



## **Struggling to Succeed: What Happened to Seniors Who Did Not Pass the California High School Exit Exam?**

California Dropout Research Project Report #11  
June 2008

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## ABSTRACT

Since 2006, students in California have been required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to receive their high school diploma. Most students have either passed the CAHSEE by their senior year or dropped out. However, more than 70,000 high school seniors in the 2007 graduating class had not passed the CAHSEE, yet chose to remain enrolled in school rather than abandon their education. A better understanding of these students and their experiences could help improve the state's graduation rate. This report summarizes findings from a study of 167 twelfth graders from the class of 2007 in four California public school districts. Participants were randomly selected from a group of students who did not pass the CAHSEE as of the fall semester of their senior year. These students were unique because they were at "high academic risk" given their poor performance on the CAHSEE, but they were also "persistent" as they were still enrolled in school despite their academic struggles. Participants were surveyed in the spring of their senior year and again the following fall to determine what happened to these students. The findings reveal characteristics and outcomes of a unique population of students who, despite knowing they had taken and not passed the CAHSEE multiple times, still enrolled in school for their senior year. Overall, these students did not resemble high school dropouts in traditional characteristics. The majority of these students attended class regularly, generally avoided trouble, felt connected to their schools, and held high educational values and hopes for their future. Most of these students were English Learners who struggled with their English language skills. This particular group of students appears willing to work hard to earn an education and appear to be looking for opportunities to achieve this objective.

*The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Russell Rumberger who was responsible for developing the initial draft of the survey in 2006.*

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## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### ***In Brief***

Since June 2006, students in California have been required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to receive their high school diploma (California Department of Education, 2007a). California Department of Education (CDE, 2007b) data reveal a stable trend of tens of thousands of students dropping out of high school during grades 9, 10, and 11, but since 2000 there has been a relative increase in the number of students who have dropped out after entering grade 12. Better understanding the characteristics and educational experiences of the group of students who have not passed the CAHSEE as of the fall of their twelfth-grade year is of great interest, particularly to gain further understanding of factors associated with students choosing to drop out and those who pursue other viable education alternatives.

### ***Primary Purpose***

Data from the CDE reveal that between 2000-2006, whereas the number of students who dropped out of school was relatively stable in grades 9, 10, and 11, the number of dropouts in Grade 12 increased from 14,202 in 2002 to 33,286 in 2006 (CDE, 2007b; data available online). Using CDE data from 2000 to 2006, the range of the number of students who drop out of Grades 9-11 is 11,000–15,000 per grade level. For example, in 2006 11,627 ninth-grade students, 11,249 tenth-grade students, and 13,217 eleventh-grade students dropped out. These data show that by the time students are enrolled in Grade 12, there have already been a large number of dropouts (over 36,000 students dropped out from Grades 9-11 in 2006). Given the substantial number of students who drop out during Grade 12, there is great interest in better understanding who these youths are and what happens to them during and immediately after their senior year of high school. Furthermore, it is documented that 69% of students pass both the English Language Arts

and Mathematics sections of the CAHSEE in Grade 10, and 15% pass in Grade 11 for a total of 84% of students who have successfully passed by the time they enter Grade 12 (Human Resources Research Organization [HumRRO], 2007). Students who are still in school but have yet to pass the CAHSEE in Grade 12 warrant further understanding, particularly when considering the recent increase in the number of dropouts among high school seniors. The present study focuses on academically high-risk twelfth-grade students who had not passed the CAHSEE as of the fall term, but still persisted in their high school education through the end of their senior year.

### ***Contemporary Context***

In the current context of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB Act, 2001)*, federal law makes high schools accountable for the education of their graduating seniors. For many states, this accountability requirement took the form of an exit exam, which requires students to display a minimum level of academic skill in order to receive their diploma. According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2007a), the California High School Exit Exam was designed to improve student achievement and provide a standardized way for schools across the state to ensure reading, writing, and math competency for their graduating students. The CAHSEE is a relatively new requirement in California; thus, little is known about its potential influence on the graduation and future plans of students (see HumRRO, 2007 and CDE website [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/evaluations.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/evaluations.asp) for further details of independent evaluations).

This report presents results from a study in which information was gathered on characteristics and experiences of students who had not passed the exam as of the fall of twelfth-grade; hence, this group of students entered their senior year of high school vulnerable to not receiving a high school diploma even if they otherwise fulfilled all other diploma requirements.

This report also explores factors associated with passing the CAHSEE, graduating high school, and post-secondary school attendance for these students—including analyses of what happens to students who do not pass the CAHSEE.

### *Description of the CAHSEE*

Descriptions of the content and history of the CAHSEE can be found on the CDE website (2007a). In brief, the CAHSEE is a minimum competency test based on California content standards, and is divided into two sections: English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Although the CAHSEE was first administered in 2001, it was not until spring 2006 that—in addition to completing the necessary course credits—students in California were required to pass the CAHSEE in order to receive their high school diploma (see CDE, 2007a, for a full discussion regarding the development and implementation of the CAHSEE). Starting in Grade 10, students can take the CAHSEE up to six times until they pass both sections—with an additional summer administration offered to students who still have not passed at the end of their senior year. For students who struggle to pass the exam, schools are required to provide remedial opportunities and extra support, the form of which varies from district to district. Districts are also required to make modifications and/or provide accommodations when necessary for students with disabilities. Students enrolled in special education programs may qualify for an exemption from the exam. Students with limited English proficiency who are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) may hear test directions translated into their primary language or ask clarifying questions and receive answers translated into their primary language. ELL students may be allowed to use a language translation glossary, take the test in the same room as other ELL students, and be given additional assistance.



