

Achievement Gaps and Graduation Requirements in California's Schools

April 28, 2016

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The James Irvine Foundation Briefing Series



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High-Need Students and California's New Assessments

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New statewide tests were administered in 2015

- First set of Smarter Balanced (SBAC) test results under the Common Core State Standards
- Common Core standards are more rigorous
 - English language arts (ELA) is more challenging
 - Math requires more ELA skills
- Education agencies “can’t compare” SBAC and the California Standards Test (CST)

Why compare new and old test results?

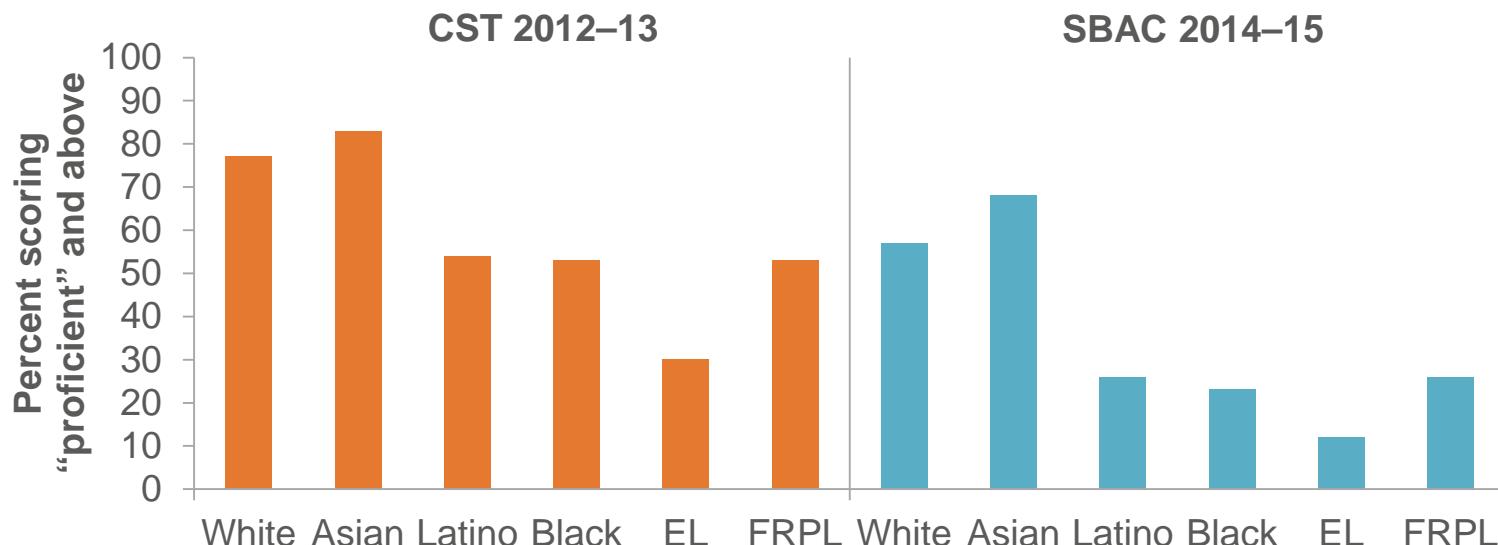
- Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) require informed decision-making
- The LCFF and LCAP target high-need students
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English Learner (EL)
- Districts and schools need to know how students are faring
 - New accountability measures are being developed
 - Closing achievement gaps is a major state goal

Outline

- Overview of SBAC results
- District-level scores
- School-level scores
- Implications

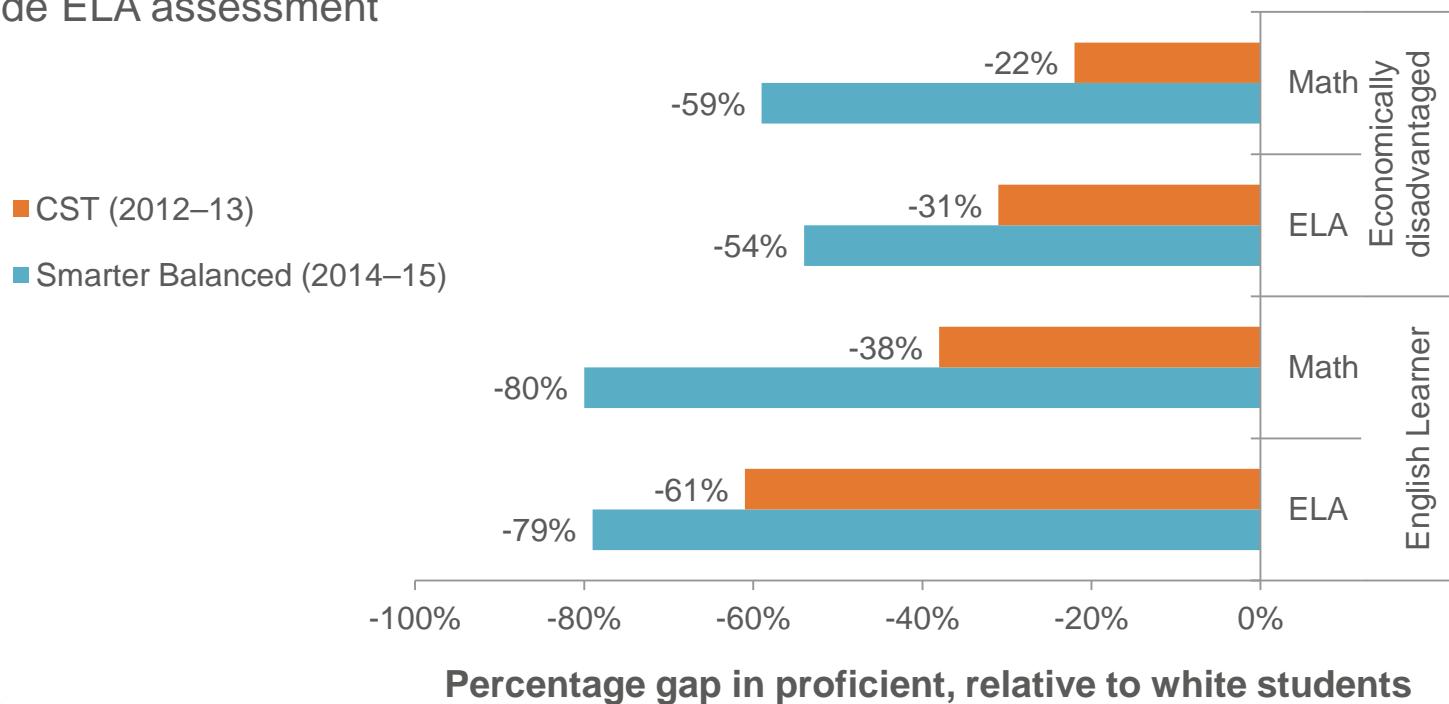
As expected, fewer students “met the standard”

