

What Middle School Teachers and Administrators Need to Know About the CAHSEE

Although the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) will not be administered to students until they are in grade ten, it is crucial that their teachers and administrators recognize and help students who are potentially at risk of not passing the examination. Students in grades 7-12 who do not demonstrate sufficient progress towards passing the exit examination must be offered supplemental instructional programs (*Education Code* Section 37252). To effectively address these concerns, teachers and administrators need to be familiar with the CAHSEE. The questions and answers that follow provide middle school teachers with information they need to help students prepare for this graduation requirement.

What is the CAHSEE?

The CAHSEE is an examination all California public school students must pass to receive their high school diploma. Students also must meet all other state and local requirements to receive a diploma.

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 are on the CAHSEE?

The CAHSEE has two parts: English-language arts and mathematics. The English-language arts portion assesses the knowledge and skills of state-adopted English-language arts content standards through grade ten, which includes reading and writing. The reading portion covers:

- Vocabulary
- Informational reading
- Literary reading

The writing section covers:

- Writing strategies
- Writing applications
- Writing conventions

The mathematics part of the CAHSEE assesses the knowledge and skills of state-adopted mathematics content standards for grades six and seven and Algebra 1. The mathematics portion covers:

- Statistics, data analysis, and probability
- Number sense
- Measurement and geometry
- Algebra and functions
- Mathematical reasoning
- Algebra 1

Students must demonstrate mastery of computational skills and show a foundation in arithmetic, which includes working with decimals, fractions, and percentages.

What types and how many questions are on the exam?

The English-language arts part of the exam includes 79 multiple-choice questions and a writing task. The writing task requires students to write a biographical composition, an informational or persuasive essay on a specific topic, or a response to a literary or informational passage.

The mathematics part of the exam includes 92 multiple-choice questions.

When do students take the CAHSEE?

The CAHSEE is first administered at the school site to all grade ten students during regular school hours. The English-language arts portion is administered on the first day of testing, and

the mathematics part is administered on the second day of testing.

What content on the CAHSEE is covered in middle school?

Although most of the standards addressed on the English-language arts portion of the CAHSEE are taught at the high school level, the content taught in middle school includes foundational skills needed to learn the content described in the high school standards for English-language arts.

The majority of questions on the mathematics part of the exam measure knowledge and skills of content standards for grades six and seven and Algebra 1.

How can teachers identify the foundational knowledge and skills middle school students need to learn?

All of the state content standards covered on the CAHSEE are listed in the CAHSEE blueprints. The blueprints include the number of test questions (items) on the CAHSEE for each subject tested and show which standards are being addressed by strand.

A thorough understanding of the California content standards covered on the CAHSEE and the test questions addressing them can help teachers focus their instruction on specific foundational skills students need to learn. This information also can help teachers and administrators identify at-risk students and better prepare them for the examination.

The CAHSEE blueprints for English-language arts and mathematics are available on the CAHSEE Resources Web page at: <http://go.usa.gov/x9gYc>.

Are there any resources to help middle school teachers prepare students for the CAHSEE?

The following resources are available for teachers:

Teacher Guides: The California Department of Education (CDE) has produced teacher guides for the CAHSEE in English-language arts and mathematics. These guides summarize the essential knowledge and skills covered in each strand of the state's content standards, followed by information and examples of how these standards may be tested on the CAHSEE.

Released Test Questions: Sample CAHSEE test questions from previous administrations of the CAHSEE for English-language arts and mathematics are available for teachers to download. These items provide examples of the type of questions on the CAHSEE, and how they address the standards.

The CAHSEE teacher guides and released test questions are located on the CAHSEE Resources Web page at:
<http://go.usa.gov/x9gYc>.

How can teachers prepare middle school students for the CAHSEE?

The best way teachers can prepare middle school students for the CAHSEE is to cover grade-appropriate content standards during regular classroom instruction. Teachers should monitor the levels at which their middle school students perform on standards-based assignments and assessments to determine areas of strength and specific areas that need improvement. Areas that need improvement should be emphasized whenever possible. Teachers should consider further support to

meet the needs of students who perform below or far below basic on the California Standards Tests.

How can middle school teachers address the needs of students with disabilities and English learners?

Teachers can use previous test data, classroom achievement, and teacher recommendations to determine the skill level and learning needs of students with disabilities or English learners. Students with disabilities and English learners then can be enrolled in specialized programs that target their individual needs.

Students with disabilities may use test variations, accommodations, and/or modifications for classroom instruction or to take the CAHSEE, as specified in their individualized education programs (IEPs) or 504 plans. English learners also may use specified variations for instruction or testing. Allowable assistance for students with disabilities is listed in *Matrix 1. Matrix of Test Variations Accommodations, and Modifications for Administration of California Statewide Assessments*. Allowable assistance for English learners is listed in *Matrix 2. Matrix of Test Variations for Administration of California Statewide Assessment for English learners*. Both documents are available on the CAHSEE Accommodations and Modifications Web page <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/accomod.asp>.

For more information about the CAHSEE

Visit the CAHSEE Web site at
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/>

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*Information for
Middle School Teachers
and Administrators*



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