### *Analyses of the CAHSEE*

Analyses of the CAHSEE were sanctioned by the CDE in January 2000, when the exam was in its preliminary stages and not yet a graduation requirement. The task of conducting an independent evaluation of the CAHSEE was granted to the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). HumRRO has produced a yearly evaluation of the exam and in the most recent 2007 report, they examine the test in its first and second year as a graduation requirement. Approximately 100,000 students in 2006 and 110,000 in 2007, entered their senior year without having yet passed the CAHSEE. Of these students, approximately 25% had special education exemptions. When these students were excluded, in both 2006 and 2007, approximately 39,000 students did not pass the exam by the end of their senior year. Analyzing this population further for 2007, it was found that 46% of these students were English Language Learners (ELL), 62% were economically disadvantaged, and 65% were Hispanic (the percentage in each of these groups is similar in both 2006 and 2007). HumRRO data also revealed that about 40% of seniors in the class of 2006 who did not pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year continued to take the exam as repeat high school or adult education students. Of these, about 25% went on to pass the exam within the next year.

HumRRO conducted further analyses on the ELL students in their study. Not surprisingly, they found that ELL students were more likely to pass the mathematics section of the exam in comparison to the likelihood of passing the ELA section. In 2007, HumRRO found that only 18% of ELL twelfth-graders who were still taking the CAHSEE passed the ELA section by the end of the school year. This finding was related to how long the ELL student had been enrolled in United States schools, as more recently enrolled students had lower passing rates on the ELA section. The study also examined students who had been reclassified as having

English proficiency (RFEP) and found that they actually did slightly better on the ELA than the mathematics section, which was comparable to the general population of students. The RFEP students also had higher passing rates on the ELA and mathematics sections than ELL students and English-only students. HumRRO hypothesized that RFEP students perform better than ELL students because they have had experience taking language tests, as the California Expressive Language Development Test (CELDT), a requirement to be reclassified as fluent in English, is administered annually starting in kindergarten until ELLs demonstrate English proficiency.

HumRRO (2006) also conducted a survey for students who had not yet passed the CAHSEE and found that over 60% of seniors entering their final year reported that the exam was the factor most likely to prevent them from graduating. Another student survey found that 89% said they needed to work harder in some way to meet the CAHSEE requirements, 40% claimed to be working harder in their classes, 20% were going to take extra classes, 16% were repeating a course to learn the material better, and approximately 15% were getting help outside the classroom. Approximately 20% of twelfth-graders reported that the CAHSEE covered material they did not learn in their classes. In 2007, HumRRO also asked students what they thought they would do after they completed high school and found a large majority were planning to pursue further education. Finally, in a survey of principals, the top barrier reported as preventing students from passing the CAHSEE was a language barrier, followed by poor school attendance.

### ***Relevant School Dropout and Completion Literature***

In order to guide the focus of the current study, surveys were developed by drawing upon research examining high school dropout and school completion. Many scholars have studied the characteristics of students who do not complete high school, and the current study compares how the population of high school dropouts may or may not compare to the current study's population

of students who persist through high school but do not graduate and/or do not pass the CAHSEE. The extant literature includes over 125 variables associated with school dropout and identifies a range of factors that may put students at risk for dropping out or increase their chances of school completion (Rosenthal, 1998; Rumberger, 2004). Below is a brief summary of important variables examined in this study, including student factors, school factors, and family factors.

### ***Student Factors***

Risk factors such as a history of poor academic achievement (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002), grade retention (Jimerson, Ferguson, Whipple, Anderson, & Dalton, 2002), and behavior problems (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005) are associated with poor school completion outcomes. Students who take on adult responsibilities such as working full-time or being a parent also tend to drop out at higher rates (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Rosenthal, 1998). Personal factors such as low self-esteem or self-confidence, impulsivity and low levels of self-control, and low educational self-expectations have also been identified as risk factors (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Rosenthal, 1998).

### ***School Factors***

“Disliking school” has been the most frequently cited reason why students drop out of school (Ekstrom, 1986; Rumberger, 1987). Other research has focused on demonstrating the link between student engagement and school completion (Finn & Rock, 1997; Reschly & Christenson, 2006). Additionally, a sense of school belonging has been associated with better academic outcomes for Mexican-American and other Latino high school students (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Sanchez et al., 2005). Some research has found that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to complete high school (Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004), and similarly positive academic experiences have been found for Latino students

participating in extracurricular activities (Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). Emergent research also shows that student engagement impacts friendship networks and subsequent school completion/dropout in ways that may or may not differ by race/ethnicity (Ream & Rumberger, in press).

### ***Family Factors***

Family factors such as socioeconomic status, minority group status, parental employment status, single parent households, and home languages other than English have been found influential regarding school completion rates (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner, 2006; Rosenthal, 1998; Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). Although the dropout rate for Latino youths has declined somewhat in recent years, dropout rates for Latino youths have consistently remained higher than rates for other ethnic groups (Jimerson et al., in press). Additionally, parent expectations for the level of their child's educational attainment has been found to be associated with a variety of educational outcomes for high school students (Jeynes, 2007). Factors involving parent communication and support have also been associated with positive academic outcomes for Latino high school students (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, & Bamaca, 2006; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Eamon, 2005).

