

# Governance Brief

## 2015-2016 California CAASPP Results

*for Mathematics and English Language Arts*

by Mary Briggs

In August, the California Department of Education (CDE) released the results of the 2015-2016 assessments for mathematics and English/language arts (ELA). This brief examines California student performance in the second year of Smarter Balanced testing, suggests questions that board members might ask about their local data, and provides resources for boards to share with their constituents.

Overall, more students in 2015-2016 met or exceeded standards than the prior year. Although all grade levels and student sub-groups made progress, troubling gaps in achievement still persist. The new funding formula and accountability system are designed to ensure local education agencies (LEAs) address these gaps by allocating resources to reduce opportunity gaps. California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data can help governance teams by providing critical information about local needs. The California data described within this brief can help LEAs situate their results within the broader state context.

### California's second year of the Smarter Balanced Assessments

California transitioned from the paper-based, multiple-choice Standardized Testing and Assessment (STAR) tests to the computer-adaptive Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments in 2015. The new tests are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the results will be a critical element of the state's new evaluation rubrics.

The SBAC summative assessments for math and ELA are two components of the CAASPP accountability system. In addition to the SBAC assessments, the CAASPP system also includes the California Standards Tests for Science, alternative assessments for students receiving special education services (math, ELA, and science), as well as

#### In this brief:

- » Summary of statewide 2015-2016 math and ELA test results
- » Comparisons to 2014-2015 results
- » Achievement gap update
- » Questions for board members to consider when analyzing local results
- » Resources for parents and teachers

the optional Standards-based Tests in Spanish for Reading/Language Arts.

Notably, California State Universities and many community colleges consider performance on the grade 11 tests to be an indication of readiness for college-level work. The state's new "College and Career Indicator" (CCI) incorporates meeting or exceeding standards in math and ELA as one factor in determining whether individual students are prepared for college and career.

### How did California students do last spring?

Nearly 3.2 million California students in grades 3-8 and grade 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessments in the spring of 2016. Participation rates were high, with fewer than one percent of eligible students not participating in testing due to parental exemptions.

In the CAASPP system, scores are reported using four performance levels: Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met. Overall, 49% of California students met or exceeded standards in English language arts. In 2016, the results indicate that about 6 out of 10 grade 11 students are ready or conditionally ready for college work in English language arts.

California students, on average, did not perform as well in math. In 2016, only 37% of students met or exceeded grade-level standards in mathematics. Troublingly, only one-third of California’s eleventh graders are ready or conditionally ready for college work in mathematics.

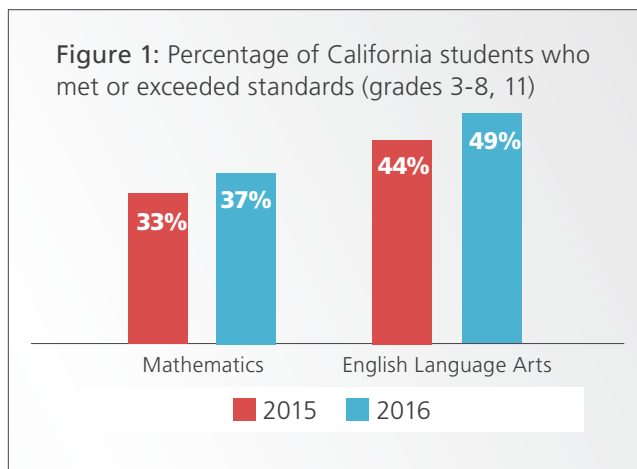
## Comparing with caution

Keep in mind that 2016 was only the second year of CAASPP testing. Comparing the results from this year to the 2015 baseline can be useful, but governance teams should be cautious about reading too much into any changes or making high-stakes decisions based solely on the comparisons to scores from 2015 and 2016. Clear trends in student performance won’t begin to emerge until three or four years of data are available.

It is common for schools and districts to see an uptick in scores in the first few years after a new assessment is implemented. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson noted that this year’s increases can be explained, in part, by the fact that teachers and students had an additional year of instruction using the CCSS and more experience with the online test format. Additionally, Local Education Agencies have invested in technology improvements, and many schools also began using interim tests to gauge student progress during the year. This gave students additional practice with the test format and allowed teachers to modify instruction if needed.

