

What Middle School Students and their Parents/Guardians Need to Know About the CAHSEE

Parents and guardians of middle school students often ask about the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) and how they can help their children begin to prepare *now* for this state-required high school graduation requirement. The questions and answers that follow provide information about the CAHSEE and suggestions on how middle school students can begin preparing 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 tested on the CAHSEE?

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

The reading section covers:

- Vocabulary
- Informational reading
- Literary reading

The writing section covers:

- Writing strategies
- Writing applications
- Writing conventions

The mathematics part of the CAHSEE tests the knowledge and skills of state-adopted mathematics content standards in 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 CAHSEE?

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 and where do students first take the CAHSEE?

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

The CAHSEE blueprints list the state’s content standards covered on the CAHSEE and show the number of test questions (items) on the examination for each standard.

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

What can students do in middle school to prepare for the CAHSEE?

The best way students can prepare for the CAHSEE is to study hard in their middle school mathematics and English-language arts classes. If students find that they are falling behind in these subjects or that they do not understand a concept being taught they should ask their teacher(s) and parents or guardians for help.

What resources are available to help students prepare for the CAHSEE?

Sample CAHSEE released test questions for English-language arts and mathematics are available for students to view and download on the CAHSEE Resources Web page at: <http://go.usa.gov/x9gYc>.

Reviewing these questions provides a sense of the type of questions on the exam, how the questions are written, and their level of difficulty.

In addition to released test questions students also may download the CAHSEE study guides for English-language arts and mathematics, which are located on the same Web page above. These guides include tips for studying, sample questions with strategies for answering/solving them, and a practice test.

How can parents and guardians help students do well on the CAHSEE?

Parents and guardians can help their children prepare for the CAHSEE by talking to their children's mathematics and English-language arts teachers to learn more about the test, by making sure class assignments and homework are completed throughout the year, and by helping their children understand the importance of learning the knowledge and skills tested on the CAHSEE. Parents and guardians also should remind their children that passing the CAHSEE does not mean that they have completed all of the graduation requirements.

What is required to pass the CAHSEE?

School districts receive students' results approximately seven weeks after the exam. Students must earn a score of 350 or higher on each part of the CAHSEE (English-language arts and mathematics) to pass. This means that students must get approximately 60 percent of the questions correct in English-language arts and 55 percent correct in mathematics.

Students do not need to pass both parts of the CAHSEE at the same time to meet the CAHSEE requirement.

How many opportunities will students have to pass the exam?

Students who do not pass one or both parts of the CAHSEE in grade ten will have additional opportunities to take the part(s) they have not yet passed. Once a student has passed one part of the CAHSEE, he or she does not have to retake that part of the exam. Grade eleven students may take the CAHSEE up to two times per school year for the part(s) of the exam not previously passed. Grade twelve students may take the CAHSEE up to five times.

What if a student does not pass both parts of the CAHSEE by grade twelve?

School districts are required to provide additional instruction to assist students who do not pass one or both parts of 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.

For More Information

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

or

Contact the teachers, principal, or assistant principal at your school.

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California Department of Education

September 2008