

Academic Indicators



On the California School Dashboard (Dashboard), districts and schools that serve students in grades three through eight and grade eleven receive two Academic Indicators: one for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and one for mathematics. Student performance on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments and the California Alternate Assessments (CAAs) are used to determine the results for these indicators. Each Academic Indicator is calculated using two components: Distance from Standard (DFS) and a participation rate. The sections below describe these in detail.

Distance from Standard

The DFS is the distance between a student's score on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments and the Standard Met Achievement Level threshold (i.e., the lowest threshold scale score for Level 3). The scale score ranges for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments vary by content area—ELA and mathematics—and by grade level.

For the CAAs, the California Department of Education (CDE) has created a crosswalk to convert levels of the CAAs to correspond with levels on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Students who obtain a score that places them in Level 1 for the CAAs will be assigned the highest Level 1 score for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Likewise, students who obtain a CAA score that places them in Level 2 will be assigned the highest Level 2 score for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Students who obtain a CAA score that places them in Level 3 will be assigned the highest Level 3 score for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. This new Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments score will be used to calculate the DFS.

Participation Rate

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), all states must test at least 95 percent of their students. If they fail to meet this target, California is required to assign a Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS) to each student needed to bring the participation rate of the school, district, and/or student group to 95 percent. The LOSS assigned to each of these students who did not test will be used in calculating the DFS.

For further details, please refer to the [CDE Academic Indicator Participation Rate Calculation for the Dashboard flyer](#).

Calculating Current Year Data

Status for the 2024 Academic Indicators will be calculated using a two-step process:

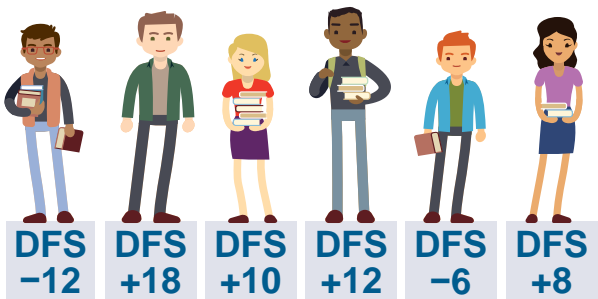
- **Step 1:** Calculate the DFS for each student.

Examples:

A third grade student receives an ELA score of 2420. The student has a DFS of -12 because their score is 12 points below the lowest possible score for the Standard Met level (Level 3), which is 2432.



- **Step 2:** Calculate the average DFS for a school or district using all students' DFS values.*



$$\frac{-12 + 18 + 10 + 12 - 6 + 8}{6} = 5^{**} \text{ points}$$

*The average DFS calculation will also include the assignment of LOSS scores only if the federal 95 percent participation rate target is not met.

**The average DFS (e.g., five points) for each indicator is used to determine the Status level.

Comparing Current and Prior Year Data

We compare current and prior year data to determine whether a school or district made improvement (i.e., had a higher DFS in 2024 than it did in 2023) or did worse (i.e., had a lower DFS in 2024).

Current year Status (2023–24)	Minus	Prior year Status (2022–23)
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Taken together—current year data and its comparison with prior year data—a Performance Level, or color, is given. Access the flyer about How Dashboard Colors are Determined on the [CDE Dashboard Communications Toolkit web page](#) for further information.

For more information, please visit the [CDE California School Dashboard and System of Support web page](#).

Contact the Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division by email at dashboard@cde.ca.gov.

