

2016-17 Top Schools: Report Methodology

Data Sources

- 2016-17 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics results. The files were posted by the California Department of Education (CDE) on September 27, 2017 and downloaded on September 28, 2017 ([See the CDE website for file](#)).
- 2015-16 CAASPP ELA and mathematics results. The files were posted by the CDE on March 22, 2017 and downloaded on March 28, 2017. ([See the CDE website for file](#)).
- Public School Directory database. This file was posted by the CDE on August 8, 2017 and downloaded on August 26, 2017 ([See the CDE website for file](#)).
- 2016-17 Student Enrollment. The files were posted by the CDE on April 11, 2017 and downloaded on May 31, 2017 ([See the CDE website for file](#)).

School Sample

The school sample included traditional public district, charter schools and alternative schools of choice at the elementary, middle, and high school level (1,275 in total across Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties). The sample does not include juvenile court schools, schools that have selective admissions, or other schools considered by the CDE to offer non-traditional education (e.g., continuation schools).¹ We reviewed each school’s website to ensure that no school (52 in total) on the Top Schools list practiced selective admissions.

Table 1: School Sample Breakdown by School Designation (Bay Area and Top Schools)

School Designation	Number of Bay Area Schools	Number of Top Schools
Public district	1,059	16
Charter	177	32
Alternative school of choice	39	4
Total	1,275	52

¹The school sample in this report is labeled “traditional schools” throughout this document. This includes the full sample of 1275 schools (traditional and alternative schools of choice).

Inclusion Criteria

Academic performance

In order to meet the performance criteria, schools were required to be at or above the statewide CAASPP rate for all students in ELA and/or math for their school type (elementary, middle, or high).

Table II: Proficiency Cut Points by Grade Level and Subject

School Type	ELA	Difference from 15-16 Top Schools Cut Point for ELA	Math	Difference from 15-16 Top Schools Cut Point for Math
Elementary	46%	+1	40%	+1
Middle	49%	+1	37%	+1
High	63%	+1	34%	-1

Participation

In order to meet the participation criteria, schools were required to test at least 95% of their students and have at least 20 students tested in the given subgroup and subject.

Enrollment

In previous years, we used enrollment data disaggregated by race and income acquired through a special data request to the CDE to determine enrollment thresholds. That data was unavailable at the time of analysis. Because of this we used the CAASPP variable for students in tested grades enrolled on test day in ELA as a proxy for overall school enrollment.²

Schools met the enrollment criteria if the number of students enrolled for the CAASPP in 2016-17 was at least one standard deviation below the state enrollment rate in ELA for the given subgroup. This meant that for the low-income African American subgroup, schools needed to have 0% or more students enrolled. For the low-income Latino students subgroup, schools needed to have 12% or more students enrolled.

² This variable is a calculation of the percent of students enrolled in tested grades (3-8 and 11) that took the CAASPP assessment in 2016-17. This proxy was used in place of overall enrollment reported in the directory files and, as such, the CAASPP enrollment figures vary slightly from school-level enrollment figures.

Table III: Bay Area Enrollment Summary Statistics by subgroup, 2016-17

Subgroup	Total Bay Area Enrollment (Number of Students)	Bay Area Average Per School (Percent of Students Enrolled)	Minimum (Percent Enrolled)	Max (Percent Enrolled)	Number of Schools that Met the Top Schools Enrollment Threshold
Low-income & African American	15,096	4%	0%	69%	239
Low-income & Latino	110,560	28%	0%	94%	729

Table IV: Top Schools Enrollment Thresholds by subgroup, 2016-17

Subgroup	State Enrollment (Number of Students)	State Rate (Percent of Students Enrolled)	Top School Threshold (1 Std. Dev. Below the State Rate)
Low-income & African American	113,986	4%	0%
Low-income & Latino	1,401,362	43%	12%

Exclusion Criteria

Low Performance on the California Dashboard

Schools with “orange” or “red” performance on the California dashboard in ELA or math for the given subgroup and subject were excluded.³ See the [California Dashboard page](#) for more information on this indicator. The tables below outline the cut points used in this report.⁴

³ Schools with no color had either between 20 or 30 students (the CDE Dashboard threshold for inclusion is 30 students tested and our threshold was 20 students). In order to determine whether a school in each category met the dashboard criteria, we looked at their status and change results. If those results were outside our band of inclusion (Table V and VI) we kept the school on the list.

⁴ These tables show the cut points that were relevant to our report. The full five-by-five grids are available on the [California Dashboard page](#).

Table V: Academic Indicator: ELA Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (By more than 15 points)	Declined (by 3 to 15 points)	Maintained	Increased (by 3 to less than 15 points)	Increased Significantly (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	Low (-5.1 to -70 points)						
	Very Low (-70.1 points or lower)						

Table VI: Academic Indicator: Math Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (By more than 15 points)	Declined (by 3 to 15 points)	Maintained	Increased (by 3 to less than 15 points)	Increased significantly (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	Low (-25.1 to -95 points)						
	Very Low (-95 points or lower)						

High Suspension (Dashboard)

Schools with “red” performance or “very high status” on the dashboard suspension rate indicator for either all of their students or the individual subgroup. See the [California Dashboard page](#) for information on this indicator.