### ***Reflections on School Completion Literature***

Although much information is available regarding risk factors for high school dropouts in general, less is known regarding the school completion experiences of ELL students. This population of students may be particularly vulnerable for deleterious educational outcomes given their lack of language proficiency. A statistic that may shed light on school completion for ELL students is that an alarming 36.5% of Latino young adults (ages 16-24) born outside the United States (who immigrate to the United States during their childhood) do not complete a high school

education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Similarly, a recent report of school completion and dropout in California revealed that more than 40% of Latino students drop out (WestEd, 2005). The dropout rate is halved among *non-immigrant* Latinos, however. Smith's (2003) related findings in *The American Economic Review* are particularly compelling in that he tracked educational *attainment* among Latinos of Mexican descent over successive generations rather than taking a single snapshot of Latinos in any one year. The high Latino dropout rate likely reflects many complex issues, such as language acquisition as well as a variety of issues such as acculturation. Cognitive academic language proficiency skills take an average of five to seven years to develop. Therefore, ELL students may be at a disadvantage for fulfilling academic requirements, including the ELA section of the CAHSEE. Given the large and growing population of Latino students in California, the issue of the interplay between language acquisition and standards/accountability needs to be addressed in future efforts to reduce the education gap.

### **Current Study**

The purpose of the present study was to provide further information and insights regarding the unique group of students who were still enrolled in school but had not passed the California High School Exit Exam as of the fall of their twelfth-grade year. Student participants in this study entered Grade 12 during the 2006-2007 academic year and were enrolled in one of four school districts in southern-central California coastal regions. The districts from which this sample was selected included urban, suburban, and more rural communities. Although this sample is not representative of the entire state of California, it nonetheless provides sufficient information with which to better understand the factors associated with high school completion among high school seniors who have not passed the CAHSEE. See Appendix 1 for a brief

summary of participating school districts. School district liaisons randomly selected students (50, 50, 49, and 18 students from each of the four districts, for a total of  $N = 167$ ) to participate in the study from a list of students who had not yet passed both sections of the CAHSEE as of the fall of their senior year. For the purposes of this report, these students are considered to be of “high academic risk” given that they had not yet passed the CAHSEE by fall of their twelfth-grade academic year (these students are among the 16% of high school seniors who have not passed the exam as they begin Grade 12. These students can also be considered educationally “persistent” because they continued to persist in their education through their senior year of high school, despite the setback of not yet having passed the CAHSEE.

Student participants completed the initial survey during the spring of their senior year to gather further information on their backgrounds, educational experiences, and education expectations. See Appendix 2 for the complete initial survey. The follow-up telephone survey with the students (43, 44, 47, and 14 students, respectively,  $n = 148$ ) during the fall after twelfth-grade was completed. This follow-up survey yielded data on educational outcomes, work experiences, and life satisfaction. See Appendix 3 for the complete follow-up survey.

Additionally, demographic information on students was obtained from each school district to determine ethnicity, gender, birth date, language proficiency, home language, free/reduced lunch status, special education status, discipline referrals during the 2006-2007 school year, absences during the 2006-2007 school year, number of credits earned as of spring 2007, GPA as of spring 2007, standardized state test scores during the 2005-2006 school year (note that Grade 11 test scores were used because Grade 12 students do not take the standardized state tests), and CAHSEE pass/not pass status as of spring 2007. See the Appendices for more detailed information on measures used in this study.

## Research Questions

Results of the current study are reported in three sections:

1. Results from the *initial survey* provide information regarding the characteristics and experiences of students who had not passed the exam as of the fall of Grade 12. Questions such as the following are answered in this section: What are the demographic backgrounds of these academically high-risk but persistent students? Specifically, language, socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnic backgrounds will be examined. What have these high-risk but persistent twelfth-graders experienced up to this point in their academic careers? Specifically, academic experiences, educational placements, behavior problems, school perceptions and involvement, educational plans/self-expectations, work experiences, and personal/family/friend characteristics will be examined.
2. Results from the *follow-up survey* describe what happened to these academically high-risk but persistent students following their senior year of high school. Questions such as the following are answered in this section: What percentage of these high-risk but persistent students graduated high school and enrolled in post-secondary school? What kind of self-expectations for educational attainment do these students hold for themselves? What kind of work experiences and life satisfaction do these students report following their senior year?
3. Results of *outcome analyses* are provided to explore what factors predict which students eventually passed the CAHSEE, as well as other educational outcomes. Questions answered in this section include: What characteristics predict which of these academically high-risk but persistent students eventually succeeded in passing the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year? What characteristics predict which of these

students graduated high school? What characteristics predict which of these students enrolled in post-secondary education? What characteristics predict which of these students did not graduate, but pursued other viable educational options?

## **SECTION 1: INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS**

The initial survey provided data on student participants during the spring of Grade 12. Data from the initial survey provide information regarding student demographics; academic experiences; educational placements; behavioral problems at school; perception, values, and involvement in school; educational plans and self-expectations; work characteristics; and student, family, and friends' characteristics. Additional demographic information obtained from the school districts is also provided.

### **Demographics**

#### *1.1 Basic Demographics*

Demographic information on this sample of high academic risk students was obtained from self-reported data on initial surveys, as well as from data obtained through school district databases. **The vast majority of participants were Latino students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.** Of the 167 students in the present study, there were 83 males and 84 females of which 87% were Latino, 4% White, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% African American, and 1% American Indian. Their ages ranged from 17 to 21 years, with an average age of 18.5 years. A large majority (78%) were considered to be of low socioeconomic standing based on their eligibility for the free lunch program. See Table 1.1 for a summary of basic demographic characteristics.



## 1.2 *Language Demographics*

Initial survey data also provided language demographic information such as language history, involvement in language programs at school, as well as students' perceptions of their proficiency in both English and Spanish. **A large number of participating students reported being native Spanish speakers.** In fact, 75% of students reported that English was not their native language—and 93% of these non-native English-speaking students identified Spanish as their native language. From school archival data, Spanish was considered the home language for 78% of students in this sample, 15% had English as their home language, and 7% had another language (i.e., Mixteco, Cambodian, Farsi, Korean, Filipino, or Thai) listed as their home language. Well over half (59%) of the participating students reported having been in an English as a Second Language (ESL) course or program at their school. See Table 1.2 for a summary of language demographics.

