

**California Department of Education
California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)
Compendium of Considered Alternatives**

| Considered Alternative | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|--|
| No alternative – maintain status quo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Keeps CAHSEE as positive force in California schools. – Maintains focus on accountability for students and system. – Guarantees consistency of graduation standard across state. – Implements intent of legislation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some students may not graduate due to CAHSEE requirement. |
| Delay the consequences for one or more years for students with disabilities, but continue to test all students on the CAHSEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Allows more time for students with disabilities to receive standards-based instruction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Could have social repercussions in which a delay will be perceived as a step back from the important goal of maximal inclusion of students with disabilities in the education process or the belief that students with disabilities can achieve at high standards. |
| Passage of an existing exam as an alternative (e.g., AP, SAT or California Standards Test (CST)) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eliminates need to develop a new exam. – Use of a CST as a CAHSEE proxy in future may reduce testing time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AP exams and SAT are not aligned to State content standards. – May not be able to validly and reliably equate CAHSEE. – CST scores could not be appropriately equated to CAHSEE scores in time for class of 2006. – May not be suited for students who cannot access a paper-and-pencil test. |

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| State-developed alternative test (e.g., performance test) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates consistency across the state. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot be implemented for the class of 2006 (implementation two to three years out). - Costly to develop (about \$3 to \$4 million). - Difficult to guarantee equivalence. |
| Compensatory Scoring Model: Require a combined score on the ELA and math portions of 700 or higher with a specified minimum pass on either part (e.g., 330) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows students to compensate poor performance on one portion of the test with better performance on the other portion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowers the standards being used to assess student performance on one of the portions of the CAHSEE. - May not be consistent with legislative intent. |
| Collection of evidence (e.g., portfolio, senior project) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows multiple measures to determine mastery of CAHSEE-based standards. - IEP teams could tailor the requirements to students' IEPs and other instructional, physical, and emotional circumstances. - Can be administered with more flexibility than an on-demand assessment (such as CAHSEE). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates significant training needs for teachers, administrators, and students. Training would require additional funding. - Requires an elaborate system at state level to monitor implementation and ensure fairness and consistency across the state; additional staffing required. - Significant expense for implementation, scoring, and reporting. - Presents significant technical challenges to ensure comparability of implementation and scoring across the state and to ensure equal rigor to CAHSEE. - Unlikely to increase passing rates without increased system readiness in support of students with disabilities. - Disregards intent of CAHSEE legislation (standardization of assessment for all students in state). |

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| <p>Focused retest: Abridged version of the full test containing only items designed to distinguish maximally between students who are borderline passers and those with an achievement level just below the proficiency standard.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students who fail the full-form administration do not have to take the entire test over again. - Better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible. - Decreases the likelihood that students will face content beyond their achievement level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Including items with difficulty levels just below or above the proficiency standard precludes the customary practice of placing relatively easier items at the beginning of the assessment to build confidence as students move into the test. Without the easier items, some test takers may be discouraged from continuing to take the test; including them will necessarily lengthen the test. - Excluding “difficult” items may disadvantage some test takers who find these items relatively easier than the ones included on the focused retest due to differential instruction, interests, and abilities. Item difficulty is an “average” value determined across all test takers. - Not all standards can be assessed with the same breadth and depth of the full-form test. This may disadvantage some students who have deeper knowledge in particular content strands. - Entails significant expense for development, implementation, scoring, and reporting. - Although technically reliable, the public may not believe such a short test is a credible instrument for high-stakes pass/fail decisions. - Unlikely to increase passing rates without increased system readiness in support of students with disabilities. - Not suited for students for whom a paper-and-pencil test format presents a challenge. |

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| <p>Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT): Test administered via computer; only presents test taker with items that fit into their ability range, so test taker is presented with fewer items at any one time</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Many students with disabilities make extensive use of computers and software as part of their instructional program; CAT method match the assessment format to the primary means of instruction. – The shorter assessment is better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible. – Adaptive method focus items at students' ability level, lessening the frustration of confronting "too-difficult" content. – CAT could be used by any student not just students with disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Requires significant investment in software development or adaptation and hardware statewide. – There is great potential for equity problems given that some schools have access to large numbers of computers and others have very limited access. – Using an abbreviated method means that not all standards can be assessed with the same breadth and depth of the full-form test. This may disadvantage some students who have deeper knowledge in particular content strands. – Although technically reliable, the public may not believe such a short test is a credible instrument for high-stakes pass-fail decisions. – Entails significant expense for development, implementation, and standard setting. – Research is still underway to determine whether traditional paper and computer administrations result in comparable scores for all student populations, including students with disabilities. – Not likely to increase passing rates without increased system readiness in support of students with disabilities. |

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| <p>CAHSEE “Mini-Tests” :</p> <p>Student takes targeted subsections of the actual CAHSEE throughout the school year, either immediately following instruction in a CAHSEE content cluster or on some other predetermined schedule; over the course of a year, the equivalent of an intact CAHSEE can be administered.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The shorter assessment administration segments are better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible. - This approach allows teachers to target appropriate instructional and test preparation approaches to specific test content. - The content of the “mini-tests” is identical to the full CAHSEE across the range of administrations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entails increased security concerns due to lengthening of the testing window and broader access to test items. - Entails significant expense for development, implementation, and standard setting. - Targeted instruction followed by the immediate administration of a “mini-test” may raise questions of fairness and validity. - Rules are yet to be developed to determine when students may be tested or retested. - An extensive management system at the local and state level needs to be developed to track and report student progress. - Research is needed to determine if the sum of the “mini-tests” is comparable to a full CAHSEE administration; some research suggests that extended time does not significantly improve student performance on assessments. - Unlikely to increase passing rates without increased system readiness in support of students with disabilities. - Not suited for students for whom a paper-and-pencil test format presents a challenge. |

