

**How Lower Performing Schools Can Help
Students Pass the High School Exit Exam
and Prepare for College**

**Promising Practices from the CAPP CAHSEE
Initiative**

**Julie Z. Aronson
Senior Research Associate
WestEd**

January 2009



How Lower Performing Schools Can Help Students Pass the High School Exit Exam and Prepare for College

Promising Practices from the CAPP CAHSEE Initiative

Julie Z. Aronson, Senior Research Associate

January 2009

This publication was prepared by WestEd, under contract from the Chancellor's Office of the California State University. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the funding agency. For information concerning obtaining additional copies of this report, please direct inquiries to:

California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP)
The California State University
401 Golden Shore, 6th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
www.calstate.edu/CAPP/publications
capp@calstate.edu
(562) 951-4780

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM’S CAHSEE INITIATIVE	3
THE CAPP CAHSEE SCHOOL PROJECTS	4
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE CAPP CAHSEE INITIATIVE.....	7
SCHOOL AND TEACHER OUTCOMES: TRENDS TOWARD SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	8
STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES: MODERATE AND MIXED.....	12
<i>Tenth Grade CAHSEE Pass Rates</i>	12
<i>Senior CAHSEE Pass Rates</i>	14
<i>Preparing Students for College</i>	16
SUPPORTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.....	24
BROADENING THE FOCUS: BEYOND THE HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM.....	25
PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE CAPP CAHSEE EXPERIENCE.....	27
REFERENCES AND RESOURCES.....	32

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In response to concerns raised in recent years that a high school diploma should represent a student's preparation for higher education or employment – rather than simply a requisite amount of seat time – California is one of 23 states that currently require students to pass a high school exit exam in order to earn a high school diploma. By 2012, this number is expected to increase to 26. The goal of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), as in other states, is to ensure that students have attained a basic level of competency in math and English Language Arts (ELA) by the time they graduate.

Like high school exit exams in most other states, the CAHSEE is aligned with the state's academic content standards, which specify what students should know and be able to demonstrate mastery of at each grade level. In California, the math portion of the CAHSEE reflects math content standards for the sixth and seventh grades as well as Algebra 1, while the ELA portion reflects content standards through the tenth grade. Students take the CAHSEE for the first time as high school sophomores. As soon as they have passed both the math and ELA portions of the exam, students have fulfilled the CAHSEE graduation requirement. Students who do not pass one or both parts of the CAHSEE as sophomores have multiple subsequent opportunities to prepare for and retake the exam. In fact, under current legislation, students may retake the CAHSEE for two years beyond their senior year. Once they pass, assuming they have satisfied all other graduation requirements, they will receive a high school diploma.

Statewide, most California high school sophomores pass both parts of the CAHSEE each year. Tenth grade CAHSEE pass rates have increased each year since the CAHSEE was first introduced in SY 2001-02, reaching an all time high in SY 2007-08 of 79 percent in math, and 78 percent in ELA. The fact that over three-quarters of California students achieve this high school graduation requirement during their sophomore year is not, objectively speaking, a huge feat. After all, by the time they first take the CAHSEE in the tenth grade, most students have been exposed to – and presumably mastered – math and ELA content largely covered during middle school. And even if they haven't, students don't need to ace the exam, they only need to pass it – which means correctly answering approximately 55 percent of the math and 60 percent of the ELA questions correctly.

So the CAHSEE, like the high school exit exam in most other states, does not set a very high bar. It's therefore no wonder that at higher performing California high schools, most students pass the CAHSEE by the tenth grade, and few seniors are denied a diploma for failing to pass the CAHSEE. For most students, the CAHSEE is just another rite of

passage on the road to high school graduation that is not a matter of concern for students, their parents, or their schools.

However, for approximately one quarter of California's sophomores – and about one of every ten seniors – the CAHSEE can represent a formidable hurdle on the road to earning a high school diploma. These students may end up taking and retaking one or both parts of the CAHSEE during their high school years. Who are these students? A quick look at the data reveals that the students who don't pass the CAHSEE in tenth grade are disproportionately low income, non-white (primarily African American, American Indian, and Latino), and English learners. In addition, many are special education students.

Students struggling to pass the CAHSEE tend to be concentrated at lower performing high schools, those with an Academic Performance Index (API) in the bottom half.¹ Such schools – whose students tend to be disproportionately low-income, nonwhite, and English learners – typically have fewer highly qualified teachers, less adequate resources, and higher staff turnover than higher performing schools. In addition, lower performing high schools generally offer fewer college preparatory courses and serve students whose parents are less likely to have attended college. For students at these schools, the CAHSEE – which became a graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2006 – represents one major new hurdle on their relatively challenging road to high school graduation and college.

This report explores school-level strategies that can help support students pass the high school exit exam, improve academic performance, and prepare for college. It is intended for district policymakers and administrators, as well as for school leaders and teachers, particularly at schools serving students at risk of failing the high school exit exam. This report describes the California Academic Partnership Program's (CAPP) CAHSEE initiative, which from 2001 – 2007 supported ten lower performing California high schools to implement partnership projects designed to support their students to pass the CAHSEE and prepare for college. This report summarizes findings from WestEd's evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, and highlights promising practices that emerged from the experiences of the school projects. Finally, this report discusses the need for a systemic approach to raising student achievement – on the high school exit exam and more broadly – and suggests promising strategies based on the experiences of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative.

¹ A high school's API ranking (1-10) is based on schoolwide performance on two standardized tests; 80% for the California Standards Test (CST) in four subject areas (ELA, math, science, and social studies) and 20% for the CAHSEE (ELA and math).

THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM'S CAHSEE INITIATIVE

Enter the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP), an organization that has long been focused on improving the academic outcomes of California students attending lower performing public high schools (see sidebar). Beginning in 2001, as the state prepared to institute the high school exit exam, CAPP launched the CAPP CAHSEE initiative. The purpose of the initiative was to support a cross-section of the state's lower performing high schools – large urban schools as well as small rural ones – develop their capacity to help students pass the CAHSEE and prepare to matriculate directly to a public, four-year state university, namely, the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU). To this end, CAPP invited public high schools with API rankings in the lower half to apply for inclusion in the initiative.

The California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP)

The California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) is a statewide organization established by the state legislature in 1984 for the purpose of improving the quality of public secondary schools and the preparation of all students for college. CAPP supports and promotes the development of regional partnerships - involving secondary and postsecondary institutions and businesses - to develop strategies and practices to accomplish two related goals: 1) to support student academic achievement in secondary schools; and 2) to improve students' preparation for and success in higher education. Over the course of the last 24 years, CAPP has funded a number of initiatives, typically involving lower performing secondary schools in partnership with their regionally-based education partners, designed to further these goals. Because CAPP strives to learn from its initiatives and disseminate findings and promising practices, CAPP projects tend to have an evaluation component. CAPP contracted with WestEd, a national education research and development organization, to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative. The findings of WestEd's evaluation provide the basis for this report. For more information about CAPP's previous initiatives, and to access information, reports, and evaluations about them, visit CAPP's website at: www.calstate.edu/capp.

The specific goals of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative were three-fold:

- 1) to prepare all students at the participating schools to pass the CAHSEE at the end of tenth grade;
- 2) to ensure that those students not passing the CAHSEE in tenth grade received the support needed to pass it by the end of twelfth grade; and
- 3) to ensure that students who passed the CAHSEE continued to prepare for college.

The CAPP CAHSEE School Projects

CAPP provided support and funding for ten of California's lower performing schools, beginning in school year 2000-01 and ending in 2006-07.² Each "CAPP project" – typically a high school in partnership with its district or county office of education, one or more feeder schools, an institute of higher education, and in some cases, a business partner – was expected to develop a set of objectives and an implementation plan related to the goals of the initiative. CAPP provided each project with substantial annual funding to support site-specific activities. The projects had significant flexibility in how they could use CAPP funds; for example, they could hire substitutes to free up teacher time for collaboration and professional development, hire teachers to provide tutoring or student support services, secure additional training for teachers and staff, or purchase resources or materials related to project activities.