Table VII: School Suspension: Elementary School Five-by-Five Color Table

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (>2.0%)	Declined (by 0.3% to 2.0%)	Maintained	Increased (by 0.3% to less than 1.0%)	Increased Significantly (> 1.0%)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (3.0% to 6.0%)						
	Very High (> 6.0%)						

Table VIII: School Suspension: Middle School Five-by-Five Color Grid

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (> 4.0%)	Declined (by 0.3% to 4.0%)	Maintained	Increased (by 0.3% to less than 3.0%)	Increased Significantly (by 3.0% or greater)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (6.0% to 12.0%)						
	Very High (> 12.0%)						

Table IX: School Suspension: High School Five-by-Five Color Grid

		STATUS					
		Level	Declined Significantly (> 3.0%)	Declined (by 0.3% to 3.0%)	Maintained	Increased (by 0.3% to less than 2.0%)	Increased Significantly (> 2.0%)
CHANGE (increased by)	High (6.0% to 10.0%)						
	Very High (> 10.0%)						

Selective Admission or Non-traditional School Status

Only public schools serving a traditional student population are eligible to be included in the Top Schools report. We defined traditional using the CDE’s educational option variable in the public school directory file. Any traditional public district, charter or alternative school of choice at the elementary, middle, and high level offering a traditional educational option (based on the CDE public school directory) was included in the sample.

Schools with selective admissions criteria, such as academic school entrance exams used to determine admissions, are not included in this report. Alternative schools of choice with an application and/or district referral and academic selection process were also excluded from our sample.

Non-traditional schools were also not included in this report (i.e. county community schools, continuation schools, juvenile court schools, opportunity schools, youth authority schools, state special schools, special education schools, regional occupational programs, and home and hospital schools).

Low Performance in a Grade Band (for Schools that Otherwise Meet Top Schools Criteria for One or More Grade Bands)

Some schools we considered serve a band of grades that do not align to the CDE’s typical grade-band breakdown (see grade band table below for more information on grade bands by school type). Schools in that category were broken up into multiple grade bands. For example, a K-8 school would be eligible to be considered as a top elementary school for their lower grades (K-5) and a top middle school for their upper grades (6-8). However, a split grade band school was only eligible if it met or exceeded the state rate for both grade bands. If a school is high-performing (meets Top Schools proficiency criteria) for one grade band but low-performing (below the state proficiency rate for the given subgroup) for their other grade band, they are excluded from the report.

Table X: School Type Breakdown by Grade Levels

School Type	Included Grades
Elementary	K-5, K-6 (and no higher grade)
Middle	6-8, 5-8 (and no lower grade), 5-9 (no lower or higher grade), 6-9 (no higher grade)
High	9-12, 8-12 (no lower grade)

Changes from Last Year's Top Schools Methodology

Dashboard Data

This year, we incorporated elements of the state of California's new dashboard accountability system into our exclusion criteria as a check on academic performance and suspension rates.

Academic Indicator

We used the dashboard academic indicator as a check on our proficiency rate breakdown. We excluded any school with "orange" or "red" performance for the subject in which they made a list (See Table V and VI). Schools in this category maintained, declined, or declined significantly in the "status" variable and/or were low or very low in "change" variable.

Suspension Indicator

As mentioned above, we also incorporated the suspension indicator into our analysis and excluded any schools that were assigned a "red" color rating or a "very high" rating on the "status" variable on the dashboard for either all students or the subgroup in which they made the list (See Table VII, VIII, IX). Schools in this category maintained, declined, or declined significantly in the "status" and/or were low or very low in the "change" variable.

Enrollment Thresholds

There were two key changes to the enrollment threshold calculation. Last year, we were able to use enrollment data disaggregated by race and income to set enrollment thresholds. That data was unavailable at the time of analysis, so we used the CAASPP enrollment variable for students tested as a proxy for total enrollment. This proxy measures the number of students enrolled on the day of the assessment in all tested grades. This meant that only students in tested grades (3-8 and 11) were included in the overall enrollment threshold calculation.

In addition to introducing the CAASPP proxy for enrollment, we lowered the cut point for inclusion. In response to shifting demographics across the Bay Area, where there has been a significant decline in the number of low-income African American students, this decision allowed us to consider a greater number of schools in our sample. In the 2016-17 school year, over 80% of Bay Area schools did not serve enough low-income African American students to have reliable test data. In fact, half of schools enroll fewer than 13 African American students.⁵ In order address this shift and account for regional differences between state enrollment rates and Bay Area enrollment

⁵ The median was calculated for African American enrollment across all five counties in the Bay Area. In this sample, Bay Area is defined as Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties. Unlike with the Top Schools list methodology (that use the CAASPP enrollment file), these are total enrollment numbers that come from the CDE enrollment data file.

rates, we moved the cutpoint to include all schools at or above one standard deviation below the state rate for percent enrolled.

This set a non-binding threshold for low-income African American enrollment, which meant that any school serving more than 20 low-income African American students was included in the low-income African American sample. We set this same cut point for low-income Latino enrollment to maintain consistency. This set the enrollment threshold for inclusion at 12% for the low-income Latino sample.

Alternative Schools of Choice

In previous years we limited the Top Schools sample as “traditional schools” as defined by the CDE. This included all schools defined as non-alternative by our “traditional schools” variable. Excluded schools include schools determined by the CDE to be “alternative” schools, juvenile court schools, schools determined to have selective admissions, or other schools which serve non-traditional populations.

This year the sample was extended to include a subset of traditional public schools and district schools with alternative options for parents that are designated by the CDE as “alternative schools of choice.” Of the 39 alternative schools of choice in the Bay Area, 15 were identified by Innovate research staff as serving a traditional set of students. That list of 15 schools included both small autonomous district schools and magnet schools with a specialized curriculum. Of the 39 alternative schools of choice in the Bay Area, 24 were removed from the analysis for their application and/or district referral and selection process.