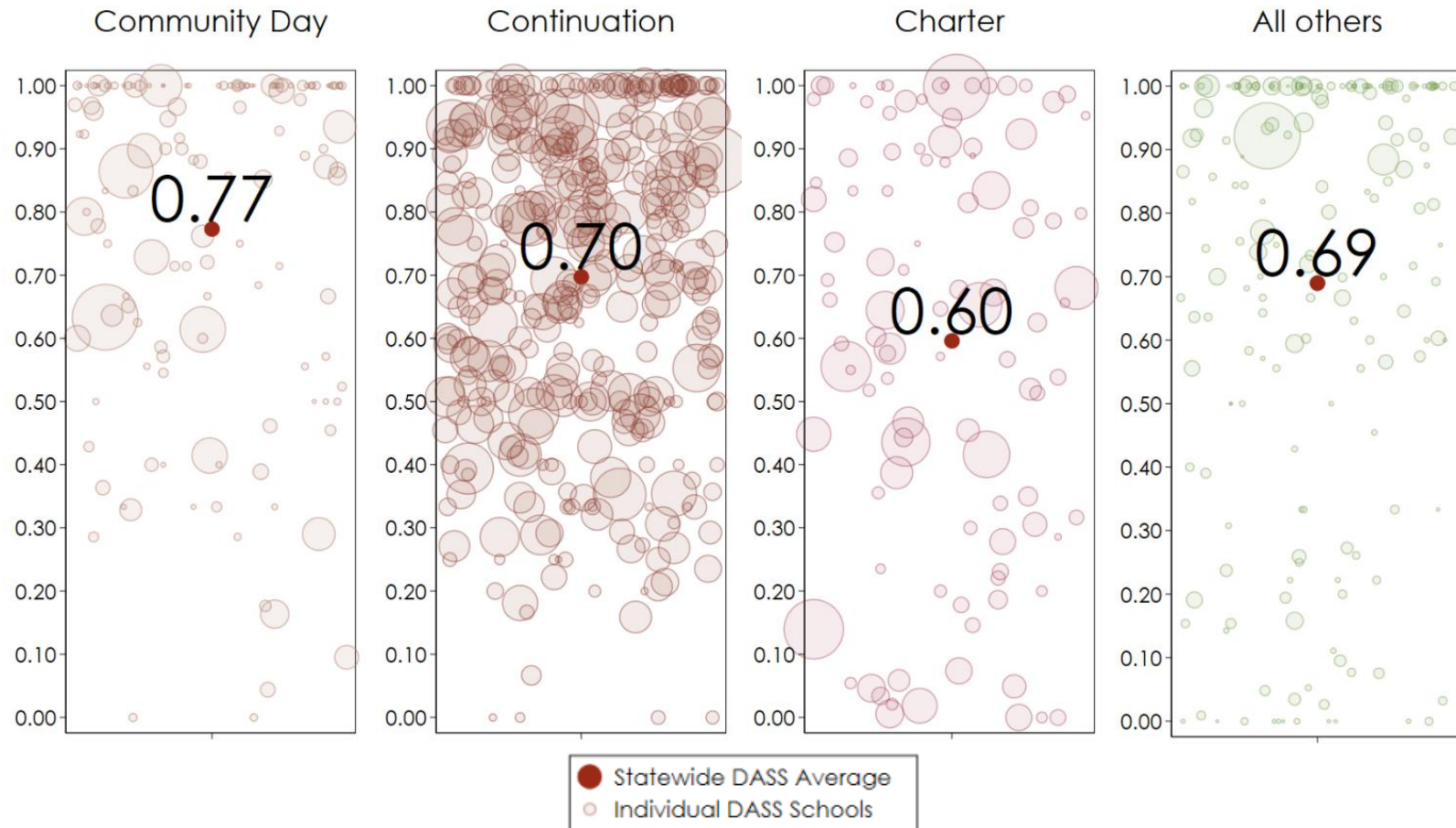
Note: Sample is based on 361,136 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days but not completing high school during the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. The solid red line connecting circles is the overall positive transition rate that excludes high school diplomas and their equivalents, but includes all other positive transitions documented in Table 1. Each translucent brown circle represents the positive transition rate of each DASS school, with the size of circles weighted by school student population size (i.e., larger circles represent schools with larger student populations). Positive transitions (excluding high school completion) include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 4. 2022 DASS School PTR by School Type (Including DASS Completers)