² Originally, CAPP planned to support projects for four years, through SY 2003-04, the year the CAHSEE was originally slated to become a graduation requirement (for the Class of 2004). However, due to a legal challenge, the state board of education delayed the CAHSEE becoming a graduation requirement for two years (until the Class of 2006). Consequently, CAPP extended the initiative, providing school projects with up to six years of funding and support.

Table 1*CAPP CAHSEE Project Schools and Partners*

School	District	Feeder School(s)	IHE Partner(s)
Calexico High School	Calexico Unified School District	William Moreno JHS De Anza JHS	UC Office of the President UCCP UC San Diego
Chula Vista and Mar Vista Senior High Schools	Sweetwater Union High School District	Mar Vista Middle School	San Diego State University University of San Diego Southwestern Com College
Farmersville High School	Farmersville Unified School District	Farmersville JHS	Chapman University College of the Sequoias
Hoopla Valley High School	Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District	Captain John Continuation District elementary schools	Humboldt State University
Jordan High School	Long Beach Unified School District	Jordan Freshman Academy Lindbergh Middle School	CSU Long Beach
Lower Lake High School	Konocti Unified School District	Oak Hill Middle School	UC San Francisco UC Office of the President
Sacramento Charter High School	Sacramento City Unified School District	California Middle School Kit Carson Middle School	UC Davis
San Lorenzo High School	San Lorenzo Unified School District	Edendale Middle School	Stanford University Mills College
Shafter High School	Kern Union High School District	Richland Junior High	CSU Bakersfield

Because the CAHSEE is a standards-based test, an important focus for CAPP was to support schools in improving their capacity to provide high quality, standards-based curriculum and instruction. To this end, in addition to funding, CAPP infused each partnership project with a variety of professional development opportunities and resources. School project teams participated in both on- and off-site professional development, received ongoing coaching and support, and attended CAPP-sponsored regional conferences and workshops that engaged participants in themes related to building professional learning communities, improving standards-based instruction, and developing school leadership capacity. In fact, one of the hallmarks of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative was the variety of opportunities that CAPP provided for the school project teams – teachers, administrators, staff, and partners – to engage in innovative, collaborative professional development activities, including the Instructional Leadership Initiative (ILI) and the Design Studios (see sidebar).

Professional Development through Collaboration

CAPP provided several opportunities for their grantees to engage in innovative and collaborative professional learning activities, both within their school teams and with their counterparts from other schools. These activities, together with other workshops and conferences sponsored by CAPP during the initiative, had a powerful impact on participants.

Instructional Leadership Initiative

The Instructional Leadership Initiative (ILI) is a professional development model that develops the capacity of a school to deliver high quality standards-based instruction. CAPP contracted with an ILI facilitator, who worked with math and ELA faculty teams at four of the CAPP CAHSEE projects, guiding teachers through a collaborative process for developing common instructional units and assessments; establishing performance standards for student work; and using student performance data to plan future instruction so that all students would successfully attain performance goals. In addition, there were several regional ILI workshops at which school teams from across the state had opportunities to deepen their skills and work collaboratively with teams from other schools.

Design Studios

The design studios were collaborative events at which one CAPP CAHSEE project would host at their school visiting teams from the other projects for two-day sessions at which they would showcase the specific features of their projects, lead panels and facilitate discussions on issues related to their objectives and activities, and provide visitors with opportunities to visit classrooms and student support activities. The design studios provided opportunities for school teams to discuss common issues, observe and learn about promising practices, and share models that could be adapted for use at other schools.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE CAPP CAHSEE INITIATIVE

With respect to the goals of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, which focused on supporting students to pass the CAHSEE and prepare for college, the CAPP projects made substantial progress. The initiative clearly helped the CAPP school projects focus on raising the achievement of students by providing targeted CAHSEE preparation and individualized support for students. More broadly, the CAPP projects engaged in efforts and built their capacity to systemically improve the quality of standards-based instruction in math and English-language arts. As long as CAPP schools continue to implement the promising practices they began during the initiative, and as their efforts to improve instructional quality are embraced and expanded schoolwide, these schools will likely make continued progress both in raising CAHSEE pass rates and improving students' overall academic achievement and preparation for college. The section that follows describes the significant school and teacher outcomes that were achieved as a result of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative. This is followed, in turn, by a brief summary of student academic performance outcomes over the course of the initiative, in terms of CAHSEE pass rates and other measures of academic performance and college preparation.

WestEd's Evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE Initiative

WestEd's evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative was both formative and summative, focusing on project implementation and student academic performance outcomes over the course of the initiative, both at the individual school level and across the ten schools. Student outcome indicators included CAHSEE pass rates (at tenth grade as well as among seniors), college preparatory course enrollments and performance, SAT participation and performance, and data on graduation, dropouts, and college preparation and entry. Project implementation was evaluated through data collected from a variety of sources, including site visits, annual progress reports, interviews with faculty and administrators, teacher surveys, and observations of school and regional activities. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed over the six years, and presented in terms of student performance outcomes and school and teacher outcomes, as summarized in this report. To access the full evaluation report, please visit the CAPP website at: <http://www.calstate.edu/capp/publications>.

School and Teacher Outcomes: Trends Toward School Improvement

WestEd’s evaluation found that the CAPP CAHSEE initiative had a significant impact on the ten CAPP-funded schools as well as the teachers involved in the school-based reform efforts. Many of these reforms have taken root, becoming institutionalized as part of the culture and instructional practices of the schools. As described briefly below, the initiative led to a number of promising improvements at the CAPP schools, including: enhanced academic support systems for students; increased teacher collaboration around curriculum and instruction; improved standards-based curriculum and instruction; creation of a more academic school culture; increased teacher leadership, professionalism, and satisfaction; and increased accountability for high student achievement.

Enhanced academic support systems for students.

Most of the CAPP CAHSEE schools developed – or improved upon existing – academic support activities designed to help students pass the CAHSEE. Support systems included homework or study centers at which students could get individual and group tutoring before, during, or after school; special CAHSEE courses designed to help students prepare for CAHSEE content and test-taking strategies; intensive summer, weekend or evening math workshops for students; and the creation of individualized instructional plans for students based on assessment data. Several schools addressed the need to help students catch up or accelerate their learning by enrolling students in two math or ELA classes concurrently. However, most schools avoided the practice of “double dosing” out of concern that it would reduce students’ opportunities to take engaging elective courses likely to encourage them – especially those struggling academically – to stay in school.

Increased teacher collaboration around curriculum and instruction.

The CAPP CAHSEE initiative provided teachers with a variety of opportunities to collaborate with colleagues within their departments, at feeder schools, and at other CAPP project schools. At most of the CAPP schools, faculty collaborated within their departments to develop common assessments and instructional units, create scoring rubrics, and develop agreements with their colleagues about how to assess student work. At some schools, teachers had opportunities to visit their colleagues’ classrooms in order to observe their instructional practices. At a number of schools, ongoing and productive collaboration between the high school and feeder schools led to improved curriculum

articulation and vertical alignment between the schools, as well as better course placement decisions for students entering the high school. In addition, through a variety of CAPP-sponsored professional development activities, teachers had opportunities to collaborate with their counterparts at other schools, in many cases developing ongoing professional relationships through which to seek advice, improve their instructional practices, and share successful strategies for providing student support.

Improved standards-based curriculum and instruction.

As a result of preparing students for the CAHSEE, math and English-language arts curriculum became better aligned with California content standards. Prior to the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, “standards-based instruction” at many of the CAPP schools amounted to teaching out of recently adopted “standards-based” textbooks, but did not necessarily relate to pedagogy. Through the various professional development activities provided to the CAPP school projects during the initiative, faculty and other project staff developed a deeper understanding of and appreciation for standards-based instruction and assessment. Teachers improved their capacity to integrate content standards into their course curriculum and assess student mastery of those standards. In addition, many teachers learned and adopted the practice of “backward mapping” from assessment to instruction, thereby using student assessment as a tool to guide – and improve – their instruction. Teachers also learned how to analyze student performance data to determine what students needed to reach mastery, in some cases individualizing instruction based on students’ specific needs.

Increased schoolwide focus on academics and college preparation.