4th-grade ELA test results



Achievement gaps are larger on the SBAC

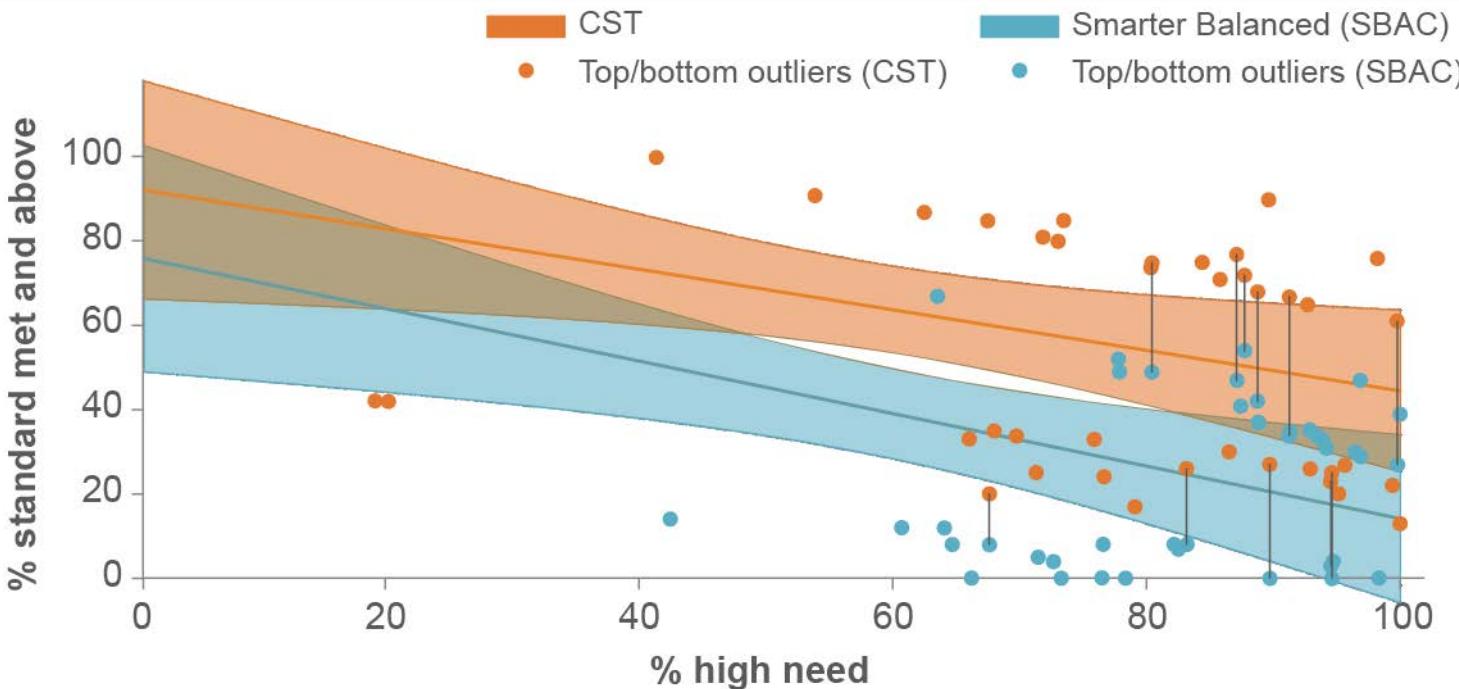
4th-grade ELA assessment



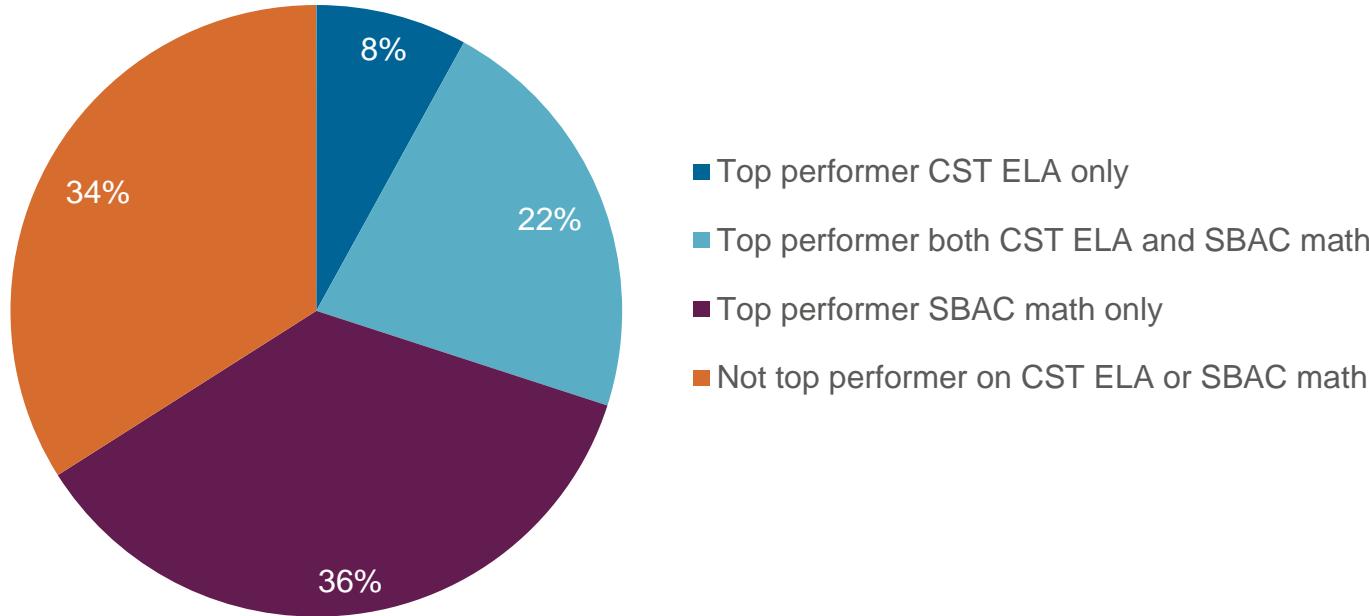
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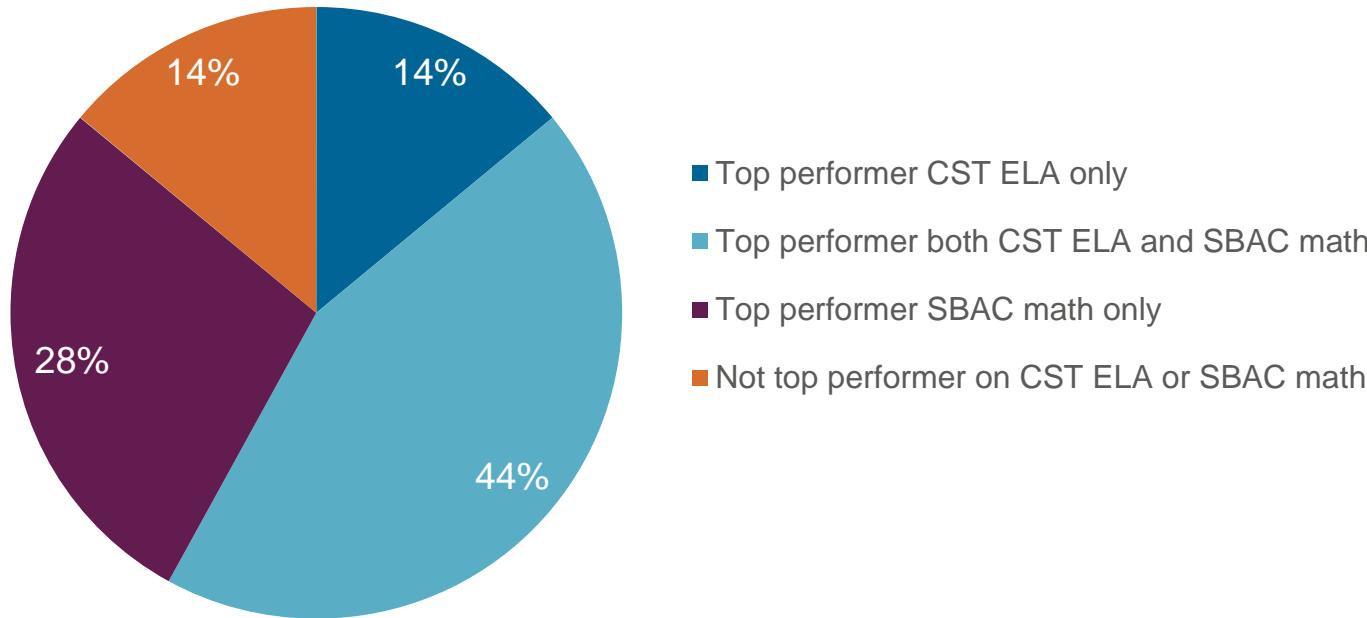
