Passing the California High School Exit Exam

Have Recent Policies Improved Student Performance?

Julian Betts
Outline

- CAHSEE’s goals and impact
- Recent interventions
- Earlier interventions and forecasting
- The CAHSEE Early Warning Model
- Policy implications
The CAHSEE Is a High-Stakes Exam

- Passing the CAHSEE is a graduation requirement for classes of 2006 and later
- Two components: English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics
- The exam’s primary goals:
  - Measuring grade-level competency
  - Boosting student achievement
Many Students Struggle to Pass

- Students have multiple chances to pass between grades 10 and 12

- Statewide results for 2010:
  - About 3 out of 10 failed at least one component in grade 10
  - About 1 in 16 failed to pass the exam before the end of grade 12
Outline

- CAHSEE’s goals and impact
- **Recent interventions**
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Recent Interventions Are Aimed at Students Who Have Failed the Exam

- AB 128: Support for students who have yet to pass CAHSEE
- AB 347: Support for students after grade 12 to pass CAHSEE
- AB 1802: Funding for school counselors
- SDUSD’s intervention: CAHSEE prep courses
AB 128 Has Had No Noticeable Effect

- We compared CAHSEE results with and without AB 128 support
- Passage rates did not improve among students eligible for AB 128 support
AB 347 May Have Increased Re-enrollment a Year after Grade 12

- Diploma bound
- Non-diploma bound

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma bound</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-diploma bound</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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But CAHSEE Passage Has Not Risen Much after Grade 12

- Diploma bound
- Non-diploma bound

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Diploma</th>
<th>% Non-diploma</th>
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<td>Class of 2006</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class of 2007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class of 2008</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Class of 2009</td>
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<td>0</td>
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## Prep Class Enrollment at San Diego Unified Is Increasing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Class of 2006</th>
<th>Class of 2007</th>
<th>Class of 2008</th>
<th>Class of 2009</th>
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<td>35</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>567</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>282</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>1817</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prep Classes Do Not Improve Overall Passage Rates

![Diagram showing change in predicted percent passing for different prep classes over years 2005-2009. The diagram includes data points for any prep class, ELA prep class, and Math prep class.](Image)
Even Optimistic Estimates Reveal Minimal Overall Impact
Less Optimistic Estimates Show Even Smaller Effects

- AB 347
- CAHSEE Prep
- AB 128 tutoring in grade 11

Year of expected graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AB 347</th>
<th>CAHSEE Prep</th>
<th>AB 128 tutoring in grade 11</th>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outline

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Early Intervention Makes Sense

- Most skills tested in the CAHSEE are taught in upper elementary and middle school
- Earlier support would cost less than later intervention
- Support over many grades is more likely to have a lasting effect
How Can Districts Identify At-Risk Students in Earlier Grades?

- Zau and Betts accurately predicted student performance with data from grades 4–9
- Create an accurate forecasting tool that uses data easily available to school districts
- Ensure that the model holds up over time
The Earlier Model Is Consistent over Time

Note: Predictions based on student data from grade 9.
Outline

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Introducing the CAHSEE Early Warning Model

- A simple spreadsheet tool can help identify struggling students **before** they first take the exam in grade 10

- Districts can use data from grade 6 or grade 8:
  - Grade 6 forecasting would enable assistance to begin earlier
  - Grade 8 forecasting would be slightly more accurate
Validation Is a Crucial First Step

- Districts need to test the model (based on SDUSD class of 2009) using data from a cohort that has already taken the CAHSEE in grade 10
- Districts can estimate how many students would need intervention at various levels by entering cutoff points
How Many Students Identified at Each Cutoff?

<table>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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<td>329</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>97</td>
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<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
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<td>259</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<td>591</td>
<td>469</td>
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<td>92.8%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the Model Is Validated, Forecasting Can Begin

- Districts enter student data from either grade 6 or grade 8
- The forecasting spreadsheet predicts students’ probabilities of passing the CAHSEE in grade 10
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Current Policies Are Not Effective

- AB 128 tutoring has been ineffective
- AB 347 may have increased re-enrollment of students after grade 12, but CAHSEE passage rates have risen only slightly
- SDUSD’s prep classes help on each section of the exam but do not boost overall passage rates
- Between 1.5% and at most 3% of students passed the CAHSEE because of these interventions
How Can Districts Help Students Pass the Exam?

- AB 128 funds are now part of a pot of money that districts can use more flexibly
  - Opens up the possibility of intervening before grades 11 and 12

- Districts may want to develop their own CAHSEE prep courses
  - Courses for students below grade 10 could be particularly helpful

- Together, early warning and early intervention could be helpful and cost effective
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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.