California Department of Education
Report to the Governor, the State Legislature, and the Director of Finance:

Recommendation on the High School Exit Examination and Pathways to Graduation

Prepared by the

Assessment Development and Administration Division
District, School, and Innovation Branch

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Recipient:	State Board of Education, appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, and Director of Finance
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Executive Summary

Senate Bill 172 (Chapter 572, Statutes of 2015), suspends the administration of the high school exit examination (HSEE) through the 2017–18 school year and the requirement that each student completing grade twelve successfully pass the HSEE as a condition of receiving a high school diploma. The law requires local educational agencies to grant a diploma to any student who completed grade twelve in the 2003–04 school year or a subsequent school year and has met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the HSEE.

California *Education Code* Section 60640(c)(6), requires that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SSPI on the continuation of the HSEE and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.

To address this reporting requirement, the California Department of Education (CDE) initiated the following activities to ensure a thorough investigation of research evidence, broad representation of stakeholder feedback, identification of key issues, and thorough evaluation of options.

- On behalf of the CDE, nationally recognized researchers from University of California, Davis provided a literature review on HSEEs, conducted an analysis of California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) results compared to Smarter Balanced results, and conducted a nationwide scan of high school graduation requirements and trends.

- Two concurrent advisory panels (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) were convened and included members representing all required stakeholder groups. Each advisory panel met once in February 2016 and once again in May 2016 and provided feedback on potential recommendations to the SSPI.

- The CDE held five regional meetings throughout the state from April to May 2016 to gather stakeholder feedback.

- The CDE administered an online survey on the CDE CAHSEE Web page from April to May 2016 and collected input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

This report summarizes the research findings and stakeholder feedback, but also takes into account California's investment in a comprehensive paradigm shift, which allows for the observation of student performance over time and moves us away from using a single assessment event, like the CAHSEE, for high-stakes decisions. Taking into account stakeholder feedback and the current paradigm shift, the SSPI recommends removal of the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation. The rationale for this recommendation are detailed in Section IX of this report.

You can find this report on the CDE California High School Exit Examination Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/. To order a hard copy of the *Recommendation on the High School Exit Examination and Pathways to Graduation*, please contact John Boivin, Education Research and Evaluation Administrator, High School and Physical Fitness Assessment Office, by phone at 916-319-0575 or by e-mail at jboivin@cde.ca.gov.

I. Introduction

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction's (SSPI's) 2013 report to the Legislature, *Recommendations for Transitioning California to a Future Assessment System* (California Department of Education [CDE], January 2013), describes how advances in assessment require and impact human and fiscal resources in addition to the time required to build an assessment system. A comprehensive assessment system, such as that required by California *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60602.5, is a system whose primary purposes are to assist teachers, administrators, and students and their parents/guardians; improve teaching and learning; and promote high-quality teaching and learning through multiple assessment approaches and item types.

The building of that comprehensive assessment system began with the implementation of the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics assessments based on Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Next will come the development of science summative assessments aligned with the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS) and the expansion of the system for the potential inclusion of summative, computer-based assessments for Spanish and history–social science, and related state-supported assessment resources and tools.

This new vision has called upon us to rethink what the state's role should be in this new context, which includes the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the federal education law—the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

This comprehensive paradigm shift allows for the observation of student performance over time and moves us away from using a single assessment event, like the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), for high-stakes decisions. For these reasons, the SSPI recommends removal of the requirement to pass a high school exit examination (HSEE) as a condition of graduation. The rationale for this recommendation is detailed in Section IX of this report.

II. Purpose

This report addresses requirements of *EC* Section 60640(c)(6), which mandates that the SSPI convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SSPI on the continuation of the HSEE and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.

III. Background

a. Senate Bill 172 Requirements

Senate Bill (SB) 172, authored by State Senator Carol Liu, went into effect on January 1, 2016, and added the following sections to the *EC* (see Appendix A for full text):

- Section 60640(c)(6) requires the SSPI to convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SSPI on the continuation of the HSEE and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements. The advisory panel must consist of, but not be necessarily limited to, the following:
    - Secondary teachers
    - School administrators
    - School board members
    - Parents
    - Student chosen from among the two finalists who were not appointed by the Governor to serve as the student member on the State Board of Education (SBE)
    - Representatives of a dropout recovery charter school
    - Measurement experts
    - Individuals with expertise in assessing English learners (ELs)
    - Individuals with expertise in assessing pupils with disabilities
- Section 60851.5 suspends the administration of a HSEE and the requirement that each pupil completing grade twelve successfully pass the HSEE as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation, or a condition of graduation from high school, for the 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18 school years.
- Section 60851.6 requires the governing board or body of a local educational agency (LEA) and the department, on behalf of state special schools, to grant a diploma of graduation from high school to any pupil who completed grade twelve in the 2003–04 school year or a subsequent school year and has met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the HSEE.

b. California High School Exit Examination in an Evolving State Assessment System

History of the California High School Exit Examination

The CAHSEE was established by SB 2 X1 (Chapter 1, Statutes of 1999) in conjunction with other education reforms that included curriculum content standards, a new assessment program, professional development, and instructional programs. Beginning with the Class of 2006, students in California

public schools were required to pass the CAHSEE to demonstrate competency in grade-level skills in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to earn a high school diploma. The content of the CAHSEE was based on content standards for ELA and mathematics that were adopted by the SBE in 1997.

The CAHSEE requirement was in addition to meeting existing state and local graduation course requirements (see Appendix A). For eligible students with disabilities, the CAHSEE requirement could be satisfied by meeting the exemption requirement pursuant to *EC* Section 60852.3 or receiving a local waiver pursuant to *EC* Section 60851(c).

Common Core State Standards

In 2010, the SBE adopted the CCSS for ELA and mathematics. The CCSS are more rigorous than most states' previous content standards because they reflect College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. California's adoption of the CCSS led to developmental work to establish statewide assessments that are aligned with the new, more rigorous standards. Steps in this process included enactment of Assembly Bill (AB) 250 (Chapter 608, Statutes of 2011) that required the SSPI to make recommendations on a design and transition plan for implementing a new statewide pupil assessment program.

Assembly Bill 250 Report, Recommendations 9 and 10

AB 250 (Brownley, 2011, enacted as *EC* Section 60604.5), guided the SSPI's 2013 report to the Legislature, *Recommendations for Transitioning California to a Future Assessment System* (CDE, January 2013). This report began the investigation into what we test, how we test, who we test, when we test, and why we test, all of which continue to be subjects of debate among policymakers, educators, and the public.

The SSPI included the CAHSEE in this discussion, although not required in law, by offering two recommendations concerning the CAHSEE:

- Recommendation 9—Consider Alternatives to the Current CAHSEE

  The SSPI recommended consideration of alternatives to the CAHSEE for measuring students' demonstration of grade-level competencies and, where possible, reduce redundancy in testing and use existing measures. These alternatives included, but were not limited to, the following:

  - Instead of administering a stand-alone CAHSEE, use the Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics high school assessments to determine academic readiness for high school graduation.
  - As a proxy for meeting high school exit requirements, use the results of other voluntary examinations (e.g., SAT, Preliminary SAT [PSAT],

ACT, or Advanced Placement). These would need to be used in conjunction with a state-administered assessment, such as the Smarter Balanced high school assessments, because not all students would choose to take the voluntary exams.

- Consider the successful completion of specific courses to determine whether students meet minimum high school requirements for graduation. Successful completion would need to be defined.

- Consider the use of any relevant end-of-course assessments that may be developed in the future to determine high school exit requirements.

- Consider the use of matriculation examinations, if developed, to satisfy high school exit requirements (see Recommendation 10).

- Recommendation 10—Explore the Possible Use of Matriculation Examinations

  Matriculation or qualification examinations are used in numerous countries to assess student acquisition of prerequisite knowledge and skills for entrance into college, career, and/or upper high school levels. The use of such examinations in the United States is rare, but the potential benefits of this type of examination to students, LEAs, colleges, and business alike suggests that consideration be given to the idea of introducing them in California. Matriculation examinations can provide students with evidence of their requisite skills for prospective colleges or employers; in turn, these examinations could make assessment relevant to students in a way that few other past state examinations have.

  The SSPI recommended that further research and discussion take place regarding matriculation examinations, including examination format (i.e., written, oral), cost, fee coverage (e.g., student, LEA), and ways in which such examinations could be used to meet high school exit requirements.

The 2013 SSPI's full report to the Legislature is available on the CDE Statewide Pupil Assessment System Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/ab250.asp.

Assembly Bill 484

Based on the SSPI's recommendations of 2013, AB 484 (Chapter 489, Statutes of 2013) was subsequently enacted as *EC* sections 60640 through 60649 and established the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System of assessments, which replaced the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program on January 1, 2014, and became the foundation of California's current statewide assessment system.

With the enactment of AB 484 in January 2014, California set out to reimagine and redefine what statewide assessments could look like, a vision that included a comprehensive system amenable to improving teaching and learning throughout the state. That vision was brought about by *EC* Section 60602.5(a), which requires California's comprehensive assessment system to "provide a system of assessments of pupils that has the primary purposes of assisting teachers, administrators, and students and their parents; improving teaching and learning; and promoting high-quality teaching and learning using a variety of assessment approaches and item types."

The CAASPP System, encompassing five assessments, does not include the CAHSEE. California's ELA and mathematics assessments are based on the CCSS, while the CAHSEE is based on 1997 content standards for ELA and mathematics. In 2015, because of the change in content standards and the need for further review, SB 172 was signed into law by the Governor to suspend until 2018 the administration of the CAHSEE and the requirement that students pass the CAHSEE in order to receive a high school diploma.

c. California's Current Assessment System

California's assessment system is in the process of transitioning to an updated system aligned with the CCSS. Its current, broad statewide assessment system has seven separate components: (1) CAASPP; (2) CAHSEE; (3) California English Language Development Test; (4) Physical Fitness Test; (5) California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE); (6) High School Equivalency (HSE) Tests; and (7) National Assessment of Educational Progress. (See Appendix B for a chart illustrating the current system.) The assessments relevant to the continuation of a HSEE and alternative pathways to graduation include the following:

- **California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress**

  The goal of the CAASPP is to provide a system of assessments that can assist teachers, administrators, students, and parents/guardians and that can promote high-quality teaching and learning through the use of a variety of assessment approaches and item types. The assessments, where applicable and valid, also will produce scores that can be aggregated and disaggregated for the purposes of federal and state accountability. Table 1, on the following page, shows the assessments included in the CAASPP System for the 2015–16 school year.

Table 1. 2015–16 CAASPP System

Required Assessments for State and Federal Accountability Purposes	**ELA and Mathematics** Grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 • Smarter Balanced Assessment System – Summative assessments • California Alternate Assessments (CAAs)
	Science Grades 5, 8, and 10 • California Standards Test for Science • California Modified Assessment for Science • California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) for Science

Optional Assessments	**ELA and Mathematics**
	Kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12)
	• Smarter Balanced Assessment System
	  – Interim assessments
	  – Formative assessment tools and resources
	Reading/Language Arts
	Grades two through eleven for Spanish-speaking ELs who either receive instruction in Spanish or who have been enrolled in the United States for less than 12 months
	• Standards-based Tests in Spanish

For 2015–16, only the Smarter Balanced assessments and CAAs are aligned based on CCSS. Development of science summative assessments aligned with the CA NGSS are currently under development. Development is also underway to replace the Standards-based Tests in Spanish with a stand-alone language arts summative assessment in primary languages other than English that aligns with the ELA content standards.

For ELA and mathematics, the overarching goal of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System, implemented operationally in California in 2015, is to ensure that all students leave high school prepared for postsecondary success in college and career through increased student learning and improved teaching. At the same time, Smarter Balanced aims to provide summative assessments that are valid, fair, reliable, and accessible and provide accurate measurements of student performance. More information about Smarter Balanced is located on the Smarter Balanced Web page at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/.

Eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities who are not able to take the Smarter Balanced tests take the CAAs, which replaced the CAPA for ELA and mathematics in 2016. The items in the CAAs are aligned with alternate

achievement standards that are linked to the CCSS. The goals of the CAAs are to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for postsecondary options. More information about the CAAs is available on the CDE CAAs Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/altassessment.asp.

- **California High School Exit Examination**

  The primary purpose of the CAHSEE has been to improve student achievement in public high schools and to ensure that students who graduate from public high schools could demonstrate competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. The CAHSEE has helped LEAs identify students who were not developing skills that are essential for life after high school and encouraged LEAs to give these students the attention and resources needed to help them achieve these skills during their high school years.

  The CAHSEE also was used for state and federal accountability purposes. Under state requirements, CAHSEE results were used as one of several components in calculating the Academic Performance Index until 2013. Under federal requirements, CAHSEE results were used to calculate the participation rate and percent proficient for Adequate Yearly Progress requirements of the ESEA under Title I. More information about the CAHSEE is available on the CDE CAHSEE Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/.

- **California High School Proficiency Examination**

  The CHSPE is a test for students who need to verify high school-level skills. In some cases, students take the test and leave high school early to work or attend college. Those who pass the test receive a Certificate of Proficiency, which is equal by law to a California high school diploma. Individuals who are sixteen years of age or older may take the test. Younger persons who meet other criteria also can take the test. This test is given twice each year at many sites in California. The test covers three subjects: reading, writing, and mathematics. There is a fee to take the test. More information about this test is available on the CDE CHSPE Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sp/.

d. California High School Exit Examination Strengths, Limitations, Unintended Consequences, and Current Context

The CAHSEE was originally created to ensure that all high school graduates had a minimum level of skills and competencies. The perception was that minimum course requirements and grades were not being applied consistently across the state, and stakeholders (particularly business community members) wanted a diploma to have the same meaning regardless of where it was earned.

There were many benefits of establishing a HSEE requirement at that time. The CAHSEE set a statewide level of proficiency and minimum competency. It was highly reliable, provided a common measure of achievement, and had a high degree of alignment with the standards on which it was based when it began in 2004. It alerted schools, districts and educators to which students were in trouble academically and provided the basis for teachers and schools to provide services to students who needed help. The requirement to pass the CAHSEE became meaningful to students who were then motivated to do well on the examination. The CAHSEE results gave credibility to schools with population challenges (i.e., alternative and dropout recovery schools)—schools in which the effectiveness of the school is very difficult to demonstrate. It was a metric by which those schools could show high performance on state and federal accountability indicators.

In 2010, California adopted the CCSS in ELA and mathematics. The adoption of these standards put California on a course for college and career readiness for all students compared to the prior focus that many perceived as aimed at proficiency or competency. The new CCSS focused on skills needed to participate in the twenty-first century global economy and recognized the need to develop lifelong learners. In order to accomplish this, the standards aimed to build skills in creativity, innovation, collaboration, problem solving, and communication. This shift from a focus on proficiency to a focus on college and career readiness put in question how a HSEE could fit within that context. Ultimately, the adoption of the CCSS required a re-examination of our existing system of professional learning, curricula development, assessments, and accountability.

In 2013, California enacted landmark legislation that introduced the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) to greatly simplify the state's school finance system. The changes introduced by the LCFF represented a major shift in how California funded schools. LCFF was intended to provide additional resources for districts with significant numbers of students in need. The LCAP is a critical part of the LCFF. The LCAP describes a district's vision and relies on the use of data to establish and measure annual goals. The LCAP is now the tool used to identify the needs of students as well as the tool to identify the appropriate actions/services to meet the goals established within the plan; thus, lessening the reliance on a HSEE to identify students in need of remediation and also allowing for the identification to occur much earlier than high school.

Critical to the success of CCSS, LCFF, and LCAP has been the increased capacity of local Student Information Systems in support of the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). LEAs maintain robust, comparable, effective, and efficient student information systems that support daily program needs and promote the use of information for decision making by school, district, and county staff. Such robust Student Information Systems and the analytics that came about with them were not the norm at the time the

CAHSEE requirement first came about in California thus increasing the reliance on a state system to identify low achieving students.

Consistent with the new focus on college and career readiness as well as local, data-driven decisions, California implemented a new statewide assessment system. The new assessment system, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) supports a paradigm shift away from assessments that only function as part of top-down accountability systems to a more comprehensive assessment system that supports our schools and districts in improving teaching and learning and includes accountability as just one part of that picture. The CAASPP System includes interim assessments, designed to support teaching and learning throughout the year and the Digital Library, designed to support classroom-based, formative assessment processes. These are just two of the resources that emphasize the new approach to assessment that is taking shape in California. The emphasis is not solely on end-of-year measures but instead the state provides resources and tools that educators can utilize to measure academic achievement throughout the grades and throughout the year. The state has never before provided such numerous and high-quality tools that educators, schools, and districts can use to identify students in need of additional support.

California has embarked on a path toward preparing all students for college, career, and life in the twenty-first century through a focus on performance, equity, and continuous improvement. This path is supported by this comprehensive assessment system, classroom supports, longitudinal data systems, and local control accountability plans and funding formulas. This is a path where LEAs take on an increased role in designing the K-12 educational structures and supports students need to reach their full potential. Because of the comprehensive resources now available to identify students in academic need, it is no longer necessary for the CAHSEE to continue beyond 2018.

IV. Senate Bill 172 Information-Gathering Process

The primary purpose of California's new assessment system is to model and promote high-quality teaching and student learning activities. The new system should also produce scores for accountability, provide assessments and tools that represent the full breadth and depth of curriculum standards, and use students' testing time as effectively and efficiently as possible.

In considering the requirements of SB 172 and recommendations from the 2013 SSPI's report, the CDE identified fundamental questions about the purpose of the CAHSEE and current state graduation requirements, particularly related to California's current transition to new, updated assessment and accountability systems.

Overview of Activities of the Process

The CDE conducted a series of information gathering and evaluation activities between February and June 2016 that collected research evidence, policy and technical advice, and stakeholder feedback and recommendations regarding the continuation of HSEE graduation requirements and alternative pathways to graduation. The information collected from these activities provided the basis for the CDE to evaluate various options and for the SSPI to determine the recommendation provided in this report. The data collection activities conducted by the CDE are summarized in this section and described in detail in sections V, VI, VII, and VIII of this report.

Literature Review, Analysis, and Nationwide State Scan

Knowing the importance of gathering quality research and analyses, the CDE turned to an influential and well-respected education researcher, Michal Kurlaender, Associate Professor, University of California (UC) Davis, to lead a team of researchers in the investigation of evidence on the impact of HSEEs and in conducting a nationwide scan of other states. The CDE contracted with UC Davis to conduct research from February through June 2016 in three key areas:

- Literature review of evidence on the effects of: (1) HSEE policies and practices; (2) students failing the HSEE; and (3) emerging trends in HSEE practices

- Analysis of California's Class of 2016 assessment results that compared 2013–14 grade ten CAHSEE scores with 2014–15 grade eleven Smarter Balanced scores

- Nationwide scan of high school graduation requirements that investigated nationwide trends in graduation policies and provided detailed examples of graduation policies in six states

The literature review results were presented at the first two advisory panel meetings, and the analysis and nationwide scan results were presented at the second two advisory panel meetings. A summary of findings is described in Section IV, and the full report is provided in Appendix D.

Advisory Panel Meetings

In order to best include a wide range of representative stakeholders and experts from across the state, the CDE, as directed by the SSPI, formed and convened two concurrent advisory panels. The two concurrent advisory panels (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) included members representing areas specified in *EC* Section 60850(c)(6). Each advisory panel met once in February 2016 and once again in May 2016:

- February 2016 initial feedback meetings

  Advisory panel members were briefed on the purpose and requirements and presented UC Davis initial literature review and nationwide scan findings. The panel members provided initial feedback about the context in which the CAHSEE was created, the consequences of the CAHSEE, and California's current context related to high school graduation. This preliminary feedback was later used in conjunction with other information as the basis for discussion at the advisory panel's May 2016 meeting.

- May 2016 feedback for SSPI recommendations meetings

  Advisory panel members were presented additional research out of UC Davis, results of feedback from five regional meetings and an online survey, and options for SSPI recommendations based on the February 2016 meeting feedback. The panel members discussed at length the policy and technical issues of California's past and current context, considered and debated research findings and stakeholder feedback, and developed recommendations for the SSPI.

General feedback for the SSPI's recommendations of the advisory panel are listed in Section V. Details on the advisory panel description, initial feedback, detailed feedback, and comments are located in Appendices E, F, and G.

Regional Meetings

In order to gather input from a wide variety of stakeholders that included educators, parents, and the public, the CDE held five regional meetings throughout the state from April to May 2016 to hear individual's views on the continuation of a HSEE and alternative pathways to graduation. Each session included a brief informational summary on the current status of high school exit criteria, and then allowed for questions and comments. The regional meetings description and stakeholder feedback are provided in Appendix H.

Online Survey

In conjunction with the regional meetings, the CDE also posted an online survey, in both English and Spanish, on the CDE CAHSEE Web page and collected input from a wide variety of stakeholders, including the public, from April to May 2016 on the continuation of a HSEE and alternative pathways to satisfy graduation. Five survey questions were asked, and responders could also provide brief suggestions or comments. The online survey description and stakeholder feedback are provided in Appendix I.

Timeline of Activities: Table 2 shows the timeline of activities for this process.

Table 2. Pathways to Graduation Activities Timeline

October 2015	SB 172 approved by Governor on October 7, 2015.
November 2015	Developed and finalized project work plan and background information for advisory groups; contracted with UC Davis to conduct research; contracted with San Joaquin County Office of Education (COE) to coordinate activities, logistics, and reporting.
December 2015–February 2016	Arranged for advisory panel membership, regional meetings, schedules and agendas of meetings, materials, and venues. SB 172 enacted on January 1, 2016.
February 2016	Held advisory panel preliminary feedback meetings (Los Angeles and Sacramento).
March 2016	Held regional meetings (Tehama, Fresno, and Sacramento).
March–April 2016	Conducted online survey on CDE CAHSEE Web page.
April 2016	Held regional meetings (Los Angeles and Santa Clara).
April–May 2016	Conducted data analysis of online survey results and compiled findings.
May 2016	Held advisory panel recommendations meetings (Los Angeles and Sacramento).
June 2016	Compiled and synthesized information into draft report and recommendations.
June–August 2016	Refined draft report and recommendations.
September 2016	Present Legislative Report and recommendations to the SBE. Submit report and recommendations to policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature and to the Director of Finance.