## How do California’s overall results compare to last year’s?

Last year was the first year California students took the SBAC assessments for math and ELA, so the scores are seen as a baseline. Overall, scores for ELA increased 5 percentage points, while math scores increased 4 percentage points (See Figure 1). It is encouraging to see scores increase in math and ELA in every grade level and student sub-group, though the



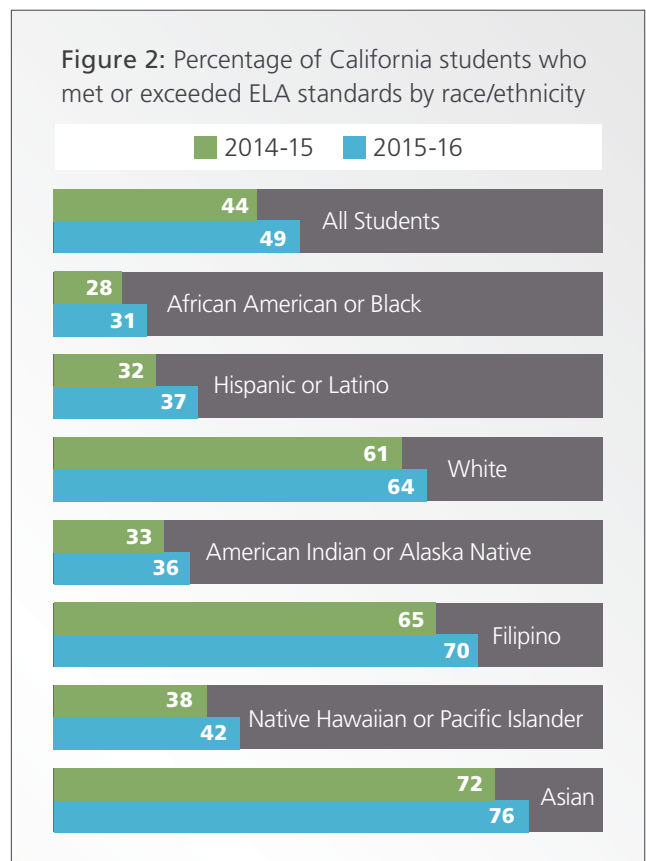
improvements are what we might expect given the factors described above.

The percentage of California students who met or exceeded ELA standards increased by three percentage points in grades 8 and 11 and by at least four percentage points in all other grades. Third graders made the largest gains in math, with the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards up six percentage points from 2015. All other grades increased by two or three percentage points.

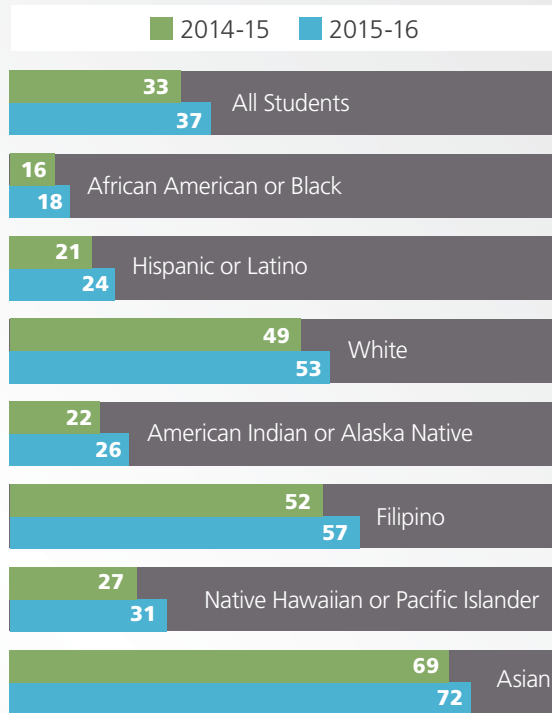
## What about the state’s achievement gaps?

Despite small, across-the-board increases in math and ELA scores, the state’s achievement gaps — the result of long-standing disparities in educational opportunities — remain troubling. California LEAs can use data to inform decisions that strategically increase support for historically underserved students. Even if all student groups improve, however, low-performing sub-groups would have to improve at a faster rate to reduce performance gaps.

2015-2016 scores, however, increased in math and ELA at relatively similar rates, with some gaps remaining the same and some widening slightly. Figure 2 shows difference in ELA performance by race/ethnicity in both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, while Figure 3 depicts the same information for math.



**Figure 3:** Percentage of California students who met or exceeded math standards by race/ethnicity



The increase in performance for each group, while slight, is encouraging, but the gaps remain largely unchanged.

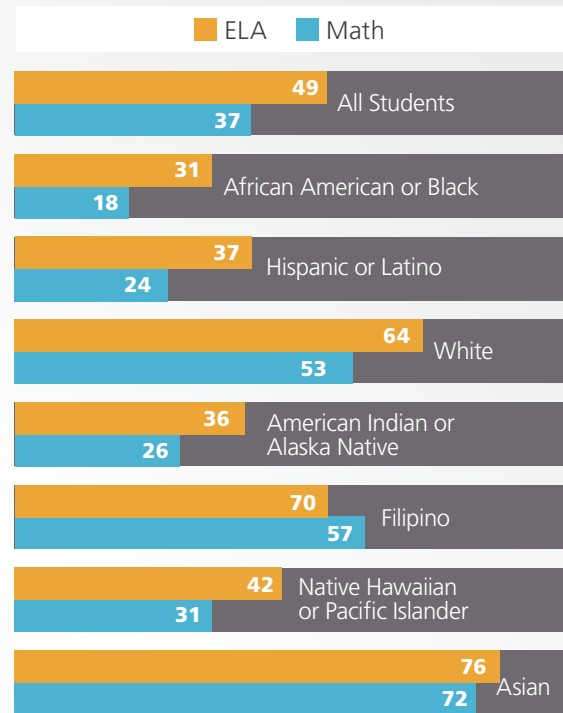
California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) places particular emphasis on providing additional support for English language learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and foster youth. LEAs receive supplemental funding for these priority sub-groups to offset the cost of providing additional support for these students.

