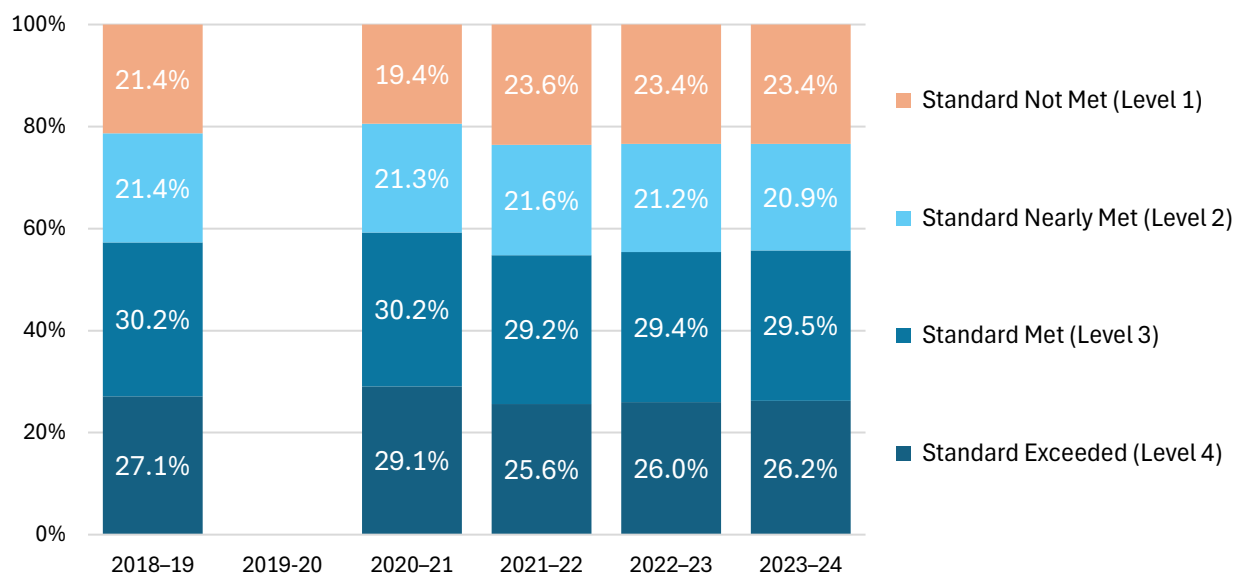


CA High School Student Performance on English and Mathematics

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), average 12th grade reading scores were 10 points lower in 2024 than in 1992,¹ and 12th grade math scores were three points below their 2005 level, the lowest level since that year.² Because California does not have state-representative NAEP results for 12th graders in reading and math, we cannot track California's trend with the same data source. Instead, we analyzed California's Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments (SBAC) for 11th graders in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, administered annually since 2018 (with 2019–20 canceled due to COVID-19).³ In addition, at the request of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), we examined A-G course performance of California resident enrollees at UC. This report presents findings from these analyses. Our main finding is that California high school performance in English and mathematics has declined in a pattern similar to the national trend.

CA 11th grade performance in ELA performance improved from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (Figure 1). In 2018-19, 27.1 percent of test-takers reached Level 4 (exceeds the standard), and 21.4 percent did not meet the standard (Level 1). In 2020-21, the share at Level 4 increased to 29.1 percent, while Level 1 fell to 19.4 percent. Performance then declined in 2021-22 with 25.6 percent exceeding the standard while 23.6 percent did not meet it. Since 2021-22, results remain essentially flat, with only a slight uptick at Level 4.

Figure 1. CA High School 11th Grade Performance on English Language Arts (ELA)



¹ NAEP. Explore Results for the 2024 NAEP Reading Assessment at Grade 12.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/q12/>.

² NAEP. Explore Results for the 2024 NAEP Mathematics Assessment at Grade 12.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/mathematics/2024/q12/>.

³ California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. Test Results for California's Assessments.

<https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/Default>.

California's 11th grade mathematics trend mirrors the ELA pattern, but a larger share of students falls below the standard, and the below-standard share has risen by more than 10 percentage points since 2020-21 (Figure 2). Over the same period, the share exceeding, meeting, or nearly meeting the standard declined by more than three percentage points.

Figure 2. CA High School 11th Grade Performance on Mathematics

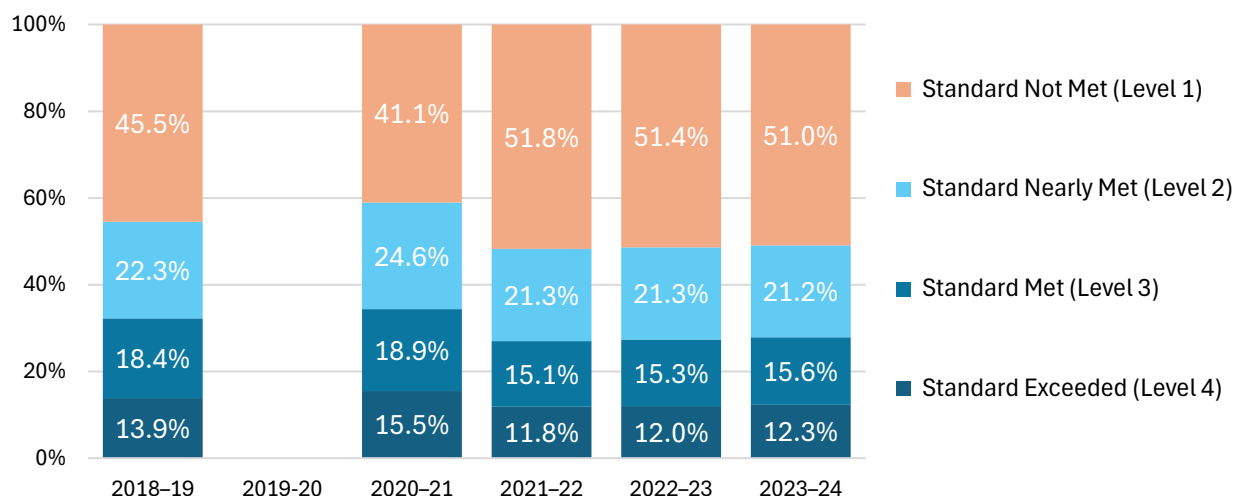


Figure 3 shows UC enrollees' average high school GPA (HSGPA) by subject—History/Social Science, English, Math, and Science—and the average number of high school courses used in the HSGPA calculation. Subject-specific HSGPA fluctuated over time and peaked in 2022. Since then, the GPA on History/Social Science, and English has been largely flat (around 3.80) while the HSGPA on Math and Science trended downward. In contrast, the average number of completed high school courses across all subject areas has increased since 2022.

Figure 3. HSGPA and # of courses by subject area, fall 2016 to fall 2024