V. Special Study: Literature Review, Analysis, and National State Scan

Study Description

UC Davis researchers conducted a special study, *High School Exit Exams: A Review of the Literature, Current State Reforms, and Analysis of California Assessment Data,* to inform the development of policy on graduation requirements for California. The study provided research evidence for policymakers, the CDE, and the SSPI about whether to continue administering a HSEE and what the possible alternatives would be to a state-developed and state-administered assessment such as the CAHSEE. The primary research questions addressed in the study included the following:

- What do other states require in terms of examinations as a requirement for graduation?

- To what extent are states using examinations other than state-developed examinations to determine college and career readiness as a graduation requirement?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the most widely used high school assessments, college entrance examinations, and high school equivalency tests, with respect to being used as a graduation requirement?

- What are the most commonly used alternative pathways to a high school diploma that do not employ some form of on-demand assessment?

To address these research questions, the work of the UC Davis researchers included the following activities:

- Review of the research literature on the use and impact of HSEEs.

- Nationwide state scan and data collection of high school graduation policies and requirements that included an overview of current practices and report on alternative pathways and HSEEs used in the United States.

- Analysis of the suitability of existing high school assessments, college entrance examinations, and high school equivalency tests and their potential for use as a graduation requirement.

Study Findings

The conclusions of the researchers provides multiple views from which to consider the impact of high school exit exams. The research literature shows the implementation of exit exams reduces graduation rates, but the costs of not graduating due to failing an exit exam may be small. However, this impact is not the same for all students, as both the research data analysis and the research literature points out that some subgroups are disproportionally affected. Clear evidence, combined with shifts in education policy driven largely by CCSS and accompanying assessments are leading to transitions in state policies around exit exams and graduation requirements in general.

The full, detailed UC Davis special study report, *High School Exit Exams: A Review of the Literature, Current State Reforms, and Analysis of California Assessment Data,* is provided in Appendix D.

VI. Advisory Panel Feedback

a. Advisory Panel Feedback to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The advisory panel reached general consensus on proposed options for consideration by the SSPI through participation in four advisory panel meetings and lengthy discussions. The members reviewed UC Davis research and stakeholder feedback; considered current state and federal requirements; and evaluated proposed options in light of state and local contexts. The following summarizes the options:

- Remove the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation. This acknowledges that California's education context has changed since the CAHSEE was first implemented.

- Allow more time for implementation of the LCFF and LCAP before considering changes to graduation requirements. This acknowledges that systems are in a period of transition and that it takes time to be fully established at the local level.

- Consideration of the state's role related to graduation requirements could focus on: (1) identifying high-quality projects; (2) providing support to innovation; (3) develop and provide state-supported assessment resources and tools; (4) provide guidance, resources, and tools for teachers, schools, LEAs, and the public; and (5) make recommendations to policymakers and control agencies.

b. Themes of Advisory Panel Discussions

In developing recommendations, advisory panel members in their discussions faced difficult choices in evaluating graduation requirement options that will provide the highest quality education for all of California's students, regardless of their background, circumstances, skills, abilities, interests, and needs. The members often discussed options and concerns reflecting four integrated themes: equity, effectiveness, efficiency, and excellence.

Equity

Advisory panel members voiced the importance of ensuring that, if the CAHSEE is eliminated, students at risk of falling behind be identified as early as elementary school and provided appropriate supports to successfully graduate, particularly students with disabilities and ELs. Members concluded that important strides currently are being made at the local level to implement CCSS, LCFF, LCAP, and Smarter Balanced assessments. LEAs are routinely identifying students at risk, often utilizing robust student information systems that were not in use when CAHSEE was first implemented, including students with disabilities. Due diligence at both the state and local levels is needed to ensure that these

activities continue and become well established throughout the state. The new systems must include pathways for students with disabilities at the beginning, and students must have multiple opportunities for ongoing success.

Effectiveness

Advisory panel members stressed that the current context calls for partnership between state and local levels, with the common goals of improved teaching and student learning. To that end, advisory panel members, particularly business community representatives, recognized that the CAHSEE approach has resulted in limited effectiveness in meeting its purpose of improving student achievement. Advisory panel members emphasized that the state's role in the current instructional, assessment, and accountability context should be to provide guidance, resources, and tools rather than top-down, one-size-fits-all requirements. Advisory panel members commented that graduation laws currently in place, coupled with current reforms, are a better approach and that policies reflect a more effective and efficient focus than past top-down requirements such as the CAHSEE.

Efficiency

Advisory panel members agreed during the February 2016 meetings that the CAHSEE was costly and time consuming at both the state and local levels. Advisory panel members provided suggestions for using cost savings resulting from elimination of the CAHSEE, such as additional funds to increase intensive individual interventions for at-risk students and professional development for teachers in implementing current reforms. At the May 2016 advisory panel meetings, members were consistent in their conclusion that adding a new HSEE requirement would be costly in terms of time and resources and would be the wrong approach at this time.

Excellence

An advisory panel member focused on excellence for students in making the following comment:

> Developing a list of state minimum competencies cheapens what the high school and education as a whole should be about, which is getting students to the next level (CCR). Accepting a minimum level as competent does a disservice to all students, especially students of color, low socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities. How will they know that meeting the minimum levels falls short of being enough to get a good job, support a family, and sustain their lives? The minimum competencies change and will change in the future. The educational system should not mask the truth in educating students. It should teach

students what they need to know, teach them how to take control of their own education, and hold them to what is known to be the next level.

Details about the advisory panel are provided in Appendix G.

VII. Pathways to Graduation: Regional Meetings

The CDE conducted five regional input meetings between March and April of 2016. The purpose of the regional input meetings was to gather feedback from the community about the: (1) continuation of the HSEE and (2) alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements after 2017–18.

The regional meetings were advertised through notifications to the California Teachers Association (CTA), California Parent Teachers Association (CAPTA), COE Regional Assessment Network (RAN) members, Chambers of Commerce, and LEAs in the regions. Groups notified passed information on to students and student groups as well as community groups. Despite extensive notifications, the participation rate was low.

The meetings were one-hour events that began with a brief presentation designed to provide participants with the background and impetus for the meetings. Participants were encouraged to provide statements and/or make comments and recommendations in an open-ended discussion format. Participants' questions also were welcomed and addressed, as appropriate.

Consistently, most or all participants expressed comments opposed to the continuation of the HSEE and supported a model that offered measurement options within a state-defined framework.

Details about these meetings are provided in Appendix H.

VIII. Survey Results

The Pathways to Graduation Survey was made available in English and in Spanish on the CDE CAHSEE Web page from March 17 to April 18, 2016. Information about the survey was distributed electronically to stakeholder agencies, networks, and organizations along with a request to forward the links to the survey to others who may be interested in responding. Business cards with the CAHSEE Web page information were distributed at the five Pathways to Graduation regional meetings to help promote the survey. A flyer about the survey was created and distributed to the Pathways to Graduation Advisory Panel members, CTA, CAPTA, and COE RAN members and Listserv for further distribution to their members and to any other interested parties.

A total of 2,378 responses were received. The majority of respondents agreed that students should be required to pass one or more examinations to graduate and should be required to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade and that California should provide multiple pathways to graduation. Conversely, respondents disagreed that California should increase the minimum course requirements and local governing boards should be able to establish their own graduation requirements.

Details about the survey results are provided in Appendix I.

IX. State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Recommendation

The CAHSEE retains education reforms initiated in the 1999 legislative session and is based on content standards for ELA and mathematics that were adopted by the SBE in 1997. In the meantime, California has made a paradigm shift from an accountability-focused assessment system to a system that is focused on the preparation of students for postsecondary success in college and career through increased student learning and improved teaching. Based on the feedback from stakeholders, the research conducted by UC Davis, and because of the resources now available as a result of California's comprehensive paradigm shift, the SSPI recommends removal of the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation.

The context for stakeholder feedback includes the adoption of the CCSS in 2010, implementation of LCFF and LCAP in 2013, development of the CAASPP System assessments, and increased capacity of local Student Information Systems in support of the CALPADS. Schools and LEAs are implementing these initiatives with increased levels of local control and flexibility. Local tools and resources support the evaluation of daily program needs and promote the use of information for decision making by school, district, and county staff.

California has embarked on a path toward preparing all students for college, career, and life in the twenty-first century through a focus on performance, equity, and continuous improvement. This is a path where LEAs take on an increased role in designing the K-12 educational structures and supports students need to reach their full potential. Because of the comprehensive resources now available to identify students in academic need at lower grades, it is no longer necessary for the CAHSEE to continue beyond 2018.

In addition to repealing the HSEE requirement, California needs to support LEAs in their coordination of alternative pathways appropriate for their student populations as allowed under existing law (*EC* Section 51225.3). The focus of resources needs to be on the expansion of the CAASPP System and the implementation of LCFF, LCAP, and federal ESSA before considering changes to graduation requirements. This recommendation acknowledges that the system is in a period of transition and will take time, in terms of local implementation, to become established.

Appendix A

Education Code Sections Related to Senate Bill 172

Education Code Sections added by Senate Bill 172

60640(c)(6)
The State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) shall convene an advisory panel, consisting of, but not necessarily limited to, secondary teachers, school administrators, school board members, parents, a student chosen from among the two finalists who were not appointed by the Governor to serve as the student member on the state board pursuant to Section 33000.5, representatives of a dropout recovery charter school operating pursuant to subdivision (g) of Section 47605.1, measurement experts, and individuals with expertise in assessing English learners and pupils with disabilities, to provide recommendations to the Superintendent on the continuation of the HSEE, described in Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 60850), and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements pursuant to Sections 51224.5 and 51225.3.

60851.5.
Notwithstanding Section 60851, the administration of the high school exit examination, and the requirement that each pupil completing grade 12 successfully pass the high school exit examination as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school, shall be suspended for the 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18 school years.

60851.6.
(a) Notwithstanding Section 60851 or any other law, the governing board or body of a local educational agency, and the department on behalf of state special schools, shall grant a diploma of graduation from high school to any pupil who completed grade 12 in the 2003–04 school year or a subsequent school year and has met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the high school exit examination.

(b) For purposes of this section, “local educational agency” means a school district, county office of education, or charter school.

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until July 31, 2018, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before July 31, 2018, deletes or extends that date.

Education Code Sections Related to Existing High School Graduation Requirements

51224.5
(a) The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall include algebra as part of the mathematics area of study pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 51220.

(b) Before receiving a diploma of graduation from high school, a pupil shall complete at least one course, or a combination of the two courses required for graduation pursuant to subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 51225.3, that meets or exceeds the rigor of Algebra I or Mathematics I, that is aligned to the content standards adopted by the state board pursuant to Sections 60605.8 and 60605.11.

(c) A pupil who, before enrollment in grade 9, completes a course in Algebra I or Mathematics I, or mathematics courses of equal rigor, that is aligned to the content standards adopted by the state board, is exempt from subdivision (b), but is not exempt from the requirement that the pupil complete two courses in mathematics while enrolled in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, as specified in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 51225.3.

(d) A pupil who has completed a course or courses that meet or exceed the content standards for Algebra I adopted by the state board pursuant to Section 60605, as that section read on June 30, 2011, shall be deemed to have satisfied the graduation requirement specified in subdivision (b).

51225.3

(a) A pupil shall complete all of the following while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, in order to receive a diploma of graduation from high school:

(1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified:

(A) Three courses in English.

(B) Two courses in mathematics. If the governing board of a school district requires more than two courses in mathematics for graduation, the governing board of the school district may award a pupil up to one mathematics course credit pursuant to Section 51225.35.

(C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.

(D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics.

(E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

(F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.

(2) Other coursework requirements adopted by the governing board of the school district.

(b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study that may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, career technical education classes offered in high schools, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary educational institution. Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.

Appendix B
2015–16 California Assessment System

	Content	Test	Type	Participants	Grade Level(s)	Window
CAASPP	ELA Mathematics	Smarter Balanced Format: CAT or P/P	MC SR CR PT	All students at designated grade levels *Exceptions:* • Eligible students participating in alternate assessments • ELA only – English learners (ELs) who are in their first 12 months of attending a school in the United States	3–8 and 11	Grades 3–8: Begins when 66 percent of instructional days completed up to last day of instruction Grade 11: Begins when 80 percent of instructional days completed up to last day of instruction Grades 3–8 and 11: LEA designates up to 6 testing periods which must be at least 25 consecutive instructional days within the window
		California Alternate Assessment Format: CBT	Field Test	Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the Smarter Balanced assessments even with accessibility supports and whose individualized education program indicates assessment with an alternate test	3–8 and 11	April 11 to June 17, 2016
	Science	CST Format: P/P	MC	All students unless their individualized education program indicates assessment with CMA or CAPA	5, 8, and 10	25-day window that includes 12 instructional days before and after completion of 85 percent of instructional days
		CMA Format: P/P	MC	Students whose individualized education program indicates assessment with CMA		
		CAPA Format: P/P	PA	Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the CST even with accessibility supports and whose individualized education program indicates assessment with CAPA		
	Reading/Language Arts	STS Format: P/P	MC	ELs at no cost to the LEA or non-ELs (e.g., students in dual immersion classrooms) at the cost of the LEA	2–11 Optional	

Legend:

CAASPP – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress
CAHSEE – California High School Exit Examination
CAPA – California Alternate Performance Assessment
CAT – Computer-adaptive test
CBT – Computer-based test
CELDT – California English Language Development Test
CHSPE – California High School Proficiency Examination
CMA – California Modified Assessment
CR – Constructed response
CST – California Standards Test
ELA – English language arts/literacy
ELs - English learners
HSET – High School Equivalency Tests
LEA – Local educational agency
MC – Multiple choice
NAEP – National Assessment of Educational Progress
PA – Performance assessment
PFT – Physical Fitness Test
P/P – Paper-pencil
PT – Performance task
SR – Selected response
STS – Standards-based Tests in Spanish

2015–16 California Assessment System

	Content	Test	Type	Participants	Grade Level(s)	Window
CAHSEE	ELA Mathematics	CAHSEE		Suspended for 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18		
CELDT	Listening Speaking Reading Writing	CELDT Format: P/P	MC CR PA	Initial – All students whose home language is not English Annual – Identified ELs until they are re-designated as fluent English proficient	K–12	Initial – Within 30 calendar days after enrolling in a California public school Annual – July 1 through October 31
PFT	Aerobic Capacity Body Composition Abdominal Strength and Endurance Trunk Extensor Strength and Flexibility Upper Body Strength and Endurance Flexibility	*FITNESSGRAM*[3] Format: P/P	PA	All students, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a physical education class or participate in a block schedule	5, 7, and 9	February 1 through May 31
CHSPE	For information on the optional CHSPE for 2015–16, visit the California Department of Education (CDE) CHSPE Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sp/.					
HSET	California has approved the use of three high school equivalency tests (i.e., General Educational Development [GED®] Test, High School Equivalency Test [HiSET], and Test Assessing Secondary Completion [TASC]). For more information on these three optional tests visit the CDE HSET Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/gd/.					
NAEP	For information on NAEP for 2015–16, contact Julie Williams, Education Programs Consultant, Assessment Development and Administration Division by phone at 916-319-0408 or by e-mail at julwilli@cde.ca.gov.					

Legend:

CAASPP – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress
CAHSEE – California High School Exit Examination
CAPA – California Alternate Performance Assessment
CAT – Computer-adaptive test
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PA – Performance assessment
PFT – Physical Fitness Test
P/P – Paper-pencil
PT – Performance task
SR – Selected response
STS – Standards-based Tests in Spanish

Appendix C

Estimated Testing Time
Grade Level by Test, in Minutes

Grade	STAR Science		CELDT	CAHSEE	Smarter Balanced						TOTAL Minutes	
					ELA		Math		Total ELA & Math		Min.	Max.
					CAT Items	PT Task	CAT Items	PT Task	CAT Items	PT Task		
K		-	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**0**	**80**
1		-	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**0**	**80**
2		-	145	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**0**	**145**
3		-	145	-	90	120	90	60	180	180	**360**	**505**
4		-	145	-	90	120	90	60	180	180	**360**	**505**
5	CST	140	145	-	90	120	90	60	180	180	**480**	**645**
	CMA	120										
6		-	145	-	90	120	120	60	210	180	**390**	**535**
7		-	145	-	90	120	120	60	210	180	**390**	**535**
8	CST	120	145	-	90	120	120	60	210	180	**510**	**670**
	CMA	135										
9			145	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**0**	**145**
10	CST	120 - 240	145	390	-	-	-	-	-	-	**510**	**775**
	CMA	150										
11		-	145	0 - 780	120	120	120	90	240	210	**450**	**1375**
12		-	145	0 - 1950	-	-	-	-	-	-	**0**	**2095**

Prepared 07/22/2015 by the California Department of Education.

Legend:

CAHSEE – California High School Exit Examination
CAT – Computer-adaptive test
CELDT – California English Language Development Test
CMA – California Modified Assessment
CST – California Standards Test
ELA – English language arts/literacy
PT – Performance Task
STAR – Standardized Testing and Reporting

Appendix D

HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE, CURRENT STATE REFORMS, AND ANALYSIS OF CALIFORNIA ASSESSMENT DATA

Report Submitted to the California Department of Education
June 27, 2016

Michal Kurlaender, Paco Martorell, and Sherrie Reed
With Research Support from:
Alexandria Hurtt and Matt Naven

University of California, Davis

Contract Number: CN140164

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2006, students graduating from California public high schools needed to demonstrate competency on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to earn a high school diploma. For nearly a decade, a great majority (between 93% and 96%) of California high school students met the requirement by spring of their senior year (Becker, Hardoin, Wise, & Watters, 2016). Recently, with the adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), the role of CAHSEE in California's assessment system and graduation requirements has been called into question. Effective January 1, 2016, California Senate Bill 172 (Liu) suspended the California High School Exit Exam administration and graduation requirement.

The suspension of the CAHSEE was accompanied by a call for an advisory panel of school leaders from across the state to make recommendations about the continuation or repeal of CAHSEE, as well as a review of alternative pathways to graduation. In response to Senate Bill 172, the California Department of Education tasked researchers at University of California, Davis with helping the advisory panel consider different dimensions of high school exit exams, specifically the following: (1) the research evidence on the impact of high school exit exams; (2) state policies and practices surrounding high school graduation requirements and exit exams across the country; and (3) an analysis of the performance of California high school students on both the CAHSEE and the newly administered SBAC in recent years. Our full report details the findings in each of these three areas and a brief report of findings are provided in this Executive Summary.

A high school exit exam is any state mandated assessment or series of assessments that requires students to earn a passing score in order to receive a high school diploma. These exit exams, whether implemented as comprehensive exams or end-of-course exams, provide a common standard that all high school graduates in a state must meet. Since the mid-1990s, more than half of the states in the U.S. have used exit exams as part of their high school graduation requirements. Yet, high school exit exams are also the subject of much debate among policymakers and other stakeholders. Recently, policies surrounding state high school exit exam have changed, with many states repealing or suspending the use of comprehensive high school exit exams and replacing those requirements with end-of-course exams or multiple measures and alternative pathways for high school graduation.

The impacts of high school exit exams are well documented in the research literature. The adoption of high school exit exams as state policy reduces high school persistence and graduation rates (Baker & Lang, 2013; Dee & Jacob,2006; Marchant & Paulson, 2005; Reardon, Atteberry, Arshan, & Kurlaender, 2009; Warren, Jenkins & Kulick, 2006). In addition to lower persistence and graduation rates, the implementation of high school exit exams leads to increased time to graduation (Bishop & Mane, 2001) and increased rates of GED receipt (Baker & Lang, 2013; Bishop & Mane, 2001; Warren, Jenkins & Kulick, 2006).

Another line of research finds that students who barely fail a high school exit exam on the first attempt are no less likely to graduate from high school than those who barely pass (Martorell, 2005; Papay, Murnane & Willett, 2010; Reardon, Arshan, Atteberry & Kurlaender, 2010). Failing later exit exam attempts, closer to the end of high school, however, does reduce the likelihood of graduating (Martorell, 2005). Even with this decreased likelihood of graduating, there appears to be little long-term impact, including college enrollment, college degree attainment, or lifetime earnings, for those individuals who narrowly miss the passing cutoff and fail to earn a high school diploma (Clark and Martorell, 2014; Papay, Murnane & Willett, 2010; Reardon, Arshan, Atteberry & Kurlaender, 2010).

In 2012, twenty-five (25) states, representing 69 percent of the nation's students, administered high school exit exams (McIntosh, 2012). The aims for high school exit exams have changed for many states since 2012. With the adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), or similarly aligned state standards, many states are shifting the focus of assessments to explicitly align with college and career readiness standards, lessening the focus on high school exit exams in particular. Currently, about sixteen (16) states use high school exit exams, including both comprehensive exams, and end-of-course (EOC) exams.

In our scan of high school graduation requirements across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, we note several trends in high school exit exams and high school graduation requirements more generally. Only one state currently implements a distinct comprehensive exam (one that was state-developed and state-administered), five states use either the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) or Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments as high school exit exams, and other states are currently using or transitioning to end-of-course exams. End-of-course exams may capture a broader range of subject knowledge than comprehensive exams, testing students on science and history in addition to math and ELA, but the content areas vary by state. The move toward the administration of a U.S. civics test is also a developing trend. While we observe an increase in the universal use of the ACT and SAT assessments in many states, we

do not observe any states that are currently using college entrance exams as a high school exit exam or graduation requirements. In addition to credit and testing requirements, many states include other measures or requirements for graduation including community service or academic and career planning.

For California, we investigated high school exit exams through analysis of two years of assessment data, comparing student performance on the CAHSEE in 2013-2014 and the SBAC in 2014-2015. Our examination of student performance on the two assessments reveals differences in the distribution of student performance. It is much more common for students to not meet SBAC standards than to fail CAHSEE, confirming that the CAHSEE passing cutoff is at a much lower achievement level than meeting SBAC standards.

