

2020-21

# SERVING BLACK STUDENTS WITH EXCELLENCE

California Charter Schools Working  
to Close Opportunity Gaps



California  
Charter Schools  
Association




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# INTRODUCTION

 alifornia public schools face the challenge of meaningfully engaging students via remote instruction during one of the most devastating global pandemics in modern history. Unfortunately, underserved students are more likely to experience learning loss during this time compared to their peers, according to CCSA's [2020-21 Portrait of the Movement](#) report.

While it is yet to be seen how California students will be impacted, some local projections are troubling because Black students could be falling even further behind academically from where they started before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because California has halted the administration of state standardized tests due to COVID-19, the most recent student performance data comes from the 2018-19 [California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress \(CAASPP\)](#). In 2018-19, the average public school student in California scored one point above [the met standard](#) in English Language Arts (ELA), while Black public school students scored 45 points below the met standard in the subject. In Math, CAASPP results show the average public school student scored 29 points below the met standard, whereas Black public school students scored 85 points below the met standard.

Academic performance differences between Black students and other students extend into measures of post-secondary readiness as well. Black students were less likely to complete [a-g curriculum](#) (required for UC/CSU admission), less likely to be considered prepared for [college or career \(CCI\)](#), and less likely to graduate from high school in four years.

Recognizing these immense opportunity gaps, California charter public schools are actively working to boost the performance of Black students, ensuring they make progress towards grade-level proficiency and leave school prepared for college and career. With increased flexibility and autonomy, in exchange for added accountability, charter schools have the ability to adapt rapidly to changing needs. Addressing the academic performance of Black students in California is one such area where charter schools are seeing success.

In California, nearly 50,000 Black students attend charter public schools, a number that has steadily risen over the past ten years, perhaps in response to the academic benefit visible to parents of Black students.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

**S**erving Black Students With Excellence: California Charter Schools Working to Close Opportunity Gaps draws attention to the increasing number of charter schools in the Golden State that are advancing Black achievement despite systemic barriers and challenges. The successes of Black students at charter schools are not one-off scenarios, particularly when looking at schools serving high proportions of Black students.

A review of Black student performance in California, at schools serving 50 percent or more Black students brought to light **shining examples of excellence**:

Charter Public School	School District	Black Student	
		CAASPP Percentile*	Enrollment
<a href="#">Wilder's Preparatory Academy Charter Middle (6-8)</a>	Inglewood Unified	99th	86%
<a href="#">Wilder's Preparatory Academy Charter (K-5)</a>	Inglewood Unified	98th	85%
<a href="#">Hardy Brown College Prep (K-5)</a>	San Bernardino City	87th	66%
<a href="#">Sacramento Charter High (9-12)</a>	Sacramento City Unified	81st	57%
<a href="#">Today's Fresh Start-Compton (K-8)</a>	Los Angeles Unified	79th	55%
<a href="#">CATCH Prep Charter High, Inc. (9-12)</a>	Los Angeles Unified	78th	63%
<a href="#">Fortune (K-10)</a>	Elk Grove Unified	77th	65%
<a href="#">Pasadena Rosebud Academy (K-8)</a>	Pasadena Unified	75th	58%

\* CAASPP percentile shows which percentile of performance (on a 1-100 scale) students in are performing in compared to students in the same subgroup statewide

Of these “bright spots,” four charter schools are profiled in this report:

- [Wilder's Preparatory Academy Charter \(K-5\)](#)
- [Wilder's Preparatory Academy Middle \(6-8\)](#)
- [Sacramento Charter High School \(9-12\)](#)
- [Pasadena Rosebud Academy Charter School \(K-8\)](#)

Each of these schools serves Black students who are performing in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher for Black students statewide on the CAASPP. In an effort to build statewide capacity and knowledge on this issue, CCSA Associate Director of Research Ellie Lawther, along with Ana Tintocalis, CCSA Director of Media Relations and Research, chronicled the achievements of these four charter schools, providing demographic and historical data about the schools, information about the hallmarks of their educational approach, as well as testimonials from students and educators who are driven by a deep commitment to equity.

