

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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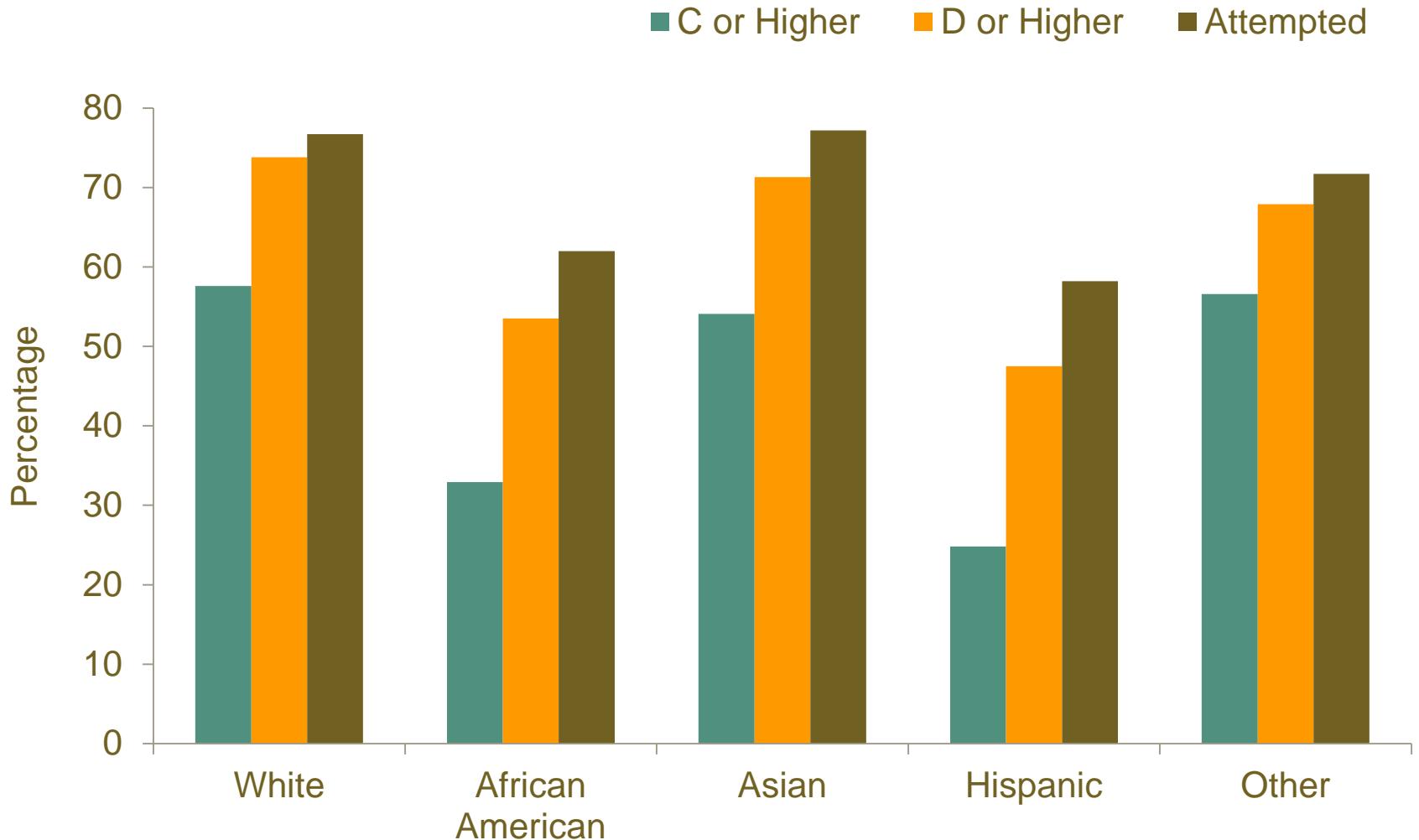


