



# High-Need Students and California's New Assessments

Laura Hill | Iwunze Ugo

Supported with funding from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

## Summary

The 2014–15 school year was the first in which the Smarter Balanced assessments (referred to here as the SBAC) were administered statewide. While educators and policymakers agree that multiple measures over multiple years are the best way to gauge student, school, and district performance, the first-year SBAC results provide an important baseline for assessing implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

These results may also have implications for the evolution of accountability measures at the district and state levels—especially in relation to high-need students. The California State Board of Education has not yet devised a replacement for the Academic Performance Index (API), which was suspended in the 2014–15 school year. Districts have developed goals and measures in their LCAPs but the rubrics that state and the county offices of education will use are not yet in place. In the meantime, a close look at the results of the first year of testing can help us track achievement gaps between student groups and identify districts and schools with the largest tasks ahead.

One of the major goals of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is to help districts address a long-standing achievement gap between high-need students—economically disadvantaged students and English Learners (ELs)—and other students. However, we find that the test score gap is larger for 4th-grade EL and economically disadvantaged students when measured with the SBAC than with the state's prior assessment (the California Standards Test, or CST). Generally speaking, as the share of high-need students in a district or school increases, the proportion of students meeting the standards falls. However, when we compare results across demographically similar schools and districts, we find that some schools performed better than expected.

Results for English Learners are particularly useful for local and state policymakers as they implement new EL standards and consider how to revise reclassification standards. Notably, in a relatively large number of schools, no EL students scored at or above the standards for English language arts (ELA) and math. In the past, 30 percent of districts required ELs to meet the ELA standard on the CST to be reclassified.

Our main conclusion is that high-need students are far behind other student groups—indeed, they may be farther behind than we thought. Schools and districts can use this analysis to take stock of their implementation of the Common Core and their progress toward their LCAP goals for EL and economically disadvantaged students. And schools and districts with large gaps—especially those performing below expectations—can find examples of similar districts and schools that exceeded expectations.

## First-Year Results Indicate a Wider Test Score Gap

The much anticipated first-year Smarter Balanced assessment (SBAC) test results were largely unsurprising: a smaller share of California students scored at or above the benchmark for the new Common Core State Standards (CDE 2015; EdSource 2015). However, the results for English Learner and economically disadvantaged students suggest that high-need students are further behind than educators may have thought.

The overall outcome was widely anticipated, and California is not alone—many other states that are implementing the Common Core standards and new assessments saw lower shares meeting their new standards than their old standards (Butrymowicz and Felton 2015; Harris 2015). There are many reasons for the lower scores: the new standards being taught changed and are being implemented unevenly across school districts (Warren and Murphy 2014; McLaughlin, Glaab and Carrasco 2014, Harrington 2016); the definition of having met the standards changed; and the testing method changed (London and Warren 2015).<sup>1</sup> While it is true that these assessments are in many ways not comparable (indeed, legislation passed in 2013 prohibits the CDE and local education agencies from doing so),<sup>2</sup> it is useful to understand which districts and schools are doing consistently well on both tests, and whether districts doing well on the SBAC English language arts (ELA) also do well on the SBAC math.

### Defining High-Need Students

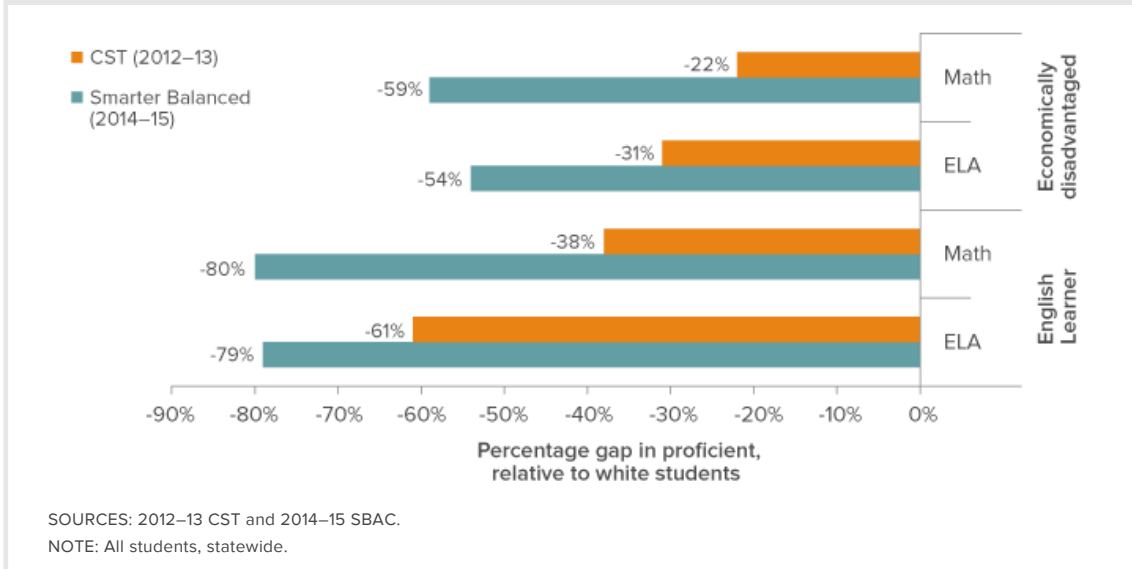
**English Learner (EL):** A student whose first language is not English who is deemed without sufficiently fluent academic English to succeed unsupported in classroom settings. EL students receive English Language Development instruction until their academic English improves and they are reclassified.