# Wilder's Preparatory Academy Charter (K-5)

## A Legacy of Academic Excellence in Inglewood

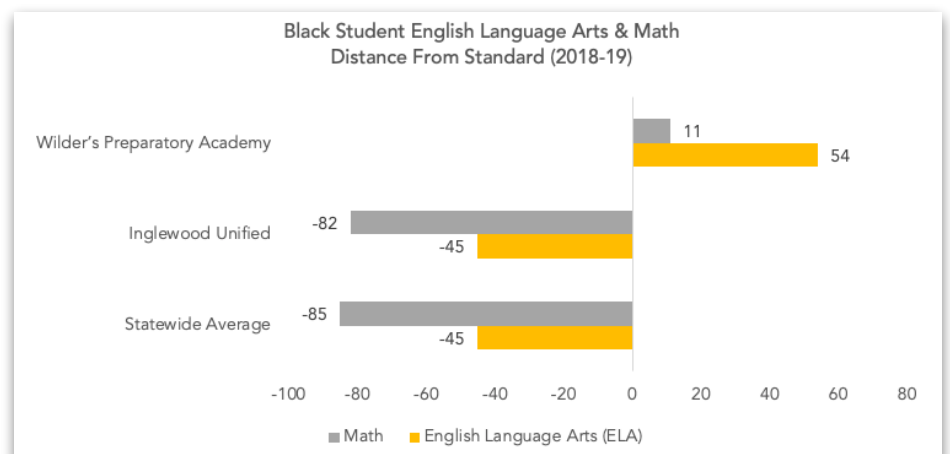
**W**ilder's Preparatory Academy was established in 2003 by Raymond D. Wilder, an engineer, businessman and community leader in Inglewood, California who believed that justice for disenfranchised people could only be achieved by helping them obtain a quality education. Wilder passed away almost a decade ago, but his legacy continues through the hard work of Wilder's Prep's dedicated and ambitious teaching staff, as well as his daughter Ramona Wilder who has assumed the role of chief executive officer and administrative director of the school.



Initially established as a kindergarten, Wilder's Prep now operates two charter schools — a middle school and an elementary school — which serve a predominantly low-income, Black student population in Inglewood.

When comparing the school's performance to others in the area, the difference Wilder's Prep is making for their students and the community is clear. Data shows that, on average, students in the Inglewood Unified School District are performing below the state average in both ELA and Math, and this is true for both Black students and all students. However, at Wilder's Prep, students are far exceeding the met standard in both subject areas.

Teachers at Wilder's Prep say **three elements** drive academic excellence:





## MINDSET

Each and every individual at Wilder's Prep is asked to fully commit themselves to realizing the academic potential of students – including the students themselves. Student behavior and academic progress are held to the highest standard, and teachers are held accountable to meet the unique learning needs of each child. According to Ramona Wilder, the Wilder's Prep mindset is achieved through 1) a determination to identify and accomplish goals 2) a desire for lifelong learning 3) discipline to attain all goals and 4) a dedication to approach learning with a positive attitude.

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Wilder's Prep describes its educational approach as "a strong research-based academic program emphasizing language arts, computation and mathematical reasoning." As such, high expectations are set for both students and staff, with an additional expectation of parental involvement. The schools emphasize the importance of individualized student growth and have long been recognized as a high performing school, achieving the California Department of Education's Title 1 Academic Achievement Award for five consecutive years. Additionally, Wilder's Prep Elementary was awarded the California Distinguished School Award in 2014.

## EDUCATORS OF COLOR

Alongside high expectations for academic rigor, Wilder's has also considered the impact of having a teaching and administrative staff that reflects the demographics of their students. CCSA's 2019 report [\*Charting the Course to Equity\*](#) highlighted the importance of racially and ethnically diverse leadership to promote positive outcomes for children of color. At Wilder's Prep elementary and middle schools, all full-time school administrators are Black. In addition, out of the 28 full-time teaching staff, 12 (43 percent) were Black, with total of 22 (79 percent) teachers of color.



# BY THE NUMBERS

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## Wilder's Prep Academy Charter (K-5)

Students served	404
Percent Black	85%
Percent <a href="#">low-income</a>	74%
Numbers of years open	18
State test performance:	
All students	83 <sup>rd</sup> percentile
Black students	98 <sup>th</sup> percentile



## Wilder's Prep Academy Middle (6-8)

Students served	210
Percent Black	86%
Percent low-income	70%
Number of years open	13
State test performance:	
All students	85 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Black students	99 <sup>th</sup> percentile

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## WILDER'S PREP MISSION STATEMENT

Dedicated to developing life-long learners; providing excellence in education for all students; and promoting the growth and development of productive citizens toward building and sustaining a humane, just, and global society. Our academic focus embraces a rigorous research-based college preparatory curriculum that supports effective teaching by the faculty and promotes strong economic, intellectual and pragmatic leadership in our students.



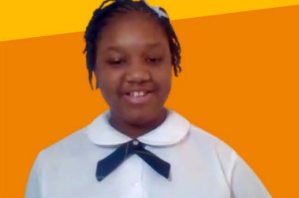
"Failure for our students is not an option."

