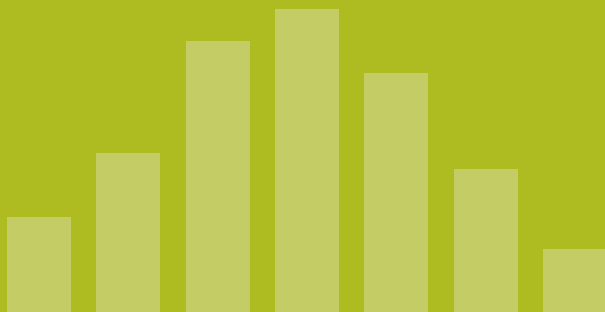


# Evidence

From California Partnership Academies: One Model of Linked Learning Pathways



SOME OF THE MOST RECENT and relevant evidence supporting Linked Learning comes from the substantial amount of data available on California Partnership Academies. These Academies, which have operated in the state for more than two decades, are one of the most well developed models using the Linked Learning approach.

A March 2007 study conducted collaboratively by ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career, and the Career Academy Support Network at the University of California at Berkeley, found that students in California's partnership academies were

- more likely to pass the California High School Exit Exam as sophomores;
- more likely to complete the a–g requirements needed for admissions eligibility to California's public universities; and
- more likely to graduate from high school.

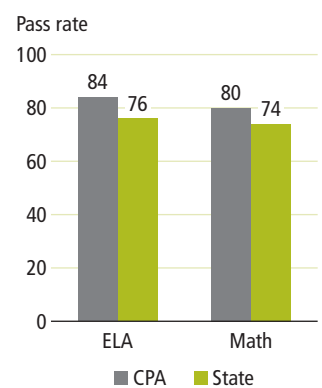
As with Linked Learning, California Partnership Academies offer a high school curriculum focused on a career theme. Courses combine academic and technical material and relate lessons to real world applications. Academies partner with local industry to offer students internships, field trips, and other work-based opportunities that connect the real world to classroom learning. At least half of each Academy's incoming class of students must be at risk by meeting three of four criteria: having disadvantaged economic status, irregular attendance, low motivation, or low achievement levels.

## Better High School Exit Exam Pass Rates

Students in California Partnership Academies were much more likely to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), a state requirement to receive a high school diploma that started with the graduating class of 2006. Students take the test for the first time in 10th grade and have multiple opportunities to pass it.

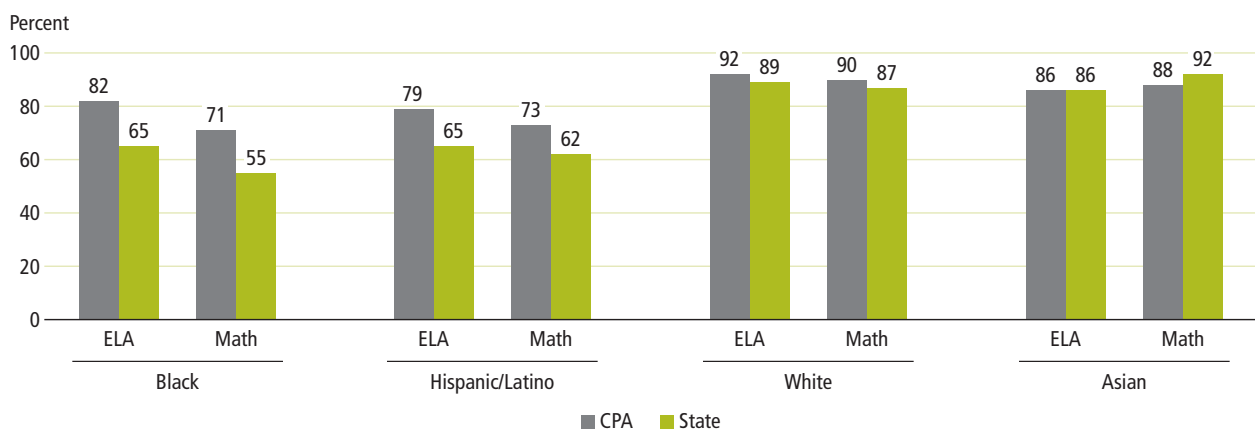
When comparing more than 12,000 sophomores from 287 Academies with more than 460,000 sophomores across California, Academy students passed the tests at higher rates than did the general state population. On the English Language Arts (ELA) test, 84 percent of Academy students passed compared with 76 percent of students statewide. On the mathematics exam, 80 percent of Academy students passed, compared with 74 percent statewide (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**  
10th-grade CAHSEE pass rates by subject test



Academies may also help narrow the achievement gap—with Black and Hispanic/Latino student CAHSEE pass rates surpassing those of similar students in other schools. The study found that 71 percent of Black students in Academies passed the math portion of the CAHSEE, compared with 55 percent of all Black high school students in the state. Little