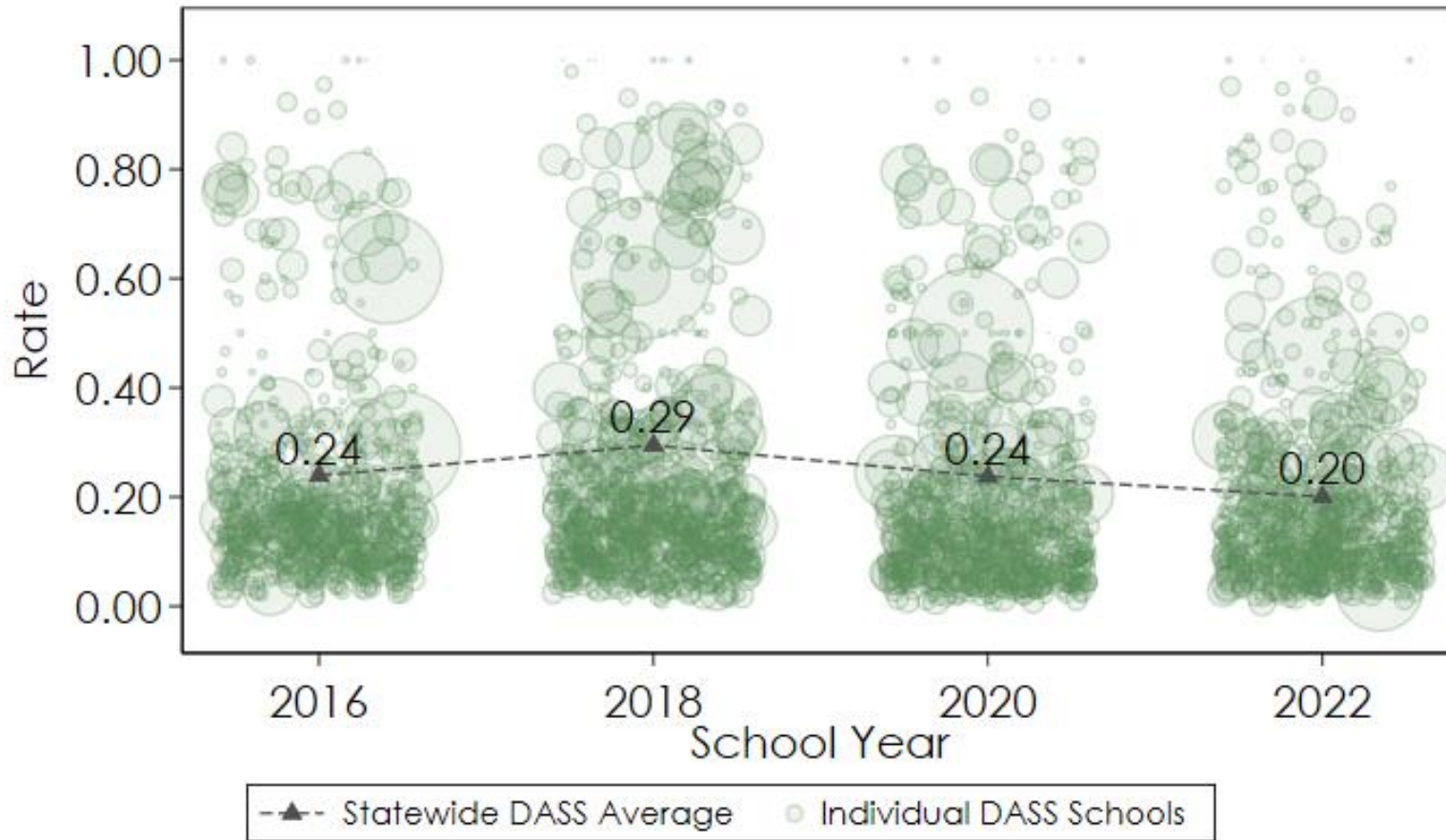
Note: Sample is based on 89,832 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days during the 2021-22 school year. Solid red circles are the overall positive transition rate that includes high school diplomas and their equivalents along with all other positive transitions documented in Table 1. Each translucent circle represents the positive transition rate of each DASS school, with the size of circles weighted by school student population size (i.e., larger circles represent schools with larger student populations). The “All others” chart shows students who attend juvenile court schools (18%), opportunity schools (6%), public special education schools (15%), “youth authority” schools (1%), and alternative schools of choice entering DASS by application (60%). Positive transitions are considered receiving a high school diploma or its equivalent, or some other positive transition including: transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 5. 2022 DASS School PTR by School Type (Excluding DASS Completers)



