

ccee

California Collaborative
for Educational Excellence



Fresno Unified
School District

Empowering Black Student Success

Fresno Unified's Blueprint for Graduation and A-G Completion



April 29, 2025

Open Door Webinar

Welcome



Italo Ciccarelli

Program Specialist,
Data & Impact

- Recording & slides will be posted on CCEE's website
- Slides will be linked in the chat
- **Questions/Comments:** Please use the Q&A feature to ask questions for our panelists

Agenda

- Introductions
- Background/History
- Why AASLA
- Student Voices
- Shifting Focus - AASLA and AAgA
- Parents Voices
- Partnerships with UC/CSU
- Q & A



Presenters



Lisa Mitchell, Ed.D.

Executive Director,
African American Academic
Acceleration (A4), Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion, and
Community Schools



**Kimberly
Hendricks-Brown, Ed.D.**

Principal on Special Assignment,
African American Academic
Acceleration (A4)



Pat Riddlesprigger

Program Manager,
African American Academic
Acceleration (A4)

Fresno Unified Data

104 Schools

66 Elementary
14 Middle
15 High
3 K-8
6 other

69,327

Student
Enrollment

Free Lunch

Provided at all
schools

10,000+
Employees

86.1%
Graduation Rate

Title I
All Schools



Fresno USD Timeline

UC System Report

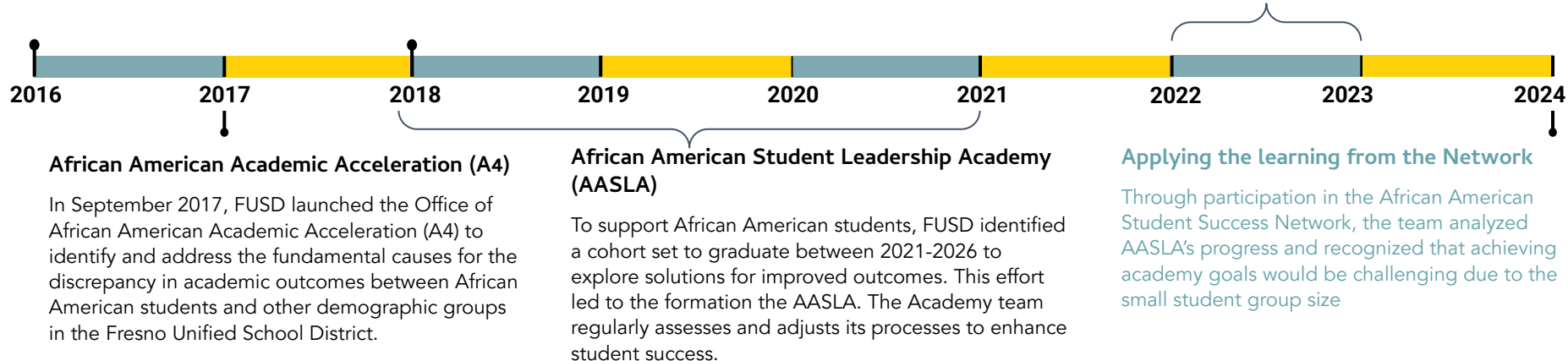
Faculty from four UC campuses published a report, Examining College Choice, Enrollment & Linkage – Investing in California’s African American Students, revealing that less than 3% of African American/Black students were attending UCs.

FUSD - UC Partnership

UC Merced and Fresno Unified partnered to recruit African American students through the African American Student Leadership Academy (AASLA), which identifies college-bound 8th graders and provides support through 12th grade to ensure UC readiness. Fresno Unified is fostering connections with African American students and families to reshape their educational journey.

Studying the AASLA

FUSD selected the AASLA for study to gain insights into effective practices and areas for improvement. The team developed a Problem of Practice (PoP) to assess strategies, with the goals of raising graduation rates and increasing A-G course completion among African American students.



Why This Work Began

How we got here...



UCMERCED
presents...

**2016 Annual Willie Lewis Brown, Jr.,
YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**


Fresno Unified
July 11 - 15
July 18 - 22

All sessions consist of 5 days and 4 nights of on-campus residency at UC Merced University

STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE
On-Campus residence at UC Merced University
Fresno Unified High School
Admission to Merced
Critical Thinking & Leadership Training
Learn from student & community leaders
Interact with college professors & students
Earn from Merced 400 & Admission Requirements
Day to the Merced & a Merced Activities

Willie Lewis Brown, Jr., Youth Leadership Development Program is here! The purpose of this program is to expose middle school students (7th grade) to an early introduction to the college experience at the University of California, Merced. It is our mission to identify middle school aged students and to inspire a sense of belonging, an opportunity to network, and develop self-efficacy through experiential learning. While participating in our program students will be introduced to the University of California, Merced campus and the Central Valley Region of California. The ultimate goal of Willie Lewis Brown, Jr., Youth Leadership Development Program is to give the students a frame of reference when they think of UC Merced and to create memories that will influence their decision when choosing a California University after graduating from high school.