In districts with more high-need students, smaller shares meet or exceed test standards



In districts with top-50 SBAC scores for economically disadvantaged students, results varied on other tests



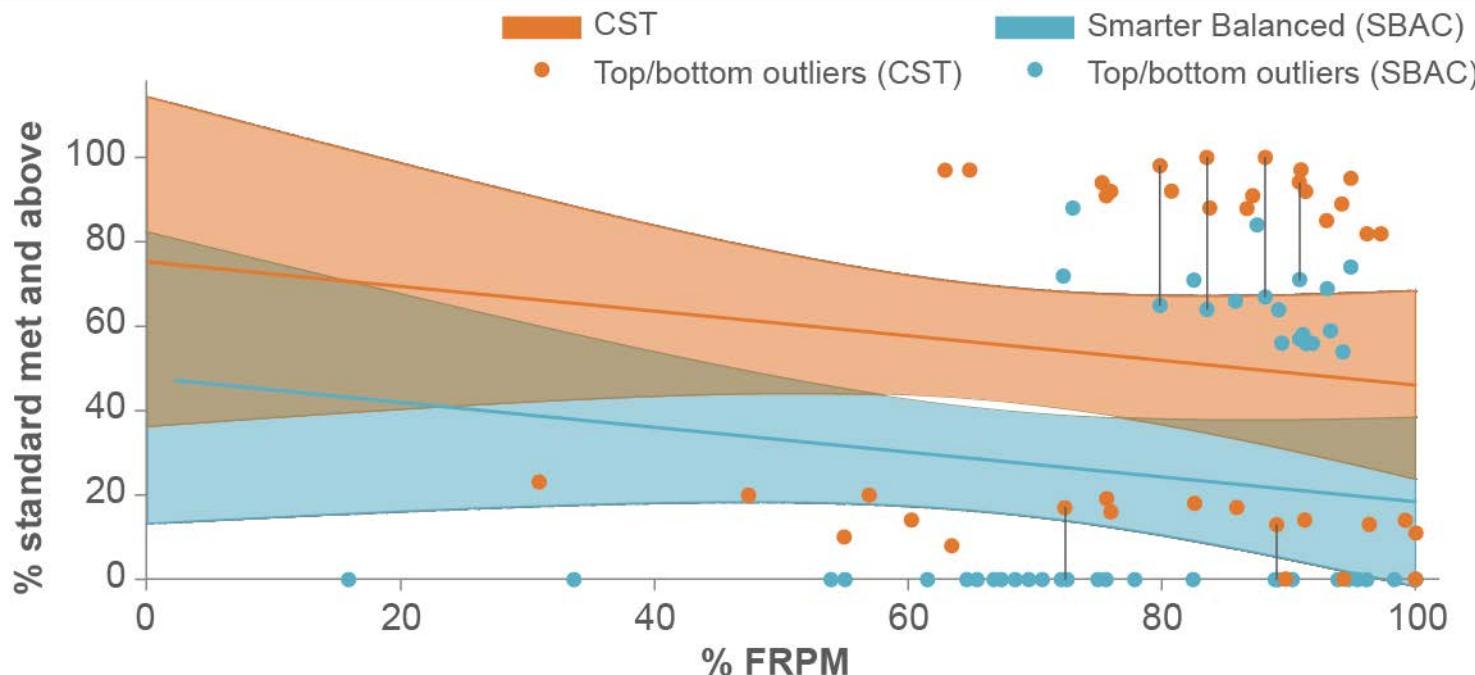
Test results also varied for English Learners in top-50 SBAC districts



