

The Impact of Second Language Learners from Low Income Families on Elementary School Education in Salinas



Summary:

The two largest elementary school districts in Salinas, California are the Alisal Union Elementary School District (12 Schools, not including the Oasis Charter Public School) and the Salinas City Elementary School District (14 Schools). The third Elementary School District in Salinas is the Santa Rita Union School District, which includes four (4) elementary schools and two (2) middle schools. In the “2016 Monterey County Education Report to the Community” the enrollments in these districts are:

Alisal Union Elementary School District	9,292
Salinas City Elementary School District	8,752
Santa Rita Union Elementary District	<u>3,425</u>
Total	<u>21,469</u>

These enrollment counts may vary during the year because of transfers in and out and dropouts.

In these three districts, the concentration of students who are learning English as a Second

Language, and who come from families with low incomes, is higher than the average in the State of California. Test scores for the Salinas Elementary Schools are lower than the state-wide averages in California. One middle school's estimate was that 33% of students entering the seventh grade had not acquired English Language Proficiency. Another middle school placed the estimate at 42%. The high numbers of English Language Learners (ELL), their below average test scores and the number of ELL students who entered middle schools without having acquired English Language Proficiency, prompted the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury (MCCGJ) to focus its study on the three Elementary School Districts in Salinas, and the effect the demographics of the student population has on academic achievement. The three Elementary School Districts in Salinas were chosen because they provided a relatively large sample of ELL students who are receiving free or subsidized meals, based on family income. In addition, the elementary schools are where many of the ELL students first study English.

Background:

Two of the stated goals of the State of California Department of Education are to:

“Ensure that English learners acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible and attain parity with native speakers of English, Ensure that English learners, within a reasonable period, achieve the same rigorous grade level academic standards that are expected of all students.”¹

It was also stated that “Meeting these two goals will help close the achievement gap that separates English learners from their native English-speaking peers.” With the large population of ELL students in California, the emphasis on those students gaining English Language Proficiency is appropriate, but the goals stated are vague and fail to provide a

¹ California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2015-2016

measurable standard to which actual performance could be compared. In addition, a combination of conditions in Salinas and other parts of Monterey County present obstacles to “rapid and effective” attainment of “parity with native speakers of English.”²

Obstacles to Academic Achievement in the Salinas Elementary Schools:

1. A student population that includes a higher percentage of students who come from low income families, where Spanish is the primary spoken language in their homes, than in the rest of California
2. The effects of the demographics on English and math test scores
3. Inadequate funding for the Salinas Elementary School Districts
4. A high cost of living in Salinas and low starting salaries for elementary school teachers
5. A shortage of teachers, especially those who are bilingual
6. Larger class sizes than was once the California standard of 20 students per teacher in kindergarten through third grade classes.³

Student Demographics⁴

	Monterey		Percentage
<u>Student Subgroup</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>Point Difference</u>
English Learners	41%	22%	19%
Economically Disadvantaged ⁵	69%	59%	10%
Migrant Students	5%	1%	4%

See Appendix 1 at the end of this report for a more complete comparison of the statistics for the

² California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2015-2016

³ California Department of Education, Cal Ed Facts, 1996 California Senate Bill 1777, Facts about English learners

⁴ California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2015-2016

⁵ Based on the Free or Assisted Lunch Program participation

Salinas Elementary School population compared to the averages for three other Monterey County School districts, for all of Monterey County School Districts, and for the State of California.

Inadequate Funding for Salinas Elementary School Districts

According to statistics in the “2016 Monterey County Education Report to the Community,” the K - 12 spending per student was \$10,291 in California and \$12,252 in the rest of the United States. The California Department of Education Report contains the 2016 - 2017 Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) targets for California K - 12 School Districts and Charter Schools. The formula is based on the average daily attendance (ADA) of students. ADA, not total enrollment, is used in the calculation because a percentage of the funding received by the School Districts is based on ADA.⁶ This analysis highlights the funding for different school districts and different communities. In Monterey County, the Carmel and Pacific Grove School Districts are expected to spend \$19,695 and \$13,715 per ADA, respectively. The percentages of second language students from low income homes is lower in those two School Districts than in the Salinas Elementary Districts. The Alisal Union Elementary School District, Salinas City Elementary School District and the Santa Rita Union School District are expected to spend \$9,492, \$10,426, and \$8,515 per ADA respectively.