Willie Lewis Brown, Jr.



- 1st African American politician to serve over 30 years in the California State Assembly
- 15 years as Speaker of the Assembly
- Pivotal political career serving as 41st Mayor of San Francisco

For more information please contact: Angie Barfield (951) 437-4368 or Leslie Scoville leslie.scoville@fresnoednet.org

UC System Report

Faculty from four UC campuses published a report, *Examining College Choice, Enrollment & Linkage – Investing in California's African American Students*, revealing that less than 3% of African American/Black students were attending UCs.

Background and History



Holland Locker
#LOCKERSTRONG

2016 Cohort Ideas/Plan

- Committee formed March 31
- Sixty-eight students attended UC Merced Willie Brown Summer Camp.
- All seventeen Middle School sites represented.
- Parent Meetings/Orientations.
- Ongoing partnership and CCI process with UC Merced Leadership
- University President guaranteed admission to any student competing A G requirements.

2016 Next Steps

- Quarterly Parent Meetings & Student Workshops.
- Student Portfolios.
- College visits annually & Enrichment trips.
- Summer Course Credit.
- Site Mentors.
- BSU Club Involvement & Leadership expectations.

A Call to Action

In September 2017, FUSD launched the Office of African American Academic Acceleration (A4) to identify and address the fundamental causes for the discrepancy in academic outcomes between African American students and other demographic groups in the Fresno Unified School District.



The African American Student Leadership Academy

The African American Student Leadership Academy (AASLA) is a program that identifies college-bound 8th grade students and provides supports and mentoring through 12th grade to ensure students are UC ready upon graduation. Each cohort is named for their graduation year and serves as a constant reminder of their ultimate goal: to graduate on time and UC ready.



Program Criteria

- Cumulative GPA 2.75 or Higher
- Attendance Rate 95% or higher
- No More than 1 Suspension in the Current School Year
- Student Engagement Participation During the School Year
- Leadership Participation (ASB or Club Leadership)
- Complete Program Application

FRESNO UNIFIED / UC MERCED YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2020 APPLICATION			
School Site: _____		Site Champion: _____	
Contact Number: _____			
STUDENT INFORMATION			
Name: _____		Current School Counselor: _____	
Student ID #: _____	Phone: _____	Cell phone: _____	
Current address: _____			
City: _____	State: _____	ZIP Code: _____	
Male _____ Female (Please circle): _____	Email: _____	Cumulative GPA: _____	
T-shirt Size: _____	Foot Measurement: _____	Birthdate: _____	
Parent/Guardian Name: _____			
Parent/Guardian Email: _____			
Parent/Guardian Cell Phone Number: _____			
SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS INCLUDE A TYPED COMPLETED APPLICATION, TWO ESSAY RESPONSES, AND PARENT PERMISSION SLIP.			
PERSONAL INFORMATION			
Describe any special skills, favorite subjects, or hobbies: _____			

GOAL 2 SCHOOL ACTIVITIES (Including sports, clubs, band, choir, etc.)			
Arts/Athletics/Activities	Participation Dates	Arts/Athletics/Activities	Participation Dates
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES (Including community events, volunteer activities, cultural events, youth group participation, etc.)			
Name of Organization or Event	Participation Dates	Total Hours	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	

Universities Partnerships

UC Merced & CSU Fresno Partnerships

- How MOUs and guaranteed admission offers were developed
- Black Empowerment & Enrichment Day

Early Exposure = Future Enrollment

- College visits, immersion experiences
- Relationship-building over recruitment



African American 9th Grade Academy (AAgA)

New Initiative (2024-2025)

- Monitor and Support all AA 9th-grade students
- No criteria to participate
- Students develop an Individualized Student Success Plan (ISSP)



AASLA & AAgA Structure

- Weekly check-ins with Student Support Specialists
 - Quantitative Data
 - Grade, attendance, and behavior monitoring
 - Qualitative Data
 - Exit Tickets & Student Voice Reals/Surveys
- Administration/Counselor/Teacher Communication
 - Real-time adjustments
 - Participate and provide input into decisions (COST/SST/IEP team meetings)
- Family/Parent Communication
 - Real-time adjustments
 - Inform family/parent about attendance, grades, and behavior