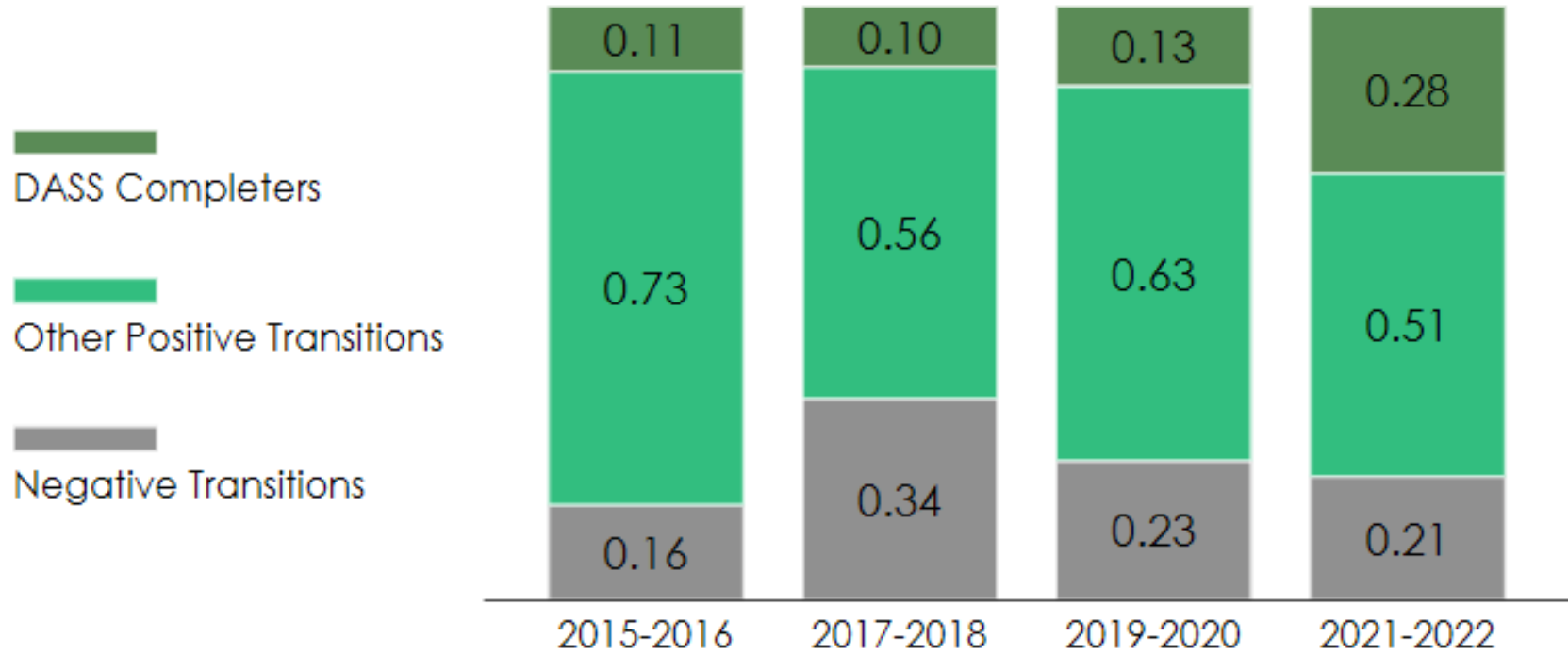
Note: The sample is based on 49,536 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days but not completing high school during the 2021-22 school year. Solid red circles are the overall positive transition rate that exclude high school diplomas and their equivalents, but include all other positive transitions documented in Table 1. Each translucent circle represents the positive transition rate of each DASS school, with the size of circles weighted by school student population size (i.e., larger circles represent schools with larger student populations). The “All others” chart shows students who attend juvenile court schools (18%), opportunity schools (6%), public special education schools (15%), “youth authority” schools (1%), and alternative schools of choice entering DASS by application (60%). Positive transitions (excluding high school completion) include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 6. Less Than 45 Day Exit Rates among DASS Schools, by Year



