



**LEVEL PLAYING FIELD
INSTITUTE**

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PRESS RELEASE

**Level Playing Field Institute (LPFI) Reports on
STEM Education Opportunity Gap in California**

**LPFI Announces 2011 Online Application for Pre-Collegiate STEM Program
*The Summer Math and Science Honors Academy (SMASH)***

San Francisco, November 9, 2010 - Level Playing Field Institute released today its comprehensive report titled "[Dissecting the Data: The STEM Education Opportunity Gap in California](#)." This research brief synthesizes the publicly-available data on the outcomes of underrepresented students of color in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as they progress through the public education system in California. It concludes with a set of recommendations to address these challenges and increase educational outcomes.

"This report underscores the disparities in STEM outcomes for students of color in California and the urgent need to improve opportunities for these students. We hope this collection of data will assist the many stakeholders who are working to respond to the astounding opportunity gap in STEM in California and will help promote the collaboration necessary to produce systemic change," said LPFI Director of Research, Allison Scott.

By examining the K-12 pipeline, the report shines a spotlight on how early inequity in access and opportunity creates unequal outcomes in math and science achievement starting with the earliest tested grade and culminating in lower rates of college readiness, limited enrollment in higher education, and even smaller numbers of students completing STEM degrees at California's public universities:

- By the 6th grade, only 35% of African-American and 41% of Latino/a students performed at grade level in mathematics, compared to 67% of White students and 80% of Asian students.
- Just 18% of African-American and 23% of Latino/a high school students reached proficiency in Chemistry.
- Only 16% of the students taking Advanced Placement exams in 2009 were Latino/a, although Latinos/as represent roughly half (46%) of California's high school population.
- In 2009, only 1,551 African-American students were enrolled in a STEM discipline across all UC campuses. This represents 0.02% of all STEM undergraduates.

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At each stage along the way, the pipeline to STEM in higher education and the workforce is leaking, and significant numbers of African-American and Latino/a students are denied the opportunities to develop math and science skills and prepare for careers in the fastest-growing and most lucrative occupations of the future. Improving STEM education in California (particularly among students of color) is critical, not only for California's future but also for the economic stability of the nation.

The LPFI Response

Level Playing Field Institute is responding to the alarming lack of minority representation in STEM fields with a two-pronged approach:

1. Providing underrepresented students with advanced STEM learning through its signature program, the Summer Math & Science Honors Academy (SMASH), a rigorous and innovative three-year STEM-focused program for high-achieving underrepresented high school students of color in California; and
2. Creating a Teachers as Leaders fellowship for STEM teachers in traditionally underperforming high schools. LPFI will admit eighteen teachers for its inaugural fellowship class in 2011.

Entering its eighth year, SMASH will be held on the campuses of UC Berkeley and Stanford in the summer of 2011 and will serve more than 170 high-potential, low-income underrepresented students of color. The [SMASH application is now available online](#) and motivated underrepresented students with demonstrated interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are encouraged to apply. Application registration is due February 21, 2011.

"Teachers look at me and see another kid from a broken down neighborhood. SMASH helped me stun them and show them that I can keep up in my advanced classes." David Z., SMASH Graduate.

About Level Playing Field Institute

Level Playing Field Institute (www.lpfi.org) is a Bay Area-based non-profit organization that works to increase fairness in education and the workplace by closing the opportunity gap.

Our vision is that all students, regardless of socio-economic status, have the opportunity to apply to and graduate from top colleges and universities.

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