As a result of the initiative, most of the CAPP schools became more focused on academics. CAPP schools expanded their course offerings to include more “A-G” courses – content-rich courses required for students preparing to go on to college – and encouraged a larger and broader spectrum of students to enroll in them. Most CAPP schools phased out – or completely eliminated from their offerings – math courses below the level of Algebra I, opting instead to enroll most students in college preparatory math courses and provide supplementary academic support as needed. For example, at one CAPP school, students who would previously have been enrolled in basic math or extended (year-long) Algebra were enrolled in “Algebra with Support”, which provided the additional academic support outside of class time students needed to keep up with the

regularly-paced Algebra course. Collaboration with local colleges brought college-age tutors to the schools, and students had more opportunities to learn about going to college and get support for preparing for college. In addition, many of the CAPP schools created (or improved upon existing) programs providing targeted instruction and support to students. Several schools enlisted their most effective teachers to work directly with those students most in need of academic support.

Increased teacher leadership, professionalism, and satisfaction.

At most of the CAPP CAHSEE schools, student support efforts were embraced and carried out by dedicated teachers, sometimes in conjunction with administrators. In many cases, teachers in the math or language arts departments took on leadership roles in the absence of administrative support. While some schools experienced significant challenges from teachers resistant to collaborating with colleagues or reforming their instructional practices, over time many initially reluctant teachers bought into the process and began to collaborate productively with their colleagues. At several CAPP CAHSEE schools, the practice of faculty collaboration around curriculum and instruction has become institutionalized. In fact, at one of the CAPP schools, where math department faculty have been collaborating successfully in developing common instructional units and assessments, the willingness to collaborate with colleagues has been established as an important new criterion for hiring new faculty members. According to annual teacher survey results, increased collaboration and teacher leadership at the schools has been accompanied by increased teacher satisfaction and a growing sense of professionalism among CAPP school faculty.

Increased teacher accountability for high student achievement.

Through their experiences with the CAPP CAHSEE project, teachers increasingly embraced standards-based instruction and viewed themselves as responsible for helping their students master academic content standards. While some teachers continued to question the fairness of expecting all students to pass the CAHSEE – especially English learners and special education students – teachers increasingly believed that their schools were providing the support needed for students to pass the CAHSEE. Moreover, teachers at the CAPP schools increasingly came to believe that all students were capable of high academic achievement and increasingly saw themselves as responsible for supporting their students to achieve at high levels.

Promising Practices in Action

With the support of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, the CAPP projects each implemented a number of student support activities, which they modified and improved upon based on the experiences of faculty, staff, students, parents, and partners. These “promising practices” became models that other CAPP projects replicated at their own schools, sometimes modifying them to meet specific circumstances at their schools. Two such models are the “Homework Center” and “Saturday Parent-Student CAHSEE Math Workshops”, described below. For more information about these and other promising practices, as well as related school reform strategies and issues that emerged from the experience of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, see “Inside High School Reform: Making the Changes that Matter”, by Jordan Horowitz and CAPP (WestEd, 2005).

Creating and Operating a Successful Study Center

One of the CAPP schools designed a “Homework Center” (HWC) that proved to be a highly successful model for providing academic support to students. Many of the other CAPP projects replicated this model – or some of its strategies – because it successfully addressed some of the challenges they experienced, such as low student participation. Staffed with enough tutors – including highly skilled teachers – to provide individualized instruction in math and other subjects, the Homework Center experience proved that large numbers of students would regularly seek assistance that addressed their needs. The HWC followed established principles that maximized its effectiveness, including: focusing on the needs of students; having enough teachers and tutors on hand to meet student needs; keeping the center open and operating according to an established schedule that students could count on; holding students accountable for following established procedures; being an integral part of the schoolwide academic program and supporting the needs of all students and teachers; and providing a positive place for students to seek tutoring or help with homework, never to be used as punishment.

Involving Parents in Academic Support Activities

One of the CAPP schools developed “Saturday Student-Parent CAHSEE Math Workshops,” which proved to be a successful approach to supporting students to improve their math skills and prepare for the CAHSEE. This, too, became a model that other CAPP schools replicated in whole or part. The school held math workshops, targeted to juniors and seniors who had not yet passed the math portion of the CAHSEE, for five consecutive Saturdays prior to the CAHSEE administration. In order to participate, students had to have an adult family member with them. The school reached out directly to parents to encourage them to participate. The Saturday sessions were well attended and proved to be very successful; data kept by the program showed that the 11th and 12th graders who attended regularly improved their CAHSEE scores. The program had additional benefits as well, such as involving parents as partners with the school, helping parents understand better the challenges their students faced, providing more comprehensive support for students, increasing student engagement, and encouraging adults to advance their own learning.

Student Academic Performance Outcomes: Moderate and Mixed

As described above, the three overarching goals of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative focused on improving student academic performance at the ten CAPP-funded schools, by improving student pass rates on the CAHSEE in the tenth grade – or by the end of twelfth grade for those not passing earlier – and improving the academic preparation of students for college. While all of the CAPP schools made progress toward these goals, the evaluation revealed that across the CAPP schools, student academic performance results were moderate and mixed.

Tenth Grade CAHSEE Pass Rates

Among the CAPP schools, tenth grade CAHSEE pass rates increased moderately over the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, both in English-language arts (ELA) and in math. As depicted in Figure 1, the CAPP school average tenth grade CAHSEE pass rate on the ELA portion of the exam increased from a low of 66 percent in SY 2002-03 to a high of 70 percent in SY 2007-08. On the math portion of the exam, depicted in Figure 2, the tenth grade pass rate increased from a low of 44 percent to a high of 72 percent during the same period. This upward trend among CAPP school tenth graders paralleled tenth grade CAHSEE performance statewide.

As depicted in Figures 1 and 2, respectively, the CAPP schools' tenth grade CAHSEE pass rate on the ELA and math portions of the CAHSEE has lagged well behind the statewide pass rate every year, although the gap between CAPP and statewide pass rates have narrowed slightly since the early years of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative. By SY 2007-08, CAPP school sophomores had a 70 percent pass rate on the ELA portion of the CAHSEE, compared with a 79 percent pass rate among sophomores statewide. The margin was smaller on the math portion of the CAHSEE; in SY 2007-08, the pass rate among CAPP school sophomores was 72 percent, compared with 78 percent among sophomores statewide.

While significant performance gaps persist among various student subpopulations – both statewide and at the CAPP schools – disaggregated CAHSEE performance data indicate that tenth grade CAHSEE pass rates on both the ELA and math portions of the exam have increased during the initiative for almost every student subgroup. Moreover, English learners, Latino, and African Americans at the CAPP schools passed at higher rates than they did statewide, especially on the math portion of the test.

Figure 1

CAHSEE Tenth Grade Pass Rates: English Language Arts – CAPP CAHSEE Schools vs. California Statewide Average (2003 – 2008)

