



# Student Transit Pass Program

## 2023-2024 School Year



Program Evaluation

July 2025

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# Introduction

# Goals and Metrics

## Goal



**Reduce Barriers**  
to transportation  
access to and from  
schools



**Improve**  
**Transportation Options**  
for Alameda County's middle  
and high school students



**Build Support**  
for transit in  
Alameda County



**Implement**  
**Cost-Effective**  
**Program**

## Metric



**Participation**  
**Rate**



**Frequency**  
of **Pass**  
**Usage**



**Transit**  
**Ridership**  
and  
**Capacity**



**Program**  
**Costs**

# Evaluation Approach

- Each year, we assess how well the **Student Transit Pass Program** is achieving its four main goals, as outlined at the program's inception.
- This evaluation covers the 2023-2024 school year (August 2023 through July 2024).
- We analyze data from partner transit agencies on student **participation** and **pass usage** (i.e., bus boardings), broken down by school district. This helps us understand program performance and calculate **program costs**.
- Our approach to understanding **transit ridership** has evolved over time:
  - **Before 2020:** We used a primarily quantitative approach, focusing on ridership counts and capacity.
  - **Since 2020:** We've added a qualitative layer by interviewing representatives from each participating transit agency to gain deeper insights.

# Two Program Models



## FREE / UNIVERSAL (69 schools)

Offered in school districts where 75% or more of students are eligible for California's Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FRPM). All students enrolled in participating schools are eligible for the STPP.\*



## MEANS-BASED (78 schools)

Students who qualify for California's Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FRPM) are eligible for the STPP.

# Participating School Districts in SY 2023-24

Program Model	School District	Transit Operators	New Schools in 2023-24SY	Participating Schools	Eligible Students
Universal	Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE)	AC Transit	+4	8	1,011
	Emery Unified (EUSD)	AC Transit	--	2	303
	Livermore Valley Joint Unified (LVJUSD)	LAVTA	--	9	6,805
	Oakland Unified (OUSD)	AC Transit	+6	48	21,165
	State Special Schools*	AC Transit	+2	2	175
Means-Based	Albany Unified (Albany USD)*	AC Transit	+1	1	9
	Alameda Unified (Alameda USD)	AC Transit	--	7	1,959
	Berkeley Unified (BUSD)	AC Transit	--	5	1,364
	Castro Valley Unified (CVUSD)	AC Transit	--	4	2,086
	Dublin Unified (DUSD)	LAVTA	+1	7	552
	Fremont Unified (FUSD)	AC Transit	-	14	4,282
	Hayward Unified (HUSD)	AC Transit	+2	11	6,455
	New Haven Unified (NHUSD)	AC Transit Union City Transit	--	5	3,006
	Newark Unified (NUSD)	AC Transit	--	4	1,192
	Piedmont Unified (Piedmont USD)*	AC Transit	+3	3	57
	Pleasanton Unified (Pleasanton USD)	LAVTA	--	6	710
	San Leandro Unified (SLUSD)	AC Transit	--	4	3,256
	San Lorenzo Unified (SLZUSD)	AC Transit	--	7	3,528
	<b>Totals</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>57,915</b>

\* District is new to the program this year. Full list of all participating schools in Appendix.

# Program Year Context: 2023-24

- **Program Growth**

- Expanded to 3 new districts and 19 additional schools (6 from new districts).
- Eligibility grew by 8,086 students, a 16% increase from 2022-23.
- Participation rate rose from 44% to 53% of eligible students, an increase of 8,861 participants.

- **Transit Agencies**

- AC Transit and LAVTA/Wheels added supplemental service on key lines to support student ridership.
- Union City removed some supplemental service as existing routes met demand.
- Overall system ridership continued to recover but stayed below pre-pandemic levels (75-95%).

- **Program Administration**

- No major changes in consultant team structure or operations.
- Several in-person outreach events were held in coordination with transit agency partners, the first since the pandemic.
- Site administrator engagement continued to vary, impacting participation levels.
- Two new districts (State Special Schools and Albany USD) were added in the 2023-24 SY but had no sign-ups, so they are excluded from subsequent slides.
- There are potential challenges with the accuracy of Pleasanton data, but it is included in this report for information.



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# Participation Rate

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# Overview of Participation

- The **participation rate** is the percentage of eligible students who sign up for a transit pass. Any student who signs up is considered a participant, regardless of usage.
- Participation rates are calculated at the end of the school year.