## 1.3 *Language Proficiency*

**Data obtained from school records revealed that a majority of these students were considered English Language Learners (ELL).** Seventy-nine percent of students in the sample were ELL compared to 13% of students who spoke only English. Schools may also reclassify a student's ELL status and 7% were reclassified as English proficient. See Table 1.3 for data on language proficiency.

## 1.4 *Perceived Language Proficiency*

Students reported their perceived level of language proficiency in the initial survey. **Participants reported a relatively stronger grasp (i.e., understanding, speaking, and reading) of the Spanish language as compared to the English language.** Fifty-eight percent reported understanding spoken Spanish “very well,” as compared to the 45% who reported

understanding spoken English very well. Sixty-two percent reported speaking Spanish very well, as compared to 32% for English. Forty-nine percent reported reading Spanish very well, as compared to 32% for English. Finally, 43% reported writing Spanish very well, as compared to 33% for English. See Table 1.4 for a summary of perceived language proficiency.

## **Academic Experiences**

### *1.5 Academic Achievement*

**Students in this study demonstrated a wide range of scores on measures of academic competency.** The current sample had an average GPA of 2.33 ( $SD = .57$ ), ranging from 0.66 to 3.78. On the California Standards Tests (CST), the majority of students scored below basic or far below basic (87% for math, 81% for English). In regards to credits earned, students completed an average of 231 ( $SD = 34.18$ ) credits by the end of their senior year. Credits earned ranged from 100 to 335. See Table 1.5 for a summary of academic achievement.

### *1.6 Time Spent on Homework*

Another area in which data were collected was academic behavior—specifically, time spent on homework each week. **All participants reported spending some time engaged in homework each week, most reported at least 1 to 3 hours a week.** A large percentage of students (82%) reported spending between 1 to 9 hours on homework each week, both in and out of school. A smaller proportion (12%) indicated spending higher amounts of time on homework. Out of all the possible response options, the highest percentage (46%) of students reported spending between 1 to 3 hours on homework each week. See Table 1.6 for a summary of time spent on homework.

## 1.7 Experience with the CAHSEE

Students reported the number of times they had taken the CAHSEE English and Math sections as of spring their senior year and the results revealed a wide range of experiences. Fifteen percent of students reported having taken the CAHSEE English section just once (16% took Math just once), and 12% reported having taken the CAHSEE English section more than five times (7% took Math more than five times). **These data revealed that students who did not pass the CAHSEE as of their senior year represent a wide range of prior experiences with the CAHSEE including both students who have had minimal attempts at passing the CAHSEE, as well as students who have attempted to pass the CAHSEE on numerous prior occasions.**

**The majority of students in this sample were involved in activities to help them prepare for the CAHSEE** (with only 8% reporting no involvement in special preparation activities). Many students reported having a special class to learn material for the exam (64%), reviewing the material in class (49%), and tutoring to help them prepare for the exam (26%). When students were asked about where they went for information about passing the exam, the majority of students reported going to their guidance counselors (74%) and teachers (68%). Some students also reported getting information from other sources such as friends (38%), tutors (20%), parents (22%), siblings (10%), other relatives (7%), and coaches (3%). These data show that most students in this academically vulnerable sample reported being involved in special efforts to help them prepare for the exam and having various people—especially school staff—to go to for information about passing the CAHSEE.

School districts provided data on whether or not students had passed the CAHSEE as of the spring of their senior year. The data showed that 66% of students had passed the Math

section of the CAHSEE, but only 26% had passed the English section of the CAHSEE by the spring of their senior year. It should be noted that these percentages reflect those students who had not yet passed in the fall but succeeded in passing by the spring of that same year. **Eighty percent of this high academic risk sample failed to fully pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year.** This percentage from the current study is higher than results found in the HumRRO 2007 report, in which 52% of students who had not passed the CAHSEE at the beginning of their senior year failed to pass the CAHSEE by the end of that year. Demographic data may help explain these different findings. While HumRRO reported 52% ELL, 66% economically disadvantaged, and 66% Latino students in their sample, our sample contained 79% ELL, 78% economically disadvantaged, and 87% Latino. It appears that the sample in the current study faced higher demographic risk factors, which may help explain their poorer CAHSEE performance. See Table 1.7 for a summary of student experiences with the CAHSEE.

## **Educational Placements**

### *1.8 Educational Programs*

**According to school data, 15% of the sample currently had Special Education status during their senior year.** Based on student surveys, 19% of students reported ever having been in a special education program. Seventeen percent of students reported ever having been involved in a vocational program in high school. See Table 1.8 for a summary of student involvement in various educational programs.

### *1.9 Grade Retention*

Students reported in the initial survey whether or not they ever experienced grade retention, and at which grades they were retained. **The majority of participating students had not been retained, but 16% reported a history of grade retention.** Of those students who had

been retained, a variety of grade levels were reported regarding when students experienced being held back in school. Twelfth grade and first grade were the most frequently reported grade levels at which students were held back, at 21% and 18%, respectively. It should also be noted that 11 students reported being retained more than once—thus, 41% of retained students had been retained more than once. It is important to note that the participating students were high school seniors and previous literature reveals that students who are retained are likely to leave school before their senior year (see Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2003). See Table 1.9 for a summary of grade retention experiences.

### **Behavior Problems at School**

#### *1.10 Tardies, Truancy, Absences, Not Following School Rules*

On the initial survey, students were asked to report how many times they had been tardy, truant, or absent during the second semester of the past school year—as well as how many times they were in trouble for not following school rules. Results showed a wide variety of experiences with these problem behaviors. **Although many students reported having never or rarely been tardy, truant, absent, or in trouble for not following school rules, a handful did indeed report that these behaviors/events had occurred 10 or more times (i.e., 16% for tardies, 8% for truancy, 13% for absences, and 3% for not following school rules).** Additional data were obtained from school district records on student absences, revealing that students were absent an average number of 7.5 days for the school year—with a range of 0 days to 48 days, and the majority falling under less than 20 days absent. See Table 1.10 for a summary of these results.