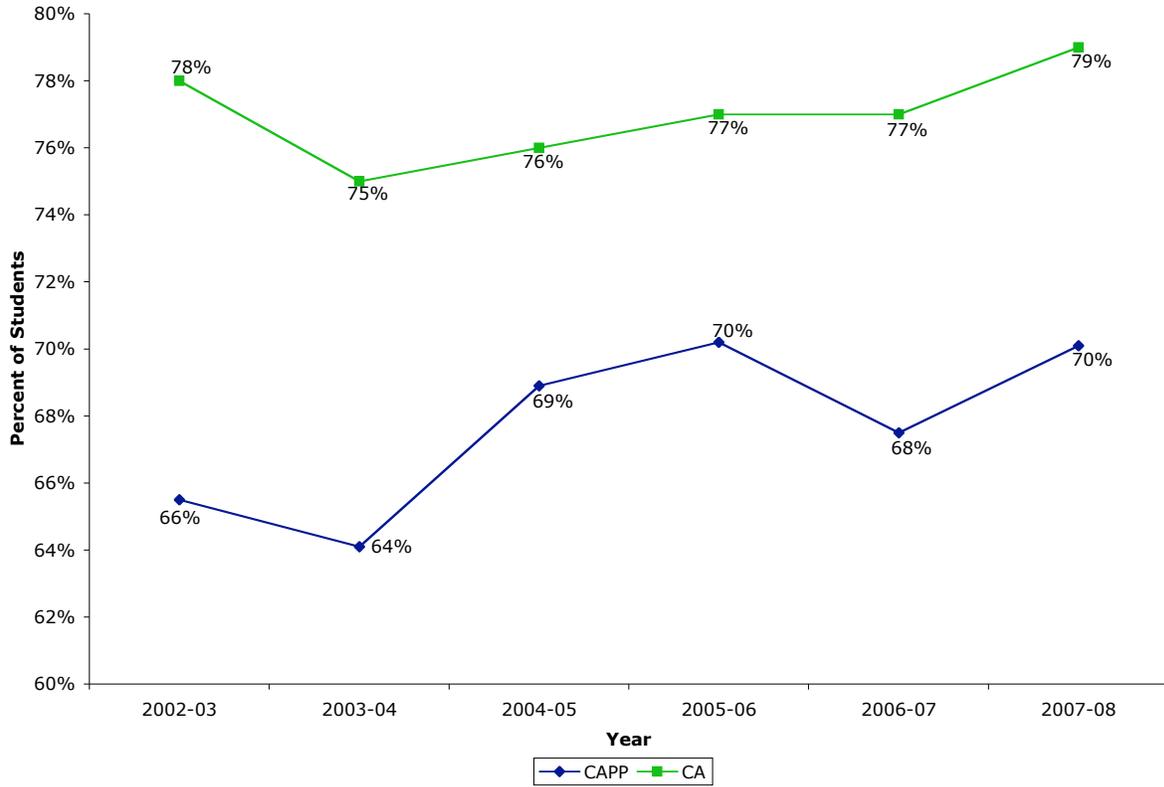
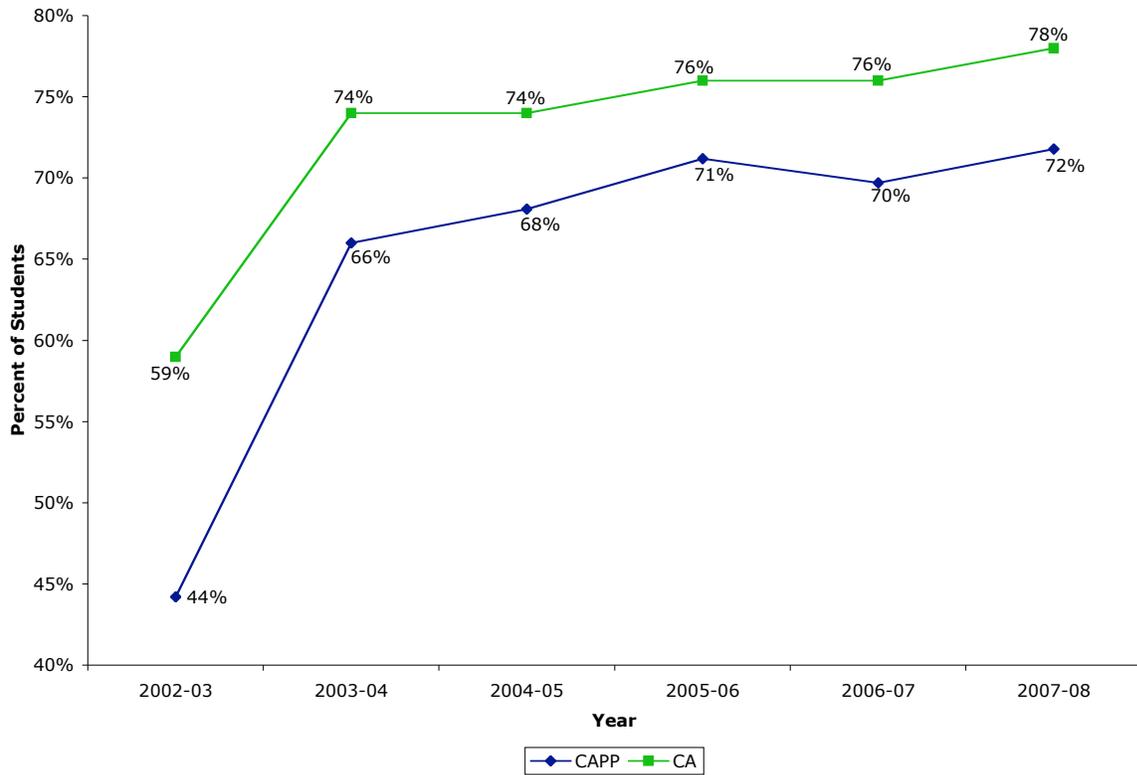


Figure 2

CAHSEE Tenth Grade Pass Rates: Mathematics – CAPP CAHSEE Schools vs. California Statewide Average (2003 – 2008)



Senior CAHSEE Pass Rates

Evaluation findings suggest that instructional and support efforts implemented by the CAPP schools to assist students to pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year made a substantial difference. While tenth grade CAHSEE pass rates at the CAPP schools were consistently lower than tenth grade pass rates statewide throughout the initiative, by the end of the twelfth grade, CAPP school students were almost as likely as students statewide to have passed the CAHSEE. Table 2 shows the percentage of seniors who passed the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year since the CAHSEE became a graduation requirement in SY 2005-06.³ Among seniors in the Class of 2006, those at the CAPP schools were almost as likely as students statewide to have passed both parts of the

³ The CDE does not report cumulative, school-level data on the percentage of students passing the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year, as it does for tenth grade CAHSEE pass rate data; senior pass rate data were provided by individual schools, and were not calculated uniformly. For this reason, between-school comparisons and comparisons between CAPP school and statewide senior pass rate averages, should be considered estimates.

CAHSEE by the end of the year; among CAPP school seniors, 90.8 percent had passed the CAHSEE compared to 91.2 percent statewide.⁴ Among seniors in the Class of 2007, 91.5 percent of CAPP students passed the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year, compared with 93.3 percent of seniors statewide. Finally, CAPP school seniors in the Class of 2008 passed the CAHSEE at a slightly higher rate than did seniors statewide – 91.0 percent compared with 90.2 percent, respectively.

Table 2

Percentage of Seniors Meeting CAHSEE Requirement (2006 – 2008)

School	Class of 2006	Class of 2007	Class of 2008⁵
Calexico High School	89.7	89.4	92.1
Chula Vista Senior High School	91.6	90.5	90.6
Farmersville High School	94.1	95.2	95.8
Hoopa Valley High School	100.0	97.2	95.9
Jordan High School	86.0	85.0	86.0
Lower Lake High School	74.0	85.5	87.4
Mar Vista Senior High School	89.2	89.3	91.5
Sacramento Charter High School	98.0	97.0	90.0
San Lorenzo High School	93.0	94.0	92.0
Shafter High School	92.2	91.9	89.2
CAPP School Average (year end)	90.8	91.5	91.0
California – (year end)	91.2	93.3	90.2
California (updated May 2008)⁶	92.3	94.0	90.2

The percentage of students who passed the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year varied by school and by school year. At three of the CAPP schools, the senior CAHSEE pass rate increased each year between SY 2005-06 and SY 2007-08; at the other schools, the senior pass rate remained relatively unchanged or varied by year. By the end of SY 2007-08, only two of the CAPP schools had senior CAHSEE pass rates that were significantly lower than the statewide average of 90.2 percent. In addition, the between-school variance in senior CAHSEE pass rates narrowed each year; for example, for the

⁴ The statewide senior CAHSEE pass rate data used for comparison purposes are the year-end, rather than the updated data (both of which are displayed in Table 2), since the CAPP school data have not been updated to reflect additional students taking and passing the CAHSEE beyond their senior year.

⁵ Exemptions for special education students expired 12/31/2007; after this date, special education students were required to pass the CAHSEE in order to receive a diploma. If Special Education students test results are excluded from the dataset, the statewide pass rate in 2008 would be 93.6%.

⁶ Statewide CAHSEE pass rate data were updated in May 2008 to reflect students who took and passed the CAHSEE after their senior year.

Class of 2006, senior pass rates at the individual CAPP schools had a 26 percentage point spread, from a low of 74 percent to a high of 100 percent; for the Class of 2008, the spread had narrowed to about 9 percentage points, ranging from a low of 86 percent to a high of 95.9 percent. This indicates that, even at CAPP schools with relatively low senior CAHSEE pass rates, considerable progress was made in helping most students successfully pass the CAHSEE in time for graduation.