# Countywide Participation

- **Countywide Participant Numbers**

- **Total Enrollment:** As of July 2024, **30,625 students** were enrolled in the program, out of 57,915 eligible students.
- **Year-over-Year Change:** Enrollment increased by **8,861 students**, a **41%** jump from the 2022-23 school year.

- **Countywide Participation Rate**

- **Overall Rate:** **53% of eligible students** in the county are enrolled in the program.
- **Year-over-Year Change:** Countywide participation rose by **9%** compared to 2022-23.

# Participation Across School Districts

- **District-Level Participation Numbers**

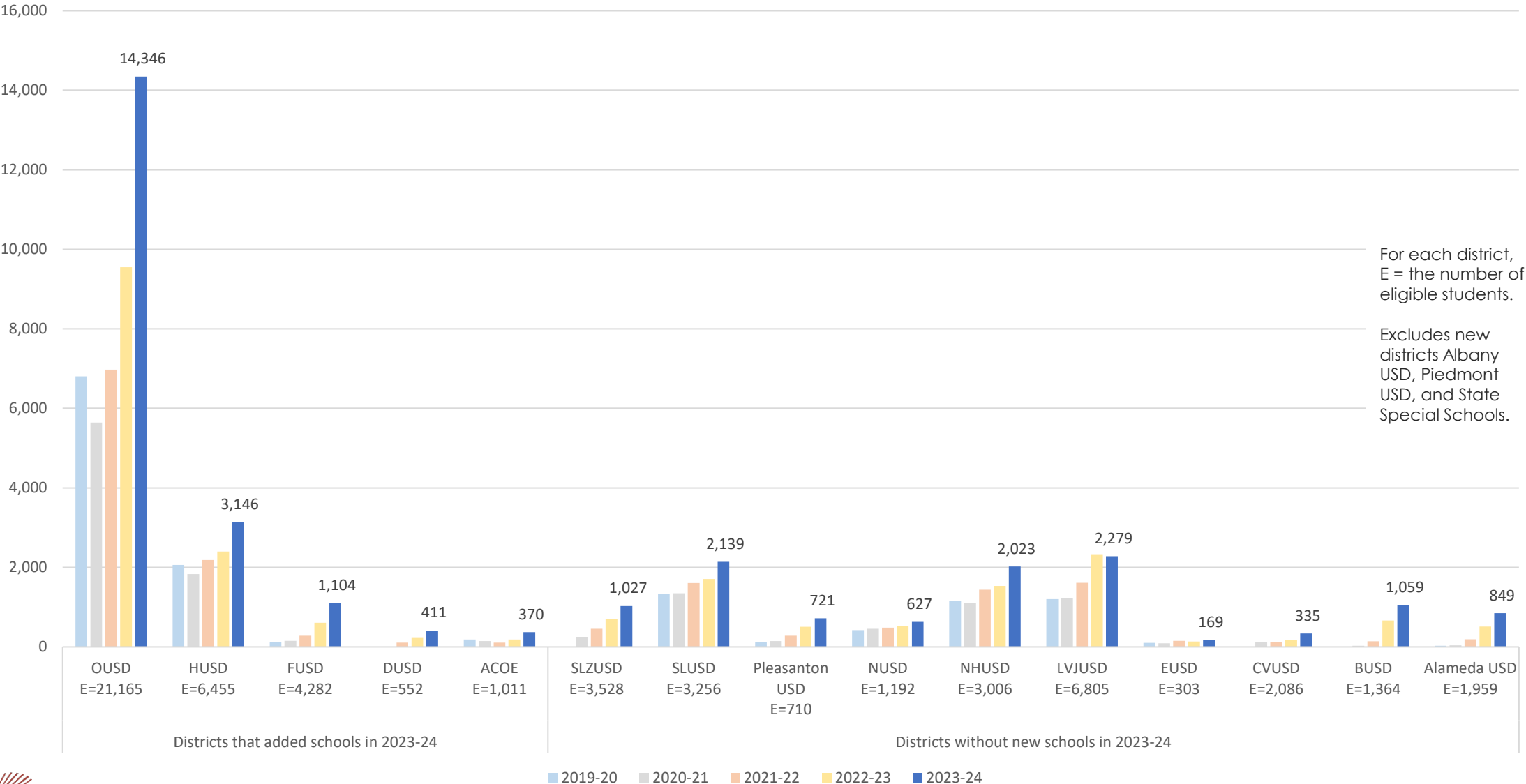
- **Highest Number of Participants:** Oakland USD (14,346 students)
- **Highest Absolute Growth in Participation:** Oakland USD (+4,797), Hayward USD (+750), Fremont USD (+499)
- **Highest Relative Growth in Participation**<sup>1</sup>: Alameda County Office of Education (+98%), Castro Valley USD (+83%), Fremont USD (+83%)