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| <p>State-level Appeal Process with Prescribed Conditions (e.g., GPA and attendance requirements, specific course requirements, taking CAHSEE, taking advantage of CAHSEE remediation, etc.)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considers multiple factors besides a single test score. - Indicators may be linked more directly to the educational program of individual students. - Allows for other demonstrations of student proficiency. - Allows state to collect data on how many students do not meet state requirement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No guarantee of consistency of implementation across classrooms (e.g., grades), schools, or districts. - Several of the possible appeal indicators are locally implemented and subjective, with the potential for widely different performance standards. - Significant infrastructure at the local and state level is required to implement and monitor the process. - Entails significant expense for implementation and oversight. - The subjective nature of an appeals system could be viewed as a side- or back-door option designed solely to allow more students to pass. - Unlikely to increase passing rates without increased system readiness. - Disregards intent of CAHSEE legislation (standardization of knowledge for all students in state). - Degree of complexity may limit the number of students who could pursue a state-level appeal. |
| <p>Coursework that reflects standards assessed on the CAHSEE in combination with specific score on CAHSEE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for use with class of 2006. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No statewide curriculum; therefore, no consistency across districts and state. - Would have to determine what score on CAHSEE in combination with a sufficient grade in coursework would have the same rigor as passing the CAHSEE. |

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| Locally developed assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local control. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No guarantee of consistency across districts. - Disregards intent of CAHSEE legislation (standardization of knowledge for all students in state). - No guarantee of quality or adherence to testing standards. - State approval difficult to implement; additional staffing required. |
| Equivalent CAHSEE courses (e.g., summer school CAHSEE equivalent course.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could be implemented for non-passers in the class of 2006. - The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Student motivation to remain in school may increase. - Multiple methods of demonstrating equivalent achievement are recognized. - Those closest to the student's work (e.g., teachers, IEP team) can evaluate the student's achievement level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No statewide curriculum. Therefore, no consistency across districts. - The differences among courses may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma. - Ensuring standard content and application of courses across the state is difficult. - Administration and monitoring of the system are difficult. |

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| Alternative courses as core courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Alternative courses offer greater flexibility and are more appropriate for some students. - Those closest to the student's work (e.g., teachers, IEP team) can evaluate the student's achievement level. - General education and special education staff have opportunities for closer ties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates two sets of expectations, one for the general student population and one for some students with disabilities. - The differences among courses may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma. - Ensuring standard meaning and application of courses across the state is difficult. - Administration and monitoring of the system are difficult. - Alternative courses may reduce standardization for students across the state. - Determining the best set of courses for each student may be difficult. - Schools and districts will need to develop new courses and adapt existing ones. |

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| <p>Tiered diploma system (e.g., Tier 1 diploma for meeting all graduation requirements except the CAHSEE and Tier 2 diploma for meeting all graduation requirements including the CAHSEE)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Multiple levels of achievement are recognized. - Such diplomas are perceived to be successful in several states. - Tiered diplomas may be effective in communicating specifically what the student has achieved. - Could be implemented for class of 2006. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The differences among diplomas may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma. - May promote tracking of at-risk student groups, including students with disabilities, into lower-level courses and diploma tiers. - Postsecondary institutions and employers may not universally accept these diplomas. - The state would face an increased burden to inform the public about the different tiers of diplomas. - Students with disabilities may face reduced access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be attained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE proficiency standard. - Administration of the system is difficult. |

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| <p>Level diploma (diploma is based on the match between student's achievement levels and postsecondary goals)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Real-world expectations and student goals are linked to the diploma. - Number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Multiple levels of achievement are recognized. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring standard meaning and application of diplomas across the state would be difficult. The burden on schools to inform the public about the different diploma levels increases. - Identifying and differentiating "real-world" academic expectations and determining whether students have met them may be difficult. - Tracking of at-risk student groups, including students with disabilities, into lower-level courses and diplomas may increase. - The migration of students whose goals change during high school into a different diploma track may be difficult to monitor. - The public may value different levels of diplomas differentially. - Students with disabilities may face reduced access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be attained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE proficiency standard. |

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| Career-Technical Diploma | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Consistent with the goals of many students with disabilities. - Students and employers will benefit from students having an endorsement of implied expertise. - Can be incorporated into a tiered diploma option. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entails extensive study of the requirements for several industries and entry-level jobs to ensure proper preparation of students (academically and job-specific). - It is uncertain what value the business community would place on a career technical diploma. - May not easily accommodate the migration of students whose goals change during high school into a different diploma track. - May narrow the focus of students with disabilities primarily to nonacademic courses. - May entail prohibitive costs for developing sufficient courses to support it. |

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| Special Education Diploma | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase. - Student motivation to remain in school may increase. - The diploma can be tied directly to the expectations in each student's IEP. - Awarding the diploma recognizes multiple levels of achievement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The separate diploma may promote tracking of students with disabilities into lower-level courses and diploma tiers. - The separate diploma may place students with disabilities at a disadvantage with respect to access to postsecondary education and future employment. - Students with disabilities may have less access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be obtained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE level. - Administration of the system is difficult. - Ensuring standard meaning and application of diplomas across the state is difficult. - Differentiates students with disabilities from the general student population, which may be inconsistent with state and federal statutes and responsible public policy. |
| Certificate of Completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The certificate can be tied directly to the expectations in each student's IEP. - This option is consistent with current state statutes, regulations, and practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not equivalent to a high school diploma. - Certificates of completion may promote tracking of students with disabilities into lower-level courses. - Not having a diploma places many students at a disadvantage with respect to access to postsecondary education/training and future employment. - This option differentiates students with disabilities from the general student population, which may be inconsistent with state and federal statutes and responsible public policy. |