The state’s new accountability system, including the forthcoming LCFF evaluation rubrics, will also report on districts’ sub-group performance. Again, policy makers, administrators, and educators must be mindful that these findings only represent two years of data, but the results suggest that governing boards and districts will need to continue developing strategies that might lead to higher overall achievement while also closing gaps for vulnerable sub-groups.

### Racial/ethnic achievement gaps

Figure 4 shows the percentage of students, by race/ethnicity, who met or exceeded standards in ELA and math during the 2015-2016 year.

**Figure 4:** Percentage of California students meeting or exceeding standards in math and ELA by race/ethnicity, 2015-2016



For ELA, 76% of Asian students, 70% of Filipino students, and 64% of White students met or exceeded standards. In contrast, only 37% of Latino students, 36% of American Indians or Alaska Natives, and 31% of African American students met or exceeded ELA standards.

Grade 11 scores suggest that about half of all Latino students and 4 in 10 African American students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level work in ELA, compared to 8 in 10 Asian students and 7 in 10 White students. While almost half of the state’s students met or exceeded ELA standards, the gaps are significant between student groups.

Overall, students did not perform as well in math, and the gaps between racial/ethnic groups are even starker. While almost three-fourths of Asian students and over half of Filipino and White students met or exceeded math standards, slightly less than one-fifth of African American students and about one fourth of Latino and American Indian or Alaska

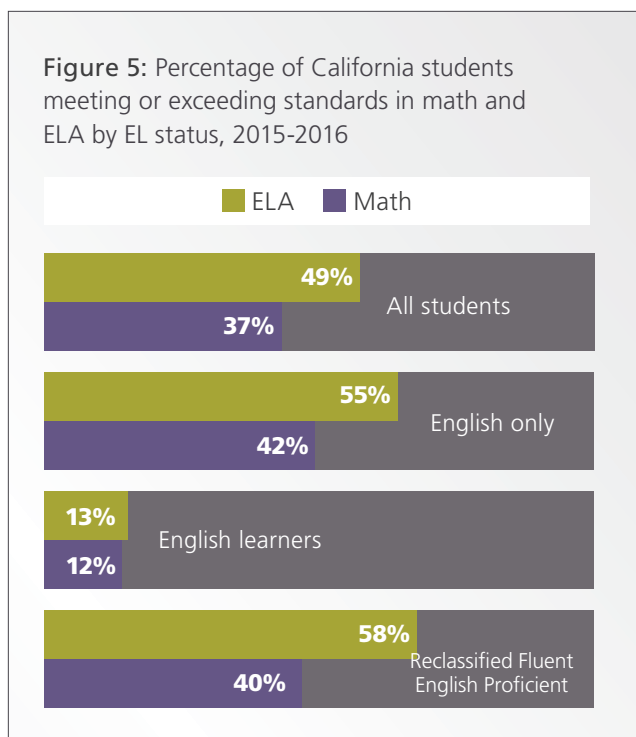
Native students did the same. Fifty-four percent more Asian students met or exceeded standards than African American students, and the gap between White and African American students was 35 percentage points.

According to grade 11 results, only 14% of Black or African American students and 20% of Hispanic or Latino students are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math coursework, compared to 70% of Asian students and 44% of White students.

### ELL performance

English Language Learners (ELLs) are identified as a priority sub-group within the state’s funding formula. As shown in Figure 5, there are significant gaps in the percentage of ELLs and English only (EO) students or ELL students reclassified as English Proficient. In part, the lower ELL scores reflect that once an LEA reclassifies English language learners as proficient in English, their scores are no longer reported in the ELL sub-group. This means that the highest scoring ELLs are continually removed from the pool as they are reclassified. Additionally, ELL scores generally do not include English learners enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months, as the state exempts them from the ELA assessment.