- **District-Level Participation Rates**

- **Highest Participation Rates:** Pleasanton USD (100%), Berkeley USD (78%), and Dublin USD (75%)

<sup>1</sup> Relative growth in participation is the percent increase from last year's participation numbers to this year's participation numbers.

# Participation by School District and Program Year

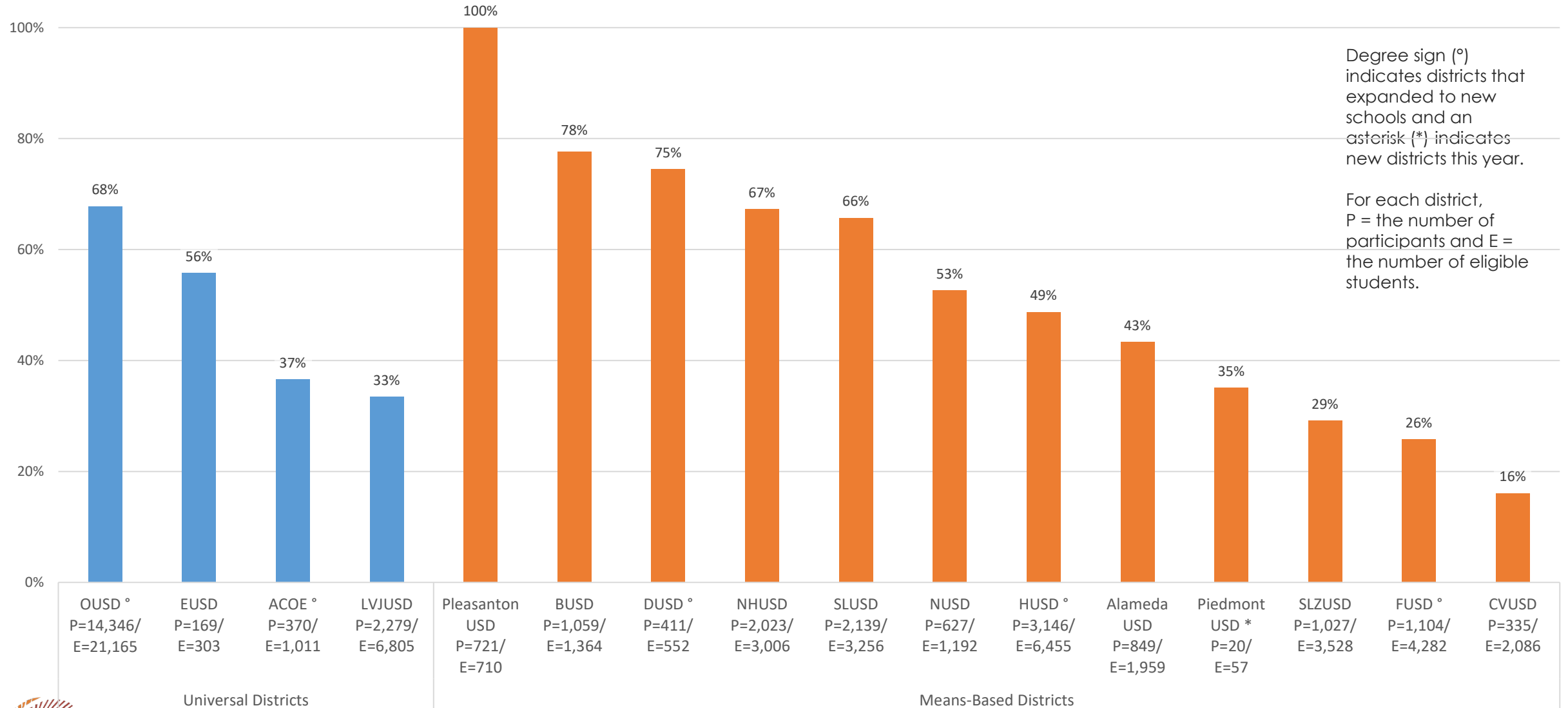


# Participation Across Program Models

- Participation rates vary widely across both **universal** and **means-based districts**, with no clear pattern—each model includes high- and low-participation districts<sup>1</sup>:
  - **Universal Districts:** Participation rates ranged from 33% (Livermore Valley JUSD) to 68% (Oakland USD), with an average rate of 58%.
  - **Means-Based Districts:** Participation rates ranged from 16% (Castro Valley USD) to 100% (Pleasanton USD), with an average rate of 47%.
  - **Universal districts** appear to have an 11% higher participation rate than **means-based districts**, largely driven by the number of participants in Oakland USD.
- The program model **does not** appear to impact whether or how much participation rates change from year to year.

<sup>1</sup> Averages exclude new districts (State Special Schools and Albany USD) due to no sign-ups.