The High Cost of Living in Salinas

The cost of living in Salinas is 5.5% lower than the California average, but 23.9 % higher than the national average. Additionally, the index for housing is 57% above the national average. The median home price estimates for Salinas by two real estate agencies are \$421,000 and \$417,100. The Committee’s survey of local rental property websites showed a price range of approximately \$1,200 to \$2,500 for one-bedroom apartments and a minimum of \$1,700 for

⁶ California Department of Education, Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) enacted in 2013-14

two-bedroom apartments.

The Low Salaries and Shortage of Elementary School Teachers

The salaries of teachers in Salinas are based on a 180 – 188 day school year, which does not provide an annual income that is adequate for someone living in Monterey County. The projected 2016 – 2017 starting salaries for Salinas elementary school teachers with a Bachelor’s degree plus 30 hours of graduate credit education (BA plus 30) are:

Alisal Unified School District	\$47,108
Salinas City Elementary School District	\$45,686
Santa Rita Unified School District	\$44,717 ⁷

The 2016 median household income in Salinas was \$63,500.⁸ Educators, who were interviewed, stated that this makes it difficult to recruit and retain qualified teachers, especially those who are bilingual and have training in teaching ELL students. These conditions were reported to cause larger class sizes and employment of marginally qualified teachers who require greater guidance and supervision.

Larger Classes Than Were Mandated in 1996*

In 1996 Senate Bill 1777 established a maximum of twenty students per teacher from Kindergarten through grade three (K – 3). This standard is no longer in force. In 2014 – 2015 the average class size in the Salinas Elementary School Districts ranged from 25.8 to 28.3 students per teacher.⁹

There is a large body of reputable research stating that larger class sizes, and especially in kindergarten through third grade, has a negative impact on student’s academic achievement.

The Center for Public Education made that case in the following quotation:

⁷ The Three District Board Certificated Salary Schedules

⁸ City of Salinas Community Development Department Housing Division

⁹ Senate Bill 1777, Chapter 163, and California Education Code Sections 52130-52128.5T

- “Smaller classes in the early grades (K - 3) can boost student academic achievement; A class size of no more than 18 students per teacher is required to produce the greatest benefits;
- A program spanning grades K - 3 will produce more benefits than a program that reaches students in only one or two of the primary grades;
- Minority and low-income students show even greater gains when placed in small classes in the primary grades; and low-income students show even greater gains when placed in small classes in the primary grades;
- The experience and preparation of teachers is a critical factor in the success or failure of class size reduction programs;
- Reducing class size will have little effect without enough classrooms and well-qualified teachers; and
- Supports, such as professional development for teachers and a rigorous curriculum, enhance the effect of reduced class size on academic achievement.”¹⁰

*Please refer to Appendix 7 at the end of this report for statistics on class sizes in Monterey County.

Investigative Methodology:

The MCCGJ conducted interviews with educators in the Salinas School Districts, with a major focus on the elementary school districts. Other individuals with expertise in education, but who are not directly involved in elementary school education, were also interviewed. Information gained from each interview was cross checked with other interviews and with other sources to verify its reliability. The websites of the California Department of Education, the Monterey

¹⁰ The Center for Public Education, an initiative of the National School Boards Association

County Office of Education, the School Districts and a variety of articles and publications on second language learners were studied. Initially, brief studies were made of:

1. The practicality of consolidating Salinas School Districts
2. The pros and cons of year-round school years
3. The innovative K - 3 Plus Summer program that is being implemented by the Albuquerque, New Mexico Public Schools

The Albuquerque schools were of interest because, like the Salinas Elementary School Districts, they have a significant population of English Language Learners. As the MCCGJ's research and interviews progressed, the focus was more and more on the underlying causes of the below average test scores of the students, the shortage of qualified teachers, and the pace at which the ELL progressed toward English Language Proficiency. The final step in the interview process was to meet with personnel in the Finance and Business Office in the Monterey County Office of Education to review the 2015 - 2016 revenue and expense data. Attention was given to the percentage of the expenses that were directly related to the students, and classroom activity and the percentage that was spent for administration and overhead. The Local Area Funding Formula (LAFF), that provides the supplemental funding for several categories of student needs, and the Fund 3 - Cafeteria Fund, that supports the Free & Reduced Meal Plan, were also reviewed.

