College Readiness as a Graduation Requirement
An Assessment of San Diego’s Challenges

Julian Betts (PPIC Bren Fellow and UCSD)
Overview

- College readiness for all?
- Assessing San Diego’s challenges
- The a–g On Track Model
- Policy Implications
College readiness is a national issue

- President Obama’s call to prepare all students for college and career
- The ACLU’s campaign for equal access to college preparatory coursework
  - Has lobbied California districts to adopt CSU/UC ‘a–g’ requirement
Several large districts in California adopting college-readiness policies

- San Jose Unified (class of 2002)
- San Francisco Unified (class of 2014)
- Oakland Unified (class of 2015)
- Los Angeles Unified (class of 2016)
- San Diego Unified (class of 2016)
UC/CSU a–g requirements

- 30 semesters in 7 subject areas with grades of C or higher
  
a: History/Social studies (4 semesters)
b: English Language Arts (8 semesters)
c: Mathematics (6 semesters)
d: Laboratory sciences (4 semesters)
e: World languages (4 semesters)
f: Visual and performing arts (2 semesters)
g: College-preparatory elective (2 semesters)
California’s a–g completion rates are low

- Only about 40% of high school graduates in California complete the a–g course sequence with grades of C or higher
  - But the Master Plan expected only a third of high school graduates to attend UC/CSU
- Many districts have adopted “D or higher” a–g requirements
  - LAUSD an exception, requiring C or higher starting with class of 2017
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About 61% of the class of 2011 would have met the new requirement

- Completion rates for graduates
  - 41.8% with C or higher
  - 61.1% with D or higher
  - 68.2% attempted all a–g courses

- Completion rates for graduates AND non-graduates combined
  - 27.6% with C or higher
  - 40.4% with D or higher
  - 45.5% attempted all a–g courses
Completion rates lower for some racial/ethnic groups

- White
- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other

- C or Higher
- D or Higher
- Attempted

Percentage

- White
- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other

Completion rates for different racial/ethnic groups.
Rates lower for English Learners, students in special education, males

Percent of graduates completing a–g

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C or higher</th>
<th>D or higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever English Learner</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently EL</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never English Learner</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in special education</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not in special education</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade 6 GPA and test scores are major factors in predicting a–g passage

Predicted percentage change in probability

-15 -10 -5 0 5 10 15 20

African-American
Asian
Hispanic
Other (non-white) race
Female
EL
FEP
Special education
Percentage days absent
Average GPA
CST math score
CST ELA score
CST science score grade 5
Out of district in grade 5

C or Higher
D or Higher
Completion rates are lower in schools with many students eligible for meal assistance.
How far short did graduates fall?

- The median graduate fell 2–3 semesters short.
- With 2–3 additional semester courses, about 80% of graduates would have met the new requirement.
- 38.9% of graduates fell short by at least one semester course.
- About a third of graduates were 1–6 semester courses short and 3% were more than 6 semester courses short.
Foreign language, math, and English posed the largest challenges

Percent of graduates short of meeting a–g requirements with D or higher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of courses short of a–g requirement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAPA</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some 2011 grads who did not complete a–g coursework went to college

- Of the 32.3% of graduates who enrolled in a 4-year college, about two-thirds attended UC or CSU
- 12% of graduates who did not complete a–g requirements attended a 4-year college—of these, 6.9% attended UC or CSU
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Districts will need to help students stay on track

- Districts need to monitor and support all middle and high school students so they stay on track and do not drop out
- Special focus on students with low GPAs, EL students, and students in special education
- Our a–g On Track Model is designed to help identify at-risk students
The a–g On Track Model

- Models created to identify students in grades 6 and 7 who went on to complete a–g
  - “C or higher” and “D or higher”

- School districts can use the model to
  - predict individual students’ a–g completion probability
  - estimate how many students will need support

- Two Excel spreadsheets for each grade
  - Validation
  - Forecasting
Districts can estimate how many students will need intervention by entering cutoff points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cutoff: Choose Students with Predicted Passage Probability Below:</th>
<th>Number of Students to Be Included in an Intervention</th>
<th>% Who Did Not Complete Who Would be Included in Intervention</th>
<th>% Who Completed Who Would be Included in Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C or better</td>
<td>D or better</td>
<td>C or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1272</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2076</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2628</td>
<td>1461</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3076</td>
<td>2052</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3507</td>
<td>2612</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3913</td>
<td>3108</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4293</td>
<td>3697</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4646</td>
<td>4257</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4857</td>
<td>4761</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Students and teachers need to prepare for new requirements

- Develop communication strategies to make sure everyone is aware of new requirements
- Provide professional development for teachers
  - Changing a–g course content
  - Common Core State Standards
  - Managing academically heterogeneous classes
The unsettled issue of alternative ways to earn a diploma

- State education code requires districts to provide alternative means to a high school diploma
  - Some districts have a–g opt-out processes (Oakland and San Jose)

- State code allows students who complete grade 10 to opt for college prep or career technical education

- The students who inspired the new policy may have little incentive to take college prep courses
Effect on UC/CSU enrollment

- Expanded participation in a–g courses could lower quality
  - Negative peer effects
  - In a–g courses will teacher qualifications fall in the short run?
- Enrollment of underrepresented students at UC/CSU may fall in first years of implementation
- Share of underrepresented students attending UC/CSU may rise in the long term
Most immediate concerns

- Districts must:
  - communicate new policy widely
  - enhance professional development
  - identify and support struggling students well before grades 11 and 12
    - Our a–g On Track Model can help

- Districts will need to ensure adherence to a–g course standards and guard against grade inflation
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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.