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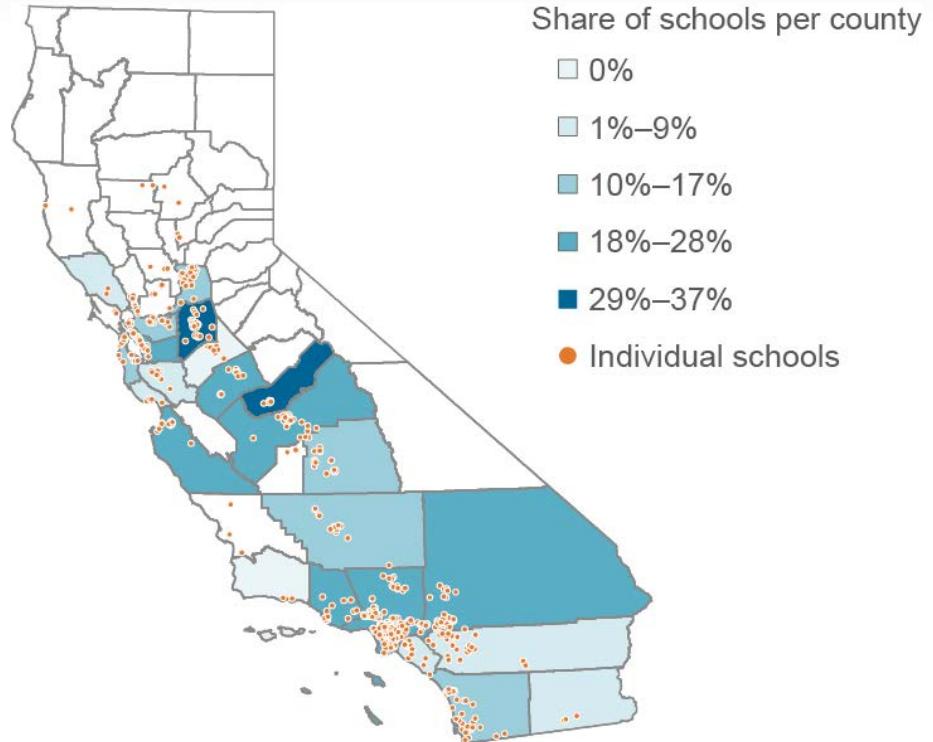
Economically disadvantaged students' test scores decline as school share increases



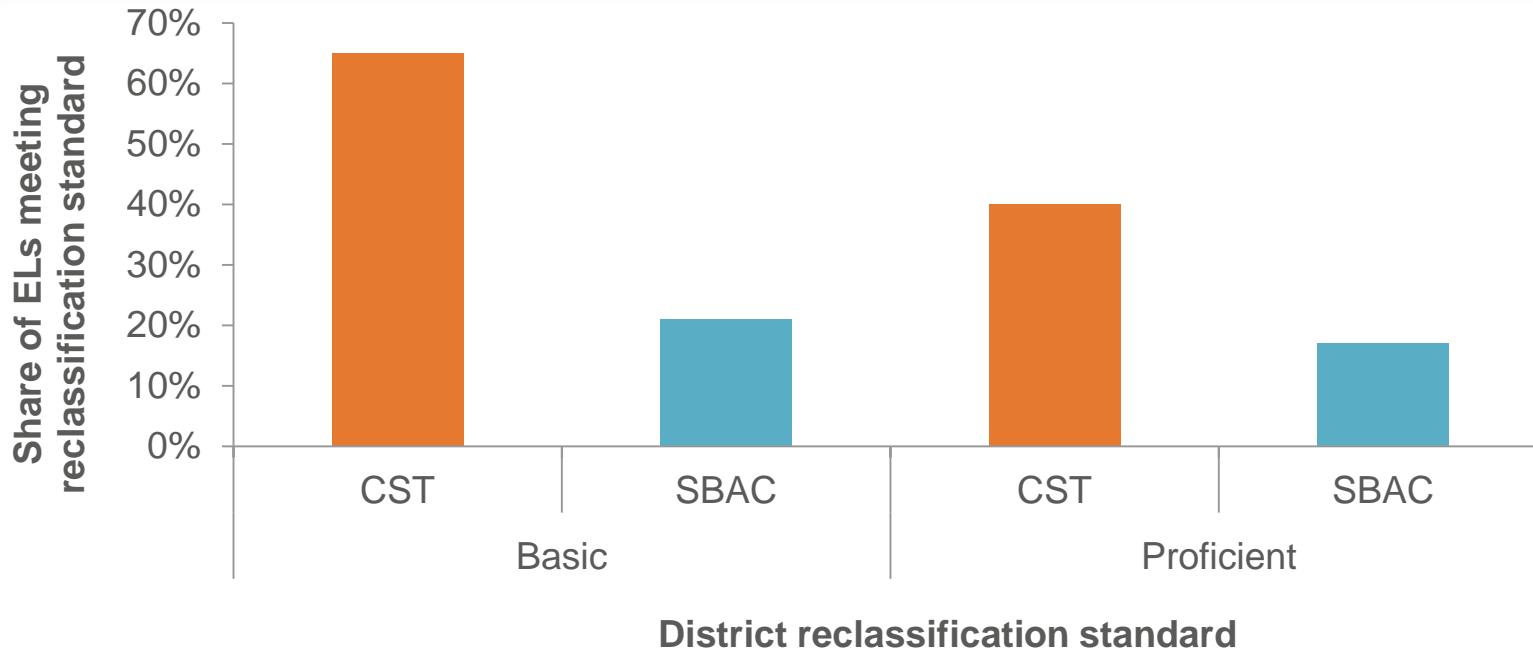
Schools where ELs most exceed expectations on SBAC and CST

