



California High School Exit Examination (*CAHSEE*)

Questions and Answers for Parents / Guardians

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. Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, all California public school students are required to pass the *CAHSEE* and meet all other state and local requirements to earn a high school 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 does the *CAHSEE* cover?

The *CAHSEE* is divided into two parts: English-language arts 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 master to graduate from high school.

English-language arts

One part of the *CAHSEE* addresses state English-language arts content standards through grade ten. This part of the exam, which consists of multiple-choice questions and a writing task, has a reading and decoding section and a writing section. The reading and decoding section covers vocabulary, informational reading, and literary reading. This section includes 50 percent literary texts and 50 percent informational texts. The writing section covers writing strategies, applications, and conventions. In addition to the multiple-choice questions, students are asked to complete one writing task on a specific topic or in response to a literary or informational passage.

Mathematics

The other part of the *CAHSEE* addresses state mathematics content standards. 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 entirely of multiple-choice questions.

For more information on the content of the *CAHSEE*, please see the *CAHSEE* blueprints on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/admin.asp>.

What is done to assist students with special needs?

A student with special needs may need to take the *CAHSEE* with a test variation. A test variation is a change in the manner in which a test is presented or administered, or in how a test taker is allowed to respond. Test variations include, but are not limited to, accommodations and modifications. An accommodation is a change in the testing environment or process that does not alter what is intended to be tested by the *CAHSEE*, whereas a modification is a change that alters what is intended to be tested.

Any student whose individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan specifies the need for accommodations or modifications for use on the *CAHSEE*, standardized testing, or for use during classroom instruction and assessment **must** be allowed to use them for the *CAHSEE*. 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 have earned the equivalent of a passing score may be eligible for a diploma if a waiver of the requirement to pass one or both parts of the *CAHSEE* is granted by the local school board. A parent/guardian must ask the school to submit a waiver on behalf of the student. More information on accommodations and modifications can be found on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/> or by contacting your local high school or school district.



Questions and Answers for Parents/Guardians continued

What is done to assist English learners?

Students who are English learners are required to take the *CAHSEE* in grade ten with all other tenth grade 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*. Recently, test variations for English learners were added to the *CAHSEE* regulations allowing English learners to use a flexible setting or schedule or to add extra time to complete the examination. The regulations also allow students to hear the test directions in their primary language or use a translation glossary.

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

About ten weeks after the exam is administered, 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 will distribute one copy to parents/guardians and place the other copy in the student's permanent record. This notification process occurs after each test administration.

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* at the same administration in order to satisfy the *CAHSEE* requirement. Students who do not pass one or both parts of the *CAHSEE* in grade ten will have additional opportunities in grade eleven and yet again in grade twelve, if needed. In addition, students may have one opportunity after grade twelve.

Do parents/guardians need to keep a copy of their child's results?

Yes. It is important that parents/guardians keep a copy of the student report for their records. The California Department of Education does not keep a copy of individual student reports as all individual student scores are confidential.

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 in either February or March, with make-up days in either March or May. Students who do not pass one or both parts of the *CAHSEE* in grade ten may have up to five additional opportunities to retake the part(s) of the exam not passed. The *CAHSEE* testing schedule through the 2007-08 school year is posted on the Internet at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/admin.asp>. School districts select their schools' testing dates from this schedule.

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

School districts are to provide additional instruction to assist students who do not pass the exam. Contact your school for more information on the programs offered in your area.

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. Because the *CAHSEE* results are used for state and federal accountability purposes, it is important that all grade ten students participate in the *CAHSEE* administration.

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

Additional information about the *CAHSEE* is posted on the CDE Web site at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs>. If parents/guardians have additional questions, they should direct their questions to their student's teachers or contact the school office or counselor.