Our analysis also reveals large unconditional gaps in test performance by demographic characteristics and that certain subgroups are disproportionately represented among the group that failed CAHSEE or did poorly on SBAC. Looking at those who "failed" the CAHSEE and SBAC, we observe that males do disproportionately worse than females on both assessments, especially in ELA. When considering student performance by race/ethnicity, we find that Black and Hispanic students are overrepresented amongst students with low test scores on the CAHSEE and SBAC. The students who make up the largest proportion of students who failed the exams compared to their representation in the overall population are economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. When we control for additional factors that may influence test performance, using regression analysis, we note that the magnitude of the test score gaps decreases somewhat. However, significant performance gaps between subgroups remain.

The evidence included in this report provides multiple views from which to consider the impact of high school exit exams. The research literature shows the implementation of exit exams reduces graduation rates, but also that the costs of not graduating due to failing an exit exam may be small. Importantly, this impact is not the same for all students, as both our data analysis and the research literature points out that some subgroups are disproportionally affected. Clear evidence, combined with shifts in education policy driven largely by CCSS and accompanying assessments are leading to transitions in state policies around exit exams and graduation requirements in general. These findings are described in greater detail in our full report. We hope that policymakers and other stakeholders find the review and analysis we provide informative, as they determine the future of CAHSEE and high school graduation requirements in California.

High School Exit Exams: A Review of the Literature, Current State Reforms, And Analysis of California Assessment Data

Since 2006, students graduating from California public high schools needed to demonstrate competency on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to earn a high school diploma. For nearly a decade, a great majority (between 93% and 96%) of California high school students, excluding those with disabilities, met the requirement by spring of their senior year (Becker, Hardoin, Wise, & Watters, 2016). Recently, with the adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), the role of CAHSEE in California's assessment system and graduation requirements has been called into question. Effective January 1, 2016, California Senate Bill 172 (Liu) suspended the California High School Exit Exam administration and graduation requirement for the high school graduating classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018.

The California state legislature passed Senate Bill SB2X in March 1999 requiring the implementation of a statewide high school exit exam in order to improve student achievement. California's High School Exit Exam was first required for the Class of 2004 who took the exam in their 9th, 10th and 11th grade years. However, in 2003, the State Board of Education deferred the CAHSEE requirement for two years after an evaluation suggested that schools needed more time to prepare students. The implementation of CAHSEE continued and the Class of 2006 became the first class of high school graduates required to pass the exam to earn a diploma (Reardon, Atteberry, Arshan, & Kurlaender, 2009).

Now, ten years later, the California state legislature has suspended CAHSEE for two years while options for high school graduation requirements are being considered. The suspension of the CAHSEE was accompanied by a call for an advisory panel of school leaders from across the state to make recommendations about the continuation or repeal of CAHSEE, as well as a review of alternative pathways to graduation. In response to Senate Bill 172, the California Department of Education tasked researchers at University of California, Davis with helping the advisory panel consider different dimensions of high school exit exams, specifically the following: (1) the research evidence on the impact of high school exit exams; (2) the variety of policies and practices surrounding high school graduation requirements and exit exams in states across the country; and (3) an analysis of the performance of California high school students on both the CAHSEE and the newly administered SBAC in recent years. This report details the findings in each of these three areas.

1. High School Exit Exams: A Review of the Research Evidence

Defining High School Exit Exams

A high school exit exam is any state mandated assessment or series of assessments that requires students to earn a passing score in order to receive a high school diploma. High school exit exams are highly varied from state to state, as will be described in detail in Section 2. Generally, high school exit exams can be categorized into two types: (a) a comprehensive, "standards- based" assessment or (b) an end-of-course exam (EOC). Comprehensive exit exams are taken by all students within the same grade level and typically assess multiple subjects, including mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) normed to specific grade level standards. End-of-course exit exams, in contrast, are subject-specific and are administered after a student completes a particular course (e.g., Algebra II). While states with comprehensive exit exams typically test material taught through the 10th grade, some states, particularly those that administer end-of-course exams, may include material taught through the 11th or 12th grade, as EOCs are aligned to course content rather than a specific grade level.

High school exit exams provide a common standard to which a state holds high school graduates accountable. These common standards within states, however, may reflect various levels of competency across states. While in some states high school exit exams are designed to assess the minimum competencies expected of a high school graduate, often tests of basic skills below 9th grade (Baker & Lang, 2013), in other states high school exit exams may reflect more difficult or rigorous high school standards (Warren, Jenkins & Kulick, 2006).

High school exit exams are the subject of much debate among policymakers and other stakeholders. Proponents believe the exams provide incentives for both schools and students; that is, that under such requirements, schools would be more likely to provide better quality instruction for struggling students, and students at risk of failing will work harder to learn the skills necessary to graduate. Further, proponents of high school exit exams posit that employers will have a clear signal and assurance that high school graduates have at least a minimum set of academic skills. On the other hand, opponents of high school exit exams believe the exams discourage some students from completing school, citing that students who struggle academically, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as low-income or non-English speaking homes, may be more likely to drop out of school if they perceive they are unlikely to pass the exit exams (Reardon, Arshan, Atteberry, & Kurlaender, 2010).

The arguments of both proponents and opponents point to important considerations in evaluating the impact of high school exit exams. First, the existence of a state policy requiring a high school exit exam for graduation may itself have an impact on school and/or student outcomes. Second, failing a high school exit exam may have differential impacts on various groups of students. Finally, while the intent of a high school exit exam may be to equalize the outcomes of high school graduates, an exam could instead negatively impact historically disadvantaged groups of students. Researchers have investigated the intended and unintended consequences of high school exit exams, exploring both types of questions: what are the impacts of exit exam policies, and what is the impact of failing an exit exam?

In the sections that follow, we summarize our review of research studies about the impact of high school exit exams. We first describe the research methods employed in the majority of studies, and then discuss the effects of state policies that require students to pass high school exit exams in order to earn a diploma on a number of aggregate outcome measures. Next, we review the evidence on studies that evaluate the impact of failing a high school exit exam. Finally, we explore the differential impacts of high school exit exams for subgroups of high school students.

Research Evidence on the Impact of High School Exit Exams

The research on high school exit exam policies commonly centers on measuring the impact of exam implementation on high school dropout rates, graduation rates, the average academic performance of students, and postsecondary outcomes, such as college enrollment and earnings. Similarly, researchers also examine the impact of failing a high school exit exam, focusing on individuals' outcomes, including the likelihood of dropping out of high school, graduating from high school, academic performance, and postsecondary opportunities, such as college enrollment and employment. To draw conclusions about the relationship between these commonly examined outcomes and high school exit exams, researchers employ a variety of analytic methods. In this review, we focus solely on quantitative studies, privileging those that utilize quasi-experimental methods with an effort to draw causal conclusions.

Effects of State Policies Requiring High School Exit Exams

Results from studies that evaluate the impact of a high school exit exam as a graduation requirement generally indicate that the adoption of high school exit exams negatively impact high school graduation rates (Baker & Lang, 2013; Dee & Jacob, 2006; Marchant & Paulson, 2005; Reardon et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2006).1 Using data from the 2000 Census, Dee and Jacob (2006) find that high

school exit exams decrease the probability of graduating from high school by about .6 percentage points. Also using national data, though restricting the sample to high school students prior to No Child Left Behind, Baker and Lang (2013) find that states with exit exams have lower graduation rates than states without exit exams. However, when controlling for differences in cohorts and state policy context, high school exit exams appear to have little impact on graduation rates. Baker and Lang (2013) also note that the rigor of the high school exit exam matters; while minimum competency exams, which they define as tests of basic skills below 9th grade, have little impact on high school graduation rates, exit exams that are designed to assess performance on high school standards negatively impact graduation rates (Baker & Lang, 2013).

In four large urban school districts in California, Reardon and colleagues (2009) similarly find that the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) decreases graduation rates. Specifically, they compare the graduating Class of 2005, who took the CAHSEE but were not required to pass in order to receive a diploma, to the graduating classes of 2006 and 2007, who were required to pass in order to graduate. Importantly, Reardon et al. (2009) compare students with similar scores on the California Standards Test (CST) in prior years across the cohorts. They find that for students with low academic skills, as demonstrated on prior tests, the implementation of the CAHSEE exam negatively impacts student persistence in both 11th and 12th grade, with a sharp decrease in graduation rates. Further, this negative impact disproportionately effects African-American, Hispanic and Asian students as compared to White students, and females as compared to males, a finding that will be discussed in more detail below. Finally, they also conclude that despite the purported goals of the CAHSEE legislation, the introduction of the high school exit exam did not improve aggregate achievement among high school students in the state (as measured by the CSTs) (Reardon et al., 2009).

While the research clearly indicates that high school exit exams lead to decreased rates of high school graduation, the research evidence on the effect of high school exit exams on dropout rates is mixed. Dee and Jacob (2006) find that in Minnesota, high school exit exams decrease dropout rates for high school students overall, but increase the dropout rates of 12th graders. However, in an examination of national data, researchers find no relationship between high school exit exams and dropout rates (Bishop & Mane, 2001; Jacob, 2001). One reason for

[1] To understand the effect of a state policy that requires students to pass a high school exit exam for high school graduation, researchers often compare the outcomes before and after the introduction of such a policy. This is typically done employing a differences-in-differences method. In the case of high school exit exam policies, researchers are comparing the outcomes of students who were not subject to an exit exam as part of their graduation requirements to those students who were required to take and pass an exit exam to earn a diploma. The difference in these outcomes is then interpreted as the impact of the policy.

the mixed evidence may be the challenges associated with measuring high school dropout rates. The definition of high school dropout varies from state to state, making state comparisons difficult. Additionally, many states are also unable to accurately track students as they transfer schools or leave the state, leading to less reliable estimations of dropouts.

Lower graduation rates but steady dropout rates may also be explained by increased time to graduation (Bishop & Mane, 2001) and increased rates of GED receipt (Baker & Lang, 2013; Bishop & Mane, 2001; Warren et al., 2006). Using national data, Bishop and Mane (2001) find that students in states with high school exit exams have a greater number of students that require an extra year to earn a high school diploma, which may be the product of numerous retakes of the exit exam. Further, some studies report that, in states where high school exit exams are a requirement for graduation, a higher proportion of students earn a GED (Baker & Lang, 2013; Bishop & Mane, 2001; Warren et al., 2006). Therefore, students may be leaving high school and taking the GED test rather than staying in school, passing the necessary exit exam, and earning a high school diploma.

The presence of high school exit exams may also be associated with other outcomes. When comparing states with and without exit exams, researchers suggest there is a positive relationship between high school exit exams and college attendance and earnings (Bishop & Mane, 2001), as well as a negative relationship between high school exit exams and incarceration (Baker & Lang, 2013). This evidence is, however, simply correlational, and does not conclude that high school exit exams cause higher college attendance and differential earnings or lower incarceration. Nevertheless, the presence of these relationships may itself suggest different policy contexts in states that require high school exit exams.

Impact of Failing a High School Exit Exam

In addition to the impact of high school exit exam policies on aggregate student outcomes, the research also examines the effect of failing a high school exit exam on individuals.2 Research demonstrates that, in general, students who barely fail a high school exit exam on the first attempt are no less likely to graduate from high school than those who barely pass (Martorell, 2005; Papay, Murnane & Willett, 2010; Reardon et al., 2010). In an examination of student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in the early 1990s, Matorell (2005) finds that failing the initial test has no impact on eventually graduating. Similarly, Papay

[2] To draw conclusions about the impact on individuals, this research commonly uses regression discontinuity to compare students, assumed to be similar in ability, who scored just below the passing score cutoff to those who scored just above the passing score cutoff.

et al. (2010) report small effects of failing a high school exit exam for students in states that use more rigorous exams, and that effect fades after a year of policy implementation, allowing for the conclusion of little to no impact. Similarly, in a study of California high school students, Reardon and colleagues (2010) find no discernible effects to failing the exit exam, and suggest this may be due to a low passing threshold. Students scoring just above and below the passing cut off for CAHSEE may in fact be failing to graduate high school for other reasons. Reardon et al. (2010) hypothesize that there may be larger effects for individuals failing the CAHSEE if the passing score was sufficiently higher and more of a barrier to graduation.

However, as exam attempts increase, the likelihood of graduating decreases (Martorell, 2005). In Texas, for those who fail to pass on the final opportunity to retake an exit exam, the likelihood of graduating decreases by 44 percentage points (Martorell, 2005). The increased likelihood of dropping out of high school in 12th grade after failing an exit exam on a final attempt is accompanied by an increase in GED acquisition (Martorell, 2005). For students in Texas who fail the "last chance" exam, the probability of earning a GED increases by seven percentage points (Martorell, 2005).

Similar to the research on the impact of high school exit exam policies, research exploring the impact of failing a high school exit exam on the likelihood of dropping out of high school also provides mixed evidence. Martorell (2005) finds no effect of failing the exit exam on the probability of dropping out of school in Texas, which is possibly due to the fact that students have an unlimited number of attempts at the test. In contrast, Ou (2010) finds that in New Jersey, those students who failed the math portion of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Exam between 2002 and 2006 were one percentage point more likely to drop out of high school, and those who failed the English language arts portion of the exam were one-half a percentage point more likely to drop out.

Aside from the effect that failing a high school exit exam in a final attempt has on completing high school, failing a high school exit exam has little impact on academic achievement or postsecondary outcomes (Clark & Martorell, 2014; Reardon et al., 2010). Reardon and colleagues (2010) find no effect of failing the California High School Exit Exam on standardized assessment scores or high school course taking in subsequent years. Further, Clark & Martorell (2014) find little to no effect on college degree attainment or lifetime earnings for those students denied a high school diploma in Texas due to failing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills compared to those who earned a diploma but were just slightly above the cutoff score on the exit exam.

Differential Impacts of High School Exit Exams

Despite the evidence that the implementation of high school exit exams negatively impacts high school graduation rates, especially for those failing exit exams on their last opportunity, this impact is not the same for all students. The negative impacts are greater in magnitude for historically disadvantaged youth. For example, through an examination of national data, Dee and Jacob (2006) find that the implementation of high school exit exams decreases graduation rates by less than one percentage point overall, but that this effect is nearly three times as large for Black students. Similarly, Reardon et al. (2009) find that the decline in student persistence rates in 11th and 12th grade, as well as high school graduation rates, disproportionately occurs for both minorities and women. Graduation rates declined by 15 to 19 percentage points for low achieving Black, Hispanic, and Asian students when the exit exam was implemented, and declined by only one percentage point (not statistically significant) for similar White students (Reardon et al., 2009). In addition, the negative effect of the exit exam on graduation rates is almost twice as large for females as for males (Reardon et al., 2009).

Further, researchers have documented differential effects of failing a high school exit exam (Papay et al., 2010). Findings reveal that for most students, failing the first attempt on the high school exit exam has little impact on the likelihood of eventually earning a diploma. However, urban low-income students are less likely to graduate high school (Martorell, 2005; Papay et al., 2010), and more likely to drop out of high school, after failing an exit exam on the first attempt (Papay et al., 2010).

The reasons for these disproportionate impacts are many and varied. They may be the result of varying rigor, content, and minimum passing scores of high school exit exams across states. They may also be the result of differences in student preparation and the quality of schools that students attend. In their California study, Reardon and colleagues (2009) review some of the mechanisms of these differential effects, ruling out school quality as the cause of varying impacts for student subgroups. These researchers hypothesize that one possible underlying reason for the greater negative impact of high school exit exams for some students may be stereotype threat, where some subgroups of students (based on race and/or gender) negatively perceive of their ability to successfully pass the exit exam and graduate high school on account of existing stereotypes associated with that subgroup's performance on such tasks.

2. High School Exit Exams Across the Nation: Current State Policy Trends

There is clear evidence on the negative—albeit slight—impact of exit exams on high school persistence and graduation rates (Baker & Lang, 2013; Dee & Jacob, 2006; Marchant & Paulson, 2005; Reardon et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2006). Much like California, controversy surrounding the use of high school exit exams in many states remains. In this section, we report our findings from a scan of high school graduation requirements across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Our report highlights the transitory climate of state high school exit exam policies, including trends of declining use of comprehensive high school exit exams, increased use of end-of-course exams, and implementation of multiple measures and alternative pathways for high school graduation. We report, with some ambiguity due to the transitory climate, how states are using exit exams, the type of exit exam, and characteristics of these exams.

Our scan draws on state policy documents and media reports found using internet searches. Our team reviewed state department and local education agency websites, legislation and regulations, and mass media reports to fully understand past, current and future requirements for high school graduation in all states. Open coding was used to identify central themes in an effort to develop a holistic understanding of states' assessment and exit exam policies. Our analysis and final report provides a rich discussion of the shifting trends in high school graduation requirements. We report high school graduation requirements as they exist for the Class of 2016, but include discussions of past and future trends when appropriate.

Prior Trends

High school exit exams have been used for several decades. Nearly half of the states used an exit exam between the mid-1990s and 2012, according to the Center on Education Policy (CEP) (McIntosh, 2012). CEP has been reporting on the trends in high school exit exams for over a decade, with the most recent annual report published in 2012. They note that since 2002, there has been a gradual shift in the use of high school exit exams, with a decline in the number of states using exams, and in those states where exams exist, a shift in the type of exam administered (McIntosh, 2012).

In 2012, 25 states, representing 69% of the nation's students, administered high school exit exams (McIntosh, 2012). Of the 25 states that administered exit exams, 17 implemented comprehensive assessments, nine utilized end-of- course exams, and one required both. This was a change from previous years, particularly with the increase in EOCs, which only two states administered in 2002 (McIntosh, 2012).

The aims for high school exit exams have changed for many states since 2012. The findings in the most recent CEP report describe high school exit exams in an era of accountability, an era distinctly different from the present one focused on college and career readiness. With the adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), or similarly aligned state standards, many states have shifted the focus of assessments to explicitly align with college and career readiness standards, lessening the focus on high school exit exams in particular. CEP notes that in 2012 at least 13 states planned to replace their exams with the CCSS-aligned assessments, while two states planned to develop a new state assessment aligned to these standards.

Current Trends

Since 2012, states' use of high school exit exams has declined overall. While some states began implementation of exit exams in the past four years, numerous states suspended or repealed the use of exit exams, including some that had very recently implemented exams. Still many other states transitioned to a new exam or multiple exams, including CCSS-aligned assessments and EOCs. With such transitions occurring across the nation, we observe varying exit exam requirements for successive graduating cohorts, making it difficult to definitively categorize states. In this section, we report state policies around exit exams as they applied to the graduating Class of 2016. In addition, noteworthy transitions are described where relevant.

We find about 16 states that utilized high school exit exams for the Class of 2016, compared to 25 states in 2012. These exams included both comprehensive exams, and end-of-course (EOC) exams, as defined previously. Five states administered comprehensive exams, eight administered end-of- course exams, and three states administered both.

Comprehensive Exit Exams

In all, there are eight states that administer comprehensive exit exams, all of which are administered during students' 10th and/or 11th grade year. A marked difference from previous exit exam trends, only one state currently implements a distinct comprehensive exam, one that was state-developed and state-administered, and does not plan for this requirement to change.

Of the remaining states that administer comprehensive exams, five states administer either the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) or Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, and have specific

scores/achievement levels students must meet in order to graduate. One state currently using a comprehensive exam is transitioning toward using end-of-course exams for both math and ELA in the near future. One state assesses only ELA in a comprehensive exam, but uses EOCs for math.

End-of-Course Exit Exams

In 2012, the CEP noted a growing trend in the use of EOCs (McIntosh, 2012), a trend that continues. While nine states administered EOCs in 2012 (McIntosh, 2012), 11 states presently require students to pass end-of-course exams in order to graduate. At least two additional states are moving toward end-of-course exams for future graduating classes, and seven states administer end-of-course exams that students must take, but not necessarily earn a passing score prior to graduation.

End-of-course exams may capture a broader range of subject knowledge than comprehensive exams, testing students on science and history in addition to math and ELA; however, the subject areas assessed by EOCs vary by state. Of the states that administer end-of-course exams which students are required to pass in order to earn a high school diploma:

- four states test students in four core subjects: math, ELA, science, history
- three states assess students in math, ELA, and science
- two states assess students in science and history only
- one state solely test students in math
- one state only assess students in science
- one state assess students in history, specifically through a U.S. Civics test

In states where students must take, but not necessarily pass, EOCs prior to graduation, exams are not treated as exit exams per se. However, EOC scores are generally factored into a student's overall grade in the course. For example, in one state, scores on end-of-course exams are worth 25% of a student's final grade for a particular course. In this case, while a cutoff score does not directly impact a student's diploma receipt, a poor grade on an EOC exam does have an influence.

Not surprisingly, mathematics and ELA appear to be valued the most within states that administer end-of-course exams. Typically, states that administer EOCs in math also do so in ELA, with the exception of one state noted previously, that uses an EOC for math and a comprehensive exit exam for ELA.

Several states have also adopted a civics test requirement for graduation. In addition to the one state that currently requires students to pass a U.S. civics exam in order to graduate, four states currently require students to take a U.S.

civics exam prior to graduation, but they are not at this time required to attain a specific score. Further, at least one additional state will include a civics exam as a graduation requirement in the future.

Use of College Entrance Exams

Another emergent trend is the implementation of college entrance exams, typically ACT or SAT, for accountability purposes in several states. Currently nine states utilize or plan to assess all high school students using one of these college entrance exams: five states administer the ACT, two states administer the SAT, and two states are considering instituting one of these nationally recognized college entrance exams, but have not yet identified which assessment. States are making this move primarily for further K-12 to postsecondary alignment, as well as to reduce the testing demand for high school students by using one assessment for multiple purposes, which is noted as the primary reason in two of the states currently using these exams, as well as both the states considering this transition. An additional benefit to the use of the ACT and SAT as the primary assessments in high school is an increase in access to college opportunities for students who may not choose to participate in the ACT or SAT independently.

While we observe an increase in the universal use of the ACT and SAT in many states, we do not find any states that are currently using college entrance exams as high school exit exams or explicit graduation requirements.

