Spotlight on Special Populations: Enrollment and Success in Transfer-Level English and Math

Updated Analysis of AB 705 Impact in the California Community Colleges

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Introduction

The RP Group's Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) regularly examines the impact of AB 705 – landmark legislation designed to increase students' access to and success in transfer-level English and math across the California Community Colleges (see sidebar). As part of the analysis, we look at whether the legislation is having an equal impact across student groups.

In the period immediately following AB 705 implementation in fall 2019, our research[i] found positive results for special population groups such as students impacted by the foster care system, veterans, and those participating in Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS)[ii] and Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS).[iii] Significant gains were seen in students' enrollment in transfer-level English and math, as well as improvements in students' completion of these courses within one year for every special population subgroup.

This brief provides current insights on the rates for special population groups with updated data through the 2023-2024 academic year. **Overall, the results showed continued gains in student access and success in transfer-level English and math for every special population**. At the same time, some groups continue to lag in certain state metrics, including students in DSPS, foster youth, Umoja, and veterans programs.

Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) Overview

The RP Group launched MMAP in 2014 to support the advancement of developmental education reform in the California Community Colleges. MMAP now supports the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office with the implementation of AB 705 and AB 1705, which seek to improve equitable placement into and completion of transfer-level English and math courses required for a student's program.

Learn more about this work at www.rpgroup.org/mmap.

Methodology

The RP Group analyzed "direct enrollments" in transfer-level English and math for student cohorts starting at any of the 116 California Community Colleges in a fall term between fall 2015 and fall 2023. Direct enrollment includes students whose first course in the discipline is at the transfer level, in a fall term of the year

identified. We also analyzed "throughput" for each entering fall cohort. We define this metric as the proportion of students who take and successfully complete transfer-level English and math courses (with A, B, C, P, or CR grades) within one year of their first attempt (i.e., fall, winter, spring, summer terms) out of the *full* cohort of incoming students who take *any* level course in the discipline (basic skills through transfer) (see Key Terms sidebar).

We included disaggregations for student characteristics reported to the state Chancellor's Office Management Information System (COMIS). Enrollment in special programs (i.e., DSPS, EOPS, veterans, foster youth) was based on students' participation at any point within the timeframe of the data file (2015-2024).[1] Program participation did not have to take place at the time of enrollment in a math or English course.

Key Findings

Enrollment in Transfer-Level English and Math Has Increased Substantially for Special Populations.

Special population groups have experienced **remarkable increases in their direct enrollment in transfer-level English and mathematics courses across all student groups since the implementation of AB 705** (see Table 1, Figure 1). Overall statewide trends show that student access increased by +56 percentage points in English and +73 percentage points in math from fall 2015 to fall 2023.

For the fall 2015 cohort, direct enrollment in transfer-level English was as low as 8% for Puente[iv] students and as high as 49% for those in the veteran program. All but one group (veteran students) had enrollment rates below the statewide rate (43%) in 2015. Following the implementation of AB 705 in fall 2019, enrollment rates for these cohorts began escalating dramatically, ranging from 89% to 98%. By fall 2023, Puente students achieved the most dramatic increase, with a 92 percentage point rise, while other subgroups saw improvements, ranging from +51 percentage points for veterans to +72 percentage points for those in Umoja.[v] Notably, by fall 2023 **most groups reached or exceeded the overall state enrollment rate of 99% in transfer-level English**. Students who participated in EOPS (98%) were the only exception.

Key Terms

Transfer-level English and math: transfer-level course that satisfies a course requirement for transfer.

Direct enrollment: first enrollment in the discipline (i.e., English or math).

Course success: completion of a course in one term, with a grade of A, B, C, or P.

Throughput: proportion of students who enrolled at any starting level in the fall term then successfully completed transfer-level English or math within one academic year (including fall, winter, spring, summer terms).

Default placement bands: high school cumulative grade point average (GPA) used for placement recommendations into transfer-level English and math based on lowest (< 1.9), middle (≥ 1.9 - < 2.59) and high (≥ 2.6) high school preparation.

