STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN CALIFORNIA:
2015 CALIFORNIA ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS (CAASPP) RESULTS

The Education Trust–West

Statewide data from California's first year of CAASPP testing reveal stark achievement gaps, underscoring the need for equitable implementation of the Common Core Standards.

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) was administered for the first time in 2015 to all students in grades 3-8 and 11 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. This test is aligned with the new, more rigorous Common Core standards, providing a more accurate measure of student progress toward college and career readiness than the previous California Standards Test (CST). These tests differ so substantially that results shouldn't be compared. However, the CAASPP results serve as a valuable baseline from which to measure future growth. They also expose large achievement gaps between student subgroups and reveal that too few students are on track to graduate with the skills they need for college and career.

STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE

Less than half of California's students met or exceeded standards in ELA (44%) and mathematics (34%) in 2015. (The "meet" and "exceeded" categories are similar to the "proficient" and "advanced" categories from the CST assessment.) In 3rd grade, 38% of students met or exceeded ELA standards; in 8th grade, 45% of students met or exceeded standards; and in 11th grade, 56% did so. In math, 40% of 3rd graders met or exceeded standards, while 33% of 8th graders and 30% of 11th graders did so. These findings raise questions, such as: What explains the wide gap between math and ELA proficiency in 11th grade? Why are 11th grade ELA scores so much higher than 3rd and 8th grade ELA scores?

FIGURE 1: CAASPP ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATH RESULTS, BY GRADE (2015)

Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standard
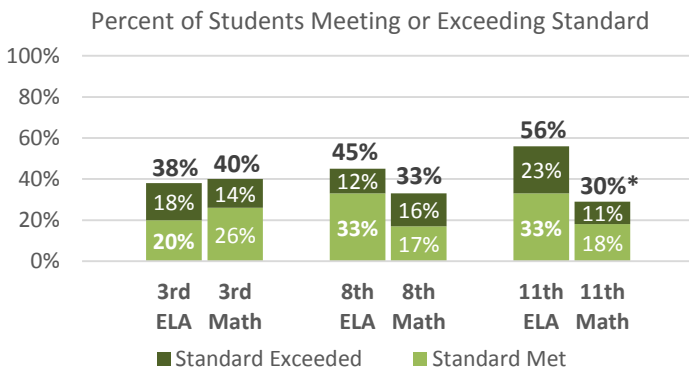
SUBGROUP PERFORMANCE AND GAPS

Large Gaps

Large gaps exist between Black, Latino, low-income, and English learner students and their White, Asian, and affluent peers. While these gaps were apparent with the CSTs, these more rigorous Common Core-aligned tests expose gaps even further. In both math and ELA, for example, about 70% of Asian students met or exceeded standards. These figures dwarf the scores of African American students: just 28% met or exceeded ELA standards, and 16% met or exceeded math standards.

* Due to rounding, figures may not sum precisely.