## 2023-24 Participation Rates by School District and Program Model



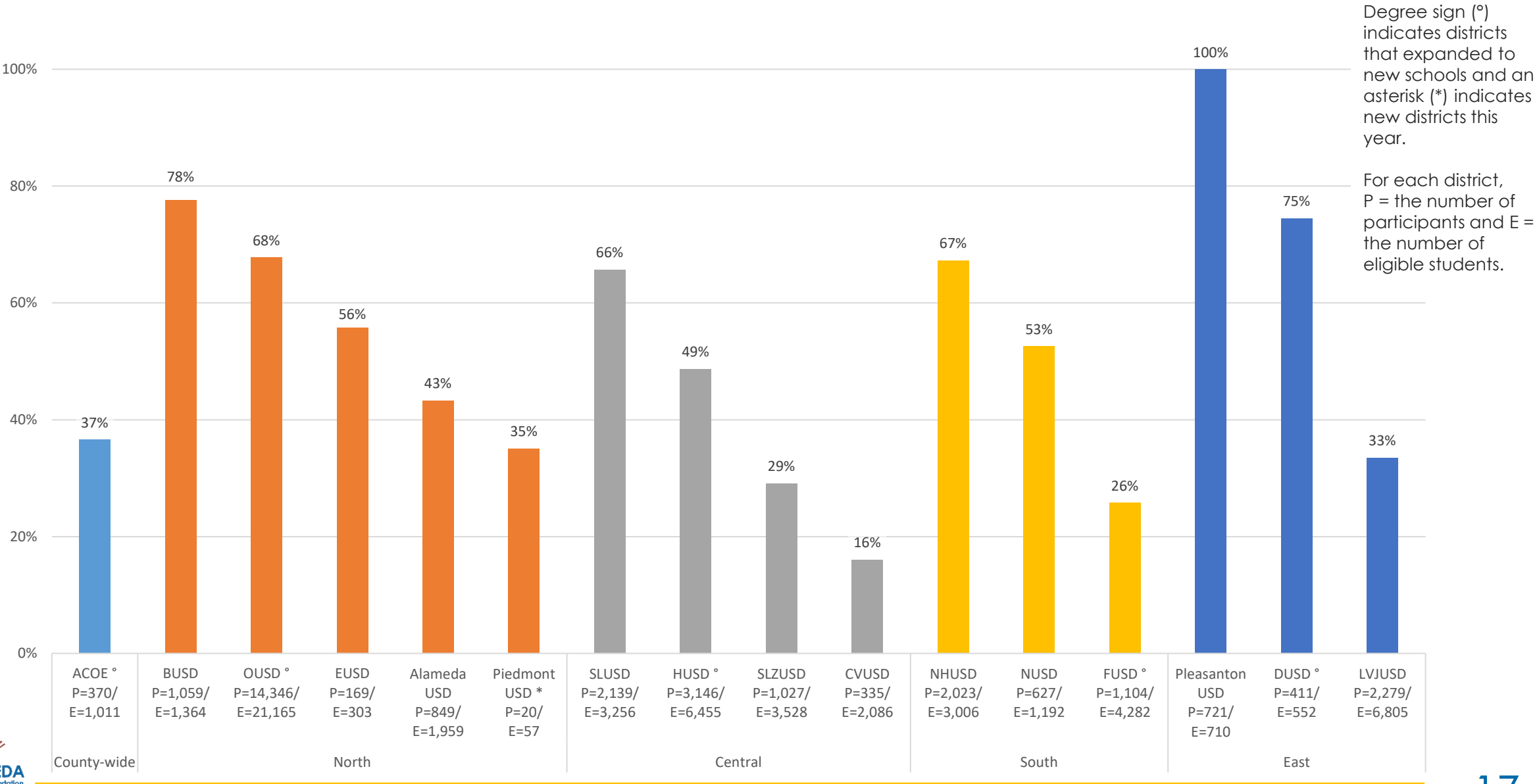
# Participation Across Planning Areas

- Participation rates vary within each planning area:
  - **North:** Participation rates ranged from 43% (Alameda USD) to 78% (Berkeley USD), with an average rate of 66%<sup>1</sup>.
  - **Central:** Participation rates ranged from 16% (Castro Valley USD) to 66% (San Leandro USD), with an average rate of 58%.
  - **South:** Participation rates ranged from 26% (Fremont USD) to 67% (New Haven USD), with an average rate of 44%<sup>1</sup>.
  - **East:** Participation rates ranged from 33% (Livermore Valley JUSD) to 100% (Pleasanton USD), with an average rate of 42%.
- The variation in participation rates within planning areas is consistent with the trends observed in past school years.

<sup>1</sup> Averages exclude new districts (State Special Schools and Albany USD) due to no sign-ups.



# 2023-24 Participation Rates by School District and Planning Area



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# Participation Across Program Stages

- Out of 147 participating schools, 128 (87%) were **established** (in their 2nd+ year of program participation) and 19 (13%) were **new** to the program.
- This ratio has varied greatly in previous years: in 2022-23, 67% were established and 33% were new; in 2021-22, 93% were established and 7% were new.
- **Overall Rate:** New schools averaged a participation rate of **40%** in 2023-24.

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# Pass Usage

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# Overview of Pass Usage

- **Total trips** and **average number of bus boardings per participant** are metrics used to evaluate **pass usage**.
- The **average number of bus boardings per participant each month** is calculated by dividing total boardings by the number of participants for that month.