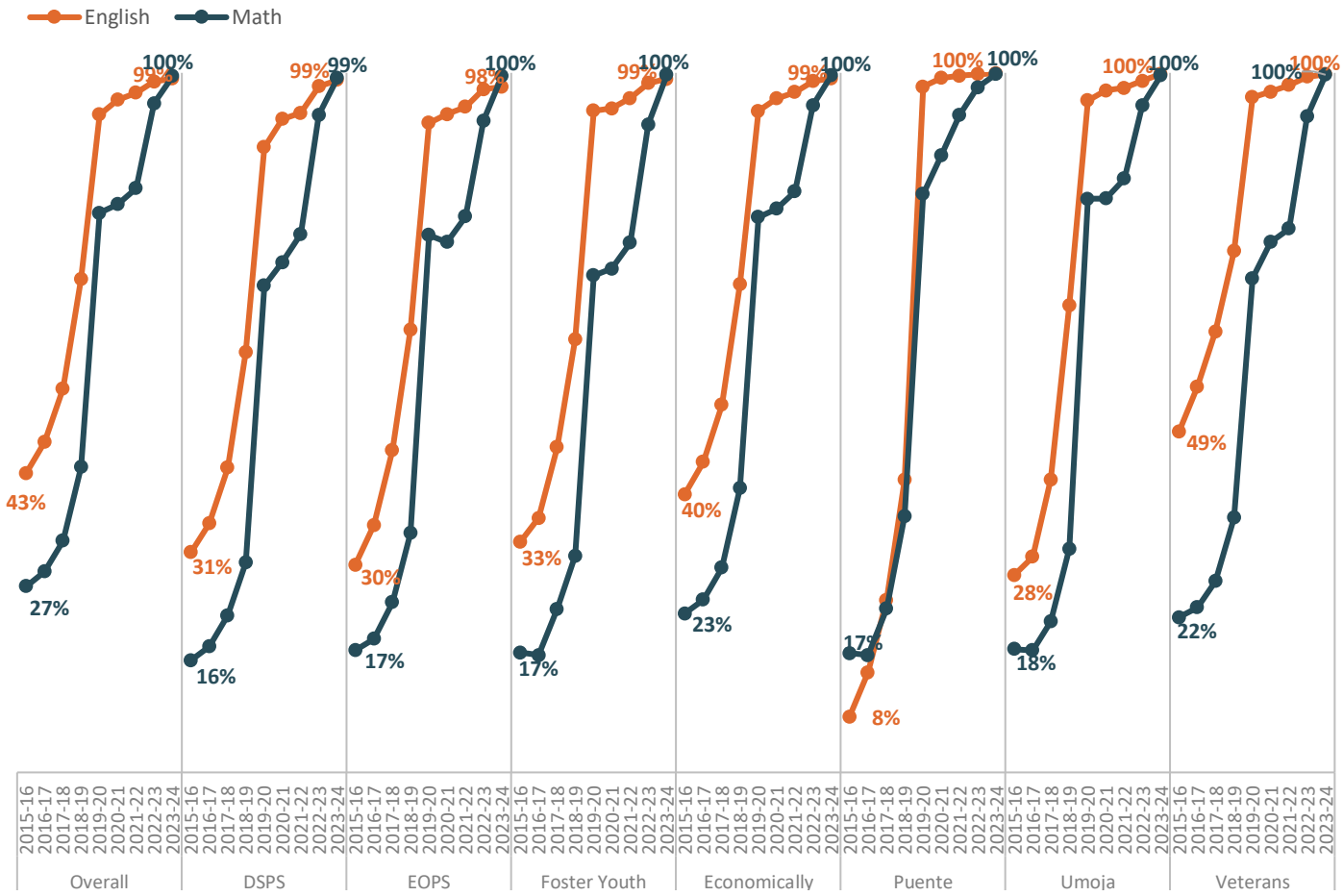
Similarly, enrollment rates for transfer-level mathematics also improved significantly. In the fall 2015 cohort, all special population groups had enrollment rates below the overall state rate of 27%, with figures between 16% and 23%. Following the implementation of AB 705 in fall 2019, enrollment rates saw a sizable increase for all groups, with figures between 70% and 83%. By fall 2023, these groups saw their direct enrollment in transfer-level mathematics increase to between 99% and 100%, with percentage point increases ranging from +77 percentage points (Economically Disadvantaged) to +83 percentage points (DSPS, Foster Youth, and Puente). **All groups reached an enrollment rate of 100% in fall 2023 matching the overall state rate, with the exception of students in the DSPS program (99%).**

[1] Data reflects transfer-level completion dashboard as of January 1, 2025.

