

CALIFORNIA'S EARLY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: IMPROVING LATINO STUDENTS' COLLEGE READINESS AND COMPLETION, OR WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY?

MARCH 2015

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In California, Latinos have become the largest racial/ethnic group. Latinos in the U.S. have high educational aspirations for themselves and their children and for the first time in 2012, Latinos actually enrolled in college at or above the rate of whites. Unfortunately, the proportion of Latinos who complete college still trails behind that of whites. Given that by 2025 California is projected to have a shortfall of one million college-educated workers, ensuring college completion for Latinos is essential.

One policy area warrants particular focus—college readiness—measured by the need for remedial or developmental coursework at the college-level. Nationwide, 41% of Latinos enroll in developmental courses, compared to 31% of their white counterparts. In the California State University System (CSU) the remediation gaps between Latinos and whites are even more pronounced. In the fall of 2013, 42% of CSU Latinos were required to take developmental English as opposed to only 12% of white students. In Math, 39% of Latinos took developmental math as freshmen versus 15% of whites.

“Even I don’t know how the students did on the EAP, except as a group, so I know their teachers don’t know. I wish I did, because I could tell the kids and help them immensely.”
-email from high school college counselor

About a decade ago, the CSU collaborated with the State Board of Education and the California Department of Education to establish the Early Assessment Program, or EAP. The EAP has three central components: (1) an optional early assessment of college readiness which accompanies the California Standards Test (CST) in the junior year of high school; (2) a revised curriculum and web-based resources available to students during the senior year to help them improve their skills to achieve college readiness; and (3)

professional development for teachers to assist students in meeting the CSU’s college readiness standards. Students are told if they are ready, conditionally ready, or not ready for college-level English and math. The EAP is designed to encourage students who are identified as not college ready to take action to increase their skills during the high school senior year. While the EAP has been praised for its design and for breaking decades-old barriers between K–12 and higher education in California, some have questioned the program’s implementation.

A study using focus groups and interviews with seniors from high schools in low-income areas in Los Angeles found that many students were not aware of the EAP before they took the assessment. One student stated: “I don’t think that my school takes that much importance in [the EAP]...no one knew [about the EAP] until that day, that moment.”

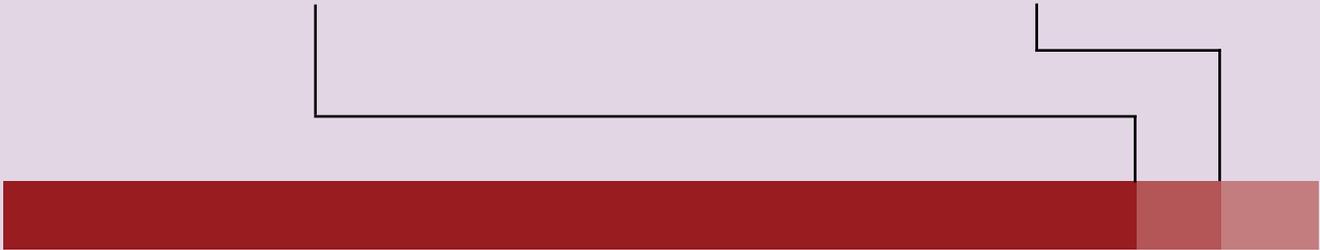
High school staff further supported the lack of information surrounding the EAP. One college counselor shared: “Even I don’t know how the students did on the [EAP]...so I know their teachers don’t know. I wish I did, because I could tell the kids and help them immensely.”

The CSU spends about \$30 million per year on developmental education, and an additional 4 million on the EAP. Ten years after its inception, it’s still unclear how effective the EAP is at reducing the need for developmental education at the CSU and ultimately improving graduation rates. In the coming years, to maximize the potential of the EAP, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners should attend to the implementation issues highlighted in this study. Particularly, better communication of the EAP is needed before the assessment and enhanced communication of the EAP results is needed after the assessment.

LATINOS AND COLLEGE

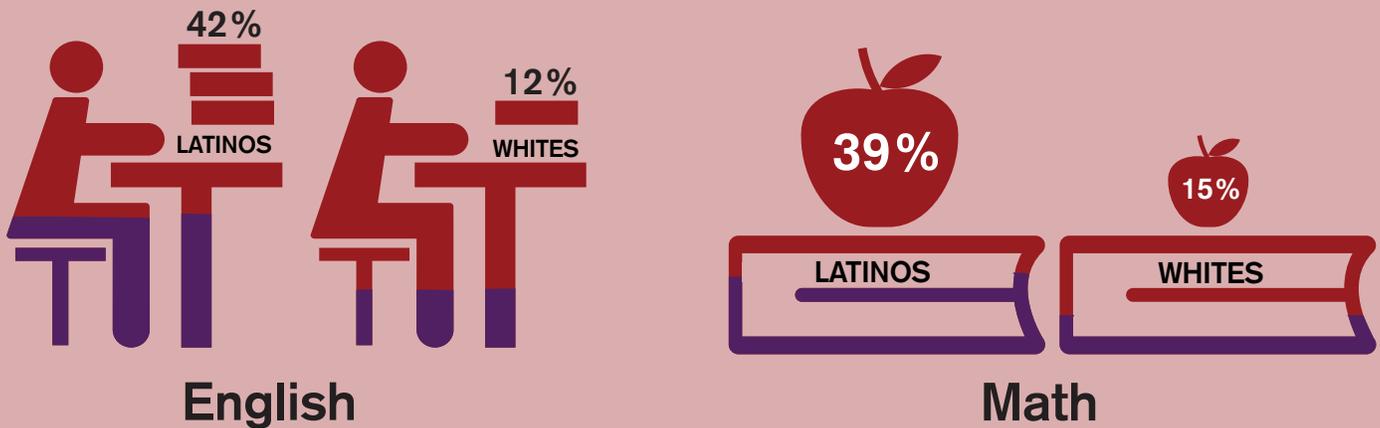
83% of Latino parents hope their children attain a **bachelor's degree or higher**.

92% believe a college education is **"very important"**



(PPIC, 2010; 2012)

CSU Students Required to Take Developmental Courses (Fall 2013)



6-year graduation rate (2007 cohort) at CSUs