**Economically disadvantaged:** A student who qualifies for free or reduced-price school meals.

**High-need:** A student who is either an EL, economically disadvantaged, or foster youth. High-need students generate extra funding for their school district (or school, in the case of charter schools) through the Local Control Funding Formula. In this report, we do not disaggregate test scores for foster youth.

However, the drop in scores was particularly pronounced among high-need students. For example, only 12 percent of 4th-grade ELs met the SBAC ELA standard, compared to 30 percent the last time the CST was administered. Similarly, 26 percent of economically disadvantaged 4th graders met the SBAC standard, while more than half (53%) met the standard the last time the CST was administered (2012–13). As a result, the test score gaps between high-need students and white students are larger on the SBAC than they were on CST for both math and ELA (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> In particular, the gap in math between EL students and white students was 80 percent on the SBAC, compared to 38 percent on the CST—in other words, the share of EL students who met the standard for the SBAC was 80 percent lower than the share of white students who met those standards. For the ELA test, the SBAC score gap was 79 percent, rather than 61 percent on the CST. These gaps were larger for EL students than any other group. Gaps between economically disadvantaged students and white students are larger as well. For math, the gap between economically disadvantaged students and white students was 59 percent on the SBAC and 22 percent on the CST. For the ELA test, the gap was 54 percent on the SBAC and 31 percent on the CST.

**Figure 1. Achievement gaps among 4th graders are larger on the SBAC than on the CST**



Not only are these gaps larger in the first year of SBAC testing, but the ELA gaps for English Learner and economically disadvantaged students are now similar to the math gaps whereas previously the gaps were larger for ELA. This is not entirely unexpected: educators were expecting that some students would find math especially challenging because Common Core math requires more ELA proficiency than California’s old standards.<sup>4</sup> But it does suggest that, as measured in the first year of the SBAC, high-need students have farther to go—perhaps further than the old standards and assessments indicated.

### Tracking Score Gaps Across Tests

**CST:** California Standards Test. Implemented in 1998 to accompany new statewide standards and administered until the 2012–13 school year.

**SBAC:** Assessments developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to assess student progress toward meeting the Common Core State Standards. These standardized tests were administered to students statewide for the first time in 2014–15 school year. California adopted the Common Core standards in 2010, but did not require implementation until 2013–14.

**Scaled score:** Number of correct answers (raw score) converted to a standardized and consistent score. For 4th graders on the SBAC ELA assessment, the scaled score ranges from 2,131 to 2,663. Scaled score ranges correspond to achievement levels (for example, scores from 2,416 to 2,472 correspond to a level called “standard nearly met”).

**Meeting the standard:** The benchmark for meeting the standard varies by grade and subject matter. For 4th graders on the ELA portion of the SBAC, the scaled score must be at least 2473.

**Test score gap:** The percentage difference between the share meeting the standard for two student groups. For example, if 10 percent of group A and 15 percent of group B met the standard, the test score gap for group A is 50 percent. Said another way, group A’s scores are 50 percent lower than those of group B.

To better understand the test score gap, we explored the relationship between the share of students who are high-need in a district (or school) and the share of EL and economically disadvantaged students who met the SBAC standards. We explored the same relationship with the CST in order to identify the largest gaps for high-need students with SBAC and whether they are the same districts and schools with low scores on the CST. Before the SBAC results were released, there were cautions issued against comparing the test results. As we've already noted, the SBAC test assesses students according to different (arguably more difficult) standards that are in the early phases of implementation, and the test itself is very different. However, highlighting the districts and schools that have done well with both tests may prove useful for districts and schools looking to improve their results. Similarly, districts and schools that did well with the CST but are now struggling with the SBAC may need to change course.

We focus on English language arts results in the 4th grade both because early test scores have proven useful in predicting later educational outcomes (see an example in [Zau and Betts 2008](#)) and because so many English Learners are reclassified at this grade level ([Hill, Weston, and Hayes 2014](#)). The decision to move students out of EL status, which has historically depended heavily on scores on the ELA portion of the CST, has important implications for long-term student success. We include comparable findings for math in the appendix.

### Assessing Test Scores at the District Level

In school districts with higher percentages of high-need students, smaller shares of students meet or exceed either the new Common Core standards as measured by the SBAC, or the old standards as measured by the CST. This is why the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) directs more funding (on a per pupil basis) to districts with a higher proportion of high-need students ([Rose and Weston 2013](#)). Along with the extra funding, districts have more spending flexibility. But they also have more responsibility for improving all student outcomes and closing achievement gaps for EL, economically disadvantaged, and other students.