FIGURE 2: CAASPP ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS RESULTS BY SUBGROUP, ALL GRADES (2015)
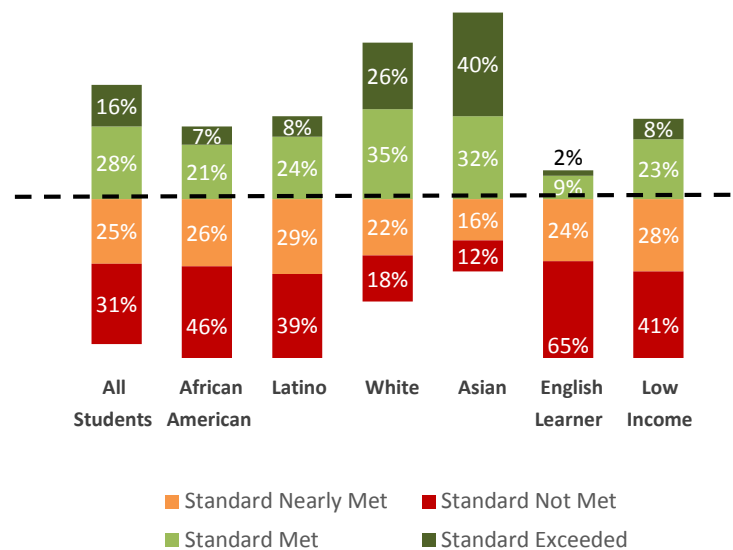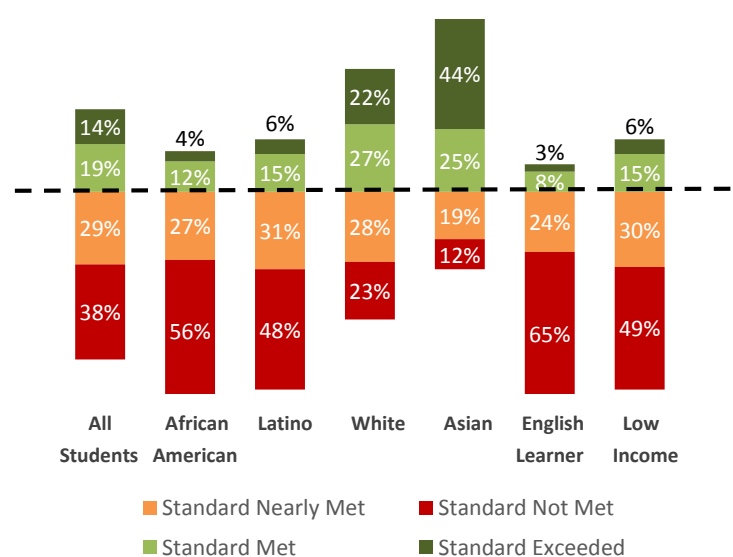

Standard Nearly Met · Standard Not Met · Standard Met · Standard Exceeded

FIGURE 3: CAASPP MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY SUBGROUP, ALL GRADES (2015)

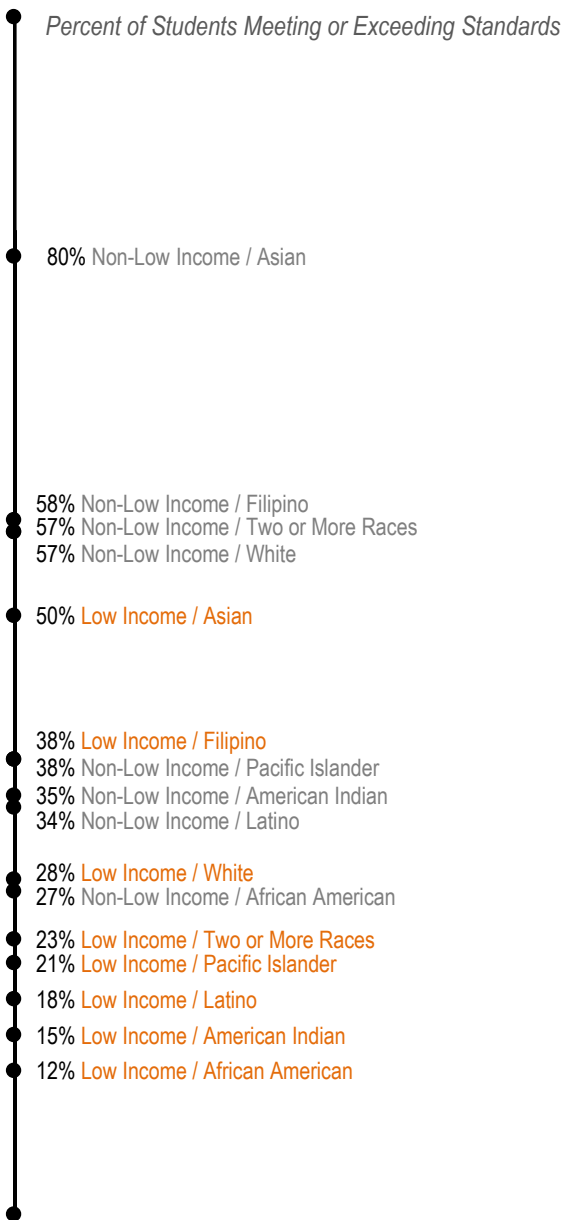Standard Nearly Met · Standard Not Met · Standard Met · Standard Exceeded

