Program History

Implemented in 2004, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) is a collaborative effort between the California State University (CSU), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the State Board of Education to determine high school student readiness to do college-level work in English language arts and math and to provide students opportunities to improve skills during their senior year. On September 28, 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 946 enabling the California Community College system to implement the EAP. This bill enables community colleges to work with their local high schools and CSU, through the EAP, to address the high number of students who are unprepared for college-level course work.

Program Description

The EAP was designed to build off the state’s Standards Testing and Reporting (STAR) accountability program for public K-12 schools. High school juniors taking the California Standards Tests (CST) have the option of completing fifteen additional multiple-choice questions on both the math and English CST, as well as writing a separate essay. Students receive their test results during the summer before their senior year. Students who demonstrate proficiency for college-level coursework are exempt from taking the California State University (CSU) and participating California Community College (CCC) placement tests for English and mathematics. These students move directly into college-level classes upon enrollment. Students who are identified as conditionally college ready in English or math will need to take an approved subject matter class and earn a “C” or higher in their senior year in order to be exempt from placement testing in those subjects upon entering the CSU. Individual CCCs will implement requirements for students to demonstrate readiness at their respective campuses. Students not demonstrating college readiness have the opportunity to enroll in English and/or mathematics classes that will include additional instruction during their senior year to prepare for placement exams necessary at CSU and CCC campuses.

Critical Issue

California K-12 education is currently transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. AB 484, effective January 1, 2014, eliminates the existing STAR accountability program and establishes the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which will include the EAP. The foundation of the new assessment system is the Smarter Balanced computer-based assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Previously, 11th grade students who were eligible to take the CST for English–Language Arts or Algebra II or Summative High School Mathematics were eligible to participate. The transition to the new assessment allows for the EAP to be embedded in the new exam with no additional questions required. This change allows all California 11th grade students to participate in the EAP and receive early signals about their readiness for college level English and math courses.
Benefits

- Students get an early signal about their preparedness for college. Those who find that they are not proficient in mathematics or English have their senior year to improve their skills in these areas. EAP aligns with California high school standards and tests and makes a connection with a student’s readiness for college.
- Students who score “college ready” on the EAP in mathematics or English are exempted from taking placement tests at CSU campuses and currently (in English, math or both) at 76 participating community colleges.
- Provides high school seniors with a “wake-up call” that will enable them to make the most of their last year in high school to prepare for college.
- Given that a majority of California’s high school graduates attend community college soon after graduation, the inclusion of the California Community Colleges in the EAP increases the relevancy of the CST.