Other Graduation Requirements

Our review of state policies around high school exit exams reveals other notable trends in high school graduation requirements. All states have minimum credits and course requirements for graduation. Along with the credit and course requirements, only some states require any type of exit exam as described in detail above. In addition, many states include other measures or requirements for graduation. These additional requirements often support the development of students holistically through community service or academic and career planning. For example, in two states students must complete at least 75 hours of community service, while in many other states students create educational development plans to help them prepare for future academic and career goals. A few states also require students to complete senior/capstone projects, in which students must demonstrate academic and/or experiential learning prior to graduation. Specific courses or skills may also be compulsory, as one state requires students to complete a financial literacy course and CPR training.

Alternative Pathways to Graduation

While students must meet all state and district requirements in order to graduate, some states permit students to demonstrate competency in alternative ways. These alternative pathways hinge on choice, as several states allow students to supplement exit exam scores with equated scores from nationally recognized assessments such as the ACT or SAT, expanding definitions of what it means for students to be prepared academically. Other states permit students to develop portfolios, which one state utilizes as a final option within its alternative assessment program. Ultimately, alternative pathways to graduation allow students more opportunities to demonstrate academic proficiency.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

While assessments attempt to capture student learning, due to individual differences between students, such as those with disabilities, accommodations must also be offered so that all students may demonstrate their learning. Testing accommodations in this case refer to changes made in the administration of an exam, such as the time allowed, the location, how an exam is presented to the student, as well as the methods through which responses are recorded. All state and national exams discussed in this report support testing accommodations for students, and in Table A1 in the Appendix, we include more detailed information about the accessibility features for students with disabilities of some commonly used assessments, such as the ACT, the California High School Proficiency Exam (CA HSPE), the General Education Diploma (GED), the High School Equivalency Test (HISET), the SAT, and the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC).

Projected Trends

As the climate of high school exit exam policies continues to change, these findings indicate a general decrease in the use of high school exit exams, particularly comprehensive exit exams, coupled with an increase in end-of- course assessments that students simply need to take in order to graduate. Further, the focus on college and career readiness continues to impact state education policies, with states administering college entrance exams, CCSS- aligned assessments, and opening multiple pathways for students to demonstrate readiness. We anticipate that this emphasis, along with states' interpretation and implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), may continue to shape high school exit requirements over the next several years.

3. California Student Performance on CAHSEE and SBAC

In addition to reviewing the research literature and current practices across the country, we investigate high school exit exams through analysis of two years of assessment data from California. Our analysis includes examining student performance on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) during the 2013-2014 academic year and subsequent performance of the same students on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), including the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exams, during the 2014-2015. From the data provided by the California Department of Education we examine how student performance on the SBAC and CAHSEE varies across subgroups of students. These results reveal notable gaps in performance across subgroups, as well as an overrepresentation of certain groups of students in the set of students who fail CAHSEE or do not meet standards on SBAC. Since many of these student characteristics are correlated with each other, we then report the results of regression analyses where we provide predictions about the likelihood that students in different subgroups defined by a given student characteristic will fail CAHSEE or fail to meet standards on the SBAC, holding constant other student characteristics.

Data and Analysis

We focus our research on tenth-grade first-time CAHSEE test-takers who progressed normally from 10th grade to 11th grade, thus the students must have been enrolled in 10th grade for the CAHSEE in 2013-2014 and 11th grade for the SBAC exam in 2014-2015. Data from both years was merged using Statewide Student Identifiers (SSID), resulting in 478,235 individual student observations. Students without valid CAHSEE or SBAC scores were dropped from the sample, separately for the math and English language arts (ELA) subjects. A student with a valid math CAHSEE and SBAC score but not a valid ELA SBAC score is included in the math sample but not the ELA sample, and vice versa. Our analytical sample includes 391,861 students for math and 394,427 students for ELA. Table 1 provides the summary statistics of demographic variables for our combined analytical sample.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Analytical Sample

Male	51%
Female	49%
Black	7%
Native American	1%
Asian	15%
Hispanic	52%
White	28%
Multi-racial or Other	2%
Economically Disadvantaged	55%
Students with Disabilities	11%
English Language Learners	8%

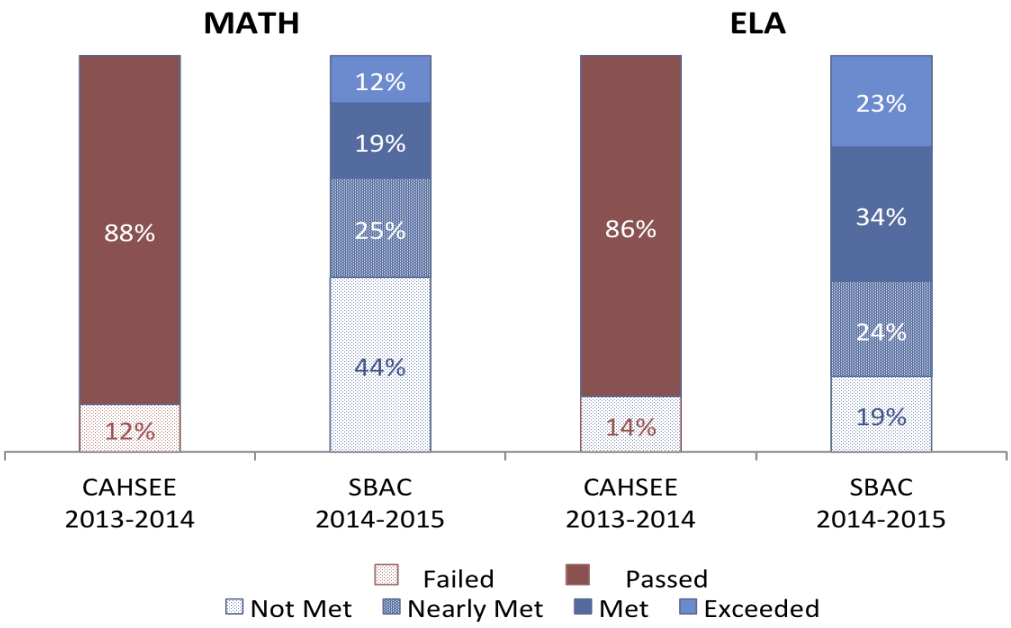
Findings

In 2013-2014, 87% of 10th graders passed the CAHSEE math exam on their first attempt, while 13% failed, as depicted in Figure 1. For ELA, 86% of 10th graders passed on their first attempt and 14% failed. When including students who took a modified CAHSEE exam3, we find that 88% of students scored above the 350 point cutoff score and 12% of students scored below on their first attempt on the CAHSEE math exam. On the ELA exam, including those students who took a modified exam, 86% scored above the 350 score cutoff and 14% scored below.

In 2014-2015, 44% of students failed to meet the SBAC math standards, 25% nearly met the standards, 19% met standards, and 12% exceeded standards. Students performed slightly better on the ELA SBAC assessment: only 19% of students failed to meet standards on the ELA exam, while 24% nearly met the standards, 34% met the standards and 23% exceeded standards.

Figure 1

Pass/Fail Rates of CAHSEE, 2013-2014, and SBAC, 2014-2015



[3] Students who take a modified CAHSEE cannot technically pass the CAHSEE. Per the CDE, "if a student takes one or both parts of the CAHSEE with a modification and has received the equivalent of a passing score (350 or higher), the student has not passed that part of the test, but is eligible to request a waiver of the requirement to successfully pass that part of the test. Because the use of a modification changes what the test is measuring, the score report will be marked modified for the applicable section of the test."

When comparing the overall performance on the two assessments, it is clear that CAHSEE has a much lower passing standard than the SBAC exam proficiency level of "Standard Met". Eighty-eight percent (88%) and 86% percent of students pass the math and ELA CAHSEE respectively, while only 31% and 57% achieve a score on the SBAC that is at a level of "Standard Met" or "Standard Exceeded." Almost half of all students scored at a "Standard Not Met" level on the math SBAC exam.

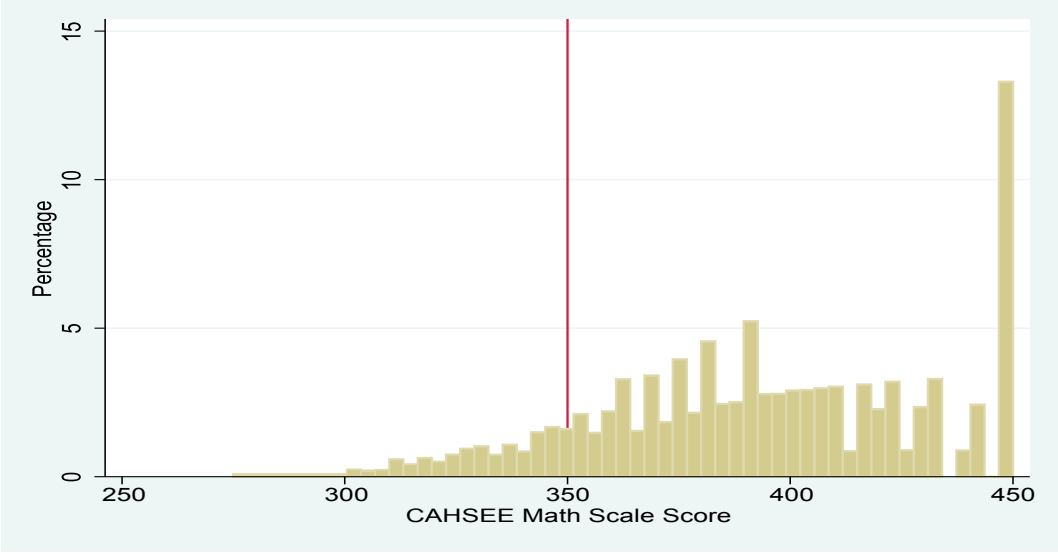
Test Score Distributions

Our examination of student performance on the two assessments reveals differences in the distribution of student performance. In the figures that follow, we display the distribution of student scores on both the CAHSEE and SBAC. Figures 2, 3, and 4 contain student scores on the x-axis and the percentage of students in the sample who received a specific score on the y-axis. The red line marks the passing cutoff score of 350 for CAHSEE. Blue lines represent the cutoff scores for various levels on the SBAC (i.e., "Standard Nearly Met", "Standard Met"). The discussion that accompanies each graph highlights the notable differences between the distributions.

First, student performance on the CAHSEE has a negative skew as depicted in Figure 2, demonstrating a high proportion of students perform in the middle to upper performance levels, and that there is more discrimination of student performance at lower performance levels. Given that the CAHSEE is used to assess students' ability to meet minimum standards for high school graduation, we expect to see this type of distribution.

Figure 2

Distribution of Student Scores on CAHSEE Math, 2013-2014

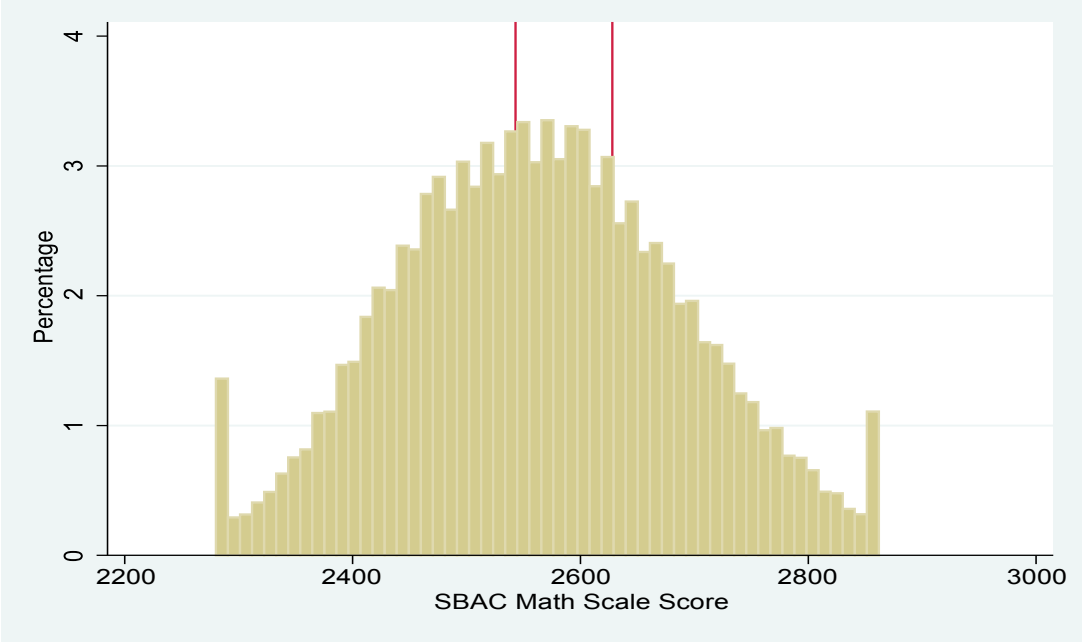


Also notable from the CAHSEE math distribution is the fact that the test has a low ceiling. There are a large number of students who score within a few points of a perfect score of 450, and no other score in the distribution has this same concentration. Thus, the CAHSEE does not distinguish between students at the top of the academic distribution very well, although this was not the purpose of the CAHSEE. The cutoff score of 350 to pass the CAHSEE is a fairly low score in the overall distribution. This shouldn't be too surprising, as only 12.6% of students in our sample failed the math CAHSEE on the first attempt. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the passing standards for the math section of the CAHSEE are not onerous.

On the other hand, student performance on the math SBAC much more closely resembles a "bell curve" distribution than do CAHSEE scores. The ceiling on the scores that is present in the CAHSEE is much smaller for the SBAC. There is small difference in the percentage of students who scored perfect scores compared to the scores just below this mark, but unlike the CAHSEE the perfect score bin does not contain the largest number of students of any bin. Furthermore, the cutoffs for meeting standards are much higher in the distribution, as was intended with this test. Thus, the average student just barely qualifies as "Standard Nearly Met", and a large proportion of students have scores below the leftmost red line and therefore earned a "Standard Not Met".

Figure 3

Distribution of Student Scores on SBAC Math, 2014-2015



To further compare the distributions, we superimpose student performance on CAHSEE Math and SBAC Math onto the same graph using standardized test scores (or z-scores). To do this, the scores are standardized (or converted to z-scores), because the CAHSEE and SBAC are scored on non-comparable scales, The resulting distributions have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1, thus a z-score of -2.3 on the math SBAC would indicate that the student scored 2.3 standard deviations below the average math SBAC score. In Figure 4, the CAHSEE scores are outlined in red, while the SBAC scores are outlined in blue. The red vertical line indicates the cutoff for passing the CAHSEE, and the blue vertical lines represent the "Standard Nearly Met" and "Standard Met" cutoffs as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Figure 4

Distribution of Standardized Student Scores on CAHSEE Math, 2013-2014, and SBAC Math, 2014-2015

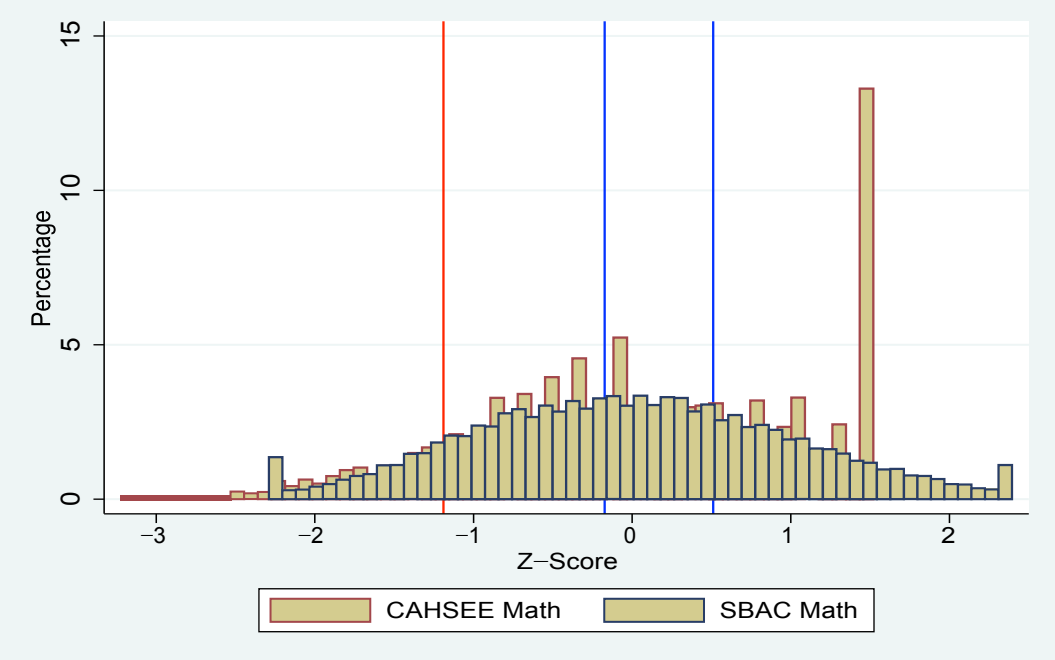
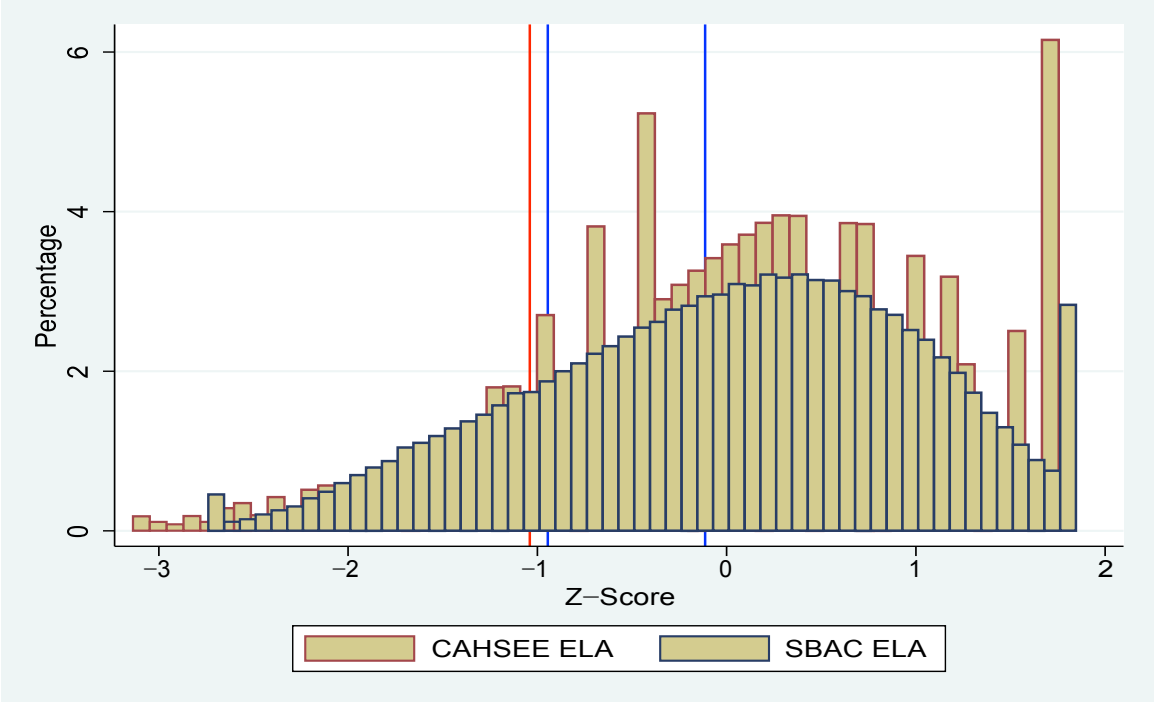


Figure 4 confirms that the SBAC standards are much higher than the passing cutoff for the CAHSEE. A student could pass the CAHSEE despite achieving a "Standard Not Met" on the SBAC by a wide margin. The score ceiling on the CAHSEE is even more apparent in this graph, as there is a large spike in the number of scores around a z-score of 1.5, while the SBAC distribution continues to have z-scores past 2. On the other hand, the score floor on the SBAC is also more apparent as the there is a clump of students at the lowest SBAC score while the CAHSEE distribution trends more smoothly towards the lowest score.

The results are more or less similar for the ELA exams. Figure 5 shows the distribution of ELA CAHSEE scores and ELA SBAC scores. Compared to the same graph depicting student performance on math assessments, there is more overlap between student performance on the CAHSEE and SBAC in ELA. Also, the cutoff for passing the ELA CAHSEE was closer to the score needed for "Standard Nearly Met" level in the SBAC score distribution.

Figure 5

Distribution of Standardized Student Scores on CAHSEE ELA, 2013-2014, and SBAC ELA, 2014-2015



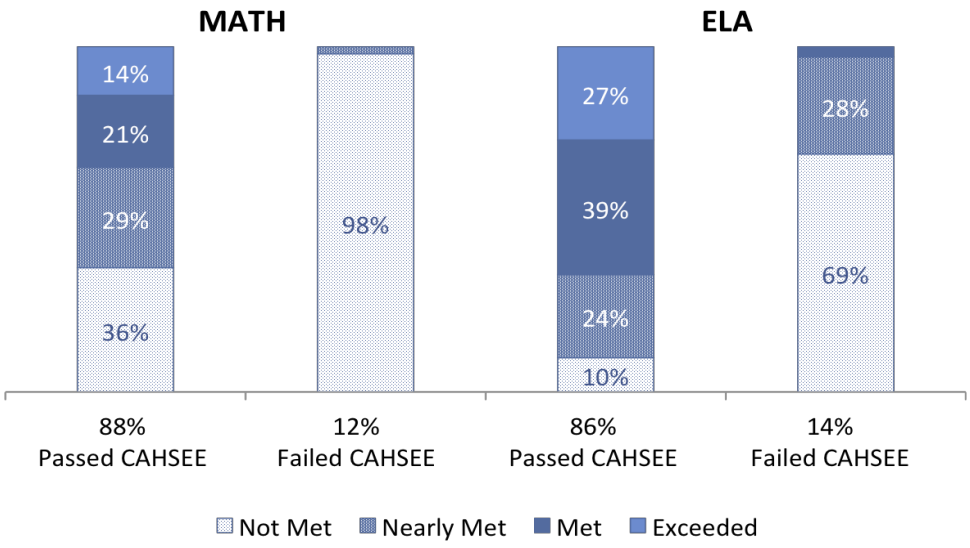
The primary difference between the math and ELA distributions is that there is less of a ceiling effect for the CAHSEE ELA. About 6% of students achieve a score in the top bin on the ELA exam, while nearly 15% of students do so on the math exam. The score ceiling appears larger on the ELA SBAC exam, while the score floor is more noticeable on the math exam. Further, the observation that the CAHSEE passing cutoff score is closer to the "Standard Nearly Met" level on the SBAC, noted in the last paragraph, indicates the ELA CAHSEE is relatively more difficult, or that the ELA SBAC is relatively easier than the corresponding math exam. In sum, these comparisons reveal clear differences between these two tests, which is not at all surprising given their quite different intended purposes.