**INTERVIEW INSIGHTS:**

CCSA interviews help illuminate how Wilder's Prep Academy has been able to sustain a legacy of academic excellence.

Watch a video featuring students at the school and Wilder's Prep's leader.

[Watch Now](#)



# Sacramento Charter High School

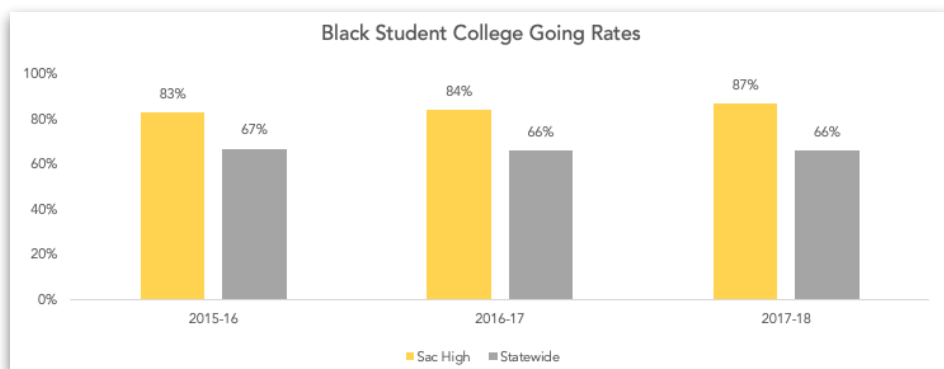
## Growing A New Generation of Black Scholars

**S**acramento Charter High School is part of the St. HOPE family of nonprofits that works to revitalize the community through high-quality public education and economic development. Located in a community called Oak Park in Sacramento, California, many Sac High students lack the support and resources at home that they need and deserve. While the school acknowledges and works to combat these issues hand-in-hand with the students and their families, the teachers and staff never use the lack of resources as an excuse for accepting anything less than excellence. As such, all students at Sac High are referred to as scholars – setting a distinct tone at this college prep charter high school.



Sac High is not shy of setting high standards. In the school leadership’s own words, “We’ve raised the bar and our schools are producing extraordinary results in our Black and Latinx students, as well as our overall student body.” As of 2019, Sac High was one of the top five schools in the Sacramento Unified School District for Black student performance, and was the highest performing high school for Black students in California. These statistics are well aligned to the school’s vision to create one of the finest urban high schools in America.

While there are many equity-based instructional practices and strategies taking place at this school, **three educational hallmarks** contribute to the school’s success:





## COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

Sacramento Charter High has made it its mission “to graduate self-motivated, industrious, and critically thinking leaders who are committed to serving others, passionate about lifelong learning and prepared to earn a degree from a four-year college.” In fulfillment of this mission, 2018-19 graduation rates at the school are high at over 97 percent for Black students, compared to the Sacramento Unified average of 88 percent. In addition, in 2020, all Black students at Sacramento Charter High graduated meeting the requirements for admission to University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) schools.

The school is justifiably proud of their consistently high college-going rates, which have not only improved over the past three years, but also stand 20 percent higher than the state average for Black students. The school’s enrollment rates at University of California schools are particularly impressive, at a high of 18 percent in 2016-17 compared to the state average of only four percent for Black students.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Enrolled at University of California	13% (4%)	18% (4%)	14% (4%)
Enrolled at California State	29% (12%)	30% (12%)	43% (12%)

*\* the state averages for non-DASS Black students are listed in parenthesis*

## POWER TO LEAD

There is no wasted time and no idle bodies at Sac High. This charter prep high school requires scholars to engage in a variety of extra-curricular activities throughout their four years at the school. As a result, students understand they must utilize every moment of their days productively engaged in academics or worthy extra-curricular activities – which often translates into more time at school. Confidence-building activities including Senate, a campus-wide governance organization, helps scholars develop critical leadership skills. In addition, Sac High nurtures students’ sense of civic responsibility by encouraging them to engage in 40 hours of community service each school year.

