



# California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Questions and Answers

## What is the CAHSEE?

State law, enacted in 1999, authorized the development of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), which students in California public schools would have to pass to earn a high school diploma. All California public school students must satisfy the CAHSEE requirement, as well as all other state and local requirements, in order to receive a high school diploma. The CAHSEE requirement can be satisfied by passing the exam or, for students with disabilities, receiving a local waiver pursuant to *Education Code* Section 60851(c).

The purpose of the CAHSEE is to improve student achievement in high school and to help ensure that students who graduate from high school can demonstrate grade-level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics.

## What subjects does the CAHSEE Cover?

The CAHSEE consists of two parts: English–language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Test questions address California content standards that a High School Exit Examination Standards Panel, appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, determined students should know to graduate from high school.

### *English–Language Arts*

The ELA part of the exam, which addresses state ELA content standards through grade ten, has a reading section and a writing section. The reading section covers vocabulary, informational reading, and literary reading. This section includes approximately 50 percent literary texts and 50 percent informational texts. The writing section covers writing strategies, applications, and conventions. The ELA part of the exam consists of 79 multiple-choice questions (seven of which are field test items and are not scored) as well as a writing task (essay) in which students are asked to respond to a specific topic or a literary or informational passage.

### *Mathematics*

The mathematics part of the CAHSEE addresses state mathematics content standards in grades six and seven and the first part of Algebra. It includes statistics, data analysis and probability, number sense, measurement and geometry, algebra and functions, mathematical reasoning, and Algebra I. Students must demonstrate computational skills and a foundation in arithmetic, including working with decimals, fractions, and percentages.

The math part of the exam is composed of 92 multiple-choice questions (twelve of which are field test items and are not scored)

The CAHSEE blueprints provide more information on the content of the exam and are available on the California Department of Education (CDE) CAHSEE Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/resources.asp>.

In order to pass the CAHSEE, a scale score of 350 or higher is required on each part. Students do not need to pass both parts of the CAHSEE during the same administration in order to satisfy the CAHSEE requirement.

### **Are there any waivers of the requirement to pass the CAHSEE?**

For certain students with disabilities, a waiver of the CAHSEE requirement may be available.

*Education Code* Section 60851(c) permits local school boards to grant a waiver of the CAHSEE requirement to students with disabilities who take the CAHSEE using modifications and receive the equivalent of a passing score.

At the request of the student's parent or guardian, a school principal must submit to the local school governing board a request for a waiver of the requirement to pass the part(s) of the CAHSEE on which a modification was used and the equivalent of a passing score was earned. For the local board to waive the CAHSEE requirement, the principal must certify that the student has met the following conditions:

1. An individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan is in place that requires the accommodations or modifications to be provided to the student when taking the CAHSEE.
2. The student has either satisfactorily completed or is in progress towards completing high school level curriculum sufficient to have attained the skills and knowledge otherwise needed to pass the CAHSEE.
3. The student has an individual score report showing that the student has received the equivalent of a passing score on the CAHSEE while using a modification.

### **What is done to assist students with disabilities when taking the CAHSEE?**

CAHSEE regulations specify accommodations and modifications that students with disabilities must be permitted to use if specified in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan for use on the CAHSEE, standardized testing, or for use during classroom instruction and assessments. An accommodation is a change in the testing environment or process that does not alter what the CAHSEE measures or affect the comparability of scores, whereas a modification is a change that fundamentally alters what the CAHSEE measures or affects the comparability of scores.

Students who use an accommodation and earn a score of 350 or higher have passed that part of the CAHSEE. Students who use a modification and earn the equivalent of a

passing score on one or both parts of the CAHSEE have not passed but may be eligible for a waiver of the CAHSEE requirement (as described above).

### **What is done to assist English learners when taking the CAHSEE?**

English learners must be permitted to take the CAHSEE with certain test variations if used regularly in the classroom. For example, if regularly used in the classroom, English learners must be permitted to hear the test directions in their primary language or use a translation glossary.

Students who are English learners are required to take the CAHSEE in grade ten with all other grade ten students. During their first 24 months in a California school, English learners are to receive six months of instruction in reading, writing, and comprehension in English (*Education Code* Section 60852). During this time, they are still required to take the CAHSEE.

### **When do parents and guardians receive their student's CAHSEE results?**

About seven weeks after each administration of the exam, school districts receive two copies of the CAHSEE Student and Parent Report for each student who took the examination. When school districts receive these reports, they are to immediately distribute one copy to parents and guardians and place the other copy in the student's permanent record.

### **Do parents and guardians need to keep a copy of their student's results?**

Yes. It is important that parents and guardians keep a copy of the student score report for their own records. The CDE does not keep a copy of individual student score reports. Individual student scores are to be maintained by the student's school district. The school district must ensure the records are maintained confidentially. (*Education Code* Section 49073 and *Title 20 United States Code* Section 1232[g].)

### **How many opportunities do students have to pass the CAHSEE?**

All students are required to take the CAHSEE for the first time in grade ten. Students who do not pass one or both parts of the exam in grade ten have up to two opportunities in grade eleven and at least three and up to five opportunities in grade twelve to retake the part(s) of the exam not yet passed. The CAHSEE testing schedule for the 2008–09 school year is posted on the CDE CAHSEE Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/admin.asp>. School districts select their testing dates from this schedule.

### **What happens if students do not pass the CAHSEE?**

School districts are required to provide additional instruction to assist students who do not pass the exam. Students, including English learners, who have not passed one or both parts of the CAHSEE by the end of grade twelve, are entitled to receive intensive instruction and services for up to two consecutive academic years after completion of grade twelve or until they pass both parts of the CAHSEE, whichever comes first.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact their child's school for information on the programs offered.

**Is the CAHSEE used for school and school district accountability purposes?**

Yes. The state and federal governments use the CAHSEE as a measure of school and school district accountability. The state accountability program is the Public Schools Accountability Act, and the federal accountability program is the No Child Left Behind Act. The use of CAHSEE results for these accountability programs in no way affects how the CAHSEE is used for individual student accountability.

**How can parents and guardians get their questions answered about the CAHSEE?**

Additional CAHSEE information is available on the CDE CAHSEE Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/>. Parents and guardians should direct their questions to their child's teachers or contact the school principal or counselor.