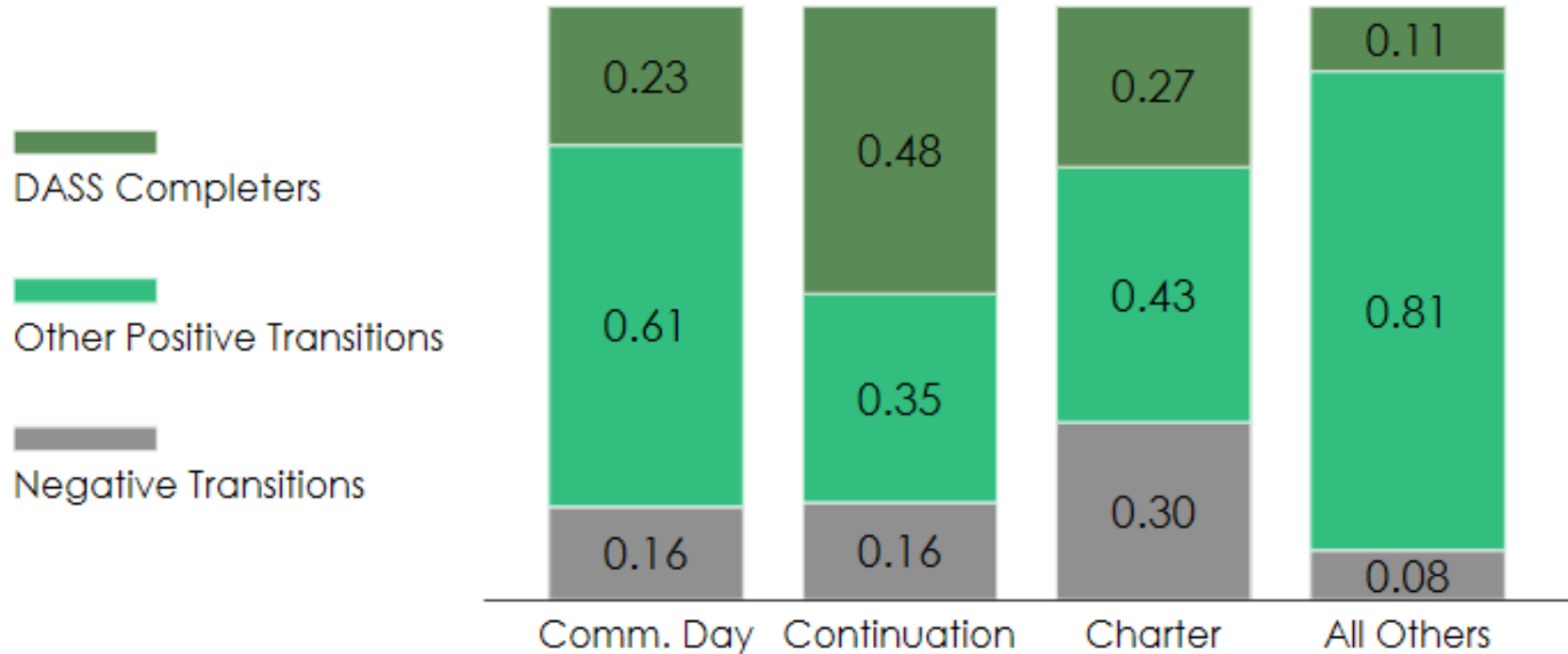
Note: Sample is based on 361,136 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days and 111,225 observations of students attending a DASS school for less than 45 days during the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. Other positive transitions include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 7. Transition Types among Students Enrolled in a DASS School for Less Than 45 Days, By Year



Note: Sample is based on 111,225 observations of students attending a DASS school for less than 45 days during the 2015-16, 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2021-22 school years. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. Other positive transitions include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates).