Performance of Students on CAHSEE and SBAC by Demographic Subgroups

In our examination of the distribution of student scores on both the CAHSEE and SBAC, we observe that it is much more common for students to not meet SBAC standards than to fail CAHSEE, suggesting that the CAHSEE passing cutoff is effectively at a much lower achievement level than the cutoff for meeting SBAC standards. This can also be seen when looking at performance on the SBAC conditional on passing or failing the CAHSEE, as shown in Figure 6. While virtually all students who fail the math CAHSEE do not meet standards on the math SBAC, 65% of students who pass the math CAHSEE also do not meet or only nearly meet standards on the SBAC. The discrepancy between the CAHSEE passing cutoff and the SBAC "Standard Met" cutoffs appears to be smaller for ELA, as 28% of those who fail the ELA CAHSEE manage to nearly meet standards on the SBAC. Moreover, most students who pass the ELA CAHSEE meet or exceed standards on the SBAC, although 34% of students still fall below standards.

Figure 6

Student Performance on SBAC by Pass/Fail on CAHSEE

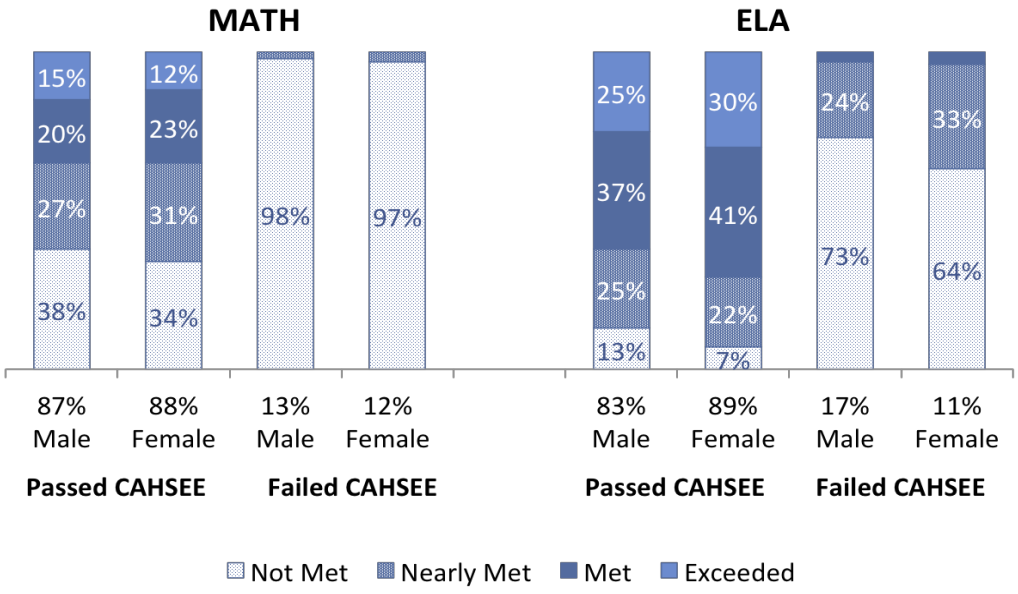


We now present results, similar to those in Figure 6, for various subgroups of students. These results are informative about the gaps in exam performance across subgroups. It is very important to keep in mind, however, that these are unconditional gaps, meaning that they do not reflect any attempt to hold constant factors that may be correlated with the particular student characteristic in question. For instance, the sizable racial gaps we document below may be driven by gaps in socioeconomic status and other factors we observe in the data, as well as many factors we do not observe in the data. In a subsequent section, we return to this issue when we present results from multivariate regression models that attempt to hold constant the student characteristics observable in the data.

Turning first to gaps by gender, the pattern observed for the entire sample generally holds for both males and females (Figure 7). Almost all students, male and female, who fail the math CAHSEE earn a "Standard Not Met" level on the math SBAC. For those who pass the math CAHSEE, 65% of both males and females do not meet or only nearly met standards on the SBAC. Again, as in the entire sample, the ELA SBAC appears to be slightly less difficult than the math SBAC for both males and females, as 24% of males and 33% of females who fail the ELA CAHSEE attain the "Standard Nearly Met" level on the SBAC. Moreover, the majority of students who pass the ELA CAHSEE meet or exceed standards on the SBAC, with females performing slightly better than males on the ELA SBAC exam.

Figure 7

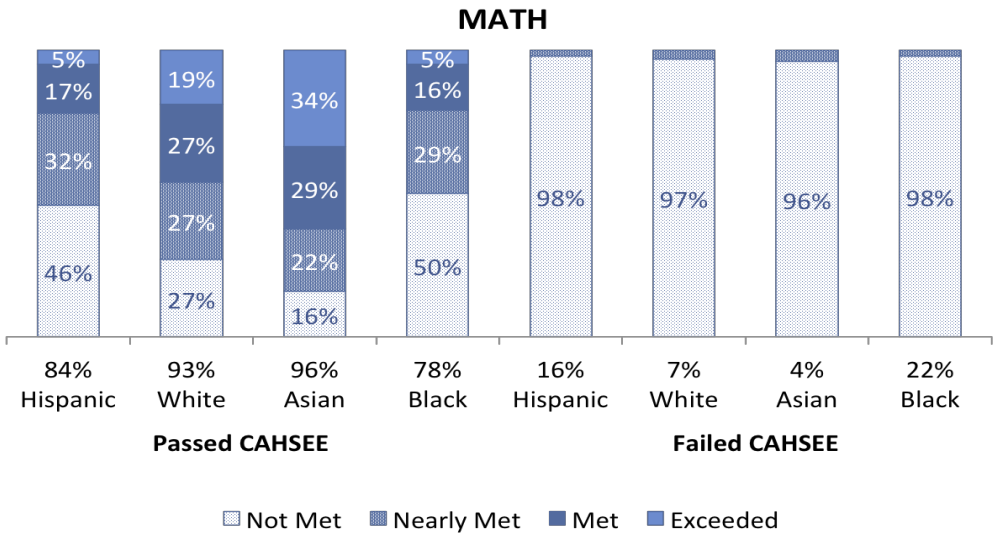
Student Performance on SBAC by Gender and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE



Unlike the similarities in performance we observe for males and females, we observe large disparities in performance on the math portion of the SBAC by race/ethnicity, as seen in Figure 8. Of those who pass the math CAHSEE, only 22% of Hispanics and 21% of Blacks meet or exceed standards on the SBAC, when compared to Whites at 46% and Asians at 63%. However, there are much smaller differences in performance amongst those who fail the math CAHSEE by race, essentially students of all races do not meet standards on the math SBAC if they fail the math CAHSEE.

Figure 8

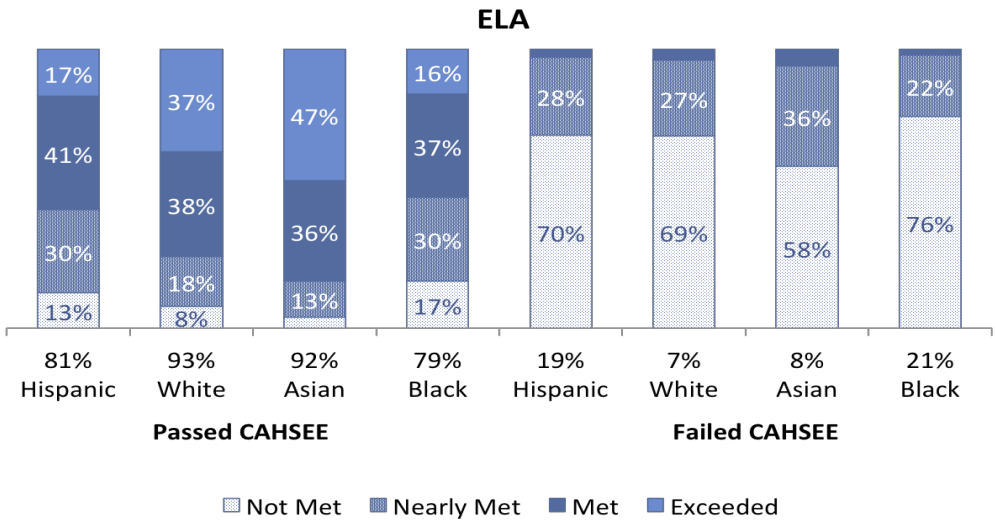
Student Performance on SBAC Math by Race/Ethnicity and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE



The disparities for the ELA exam, Figure 9, still exist but are not nearly as striking as for the math exam. Here, 58% of Hispanic and 53% of Black ELA CAHSEE passers meet or exceed standards on the ELA SBAC, while 75% and 83% of White and Asian CAHSEE passers meet or exceed standards respectively. Again, the ELA SBAC does not appear to be as difficult as the math SBAC; nearly a quarter of students from each race nearly meet standards on the ELA SBAC despite failing the ELA CAHSEE, although the number is about ten percentage points higher for Asian students.

Figure 9

Student Performance on SBAC ELA by Race/Ethnicity and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE



There are further disparities for students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch (FRPL), English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities, at least amongst those students who passed the CAHSEE. Figure 10, Figure 11 and Figure 12 depict these disparities. For the math exam, only 23% of FRPL, 9% of ELL, and 13% of students with disabilities who pass the CAHSEE meet or exceed standards when taking the SBAC. For non-FRPL, non- ELL, and students without a disability the percentages are 47%, 37%, and 36% respectively, which amounts to a difference of about 25 percentage points for each group. Although disadvantaged students in general perform better on the ELA SBAC than on math, there are still large differences in performance when compared to students without these disadvantages. Of the students who pass the ELA CAHSEE, 57% of FRPL, 24% of ELL, 36% of disabled students meet or exceed ELA SBAC standards, while 75% of non-FRPL, 69% of non-ELL, and 68% of students without disabilities meet or exceed ELA SBAC standards. The gaps of 45 percentage points for ELL students and 32 percentage points for students with disabilities are particularly striking. Amongst students who failed the CAHSEE exams, performance on the SBAC is roughly equivalent, except for students with a disability who perform slightly worse on the ELA SBAC than students with no disability.

Figure 10

Student Performance on SBAC for Economically Disadvantaged Students and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE

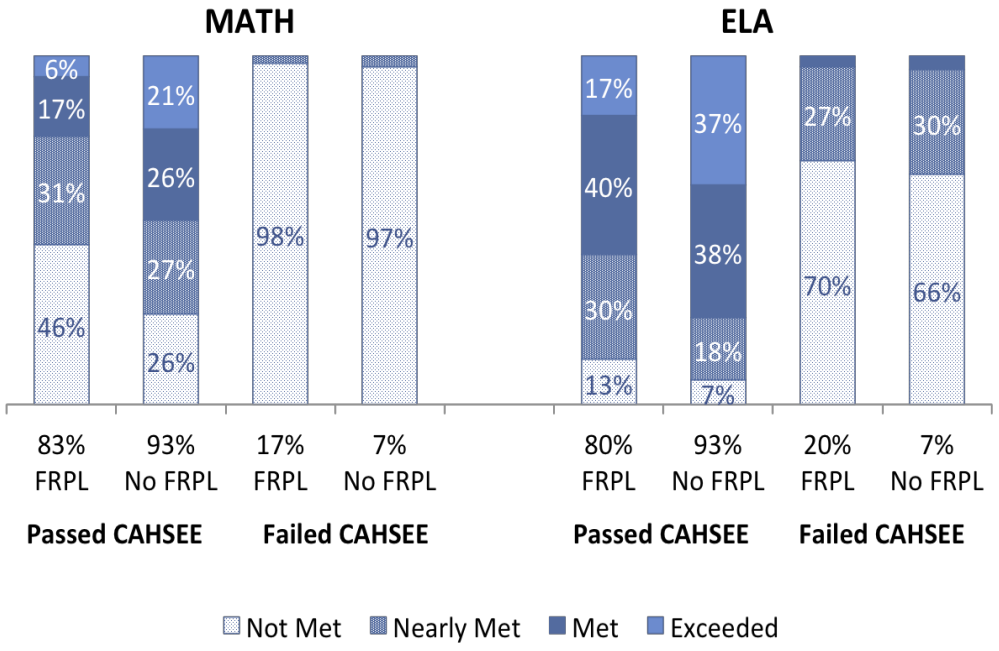


Figure 11

Student Performance for English Language Leaners and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE

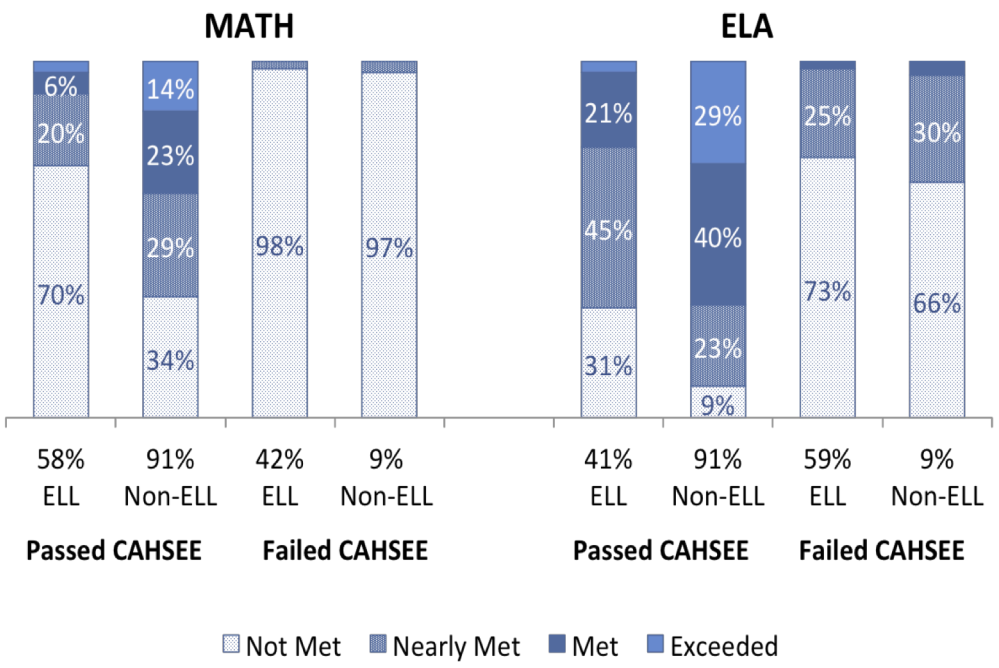
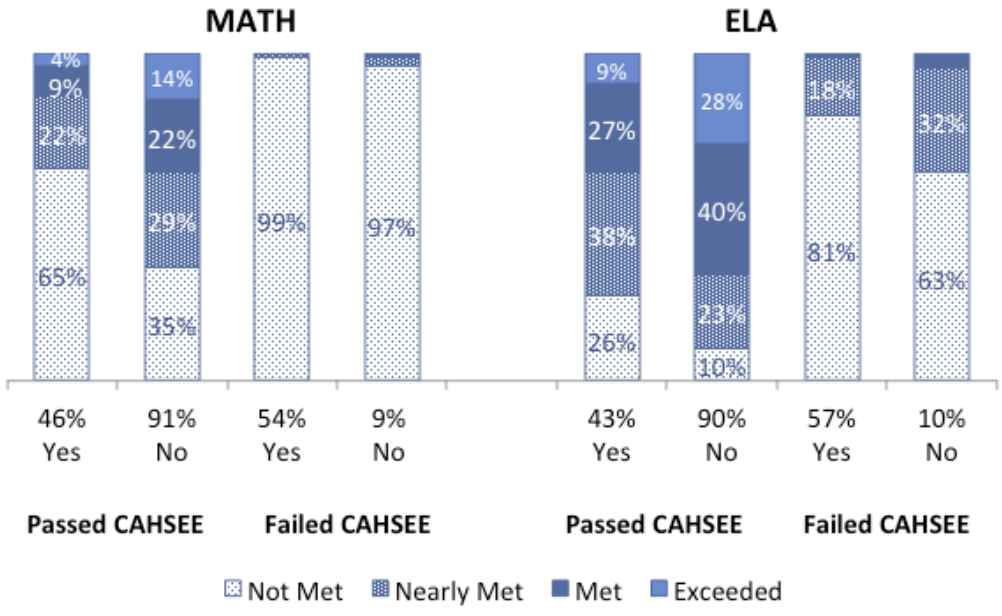


Figure 12

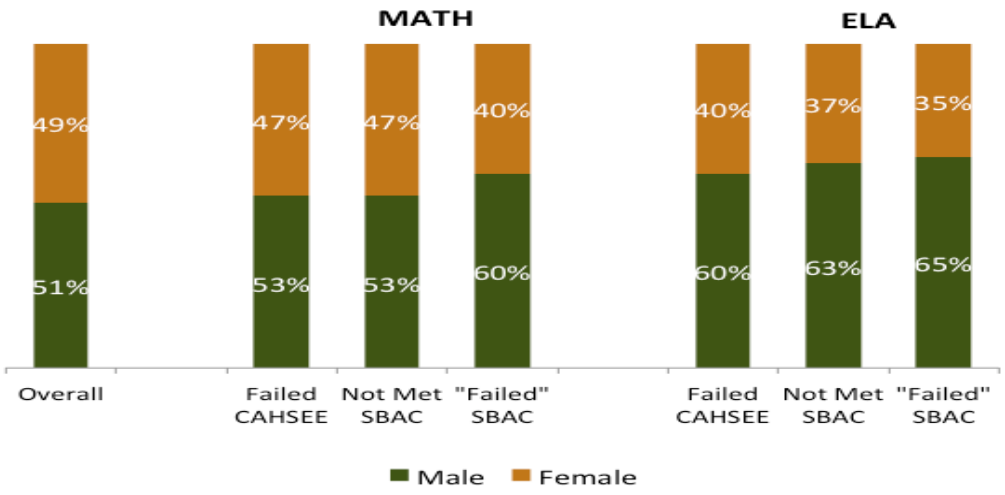
Student Performance on SBAC for Students with Disabilities and Pass/Fail on CAHSEE



The preceding analysis shows gaps in SBAC performance conditional on CAHSEE passing status and demographic characteristics. We are also interested in the extent to which poor exam performance disproportionately occurs for certain student subgroups. To address this question, we now examine the demographic characteristics of students with poor test performance, focusing mainly on a comparison of how these characteristics differ for student who did poorly on SBAC versus CAHSEE. For these graphs we define three categories of failure to allow for comparison across tests. The first category is comprised of those students who actually failed the CAHSEE by earning a score below 350. The second category is those students who scored within the "Standard Not Met" level on the SBAC. The third category holds the failure rate on SBAC equal to the failure rate on CAHSEE, such that an equal proportion of students (12% for math and 14% for ELA) at the bottom of the distribution are considered as failing each assessment.

Looking at those who "fail" the CAHSEE and SBAC, we observe that males do disproportionately worse than females on both assessments, especially in ELA. As shown in Figure 13, males make up 51% of the sample, yet they make up 60% of the students who fail the ELA CAHSEE and 63% of the students that do not meet standards on the ELA SBAC. Looking at the bottom 14% of ELA SBAC scores, the share of male students jumps to 65% of the total. Thus when comparing equivalently sized groups with the lowest scores, it is evident that poor performers are even more likely to be male on the SBAC than on the CAHSEE. The math exams tell a similar story although the gaps are not as severe as with the ELA exams, as males make up 53% of those who fail the math CAHSEE, 53% of those who do not meet math SBAC standards, and 60% of the lowest 12% of math SBAC scores.

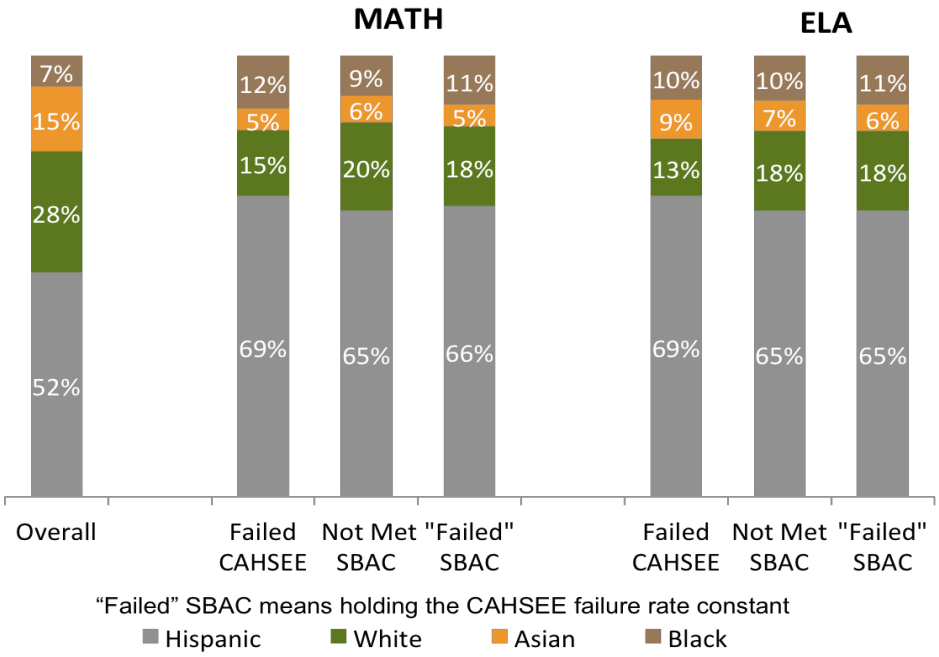
Figure 13
Gender by CAHSEE and SBAC Performance



When considering student performance by race/ethnicity (Figure 14) we find that Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented amongst students with low test scores on the CAHSEE and SBAC. While Blacks make up 7% of the overall student sample, about 10% of the students who perform poorly on the CAHSEE and SBAC are Black. For Hispanics the gap is even bigger; 52% of the student sample is Hispanic but Hispanics make about 15 percentage points more of the share of the population who does poorly on the tests. Whites and Asians tend to perform well on both the CAHSEE and SBAC, although Asians tend to do better on the math exams than the ELA exams and Whites do slightly better on the ELA exams. We note that these disparities by race are greatest for the fail CAHSEE category, which may be in part because of the high stakes nature of that exam relative to the SBAC for this cohort of test takers.