Poverty and Race

These gaps between racial subgroups can't be explained away by poverty. Low-income White students perform about as well as Black students who are *not* low income. And Asian students who are low income perform far better than those Latino, American Indian, and Pacific Islander students who are economically advantaged. This is not to say poverty doesn't matter. It does. Indeed, the data reveal that a student who is both Black and low income is doubly disadvantaged.

Gaps at the High End

Gaps are also found at the high end. For example, an Asian student is 5 times as likely as a Latino student to exceed standards in ELA and a White student is 5 times as likely as a Black student to exceed standards in math.

FIGURE 4: CAASPP MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY ETHNIC SUBGROUP AND INCOME STATUS, ALL GRADES (2015)

Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards

- 80% Non-Low Income / Asian
- 58% Non-Low Income / Filipino
- 57% Non-Low Income / Two or More Races
- 57% Non-Low Income / White
- 50% Low Income / Asian
- 38% Low Income / Filipino
- 38% Non-Low Income / Pacific Islander
- 35% Non-Low Income / American Indian
- 34% Non-Low Income / Latino
- 28% Low Income / White
- 27% Non-Low Income / African American
- 23% Low Income / Two or More Races
- 21% Low Income / Pacific Islander
- 18% Low Income / Latino
- 15% Low Income / American Indian
- 12% Low Income / African American

WHO IS DOING BETTER?

Despite stark statewide achievement gaps and low performance for most student subgroups, these trends don't exist everywhere. In a number of schools, the majority of low-income students met or exceeded standards — even when we look at only higher poverty schools. Schools like these dispel the damaging myth that schools can do very little to help students overcome the barriers of poverty.

Tables 1-3 list the top 10 highest performing schools for low-income 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade students. We limited our analysis to those schools where at least 60% of students are low income, mirroring the state's K-12 student poverty level.

TABLE 1: TOP-PERFORMING SCHOOLS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS, 3RD GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (2015)

SCHOOL	DISTRICT / COUNTY	STUDENTS SERVED / % LOW INCOME	% LOW-INCOME STUDENTS MEETING/ EXCEEDING STANDARDS
AMERICA'S FINEST CHARTER	(San Diego)	255 / 95%	77%
CORNERSTONE ACADEMY PREPARATORY	(Santa Clara)	412 / 73%	65%
GEYSERVILLE ELEMENTARY	Geyserville Unified (Sonoma)	118 / 69%	64%
JOHN YEHALL CHIN ELEMENTARY	San Francisco Unified (San Francisco)	273, 85%	67%
HOLLISTER PREP	(San Benito)	242 / 66%	71%
KIPP COMIENZA COMMUNITY PREP	(Los Angeles)	525 / 90%	76%
KIPP RAICES ACADEMY	(Los Angeles)	536 / 91%	78%
RIO VISTA ELEMENTARY	El Monte City (Los Angeles)	434 / 87%	64%
ULLOA ELEMENTARY	San Francisco Unified (San Francisco)	515 / 64%	67%
YORKDALE ELEMENTARY	Los Angeles Unified (Los Angeles)	300 / 78%	63%

TABLE 2: TOP-PERFORMING SCHOOLS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS, 8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS (2015)

