



FACT SHEET

CALIFORNIA STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

How the state is failing to prepare students for college and careers.

The Landscape

- As of [2021-22](#) (the most recent year for which there's available data), there are 5,892,240 students enrolled in California public schools across 1,021 districts. This is a 4.39 percent decrease from [2019-20](#), during which 6,163,001 students were enrolled.
- The largest [demographic](#) of California public school students are Latino/Hispanic students, comprising 55.9 percent of California's K-12 population in 2021-22. White students comprise the second largest demographic group (21.1 percent), followed by Asian (9.5 percent) and African American (5.1 percent) students.
- 57.8 percent of California students in 2021-22 were eligible for [free or reduced-price meals](#); this is a metric commonly used to [gauge student poverty](#). (However, in 2021, AB130 was signed into law, which establishes a [universal meal program](#) for all students by the 2022-23 school year.)
- During the 2021-22 school year, there were 1,127,648 [English learning students](#), or 18.1 percent of California public school enrollment according to the California Department of Education (CDE).
- Total K-12 education funding in California for the [2020-21 year](#) was \$98.8 billion, equaling \$16,881 per student. The K-12 education budget totaled \$124.3 billion for the [2021-22 year](#), and \$128.6 billion for the [2022-23 year](#). As of January 2023, the Governor's [proposed budget for 2023-24](#) allots \$128.5 billion for all K-12 programs, amounting to "\$23,723 per pupil when accounting for all funding sources" according to the CA Department of Finance.



Dismal Student Achievement Scores

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

- A 2022 [EdSource Special Report](#) reveals that “California fourth graders trail the nation in reading, and half of its third graders...do not read at grade level.”
- The CDE’s most recent [Smarter Balanced test results](#) (2021-22) show that among all California students in third grade, under half ([42.17 percent](#)) met or exceeded standards for ELA. In addition:
 - Among economically disadvantaged third graders, only [29.41 percent](#) met or exceeded ELA standards.
 - Less than one-third ([30.61 percent](#)) of Hispanic third grade students met or exceeded standards.
 - Only [26.62 percent](#) of Black/African American third grade students met or exceeded standards.
- California’s 2021-22 Smarter Balanced Assessment scores also show that just under half ([49.22 percent](#)) of students in seventh grade met or exceeded ELA standards.
 - [37.41 percent](#) of economically disadvantaged seventh grade students in California met or exceeded ELA standards.
 - Among Hispanic seventh graders, [38.56 percent](#) met or exceeded standards
 - [32.28 percent](#) of Black/African American seventh graders met or exceeded standards

MATHEMATICS

- EdSource [reports](#) that California students’ math assessment scores touch off a “five-alarm fire” in the state (2022).
- For 2021-22, Smarter Balanced Assessment scores show that [38.26 percent](#) of all California fourth graders met or exceeded math standards for their grade level.
 - Among economically disadvantaged fourth grade students, just less than one-quarter ([24.83 percent](#)) met or exceeded math standards.



- [25.31 percent](#) of Hispanic fourth grade students met or exceeded math standards in 2021-22.
- Among Black/African American fourth graders, only [19.46 percent](#) met or exceeded math standards. An even smaller proportion of Black/African American fifth grade students met their grade-level math standards, at [14.29 percent](#).
- In 2021-22, only [29.24 percent](#) of all California eighth grade students met or exceeded math standards for their grade level.
 - Among economically disadvantaged eighth grade students, only [17.74 percent](#) met or exceeded standards.
 - Among Hispanic eighth grade students, [17.48 percent](#) met or exceeded standards.
 - Just [12.59 percent](#) of Black/African American eighth graders met or exceeded math standards.

SCIENCE

- According to the [CAST](#) (California Science Test) results for 2021-22, less than a third ([31.19 percent](#)) of all California fifth grade students met or exceeded science standards for their grade.
 - Among economically disadvantaged fifth grade students, only [19.01 percent](#) met or exceeded science standards for their grade level.
 - The numbers are approximately the same for Hispanic fifth graders: [19.74 percent](#) met or exceeded standards.
 - Science standards were met or exceeded by just [15.49 percent](#) of Black/African American fifth graders in 2021-22.
- The same year, only slightly more than one-quarter ([26.82 percent](#)) of all twelfth grade students met or exceeded grade-level science standards.
 - [17.31 percent](#) of economically disadvantaged twelfth grade students met or exceeded science standards.
 - Just [16.23 percent](#) of Hispanic twelfth grade students met or exceeded science standards in 2021-22.
 - Just over one in ten ([11.33 percent](#)) of Black/African American twelfth grade students met or exceeded science standards.