## DATA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Sac High is the highest performing high school in the state where Black students make up at least 50% of the tested population. That

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*\* DASS schools: Specific school types are automatically placed into DASS or are considered Alternative Schools that are: Continuation, County or District Community Day, Opportunity, County Community, Juvenile Court, California Education Authority, Division of Juvenile Justice, or County-Run Special Education Schools.*



accomplishment has largely been achieved through the use of data to inform effective instructional practices. In addition to standardized tests and other objective measures, students at every grade level submit a “digital exit ticket” on a daily basis. This real-time student performance data allows teachers to immediately pinpoint areas of improvement for each student and provide the specific support their students need. A guiding principle at Sac High is “Waiting for 100%” which has translated into academic excellence across every grade level.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Sacramento Charter High School

Students served	505
Percent Black	57%
Percent <a href="#">low-income</a>	73%
Numbers of years open	18
State test performance:	
All students	53 <sup>rd</sup> percentile
Black students	81 <sup>st</sup> percentile

### SAC HIGH MISSION STATEMENT

To graduate self-motivated, industrious and critical thinking leaders who are committed to serving others, passionate about lifelong learning and prepared to earn a degree from a four-year college.



"I was able to gain confidence in myself"

**INTERVIEW INSIGHTS:**

CCSA interviews help illuminate why Sac Charter High School produces consistently high college-going rates.

Watch a video featuring a student at the school and a Sac High educator.

[Watch Now](#)



# Pasadena Rosebud Academy Charter School

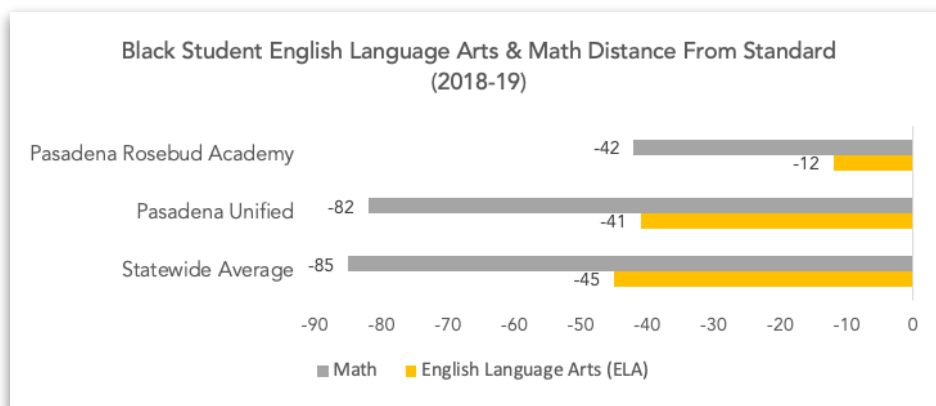
## Where Young Minds Blossom

**S**tarting from humble beginnings, [Pasadena Rosebud Academy Charter School](#) opened in 2007 serving only a handful of students in Altadena, California — a community directly north of the city of Pasadena. The community’s connection to the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena inspired the school’s name. Rosebud Academy has grown to serve nearly 200 students in elementary and middle school grades since its inception almost 15 years ago, offering a high-quality education to a community made-up of mostly low-income families of color.



Students at Rosebud are expected to look beyond the four walls of the classroom, living into the school’s vision “to develop well rounded critical thinkers, who will impact the world.” Parents or guardians of Rosebud Academy students are also encouraged to engage with their child’s learning, with an emphasis on reading — both together and supporting the child’s reading independently. Rosebud Academy’s emphasis on social and emotional learning, a cornerstone of the school’s educational philosophy, has helped to support students during the pandemic.

Within the Pasadena Unified School District, approximately 12 percent of students are Black, compared to Rosebud Academy’s 58 percent, clearly illustrating the school’s desire to serve this population of students. The school is in the top six of all public schools for Black students in the district,

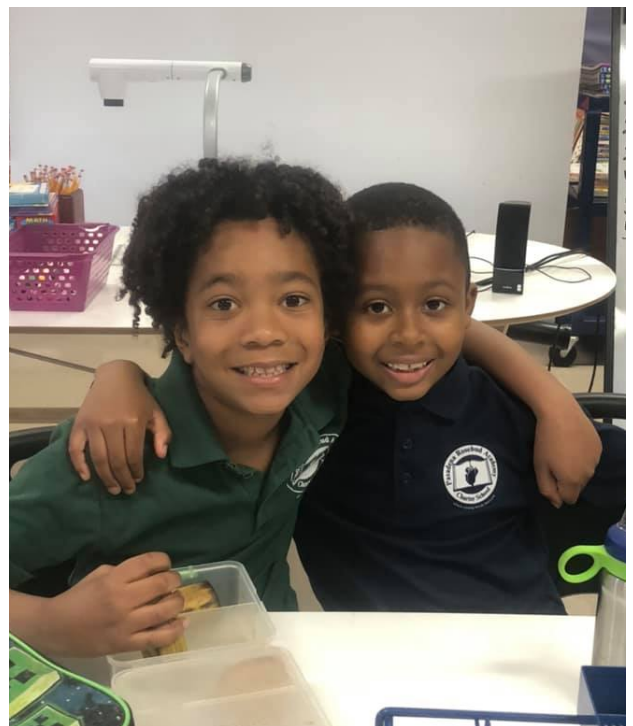


and is the highest performing charter for Black students. In the most recent year of state testing, Black students in Pasadena Unified performed similarly to the state average for Black students, scoring 41 points below the met standard in English Language Arts, and 82 points below the met standard in Math. At Rosebud, the opportunity gap is closing, with Black students performing closer to the met standard in both subjects than the state average. While there is still work to be done to ensure students are consistently meeting academic standards in ELA and Math, the performance differences are clear.