Table 1. *Direct Enrollment in Transfer-Level English and Math by Student Subgroup (Fall 2015 – Fall 2023)*

Subject	Subgroup	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	9-Yr % Pt. Change	9-Yr # Students Change	# Students to Reach 100%
English	DSPS	31%	36%	44%	60%	89%	93%	94%	98%	99%	+68%	+7,781	+115
	EOPS	30%	35%	46%	63%	93%	94%	95%	98%	98%	+68%	+9,637	+287
	Foster Youth	33%	36%	46%	62%	95%	95%	96%	99%	99%	+66%	+1,801	+24
	Economically Disadvantaged	40%	44%	53%	70%	95%	96%	97%	99%	99%	+59%	+72,867	+961
	Puente	8%	14%	25%	42%	98%	99%	100%	100%	100%	+92%	+1,612	+1
	Umoja	28%	31%	42%	67%	96%	97%	98%	99%	100%	+72%	+1,650	+4
	Veterans	49%	55%	63%	75%	97%	97%	98%	99%	100%	+51%	+1,462	+6
	Overall	43%	47%	55%	71%	94%	96%	97%	99%	99%	+56%	+94,175	+1,414
Math	DSPS	16%	18%	22%	30%	70%	73%	77%	94%	99%	+83%	+6,832	+60
	EOPS	17%	19%	24%	34%	77%	76%	79%	93%	100%	+82%	+8,813	+46
	Foster Youth	17%	17%	23%	31%	71%	72%	76%	93%	100%	+83%	+1,498	+5
	Economically Disadvantaged	23%	25%	29%	41%	79%	81%	83%	95%	100%	+77%	+73,018	+327
	Puente	17%	17%	23%	37%	83%	88%	94%	98%	100%	+83%	+941	+2
	Umoja	18%	17%	22%	32%	82%	82%	85%	95%	100%	+82%	+1,266	+6
	Veterans	22%	24%	27%	36%	71%	76%	78%	94%	100%	+78%	+2,170	+8
	Overall	27%	29%	33%	44%	80%	81%	84%	96%	100%	+73%	+93,643	+578

Figure 1. *Direct Enrollment in Transfer-Level English and Math by Student Subgroup (Fall 2015 – Fall 2023)*



More Special Populations Students Are Completing Transfer-Level English and Math, but Equity Gaps Persist for Some Groups.

To examine success in transfer-level English and math courses, we looked at the proportion of the entire cohort of students, starting at any level, who successfully completed a transfer-level English or mathematics course within one year (throughput rate). Overall, **throughput rates increased substantially between 2015 and 2023** (see Table 2, Figure 2).