It appears that the intensive academic support focused on students who had not passed the CAHSEE during the tenth grade were effective in preparing students to pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year. Moreover, given that the CAPP schools have institutionalized many of their promising support activities, it is likely that their CAHSEE pass rates will continue to increase in the years ahead. In fact, such support activities are likely to be continued and even expanded, given the recent passage of state legislation that will provide funding for up to two years of additional student support and tutoring for students who do not pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year.⁷

Preparing Students for College

The evaluation collected and analyzed data on a number of high school performance measures, including high school graduation and dropout rates, and enrollment and performance in A-G courses – academically-oriented courses designed to prepare students for college.⁸ In addition, the evaluation tracked the percentage of high school graduates each year that successfully completed the full sequence of A-G courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU). Additional college performance measures included the proportion of twelfth graders taking the SAT, SAT performance, and college matriculation rates.

A-G Course Enrollment and Performance

The evaluation found that the CAPP CAHSEE initiative helped the CAPP schools make progress toward the goal of preparing students for college. Again, some high schools were more successful than others in this regard. During the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, most CAPP schools enrolled an increasing proportion of their students in A-G

⁷ California recently passed legislation that provides funding to support tutoring for seniors (AB 128) and up to two years of academic support for students who failed to pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year (AB 347).

⁸ Currently, the A-G course sequence required for admission to UC/CSU includes a minimum of 3 years of math (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II), 4 years of English-language arts, 2 years of History/Social Science, 2 years of science, 2 years of a single foreign language, 1 year of visual or performing arts, and 1 college preparatory elective.

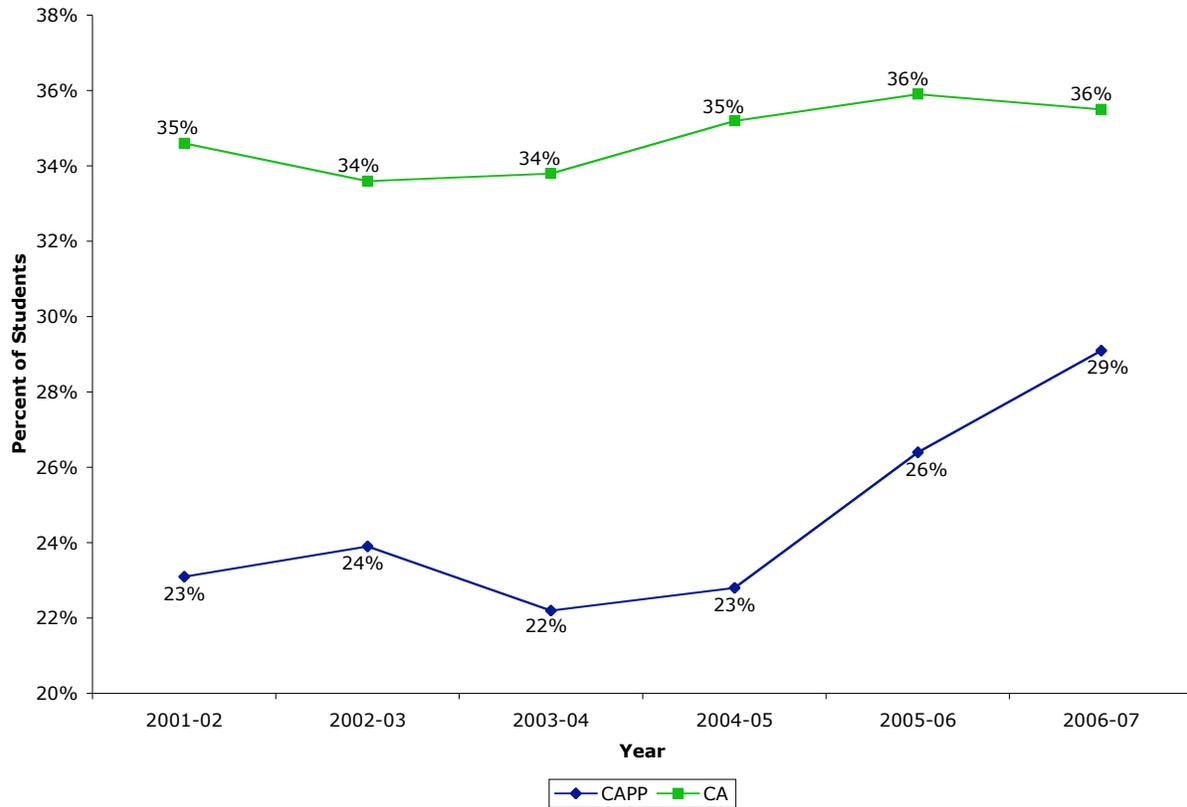
courses. In addition, many of the schools increased the number of A-G courses they offered, and reduced the number of students enrolled in “basic”, or “non-A-G” courses. This was especially common in math, where some schools limited – or even eliminated – courses below the level of Algebra 1. At most of the CAPP schools, an increasing proportion of students enrolled in A-G math and English courses over the course of the initiative. Perhaps not surprisingly, increased student participation in more challenging coursework was accompanied by lower overall performance; as a broader spectrum of students enrolled in A-G courses, the percentage passing (with a “C” or better) decreased. As will be described below, the same pattern held true for SAT participation and performance; broader participation was accompanied by lower overall performance.

Graduates Passing Full A-G Course Sequence

Among CAPP school graduates, A-G course enrollment and performance outcomes were more positive than for the student body as a whole. Over the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, an increasing proportion of CAPP school graduates successfully completed the full A-G course sequence, thereby meeting UC and CSU admission requirements. As shown in Figure 3, the percentage of CAPP school graduates successfully completing the full A-G course sequence increased from 23 percent in SY 2001-02 to 29 percent in SY 2006-07. In addition, the proportion of CAPP school graduates has increased steadily since SY 2003-04, and at a faster pace than high school graduates statewide. At most of the CAPP schools, a record proportion of graduates achieved this college eligibility requirement during the last two years, another indication that CAPP school efforts to support broader student preparation for college have made a difference.

Figure 3

Percentage of Graduates Passing Full A-G Course Sequence – CAPP CAHSEE Schools vs. California Statewide Average (2002 – 2007)



SAT Participation and Performance

SAT participation has been fairly steady among seniors at both the CAPP schools and statewide throughout the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, although the rate for CAPP schools has been increasing in the last two years. Approximately one quarter of CAPP seniors took the SAT each year, while the statewide participation rate has ranged between 35 and 37 percent. The proportion of seniors at the CAPP schools taking the SAT declined slightly (from 29 to 23 percent) during the first four years of the initiative, and has since then increased steadily, returning to 29 percent in SY 2006-07. Again, there was considerable variation by individual CAPP school; for example, in SY 2006-07, the SAT participation rates at the ten CAPP schools ranged from a low of 14 percent to a high of 55 percent. At most of the CAPP schools, SAT participation in the last two years has reached their highest levels since the CAPP CAHSEE initiative began. Moreover, at several CAPP schools, the

proportion of seniors taking the SAT increased substantially during the initiative; at two of the schools, more than half of the seniors took the SAT in the last two years, well above the statewide SAT participation rate of 37 percent.