According to educational leaders at the school, there are **three key factors** contributing to the schools' sustained success:

### STRONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS FOCUS

According to Rosebud Academy's Director Shawn Blumfield, "reading is the foundation to all other learning" and if students are strong readers, they will have the critical thinking skills that will allow them to find success in all other content subject areas. As mentioned, parents or guardians are expected to be active participants in the learning process, and the school challenges them to become reading partners alongside their children in order to create a positive cycle of academic success that will be passed on from generation to generation. Reading Logs are an essential part of holding students and parents accountable at the charter school. Students are required to read nightly along with their parents or guardians and must complete the log to show progress made.



### CULTURALLY RELEVANT INSTRUCTION

Rosebud Academy teachers and staff are committed to the belief that diversity makes their school, community, state and nation strong. As such, the school intentionally and meaningfully heightens awareness of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds that make the country what it is today. Educational leaders at the school say cultural awareness begins by understanding culture, and that cultural awareness is essential to promoting racial harmony. As students learn about cultural differences, they celebrate commonalities and embrace life together, becoming more tolerant and respectful of themselves and others.



## EDUCATORS OF COLOR

Rosebud Brumfield – a Black charter school leader – manages a team of eight teachers of color at the school. The school’s intentional practice of hiring teachers of color aligns with a growing body of research that finds educators of color provide benefits to all students, especially to Black and Latinx students. According to a 2018 study released by the Learning Policy Institute entitled [Diversifying the Teaching Profession](#), teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color, resulting in improved reading and mathematics test scores, improved graduation rates, and increased aspirations to attend college. That is certainly the case at Rosebud Academy.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Pasadena Rosebud Academy

Students served	194
Percent Black	58%
Percent <a href="#">low-income</a>	67%
Numbers of years open	14
State test performance:	
All students	52 <sup>nd</sup> percentile
Black students	75 <sup>th</sup> percentile

### ROSEBUD ACADEMY’S MISSION STATEMENT

To provide an exceptional educational experience through uncompromisingly high expectations and standards for all students, staff, and parents in Pasadena and surrounding areas. Teachers use programs and strategies that stimulate all senses and engage the whole child. We challenge all children to grow intellectually, socially, and



"It's important to have a good education to make it far in life!"

**INTERVIEW INSIGHTS:**

CCSA interviews help illuminate why Pasadena Rosebud Academy enables a culture of belonging and feeling proud.

Watch a video featuring a student at the school and a Rosebud Academy educator.

[Watch Now](#)



## CONCLUSION

**E**ach of these schools in this report has at least one thing in common: Their desire to graduate high-performing students who hold high-expectations for themselves and their futures. In a year where teachers, students and families have faced unprecedented challenges and uncertainty, it is even more important that California’s public schools continue to fight for equity for all students, pushing to close opportunity gaps and expand access to educational opportunities.

CCSA is committed to advancing educational opportunities for all students, through our support of exceptional schools like those highlighted in *Serving Black Students With Excellence: California Charter Schools Working to Close Opportunity Gaps*. Schools like Wilder’s Preparatory Academy, Pasadena Rosebud Academy, and Sacramento Charter High School are leading the way in the effort to close opportunity gaps for Black students. There are many lessons to be learned and shared from the successes of their students.

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CCSA's mission is to meet parent, educator, and community need for great public school options by supporting and advocating for high quality non-profit charter schools and sharing their success throughout California.

*Our Mission Commits Us to Equity, Opportunity and Access.*

As part of California's public school family, CCSA embraces its history of being an advocacy organization advancing issues of social justice and civil rights. Our members and the teachers and administrators who serve in their schools value diversity in culture, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, and perspective. While we seek to grow a movement that serves all students, all families, and all communities, we work with a special spirit of urgency to provide our most historically underserved and vulnerable students with the high quality public education they deserve. We join in common cause with those fighting both inside and outside of public education for greater equity, opportunity, and access for all.

[ccsa.org](http://ccsa.org)