#### *1.11 Suspensions, Transfers, Expulsions*

Students also reported on the initial survey how many times they had been put on in-school suspension, given out-of-school suspension, transferred to another school for disciplinary

reasons, and/or expelled from school during the second semester of the past school year. **The majority of participating students reported not being involved in any of these types of disciplinary sanctions.** Eighty-nine percent had never had in-school suspension, and 93% had never had out-of-school suspension. Ninety-eight percent of students had never been transferred to another school for disciplinary reasons, and 98% had never been expelled from school. However, 10% received in-school suspensions and 7% received out-of-school suspensions to varying degrees of frequency. Also, 3% had been transferred, and 2% expelled. See Table 1.11 for a summary of these results.

### **Perceptions, Values, and Involvement in School**

#### *1.12 Student Perceptions of School / Education*

Students completed a school connectedness scale on the initial survey, indicating how close they felt to people at school, how happy they were to be at their school, how much they felt like they were a part of the school, how fairly they felt teachers at school treated students, and how safe they felt at school. **In general, students reported highest percentages of feeling connected to school or not being sure how they felt.** For each connectedness item, over half (between 54% and 66%) reported agreeing moderately or strongly. Although numbers were lower for students reporting that they did not feel connected, it should be noted that 19% reported not feeling close to people at school; 14% were not happy to be at their school; 22% did not feel like they were a part of their school; 19% did not feel teachers treated students fairly at their school; and 21% did not feel safe at school. The school connectedness scale results revealed an overall average score of 2.63 (on a 0-4 scale), indicating that students felt generally neutral-to-moderately connected at school. This finding is relatively consistent with school connectedness results from other studies of randomly sampled adolescents (Sharkey, You, &

Schnoebelen, in press). Students in the current study of high academic risk youth actually reported slightly higher levels of school connectedness. See Table 1.12 for a summary of school connectedness.

### 1.13 *Value of Education*

Students also completed a scale indicating their beliefs about the value of education. Scale items included four statements about the value of education, including: *education is the key to success in the future; the way for poor people to get ahead is for them to get a good education; young people have a chance of making it if they do well in school; and regardless of where you come from, or who you are, if you work hard and get a good education, you have a chance to make it in America.* Students could respond that they strongly disagree (score of 0), disagreed (1), felt neutral (2), agreed (3), or strongly agreed (4) with each statement. **Responses revealed that three-quarters of the students agreed or strongly agreed with these statements; thus, reflecting the positive perception of the value of education among participants.** See Table 1.13 for a summary of these findings.

### 1.14 *Extracurricular Activity Involvement*

On the initial survey, students provided data describing whether or not they participated in various school-sponsored extracurricular activities, and to what degree they participated. **The majority of students reported participating in at least one extracurricular activity, with 38% not participating at all.** For each category, between 4% and 24% of students reported participating. Interscholastic sports, intramural sports, and academic clubs were the most highly cited activities (24%, 22%, 22%, respectively). See Table 1.14 for a summary of extracurricular activity involvement.

### 1.15 *Total Hours Spent on Extracurricular Activities Per Week*

Students also reported how many total hours per week they typically spent on school-sponsored extracurricular activities. **Most students reported spending less than 1–4 hours each week on extracurricular activities.** Among those involved in extracurricular activities, 30% reported no involvement; 15% reported spending less than 1 hour per week on extracurricular activities; and 33% reported spending 1–4 hours per week on extracurricular activities. Smaller percentages reported spending five or more hours per week on extracurricular activities. See Table 1.15 for a summary of time spent on extracurricular activities.

## **Educational Plans and Self-Expectations**

### 1.16 *Current Educational Plans*

On the initial survey, students were asked to report on their current educational plans (as of the spring of their senior year). Nineteen percent of students expressed plans for earning a regular high school diploma by re-enrolling in high school, independent study, adult secondary school, district courses to prepare for the CAHSEE, or community college adult education programs. Another 23% reported plans to earn an equivalent diploma by either passing the General Educational Development test (GED) or the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE). **The majority of participants reported plans to enroll in some form of postsecondary education.** Forty-one percent planned to enroll in community college, another 9% in trade/vocational school, and 6% in a four-year college. Only 4% of students reported having no current plans to attend further school. **From these results, it appears that in the spring of their senior year many of these students planned on earning their high school diploma and/or pursuing further education.** See Table 1.16 for a summary of current educational plans.



### 1.17 *Educational Self-Expectations*

Students were also asked on the initial survey how far in school they believed they would get. Only 8% reported that they would likely stop at getting their high school diploma through normal graduation or through the equivalent GED/CHSPE. Only 2% believed they would not finish high school or receive any sort of diploma. **A large majority of students expressed aspirations of pursuing further education.** Twenty-six percent responded that they believed they would finish one to two years at a community college, while about 50% of the students said they would go on to attend a four-year college or beyond. **These results reveal that students who had not passed the CAHSEE upon entering their senior year still tended to have high self-expectations of furthering their education.** See Table 1.17 for a summary of educational self-expectations.