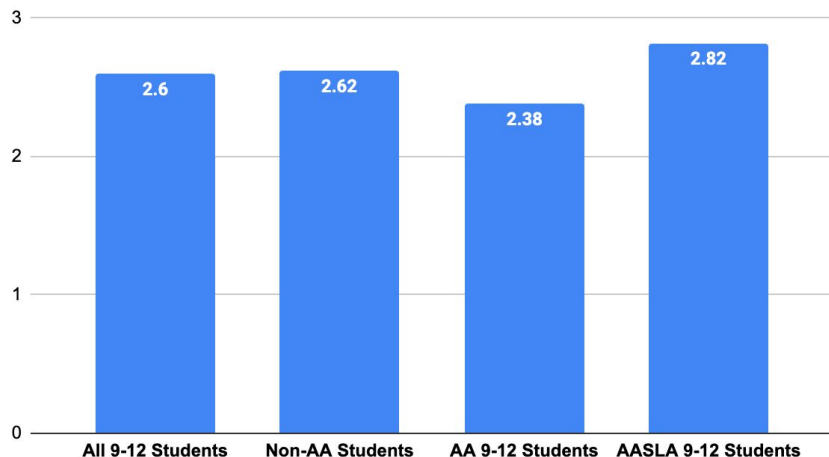
The Power of Mentorship

- Weekly Student Support Specialist check-in and connect
 - Build Relationships
 - Someone they can go to when needed
 - Provide Tools and Resources to add to their academic toolbelt
 - A-G Completion, Conflict Resolution, Building their own voice/Advocacy, Goal Setting/Planning

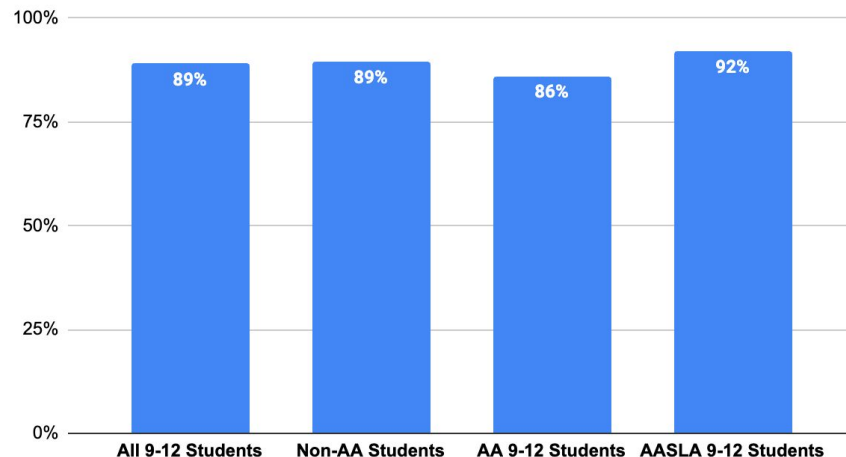
Student quote: *"Champion grade check-ups kept me on track."*