SBAC				CST			
County	School	Met Standard (%)	Expected to Meet Standard (%)	County	School	Met Standard (%)	Expected to Meet Standard (%)
Los Angeles	Newhall Elementary	52	6	Fresno	Pacific Union Elementary	87	24
San Diego	Sherman Elementary	49	6	Sonoma	Robert L. Stevens Elementary	96	27
Santa Barbara	Sanchez (David J.) Elementary	28	4	Contra Costa	Montalvin Manor Elementary	85	28
Orange	Finley Elementary	48	6	Riverside	Martin Van Buren Elementary	75	25
Orange	Jessie Hayden Elementary	49	7	San Diego	Lauderbach (J. Calvin) Elementary	65	22

At hundreds of schools, no 4th-grade ELs met the ELA standard



Fewer 4th-grade ELs met district reclassification standards on the SBAC ELA



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Implications

- Some districts and schools have had success with EL and economically disadvantaged students
 - Some on both SBAC and CST
- In many schools and some districts, no ELs “met the standard”
 - Potential for huge impact on EL population
 - Time to rethink reclassification standards
- State could provide guidance to districts
 - Technical assistance from county offices, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence
 - CORE as an example

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.

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College Prep for All

Will San Diego Students Meet Challenging New Graduation Requirements?

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Julian R. Betts, Sam M. Young, Andrew C. Zau,
and Karen Volz Bachofer



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San Diego and other districts are expanding access to college prep coursework

- President Obama has called for US high schools to prepare all students for college and career
- In California, the ACLU has urged many large districts to expand access to “a–g” coursework needed to apply to CSU and UC
- San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) decided in 2012 to make a–g coursework a graduation **requirement**
- Several other major districts have adopted similar policies
 - Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose

Outline

- New a–g graduation requirements
- a–g course-taking
- Projected UC/CSU eligibility and graduation rates
- Policy implications

The a–g course sequence

- 15 year-long courses in 7 subject areas
 - a: History/Social studies (2 years)
 - b: English Language Arts (4 years)
 - c: Mathematics (3 years)
 - d: Laboratory sciences (2 years)
 - e: World languages (2 years)
 - f: Visual and performing arts (1 year)
 - g: College-preparatory elective (1 year)

SDUSD and others allow lower a–g grades

- In San Diego and other districts, students with grades of D or higher on a–g coursework can graduate
- UC and CSU require grades of C or higher on a–g coursework
- The districts' goal is to expose all students to college prep without creating undue barriers to graduation

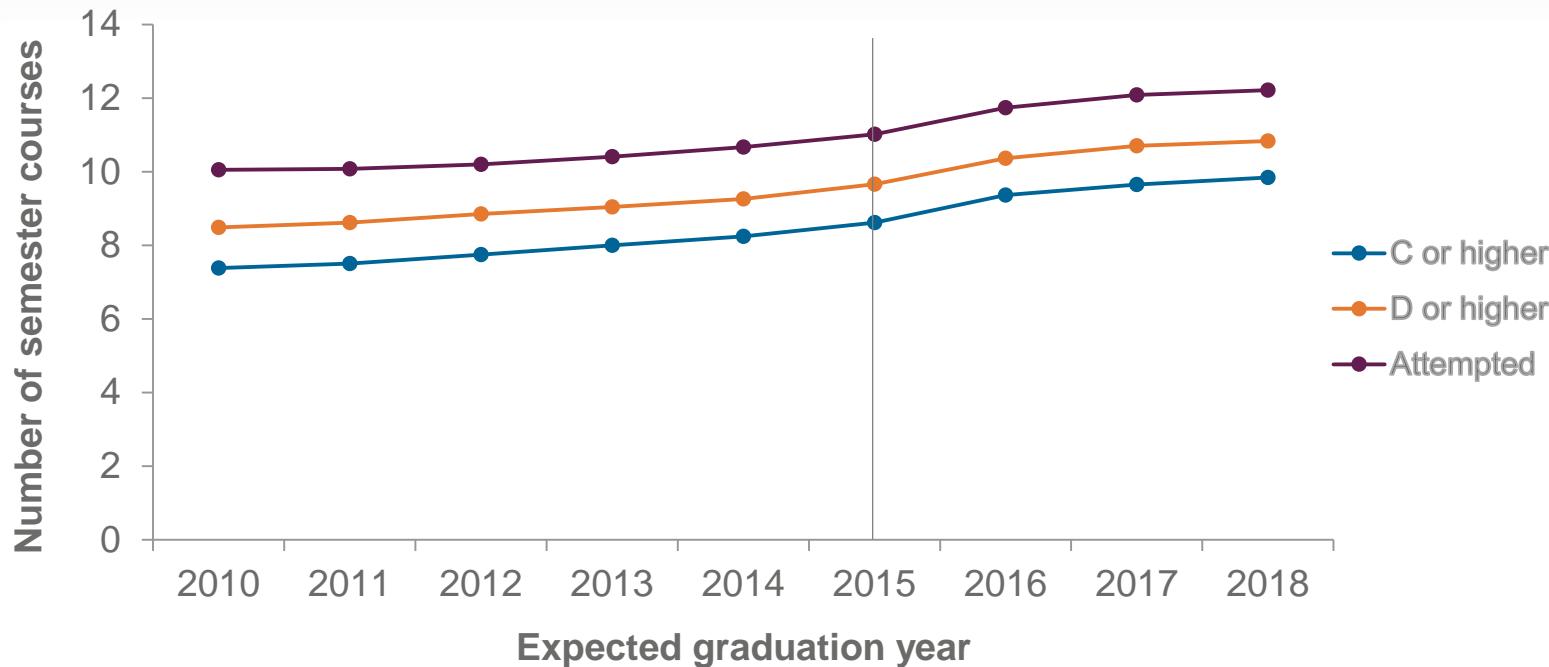
Some districts allow students to opt out