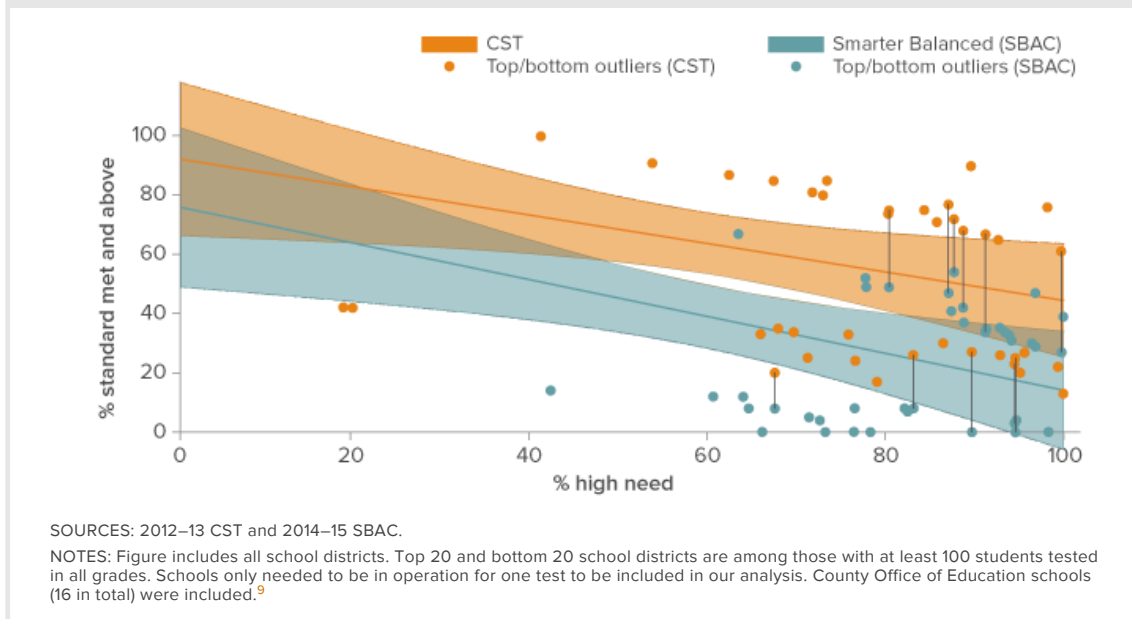
District-designed accountability plans (known as LCAPs) include a variety of measures, including test scores. These plans are meant to help local stakeholders assess school and district progress, but the accountability mechanism is not yet clear. Policymakers at the state level are designing a replacement for the state's old accountability metric (the API), but what it will include is still uncertain. While the SBAC is just one measure of academic achievement, it is an important one and will likely be a part of the state's new accountability measure.

The solid diagonal lines in Figure 2 illustrate the relationship between the share of high-need students and the share meeting the standards at school districts, with orange for the CST and teal for the SBAC.<sup>5</sup> We find a statistically measurable difference in the strength of the relationship between SBAC and CST scores and the district-wide percentage of high-need students. This is additional evidence that many districts—particularly those serving large high-need populations—had a difficult time adjusting to the new standards.

In Figure 2, the curved lines provide a sense of how this relationship varied across districts.<sup>6</sup> The lines indicate the upper and lower bounds for the shares of 4th graders who met the ELA standard in 68 percent of demographically similar school districts.<sup>7</sup> Overall, the scores were lower in districts with larger shares of high-need students, but in some districts student performance was either better or worse than expected, based on the shares of high-need students.<sup>8</sup> The orange dots (for the CST) and the teal dots (for the SBAC) represent the 20 school districts that were furthest above or below expectations—these dots are mostly outside the curved lines.

These findings are important for districts that are performing below expectations for two reasons. First, these districts may not be aware of how far below average their high-need students are; and second, struggling districts may be able to learn from districts that are outperforming expectations.

**Figure 2. In some districts, ELA results for high-need 4th graders are better—or worse—than expected**



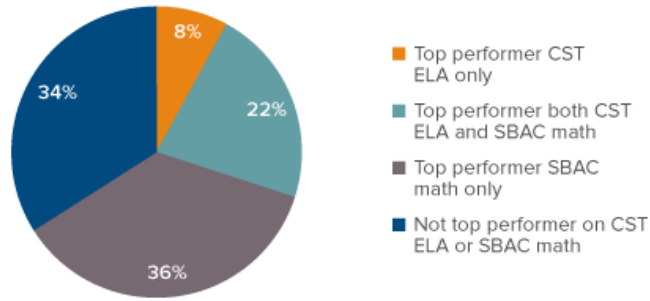
In some districts, high-need students performed similarly on both tests. In Figure 2, we indicate that a district that is a top-20 performer on both the CST and the SBAC with a line that connects its test score dots. This shows that even in top performing school districts, a much lower share of students met the standard on the new test. Six of the top 20 districts on the CST also performed in the top 20 on the SBAC. Five of the bottom 20 districts on the CST were also in the bottom 20 for on SBAC.<sup>10</sup>

We further explore the relationship in performance across the two tests, still focusing on high-need students, but analyzing the results separately for EL and economically disadvantaged students, both of which are treated separately in LCAPs and accountability measures.

#### ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

We find among the top 50 districts for SBAC ELA performance for economically disadvantaged students, 30 percent of these districts were also top performers on the CST ELA.<sup>11</sup> Nearly one-third of districts that exceeded expectations under the old standards are doing much better than expected with the new standards, as measured by these tests. Fifty-eight percent of districts in which economically disadvantaged students did well on the ELA portion of the SBAC were also likely to have good results on the math portion of the SBAC. More than a fifth (22%) of districts with good ELA results were also top performers on the CST ELA—as well as in SBAC math. At the other end of the spectrum, we found that 38 percent of districts among the lowest 50 performers were also at the bottom on the CST ELA. More than half of the districts with performance that was worse than expected on the SBAC ELA also fared poorly on the SBAC math (52%).