## **Work Characteristics**

### 1.18 *Work Experiences*

Students in this sample reported a wide range of work experiences. **Most students reported work experience, although the range of current and previous employment varied considerably.** Thirty-one percent had never worked for pay; however, 33% were currently employed, 19% had a summer job only, and 17% had worked before but were not currently employed. Students demonstrated some variety regarding when they began their current or most recent jobs, but most students (83%) began their jobs within the past few years. Of the students who were employed during their senior year, 29% worked 0-9 hours, 25% worked 10-19 hours, and 46% worked 20 or more hours. Although the majority of the students (67%) reported not working during their senior year, one-third did—and according to their report, most of them worked long hours. Data on students who were currently, or at one time, employed showed that

most reported working between 1-9 hours (63%), with some (33%) working 10-19 hours and fewer (5%) working 20 or more hours on the weekends. See Table 1.18 for a summary of work experiences during the school year.

### 1.19 *Summer Work Plans*

**Most students planned to work during the summer.** When asked if they had a regular job lined up for the summer, 47% of the students reported that they already had a specific job opportunity planned for the summer. Another 45% claimed to be looking for a summer job, and 8% said that they had not done anything to find a summer job. Participating students had a variety of employment prospects, the most common being fast food workers, cashier/grocery clerks, salespersons, and construction related jobs. See Table 1.19 for a summary of students' summer work plans.

## **Student Characteristics**

### 1.20 *Self-prediction of Graduation Status*

Several sections of the initial survey completed in the spring of the senior year focused on personal characteristics and values of seniors who had not yet passed the CAHSEE. **Over three-fourths of the participating students (77%) predicted that they would go on to graduate from high school this year, whereas less than one-fourth (23%) believed they would not. When students who did not believe they would graduate from high school were asked what they thought would be the reasons for not graduating, most of the students (68%) reported that they would not pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE.** Less than half reported that they would not have enough credits and about a quarter believed not passing the math section of the CAHSEE would prevent them from graduating. Some students had concerns about more than one barrier, such as failing both sections of the CAHSEE or failing the

CAHSEE and lacking the necessary credits to graduate. See Table 1.20 for a summary of self-prediction of graduate status.

### 1.21 *Views on the Importance of Life Attainments*

On the initial survey, students also indicated the importance of various life attainments. **Trends in the data revealed that the most valued life attainments included getting a good education and not only getting a good job, but also being successful or an expert in their career field. Participating students also felt strongly about giving their future children opportunities that they never had.** In addition, while not as strongly supported by the overall sample, having strong friendships and being an active and informed citizen were reported to be areas of particular importance. Only 16% reported that “getting away from this area of the country” was very important to them, which was the lowest response for this category of importance out of all the items listed. See Table 1.21 for a summary of views on the importance of life attainments.

### 1.22 *Academic Self-Efficacy and Life Satisfaction*

**Overall, students on the initial spring survey reported an average academic self-efficacy score of 1.87, indicating a modest sense of believing that they could engage in the behaviors needed to succeed in school through effort and persistence.** On the *Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale* (SLSS, Huebner, 1991), participating students had a mean score of 3.91 on the initial survey, indicating that they felt a mild level of satisfaction with their current lives. Other studies using this scale have found typical adolescents score approximately 4.21 on the SLSS (Huebner et al., 2000; Suldo & Huebner, 2004). Thus, average SLSS score of students in this sample was just below a typical population. See Table 1.22 for a summary of self-efficacy and life satisfaction scores.

## Family Characteristics

The initial survey yielded information on a variety of family characteristics such as family structural living situation, parents' educational expectations as perceived by the students, and level of communication between students and their parents.

### 1.23 Family Structure

**Results showed that approximately half of the students reported living with both their mom and dad, 25% lived with their mom only, 5% with only their dad, and 12% without their mom or dad.** It should be noted that the survey question only asked whether the student was living with their mom or dad and did not specify whether they were stepparents or biological parents. Therefore, these results reflect students' interpretation of who they considered to be a "mom" and a "dad."

### 1.24 Parent Expectations

Previous sections provided information on students' self-expectations for educational attainment. The initial survey also contained items in which students indicated what they believe their mother and father think is the most important thing for them to do right after high school, including attending post-secondary school. **By far, the most frequently rated perceived mother and father expectations for student educational attainment was to attend college after high school.** Eighty-six percent of students indicated that their mothers viewed post-secondary school attendance as most important, and 70% of students indicated that their fathers viewed post-secondary school attendance as most important. The next highest option was getting a full-time job, in which 6% of mothers and 9% of fathers were believed to expect their children to do. Parent expectations to enter the military, get married, and do whatever you want were all endorsed by 2% or less of students in our sample. See Table 1.24 for a summary of these results.

### 1.25 *Parent-student Communication*

On a measure of family communication, participating students averaged a score of 1.31 on a scale from 0.00-2.00, indicating that students tended to discuss educational topics and other topics relevant to their lives with their parents to a moderate degree (between sometimes and often). When analyzing individual sections of the measure, students most often talked to their parents about grades, college attendance, and employment they would like after high school. Students reported talking to their parents somewhat less frequently about school activities, choosing classes at school, current events less frequently, and things that were troubling them. **The overall pattern revealed that students were more likely to talk to parents about all of these topics either “sometimes” or “always,” and less likely to report “never” talking to parents about these topics.** See tables 1.25a and 1.25b for a summary.

### **Friend Characteristics**

During high school years, peers play a tremendously influential role in students’ lives. Data were collected in the initial survey on characteristics of participating students’ friends.

### 1.26 *Friend Characteristics*

Students provided information in the initial survey regarding different outcomes their close friends were choosing (or likely to choose) after high school. Examination of the data revealed patterns in the number of friends, ranging from 0–4 or more, that were heading down various post-secondary school paths. For example, most students reported believing several friends or more were planning to enroll in some form of postsecondary education after high school, whereas many did not have any friends or only one friend planning on going into the military or becoming a homemaker. **Students reported a fairly even distribution of friends (from 0-4 or more) who had dropped out of high school without graduating, indicating that**

**many of these high academic risk youths have friends who were also academically at-risk.**

Many students also reported having one or more friends who planned to secure a full-time job right after high school. From these reports, it seems that students in this sample have friends with a variety of educational / vocational plans. See Table 1.26 for a summary of friend characteristics.