- San Jose Unified implemented a–g in 2002 but students could opt out
 - Very little change a decade later in share of graduates completing a–g with grades of C or higher
- Oakland Unified also has an opt-out provision
- San Francisco and Los Angeles are closer to San Diego in making a–g a grad **requirement**

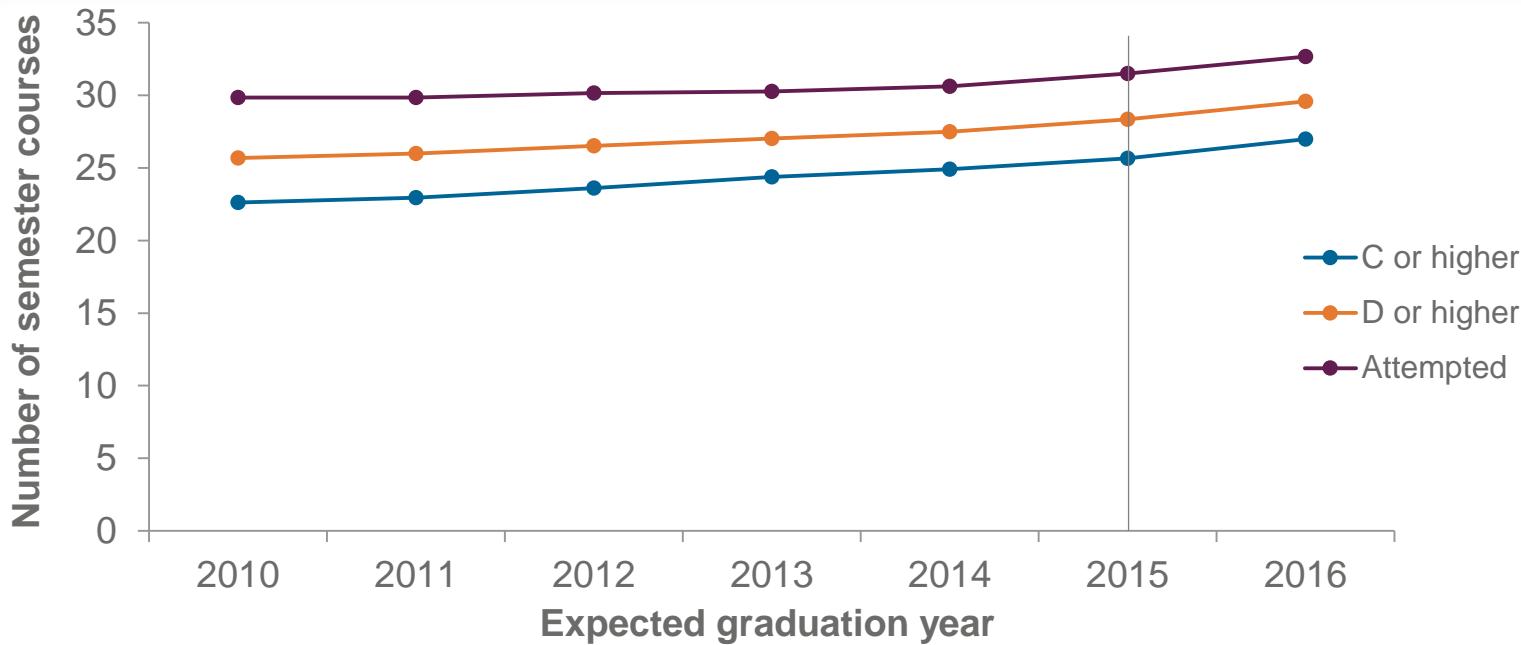
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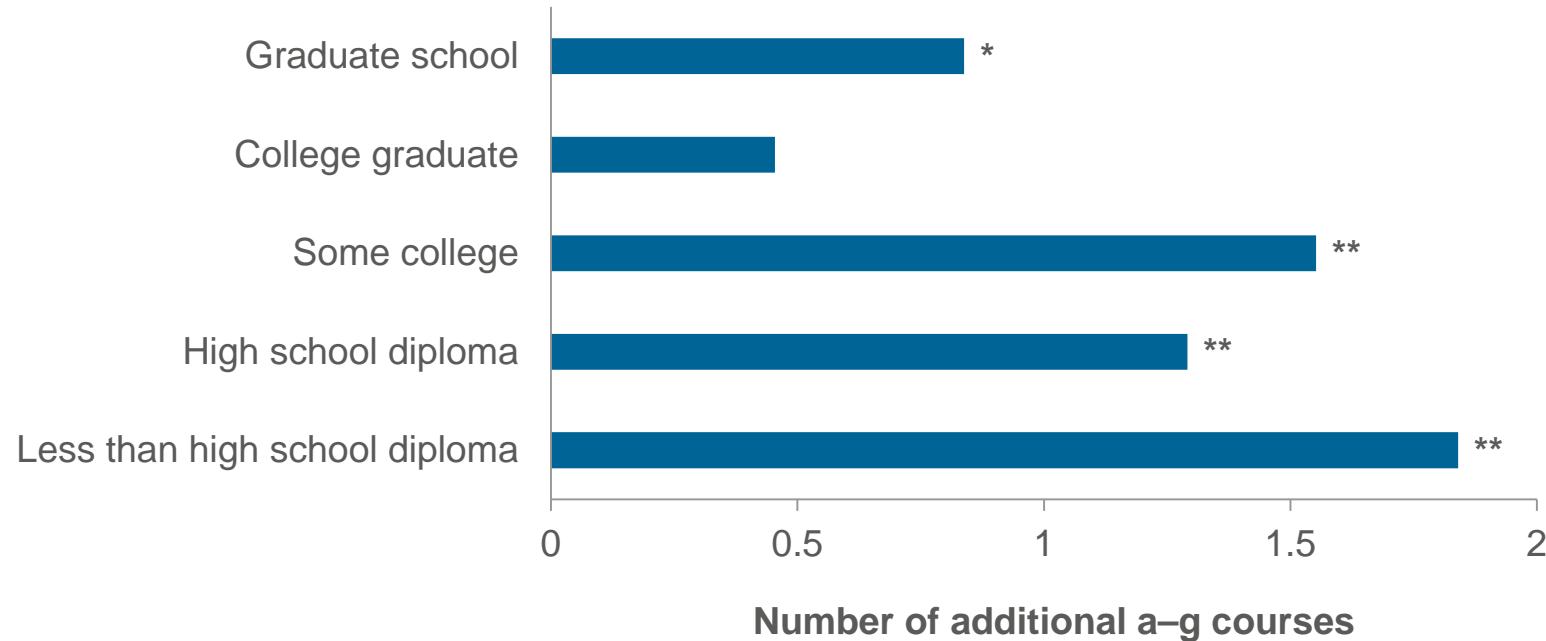
More a–g courses are being taken by the end of grade 9



a–g course-taking by end of grade 11 has also risen



Course-taking has increased most among students whose parents have less education