Figure 14

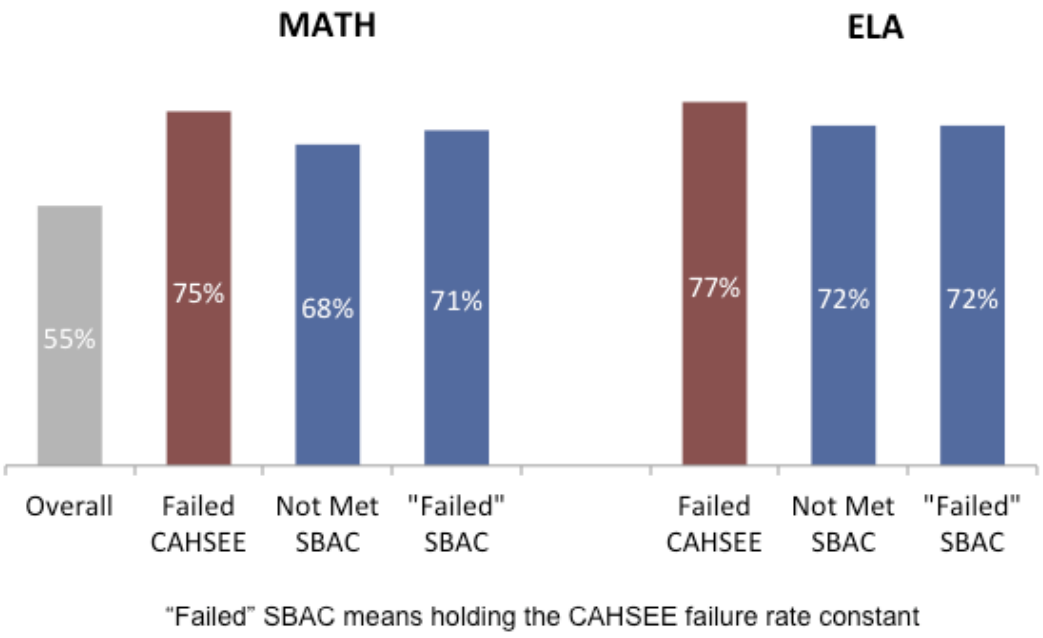
Race/Ethnicity by CAHSEE and SBAC Performance



The students who make up the largest proportion of students who fail the exams compared to their representation in the overall population are economically disadvantaged students (Figure 15), students with disabilities (Figure 16), and English language learners (ELLs) (Figure 17). Economically disadvantaged students make up a significant proportion of the overall population, representing 55% of the overall sample, but they make up three quarters of the population of students who fail the math or ELA CAHSEE. Interestingly, they appear to perform somewhat better on the SBAC as they make up only 66% of those who do not meet standards on the math CAHSEE and 72% of those who do not meet standards on the ELA SBAC. Furthermore, when comparing those who fail the CAHSEE with an equivalently sized group of the lowest performers on the SBAC, there are slightly more economically disadvantaged students that fail the CAHSEE.

Figure 15

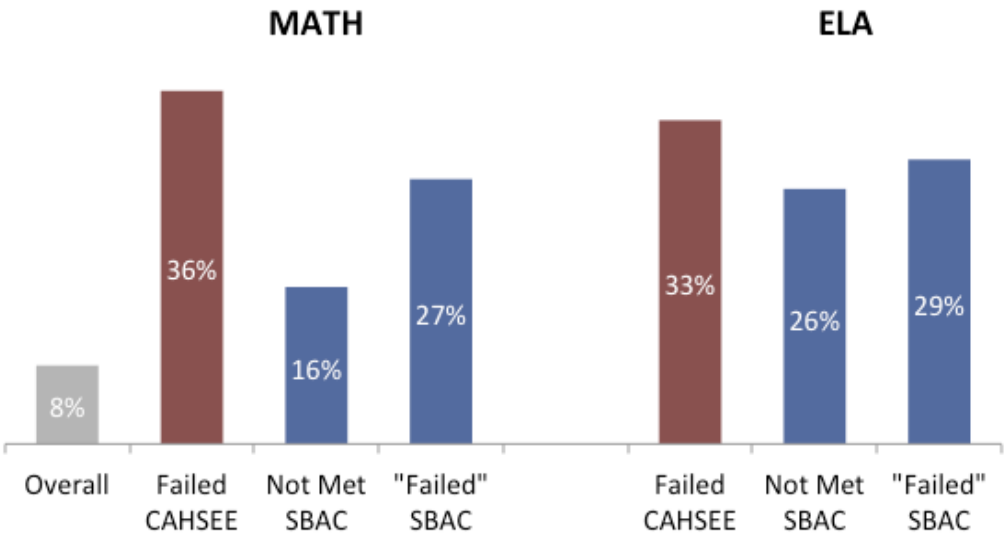
Economically Disadvantaged Status by CAHSEE and SBAC Performance



The gap is even larger for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities make up only 8% of the overall population, yet about a third of students who fail the math or ELA CAHSEE have a disability. Interestingly, there is a large disparity between the share of students with a disability who fail the math CAHSEE and the share of students with a disability who perform poorly on the math SBAC; 27% of students with the lowest performance on the math SBAC have some type of disability, compared to 36% of the equivalently sized group of low performers on the math CAHSEE. Furthermore, only 16% of students who do not meet standards on the math SBAC have a disability. While much smaller, there are also slight disparities in the population of students who do poorly on the ELA CAHSEE and SBAC, with students with disabilities making up a lower proportion of poor performers on the ELA SBAC when compared to the CAHSEE.

Figure 16

Students with Disabilities Status by CAHSEE and SBAC Performance

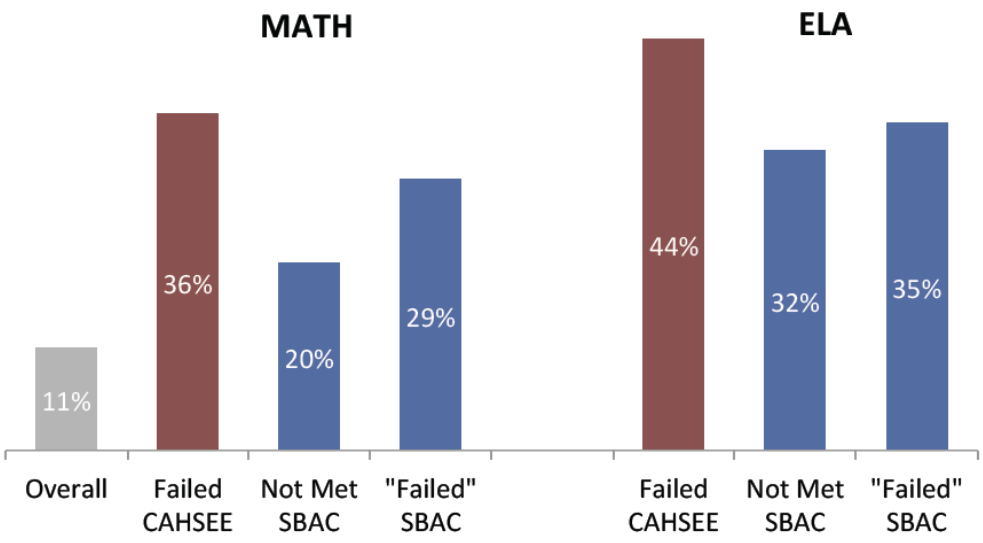


"Failed" SBAC means holding the CAHSEE failure rate constant

The gap between the share of the overall population and share of students who fail CAHSEE is highest for ELLs, as they make up only 11% of the overall sample but 36% of those who fail the math CAHSEE and a staggering 44% of those who fail the ELA CAHSEE. Again, these students appear to perform better on the SBAC than on the CAHSEE, as ELLs only make up 20% and 35% of the students who do not meet standards on the math and ELA SBAC respectively. ELLs also make up 7 percentage points less of the lowest performers on the math SBAC and 9 percentage points less of the lowest performers on ELA SBAC compared to the equivalent size group on the CAHSEE. Thus, disadvantaged students appear to perform better across the board on the SBAC exams compared to the CAHSEE exams.

Figure 17

English Language Learner Status by CAHSEE and SBAC Performance



"Failed" SBAC means holding the CAHSEE failure rate constant

Passing Rates Conditional on Test Scores and Demographics: A Closer Look of Achievement Gaps

The findings shared in the preceding sections show performance on SBAC and CAHSEE by demographic subgroups and also the demographic characteristics of students who perform poorly on both assessments. These results show that there are large gaps in test performance by demographic characteristics and that certain subgroups are disproportionately represented among the group that fail CAHSEE or do poorly on SBAC. While these results are informative about unconditional performance gaps, they do not help us understand whether, for instance, how much of the disparity in SBAC performance between ELL and non- ELL students is attributable to differences in poverty, disability, and other factors that are correlated both with ELL status and also SBAC performance.

To examine this issue, we estimate logistic regression models where the outcome is a binary measure of test score performance (e.g., failed CAHSEE, did not meet SBAC standards) and that include as predictors: gender, race/ethnicity, ELL status, an indicator for economic disadvantage based on student eligibility for free and reduced price meals, and an indicator for whether or not a student has a disability.

The results reported in Table 2 and Table 3, indicate that controlling for additional factors reduces the magnitude of the test score gaps described in the previous section, although significant performance gaps between subgroups remain. Table 2 reports results for math and Table 3 reports results for ELA, with both CAHSEE and SBAC reported in each table. In both Table 2 and 3, the furthest left column lists the demographic variables that we include in our analysis. The next two columns report the actual failure rates, which we define as a score below 350 for CAHSEE and earning a “Standard Not Met” level on SBAC. The last two columns on the right provide the predicted probability that the average student with that particular characteristic will fail the CAHSEE or the SBAC. For example, in Table 2 we see that 42% of ELLs fail the CAHSEE and 82% score in the “Standard Not Met” level of SBAC. However, when we control for other student characteristics such economic disadvantage and ethnicity, which may be correlated with ELL status and test performance, we predict that 30% of ELLs would fail the CAHSEE and 50% will not meet standards on the SBAC.

Table 2

Predicted Probabilities of Failing CAHSEE Math or Earning a "Standard Not Met" Level on SBAC Math

	Actual Failure Rates		Predicted Probability of Failing	
	CAHSEE	SBAC	CAHSEE	SBAC
	Score < 350	Not Met	Score < 350	Not Met
Male	.13	.462	.0742 (.00138)	.445 (.00444)
Female	.117	.416	.0865 (.00148)	.337 (.00412)
Non English Learner	.0882	.394	.0668 (.00118)	.378 (.00401)
English Learner	.418	.819	.304 (.00495)	.497 (.00732)
NSLP Not Eligible	.0731	.317	.0713 (.00156)	.365 (.00477)
NSLP Eligible	.169	.548	.0886 (.00169)	.414 (.00472)
Not Economically	.0687	.31	.0673 (.0014)	.372 (.00484)
Economically	.169	.547	.0922 (.00174)	.407 (.00464)
No Disability	.0867	.404	.0666 (.00118)	.383 (.00411)
Has Disability	.536	.838	.445 (.00583)	.486 (.00715)
White	.0655	.316	.0674 (.00171)	.381 (.00533)
Black	.225	.617	.204 (.00545)	.45 (.00748)
Asian	.0397	.192	.0326 (.00127)	.272 (.00586)
Native American	.15	.5	.138 (.00685)	.435 (.0121)
Hispanic	.163	.549	.0975 (.00168)	.425 (.00459)
Total	.124	.439		
Observations	392,193	392,193	390,414	390,414

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

Table 3

Predicted Probabilities of Failing CAHSEE ELA or Earning a "Standard Not Met" Level on SBAC ELA

	CAHSEE	SBAC	CAHSEE	SBAC
	Score < 350	Not Met	Score < 350	Not Met
Male	.17	.234	.0999 (.00167)	.109 (.00281)
Female	.114	.138	.0771 (.0013)	.0711 (.00201)
Non English Learner	.0886	.142	.0681 (.00114)	.0849 (.00225)
English Learner	.587	.558	.49 (.00602)	.124 (.00397)
NSLP Not Eligible	.0768	.118	.0743 (.00155)	.0847 (.00258)
NSLP Eligible	.201	.248	.102 (.00179)	.092 (.00251)
Not Economically	.0721	.115	.0716 (.00149)	.0865 (.00253)
Economically	.201	.247	.104 (.00183)	.0902 (.00258)
No Disability	.103	.152	.073 (.00121)	.0853 (.00229)
Has Disability	.574	.578	.481 (.00606)	.132 (.00371)
White	.0678	.119	.0725 (.00181)	.0996 (.00273)
Black	.218	.299	.202 (.00536)	.135 (.00456)
Asian	.0761	.0832	.0577 (.00174)	.0534 (.00236)
Native American	.148	.213	.14 (.00691)	.113 (.00596)
Hispanic	.189	.236	.0969 (.00165)	.0904 (.00265)
Total	.142	.187		
Observations	394,769	394,769	392,978	392,978

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

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4. CONCLUSION

The evidence included in this report provides multiple views from which to consider the impact of high school exit exams. The research literature shows the implementation of exit exams reduces graduation rates, but also that the costs of not graduating due to failing an exit exam may be small. Importantly, this impact is not the same for all students, as both our data analysis and the research literature points out that some subgroups are disproportionally affected. Clear evidence, combined with shifts in education policy driven largely by CCSS and accompanying assessments are leading to transitions in state policies around exit exams and graduation requirements in general. These findings are described in greater detail in this report. We hope that policymakers and other stakeholders find the review and analysis we provide informative, as they determine the future of CAHSEE and high school graduation requirements in California.

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Table A1

Testing Accessibility Features for Students with Disabilities

	ACT		CA HSPE	GED	HISET	SAT	TASC
	National Extended Time (50% Time)	Special Testing					
Flexibility in Time/Scheduling	-Time-and-a-half: 5 hours total for the ACT (no writing), or 6 hours total for the ACT with writing (includes breaks between tests). -Self-paced within total time allowed. -Must complete all tests in a single session.	-Timing guidelines based on test format and disability diagnosis. -Time for each test individually monitored. -May request to test over multiple days (at least one subject test each day).	The standard testing session is three and one-half hours. [An examinee] may request extended time (up to 5 hours and 15 minutes) or double time (up to 7 hours)	Extended time, extended breaks, stop-the-clock breaks	Extended time, additional supervised break time	-Frequent breaks (between test sections, extended breaks, breaks as needed) -Extended time (time and a half, double time, more time) -Multiple day (may or may not include extra time) -Specified time of day	-Scheduling (supervised breaks, multiple sessions) -Duration (time and a quarter, time and a half, double time)
Flexibility in Setting	-At scheduled national test centers. -Administered in small groups (usually no more than 10 in extended time room).	-Normally, at school attended by examinee; explanation required for alternate location. -Administered individually or in small groups.	-Testing in a small group -Testing in a hospital or other institutional setting -Use of noise buffers or headphones (brought by the examinee) to minimize distraction -Frequent supervised breaks (Testing time does not stop during breaks.)	Separate or distraction-reduced room	Separate room	-Small group setting -Private room -Alternative test site (with proctor present) -Preferential seating	-Separate room -Small group setting -Physical support (preferential seating location, adaptive equipment, adaptive furniture)
Method of Presentation	Requests for accommodations must be supported by the submitted documentation. May request to bring a sign language interpreter for spoken instructions, etc.		-Braille or large print (18-point font) test materials -Sign language interpreter to present directions (Does not apply to test questions.) -Use of audio amplification or visual magnification equipment (brought by the examinee) -Use of colored overlay, mask, or other means (brought by the examinee) to maintain visual attention -Test questions and answer choices read aloud to the examinee (available for the Mathematics section and the Language subtest only)	Audiocassette, braille edition, large-print, screen magnification	Audiocassette or other form of recorded audio, large print, screen magnification, sign language-interpreted instructions for test takers who are deaf or hard of hearing	-Large print (14 pt., 20 pt., other) -Reader (Note: Reader reads entire test) -Use of a highlighter -Sign/orally present instructions -Visual magnification (magnifier or magnifying machine) -Colored overlays -Braille -Braille graphs -Braille device for written responses -MP3 audio test format -Assistive technology–compatible test format	Audio CDs of subtests, screen reader

Table A1 (continued)

Testing Accessibility Features for Students with Disabilities

	ACT		CA HSPE	GED	HISET	SAT	TASC
	National Extended Time (50% Time)	Special Testing					
Method of Response	Requests for accommodations must be supported by the submitted documentation. May request assistance marking answers, magnifying device, reader, braille device, etc.		-Mark responses in the test booklet (Responses are transferred to an answer document that can be scored by computer.) -Use of a scribe for multiple-choice questions (Examinee indicates answers to the scribe, who marks them on the answer document.) -Use of a scribe for the writing task (Examinee dictates response to the writing task, providing all spelling and language conventions.) -Use of a computer (provided at the test site) to type essay (All spelling and grammar tools will be disabled.) -Use of an English-to-primary language and/or primary language-to-English translation glossary or word list (brought by the examinee) that does not include definitions or formulas (for English Learners only)	Calculator, scribe	Calculator/talking calculator, scribe or keyboard entry aide	-Verbal; dictated to scribe -Tape recorder -Computer without spell-check/grammar/cut-and-paste features -Record answers in test booklet -Large-block answer sheet -Four-function calculator (use of basic four-function calculator on test sections that do not permit use of a calculator)	Calculator memory function, talking calculator, abacus, technology-assisted writing, scribe
Source	http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Accommodations%20on%20the%20ACT%20Test%20-%20National%20Extended%20and%20Special%20Testng.pdf		https://www.chspe.net/registration/special/	http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/computer-accommodations, https://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/7b61476f99d3e13d20c485169cec24a4.pdf	http://hiset.ets.org/take/disabilities	www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities/typical-accommodations	http://www.tasctest.com/assets/2_tasc_special_testing_accommodations_descriptions_051016.pdf

Note: Accessibility features presented are not exhaustive nor complete. All exams may approve additional accommodations per examinee request and appropriate documentation. CA HSPE = California High School Proficiency Exam; GED = General Education Diploma; HISET = High School Equivalency Test; TASC = Test Assessing Secondary Completion

Appendix E

Pathways to Graduation: Advisory Panel Description

Advisory Panel Description

California *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60640(c)(6) required the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to consult with specific stakeholders in developing recommendations on the continuation of the high school exit examination (HSEE) and on alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements. To facilitate that consultation, the California Department of Education formed two Pathways to Graduation Advisory Panels (Advisory Panels) representing:

- Secondary teachers
- School administrators
- School board members
- Parents
- Student chosen from among two finalists but not appointed by the Governor as the student member on the State Board of Education (SBE)
- Representatives of a dropout recovery charter school
- Measurement experts
- Individuals with expertise in assessing English learners (ELs) and pupils with disabilities
- SBE members and staff representatives
- Members from California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) expansion meetings
- Legislative and business community representatives

The two concurrent Advisory Panels (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) were formed to ensure participation from a wide range of representative stakeholders and experts from across the state. The task of the Advisory Panels was to apply professional expertise and perspective while providing feedback and suggestions regarding high school graduation and alternative pathways. A total of four Advisory Panel meetings were held and each meeting allowed members opportunities for in-depth discussions and multiple avenues for providing input on high school graduation issues.

Typically, those opportunities followed a presentation or a large or small group discussion. The Advisory Panel (North) included 18 participants, and the Advisory Panel (South) included 20 participants. Tables E-1 and E-2 list the Advisory Panel members.