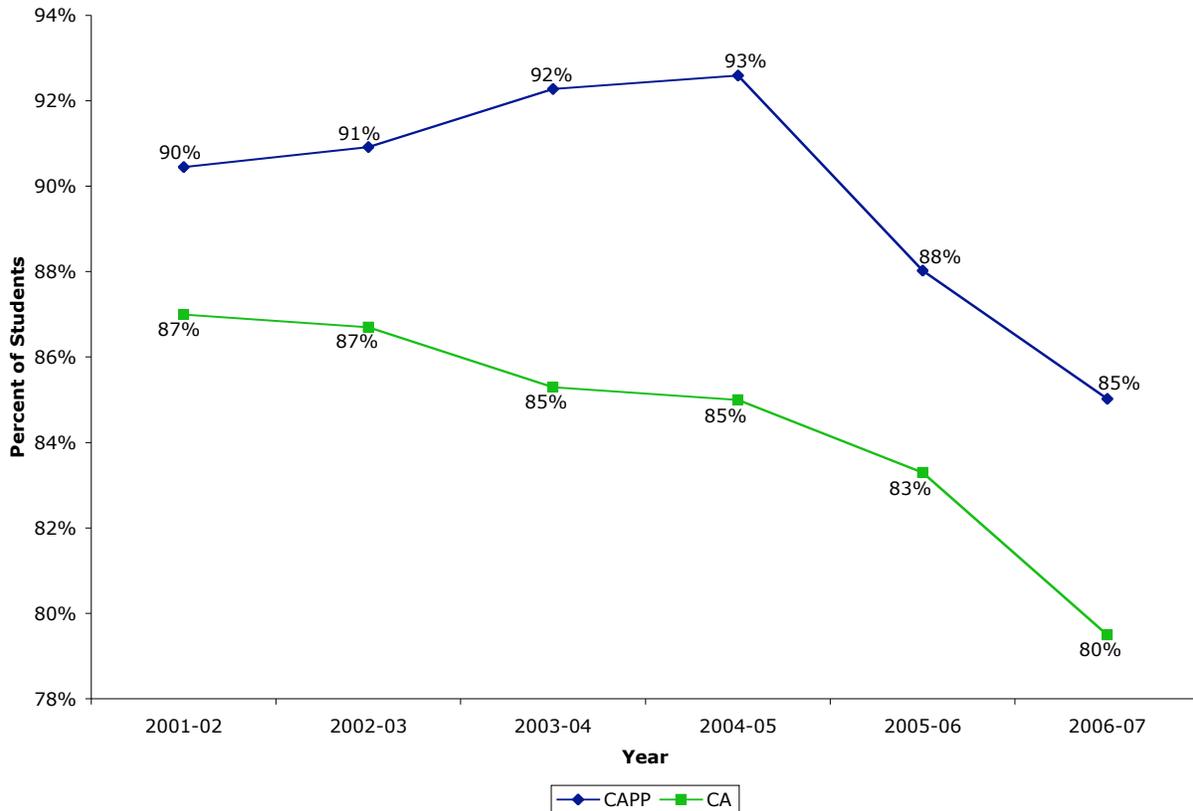
Overall SAT performance at the CAPP schools has remained fairly steady throughout the CAPP CAHSEE initiative. However, slightly increased SAT participation at the CAPP schools in recent years has been accompanied by somewhat lower overall performance. Among CAPP school seniors taking the SAT each year, roughly one quarter of them reached the target score (1000 or 1500, depending on the year), approximately half the statewide average of between 52 and 48 percent. Average CAPP school student performance on the SAT improved during the first years of the initiative, reaching a high of 29 percent in SY 2003-04, and then declined each year since then. In SY 2006-07, only 22 percent of SAT-takers at the CAPP schools met the target score, compared with 48 percent of SAT-takers statewide. Again, SAT performance varied considerably among the individual CAPP schools. For example, in SY 2006-07, the percentage of seniors reaching the SAT target score ranged from 13 to 48 percent at the individual CAPP schools.

High School Graduation

Compared with statewide trends, the graduation rate among the CAPP schools has been consistently slightly higher over the course of the initiative, as shown in Figure 4. While the reason for this is not completely clear, it suggests that the support activities being implemented at the CAPP schools may have helped students persist in school. Across the CAPP schools, the high school graduation rate reached a high of 93 percent in SY 2004-05. However, the graduation rate has dropped considerably among the CAPP schools – as it has statewide – beginning in SY 2005-06, the year the CAHSEE became a graduation requirement. This trend suggests that the CAHSEE has presented an obstacle to graduation, particularly among students at lower performing schools. This is consistent with the findings of the statewide evaluation of the CAHSEE conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO, 2007).

Figure 4

High School Graduation Rate – CAPP CAHSEE Schools vs. California Statewide Average (2002 – 2007)⁹



High School Dropouts

Statewide, high school dropout rates have been increasing gradually over the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, from 2.7 percent in SY 2001-2002 to 4.4 percent in SY 2006-07. The dropout rate among the CAPP schools, on average, has been consistently lower than the statewide rate, ranging from 1.7 to 3.1 percent during the same years. However, since SY 2005-06, dropout rates both statewide and among the CAPP schools have been rising at a slightly faster rate.¹⁰ This may indicate that seniors who fail to pass

⁹ Beginning in SY 2006-07, graduation rate data calculations included student-level data (dropout numbers for SY 2006-07) for the first time. While this provides a more accurate estimate of the actual graduation rate, it would be misleading to simply compare this year's graduation rate to that of previous years, which were derived using aggregate enrollment and dropout data.

¹⁰ Beginning in SY 2006-07, dropout data were collected at the individual student level for the first time. Therefore, dropout data for SY 2006-07 and beyond are not strictly comparable to data from previous years. While actually dropout rates may have increased significantly, at least part of the difference is likely due to more precise data collection.

the CAHSEE may be at increasing risk of dropping out of school, as suggested by the HumRRO evaluation report. This is an issue that requires further investigation.

Enrollment in Higher Education

One of the primary goals of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative was to prepare students at the CAPP schools for college, and particularly to prepare them to matriculate directly to four-year institutions of higher education. For the purposes of the evaluation, WestEd collected data on student enrollments at California-based public colleges: the four-year institutions being the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU), as well as two-year California community colleges (CC).

Figure 5

Percentage of Graduates Matriculating to UC, CSU, and CC – CAPP CAHSEE Schools vs. California Statewide Average (2000-01 – 2006-07)

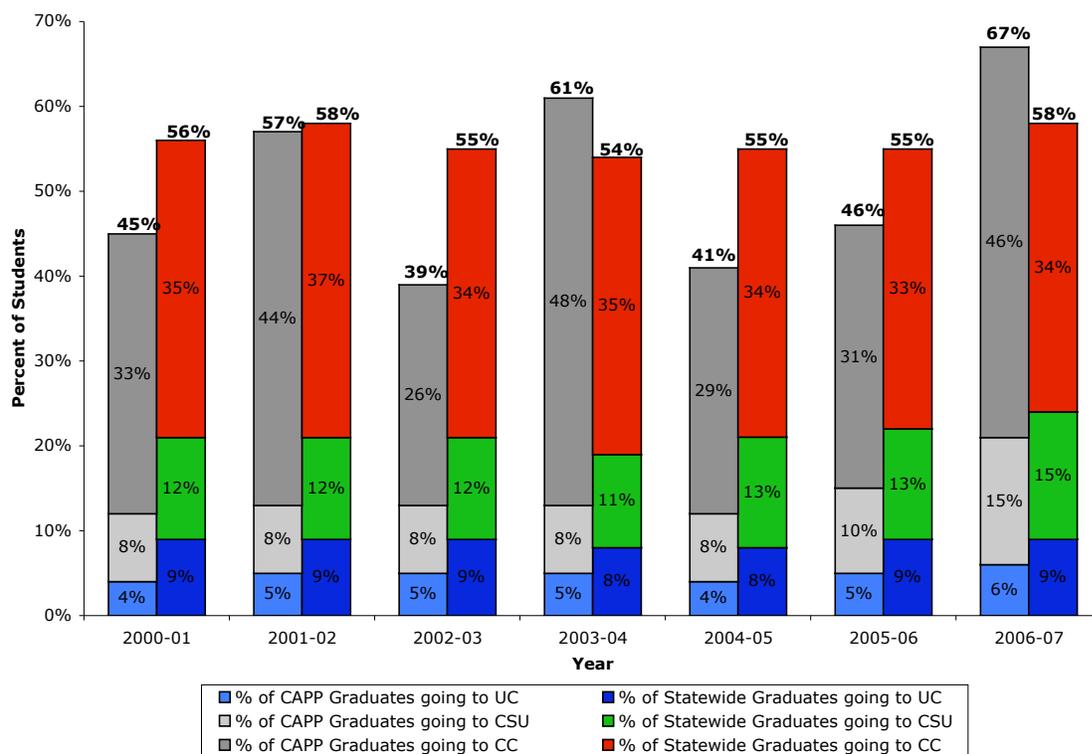


Figure 5 shows the percentage of graduates from the CAPP schools enrolling as freshmen at UC, CSU and CC from SY 2001- 02 through SY 2006-07, compared with the

respective enrollment rates of high school graduates statewide. The proportion of CAPP school graduates matriculating to college increased markedly during the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, while remaining relatively steady among high school students statewide. Overall, each year between 39 and 67 percent of CAPP school graduates enrolled in college, compared with between 55 and 58 percent of high school graduates statewide.¹¹ When the CAPP CAHSEE initiative began in SY 2001-02, 45 percent of CAPP CAHSEE school graduates enrolled in college, compared with 56 percent statewide; by SY 2006-07, 67 percent of CAPP school graduates enrolled directly in college, compared with 58 percent of students statewide. Until recently, the main source of variation was the percentage of graduates enrolling in community colleges each year, which fluctuated between 26 and 46 percent among CAPP graduates, and between 33 and 37 percent for high school graduates statewide. However, in the last two years, the proportion of students matriculating to UC and CSU increased significantly, especially among CAPP school students.