**Figure 3. The 50 districts with the highest ELA scores on the Smarter Balanced for economically disadvantaged 4th graders had varying results on other tests**



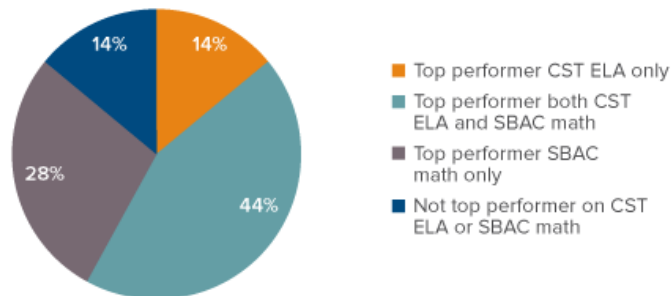
SOURCES: 2012–13 CST and 2014–15 SBAC.

NOTES: Top 50 districts are among those with at least 100 students tested in all grades. Schools only needed to be in operation for one test to be included in our analysis. County Office of Education schools (16 in total) were included.

### ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS

To better understand the SBAC performance of EL students at the district level, we explored the degree to which districts with relatively high English Learner performance on the SBAC ELA overlap with top performers on other exams. Overall, 58 percent of the high-performing districts on the SBAC were also top performers on the CST ELA.<sup>12</sup> Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of the 50 top performing districts on the SBAC ELA were also top performers on the SBAC math. More than two-fifths (44 percent) of districts that were high performers on the ELA portion were also high performers on the CST ELA and in SBAC math. Among the 50 districts in which the EL population performed much worse than expected, 38 percent also underperformed on the CST ELA and 54 percent were underperformers on the SBAC math test.<sup>13</sup> In 20 school districts, no 4th-grade EL students scored at or above the state standard on the ELA assessment. This means that many students will fall short of the standards for reclassification—as recently as 2012–13, 30 percent of school districts required scores of “proficient” on the CST in order for ELs to be reclassified (Hill, Weston, and Hayes 2014). Our finding implies that 4 percent of school districts would have no students eligible for reclassification based on that cut-off. In other words, some school districts have a great deal of work to do to improve EL student outcomes.

**Figure 4. The 50 districts with the highest ELA scores on the Smarter Balanced for English Learner 4th graders had varying results on other tests**



SOURCES: 2012–13 CST and 2014–15 SBAC.

NOTES: Top 50 districts are among those with at least 100 students tested in all grades. Schools only needed to be in operation for one test to be included in our analysis. County Office of Education schools (16 in total) were included.

Despite differences in standards, assessments, testing methods, and benchmarks for meeting the standards, there is some overlap between high-performing districts on the SBAC and CST. However, more than half of high-performing districts on the SBAC were not high performing on the

CST.<sup>14</sup> And for many districts, what worked well in the past does not appear to be working as well now. Future research could help low-performing high-need districts understand how other districts with similar shares of high-need students managed to exceed expectations.

## Assessing Test Performance at the School Level

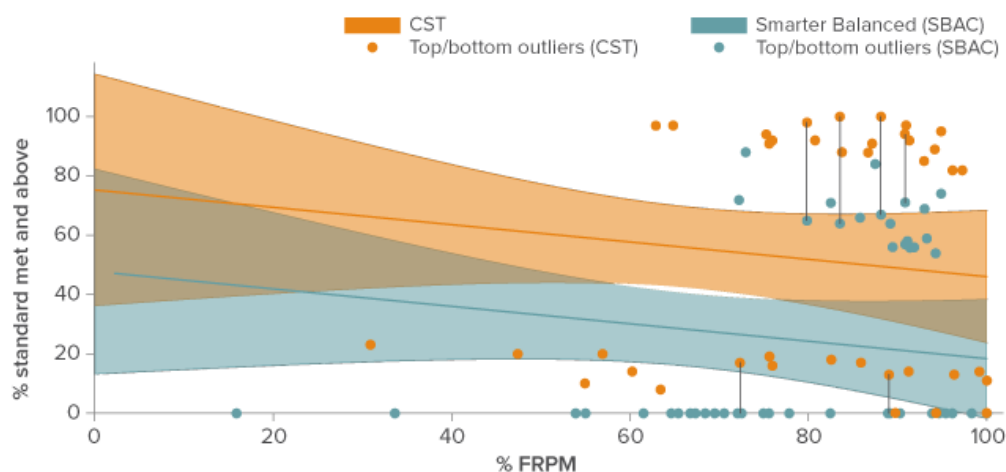
LCFF dollars flow to districts, and districts have both the responsibility and opportunity for improving all student outcomes and closing achievement gaps for students at their district schools. Annual results from the Smarter Balanced assessments should help districts evaluate progress toward those LCAP goals that rely on SBAC scores and evaluate whether their LCFF funding is being directed toward students and schools in the most beneficial manner. Here, we examine the performance of economically disadvantaged students and EL students at schools throughout the state.<sup>15</sup> As with the district analysis, we focus on English language arts results for 4th graders. We find that as the share of economically disadvantaged or EL students increases at a school, those students exhibit lower test scores, on average, and we examine the performance of EL and economically disadvantaged students separately at their schools.

### ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Our analysis of school-level test results indicates that as the share of economically disadvantaged students in a school increases, the share of those students scoring at or above the level of the standard falls on both the CST and the SBAC. In Figure 5, this is illustrated with the solid, downward trending line. As we did at the district level, we find that some schools exceed or fall far below expectations. Because districts are responsible for improving educational outcomes, it is important to identify the schools that may need the most help. These struggling schools may benefit from the experience of schools that are faring relatively well on the SBAC.<sup>16</sup>

Four of the 20 schools in which economically disadvantaged students scored better than expected on the SBAC were also in the top 20 performers on the CST.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, three of the 20 schools with scores that were much worse than expected on the SBAC were also low performers on the CST.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 5. In some schools, ELA results for economically disadvantaged 4th graders are better—or worse—than expected**



SOURCES: 2012–13 CST and 2014–15 SBAC.

NOTES: Figure includes all schools. Top 20 and bottom 20 schools are among those with at least 100 students tested in all grades. Schools only needed to be in operation for one test to be included in our analysis. County Office of Education schools (16 in total) were included.

When we compare the results from top and bottom performing schools on the SBAC ELA to their experiences with the CST, we find that 26 of the top 100 SBAC performers were also among the 100 schools that exceeded expectations on the CST the most. Almost half (47%) of the top performing

schools on the ELA portion of the SBAC were also top performers on the math portion. At the other end of the spectrum, we find that 18 of the bottom 100 performing schools were also among the bottom performers on the CST. Just 29 percent were on the bottom-performing lists for both the SBAC ELA and math tests.<sup>19</sup>

#### ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS

EL students are the least likely of all student groups to meet the state standards as measured by the SBAC—only 12 percent of 4th-grade ELs did so in the first year of testing. This means that in hundreds of schools, no EL students are meeting the state ELA standard. In Table 1, we list the schools with EL test scores in the top 20 on the SBAC (on the left) and the CST (on the right). Only three schools (Brentwood Academy in Ravenswood City Elementary School District, Otay Elementary in Chula Vista, and Robert Louis Stevenson in Wright Elementary School District) are top performers on both the CST and SBAC. (These schools are highlighted in the table.)

The biggest overachiever in terms of EL scores on the SBAC was Newhall Elementary in Newhall School District. Based on the school's demographic profile, 6 percent of EL students would have been expected to meet or exceed the state ELA standard, but 52 percent actually did so.



**Table 1. Three schools had top 20 results for 4th-grade ELs on both the 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
Los Angeles	Kipp Raices Academy	69	10	San Diego	Kimball	66	23
Orange	A. J. Cook Elementary	63	9	San Diego	Edison Elementary	65	23
Orange	Willmore Elementary	40	6	Orange	Morningside Elementary	73	26
San Diego	Rosa Parks Elementary	28	5	San Mateo	Spruce Elementary	61	22
Sonoma	Robert L. Stevens Elementary	56	9	San Mateo	Brentwood Academy	60	21
Los Angeles	Mildred B. Janson Elementary	61	11	Orange	Demille Elementary	63	22
San Francisco	Lau (Gordon J.) Elementary	34	6	Santa Clara	Curtner Elementary	87	31
San Diego	Otay Elementary	36	7	Los Angeles	John Marshall Elementary	72	26
Orange	Handy Elementary	36	7	Orange	Centralia Elementary	71	26
San Francisco	Ulloa Elementary	52	10	Los Angeles	Furgeson (Venn W.) Elementary	57	21
San Mateo	Brentwood Academy	26	5	San Diego	Otay Elementary	63	24
San Diego	Baker Elementary	34	7	Los Angeles	Dr. J. Michael McGrath Elementary	72	27
Orange	Fryberger Elementary	45	9	Orange	Landell (Margaret) Elementary	93	36
Los Angeles	Mark Keppel Elementary	61	12	Los Angeles	Felton Elementary	61	24
Orange	Oak View Elementary	17	3	Santa Clara	Ida Jew Academies	74	29

SOURCES: 2012–13 CST and 2014–15 SBAC.

NOTES: Schools that were top performers on both the SBAC and the CST are shaded in teal for the SBAC, orange for the CST. Only schools where at least 100 ELs were tested in all grades are included in the table. Schools only needed to be in operation for one test to be included in our analysis. County Office of Education schools (16 in total) were included. Table is sorted by the percentage difference between the expected and actual score.