Advisory Panel Meeting Dates

Four Advisory Panel meetings were held on the following dates and locations:

- February 18, 2016, Los Angeles
- February 23, 2016, Sacramento
- May 3, 2016, Los Angeles
- May 17, 2016, Sacramento

Table E-1. Advisory Panel Members (North)

Name	Advisory Panel Role	Title	Affiliation
Teri Burns	School board member; Member from CAASPP expansion meetings	Legislative Advocate	California School Boards Association (CSBA)
Steve Collins	Individual with expertise in assessing students with disabilities	Director, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA); Co-Chair of Assessment and Evaluation Committee	West Contra Costa Unified School District (USD); State SELPA Administrators of California
Linda Dawson	Representative of a dropout recovery charter school	Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer	SIATech Charter High School Network
Tanya Golden	Teacher; Member from CAASPP expansion meetings	Teacher	ABC USD; California Federation of Teachers
Susan Henry	School board member	President-Elect; Trustee	CSBA; Huntington Beach Union High School District; Coastline Regional Occupational Program
Alex Hurtt	Measurement expert	Research Assistant	University of California, Davis
Lynn Lorber	Legislative representative	Principal Consultant	State Senate Pro Tempore Office, Senate Education Committee
Barbara Nemko	School administrator	Superintendent	Napa County Office of Education (COE)
Jennifer Pettey	Secondary teacher	Grade 11 English International Baccalaureate Teacher; Chair, Assessment and Testing Committee	Canyon High School, Orange USD; California Teachers Association (CTA)
Eric Premack	Representative of a dropout recovery charter school; School board member	Founder and Executive Director; Board Member	Charter Schools Development Center; Civicorps
Kimberly Rodriguez	Legislative representative; Member from CAASPP expansion meetings	Education Consultant	State Senate Pro Tempore Office
Norma Sanchez	Secondary teacher; Measurement expert	Staff, Department of Instruction and Professional Development, and Co-Consultant of Assessment and Testing Committee	CTA
Ting Sun	SBE member; School administrator	Member and Assessment Liaison; Co-founder and Executive Director	SBE; Natomas Charter School

Table E-2. Advisory Panel Members (South)

Name	Advisory Panel Role	Title	Affiliation
Shawn Ahdout	Student chosen from among two finalists but not appointed to serve on SBE	High School Senior; President	Beverly Hills High School; California Association of Student Councils
Sonia Campos-Rivera	Business community representative	Director, Education Policy and Public Affairs	Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Jose Dorado	Individual with expertise in assessing ELs	Specialist, Elementary Mathematics	Los Angeles USD, CORE District
Mathew Holton	School administrator	Superintendent	Chaffey Joint Union High School District (HSD)
Paul Jessup	School administrator	Deputy Superintendent	Riverside COE
Claudine Jones	Parent; School board member	President	Carlsbad Unified School District Board of Trustees
Michael McCormick	School administrator	Superintendent	Val Verde USD
Cynthia Moran	Parent; Business community representative	Parent, Chino Hills City Councilwoman, Substitute Teacher	Chino Hills, California
Alice Petrossian	School administrator	Past President; Chief Academic Officer/Deputy Superintendent	Association of California School Administrators; Pasadena USD
Natalie Pitman	Business community representative	Office Manager, Education and Workforce Development	Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
David Rattray	Business community representative; Member from CAASPP expansion meetings; Member from Accountability and Continuous Improvement meetings	Executive Vice President, Education and Workforce Development	Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, UNITE-LA
Norma Sanchez	Secondary teacher; Measurement expert	Staff, Department of Instruction and Professional Development, and Co-Consultant of Assessment and Testing Committee	CTA
Steve Seal	Secondary teacher; Measurement expert	Teacher; Board Member and Vice Chair of Assessment and Testing Committee	Los Angeles USD; United Teachers Los Angeles, CTA
Ilene Straus	SBE member; Member from CAASPP Expansion meetings; Former school administrator	Vice President; Former Teacher and Assistant Superintendent	SBE; Beverly Hills USD
Barbara Tyer	Secondary teacher	Language Arts Teacher	Jurupa USD
Cynthia Vasquez-Pettit	Individual with expertise in assessing ELs; School administrator	Director, English Learner and Multilingual Services	Anaheim Union HSD; Californians Together

Appendix F

Pathways to Graduation: Advisory Panel Preliminary Feedback

In order to include a wide range of representative stakeholders and experts from across the state, the California Department of Education (CDE), as directed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, convened two concurrent Pathways to Graduation Advisory Panels (Advisory Panels). The two concurrent Advisory Panels (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) included members representing areas specified in *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60850(c)(6). Each Advisory Panel met once in February 2016 and once again in May 2016. This document describes the February 2016 Advisory Panel meetings and feedback.

February 2016 Advisory Panel Meetings Description

The first two Advisory Panel meetings were held in February 2016 (one in the North and one in the South). Both meetings had the same agenda, comprised of the following activities:

- The requirements of *EC* sections and related information about the continuation of a high school exit examination (HSEE) and alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements were presented.

- University of California, Davis researchers: (1) presented research evidence on the effects of HSEE policies and practices and of students failing the HSEE, (2) reviewed HSEE requirements in two Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium states (Oregon and Washington), and (3) discussed the emerging trends in HSEE practices.

- A Large Group Reflection Discussion was held in which Advisory Panel members provided input on five topics: (1) Original reasons for creating an exit examination, (2) Benefits of having an exit examination, (3) Unintended consequences of the exit examination, (4) Whether the context for creating the CAHSEE still exists today, and (5) Methodology for driving the state's current goals without a CAHSEE.

- A Small Group Discussion session was held in which Advisory Panel members were assigned to one of two smaller groups and asked to prioritize six proposals. (Possible priority ratings were 1=lowest, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high, and 5=highest.) Each group prioritized and commented on the following: (1) new HSEE requirement; (2) change in *EC* high school course requirements; (3) require local educational agencies (LEAs) to include a high school graduation requirement; (4) implement no new graduation requirements; (5) grade point average (GPA) requirements for specific courses; and (6) utilize a hybrid model—multiple pathways of tests, grades, courses, and projects.

February 2016 Advisory Panel Preliminary Feedback

Advisory Panel comments from the two February 2016 meetings were combined for each discussion type and organized according to the topics of each discussion.

Large Group Reflection Discussion Comments

Advisory Panel members provided input on five topics: (1) Original reasons for creating an exit examination, (2) Benefits of having an exit examination, (3) Unintended consequences of the exit examination, (4) Whether the context for creating the CAHSEE still exists today, and (5) Methodology for driving the state's current goals without a CAHSEE. The following comments were provided by Advisory Panel north and south members during the Large Group Reflection Discussion.

Topic 1: Original reasons for creating an exit examination

- The CAHSEE was created in response to pressures, particularly from the business community, for all graduates to have a minimum level of skills and competencies.
- Minimum course requirements were not being applied consistently across the state. Stakeholders wanted a diploma from one LEA to mean the same from another LEA.
- There was a need for LEAs to better identify students who were falling behind and provide support for those students before grade twelve.

Topic 2: Benefits of having an exit examination

- The CAHSEE set a statewide level of proficiency and minimum competency.
- The CAHSEE alerted educators on which students were behind academically and provided the basis for teachers and schools to provide services to students who needed help. It objectively identified students at risk so that parents were more likely to support their child enrolling in remedial courses.
- Having the CAHSEE provided an incentive for student accountability. It became meaningful to students who were then motivated to do well on the exam.
- The CAHSEE results gave credibility to schools designed to serve challenging student populations (e.g., alternative and dropout recovery schools) in which it is very difficult to demonstrate effectiveness of the school. It was a metric by which schools could show high performance.

Topic 3: Unintended consequences of the exit examination

- The CAHSEE was aligned to mathematics content standards for grades six, seven, and Algebra I and grades eight, nine, and ten for English language arts (ELA). The intent to increase the rigor over time never occurred.

- Students had less time for electives. Some test preparation classes took the place of instruction, and thereby, narrowing the curriculum.
- It was stressful for students and teachers to prepare for and administer the CAHSEE. Students had test fatigue.
- CAHSEE results for grade ten were too late for significant remediation by grade twelve.
- The CAHSEE did not allow for growth scores to be determined.
- The CAHSEE required much time and cost at both the state and local levels and resulted in little effectiveness.

Topic 4: Whether the context for creating the CAHSEE still exists today

- The conversation and context has changed since CAHSEE was implemented. Today, LEAs and schools have the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with increased levels of local control and flexibility. There are now funding sources and local interventions already occurring to help students who are falling behind. There is increased emphasis now on closing the achievement gap.
- College and career readiness (CCR) is now viewed as important for all graduates. All graduates will need to go to some kind of college or technical training to be competitive in the job market.
- If students passed the required courses and local grading across all courses were consistent, there would not be a need for a HSEE.

Topic 5: Methodology for driving the state's current goals without a CAHSEE

- The CCSS provides a basis for the state's goals, including CCR. LCAP has the potential for driving current goals; however, courses and grading across LEAs and schools is likely to remain inconsistent.
- California now has appropriate assessments that are vertically scaled and can provide growth information and CCR information.
- LEAs can now identify students at risk by reviewing results of multiple measures that are part of a dashboard of state and local indicators.
- The new systems must include pathways for students with disabilities at the beginning, and students must have multiple opportunities for ongoing success.

Small Group Discussion Comments

At both the north and south meetings, Advisory Panel members were assigned to one of two smaller groups and asked to prioritize six proposals: (1) new HSEE requirement (4 variations); (2) change in *EC* high school course requirements; (3) require LEAs to include a high school graduation requirement; (4) implement no new graduation requirements; (5)

GPA requirements for specific courses; and (6) utilize a hybrid model—multiple pathways of tests, grades, courses, and projects. The following priority ratings and comments were provided by Advisory Panel members during the Small Group Discussions.

Approach 1: A New HSEE Requirement (4 variations)

- Establish a new, stand-alone HSEE.
- Utilize existing CDE examinations as a HSEE (e.g., Smarter Balanced, Next Generation Science Standards [NGSS] assessments).
- Utilize existing non-CDE examinations (e.g., SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, career technical education [CTE] exams).
- No new exit examination requirement.

Establish a new, stand-alone HSEE.

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for all four groups

- While this approach could provide identification of students at risk, it would be redundant given the current measures now available. The resources for establishing a new assessment should be redirected to better priorities. It could lead to tracking students and narrowing of the curriculum.

Utilize existing CDE examinations as a HSEE (e.g., Smarter Balanced and NGSS assessments).

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for two groups; 3 (moderate) for one group; 5 (highest) for one group

- The summative assessments are not developed for this purpose, therefore would not be appropriate.
- Further exploration is needed. This approach could leverage currently available tests that are aligned to current standards and would motivate students to do well on the tests.
- However, use of these tests would require multiple administrations and administrations earlier than grade eleven, which would be very costly. It is unclear what the consequences would be for students who opt out.

Utilize existing non-CDE examinations (e.g., SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, or CTE exams).

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for three groups; 4 (high) for one group

- These tests are nationally normed and generally considered reliable.

- However, these tests do not go through federal peer review, and the state would receive little technical data to verify test soundness or applicability to California. There is a high cost associated with these types of tests. Students with disabilities and English learners may have limited access to these assessments. LEAs currently have the option with LCFF and LCAP to use funds to provide these types of tests to all students, but this option should not be mandated statewide.

No new exit examination requirement.

Priority Rating: 5 (highest) for all four groups

- By eliminating the HSEE requirement, this approach would allow more time, space, and resources for LCFF and LCAP to work. A new exit examination requirement is not needed because LEAs and schools already have much information to use to identify students at risk and are implementing Smarter Balanced assessments, which are based on higher standards than CAHSEE was.

Approach 2: Change in *EC* high school course requirements.

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for three groups; 4 (high) for one group

- The mathematics course requirement should be increased from two years to three years.

- However, more statewide course requirements will restrict local flexibility. Local flexibility is needed because not all students can meet the higher University of California A-G admission requirements, while some students can achieve beyond A-G.

Approach 3: Require LEAs to include a high school graduation requirement (e.g., volunteer hours, senior projects, career exploration).

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for all four groups

- There is much value in these types of activities, but they should be a local and community determination rather than a statewide requirement.

Approach 4: Implement no new graduation requirements.

Priority Rating: 5 (highest) for all four groups

- Having no new requirements is consistent with eliminating the HSEE requirement. Adding more requirements does not necessarily create improvement. Allow LEAs to manage locally with LCAP.

Approach 5: GPA requirements for specific courses.

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for all four groups

- This approach has little chance of being effective. Grades are subjective, and there is already much pressure put on earning a high GPA. This approach could result in additional pressure on teachers and administrators that could result in grade inflation.

Approach 6: Utilize a hybrid model—multiple pathways of tests, grades, courses, and projects.

Priority Rating: 1 (lowest) for one group; 3 (moderate) for one group; 5 (highest) for two groups

- The hybrid model aligns well with California's current context and goals of multiple measures, supporting local control, and use of best practices.

- It is very important that the state's role be supportive and guiding rather than adding more requirements. The state should provide LEAs and schools with models, examples, and best practices. The current local requirements in place already allow for multiple measures and are sufficient to move forward. No new state requirements should be imposed on local decision making.

- On the other hand, the state's role could include providing a framework for the hybrid model, such as several multiple indicators required by all LEAs with a menu of other indicators LEAs could select as locally-required indicators. Parents and the community need assurance that students meet minimum competencies to graduate.

- The primary disadvantage of the hybrid model is that the system could become very complicated, particularly with many multiple measures. In addition, student mobility issues may cause problems for students meeting requirements and school tracking requirements.

School Level Review Comments

During the February 2016 Advisory Panel discussions, there were some comments that voluntary school level reviews, such as AdvancED and Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditations, are also important in fostering excellence in education. Advisory Panel members recommended this type of indicator continue to be investigated and had the following comments:

- School reviews would give the business community confidence in the students who graduate from an accredited school. Government sanctioned reviews of a school would provide a robust way to review the education that students receive. School reviews could be an external “referee” that all schools could use.

- However, there is subjectivity in school reviews. School reviews are not at the student level and, as such, do not address the issues of Senate Bill 172 (i.e., a standardized minimum competency measure for an individual student, which is what CAHSEE provided).

- The types of indicators used for accreditation are also likely to be those included in LCFF and LCAP evaluation rubrics and in accountability measures.

Appendix G

Pathways to Graduation: Advisory Panel Detailed Feedback and Comments

The California Department of Education (CDE), as directed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), convened two concurrent Pathways to Graduation Advisory Panels (Advisory Panels). The two concurrent Advisory Panels (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) included members representing areas specified in *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60850(c)(6). Each Advisory Panel met once in February 2016 and once again in May 2016. Preliminary feedback from the February 2016 meetings was used in conjunction with May 2016 information as the basis for discussion and decision making at the May 2016 meetings. This appendix describes work of the May 2016 Advisory Panel meetings and provides the detailed recommendations and comments of the Advisory Group members from the May 2016 meetings. These detailed recommendations are reflected in the SSPI recommendation provided in Section IX of this report.

May 2016 Advisory Panel Meetings Description

The second two Advisory Panel meetings were held in May 2016, two months after the first two meetings, to allow time for further research and collection and analysis of preliminary feedback from first two Advisory Panel meetings, Regional Input meetings, and Online Survey. Both meetings had generally the same agenda, comprised of the following activities:

- University of California, Davis (UC Davis) researchers presented findings from their analysis of two years of assessment data (California's Class of 2016 assessment results, which compared 2013–14 grade ten California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) scores and 2014–15 grade eleven Smarter Balanced scores). UC Davis researchers also presented findings from their nationwide scan of high school graduation requirements that investigated trends in graduation policies and provided detailed examples of graduation policies in six states.

- The results from the Pathways to Graduation Regional Input meetings and Online Survey were reviewed.

- A Large Group Focused Discussion was held at both north and south Advisory Panel meetings to develop recommendations for the SSPI. At the south meeting, Advisory Panel members were asked to provide input on two proposed recommendation options:

    - Option 1 would recommend removing the state requirement to pass a high school exit examination (HSEE) as a condition of graduation.

    - Option 2 would be the same as Option 1 and additionally recommend defining the statewide set of minimum competencies that must be met for

graduation. Local educational agencies (LEAs) would determine if the student met the minimum levels.

At the north meeting, the same two options were proposed plus an additional third option, based on input from the south meeting:

- Option 3 would be the same as Option 1 and additionally recommend investigating local policies and state graduation requirements after a time period for implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

May 2016 Advisory Panel Detailed Recommendations and Comments

Advisory Panel detailed recommendations and comments were combined from the north and south May 2016 meetings and organized according to input gathered on Options 1, 2, and 3. The following detailed recommendations and comments were provided by Advisory Panel members from the May 2016 meetings.

Option 1:

Remove the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation.

- This recommendation would acknowledge the context has changed since the CAHSEE was first implemented (i.e., waivers/exemptions, LCFF/LCAP).

Sample Feedback: Option 1 Support

- The intention years ago for the establishment of the CAHSEE was to equalize the outcomes for high school graduates from one educational institution to another.

- There is currently a high confidence in teachers; evidence that high school grades are a better predictor of college success than SAT or ACT scores (i.e., "Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions," W. Hiss and V.W. Franks, February 5, 2014).

- Previous lack of trust in grading when CAHSEE was implemented does not appear to be the case currently. California teachers and schools have been moving away from teaching-to-the-test and are now focusing on skills-based instruction, CCSS, teaching skills across the curriculum, and providing career technical education (CTE) to motivate students. These changes are also influencing teachers to reevaluate grading policies.

- If students passed the required courses and local grading across all courses were consistent, there would not be a need for a HSEE.

- The state's role should be to provide guidance, make recommendations, and provide tools that can be more efficiently developed at the state level than at the

local level. For example, some of the non-test requirements used by other states (e.g., portfolios, senior project, and community service) could be options in addition to current course requirements. Use caution and not rely too heavily on a narrow definition of an academic diploma, which could run the risk of not including all students. Graduation and college and career readiness (CCR) should be blended and should include a menu approach that can fit all students (but would have some inconsistencies across LEAs and schools).

- Having some inconsistencies would be better than a one-size-fits-all approach that actually fits only some (but would be more consistent). There is a trade-off in any approach, but the one-size-fits-all, compliance approach of CAHSEE did not work.

- The use of the CAHSEE was a waste of time and valuable money. That funding should now be used elsewhere, such as LCFF/LCAP funding for staff development and for intervention programs for students at risk, focusing on improving individual competencies.

- If the state is not willing to define what a diploma means and which students would not get a diploma (i.e., Option 2), then the best option is Option 1, which does not include any qualifiers. Whether there are statewide or local minimum requirements, situations can occur in which a student receives a diploma but cannot read or where a student is held back. Either case is unacceptable. These situations will happen, and people will be upset either way.

- Students with disabilities who fall behind currently are identified and provided support through the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom.

Option 2:

Remove the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation.

- This recommendation would acknowledge the context has changed since the CAHSEE was first implemented (i.e., waivers/exemptions, LCFF/LCAP).

Define state minimum competencies that must be met for graduation.

- This recommendation would acknowledge the need to define what a diploma means statewide.

- This recommendation would acknowledge that locals are best positioned to determine if students meet that minimum level (as well as the metrics used to make that determination).

Sample Feedback: Option 2 Support

- One reason why CAHSEE was established was the concern for a minimum level in the quality of instruction and equity in schools, which also may still exist. Local control, even with LCFF and LCAP, can range from the worst to the most outstanding. The state must be able to prove that every child has fair access, the most rigorous program, and will be marketable to get a job.

- Local control is strongly supported. However, the concern statewide is the equity issue. Because school districts and schools across the state are so varied in their programs and resources, those variations can result in disadvantages for some students, particularly in low socioeconomic areas with many English learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and minority students. There is much variability and different challenges across schools and across classrooms. In order to address the equity issue, there needs to be some kind of common assessment.

- While the state is now in an era of local control and there are many reasons to discard Option 2, there is hesitation about completely discarding it due to worry that, in the long run, at risk students will be left behind as has happened in the past. Under Option 2, once the minimum competencies are defined, it would be up to LEAs to determine measures that students would need to meet the minimum competencies and ensure students meet them.

- The Smarter Balanced assessment offers the opportunity to assess more content areas but was never designed to be a HSEE. It was built on the logic of California's Early Assessment Program. However, Smarter Balanced could be one measure among others of CCR.

- There should be state level requirements tied to current graduation requirements that include more content areas than just English language arts/literacy and mathematics. One area that is currently lacking as a requirement for graduation is a minimum proficiency in history-social science. The current requirements specify students take courses of study, but there is no state test for history-social science.

Sample Feedback: Option 2 Concerns

- Developing a list of state minimum competencies cheapens what the high school and education as a whole should be about, which is getting students to the next level. Accepting a minimum level as competent does a disservice to all students, especially students of color, low socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities. How will they know that meeting the minimum levels falls short of being enough to get a good job, support a family, and sustain their lives? The minimum competencies change and will change in the future. The educational system should not mask the truth in educating students. It should teach students what they need to know, teach them how to take control of their own education, and hold them to what is known to be the next level. Schools still must meet accreditation through Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation and A-G approvals.

- Additional minimum state competency requirements are not needed because most schools and LEAs are already identifying and supporting at-risk students in the following ways:

    - LEAs are implementing and attending to CCSS, LCFF/LCAP goals, and other strategies (e.g., Smarter Balanced assessments, tools, and resources).

    - Schools and LEAs are now more competitive, particularly with the growth of charter schools. This competitiveness provides incentives for improvement and helps to drive the diploma to mean higher standards.

- Option 2 could result in tracking students, particularly minority groups. EL students are especially vulnerable because they do not have strong advocacy group support.

- Option 2 would not be flexible for all LEAs. LEAs are so varied across the state. Our high school district is very focused on CCR, which has a different meaning and scope across every region and LEA in the state. To recommend a one-size-fits-all approach would be a mistake, especially regarding CTE and CCR. In moving towards more local control, there is widespread disagreement on the definition of CTE and CCR. Defining minimum competencies for all students across all LEAs would be very difficult.

- Option 2 seems just a back door way of having a HSEE. With the establishment of the LCFF and LCAP, California is now in an era of local control in which LEAs define their goals and programs. The state has adopted CCSS and Smarter Balanced, which focus on a CCR approach while CAHSEE focused on the minimum standards approach. The expectation now is that all students should be college and career ready. Tests and LEA databases to obtain and track results are now more sophisticated. In retrospect, there were only a very few number of students who did not receive a diploma due to not passing the CAHSEE.

Option 3:

Remove the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation.

- This recommendation would acknowledge the context has changed since the CAHSEE was first implemented (i.e., waivers/exemptions, LCFF/LCAP).

Following a time period to allow for implementation of the state standards and LCFF/LCAP, investigate local policies and state requirements regarding high school graduation.

- This recommendation acknowledges the system is in a time of transition, and we should wait until the system matures to conduct further evaluation.

Sample Feedback: Option 3 Support

- Although it would be useful for LEAs if the state were to develop a database of local graduation requirements and research differences, it is recommended to leave out the recommendation to investigate local policies and state requirements. Instead, let the natural legislative process occur in which people voice evaluation needs as issues arise.
- The recommendation should have some kind of additional guidance, and it will take time to identify and come to agreement by all stakeholders on what that guidance should be in the absence of a HSEE.

Summary of Advisory Panel Recommendations

Considering all input on the three proposed options, Advisory Panel members generally agreed with the following recommendations:

- Remove the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation. This recommendation would acknowledge California's education context has changed since the CAHSEE was first implemented (i.e., waivers/exemptions, LCFF/LCAP).
- Allow more time for implementation of the LCFF and LCAP before considering changes to graduation requirements. This recommendation would acknowledge the system is in a time of transition, and it will take time for local implementation to become established.
- Provide assurances to parents and other stakeholders that students will meet minimum competencies to earn a diploma through current federal, state, and local requirements (i.e., successful course completions, passing grades, or other options).
- The state's role related to graduation requirements should be to: (1) identify high quality projects; (2) support innovation; (3) develop and provide tools that can be more efficiently developed at the state level than local level; (4) provide guidance, resources, and tools for teachers, schools, LEAs, and the public; and (5) make recommendations to policy makers and control agencies.