About 61% of the class of 2011 would have met the new requirement

- 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



Rates lower for English Learners, students in special education, males

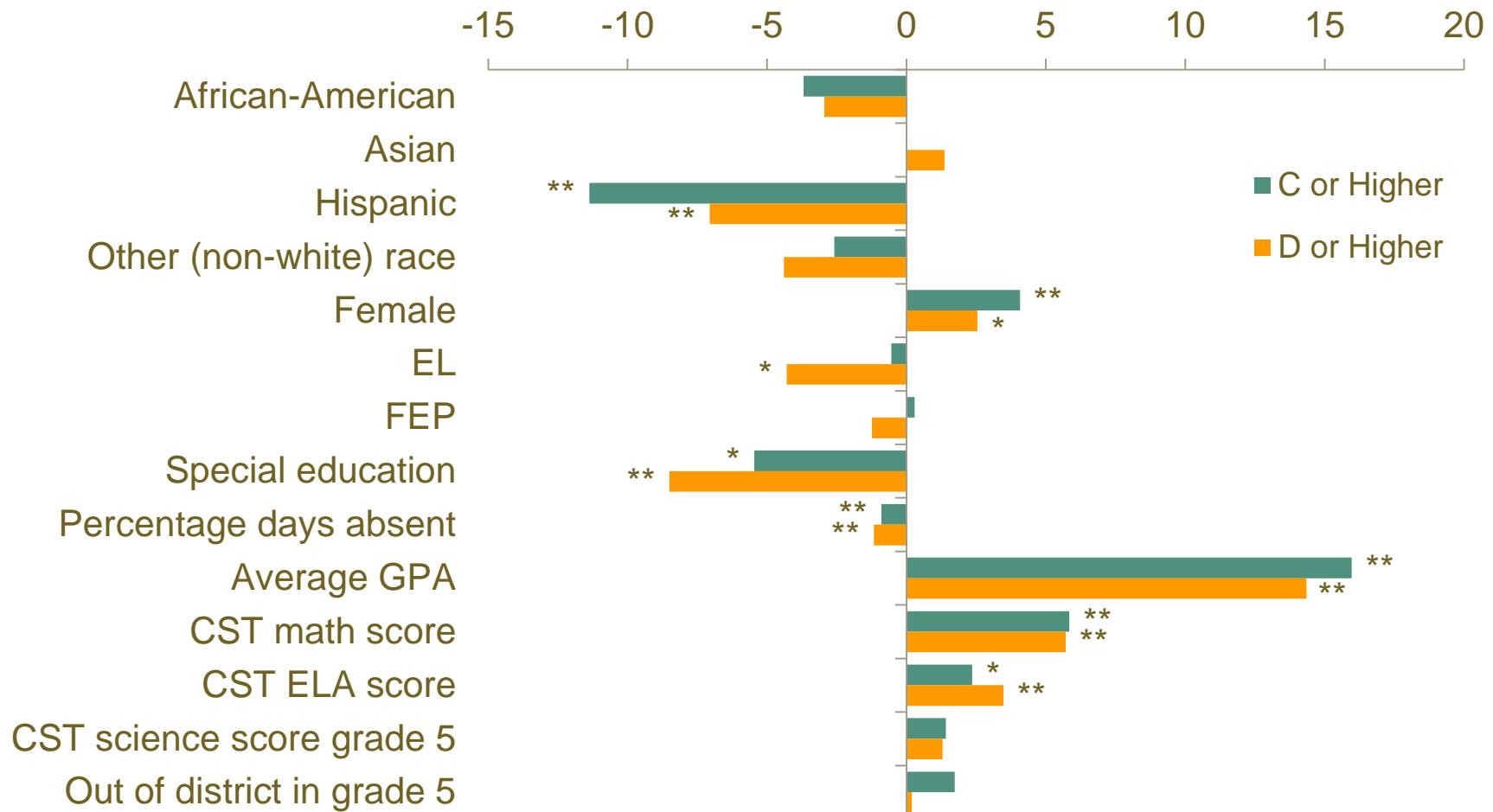
Percent of graduates completing a–g

	C or higher	D or higher
Ever English Learner	28.9	49.2
Currently EL	20.3	35.2
RFEP	34.0	57.6
Never English Learner	48.5	67.2
Students in special education	27.8	44.6
Students not in special education	43.7	63.3
Male	37.5	57.6
Female	46.0	64.5