SCHOOL	DISTRICT / COUNTY	STUDENTS SERVED / % LOW INCOME	% LOW-INCOME STUDENTS MEETING/ EXCEEDING STANDARDS
AMERICAN INDIAN PUBLIC CHARTER	(Alameda)	196 / 81%	75%
AMERICAN INDIAN PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL II	(Alameda)	616 / 69%	83%
DOWNTOWN CHARTER ACADEMY	(Alameda)	248 / 84%	82%
HAYFORK VALLEY ELEMENTARY	Mountain Valley Unified (Trinity)	196 / 79%	75%
KIPP LOS ANGELES COLLEGE PREP	(Los Angeles)	495 / 93%	84%
KIPP SUMMIT ACADEMY	(Alameda)	407 / 68%	83%
NESTOR LANGUAGE ACADEMY CHARTER	(San Diego)	935 / 61%	80%
VALLEY ALTERNATIVE MAGNET	Los Angeles Unified (Los Angeles)	616 / 61%	69%
VOICES COLLEGE-BOUND LANGUAGE ACADEMY	(Santa Clara)	440 / 75%	91%
YNEZ ELEMENTARY	Alhambra Unified (Los Angeles)	909 / 77%	73%

TABLE 3: TOP-PERFORMING SCHOOLS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS, 11TH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (2015)

SCHOOL	DISTRICT / COUNTY	STUDENTS SERVED / % LOW INCOME	% LOW-INCOME STUDENTS MEETING/ EXCEEDING STANDARD
DOWNTOWN BUSINESS HIGH	Los Angeles Unified (Los Angeles)	1,060 / 84%	88%
HARBOR TEACHER PREPARATION ACADEMY	Los Angeles Unified (Los Angeles)	437 / 61%	93%
HAWTHORNE MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY	(Los Angeles)	565 / 77%	92%
MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH	Santa Ana Unified (Orange)	328 / 91%	99%
MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH	San Bernardino City Unified (San Bernardino)	273 / 86%	98%
OAKLAND CHARTER HIGH	(Alameda)	350 / 80%	93%
PREUSS SCHOOL UCSD	(San Diego)	846 / 95%	88%
RENAISSANCE ARTS ACADEMY	(Los Angeles)	358 / 65%	94%
STOCKTON UNIFIED EARLY COLLEGE ACADEMY	Stockton Unified (San Joaquin)	375 / 68%	96%
UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY	Victor Valley Union High (San Bernardino)	1,109 / 70%	96%

LOOKING FORWARD: EQUITABLE COMMON CORE IMPLEMENTATION

The data are clear: outcomes for our students – particularly Black, Latino, English learner, and low-income students – are far too low. These gaps serve as an important reminder of just how critical our new, more rigorous standards are. The shift to Common Core came from the recognition that students were not being sufficiently prepared for college and career, and we now have an opportunity to reverse this trend and ensure *all* students are being taught to the highest standards. Doing so will require a concerted effort on the part of schools, districts, and the state. We recommend the following:

1. **Ensure equity is front and center in the implementation of the new standards.** Common Core demands that students learn and apply higher-order, critical thinking skills. CAASPP results show that many students have not been given sufficient opportunity to learn, practice, and apply these skills. This makes it critical that schools target academic supports, interventions, and extended learning time towards the students who most need them.
2. **Support educators in the transition to the new standards.** The new standards demand a significant shift in teaching. Offer teachers the resources, high-quality and ongoing professional development, and administrative support they need to design engaging Common Core-aligned lessons and assignments, particularly lessons and tasks that will help California's diverse and multilingual students master the new standards.
3. **Support school districts in this critical time of transition.** The state should continue to provide districts with financial support so they can invest in the professional development, technology, and instructional materials they need for full, smooth, and equitable implementation of the new standards.
4. **Develop strong systems of accountability.** These results underscore the need for strong systems of accountability for schools and districts. The state should set clear, statewide targets on a few measures of college and career readiness, including academic achievement and progress. It should direct supports and interventions to those schools and districts failing to serve all students well and should highlight successful practices.

Source: All data accessed from the California Department of Education, 2015.