### *1.27 Friend Expectations*

**A large majority (77%) of participating students reported believing that their friends thought college was the most important thing for them to do after high school.** Six percent reported believing that friends would think the student getting a job right after high school is most important, and 9% reported believing that friends would think the student should do whatever he/she wants. See Table 1.27 for a summary of friend expectations.

## **SECTION 2: FOLLOW-UP SURVEY RESULTS**

As reported above in Section 1, the initial survey provided information about the student participants during the spring of their senior year in high school. Data from the follow-up survey reveals subsequent information about these students' outcomes during the fall following Grade 12. The follow-up survey was a shortened version of the initial survey that highlighted outcomes such as whether or not these students graduated high school and enrolled in post-secondary school, their updated self-expectations for educational attainment, actual work experiences following their senior year, and life satisfaction measures. The follow-up fall survey data were obtained from 148 (89%) of the 167 students who took the initial spring survey.

## Educational Outcomes

### 2.1 Graduation Status at Follow-up

Results from the follow-up survey reveal that 47% of the students in this sample of individuals who were at high academic risk went on to pass the CAHSEE and receive their high school diploma as of the fall following their senior year; however, 53% did not. Students who had not graduated at follow-up were asked to provide reason(s) for why they did not graduate. **A total of 72% of the non-graduates reported not passing the ELA section of the CAHSEE.** Thirty-four percent of non-graduates reported not passing the math section of the CAHSEE. As Richard Durán points out in related literature, lack of English proficiency can inhibit student performance even on *mathematics* tests (Durán, 1987, pp., 119-121). Many students reported a combination of reasons for not graduating, but 48% reported not graduating solely due to not passing the ELA section of the CAHSEE. This finding is not surprising because nearly 80% of students sampled were considered ELL with Spanish as their home language.

It should be noted that, as reported in Section 1.7, previous school records from the spring of the students' senior year indicated that 80% of the students had not fully passed the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year. Follow-up data reveal that many more went on to receive their diploma after their senior year. It seems that many of these students took advantage of extra support options and eventually passed the CAHSEE during the summer exam period after school ended.

Referring back to the initial survey, when students were asked if they expected to graduate from high school that year, approximately three-fourths indicated they would. **Of the students that reported they would not graduate from high school that year, 77% ended up not graduating and 24% did, indicating that they generally had a realistic appraisal of**

**their prospects of earning a diploma. Among the students who reported that they would graduate, more than half (55%) went on to actually graduate and receive their diploma by September 2007.** On the initial survey, students who did not believe they would graduate were also asked what might prevent them from doing so. These students listed the ELA section of the CAHSEE most frequently as the main factor that would prevent them from graduating. Follow-up data confirmed these predictions and found that for non-graduates, not passing the ELA section outweighed both not passing the mathematics section and not having enough credits to graduate. However, it appears that more students who did not graduate (29%) ended up not having enough credits to graduate—compared to the 13% who had originally been concerned about credits holding them back from graduating.

## *2.2. Current Educational Activities at Follow-up*

The follow-up survey also revealed what kinds of educational activities these students were involved in during the fall following their senior year. Students who had graduated with their diploma overwhelmingly reported involvement in post-secondary education. Sixty-six percent were attending a community college that fall, and an additional 24% reported that they had plans to enroll in further schooling within the upcoming year. Only 9% of the high school graduates said they did not plan to attend further schooling.

For students who did not receive their diploma, 13% were working toward their high school diploma by re-enrolling in high school, and 19% were pursuing options such as tutoring, independent study, adult secondary school, or district CAHSEE courses to work toward receiving their diploma. **Thirty-one percent of students who did not graduate high school were attending community college in the fall following their senior year. Twenty-five percent of these non-graduates who were attending post-secondary school were also**



**simultaneously working on passing the CAHSEE and earning their high school diploma through extra district courses, tutoring, or independent study.** In addition, 24% of non-graduates reported intentions to attend further schooling within the upcoming year. As with graduates, 10% of students who did not receive their diploma had no further educational plans. It was interesting to note that none of the participating individuals reported that they were attempting to earn their equivalent high school diploma by passing the GED and none were attending a 4-year college or university at the time of the follow-up survey. See Tables 2.2a, 2.2b, and 2.2c for summaries of educational plans for all students in the sample, high school graduates, and students who did not graduate high school.

### *2.3 Educational Self-expectations at Follow-up*

The follow-up survey in the fall 2007 also provided an opportunity to assess students' educational self-expectations following their senior year of high school. Students were asked how much education they thought they would eventually attain. Thirty-five percent reported self-expectations of attending community college. Even in this academically vulnerable group, 34% expected to complete a 4-year college degree and 12% reported expecting to complete education beyond four years of college. Comparisons of self-expectations from the initial survey to the follow-up survey show some interesting patterns. **On the initial survey, 26% had reported expecting to complete community college, and 24% had reported expecting to graduate from a 4-year university. At follow-up, these percentages increased to 35% for finishing community college, and 34% for graduating from a 4-year college.** Fewer students reported that they did not know how far they would get and fewer also believed they would stop at only a high school diploma. Despite their struggles, the educational aspirations of these students

actually increased after their senior year of high school. More students also reported aspirations of getting a Master's degree and beyond at the follow-up survey.