- Usage rates are based on the “core months” of **October through May**, when program rollout is complete and school calendars are aligned. This approach is consistent with prior evaluations (2022-23, 2021-22, and pre-pandemic).

# Countywide Pass Usage

- **Total STPP Boardings:** Participants took **1.78 million bus trips** between August 2023 and July 2024.
- **Year-over-Year Change:** Overall bus trips in 2023-24 increased by **54%** (642,441 additional bus trips) compared to 2022-2023.
- **Average Monthly Boardings:**
  - Participants averaged **5.3 boardings per month** over the course of the entire 2023-24 school year, an increase from 4.8 boardings per month in the 2022-23 school year.
  - Boardings were **relatively stable** throughout the school year, with an expected dip in ridership over the summer (even though students can use the pass for non-school trips).

Transit Operator	Total STPP Boardings (Aug 2023 – Jul 2024)	Year-Over-Year Change	Avg. Pass Usage During Core Months (Oct-May)	Percent of All STPP Boardings
AC Transit	1,604,860	+602,120	5.8	90%
LAVTA/Wheels	143,406	+38,019	4.6	8%
Union City Transit	34,632	+2,302	1.8	2%
Total	1,782,898	+642,441	5.8	100%

# Usage Across Planning Areas

- Two districts in the AC Transit service area (North, Central, and South Planning Areas) had **above average** pass usage this past school year:
  - **Piedmont USD:** 8.0 monthly boardings per participant (the highest, despite being a new district)
  - **Oakland USD:** 6.4 monthly boardings per participant
- LAVTA/Wheels service area (East Planning Area) saw some of the **highest and lowest pass usage rates** in the county:
  - **Pleasanton USD:** 6.3 monthly boardings per participant
  - **Dublin USD:** 5.7 monthly boardings per participant
  - **Livermore JUSD:** 3.9 monthly boardings per participant
- All districts in the Central Planning Area (AC Transit service area) saw **below average** pass usage, ranging from 0.7 (Castro Valley USD) to 3.3 (San Leandro USD) monthly boardings per participant. This is likely due to less transit access and newer program rollout.