As shown in Figure 5, over the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, the percentage of CAPP graduates enrolling in UC held relatively steady at between 4 and 5 percent between SY 2000-01 and SY 2005-06, compared with between 8 and 9 percent of high school graduates statewide. Then, in SY 2006-07, six percent of CAPP school graduates enrolled in UC, a significant increase from the previous years, and the highest UC enrollment level during the six years of the initiative. Moreover, the gap between CAPP school and statewide enrollment at UC narrowed, as CAPP school graduates increased to 6 percent while statewide enrollment remained at 9 percent.

Similarly, CAPP school graduates have recently matriculated directly to CSU at significantly higher rates than before. The percentage of CAPP school graduates enrolling in CSU held steady at 8 percent between SY 2000-01 and SY 2004-05, compared with a statewide rate between 11 and 13 percent during the same years. Then, in SY 2005-06, the percentage of CAPP graduates matriculating to CSU increased to 10 percent, compared with a statewide enrollment rate of 13 percent. CAPP school enrollment increased again in SY 2006-07, when 15 percent of CAPP school graduates matriculated directly to CSU, matching the CSU enrollment rate of high school graduates statewide. In other words, beginning in SY 2006-07, CAPP school graduates matriculated directly to CSU at approximately twice the rate as they had during the first years of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, and at the same rate as high school graduates statewide.

¹¹ The total college-going rates are likely somewhat higher, as these data do not reflect students who enrolled in private or out-of-state public colleges, nor the enrollment of transfer students.

Over the course of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, most of the CAPP schools significantly increased the percentage of their graduates matriculating to UC and CSU. In SY 2006-07, five of the CAPP schools saw their graduates enrolling in UC undergraduate programs at more than twice the rate they had in previous years; across the CAPP schools, between 2 percent and 14 percent of the previous spring's graduates enrolled at UC campuses. The same year, 7 of the 10 CAPP schools had the highest percentage of their graduates matriculate directly to CSU; between 6 and 25 percent of the previous spring's graduates enrolled at CSU in SY 2006-07.

These recent increases in college enrollment indicate that the CAPP CAHSEE initiative may have played a significant role in helping students at the CAPP schools prepare for and matriculate directly to four-year college programs. Given that, as described above, the proportion of CAPP school graduates successfully completing the full A-G course sequence making them eligible for UC and CSU, this trend is likely to continue in the coming years.

SUPPORTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Through the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, the ten school partnership projects received the funding, resources, and support that enabled them to implement a number of school-based programs and activities designed to support improved student performance on the CAHSEE. In addition, the schools participated in a range of both formal and informal professional development and networking opportunities aimed at improving the quality of their curriculum and instruction, thereby promoting improved student academic achievement and preparation for college. Involvement in these and other activities led to sustained and productive collaboration among faculty and staff of the CAPP schools, as well as to the development of the schools as professional learning communities. CAPP project schools shared effective strategies for providing academic support to students, such as staffing homework centers with qualified teachers and tutors, increasing student utilization of homework centers, involving more parents in the academic life of their children, and providing more targeted instruction and support to students.

As documented briefly in this report, the CAPP CAHSEE initiative helped to bring about important student, teacher, and school outcomes at the CAPP schools. While student academic performance at the CAPP schools, on average, has continued to be lower than that of students statewide, the gap is narrowing. The evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative also revealed that student performance outcomes and trends varied considerably between the ten CAPP schools. Some schools were more successful at making progress toward student performance goals than others, due to different activities, strategies, and implementation approaches. In addition, many of the CAPP schools faced considerable challenges in implementing their CAPP projects during the six years of the initiative, including high administrative and faculty turnover, lack of sustained school and project leadership, and changing student demographics, especially the growing numbers of under-prepared and EL students.

While the CAPP CAHSEE initiative did not bring about dramatic overall improvements in terms of student academic performance, outcomes at the school and teacher levels set the stage for improved student performance in the future. Most of the CAPP schools made significant progress in terms of improving the quality of curriculum and instruction, adopting standards-based instructional and assessment practices, and developing effective student academic support programs. Teachers at the CAPP schools increasingly collaborated around curriculum and instruction, took on leadership roles to ensure that effective practices were implemented and sustained, and provided data-driven,

individualized academic support to their students. In these ways, the CAPP CAHSEE initiative helped to support the schools develop as professional learning communities. The schools developed effective approaches to supporting students academically, both by improving the quality of curriculum and instruction, and by providing targeted student support. Teachers collaborated with their colleagues around developing curriculum and assessments, as well as assessing student work. In addition, faculty and staff collaborated across schools, sharing effective strategies for supporting students academically.

Given that many of these effective support and instructional practices have become institutionalized at the schools, it is likely that an increasing proportion of students will develop a solid academic foundation based on the mastery of academic content standards, which in turn should lead to improved CAHSEE pass rates, as well as improved overall academic achievement and college preparation and enrollment.

Broadening the Focus: Beyond the High School Exit Exam

Currently, almost ten percent of public high school students in California are not passing the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year. Given the increasing number of states that require students to pass an exit exam in order to earn a high school diploma – and the well-documented consequences for students who fail to earn one – the imperative for schools to provide students the support they need to pass the exit exam is clear. However, narrowly focused efforts to raise high school exit exam passing rates are not likely to improve students' overall academic achievement, nor are they likely to improve students' preparation or prospects for attending college. Since the students most at risk of not passing the exam tend to be concentrated at lower performing schools – where overall student academic achievement is lower than average – supporting students to prepare for and pass the high school exit exam should be part of a broader, more comprehensive effort to raise student academic achievement.

An important lesson learned from the experience of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative is that, in order to tackle the problem of students not passing the CAHSEE, the root problem of student underachievement needs to be addressed. The CAHSEE – like the high school exit exam in most other states – reflects the academic content standards in English/language arts and math that high school students are expected to have mastered by the time they graduate. Students who have trouble passing the CAHSEE have not adequately mastered the content standards that should be reflected in middle and high school curriculum. Therefore, CAPP's approach was to encourage schools to provide support for students in passing the CAHSEE as part of a broader, more systemic reform

effort to help schools improve and align curriculum with state academic content standards and improve faculty capacity to provide quality, standards-based instruction.

The experience of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative demonstrates that supporting schools to improve student achievement by making fundamental structural, pedagogical, and cultural changes is an enormous undertaking. Like other significant reform efforts, this process requires a tremendous amount of time, resources, commitment, participation, collaboration, and leadership. As summarized in this report, the impact of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative – in terms of measurable student achievement outcomes – were neither dramatic nor consistent. However, the CAPP schools did make dramatic progress in getting teachers, administrators, and other school staff to work together to improve instructional quality and support student success. Moreover, because many of the promising practices developed during the initiative have taken root at the schools, and have been adopted gradually by additional departments and teachers, student performance outcomes – on the CAHSEE and more broadly – will likely continue to improve in the years to come.

Ensuring that students are prepared to pass the high school exit exam cannot and should not be the sole responsibility of high schools. Recent research conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California suggests that students at risk of not passing the CAHSEE can be identified quite accurately by the fourth grade based on measures such as standardized test scores, grades, and behavior (PPIC, 2008). By the time they get to high school, many of these students are already years behind academically. Clearly, the entire educational system must be involved in preparing students to pass the high school exit exam so that students have mastered the content by the time it is first administered.

In order to promote high overall student achievement and prepare all students for college, high schools need to offer an array of content-rich, college preparatory courses and provide high quality instruction and support. Course curriculum must incorporate the academic standards that students need to master, and assessments and instruction must be aligned. Moreover, most students should be taking these courses, and supplemental support should be available to ensure student success.