Appendix H

Pathways to Graduation: Regional Meetings Stakeholder Feedback

Regional Meetings Description

The California Department of Education (CDE) conducted five Pathways to Graduation regional meetings between March and April 2016. The purpose of the regional meetings was to gather feedback from the community about the: (1) continuation of the high school exit examination (HSEE) and (2) alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements after 2017–18. This document is a summary of input from all five meetings.

Table H-1. Participants by Group Represented

Group Represented	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Students	1	3%
Parents	7	21%
School Administrators	22	67%
Secondary School Teachers	3	9%
Business Community Members	0	0%
Other Community Members	0	0%
TOTAL	33	100%

The regional meetings were advertised through notifications to the California Teachers Association, California Parent Teachers Association, County Office of Education (COE) Regional Assessment Network members, Chambers of Commerce, and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the regions. Despite extensive notifications, the participation rate was low. The meetings were one-hour events that began with a brief presentation designed to provide participants with the background and impetus for the meetings. A summary of Senate Bill 172 requirements was presented. Participants were encouraged to provide statements and/or make comments and recommendations in an open-ended discussion format. Participant's questions also were welcomed and addressed, as appropriate.

Regional Meetings Dates

Five regional meetings were held on the following dates and locations:

- March 15, 2016, Tehama County COE
- March 16, 2016, Fresno COE
- March 22, 2016, Sacramento COE
- April 4, 2016, Los Angeles COE
- April 7, 2016, Santa Clara COE

Regional Meetings Stakeholder Feedback Summary

The comments of Regional Meeting participants were combined and categorized by consideration type and topic areas. The participant comments from the Regional Meetings are summarized as follows:

- Consistently at each meeting, most or all participants expressed comments *opposed* to the continuation of the HSEE.

- Consistently at each meeting, most or all participants provided comments that *supported a hybrid model*, (e.g., a menu of measurement options within a state-defined framework.)

Regional Meetings Stakeholder Detailed Comments

The participant comments from the Regional Meetings are listed by consideration type and topic areas:

Consideration 1: *Recommendations about the continuation of the HSEE*

Summary: Consistently at each meeting, most or all participants expressed comments *opposed* to the continuation of the HSEE.

Relevance of a High School Exit Examination

- Eliminate the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in its current form. The CAHSEE was not aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and did not have the level of rigor of the CCSS. As a result, CAHSEE was giving a false measurement of what students were able to do.

- When a student goes to college, does the work, and successfully passes the courses, that student receives a diploma.

- California's new assessment system is not about accountability but about instruction and supporting the needs of the students. Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their readiness and use a multiple measures approach for accountability.

- Ultimately, the teacher provides the guidance and support for the student to achieve, not a HSEE.

- Employers should meet their responsibility of due diligence in determining if an employee is well qualified for a particular position. It should not be up to a HSEE to make an employment choice.

English Learners, Students with Disabilities, Alternative Education Students

- Any type of exit examination creates two classes of people: one with a diploma and one without a diploma. This will likely cut along economic levels.
- Alternative education students have commented that they were not helped by taking a HSEE.
- Students who attend regularly, do the work, and receive the grades should receive a diploma. A HSEE should not be a roadblock to a student's success for college or career.
- Students should be allowed to work up to their potential and the CAHSEE should be eliminated.
- Students not passing the CAHSEE get stuck in remedial classes for most of high school rather than being provided opportunities to succeed at being independent or receive training in alternative careers at their maturity level.
- Advanced students taking the CAHSEE find it to be a waste of time.
- Foster youth transition frequently and typically would not receive all of the content needed to prepare to pass a HSEE. They often deal with various traumas throughout their lives and, at a minimum, need to be in the right frame of mind to even take the test.

Adds Local Burden

- Another separate test like the CAHSEE is not needed on top of all of the other tests that are already being administered to students.
- A HSEE is not needed now that we have more rigorous standards and opportunities for students to engage in meaningful activities with real world applications and where students are measured for their unique competencies.

Waste of Time and Resources

- The state has spent millions of dollars and much time on an examination that has minimal impact. If the purpose of the CAHSEE was to show minimum competency, it did not do that very well.
- The funds that would be used for a HSEE should instead be used to fully fund technology in all schools and fund the new science assessment.

Consideration 2: *Recommendations about alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements after 2017–18*

Summary: Consistently at each meeting, most or all participants provided comments that *supported a hybrid model*, (e.g., a menu of measurement options within a state-defined framework).

Different Options for Different Students

- Different students require different means of demonstrating their proficiency, and this should be a primary consideration. Provide a menu of options for students to show they are ready to graduate from high school, and ensure the options encompass multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their competence prior to graduation.

- A hybrid model would include a variety of ways a student could meet minimum graduation requirements. For example, graduation requirement options could include passing an Advanced Placement test, earning a certain score on the ACT test, taking A-G courses, taking a year or two of a career technical education (CTE) pathway, and/or earning a State Seal of Biliteracy.

- Options would allow for a level of local control within state minimum criteria and would align with Local Control and Accountability Plans.

English Learners, Students with Disabilities, Alternative Education Students

- The hybrid model would be a way to measure a student's college and career readiness and alternative student competencies.

- Provide more life courses for special education students to help them learn to be functional and independent after high school.

- Bringing after school programs to areas with low performing students. It will cost more, but it will bring more success.

- Increase the numbers of counselors, mentors, and people who can help and motivate students with their homework. Provide funds to increase the number of technical high schools in California.

Avoid Local Burden

- The hybrid model (multiple measures) will be more work for LEAs, schools, and counselors and more choices for students and parents. It may be beneficial to require each freshman student to develop a high school plan from a checklist of options for meeting graduation requirements.

- Local student information systems and the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System could handle the processing demands of tracking whether students meet minimum graduation requirements under the hybrid model.

Use of Time and Resources: Staff Development and Teacher Training

- There must be a continuum of support from elementary through high school so that students do not fall behind.

Student Incentives and Recognition

- California currently has the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, which is earned by scoring high on tests and completing extra courses. Rather than the current two tiers of diplomas consider having three tiers: (1) Golden State Seal Merit Diploma, (2) special star/seal diploma for meeting several mid-range indicators, and (3) regular diploma. In this model, more students would have greater incentive to do well on the Smarter Balanced or California Alternate Assessment tests.

Appendix I

Pathways to Graduation: Online Survey Description and Feedback

Survey Description

A Pathways to Graduation Survey was designed and made available for stakeholders to provide their suggestions and feedback on the continuation of the high school exit examination (HSEE) and on alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduation requirements. The survey included one demographic question, five questions that elicited the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a statement, and one open-ended question that elicited respondents' suggestions. For the five agree/disagree statements, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a statement and then asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree, with the possible range of ratings being from 1=not at all to 5=very strongly. The survey questions included the following:

- What group(s) do you represent? (Check all that apply)
  Student
  Parent
  School Administrator
  Secondary School Teacher
  Business Community Member
  Other Community Member

- California students should have to pass one or more examinations as a requirement for high school graduation.
  Agree
  Disagree

- California should *increase* the minimum course requirements for high school graduation in state law.
  Agree
  Disagree

- Local governing boards should establish their own graduation requirements.
  Agree
  Disagree

- Students should have to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade in order to graduate.
  Agree
  Disagree

- California should provide multiple pathways to graduation (e.g., exams, grades, courses, portfolios).
  Agree
  Disagree

- Do you have any suggestions for alternatives to satisfy high school graduation requirements? If so, please provide a short description. *(Optional: 0 of 250 character limit)*

The Pathways to Graduation Survey was available in English and in Spanish on the California Department of Education (CDE) California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/ from March 17 to April 18, 2016. Information about the survey was distributed electronically to stakeholder agencies, networks, and organizations, along with a request to forward the links to the survey to others who may be interested in responding. Business cards with the CAHSEE Web page information were distributed at the five Pathways to Graduation Regional Meetings to help promote the survey. A flyer about the survey was created and distributed to the Pathways to Graduation Advisory Panel members, California Teachers Association, California Parent Teachers Association, and County Office of Education (COE) Regional Assessment Network (RAN) members and Listserv for further distribution to their members and others.

Survey Participation

A total of 2,378 responses were received. Table I-1 displays the group representation breakdown for the respondents who identified their role. **Note:** Because the survey indicated "Check all that apply," percentages do not total 100 percent.

Table I-1. Participants by Group Represented

Group Represented	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Student	482	20%
Parent	654	28%
School Administrator	312	13%
Secondary School Teacher	1,128	47%
Business Community Member	54	2%
Other Community Member	254	11%

Survey Quantitative Results

Responses to the five agree/disagree questions of the Survey are summarized as follows:

The majority of respondents agreed with the statements that:

- Students should have to pass one or more examinations to graduate.

- Students should have to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade.

- California should provide multiple pathways to graduation.

The majority of respondents disagreed with the statements that:

- California should increase the minimum course requirements.
- Local governing boards should be able to establish their own graduation requirements.

Table I-2 shows that the agree/disagree responses were similar both for educators and for non-educators.

Table I-2. Survey Responses by Educator and Non-Educator

Statement	Educator		Non-Educator	
	Agree	***Disagree***	***Agree***	***Disagree***
1. California students should have to pass one or more examinations as a requirement for high school graduation.	858 (61%)	554 (39%)	568 (59%)	398 (41%)
2. California should increase the minimum course requirements for high school graduation in state law.	502 (36%)	910 (64%)	304 (31%)	662 (69%)
3. Local governing boards should establish their own graduation requirements.	545 (39%)	867 (61%)	328 (34%)	638 (66%)
4. Students should have to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade in order to graduate.	1,081 (77%)	331 (23%)	686 (71%)	280 (29%)
5. California should provide multiple pathways to graduation (e.g., exams, grades, courses, portfolios).	1,181 (84%)	231 (16%)	852 (88%)	114 (12%)

Tables I-3, I-4, I-5, I-6, and I-7 show how strongly respondents rated each statement after they had chosen to agree or disagree.

Table I-3. Survey Response Ratings, Statement 1

Statement 1: California students should have to pass one or more examinations as a requirement for high school graduation.					
Rating	**5- very strongly**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1- not at all**
Agree (1,426)	724	409	260	29	4
Disagree (952)	511	239	163	23	16

Table I-4. Survey Response Ratings, Statement 2

Statement 2: California should *increase* the minimum course requirements for high school graduation in state law.					
Rating	**5- very strongly**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1- not at all**
Agree (806)	345	267	173	19	2
Disagree (1,572)	691	403	382	74	22

Table I-5. Survey Response Ratings, Statement 3

Statement 3: Local governing boards should establish their own graduation requirements.					
Rating	**5- very strongly**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1- not at all**
Agree (873)	362	225	253	31	2
Disagree (1,505)	809	356	261	48	31

Table I-6. Survey Response Ratings, Statement 4

Statement 4: Students should have to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade in order to graduate.					
Rating	**5- very strongly**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1- not at all**
Agree (1,767)	869	554	309	31	4
Disagree (611)	306	143	130	28	4

Table I-7. Survey Response Ratings, Statement 5

Statement 5: California should provide multiple pathways to graduation (e.g., exams, grades, courses, portfolios).					
Rating	**5- very strongly**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1- not at all**
Agree (2,033)	1,170	493	323	40	7
Disagree (345)	145	89	80	27	4

Survey Qualitative Results: Selected Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to list any additional comments (up to 250 characters). There were 807 respondents who added additional comments to their survey responses. The comments were categorized into topic areas, and responses were selected that were representative of each topic area. For ease of reading, the comments were then categorized under one of the five Survey statements or the final Survey question.

Statement 1: California students should have to pass one or more examinations as a requirement for high school graduation.

Most comments tended to agree with Statement 1. Some comments suggested options, such as using existing CDE examinations (i.e., Smarter Balanced) or non-CDE examinations (e.g., SAT, ACT) rather than creating a new HSEE. Responses that agreed with Statement 1 largely supported having to pass one examination rather than several examinations as a requirement of graduation.

Examinations

- Students should have to take an examination that actually tests them on relevant content, which the CAHSEE didn't do. The examination should be comprehensive, taken senior year, and should be multifaceted with multiple choice, essays, portfolios, etc.

- Provide multiple opportunities, such as Smarter Balanced assessments, SAT/ACT/PSAT results, or a specific sequence of courses (A-G). If there must be a test, have one test that fits all purposes.

- There should be a baseline examination that shows the standard of competency for all graduating seniors. It is not appropriate or anything gained by setting local competency unless colleges would delineate the differences and award higher (or lower) acceptance rates accordingly.

- The test should be able to accommodate students at ALL levels – Special Education students need to be considered.

- A minimum score on the Smarter Balanced examinations in 11th grade would be appropriate. This way, 11th grade students will take the Smarter Balanced tests seriously, try their best, and help with the authenticity of the scores.

- Nothing is perfect. If you don't do a test, then I don't think you should do anything at all because it is too subjective.

- If a child passes all of the required classes for graduation, they should graduate. Their eligibility to graduate should not be based on a single exam.

Diploma

- I believe strongly that a high school diploma in the state of California should mean the student has met certain specific and objective criteria. Among those would be the ability to read and understand a variety of authentic, complex texts, such as voter information guides, editorials, and news articles. I also support a writing requirement similar to the CAHSEE.

- Students completing all the required coursework and pass the state exit examinations should be awarded a state diploma.

General

- The major issue with the CAHSEE being one of the main components of the graduation requirement is that testing grade ten students at a grade eight level and telling them they are ready to graduate high school is setting them up to under achieve and strive for a D the rest of their high school career.

Statement 2: California should increase the minimum course requirements for high school graduation in state law.

Comments were split between being in favor or against Statement 2. Several comments were unclear about increases versus decreases to course requirements but requested revisions regarding the types of courses required, such as allowing certain career technical education (CTE) courses to count towards the mathematics requirement.

Regarding vocational education, there was strong support for providing vocational education courses and programs as part of a vocational pathway leading to a career. Some responses suggested revisions and/or flexibility in course requirements. Some respondents appeared confused about current state course requirements.

Mathematics

- Students are required to take four years of English in high school. Both state and University of California (UC) schools require three years of math but recommend four years.

English Language Arts (ELA)

- English language learners who moved here in high school should not be denied a diploma because they haven't fully acquired the language yet. They could still show proficiency in their primary language with an English language component.

- Students have to meet specific competencies at an acceptable level of achievement. Instead of "taking English" students would have to meet an expectation for writing. Separate competencies could be created for all important aspects of English classes.

Vocational Education

- Districts need to recognize the need for vocational education classes and open more programs and allow students to go to the high school that has that program.

- Vocational and alternative schools should be able to meet the state-mandated requirements for a high school diploma.

- There is too much emphasis on California's A-G requirements in our high schools, and not all students will be successful on that pathway.

- Special education students need an alternative, as many of those students need a more vocational pathway.

- We need to give students the option to take vocational education courses and courses in the visual and performing arts.

A-G Course Taking

- Required coursework should be revisited. The California State University (CSU) and UC systems largely determine what high schools require and should include more science/CTE courses and less English and math classes.

- Get rid of all the subjects that will not help our children in the future. Basic math is all they need to get them through life. Teach life skills and communication skills.

- High school graduation requirements should be closely aligned with UC/CSU A-G requirements to ensure rigorous educational expectations as well as the possibility for higher education for all students.

- If the student feels they won't need the course later in life, it should be their/our decision.

- Quit offering so many silly elective courses and concentrate on the basic subjects. If a student completes the required number of credits, they should graduate.

- The A-G requirements should be the primary graduation requirement.

General

- If the state insists on integrated science with the adoption of Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), more years of science will be required to graduate than the two years of science required now. All districts should have the same requirements for graduation to ensure equity for all students.

Statement 3: Local governing boards should establish their own graduation requirements.

Most comments seemed to support local decision making and having local governing boards establish their own graduation requirements *beyond existing state requirements*. Some comments seemed to suggest that local boards should be allowed to set their own requirements regardless of any state requirements, although it is unclear if this is what respondents meant and/or whether they were aware/unaware of current state course taking requirements for high school graduation.

Portfolios

- Districts set courses required to graduate with minimum competency exams, projects, or portfolios for each required course. Required courses would reflect the needs of the students within that district.

A-G Course Taking

- Local boards should be able to add course requirements on top of the state requirements. Portfolios might be a workable way for students who have difficulty passing an examination or who just miss the cut off by a point or two.

Diploma

- Ultimately I think we need to clarify what a high school diploma means.

Alternate Pathways

- Local boards should be able to establish graduation requirements in excess of state requirements only. Multiple pathways should include examinations as a requirement. In lieu of an exam, a comprehensive essay should be required.

- Anything that is one-size-fits-all and limits students' access to graduation and a high school diploma should not be allowed. Keep control local.

- Continue with state minimum requirements for courses with local flexibility to increase requirements per the student population/community culture AND allow multiple means to earn a diploma as determined locally.

- There is already so much "local control" and teacher/course variability as well as inequitable access to rigorous courses and teaching that those issues probably need to be addressed first.

General

- Higher standards and more local control over curriculum are vital to student success. Empowered teachers and empowered local school officials equals increased student success.

- Until ALL funding mechanisms and power are returned to the local level then you will have underperforming schools and students. The local community should be the ones who determine the path.

- The school could decide. They are accountable to school board and parents.

- Students need a broad based liberal arts education to prepare them to be well informed members of society. Beyond that, requirements should be figured out at the local level.

Statement 4: Students should have to pass a specific set of courses with a state-specified passing grade in order to graduate.

Comments were generally in favor of Statement 4. Some comments suggested options, such as raising the current passing grade of a “D” to a “C.”

Grades

- I have concerns about grades being used, as teachers' grading practices vary widely within and between schools and districts.
- Raise the passing grade requirement for all "required" classes to a C- instead of the D- that is currently accepted as "passing" and earns a student their "units."
- Students should graduate high school based upon their academic grade point average (GPA) and minimum number of units.

Alternative Pathways

- Grades have always been the better predictor. Testing is simply an accountability measure. Alternate pathways are key here. Stop over-testing kids!

Diploma

- The 2.00 requirement should be re-established.

General

- In order to play on a team, a student must have a "C" average—expecting every student to be able to pass every class is untenable.

Statement 5: California should provide multiple pathways to graduation (e.g., exams, grades, courses, portfolios).

Responses overwhelmingly agreed with Statement 5 that students should be provided multiple pathway options to meet graduation requirements.

Portfolios

- I definitely like the idea of alternative means of meeting high school requirements. A portfolio and interview may show how a student can show mastery of required skills.
- I feel that ALL students should complete several different types of requirements for graduation (exams, projects, portfolios, courses, etc.) in order to display a well-rounded education.

- Too much emphasis is placed in a test as opposed to skills, skills that cannot be necessarily measured on an academic exam.

- Portfolio defenses of what students have learned over the course of their years will be more beneficial than a standardized test; let students own their education.

- Use (1) portfolios showing mastery ability, (2) alternative examinations, such as an oral response assessment with a rubric, (3) written explanations to problem solving scenarios that cover more multiple standards and practices (not just a performance task), and (4) project-based courses that result in presenting end-of-course mastery.

- Students in special education programs should have a modified requirement, which makes the portfolio a desirable requirement because of its flexibility.

- Students should be able to show competency in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, with an emphasis on technology, prior to graduating from high school.

- Requirements could include job/work study, project-based and portfolio-based versus grades, different alternatives to EVERYONE having to pass the higher level Math/Science courses, more arts-based curriculum included for graduation requirements for a well-rounded education.

- I think you need to take into consideration the ability levels of subsets of the population. Giving options helps all students.

Work Experience

- We give a lot of lip service to Career Readiness and Career courses but most graduation requirements are for a college-bound student. If career is to be a focus, then money and pathways need to be fully funded/implemented with real business partnerships.

- Students should be given passing grades, work experience, volunteer opportunities in the community for more hours to expose them to real world scenarios, which would be more meaningful than examinations as a means for graduation requirements.

Question: Do you have any suggestions for alternatives to satisfy high school graduation requirements? If so, please provide a short description. *(Optional: 0 of 250 character limit)*

Responses tended to support statewide minimum competency requirements and multiple pathways options for high school graduation. Some respondents provided suggestions for multiple pathways models or approaches.

Diploma

- For students to get a return on their years of work in the educational system they must demonstrate that they possess marketable skills. If there is no standard or minimum qualification to earn a diploma, then there is no value in the diploma.

- A basic high school diploma should be the same throughout the state; diploma requirements should not be based on the district in which one resides.

- There should be an option for two types of graduation requirements: one for the academic degree and one for a technical degree.

Career

- We need a career pathways model for high school education in California. Provide students with a career-focused education in grades eleven and twelve, with different graduation requirements for each career pathway.

- Provide continued expansion of CTE certificate programs with positive job placement pathways within the industries of the program impact area.

- Provide more funding for arts and technology and "real" career courses like running your own business. Art is essential to creative thinking and adaptation. Technology is crucial in our society today. Less homework and more focused work in classrooms on how to apply real world situations. More social projects to develop philanthropy and caring about our communities and people in general.

Alternate Pathways

- Students need to be offered academic, vocational, or a combination high school certificate.

- High school diplomas need to be standardized. If you want another pathway you need to call your completion of that program something else because it is NOT standardized high school.

- There should be no social promotion. After grade eight, students should be allowed to choose between a vocational track or an academic track.

- There should be clear cut alternative pathways for students with autism or in special education to achieve a high school diploma.

- Use Early Assessment Program (EAP) results and then alternative pathways for those who are not college ready or provisionally ready.

- Provide alternative pathways through adult education with an equal high school diploma (e.g., prescriptive credit recovery through adult education and alternative classes that meet the required course list for credit).

- Students should get a choice between examinations and project-based assessment for the exit requirement. The project could be open-ended so it could be tailored by teachers to student interests and abilities.

- Students should be able to create their own ways to demonstrate their understanding of course material throughout school if they do not do well on traditional exams.

General

- Provide classes on safety, situational awareness, anti-bullying, and ethics.

- Education is NOT one size fits all. A high school diploma should represent a set of minimum requirements toward graduation.

- I admire the British system in which students leave school with a nationwide General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) type of tests that allow end-of-required education at age 16 where employment or specialized career training can begin.