# Usage Across Program Years

- **Change in Pass Usage**

- Total STPP ridership in 2023–24 has surpassed pre-pandemic levels (2019–20).
- However, because program participation has more than doubled, total boardings are now averaged across a much larger group, making it appear as though per-student usage has dropped by half.
- Participation alone doesn't guarantee usage — program maturity, local transit demand, and outreach and marketing efforts may be major factors.

- **Program Need**

- Early rollout targeted high-need schools with strong transit access, driving strong usage.
- Expansion to lower-demand areas has reduced average boardings per participant.

- **Opportunities for Growth**

- Marketing efforts could shift beyond sign-ups to encouraging more frequent ridership.
- Offering travel training opportunities (through the Safe Routes to Schools Program) could increase awareness and build confidence in riding transit more regularly.
- Deeper analysis of ride patterns — by month, grade level, or demographics — may reveal what drives higher usage.

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# Transit Ridership and Capacity



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# Overview of Transit Ridership and Capacity

- The project team met with representatives from AC Transit, LAVTA/Wheels, and Union City Transit in June 2024 to discuss ridership and capacity trends during the 2023-2024 school year.
- AC Transit and Wheels both offered **supplemental bus service** during the school year, which is buses that provide service to schools immediately before and after school bell times.

# AC Transit

- **Service Adjustments and Demand**

- In 2023-24, several school-serving bus routes experienced crowding, prompting the addition of supplementary buses to handle rush hour surges.
- 27 out of 130 participating schools in the AC Transit service area received service from supplementary lines.

- **System Performance and Operations**

- Overall system ridership continued to recover, increasing by 12% since last fall and reaching 75–80% of pre-pandemic levels.
- Bus driver shortages improved significantly.
- Most maintenance issues from the previous school year were largely resolved.

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# LAVTA/Wheels

- **Service Adjustments and Demand**

- Service expanded from the previous year, with new routes connecting to more schools.
- A supplemental service was added for Dublin USD schools at the beginning of the year in response to a surge in ridership.

- **System Performance and Operations**

- System ridership rose, likely due to parents/caregivers returning to in-person work, new service in Livermore, and with the agency's Summer Youth Ride Free promotion.
- Driver shortages and fleet limitations constrained LAVTA's ability to expand fixed-route services to meet growing demand.

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# Union City Transit

- **Service Adjustments and Demand**

- Existing fixed route service could handle ridership demand, so agency suspended supplemental service.
- Union City Transit coordinated transfers with BART, although scheduling challenges made this difficult to implement smoothly.

- **System Performance and Operations**

- System ridership was approximately 95% of pre-pandemic levels and is expected to fully recover by next year. Weekend ridership continued to be slower to recover than weekday ridership.
- Evening rush hour reliability remained inconsistent, though increased bus frequency helped mitigate delays.
- Maintenance challenges persisted due to an aging fleet; no new buses are expected until later in 2025.

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# Lessons Learned

- Temporary supplemental bus services can significantly improve reliability during peak hours.
- Each transit agency faces distinct challenges — from driver shortages to aging fleets — requiring tailored solutions.

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# Program Costs

# Transit Pass Costs

- Alameda CTC uses a pay-per-ride payment structure with each participating transit agency for the ongoing program.
- Total boardings, cost per trip, and bus pass costs are shown below.

Transit Agency	2023-2024 Boardings	Alameda CTC Cost per Trip	Bus Pass Cost
AC Transit	1,604,860	\$1.12	\$1,797,443
LAVTA/Wheels	143,406	\$1.60	\$229,450
Union City Transit	34,632	\$1.25	\$43,290
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,782,898</b>	<b>Average \$1.16</b>	<b>\$2,070,183</b>

# Transit Pass Cost Per Participant (1)

School District	2023-24 Total Participants [1]	2023-24 Total Boardings	Ratio: Boardings / Participant	Annual Cost Per Participant [3]
<b>AC TRANSIT</b>				
Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE)	370	9,004	24	\$66.05
Alameda Unified School District	849	44,154	52	
Berkeley Unified School District	1,059	58,008	55	
Castro Valley Unified School District	335	2,062	6	
Emery Unified School District	169	7,409	44	
Fremont Unified School District	1,104	55,835	51	
Hayward Unified School District	3,146	86,839	28	
Newark Unified School District	627	21,062	34	
Oakland Unified School District	14,346	938,028	65	
Piedmont Unified School District	20	1,450	73	
San Leandro Unified School District	2,139	70,770	33	
San Lorenzo Unified School District	1,027	30,148	29	
Unknown USD [2]	n/a	207,682	n/a	

[1] Any student who signs up to receive a transit pass is considered a "participant" regardless of how often they use the pass.