**FIGURE 2**  
10th-grade CAHSEE pass rates by subject test and race/ethnicity

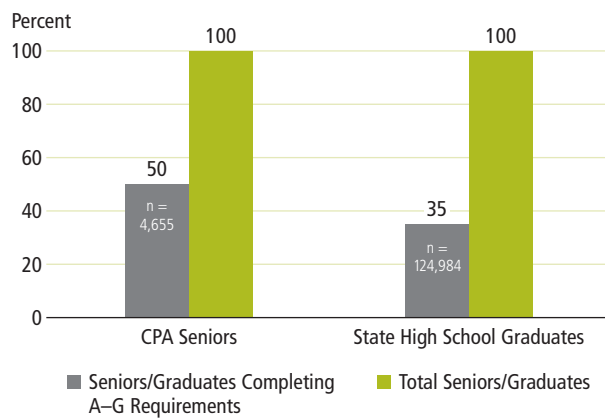


or no differences in achievement were found between Academy and state students who were White or Asian (Figure 2).

### Completion of More Rigorous Courses

Similarly, Academy students were much more likely to complete the 15 academic courses (the a–g requirements) needed to be eligible for admission to California’s public colleges and universities. The study found that 50 percent of graduating seniors in Academies had completed the a–g requirements, compared with only 35 percent of graduates statewide (Figure 3).

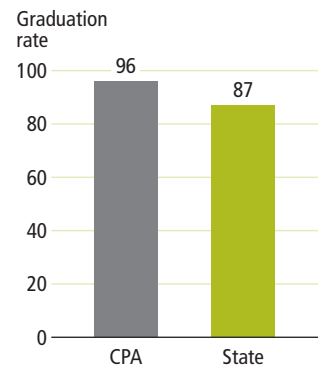
**FIGURE 3**  
Seniors reported to meet a–g subject requirements



### Better Graduation Rates

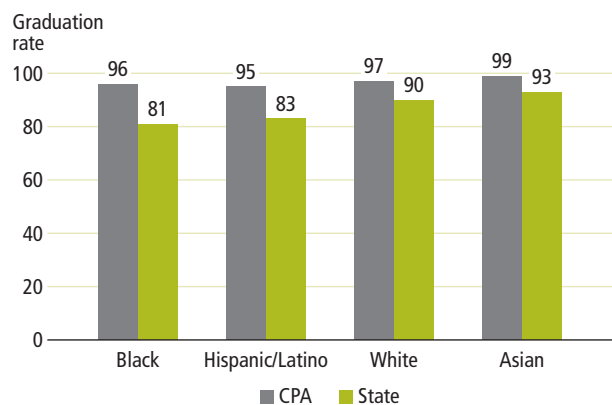
Graduation rates were also better for those attending California Partnership Academies, with 96 percent of Academy seniors graduating compared with only 87 percent of high school seniors statewide (Figure 4). (Data were unavailable for the study to calculate graduation rates from entry in ninth grade to graduation.) While it is possible that selection effects—that students enrolled in the academies were more motivated or better prepared to begin with—account for some of the outcome, it seems unlikely that this could explain such a large difference.

**FIGURE 4**  
CPA and California 12th-grade graduation rates



Hispanic/Latino and Black Academy students graduated respectively at rates 12 and 15 percentage points higher than the general student population (Figure 5). White and Asian Academy students also graduated at higher rates than their counterparts in the general student population, but these differences were smaller.

**FIGURE 5**  
CPA and California 12th-grade graduation rates by race/ethnicity



## Future Considerations

While these findings are positive, more research is needed. The data available for this report came from Academy self reports so accuracy is not guaranteed. In addition, too little information was available about student selection to confirm whether the at-risk requirements for program admission were consistently met. That makes it impossible to determine the degree to which results are due to student selection versus program performance. In general, the high school improvement movement would benefit from studies employing experimental design that can eliminate the potential effects of students “self-selecting” to participate in career academies, other models for implementing pathways, and other high school improvement approaches.

## Conclusion

Until those studies are conducted, this research provides strong preliminary evidence that California Partnership Academies, and Linked Learning, offer a promising approach for preparing high school students for the future. However, when Academy programs were examined for this study in 2004–05, they served only 2 percent of California’s high school population in grades 10–12. These initial findings should encourage expansion of California Partnership Academies, and Linked Learning pathways in general, to benefit more students statewide. Doing so may contribute significantly to closing the achievement gap.

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For a copy of the full report *A Profile of the California Partnership Academies 2004–05*, go to:  
[http://connectedcalifornia.org/publications/CA\\_Partnerships.pdf](http://connectedcalifornia.org/publications/CA_Partnerships.pdf).

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Carol Studier, editor

May 2008

**Findings from: *A Profile of the California Partnership Academies 2004–2005***

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