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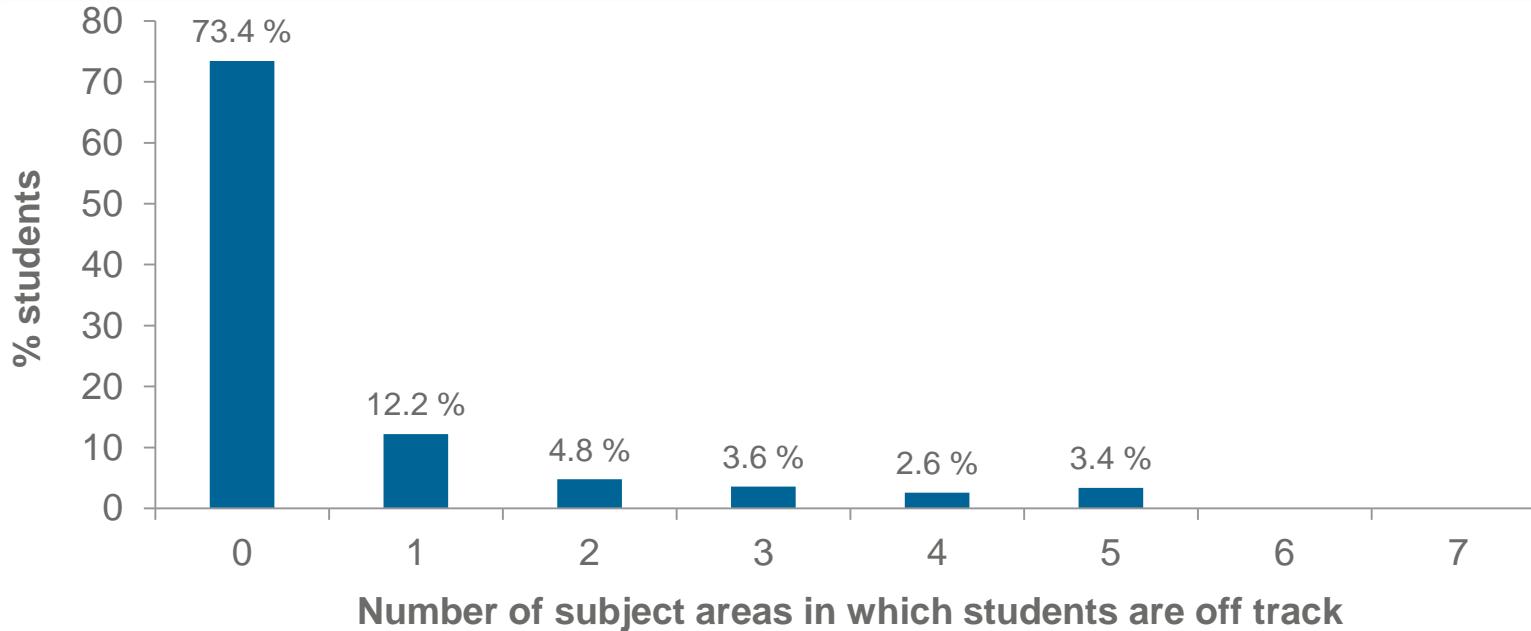
More SDUSD students are on track to meet UC/CSU course requirements . . .

- 59% of students in the class of 2016 are on track to complete the a–g requirements with grades of C or higher
- Could be a 10 percentage point gain in eligibility for UC/CSU

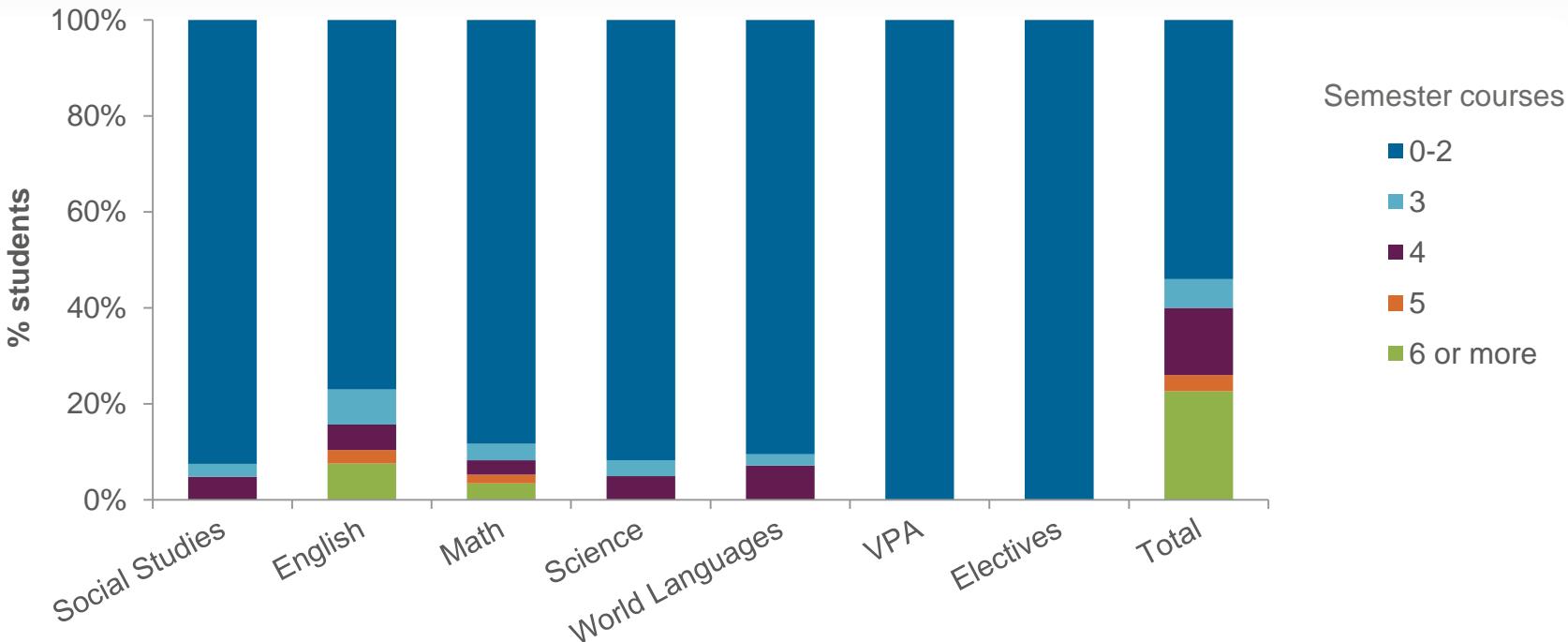
... but SDUSD graduation rates may drop in 2016