[2] During the 2023-2024 school year, some students who lost their pass were issued a replacement that was not correctly coded to their school district. Although the trips on these cards were logged in the Clipper system as program boardings, the trips cannot be associated to a particular school district.

[3] The program team is evaluating this metric given challenges with data but is providing the data as it has been included in prior evaluation reports.



# Transit Pass Cost Per Participant (2)

School District	2023-24 Total Participants [1]	2023-24 Total Boardings	Ratio: Boardings / Participant	Annual Cost Per Participant [4]
<b>AC TRANSIT + UNION CITY TRANSIT</b>				
New Haven Unified School District [2]	2,023	107,041	53	\$87.45
<b>LAVTA / WHEELS [3]</b>				
Dublin Unified School District	411	21,147	51	\$67.27
Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District	2,279	82,379	36	
Pleasanton Unified School District [4]	721	39,830	55	

[1] Any student who signs up to receive a transit pass is considered a “participant” regardless of how often they use the pass.

[2] The Cost per Participant for New Haven USD is the sum of the average cost across the entire AC Transit service area plus the extra cost associated with travel on Union City Transit.

[3] The total number of boardings for LAVTA here is 50 fewer than the totals provided on page 23 and 34 because of 50 boardings unassociated with a school district in July 2024.

[4] The program team is evaluating this metric given challenges with data but is providing the data as it has been included in prior evaluation reports.

# Administrative Costs

Cost Type	Cost
Labor (incl. Alameda CTC, consultant team, and AC Transit)	\$687,826
Direct Costs (incl. online application platform, translations, shipping, and printing)	\$19,948

- Labor costs increased relative to last year, due to the return of in-person outreach throughout the school year, rising administrative duties with the program near full-scale, and a targeted, intensive Clipper card reactivations effort.
- Total administrative costs accounted for 25% of the total program costs (e.g., labor, direct costs, and bus pass costs) due to boardings remaining below pre-pandemic levels and the continued hands-on approach to administering the program.
- Staff are actively monitoring administrative costs as the program ridership recovers from the pandemic and full program expansion is completed and will revisit this threshold and the program delivery model after analyzing data from this current year.

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# Road Ahead

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# Road Ahead

- By the start of the 2024-25 school year, the program will have expanded to include all eligible middle and high schools in Alameda County. The program will serve over 160 schools across 18 school districts, reaching approximately 63,000 eligible students.
- To support engagement and to continue increasing participation, the STPP team will launch refreshed branding and marketing materials designed to feel more relatable and human-centered, better aligning with the experiences and expectations of middle and high school students.
- Since it's 2016 pilot, the program has grown from ~3,000 to ~30,000 participants. With this growth, supporting systems related to producing cards, addressing pass issues, and communication need to adapt accordingly.
- As the program enters this new phase, the STPP team is exploring ways to update its goals and metrics to reflect changing community needs and will focus on program sustainability.
- There is also an opportunity to bring in more voices—especially from school staff, families, and students—to strengthen future evaluations.

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# Appendix

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Universal

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE)</b>	Alameda County Community
	Alternatives in Action
	Aurum Preparatory
	Community School for Creative Education
	Envision Academy for Arts & Tech
	Lazear Charter
	Oakland Unity Middle
	Opportunity Academy
<b>Emery Unified School District (EUSD)</b>	Anna Yates TK-8
	Emery High

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Livermore Valley Joint Unified (LVJUSD)</b>	Andrew N. Christensen Middle
	Del Valle Continuation High
	East Avenue Middle
	Granada High
	Joe Mitchell K-8 School
	Junction K-8
	Livermore High
	Vineyard Alternative
	William Mendenhall Middle

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Universal

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)</b>	AIMS College Prep High
	AIMS College Prep Middle
	ARISE High
	ASCEND
	Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy
	Aspire Golden State College Preparatory Academy
	Aspire Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy
	Bay Area Technology
	Bret Harte Middle
	Castlemont High
	Claremont Middle