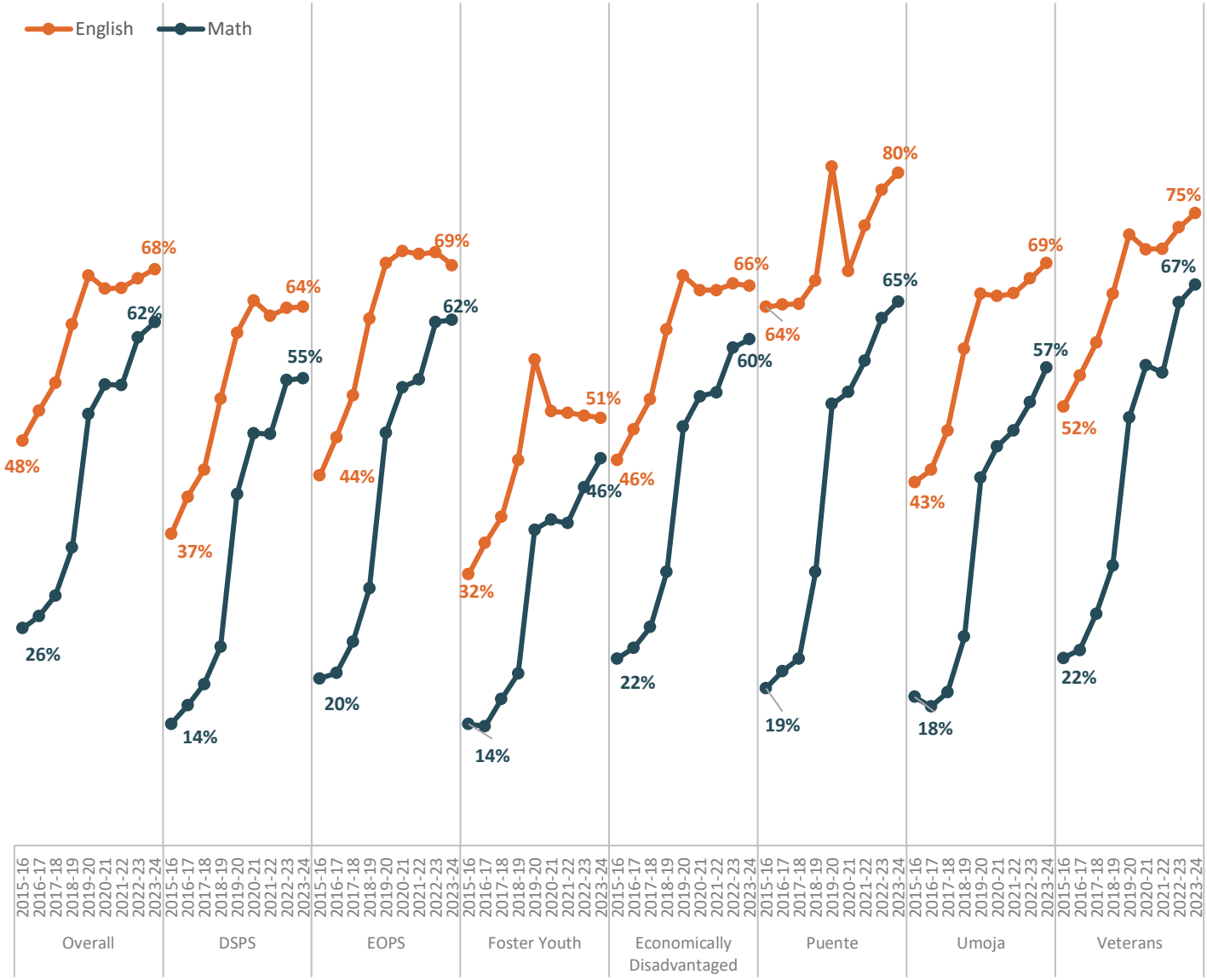
In English, the overall throughput rate increased from 48% in 2015-2016 to 68% in 2023-2024. Special population groups experienced comparable enhancements in throughput rates, with percentage point increases ranging from +16% (Puente) to +27% (DSPS). The range of throughput rates for student groups was from 32% to 64% in fall 2015. Following the implementation of AB 705 in fall 2019, throughput rates saw a sizable increase for all groups, with figures between 58% and 81%. By 2023-2024, **all student groups, except DSPS, foster youth, and economically disadvantaged students surpassed the overall throughput rate of 68%**. While foster youth showed notable increases in the completion of transfer-level English (a +19-percentage point increase), they remained below the overall rate, with a gap of -17 percentage points. **Umoja students made significant progress from 43% to 69%, closing the gap at +1 percentage point above the overall rate.**

For math, the overall throughput rate escalated from 26% in 2015-2016 to 62% in 2023-2024. **All special population groups saw at least a tripling of their transfer-level math throughput from 2015-2016 to 2023-2024, with the exception of economically disadvantaged students who exceeded a doubling of their throughput rates**. In 2015, math throughput for these groups spanned from 14% (DSPS and foster youth) to 22% (economically disadvantaged and veterans). Following AB 705, these rates improved, now range from 46% (foster youth) to 67% (veterans). **Despite these strides, most groups' completion of gateway math within one year still trailed the overall state rate (68%) in 2023-2024**, with gaps of 16 percentage points (foster youth), 7 percentage points (DSPS), -2 percentage points (economically disadvantaged), and -5 percentage points (Umoja), **indicating a need for ongoing support to close these disparities**.

