2017-18 Top Schools: Report Methodology

Data Sources

- 2017-18 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics results. (The files are available for download here: https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2017/ResearchFileList).
- 2016-17 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy and mathematics results. (The files are available for download here: http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2016/ResearchFileList).
- California Department of Education (CDE) Public School Directory database. (The file is available for download here: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubschls.asp).
- Student Enrollment in School Year 2017-18 through the California Department of Education's website. (The downloadable enrollment files are available here: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp).
- 2017-18 California State Dashboard. We incorporated elements of the state of California's dashboard accountability system into our exclusion criteria as a check on academic performance and suspension rates. (The dashboard information is available here: https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/Home).
- 2017-18 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) and Outcome Data through the California Department of Education's website. (The downloadable enrollment files are available here: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesacgr.asp).

School Sample

The school sample included traditional public district, charter schools and alternative schools of choice at the elementary, middle, and high school level (1,278 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 (51 in total) on the Top Schools list practiced selective admissions.

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

School Designation	Number of Bay Area Schools	Number of Top Schools
Public district	1,064	19
Charter	174	29

---

[1] The school sample in this report is labeled "traditional schools" throughout this document. This includes the full sample of 1278 schools (traditional and alternative schools of choice).

Alternative school of choice	40	3
Total	1,278	51

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).

High schools, specifically, must demonstrate that they are preparing low-income African American or low-income Latino students for college. Schools' graduation and UC/CSU eligibility rates for these student groups must be at or above the statewide average for all students. High schools must also demonstrate that they are successfully closing the achievement gap. Schools' proficiency rates in English and/or math for these two student groups have to be at or above the statewide proficiency rate for all students in English and/or math.

Table II: Proficiency Cut Points by Grade Level and Subject

School Type	ELA	Difference from 16-17 Top Schools Cut Point for ELA	Math	Difference from 16-17 Top Schools Cut Point for Math
Elementary	49%	+3	42%	+2
Middle	49%	+0	37%	+0
High	56%	-7	31%	-3

Table III: UC/CSU and graduation cut-points all students in 2017-18 (applied only to high school methodology)

UC/CSU Eligibility		Graduation Rate	
Rate	Difference from 2016-17	Rate	Difference from 2016-17
50%	+0	83%	-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. Only schools testing at least 95% of their students, including the student groups in our report, are included because this testing threshold indicates that the school is testing the majority of their students (i.e., the school makes a concerted effort to test all of its students and therefore test results are a reflection of the school's full student population). We also use the threshold of at least 20 students tested because it is a standard, best-practice threshold of the number of students tested in a school to ensure validity in testing data. The 20 student threshold is used by a vast majority of states and districts as the minimum threshold for testing accountability purposes.

Enrollment

Schools included in the Top Schools sample are those whose enrollment meets at least one standard deviation below the state enrollment rate for the subgroups included in this report. We set that cutpoint to reflect the lower enrollment rates of low-income African American students in Bay Area schools. Setting the enrollment threshold at one standard deviation below the state enrollment rate effectively removes the enrollment threshold for low-income African American sub-group (0%). To meet the participation criteria (listed above), schools were also required to have at least 20 low-income African American students tested in order to be considered.

Table IV: Top Schools Enrollment Thresholds by subgroup, 2017-18

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	254,807	4%	0%
Low-income & Latino	2,701,371	43%	14%

Table V: Bay Area Enrollment Summary Statistics by subgroup, 2017-18

Subgroup	Total Bay Area Enrollment (Number of Students)	Average Percent of Students enrolled per	Minimum (Percent Enrolled)	Max (Percent Enrolled)	Number of Schools that Met the Top Schools

		School in the Bay Area			Enrollment Threshold
Low-income & African American	34,649	4.7%	0%	70.5%	237
Low-income & Latino	236,037	29.2%	0%	95.3%	702

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 are excluded.[2] See the California Dashboard page for more information on this indicator. The tables below outline the cut points used in this report.[3]

Table VI: Academic Indicator: ELA Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table (Grade 3-8)

		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)	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟧	🟧

---

[2] Schools with no color had either between 20 or 30 students (the CDE Dashboard threshold for inclusion is 30 students tested and our threshold is 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.

[3] 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 VII: Academic Indicator: ELA Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table (Grade 11)

		STATUS				
	Level	**Declined Significantly** (By more than 15.1 points)	**Declined** (by 3 to 15 points)	**Maintained**	**Increased** (by 3 to less than 14.9 points)	**Increased Significantly** (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	**Low** (-1 to -45 points)	🟧	🟧	🟧	⬜	⬜
	Very Low (-45.1 points or lower)	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟧	🟧

Table VIII: Academic Indicator: Math Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table (Grade 3-8)

		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)	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟧	🟧

Table IX: Academic Indicator: Math Assessment Five-by-Five Color Table (Grade 3-8)

		STATUS				
	Level	**Declined Significantly** (By more than 15.1 points)	**Declined** (by 3 to 15 points)	**Maintained**	**Increased** (by 3 to less than 14.9 points)	**Increased significantly** (by 15 points or more)
CHANGE	**Low** (-60.1 to -115 points)	🟧	🟧	🟧	⬜	⬜
	Very Low (-115.1 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. Our methodology breaks out schools that span multiple grade bands (K-8, 6-12, etc.) into two separate schools (elementary/middle in the case of a K-8 and middle/high in the case of a 6-12) in order to effectively and fairly compare schools of grade levels.[4] Conversely, the CDE aggregates suspension rates and reports one single rate for schools that serve multiple grade bands as one school record based on how it is reported in the state's School Directory File. This means that schools in our analysis that span multiple grade bands are held to one suspension rate for both grade bands -- whichever band they are officially recorded under according to the state's database. See the California Dashboard page for information on this indicator.

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

		STATUS				
	Level	**Increased Significantly** (<2.0%)	**Increased** (0.3% to 2.0%)	**Maintained**	**Declined** (0.3% to 2.0%)	**Declined Significantly** (>2.0%)
CHANGE (increased by)	**High** (3.0% to 6.0%)	🟥	⬜	⬜	⬜	⬜
	Very High (> 6.0%)	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟧	🟨

---

[4] More details on this breakdown are available in the "Low Performance for a Grade Band" section of the methodology on page 7.

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

		STATUS				
	Level	**Increased Significantly** (<4.0%)	**Increased** (0.3% to 4.0%)	**Maintained**	**Declined** (0.3% to 3.0%)	**Declined Significantly** (>3.0%)
CHANGE (increased by)	**High** (6.0% to 12.0%)	🟥	⬜	⬜	⬜	⬜
	Very High (> 12.0%)	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟧	🟨

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

		STATUS				
	Level	**Increased Significantly** (<3.0%)	**Increased** (0.5% to 3.0%)	**Maintained**	**Declined** (0.5% to 3.0%)	**Declined 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) is 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.

Schools were excluded based on the following:

1. If they had an application process that required students to demonstrate a skill or academic proficiency.
2. If the school required a certain grade point average or academic performance level to qualify for registration.
3. If there an interview process of any kind for interested students.
4. If enrollment in the school required a referral from the district or a traditional school setting.

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 included in the report sample 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). For schools in that category, data is separated into multiple grade bands. For example, a K-8 school's data would be included in the elementary school sample for their lower grades (K-5) and the middle school sample for their upper grades (6-8). The split grade band school would be eligible in each of those respective lists if it met or exceeded all the other criteria. If a school meets all criteria for one grade band but is low-performing (below the state proficiency rate for the given subgroup and subject) for their other grade band, they do not qualify as a Top School.

Table XIII: 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)