Figure 8. Transition Types among Students Enrolled in a 2021-22 DASS School for Less Than 45 Days, by School Type



Note: Sample is based on 22,508 observations of students attending a DASS school for less than 45 days during the 2021-22 school year. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. Other positive transitions include transitioning to another public or private school, adult education, a community college, the military, or home schooling. Negative transitions include expulsion, truancy, same-school no-shows, and age-outs. DASS Completers are those who receive a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e., Special Education, CHSPE, or GED completion certificates). The “All others” bar shows students who attend juvenile court schools (18%), opportunity schools (6%), public special education schools (15%), “youth authority” schools (1%), and alternative schools of choice entering DASS by application (60%).

Table 1. Positive Transition Rate Analysis Rules using CALPADS Exit Codes

Positive Transition	Negative Transition	Excluded Transitions
<p>E-100 – Graduate** E-120 – Cert of Completion (SPED) E-125 – Special education completer E-156 – 12th grade continued enrollment E-250 – Adult education Diploma** E-320 – GED** E-330 – CHSPE**</p> <p>T-160 – Public school T-165 – Transfer for behavior T-167 – Transfer to independent study/DASS T-180 – Transfer to private school T-200 – Transfer out of California T-240 – Transfer out of country T-260 – Adult Ed. – verified enrolled T-280 – Enrolled in college T-370 – Military, Job Corps T-460 – Transfer to home school 480 – Completed highest grade at school; expected to attend another CA school</p>	<p>E-140 – Truant (next school unknown) E-170 – Student who was enrolled with a secondary Enrollment Status Code (20) in any grade, exited/withdrew from school E-230 – Completer – no diploma^ E-300 – Expelled E-360 – Aged out; no diploma E-400 – Expelled, no known enrollment E-490 – Dropped out of summer or intersession program</p> <p>N-240 – No show, same school as last year N-420 – Completed prior year, was expected to return and did not</p> <p>T-270 – Adult education dropout T-380 – Transfer to institution, no HS diploma</p>	<p>E-130 – Death E-150 – Mid-year enrollment update E-155 – Student exited at grade level (excluding HS Completer). Used for students expected to return to the same school E-410 – Medical reasons</p> <p>N-430 – Meant to nullify a pre-matriculation from another school N-470 – No show</p> <p>T-310 – Health facility admission</p>
<p>Note: As apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship enrollments with high school diploma pathway are added to CALPADS, these could be included here. ** These are included in the one-year graduation rate when the GED or Adult Ed diploma is awarded by the DASS school. ^ If this exit code is accompanied by a completion code that qualifies for the one-year graduation rate, then include in the numerator (positive transition).</p>		

Table 2. Positive Transition Rates among DASS Student Subgroups (2021-2022)

Variables	All DASS	Community Day	Continuation	Charter	Other
Gender=Male	0.80	0.83	0.83	0.75	0.69
Gender=Female	0.82	0.82	0.86	0.80	0.73
Gender=Non-Binary	0.78	0.55	0.80	0.83	0.78
Race=White	0.83	0.83	0.86	0.84	0.74
Race=Hispanic	0.80	0.83	0.84	0.76	0.68
Race=Black	0.78	0.85	0.82	0.72	0.76
Race=Asian	0.79	0.78	0.83	0.81	0.69
Race=Pacific Islander	0.81	0.83	0.84	0.76	0.78
Race=Filipino	0.81	0.89	0.85	0.88	0.61
Race=American Indian	0.82	0.76	0.85	0.79	0.78
Race=Multiracial	0.83	0.82	0.84	0.81	0.81
Race=Unknown	0.84	0.83	0.86	0.86	0.67
Special Education	0.72	0.84	0.79	0.78	0.51
Migrant	0.86	0.85	0.87	0.86	0.74
Homeless	0.80	0.80	0.82	0.73	0.81
Foster Youth	0.83	0.87	0.83	0.77	0.85
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	0.80	0.82	0.84	0.76	0.71
English Learner	0.76	0.82	0.81	0.67	0.58

Note: The sample is based on 89,832 observations of students attending a DASS school for 45 or more days during the 2021-22 school year. The “Others” category represents students who attend juvenile court schools (18%), opportunity schools (6%), public special education schools (15%), “youth authority” schools (1%), and alternative schools of choice entering DASS by application (60%).