Table 2. *English and Math Throughput Rates by Student Subgroup (2015-2016 – 2023-2024)*

Subject	Subgroup	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	9-Yr % Pt. Change	9-Yr # Students Change	# Students to Reach 100%
English	DSPS	37%	41%	45%	53%	61%	65%	63%	64%	64%	+27%	+1,987	+4,154
	EOPS	44%	48%	53%	63%	69%	71%	70%	70%	69%	+25%	+2,427	+4,391
	Foster Youth	32%	36%	39%	46%	58%	52%	51%	51%	51%	+19%	+256	+1,340
	Economically Disadvantaged	46%	49%	53%	61%	68%	66%	66%	67%	66%	+21%	+16,874	+41,122
	Puente	64%	64%	64%	67%	81%	68%	74%	78%	80%	+16%	+223	+353
	Umoja	43%	45%	49%	59%	66%	65%	66%	67%	69%	+26%	+414	+711
	Veterans	52%	56%	60%	65%	73%	71%	71%	73%	75%	+23%	+494	+713
	Overall	**48%**	**52%**	**55%**	**62%**	**68%**	**66%**	**66%**	**67%**	**68%**	**+20%**	**+23,239**	**+52,808**
Math	DSPS	14%	17%	19%	24%	42%	49%	49%	55%	55%	+41%	+1,867	+3,656
	EOPS	20%	20%	24%	30%	49%	54%	55%	62%	62%	+43%	+2,848	+4,038
	Foster Youth	14%	14%	17%	20%	37%	39%	38%	42%	46%	+32%	+263	+980
	Economically Disadvantaged	22%	23%	26%	32%	50%	53%	54%	59%	60%	+38%	+21,604	+37,879
	Puente	19%	21%	22%	32%	52%	54%	58%	63%	65%	+46%	+336	+403
	Umoja	18%	16%	18%	25%	44%	47%	49%	53%	57%	+39%	+343	+668
	Veterans	22%	23%	28%	33%	51%	57%	56%	64%	67%	+44%	+827	+935
	Overall	**26%**	**27%**	**30%**	**35%**	**51%**	**55%**	**55%**	**60%**	**62%**	**+36%**	**+28,951**	**+48,646**

Figure 2. *English and Math Throughput Rates by Student Subgroup (Fall 2015 – Fall 2023)*



Conclusion

AB 705 proves to positively impact enrollment and throughput rates for special populations in both transfer-level English and math. For example, enrollment rates in transfer-level English for all but one group (EOPS) met or surpassed the overall state rate. Close to 100% of each group directly enrolled in transfer-level English after AB 705 implementation. In addition, direct enrollment in transfer-level math significantly improved for all students, with at least two-thirds of students enrolling for the first time in transfer-level courses. When comparing transfer-level enrollment among certain special populations to the overall enrollments, all groups achieved or very nearly achieved the overall enrollment rate of 100%.

Throughput rates also improved substantially among all groups post-AB 705. Notably, Puente students experienced the highest percentage point increase in math throughput in the nine years examined. However, DSPS, foster youth, and economically disadvantaged students' throughput rates in both English and math remained below the overall rate in 2023-2024. These continued gaps suggest that **these student groups may not be receiving the same advising or access to and/or support in transfer-level coursework compared to other students.**

While throughput rates increased across all student groups post-AB 705, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and a shift to remote learning may have affected throughput rates, as exemplified by dips in completion rates for DSPS, EOPS, foster youth, Umoja, and veterans in English between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, as well as for DSPS, EOPS, foster youth, economically disadvantaged, and Umoja students in math during the same period.

These findings indicate that **colleges should continue to monitor enrollment and throughput rates for special populations along with the support services provided to these groups**. These latest results also suggest that a **continued focus on improvements in teaching and learning** may also help special populations students achieve these critical milestones in their educational journey.

For More Information…

Visit www.rpgroup.org/mmap

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[i] The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. (2021). *Enrollment and Success in Transfer-Level English and Math for Special Populations.* https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/MultipleMeasures/AB705_Workshops/Enrollment%20and%20Success%20in%20Transfer-Level_English_and_Math_for_Special_Populations_July2021.pdf?ver=2021-08-04-114819-053.

[ii] https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Disabled-Student-Programs-and-Services

[iii] https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services

[iv] https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Puente-Project

[v] https://umojacommunity.org/