Discussion:

The background section of this report has laid out the major obstacles to academic achievement that are faced by the Salinas Elementary Schools. The following are obstacles that are outside the control of the educators who were interviewed, and are also beyond the scope of a MCCGJ study:

- The demographics of the student population in Salinas

- A large proportion of the student population who come from low income homes where Spanish is often the predominant language
- The inadequate funding of the schools
- The high cost of living in Salinas
- The low salaries for new teachers relative to the cost of living
- The shortage of teachers

Narrowing the focus of the report to the three Elementary School Districts in Salinas and gaining an understanding of the constraints under which the Districts are operating made clear what changes or improvements could and should be made. Several of the individuals who were interviewed stated that there was limited coordination and cooperation between the three Districts and between the elementary, middle and high schools. It was also reported that there is not a formal system in place to track and measure the pace at which ELL students achieve English Language Proficiency.

Facts:

1. The Salinas elementary schools have a high percentage of ELL students, many of whom come from low income families who speak primarily Spanish in their home.
2. The schools with these demographics generally have lower English and math test scores than schools with a higher percentage of students who are native English speakers.
3. The percentage of the ELL students who finish sixth grade in the Salinas elementary schools without having attained English proficiency was reported as ranging between 33% and 42%.
4. The stated goals of the California State Board of Education (CSBE) contain vague wording like “as rapidly and effectively as possible” and “within a reasonable period.”

5. The stated goals of the CSBE do not provide a quantifiable standard to which actual results can be compared.
6. Research and interviews conducted by the MCCGJ did not reveal quantifiable goals for the attainment of English proficiency by students in the Salinas Elementary School Districts.
7. The amount spent per student Average Daily Attendance (ADA) in Salinas schools is less than the national average and the averages for the State of California, and the cities of Carmel and Pacific Grove.
8. Salaries for beginning teachers with a bachelor's degree are lower in Salinas than the rest of Monterey County and California.
9. There is a shortage of bilingual and qualified ELL teachers in Salinas and in California.
10. The average class size in Salinas elementary schools is larger than Carmel, Pacific Grove, the State of California and the rest of the United States.
11. There is an insufficient number of teachers available to reduce the classroom overcrowding.
12. The "Professional Teacher Pathway Program" of California State University (CSUMB) and Hartnell College in South Monterey County is aimed at alleviating the teacher shortage.
13. The "Professional Teacher Pathway Program" currently includes about 30 students.
14. CSUMB and Hartnell are collaborating on an additional program for prospective teachers that already has approximately 120 students enrolled and has the intention of increasing its enrollment.
15. There is no uniform ELL curriculum among the Salinas elementary schools.

Findings:

- F 1. Until some of the obstacles to academic achievement are addressed, lack of improvements in the ELL students' academic performance will continue.
- F 2. The three elementary school districts in Salinas are not meeting statewide averages for English and math test scores.
- F 3. The K - 3 class sizes exceed the 20 students per teacher that was mandated by the California Department of Education in 1996.
- F 4. The general goals for the progress of ELL students set by the California Department of Education for teaching ELL students are not specific or quantifiable, and do not provide a standard against which actual results could be compared.
- F 5. It is unlikely that the low amount of funding per student ADA, the disparity between the cost of living in Salinas and starting teachers' salaries will be solved in the foreseeable future.
- F 6. The new CSUMB / Hartnell College joint venture, the "Professional Teacher Pathway," in South Monterey County provides a blueprint for similar programs and would contribute to a long- term solution to the shortage of qualified teachers in the Salinas elementary schools.
- F 7. Cooperation and coordination between the elementary school districts and the Salinas middle schools within the Salinas Union High School District is not adequate to ensure that all students entering middle schools are equally prepared.
- F 8. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) provides supplemental funding for a variety of student needs and these funds are included in the General Operating Funds of the Elementary School Districts.