However, according to research conducted by WestEd (Finkelstein, 2008), students at lower performing high schools are not enrolling in college preparatory courses early enough. The study concludes that in order for students to take – and pass – the full sequence of “A-G” courses needed to qualify for UC and CSU admission, students must begin enrolling in them during their freshman year of high school. This, of course, would require that students enter high school prepared for college preparatory course content, which is clearly not the case at most high schools. Again, this suggests the need for

educational segments across the K-12 continuum to work together to ensure that students are prepared to move from one grade level to the next. High schools need to work closely with middle schools – and ideally with elementary schools – to align curriculum and instruction and ensure that students are adequately prepared to move from one grade to the next. In addition, districts should facilitate communication between schools and create opportunities for teachers across the educational segments to work together to strategize about how best to teach and support students.

Promising Practices from the CAPP CAHSEE Experience

As described in this report, the CAPP CAHSEE initiative helped schools develop, improve upon, and share with other schools a number of practices and strategies to promote schoolwide improvement focused ultimately on improving student academic achievement. These practices included the implementation of student support programs and activities targeted to students most at risk of not passing the CAHSEE, such as school-based homework and study centers, individual and group tutoring, and workshops to provide supplementary academic support and CAHSEE preparation. In addition, faculty collaboration around curriculum and instruction, including creating common instructional units and assessments, proved to be an important strategy for improving instructional quality. Collaboration with feeder schools and partnerships with colleges contributed greatly to schools at which authentic relationships were developed and deepened. Teachers also increasingly assumed leadership roles in working with their colleagues, administrators, and others to improve the quality of instruction, curriculum, and student support.

The following strategies and promising practices, derived from the experiences of the CAPP school projects, the evaluation of the CAPP CAHSEE initiative, and related educational research, may be useful to lower performing schools as they focus on schoolwide instructional improvement and supporting the academic success for all students.

Improve the quality of standards-based curriculum and instruction schoolwide.

- Involve every teacher and staff member in improving the academic achievement of all students by creating and nurturing a unified, schoolwide culture focused on learning and supporting the academic success of all students.

-
- Create a schoolwide professional learning community, by involving all faculty in the process of improving instructional quality. Invest in high quality, school-based professional development focused on improving standards-based instruction throughout the school, and centered around improving student achievement for all students.
 - Provide leadership to begin the process of faculty collaboration in a manner that creates an atmosphere of trust and safety, without which collaboration will not be productive. Ensure that ground rules for collaboration are established and followed, expect all teachers to participate, and ensure that the process is inclusive and respectful.
 - Support teachers in developing their instructional skills through ongoing informal professional development activities. Faculty members can learn from colleagues, as well as coaches and mentor teachers, through observing each other provide instruction, discussing instructional strategies, and sharing constructive feedback with one another.
 - Focus faculty collaboration on curriculum and instruction; support faculty teams in developing specific objectives for collaborative work, including developing common assessments and scoring rubrics, assessing student work, creating instructional units, and sharing effective teaching practices.
 - Ensure that curriculum, assessments and instruction incorporate the content standards that students need to master in order to pass the high school exit exam, achieve at higher academic levels, and prepare for college.
 - Build regular faculty collaboration time into the master schedule. and make sure the time allotted is adequate to accomplish established objectives. Emphasize the importance of focusing on instruction by not allowing collaboration time to be used for administrative or other purposes.

Use student assessment data as a basis for planning instruction.

- Provide professional development to teachers and other staff to enable them to use student assessment results to analyze student performance strengths and challenges, and as a template for planning instruction.

-
- Support teachers in using student-level assessment data to guide the development of specific, individualized instruction plans for students, as well as to identify what they have taught well as well as what they need to re-teach.
 - Use student assessment data to analyze schoolwide and student subgroup performance, and develop a schoolwide plan to address student learning needs.

Develop a comprehensive, schoolwide student support system.

- Establish a school-based study center where comprehensive academic support is available to all students, whether they are preparing for an exam, seeking supplemental instruction or tutoring, or needing a quiet place to complete homework.
- Ensure that the student study center is seen as an integral part of the school and a valuable activity that is part of the school's academic culture. Establish the study center in a central campus location, and set the center's hours so as to maximize opportunities for students to access help before, during, and after school. Once established, ensure that the center's posted hours are regular and predictable, so that students can count on having a place to work and receive academic support.
- Enlist a key faculty or staff member to oversee the study center and ensure that it is adequately utilized and staffed. Involve the most qualified and effective teachers – as well as college students and community volunteers – in providing tutoring and academic support. Encourage all faculty to participate both in providing tutoring and encouraging their students to use the center; this will help to legitimize the center among all faculty and increase their support and participation.
- Encourage students to use the study center by focusing center resources on students' instructional needs, and by creating a quiet, clean, and inviting environment that encourages focused learning.
- Reward students for utilizing the center by providing incentives for regular participation; these could include snacks, or opportunities to earn small prizes or privileges. Never make study center attendance punitive, or allow teachers to send students to the center as a punishment for misbehavior.

-
- Create individualized academic support plans for students, based on assessments and input from teachers, staff, parents, and the students themselves. Develop plans in such a way that students – as well as their teachers and parents – can see the progress they have made toward achieving their goals.
 - Enlist the involvement of parents and family members to support students academically. Make sure that parents know about the study center and related academic support and resources available through the school, solicit their input and goals, and encourage them to help support and be involved in their child’s education.

Support teachers to take on leadership roles in school improvement.

- Encourage teachers to participate and take leadership roles in school improvement efforts, and support them in taking on leadership roles within their departments and faculty teams.
- Expect teachers to collaborate with their colleagues in enhancing the quality of curriculum and instruction and supporting students academically. Consider making teacher participation in collaboration and student academic support efforts a criterion used in faculty hiring decisions as well as for performance evaluation.

Build partnerships and align resources to support student achievement.

- Establish partnerships with local colleges and businesses with the goal of supporting student achievement; involve partners in activities such as providing tutoring, mentoring, information, and support around college preparation and admission.
- Pursue partnerships and seek resources that will provide support to continue and expand school and district efforts related to schoolwide academic goals.

Provide students the support they need before they get to high school.

- High schools should establish and support ongoing communication with feeder middle and elementary schools at the administrative and faculty level to discuss how to prepare students to move through the educational continuum, and to identify and plan for those students needing additional academic support.

-
- Establish ongoing vertical teaming efforts between the schools to improve curriculum articulation and developed shared agreements about what students are expected to learn and the skills they will master, as well as to make informed course placement decisions for students moving from one school to another.
 - Identify students needing support in order to be ready for the CAHSEE and academically challenging, content-rich courses by the time they begin high school. The schools may be able to create support programs designed for students transitioning between schools to share responsibility for ensuring that students are prepared for the next step.
 - Develop or expand academically-oriented summer programs and encourage students to participate in summer learning activities to keep students engaged in learning between school years.

Foster a school culture focused on improving teaching and learning.

- Make improving student academic performance the focus of school improvement efforts. Help to foster a school culture where all staff, teachers, students, and parents share the belief that all students are capable of high academic achievement.
- Focus teacher professional development efforts on the goal of raising student achievement; expect school staff and faculty to share responsibility for improving the capacity of the school to deliver high quality curriculum and instruction.
- Provide teachers with ongoing opportunities to develop and implement successful strategies for supporting student achievement through collaborating – within and between schools – to model and share successful strategies and practices.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Public Policy Institute of California (2008). *Predicting Success, Preventing Failure: An Investigation of the California High School Exit Exam*.
- Horowitz, J. and the California Academic Partnership Program. (2005). *Inside High School Reform*. San Francisco: WestEd.
- Human Resources Research Organization. (2007). *Independent Evaluation of the California High School Exit Examination: 2007 Evaluation Report*.
- Finkelstein, N. and Fong, A. (2008). *Course-Taking Patterns and Preparation for Postsecondary Education in California's Public University Systems Among Minority Youth*. San Francisco: WestEd.
- California Academic Partnership Program. (2006). *Lessons Learned from Ten High Schools: Findings and Recommendations from the California Academic Partnership Program*.