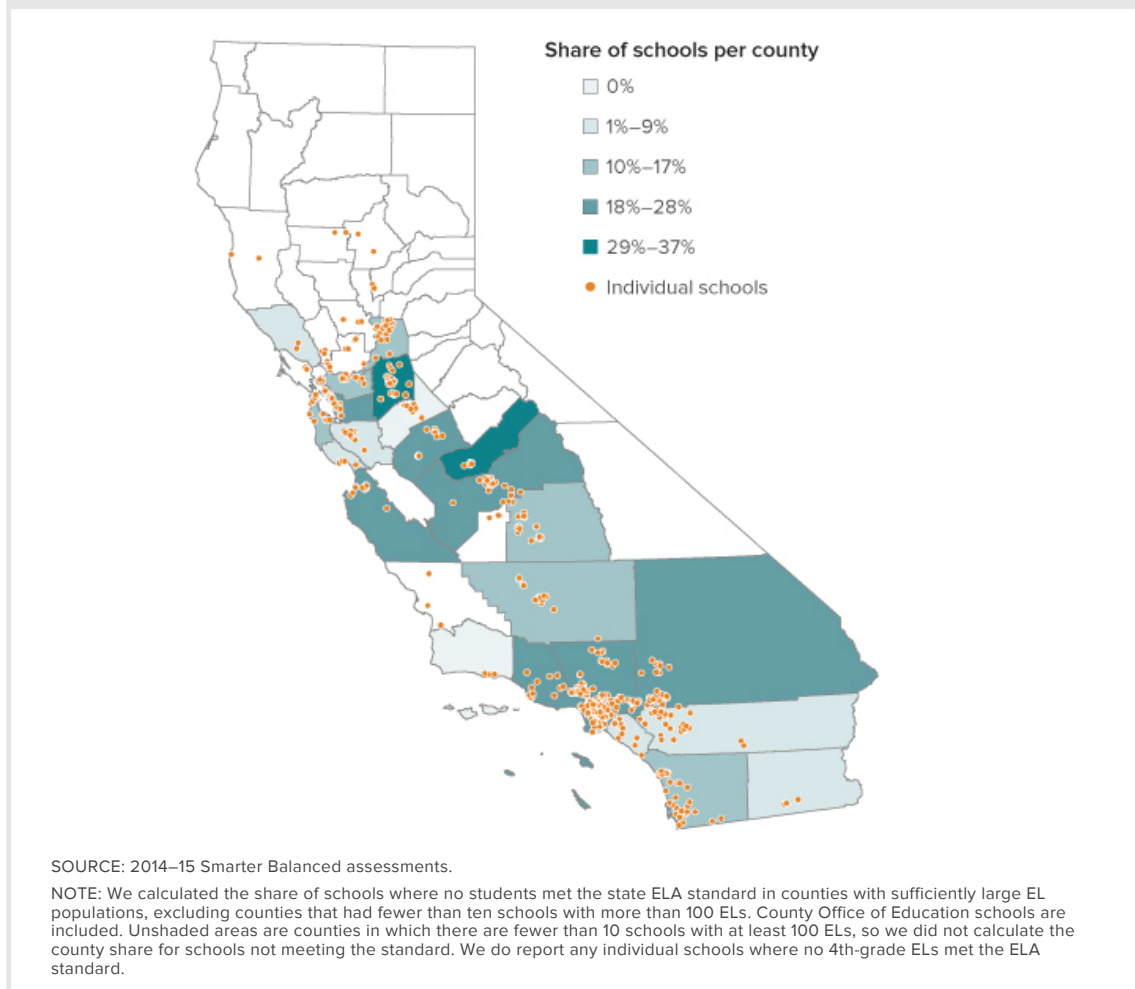
Four of the top 20 performers are in Westminster School District in Orange County, two are in San Diego Unified School District, and two are in San Francisco Unified School District.

Of the 1,653 schools with at least 100 EL students taking the SBAC, 273 (or 17%) had no 4th-grade EL students who met the ELA standards. The shares of EL students in these schools ranged from about 25 percent to 84 percent. We found no relationship between EL test scores (as opposed to

the percentage who met the standard) and shares of EL students at these schools. Mean ELA scaled scores for ELs in these schools range from 2,307 to 2,396 (out of 2,663 possible points) at the lowest achievement level (“Standard Not Met”). When we include all schools with enough tested ELs (10 or more) to have their scores reported by CDE, we find that in 740 out of 3,464 schools (21%), no 4th-grade ELs who met the state ELA standard; in 748 of these schools, no ELs met the math standard.

The schools with no EL students meeting the SBAC standards are distributed across the state (Figure 6). In counties with at least 10 schools that administered tests to 100 or more ELs, the shares of schools in which no 4th-grade ELs met the state ELA standard are indicated by shading.

**Figure 6. At hundreds of schools, no 4th-grade ELs met the state ELA standard**



In more than 30 percent of the schools in Madera and San Joaquin Counties that administered tests to 100 or more EL students, no ELs met the SBAC standards. The district with the largest number of schools in which no EL students met the ELA standards is Los Angeles Unified School District: in 182 of the 343 schools with more than 100 EL students, no students met the standards. There were 21 such schools in Oakland Unified (out of 34); and there were 31 schools (out of 45) with 100 or more ELs in which no ELs met the standards in Fresno Unified, 22 (out of 31) in Stockton, and 12 (out of 25) in Ontario Montclair.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, 30 percent of SBAC high-performing schools and 17 percent of SBAC low-performing schools are similarly ranked for the CST. In addition, there is a high degree of overlap in over-performers on the SBAC ELA and math tests (53%).<sup>21</sup> However, there is much less overlap—just 8 percent—in the bottom performing lists for both ELA and math.