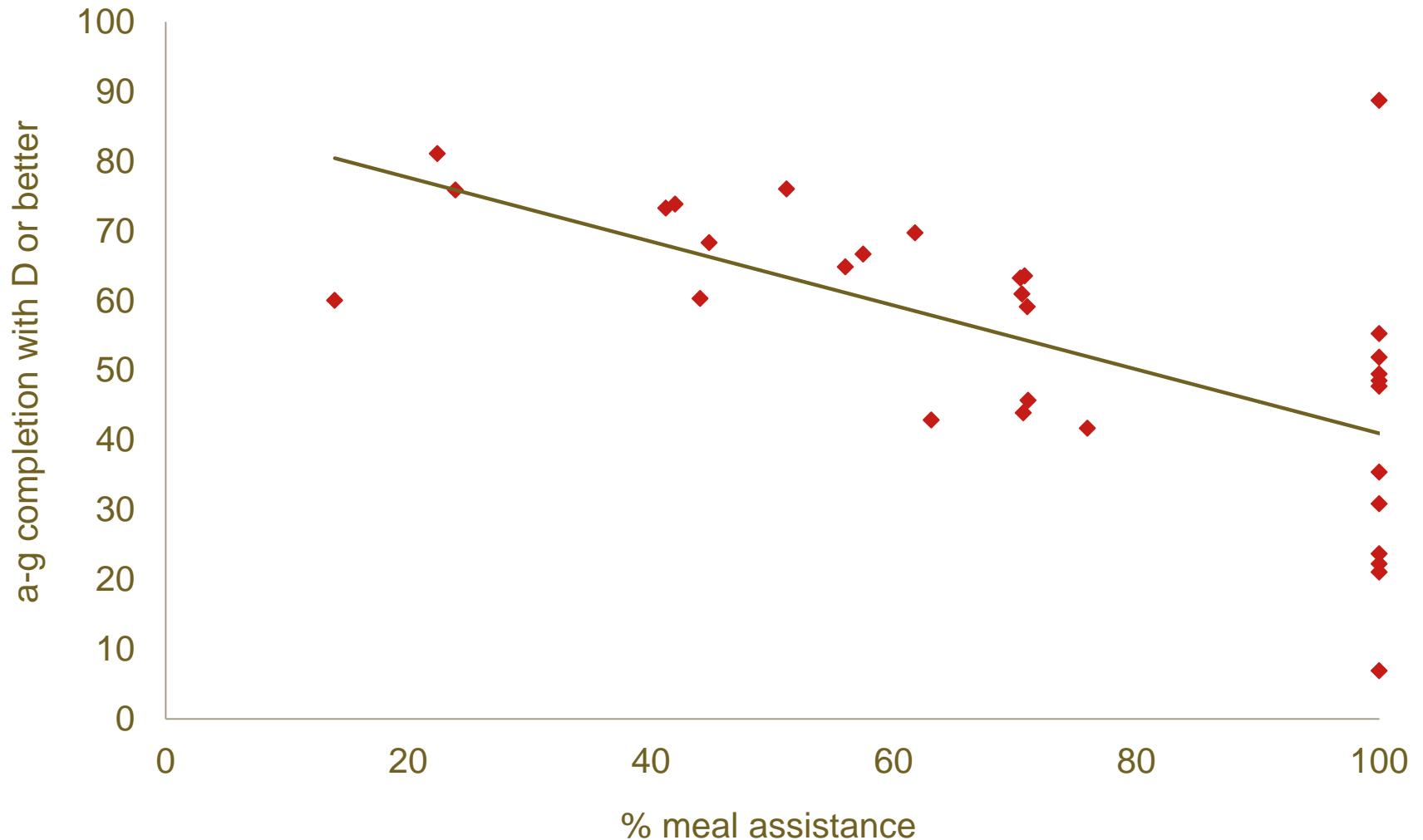


Grade 6 GPA and test scores are major factors in predicting a-g passage

Predicted percentage change in probability



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

	Number of courses short of a–g requirement								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Social studies	3.8	2.8	0.6	0.6					7.9
English	6.9	4.8	1.5	1.3	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.4	16.0
Math	14.0	4.7	2.1	1.8	0.3	0.2			20.5
Science	1.5	1.7	0.2	0.5					3.8
Foreign language	3.4	9.5	2.1	7.8					23.9
VAPA	5.6	2.5							8.0
Elective	0.6	0.6							1.2



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

44	Cutoff: Choose Students with Predicted Passage Probability Below:	Number of Students to Be Included in an Intervention		% Who Did Not Complete Who Would be Included in Intervention		% Who Completed Who Would be Included in Intervention	
		C or better	D or better	C or better	D or better	C or better	D or better
45							
46	0.1	1272	282	37.0%	10.2%	3.5%	0.9%
47	0.2	2076	832	58.1%	29.3%	10.6%	3.7%
48	0.3	2628	1461	71.1%	48.5%	18.3%	9.6%
49	0.4	3076	2052	80.0%	63.7%	28.0%	18.4%
50	0.5	3507	2612	87.0%	75.7%	40.3%	29.2%
51	0.6	3913	3108	92.5%	83.7%	54.4%	41.6%
52	0.7	4293	3697	96.0%	90.4%	70.8%	59.4%
53	0.8	4646	4257	98.5%	95.5%	87.5%	77.7%
54	0.9	4857	4761	99.7%	98.9%	98.2%	95.5%
55							



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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:

Julian Betts (jbetts@ucsd.edu)

Thank you for your interest in this work.