2023/24 Outcomes

2023/24 GPA Comparison By Student Group

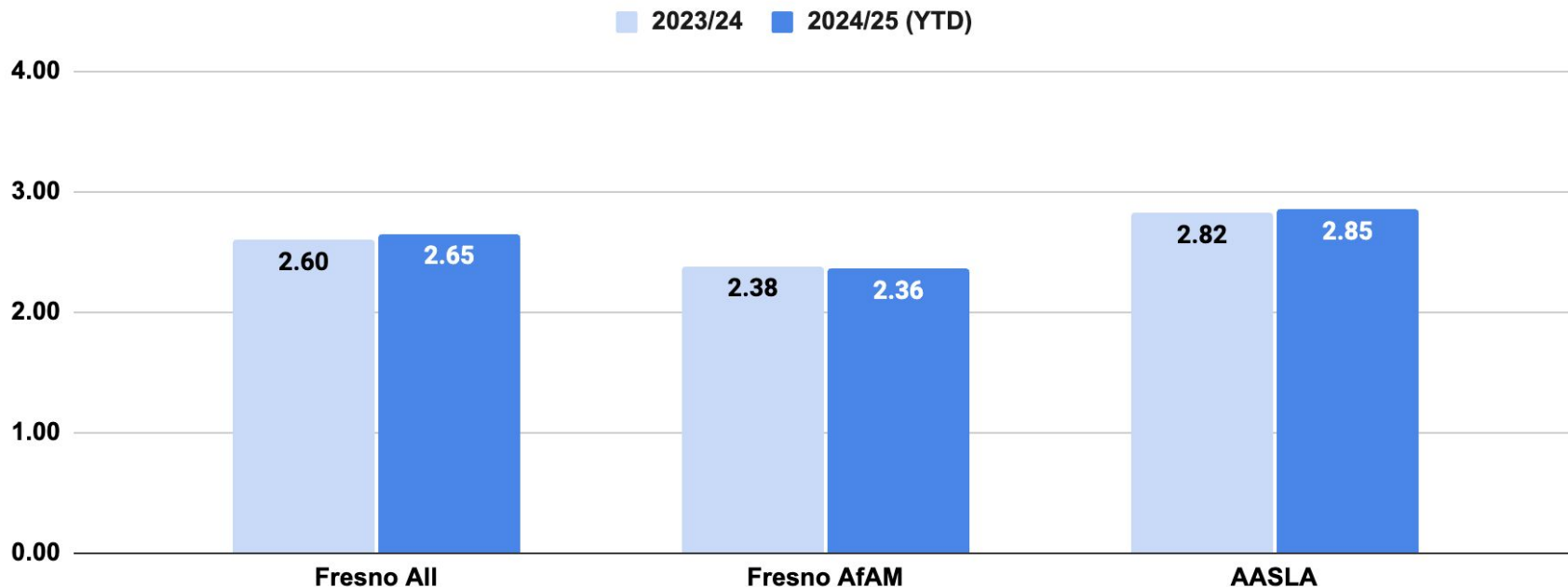


2023/24 Attendance Rate Comparison By Student Group



2024/2025 Data...So Far

Fresno USD High School GPA Comparison



Meet the Students



Kamari Wilson

AASLA Class of 2021

Will Graduate College in 2025



Marcus Miller

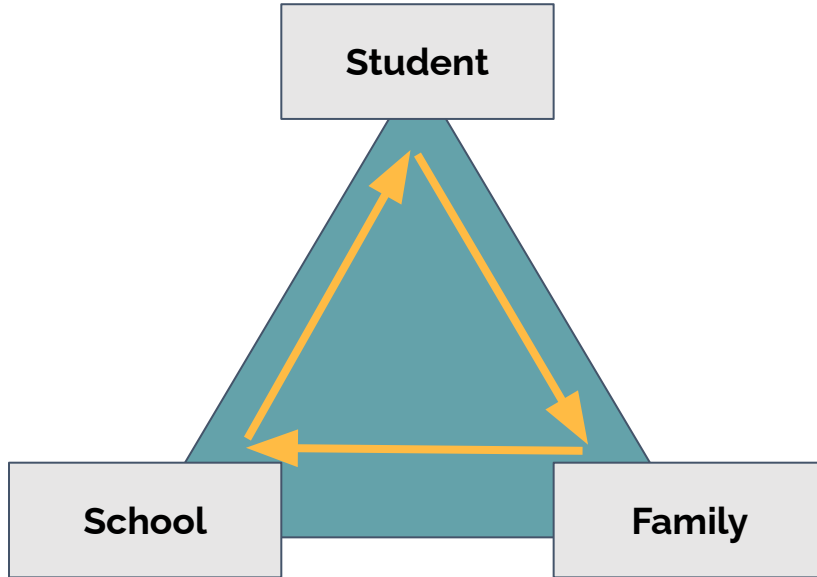
AASLA Class of 2021

Received 4 Scholarships

Student Panel Questions

- How has the mentorship or AASLA program impacted your high school journey?
- What has it meant to visit a university campus before graduating?
- What advice would you give to adults supporting students like you?

Full Support Triangle



"If you can't connect, you can't correct."

What We Learned

- Monitoring isn't enough—students need real support
 - Relationships - school
 - Site Leaders
 - Family
- "Academic + behavioral + SEL"
= full support triangle

Meet the Parent

Elisha Henderson

Two daughters participated in AASLA

- Elana - 2023
- Evonne - 2025



Parent Testimonial

- How they were engaged by the district?
- What changed in their child's experience?
- What this meant for their family?
- What would you share with other families or districts?

Key Takeaways and Closing

1. Relationships drive results
2. Infrastructure matters: mentors, data, and accountability
3. You can't wait until senior year—start in middle school
4. Full Service - Ongoing support is key
 - a. Parents and family engagement
 - b. Student voices
 - c. Take advantage of all your school services

Recipe for Academic Success for African American/Black Students

Ingredients

- 4 Cups of Parent/Family Engagement
- 2 Cups of Positive School Connections
- 1 Cup of Cultural Learning/Relevant Materials
- 1 Cup of an Equitable Environment
- ½ Cup of a “Success” Mindset
- ½ Cup of Cultural Affirmations

Mix all ingredients together. Serve immediately!



Questions



Thank You

Contact



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**Please take a few minutes to fill out
our Zoom feedback survey.**