

ELA, Math, and Science Indicators Participation Rate Calculation for the Dashboard



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires all states to test at least 95 percent of all students and student groups in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics (math). It also requires states to factor the participation rate into their accountability systems, which, for California, are the ELA and Math Indicators. The ELA and Math Indicators are based on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments and the California Alternate Assessments (CAAs) for ELA and Mathematics. Though there is no federal requirement to test at least 95 percent of all students on the California Science Test (CAST) or the CAA for Science, the California State Board of Education (SBE) chose to enact a minimum participation rate for all local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and student groups across the state. Therefore, the ELA, math, and science assessments require at least 95 percent of all students to be tested.

For any LEA, school, or student group with less than 95 percent of students tested, ESSA requires a penalty to be applied to the ELA and Math Indicators and the SBE requires a penalty to be applied to the Science Indicator. To meet these requirements, California assigns the Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS) to each student needed to bring the participation rate of the LEA, school, or student group up to 95 percent. The LOSS assigned to each of the students who did not test is then used in calculating the Distance from Proficiency (DFP) or Science Points (SPs).

It is important to note that the assignment of a LOSS occurs only when the California Department of Education (CDE) calculates the California School Dashboard (Dashboard) ELA, Math, and Science Indicators. Students who did not test **will not** receive a LOSS on their individual California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Student Score Reports or in the CAASPP Student Score Data File.

Update for 2026

In March 2026, the SBE approved a change to how the participation rate is calculated for the ELA, Math, and Science Indicators by eliminating the use of grace periods in the participation rate calculation.

Dashboard Participation Rate Calculation

The calculation determines the number of students needed to bring the participation rate of the LEA, school, or student group to 95 percent. Each of these students will be assigned the following DFP or SPs score based on their assessment:

- ELA: 333 points below proficient
- Mathematics: 348 points below proficient
- Science: 0 SPs

Example Unified LEA Using Participation Rate Penalty Calculation for ELA

LEA Information	Participation Rate Penalty Methodology
Number of students enrolled during the testing window in grades three through eight and grade eleven at the Unified LEA who are eligible to participate in the ELA summative and alternate assessments	355 students
Number of testing students needed to meet the 95 percent participation rate target	338 students ($355 \times 0.95 = 337.25$ rounded to 338)
Number of students tested	268 students
Tested students' DFP before the penalty	4,355 points
Difference between number of students needed to meet 95 percent and number of students tested	70 students (338 students needed minus 268 students tested)
Participation rate penalty calculation	Each of the 70 students will be assigned a LOSS and receive a DFP of 333 points below proficient (DFP for ELA). $70 \times (-333) = -23,310$ penalty
Adjusted DFP calculation	$4,355$ (DFP without penalty) $- 23,310$ (participation rate penalty) = $-18,955$
Final DFP calculation	$-18,955 \div 338$ (number of students needed to meet 95 percent target) = -56.08 The LEA's DFP is rounded to -56.1 points from Achievement Level 3 (Proficient).

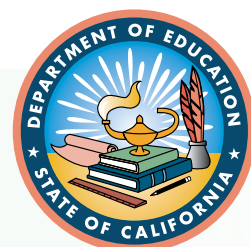
Example Middle School Using Participation Rate Penalty Calculation for Science

School Information	Participation Rate Penalty Methodology
Number of students enrolled during the testing window in grade eight at the middle school who are eligible to participate in the CAST and CAA for Science	225 students
Number of testing students needed to meet the 95 percent participation rate target	214 students ($225 \times 0.95 = 213.75$ rounded to 214)
Number of students tested	189 students
Tested students' SPs before the penalty	10,017 SPs
Difference between number of students needed to meet 95 percent and number of students tested	25 students (214 students needed minus 189 students tested)
Participation rate penalty calculation	Each of the 25 students will be assigned a LOSS of 0 SPs.
Final SPs calculation	$10,017 \div 214$ (number of students needed to meet 95 percent target) = 46.81 The school's SPs are rounded to 46.8 SPs .

LEA, school, and student group participation rate reports for the ELA, Math, and Science Indicators are available on the [CDE School Dashboard Additional Reports and Data web page](#) as well as the [CDE Downloadable Data Files web page](#).

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.



August 2026