The Opportunity Gap for Children Across Contra Costa County

While many kids in Contra Costa County are thriving, others lack basic health, education, and financial supports they need for well-being and long-term success. Since countywide statistics can mask such issues, regional data is useful for highlighting disparities and targeting resources. It’s especially critical to provide supports to those who are born into structural inequities such as kids of color, children living in poverty, kids in foster care, and dual-language learners. The statistics below show that some children in the county have far fewer opportunities to succeed than others.¹

### Demographic Overview

**Contra Costa**
- 260,950 kids
- 40%
- Black
- 14%
- Asian
- 34%
- Latino
- 13%
- White
- 13%
- Other²
- 9%
- 2+ Races

**West**
- 54,938 kids
- Black
- 14%
- Asian
- 14%
- Latino
- 13%
- White
- 13%
- Other²
- 12%
- 2+ Races

**Central**
- 108,819 kids
- Black
- 22%
- Asian
- 56%
- Latino
- 13%
- White
- 7%
- Other²
- 12%
- 2+ Races

**East**
- 96,431 kids
- Black
- 24%
- Asian
- 22%
- Latino
- 15%
- White
- 13%
- Other²
- 13%
- 2+ Races

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### Child poverty varies widely across the county.

**Low-income students**

Students who are eligible for free & reduced-price meals, with family annual income under $46,500.³

- **Contra Costa**: 40%
- **West**: 72%
- **Central**: 21%
- **East**: 54%

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### Without additional supports, poverty can limit kids’ opportunities.⁶

Childhood poverty is linked to:
- worse academic outcomes
- food insecurity
- toxic stress

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### Too many kids are entering school with tooth decay, especially in West and East county.

Percent of kindergarteners with reported tooth decay.⁷

- **Contra Costa**: 18%
- **West**: 25%
- **Central**: 13%
- **East**: 25%

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Children with untreated oral health problems are at risk for:
- increased absences
- lower grades
- low self-esteem
- trouble sleeping
- difficulty eating
- weakened immune system

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#CloseTheGapCCC
Children are more likely to suffer from uncontrolled asthma when it is difficult to access preventive health care. This means that more kids visit the emergency room for chronic asthma. Poor air quality and other factors also contribute to childhood asthma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Average number of children's ER Visits for asthma, 2009-16 per 10,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children with regular health care are more likely to:  
- do better in school and miss fewer days  
- graduate from high school and go to college  
- earn more money as adults  
- have fewer emergency room and hospital visits as adults

Too many kindergarteners are not ready for school, particularly in some districts. Children who are behind when they start kindergarten may fall further and further behind (e.g., see 3rd grade reading, below).²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent of children not ready to start school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburg</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Diablo</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioch</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Ramon</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Too many 3rd-graders are reading below grade level, especially in West and East County. 3rd-grade reading is linked to 9th-grade outcomes, high school graduation, and college enrollment rates. This indicator offers an opportunity for targeted interventions with at-risk students while they are still in elementary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>The percent of 3rd-graders reading below grade level reflects large regional disparities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economically disadvantaged 3rd-graders are 3x more likely than non-disadvantaged 3rd-graders to read below grade level.

Racial disparities are enormous. Black (49%), Latino (43%), & Pacific Islander (38%) 3rd-graders are 2-3x more likely to read below grade level than their White (16%) peers across the county.

Sources