

Dispelling the Myths: Providing Opportunity for All Through ACA 5 K-12 Education Issues May 2020

Proposition 209 and affirmative action are hot-button issues in California. After decades of intense debate about affirmative action or race-conscious policies, it can be challenging to separate fact from fiction. As you consider your vote on ACA 5, we hope the clarity below about commonly-held myths will be helpful. We also hope that California legislators and the Governor will allow voters to decide whether we want to overturn the outdated ban on affirmative action.

Myth #1: California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) addresses funding the needs of students of color.

The Facts: LCFF provides much needed additional funding (i.e., through supplemental and concentration grants) to serve English learners, foster youth, and low-income students. However, California’s inability to implement race-conscious funding leaves Local Education Agencies (LEAs) without the resources needed to support students facing some of the most severe opportunity and achievement gaps. For example, African American students are reported as the lowest-performing racial/ethnic subgroup on standardized assessments in California.ⁱ Yet, approximately 90,000 African American students do not generate additional funds to meet their unique needs.ⁱⁱ

Myth #2: Schools can use their LCFF supplemental and concentration grant funds to support students based on race-conscious needs.

The Facts: The LCFF formula does not allow LEAs to spend additional dollars on specific racial student groups. The legislature did not designate students of color to generate or receive these funds due to Prop 209’s limitations. However, there is a significant need to include racial groups in the LCFF formula because some students have unique and increased needs based on race alone. One clear example of these racial disparities is K-12 student performance on Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessments. As indicated in *Figure 1*, 57 percent of low-income Asian students met math standards, surpassing non low-income Black (33 percent), Native American (39 percent), and Latinx (41 percent) students. We see similar trends in English language arts results. (*Figure 2*.) Repealing Proposition 209 would give the legislature the ability to make the LCFF formula race-conscious, allowing LEAs to target additional dollars towards needs specific to students of color.

Myth #3: The racial or ethnic background of teachers doesn’t matter for student learning or success.

The Facts: California’s public-school children and their teachers look very different. Approximately 77 percent of the students in public schools are students of color, while 65 percent of teachers are White.ⁱⁱⁱ Students of all races report forming more reliable connections and learning better when they have teachers of color.^{iv} Importantly, students of color with same-race teachers earn higher GPAs, spend more time on homework, and have higher expectations for themselves attending college.^v Low-income Black students in elementary school experience some of the most significant benefit. For example, after having a single Black teacher in grades K-3rd, these students are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college.^{vi}

Myth #4: Reinstating affirmative action in employment practices will hurt experienced White teachers.

The Facts: California’s teacher tenure and seniority policies guide educator layoff practices. Reinstating affirmative action will provide an opportunity to diversify the educator pipeline moving forward, but will in no way affect the seniority protections of already-employed teachers.^{vii} Repealing Prop 209 would lift limits on using race-conscious strategies to recruit and retain Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American teachers. This includes state-



funded scholarships to recruit people of color to enroll in credentialing programs and targeted funding for programs to retain teachers of color, such as race-based affinity groups and mentoring.^{viii}

*These answers have been truncated for readability. To access full answers and additional information contact Manny Rodriguez (mrodriguez@edtrustwest.org) or Yvonne Muñoz (ymunoz@edtrustwest.org)