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# EQUITY ALLIANCE AT ASU NEWS RELEASE

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## FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES FOR CALIFORNIA STUDENTS RISE SLIGHTLY

Tempe, AZ -- Recently released figures from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) show an improvement in California's four-year graduation rate from 70.7% in the 2006-2007 school year to 71.2% for the 2007-2008 school year for all groups. California's graduation rate is lower than the national average of 74.9%. Examination of individual racial/ethnic groups shows some surprising variations. California's American Indian/Alaska Native students are the only group graduating at higher rates than the national average, while Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, and White students are graduating at lower rates than national averages.

2007-2008 Freshman 4 Yr Grad Rate						
	All Groups	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White
California	71.2	65.3	91.1	61.2	57.4	80.1
National Average	74.9	64.2	91.4	63.5	61.5	81

In the current climate of high-stakes accountability and tension over group achievement disparities, what does this mean? [U.S. Census data](#) on student demographics shows that in 2000, 1% of California students were identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, 11% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 42% as Hispanic, 9% as Black, and 37% as White. When compared to the national average for All Groups, California's Asian/Pacific Islander and White students are graduating at higher rates, but American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Black students are graduating at lower rates. California's groups with the lowest graduation rates are Black and Hispanic students.

**How have recent state leadership efforts addressed these disparities?** In 2007, California's Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell created the [Closing the Achievement Gap](#) initiative to address achievement disparities between student groups. The initiative has included a state-wide summit, a 2008 report, and a website filled with resources for educators. In order to be effective, teachers must work in school environments that hold high expectations for all students and engage in culturally responsive practices. The [California Professional Standards for Education Leaders](#) identify the features of an effective, collaborative, and responsive principal in order to create schools where all students can be successful. In addition, the California Department of Education is engaged in a partnership with the [Equity Alliance at ASU](#) to create online professional learning in culturally responsive classroom practices for all California teachers.

As we discussed on our recent [Equity Matters: Exploring Differences in Achievement](#), differences in academic outcomes between student groups are complex and unyielding. **California's efforts to address academic disparities for student groups demonstrate a long-term, systemic commitment to improvement to provide consistent and equitable education for all students.**