- If all SDUSD students take and pass all a–g courses in 2015–16, 73% will complete a–g with D or higher
 - An additional 1% may complete a–g but not have the required cumulative GPA of 2.0
- Represents a 15.5% drop from June 2014

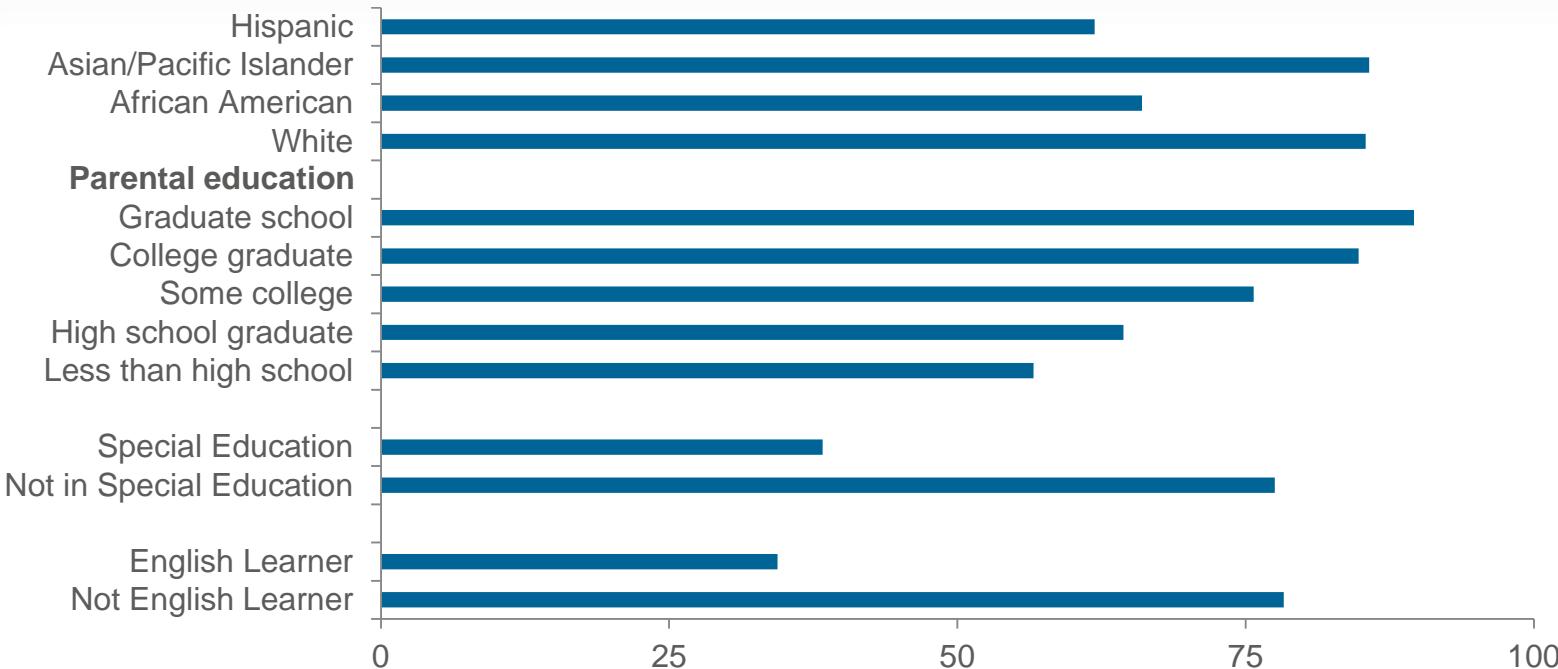
Some students are more than a year behind in two or more a–g subject areas



English, math, and world languages are the greatest barriers



For the class of 2016, a–g completion varies across groups



LAUSD graduation rates are also likely to fall; SFUSD fared better

- In LAUSD, the graduation rate is likely to drop from 74% to 63% or lower
 - As of fall 2015, only 54% of seniors were on track to graduate
- In SFUSD, the graduation rate was 83.9% for the first class subject to the new requirements; it was 81.7% the year before

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Districts supports can help

- SDUSD has implemented two remedial tools
 - Summer school
 - Online credit recovery classes that are a–g certified
- SDUSD has also implemented a preventive tool
 - Ensuring access to world language courses at all middle schools
- SFUSD has made extensive use of credit recovery courses
- LAUSD has invested in online credit recovery courses and other supports

Intervention and early support are key

- An aggressive program to re-enroll non-graduating seniors for fall 2016 would be useful
- More preventive programs are probably needed
 - Schools can identify and support at-risk students in middle school or even earlier
 - Early supports for English Learners in both English and math are crucial

College prep for all is a worthy but difficult goal

- Watershed moment for San Diego Unified
- Policy was designed to increase equality of opportunity but...
- An a–g graduation requirement can hurt at least as many students as it helps
- Districts need to marshal resources to provide student support in high school—and also much earlier

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