While there are some schools with high concentrations of successful EL students, many more are falling far short—in more than 700 schools, no tested EL students met the state standard. It will be important for these schools to find ways to help their EL students master the standards, especially because scores on the SBAC are likely to be an important criterion by which EL students will be evaluated for reclassification.

## Policy Implications

With the advent of the Common Core standards and the SBAC assessments, the bar for “meeting the standard” is clearly higher. The first-year test results indicate that English Learners and economically disadvantaged students have the most ground to cover. However, in some districts and schools these students performed relatively well, including some whose students performed well on the CST, but also some in which students did not.

As California’s new accountability framework is being developed, educators at the district and school levels have a unique and important opportunity to examine their performance, and to learn from schools and districts that are having more success with the SBAC. The state should play a role in facilitating this process; the CORE districts’ peer matching program may prove to be a useful model. The CORE districts, a collection of 10 districts representing more than one million students, pair “schools of distinction” with demographically similar low-performing schools to encourage collaboration between their teachers and administrators. The State Board of Education could also facilitate research and encourage or require the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and the county offices of education to enlist peer schools to provide technical assistance to struggling districts and schools.<sup>22</sup>

There is strong evidence that English Learner students have the farthest to go in meeting the new standards. In the past, the state ELA test was a critical factor in reclassification decisions. If this carries over to the new reclassification policy, the SBAC may become a large barrier to reclassification for many EL students. State policymakers should consider the findings we have presented when implementing the new EL standards and deciding how EL students will be reclassified.

Accountability in California is still evolving—there are many questions about the LCAP, the LCAP rubrics, the state replacement for the Academic Performance Index (API), and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). But, however these questions are resolved, the goal of the LCFF is clear: to improve outcomes for all students and close achievement gaps for high-need students. The first-year SBAC results provide an important call to action for districts and schools that are struggling to educate high-need students.

---

## NOTES

1. While California students’ CST scores improved, analyses of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress suggest that on average, California student scores did not continue to improve on that test. Analyses that controlled for the demographic composition of states did not improve California’s ranking, but did improve the ranking for other states with large EL populations such as Texas and Florida (Chingos 2015).
2. EdCode 60641(a)(2).
3. While some economically disadvantaged students are white students, we use white students as the reference category to calculate test score gaps for both EL and economically disadvantaged students. Statewide, 57 percent of 4th-grade white students met the standards on the SBAC exam, while the average for 4th-grade students overall was 39 percent (CDE 2015).
4. A recent news article suggests that math scores may also be relatively low because while the standards for math were adopted in 2010, the State Board did not provide a list of recommended math materials for grades K–8 until 2014 (Harrington 2016).
5. The R-squared values for the regressions of the share of students meeting the standards on the share of high-need students at a district are high for both the SBAC and the CST at 0.69 and 0.59 respectively. Coefficient values are -62.6 for the SBAC and -48.3 for the CST.
6. Here we calculate expected scores (share meeting the standard) with a simple linear regression of shares meeting standard on shares of high-need students in order to compare districts with similar demographics. Those districts most exceeding their expected share meeting the standard are high performers, those falling most short are low performers.

7. Sixty-eight percent is one standard deviation, assuming a normal distribution. Bounds are tightest closer to the state average for the share of high-need students because we have more school districts that fall into those categories than into either extremely high or low shares of high-need students.
8. Prior research has shown when identifying either high- or low-performing districts or schools, there is a great deal of sensitivity to the performance measure(s) being used, the way school characteristics are controlled, and the year of measurement (see Abe et al 2015 for a good description).
9. A separate analysis excluded County Office of Education (COE) schools, and we found a very slight difference in the strength of the relationship between the share of high-need students and the percent of students meeting the state standard (the coefficient for the SBAC test changed from -62.6 with the COE schools to -62.1 without them).
10. The top performers are: Los Nietos School District (Los Angeles County), Oro Grande Elementary School District (San Bernardino County), Valle Lindo Elementary School District (Los Angeles County), Garvey Elementary School District (Los Angeles County), Wright Elementary School District (Sonoma County), and Rosemead Elementary School District (Los Angeles County). The bottom performers are: Loleta Union Elementary School District (Humboldt County), Butte COE (Butte County), Raisin City Elementary School District (Fresno County), Maricopa Unified. (Kern County), Los Angeles County Office of Education (Los Angeles County).
11. We list the 50 districts in which test performance was better and worse than expected for low-income students on the SBAC (based on the shares of low-income students enrolled in each district) in technical appendix Table A1.
12. We list the 50 districts in which EL student SBAC scores are better and worse than expected (based on their shares of EL students) in technical appendix Table A2.
13. Technical appendix Tables B1 and B2 present the 50 districts that are top and bottom district performers on 4th-grade math for both low-income and EL students.
14. We find that there was the most movement of district scores from the old to the new test among schools that were in the middle of the distribution for the share of high-need students, with a 70% lower share meeting the standards as measured by the SBAC in comparison to the CST. Districts with both low and high percentages of high-need students were more likely to have smaller changes in the share of students meeting the standards when comparing the SBAC and the CST (approximately a 50% lower share). Results available from the authors on request.
15. An earlier PPIC report found a great deal of variation in the share of high-need students across schools within school districts (Hill and Ugo 2015). Further, there is an important line of research inquiry that endeavors to understand the role of schools in their student outcomes (see Konstantopoulos (2005) for a discussion).
16. Technical appendix Table A3 lists the 100 schools most exceeding and most falling short of expectations on the SBAC.
17. Top performing schools on both assessments are Kipp Raices Academy (Los Angeles Unified), Sanger Academy (Sanger Unified), and John Yehall Elementary (San Francisco Unified), and Robert L. Stevens Elementary (Wright Elementary School District).
18. Bottom performing schools on both assessments are Xinaxcalmecac Academy (Los Angeles Unified), Pescadero Elementary and Middle (San Mateo), and Mission Education Center (San Francisco Unified).
19. [Technical appendix Table B3](#) shows math results.
20. In [technical appendix Table A4](#), we list the 100 schools where test scores are better and worse than expected for English Learner students on the SBAC based on the share of students who are English Learner in the school.
21. See technical appendix Table B4.
22. The California Collaborative for Education Excellence is a state commission tasked with providing advice and assistance to districts in implementing their LCAPs.