- F 9. The Cafeteria Fund is a restricted Federal fund that is to be used only for the “Free and Reduced Meal Plan”, and for that reason this fund is reported separately from the General Operating Funds of the Elementary School Districts.
- F 10. Despite the obstacles to be overcome, the MCCGJ found reason to be optimistic about the long-term future of elementary school education in Salinas.
- F 11. The MCCGJ was impressed by the dedication of the individuals who were interviewed.

Recommendations:

- R 1. The Salinas elementary school districts should adopt specific goals for the number of years it should take for ELL students to achieve proficiency.
- R 2. The three Salinas school districts should establish and use a uniform ELL curriculum to ensure that all students are equally prepared when entering middle school.

Request for Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury requests a response to Findings F 2. - F 7. and Recommendations R 1. & R 2. From the following:

Monterey County Office of Education

Alisal Union Elementary School District

Salinas City Elementary School District

Santa Rita Union Elementary School District

- F 7. Salinas Union High School District

APPENDIX 1

Comparative Statistics of Several Monterey County School Districts

	Total	English Language Learners		Free/Reduced Price Meals	
<u>School District</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Alisal Union Elementary District	9,282	6,658	71.00%	8,112	87.40%
Salinas City Elementary District	9,105	4,920	52.90%	7,230	79.40%
Santa Rita Union Elementary District	3,425	1,482	43.30%	2,319	67.70%
Monterey Peninsula Unified District	10,633	3,277	30.80%	6,962	65.50%
Pacific Grove Unified School District	2,078	161	7.70%	413	20.40%
Carmel Unified School District	2,510	140	5.60%	323	12.90%
Monterey County	76,768	31,165	40.60%	52,930	68.95%
State of California	6,226,736	1,373,724	22.10%	3,665,445	58.90%

Source: California Department of Education, Data /Quest, 2015-16

APPENDIX 2

Salinas Elementary Schools Great Schools Ratings

							Free /	
							Assisted	English
Rating		Grade	Math	English	Hispanic	Anglo	Lunches	Learner
	State Wide Proficiency	4%	44%	33%	%	%	%	%
2 of 10	Salinas City Elementary Schools							
5	Mission Park Elementary	K-6	36%	27%	67%	21%	49%	14%
4	Henry Kammann Elementary	K-6	25	21	88	4	86	48
4	Laurel Wood Elementary	K-6	26	19	78	11	68	26
3	Lincoln Elementary	K-6	30	15	74	19	43	30
3	Los Padres Elementary	K-6	23	17	97	1	92	76
2	Monterey Park Elementary	K-6	18	9	88	8	80	45
2	Boronda Meadows Elementary	K-6	18	10	93	3	91	63
1	El Gabilan Elementary	K-6	13	10	96	2	91	61
1	Loma Vista Elementary	K-6	11	7	94	2	93	71
1	Natividad Elementary	K-6	14	8	95	3	95	67
1	Roosevelt Elementary	K-6	13	7	96	1	98	69
1	Sherwood Elementary	K-6	11	11	99	0	98	82
1	University Park Elementary	K-6	15	9	83	9	76	39
1	Boronda Elementary *	K-6	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(1) * Not yet rated							
3 of 10	Santa Rita Union Elementary District							
5	New Republic Elementary	K - 5	29	28	77	17	49	42
4	La Joya Elementary	K - 5	25	23	86	12	63	53
3	McKinnon Elementary	K - 5	27	27	83	8	67	55
1	Santa Rita Elementary	K - 5	17	17	85	12	67	55

Source: ©1998-2017 GreatSchools.org and Salinas School District websites

APPENDIX 2

Salinas Elementary Schools Great Schools Ratings, cont.