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Continued</b>	Coliseum College Prep Academy
	Dewey Academy
	Edna Brewer Middle
	Elmhurst United Middle
	Fremont High
	Frick Middle
	Gateway to College at Laney College
	Greenleaf Elementary
	Independent Study, Sojourner Truth
	KIPP Bridge Academy
	LIFE Academy
	Lighthouse Community Charter High
	Lighthouse Community Charter Middle

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Universal

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Continued</b>	Lodestar: A Lighthouse Community Charter Public
	LPS Oakland R&D Campus
	Madison Park Academy 6-12
	McClymonds High
	Melrose Leadership Academy
	MetWest High
	Montera Middle
	Oakland Charter Academy
	Oakland Charter High
	Oakland High
	Oakland International High

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Continued</b>	Oakland Military Institute, College Preparatory Academy
	Oakland Technical High
	Oakland Unity High
	Ralph J. Bunche Academy
	Roosevelt Middle
	Rudsdale Continuation
	Skyline High
	Street Academy (Alternative)
	United Success Academy Middle
	Urban Promise Academy
	West Oakland Middle
	Westlake Middle
	Young Adult Program (OUSD)



# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Means-Based

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Albany Unified School District (Albany USD)*</b>	MacGregor High (Continuation)
<b>Alameda Unified School District (Alameda USD)</b>	Alameda High
	Alameda Science and Technology Institute
	Bay Farm
	Encinal Junior/Senior High
	Island High
	Lincoln Middle
	Will C. Wood Middle

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD)</b>	Berkeley High
	Berkeley Technology Academy
	Longfellow Arts and Technology Middle
	Martin Luther King Middle
	Willard Middle
<b>Castro Valley Unified School District (CVUSD)</b>	Canyon Middle
	Castro Valley High
	Creekside Middle
	Redwood Continuation High



\* = District is new to the program this year.

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Means-Based

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Dublin Unified School District (DUSD)</b>	Cottonwood Creek
	Dublin High
	Dublin Unified Transition Program
	Eleanor Murray Fallon
	Valley High
	Wells Middle
	York Alternative Learning Center
<b>Fremont Unified School District (FUSD)</b>	American High
	Centerville Junior High
	Circle of Independent Learning

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Fremont Unified School District (FUSD) Continued</b>	G.M. Walters Middle
	Irvington High
	John F. Kennedy High
	John M. Horner Middle
	Mission San Jose High
	Robertson High
	Thornton Junior High
	Vista Alternative
	Washington High
	William Hopkins Junior High
	Young Adult Program

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Means-Based

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Hayward Unified School District (HUSD)</b>	Anthony W. Ochoa Middle
	Brenkwitz High
	Bret Harte Middle
	Cesar Chavez Middle
	Faith Ringgold School of Arts and Science
	Hayward High
	Knowledge Enlightens You (KEY) Academy
	Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle
	Mt. Eden High
	Tennyson High
	Winton Middle

School District	Participating Schools
<b>New Haven Unified School District (NHUSD)</b>	Cesar Chavez Middle (NHUSD)
	Conley-Caraballo High
	Decoto School for Independent Study
	Itliong-Vera Cruz
	James Logan High
<b>Newark Unified School District (NUSD)</b>	Bridgepoint High
	Crossroads High
	Newark Junior High
	Newark Memorial High
<b>Piedmont Unified School District (Piedmont USD)*</b>	Millenium High Alternative
	Piedmont High
	Piedmont Middle



\* = District is new to the program this year.

# 2023-2024 Participating Schools – Means-Based

School District	Participating Schools
<b>Pleasanton Unified School District (Pleasanton USD)</b>	Amador Valley High
	Foothill High
	Harvest Park Middle
	Pleasanton Middle
	Thomas S. Hart Middle
	Village High
<b>San Leandro Unified School District (SLUSD)</b>	Bancroft Middle
	John Muir Middle
	Lincoln High
	San Leandro High

School District	Participating Schools
<b>San Lorenzo Unified School District (SLZUSD)</b>	Arroyo High
	Bohannon Middle
	East Bay Arts High
	Edendale Middle
	Royal Sunset
	San Lorenzo High
	Washington Manor Middle
<b>State Special Schools*</b>	California School for the Blind
	California School for the Deaf



\* = District is new to the program this year.