---

## REFERENCES

- Abe, Yasuyo, Vincent Chan, Coby Meyers, R. Dean Gerdeman, W. Christopher Brandt. 2015. "How Methodology Decisions Affect the Variability of Schools Identified as Beating the Odds." IES National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance and Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.
- Butrymowicz, Sarah, and Emmanuel Felton. August 15, 2015. "The surprising initial results from a new Common Core Exam," Hechinger Report.
- California Department of Education. September 9, 2015. "State Schools Chief Torlakson Calls First Year of CAASPP Results California's Starting Point Toward Goal of Career and College Readiness." California Department of Education News Release #15-69.
- California Department of Education. 2015. CAASPP Research Files for Online Assessments.
- Chingos, Matthew. 2015. "Breaking the Curve: Promises and Pitfalls of Using NAEP Data to Assess the State Role in Student Achievement." Urban Institute.
- Harrington, Theresa. 2016. "Districts' Leaders Anticipate Higher Math Scores This Year." EdSource.
- Harrington, Theresa, and Sarah Tully. 2015. California Smarter Balanced Assessment Results: Spring 2015. EdSource.
- Harris, Elizabeth A. 2015. "Test Scores Decline as New Jersey Aligns Exams with Common Core." *New York Times*, October 20.
- Hill, Laura, and Iwunze Ugo. 2015. *Implementing California's School Funding Formula: Will High-Need Students Benefit?* Public Policy Institute of California.

Hill, Laura E., Margaret Weston, and Joseph M. Hayes. 2014. *Reclassification of English Learner Students in California*. Public Policy Institute of California.

Konstantopoulos, Spyros. 2005. "Trends of School Effects on Student Achievement: Evidence from NLS:72, HSB:82, and NELS:92." IZA Discussion Paper Series, No 1749.

London, Rebecca, and Paul Warren 2015. "Why Students Found the New Tests Tough." Public Policy Institute of California blog.

McLaughlin, Milbrey, Laura Glaab, Isabel Hilliger Carrasco. 2014. *Implementing Common Core State Standards in California: A Report from the Field*. Stanford University and PACE.

Rose, Heather, and Margaret Weston. 2012. *California School District Revenue and Student Poverty: Moving Toward a Weighted Pupil Funding Formula*. Public Policy Institute of California.

Warren, Paul, and Patrick Murphy. April 2014. "Implementing the Common Core State Standards in California." Public Policy Institute of California.

Zau, Andy, and Julian Betts. 2008. *Predicting Success, Preventing Failure: An Investigation of the California High School Exit Exam*. Public Policy Institute of California.

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank Rebecca London, Niu Gao, Lynette Ubois, Matt Taylor, and Bruce Fuller for their thoughtful reviews and Mary Severance, Kate Reber, and Jenny Miyasaki for editorial support. We also thank Paul Warren for many helpful conversations! Any errors are our own.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Laura Hill** is a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. Her areas of expertise are K–12 education and immigration. She is currently researching English Learners in California schools, the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, and undocumented immigrants and health insurance. Her recent publications examine the link between language reclassification policies and student success, and access to the health care safety net in California. Prior to joining PPIC, she was a research associate at the SPHERE Institute and a National Institute of Aging postdoctoral fellow. She holds a PhD in demography and an MA in economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Iwunze Ugo** is a research associate at the Public Policy Institute of California. His work focuses on K–12 education. Previously, he studied adolescent health and changes in education spending following the passage of Proposition 13. He holds a BA in economics and mathematics, with a minor in statistical science, from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

---

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Implementing California's School Funding Formula: Will High-Need Students Benefit?  
Implementing Local Accountability in California's Schools: The First Year of Planning  
California's Future: K-12 Education



© 2016 Public Policy Institute of California

The Public Policy Institute of California is dedicated to informing and improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research. PPIC is a public charity. It does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

Short sections of text, not to exceed three paragraphs, may be quoted without written permission provided that full attribution is given to the source.

Research publications reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or board of directors of the Public Policy Institute of California.

#### **PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA**

500 Washington Street, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
T 415 291 4400 F 415 291 4401

#### **PPIC SACRAMENTO CENTER**

Senator Office Building  
1121 L Street, Suite 801  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
T 916 440 1120 F 916 440 1121

[ppic.org](http://ppic.org)