							Free /	
							Assisted	English
Rating		Grade	Math	English	Hispanic	Anglo	Lunches	Learner
	State Wide Proficiency		44%	33%	%	%	%	%
	Alisal Union Elementary District							
5	John Steinbeck Elementary	K - 6	32%	27%	30%	8%	59%	34%
4	Creekside Elementary	K - 6	29	22	83	5	78	50
3	Frank Paul Elementary	K - 6	25	13	91	0	91	78
3	Virginia Rocca Barton Elementary	K - 6	23	12	(1)	(1)	90	82
3	Oasis Charter Public School	K - 6	19	17	76	15	59	34
2	Alisal Community School	K - 6	15	9	99	0	91	83
2	Bardin Elementary	K - 6	16	10	96	1	85	81
2	Cesar Chavez Elementary	K - 6	16	10	88	1	89	86
2	Fremont Elementary	K - 6	16	9	88	0	84	82
2	Oscar Loya elementary	K - 6	19	15	95	1	80	72
2	DR. Martin Luther King, Jr Academy	K - 6	21	10	99	1	94	92
2	Monte Bella Elementary	K - 6	17	10	95	2	82	70
1	Jesse Sanchez Elementary	K - 6	9	8	99	1	97	94
	No rating found							

Source: ©1998-2017 GreatSchools.org and Salinas School District websites

APPENDIX 3

**2016-2017 Total Estimated Funding
in
Monterey County Elementary School Districts**

	TOTAL FUNDED	ADA	FUNDED PER ADA
Alisal Union Elementary School District	\$82,866,940	6,730.2	\$9,492
Salinas City Elementary School District	\$90,427,451	8,673.5	\$10,426
Santa Rita Union Elementary School District	\$28,058,637	3,295.3	\$8,515
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District	\$105,895,124	9,175.8	\$11,541
Pacific Grove Unified School District	\$27,383,634	1,992.2	\$13,745
Carmel Unified School District	\$47,367,079	2,405.0	\$19,695

ADA - Average Daily Attendance

Source: California Department of Education School Fiscal Services 2015 - 2016
Current Expenses Per Average daily 'attendance as of January 09, 2017

APPENDIX 4

Cost of Living for Salinas Area

Overall cost of living	23% above national average
Average overall cost of living in CA	15% above national average
Category with highest index: Housing	57% above national average
Category with lowest index: Childcare	10% below national average
Annual cost for a single adult with no children:	\$36,264
Annual cost for a married couple with one child:	\$67,821
Annual cost for a married couple with four children:	\$99,980

Source: Policy Institute, United States Department of Labor, BLS and American Community Survey

APPENDIX 5

State Department of Education Announces Status of Teacher Recruitment and Training Bills at State Capitol

SACRAMENTO—The State Department of Education announced that legislation is advancing at the state Capitol to help address a growing shortage of teachers in California.

Several bills moved forward last week as the Legislature faced a bill deadline. A Department representative spoke in favor of the legislation at a Capitol news conference earlier in the year, when legislators introduced new measures to recruit more educators and help them earn teaching credentials.

Enrollment in California's teacher preparation programs fell from more than 40,000 students during the 2008-9 school year to less than 20,000 in 2012-13. In 2014-15, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing issued 15,000 credentials, while the California Department of Education (CDE) projected the need for California schools to hire 22,000 teachers. Bills that the Department supports include SB 915. This bill re-establishes the California Center on Teaching Careers (Cal Teach) to recruit qualified individuals into the teaching profession. The program boosted teacher recruitment through outreach campaigns in the 1990s but was discontinued due to state budget cuts. SB 915 passed the Senate 28-8 and is pending in the Assembly.