As shown in Figure 5, only about 13% of ELLs met or exceeded standards in ELA, compared to 55% of English only students, a difference that is expected given that by definition, ELL students are not yet proficient in the English language. However, in math, where we might expect to see

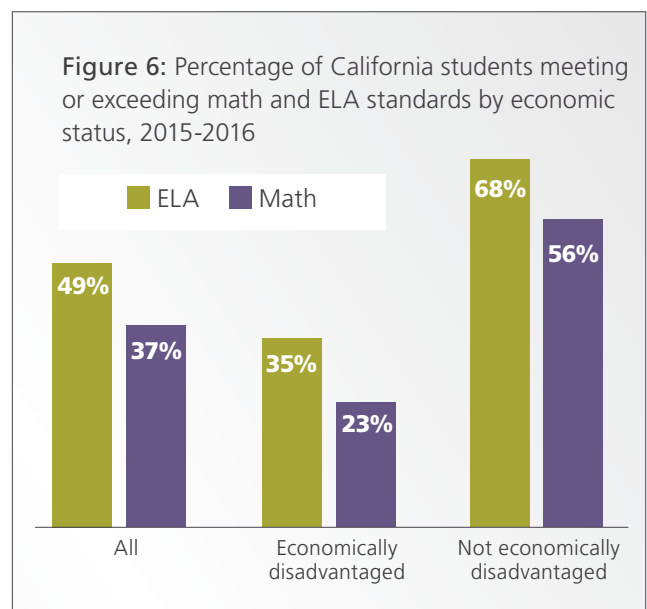


a smaller gap, only 12% of ELLs met or exceeded math standards compared to 42% of English only students. Consistent with existing research, ELLs who are reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) performed higher on the ELA exam than English only students.

If using grade 11 scores as a measure of college readiness, only about 1 in 10 ELLs is ready or conditionally ready for college level English coursework and slightly more than 1 in 20 ELLs is ready or conditionally ready for college level coursework in math. Almost two-thirds of English only students are ready or conditionally ready for college coursework in English, and almost four in ten EO students are ready or conditionally ready for college level math coursework.

### Economic status

Economically disadvantaged students, defined as students who participate in free and reduced-price meal programs, are another priority sub-group under LCFF. As shown in Figure 6 below, economically disadvantaged students performed about half as well on both tests as their non-economically disadvantaged peers.



The gap is further evident in college and career readiness, with only 48% of economically disadvantaged eleventh graders identified as ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework in English, compared to 72% of students who are not economically disadvantaged (a 24 point difference). In mathematics, 21% of economically disadvantaged eleventh graders are ready or conditionally ready for college-level math courses, less than half that of their non-economically disadvantaged peers (46% ready or conditionally ready).

## How are the statewide and local results useful to board members?

Statewide results can help districts consider local performance within the broader context. Boards might find it useful to compare statewide and county results to their district's performance.

Additionally, when looking at local results, boards might want to ask a series of important questions:

### Comparisons

- » How do our 2016 results compare with our performance last year?
- » What patterns can we observe when looking at performance at the district's individual school sites?

### Equity data

- » Which student groups have the largest proportion of students "almost meeting" or "not meeting" standards in mathematics and English language arts?
- » How are LCFF funds currently being used to support these groups of students? Given these results, are adjustments to our goals or budget appropriate?
- » When looking at performance across the different grade levels and sub-groups, are there areas that the board should study further? What additional data would be useful?

### LCAP and LCFF

- » How do we anticipate these results will be reflected in the LCFF evaluation rubrics that will be published in the coming months?
- » How can we use these results to inform our 2017 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) update?
- » How can we share these results with the community in a way that will increase stakeholder engagement, involvement and support for student achievement efforts?

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## CAASPP Resources

### Official CAASPP Site with Results for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics

<http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2016>

The 2016 CAASPP results site allows users to compare test scores across counties, districts, school, or the state on a single screen. It also allows users to view results for 2015-2016 alone or alongside 2014-15 results.

### EdSource

<https://edsourcesmarter-balanced-results/index.html>

EdSource provides a searchable resource for exploring 2016 CAASPP results.

### Online Practice Tests

[www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html](http://www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html)

Teachers and students can access online practice tests. The CDE hopes LEAs will ensure families are aware of this resource.

### Smarter Balanced Digital Library

[www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/diglib.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/diglib.asp)

The Digital Library offers educators subject- and grade-specific resources for formative assessment during daily instruction. The Digital Library also allows users to rate materials and collaborate with their peers across the country. It is available to all local educational agencies serving grades K-12. CAASPP coordinators currently must register new users, though the CDE plans to allow educators to self-register in the near future.

### Understanding the CAASPP Student Score Result 2015-16

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoxPJtFbBKE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoxPJtFbBKE)

Brief video overview of how to read the Student Score Report sent to families.

### CDE Smarter Balanced Resources

[www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalresources.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalresources.asp)

Includes CCSS, accessibility, and accommodation information, presentations, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets.

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All data used to generate the figures within this brief were accessed online using the CAASPP website. 2015 scores were accessed at <http://bit.ly/1ieacTn>. 2016 scores were accessed at <http://bit.ly/2bxTPkk>.