Senate bill 933 would create a California Teacher Corps program that provides matching grants to local school districts to create or expand teacher residency programs. SB 933 passed the Senate 37-0 and is also pending in the Assembly. SB 62, to reinstate and improve a phased-out state program to provide student loan forgiveness to new teachers. Under the Assumption Program of Loans for Education (APLE), a new teacher would teach for four years at a school with large numbers of disadvantaged students or at a rural school. This bill was introduced last year and is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The department also supports several other bills to expand and increase funding for teacher training. Information is available at the [Legislative Information](#) Web site. In addition, those seeking more information about how to become a teacher can find it at [Teach California](#)

An excerpt from a California Department of Education News Release
Release: #16-41
Jun 8, 2016

APPENDIX 6

CSUMB and Hartnell College Teacher Credential Pathway Program EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the 2015-2016 academic year, districts across California had to fill 21,500 teaching positions, while the state issued fewer than 15,000 new teaching credentials a year. The teacher shortage affects all subjects and all grade levels, including Special Education, and is being felt across the country and in central California, in particular. This unmet need has greater urgency for districts in rural and remote parts of CSUMB's Tri-County service region (Monterey, San Benito, & Santa Cruz Counties). In Monterey County, the teacher shortage is even more acute for districts such as King City, Greenfield, Soledad, Gonzalez, North Monterey County Unified School District and other high-need districts. In San Benito County, the teacher shortage has significantly impacted districts such as Hollister Elementary and the San Benito High School District. In Santa Cruz County, the teacher shortage has most adversely impacted Pajaro Valley Unified School District. To formally confirm the dire needs, CSUMB conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in the Spring 2016 term that confirmed that the teacher shortage is even more acute in rural, high poverty, and remote regions of CSUMB's Tri-County service area. To address the looming teacher shortage in our region, CSUMB is committed to partnering with local community colleges to create seamless career pathways for those interested in pursuing teaching as a career. The first such effort was collaboratively developed with Hartnell College to implement a 2+2+1(2) teacher credential pathway program in King City. King City was selected as the location due to the fact that Hartnell College already has facilities within the community. Specifically, the project offers south Monterey county residents the opportunity to earn a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies (traditional undergraduate degree for those interested in becoming elementary and special education teachers) as a "grow our own" effort to address the critical teacher shortage in the region. The program design involves the implementation of a cohort model in which students complete the BA degree and the post baccalaureate credential program within a facility close to their community. In our collaborative efforts in south Monterey County, Hartnell College offers the first two years of the Elementary Education Associate of Arts degree, which is a fully articulated program with CSUMB's Liberal Studies (LS) major. Upon completion of the AA degree, students have guaranteed admission to CSUMB to complete the second two years of the LS BA degree. Graduates will continue on to complete a post baccalaureate teaching credential in Elementary or Special Education. It is important to note that the program is flexible and allows for multiple opportunities for interested participants to "on-ramp" onto the cohort depending on the academic stage that the prospective candidates find themselves at the time they join the pathway. Elements that are essential to the success of CSUMB's collaborative teacher pathway projects include the following: (a) a fully articulated transfer agreement between CSUMB and a partner community college, (b) a commitment from the partner community college and CSUMB to fully offer the teacher pathway curriculum at a site that is convenient for program participants, (c) a commitment from the partner community college and CSUMB to fully offer all program courses at a time and in a schedule that is accessible for program participants, (d) a commitment from partner K-12 districts and county offices of education to support the project in recruitment and program delivery, and (e) a shared commitment from all participating agencies to seek external funding to support participants in the teacher pathway project to ensure that all barriers are removed.

Source: CSUMB and Hartnell websites

APPENDIX 7

2014 – 2015 Class Sizes in Monterey County¹¹

School District	Average Ratio of Students per Teacher
Alisal Union Elementary Schools	26.9 / 1
Salinas City Elementary Schools	25.8 / 1
Santa Rita Union Elementary Schools	28.3 / 1
Monterey Peninsula Unified District	23.9 / 1
Pacific Grove Unified School District	22.6 / 1
Carmel Unified School District	22.4 / 1
California	22.0 / 1
The Rest of the United States	15.4 / 1

California ranks 51st in the nation and the Salinas Elementary School Districts lag behind the California average.

¹¹ Source: 2016-2016 Monterey County Office of Education & Ed Data.
The 2015-2016 data was not yet available at this site