Comparisons were made between self-expectations of graduates and non-graduates. **Students who graduated with a diploma reported similar, though slightly higher, future educational expectations as those who did not graduate.** Thirty-nine percent of these graduates reported that they would complete community college and another 39% reported that they would eventually complete a 4-year college. Comparatively, 32% of those that did not graduate reported that they would go on to complete community college and 30% reported that they would eventually graduate from a 4-year college. These findings may reflect relevant literature regarding the differences between students' educational motivations/expectations and their actual *behaviors* (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). See Table 2.3 for a summary of educational self-expectations at follow-up for all students, those who graduated, and those who did not graduate.

## **Employment Outcomes**

### *2.4 Work Characteristics at Follow-up*

In the follow-up survey, details about students' employment status were also collected and compared to the initial survey. **In the fall following their senior year, half of the participants were employed, another 16% had a job only for the summer, 7% used to be employed but no longer were, and one-third had never worked for pay.** Of the students who were currently working for pay or had before, the average number of hours worked per week was 27 hours. Most worked in the 20–29 hour range, but a large portion (27%) also worked 40 or more hours per week. About 70% of these students worked weekends for an average of about 10 hours in total for Saturday and Sunday. A large majority of these students were employed within

the last year or two of the follow-up survey, meaning that they worked while attending high school.

Compared to the initial survey, a higher percentage of students were employed following their senior year—47% at follow-up compared to 33% at initial survey. Perhaps as might be expected, students also averaged longer working hours after graduation. On the initial survey, 46% of students reported to work 20 or more hours per week. On the follow up, 82% worked 20 or more hours, including 27% working 40 or more hours. A lower percentage of students were working weekends at the follow-up survey. See Table 2.4 for a summary of work characteristics at follow-up.

## **Life Satisfaction**

### *2.5 Life Satisfaction at Follow-up*

On the *Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (SLSS), students on the initial survey had a mean of 3.91 (on a range of 1-6) with a standard deviation of 1.03. At follow-up, the overall mean SLSS score for all students increased to 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.96. Students who graduated had a slightly higher life satisfaction with an average of 4.35, standard deviation of 0.85; whereas non-graduates had an average of 4.08 with a standard deviation of 1.04. As mentioned in Section 1, past research found late adolescents to have a mean SLSS score of 4.16 with a standard deviation of 1.10 and focused on a largely African American and European American population, whereas this sample was overwhelmingly Latino American. **It appears that participants reported SLSS scores that are generally similar to other populations, at both initial and follow-up points of data collection. It is also interesting to note the increase in students' life satisfaction after their senior year, as compared to during their senior year.** See Table 2.5 for a summary of these results.

### SECTION 3: OUTCOME ANALYSES RESULTS

Logistic regression analyses were completed to examine the association between specific variables traditionally associated with several student outcomes of interest in the present study. The four outcomes of primary interest were: (a) passing the CAHSEE (i.e., both language and mathematics as of spring 2007); (b) high school graduation (as of fall 2007); (c) post-secondary enrollment (as of fall 2007); and (d) did not graduate but pursued other viable educational options (as of fall 2007).

The initial survey included numerous variables of interest, including the following six composite variables: (a) youth's perception of the value of education, (b) academic self-efficacy, (c) life satisfaction, (d) parent-child communication, (e) school connectedness, and (f) extracurricular activities (see description of each of these composite variables in Appendix 4). Given the large number of ELL students ( $n = 127$ ), *t-tests* were completed to compare composite scores with non-ELL students ( $n = 31$ ). There were no significant differences found for extracurricular activities, school connectedness, parent-child communication, self-efficacy, and valuing education. However, the groups were significantly different on life satisfaction ( $p = 0.049^*$ ) with non-ELL students reporting slightly higher life satisfaction ( $M = 4.26$ ) on average, compared to ELL students ( $M = 3.87$ ).

#### ***3.1 Passing the CAHSEE***

**Logistic regression analyses revealed that only one of the six composite variables was significantly associated with passing the CAHSEE as of the spring 2007.** Life satisfaction, perhaps not surprisingly, was significantly associated with passing the CAHSEE ( $p = 0.02^*$ ). Students who passed the CAHSEE reported higher life satisfaction. See Table 3.1 for a summary of results of these analyses. Analyses with other variables of interest from the initial

survey revealed very few significant results. **However, those students whose home language was not English were significantly less likely to pass the CAHSEE.** Also, it was found that those students who had reported that they had a regular, full-time job lined up for the summer were significantly less likely to have passed the CAHSEE. This finding suggests that these students who had low expectations for passing the CAHSEE were pro-active in anticipating and arranging summer employment as a viable postsecondary option, relative to those who passed the CAHSEE. Student report of understanding spoken English and Spanish as well as speaking, reading, and writing in English and Spanish were also significantly related to passing the CAHSEE.

### ***3.2 High School Graduation***

**Logistic regression analyses revealed that only one of the six composite variables was significantly associated with high school graduation.** Valuing education was significantly associated with high school graduation ( $p = 0.04^*$ ). Paradoxically, students who did not graduate high school reported higher levels of valuing education than students who did graduate. These results are counterintuitive; however, one possible explanation might be that students who did not graduate were more vividly aware of the benefits that could come from earning a high school diploma. See Table 3.2 for a summary of results of these analyses. Analyses with other variables of interest from the initial survey revealed very few significant results. **Students who reported having close friends who had dropped out of high school without graduating were significantly less likely to graduate, however. Student reports of understanding spoken English as well as speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish were also significantly related to high school graduation.** These results involving perceived language proficiency suggest that students who report that they do not understand spoken English very well are less likely to

graduate, and students with less Spanish skills are more likely to graduate. It was also found that those students who had reported that they had a regular, full-time job lined up for the summer were significantly less likely to graduate from high school, which suggests that these students were pro-active in anticipating and arranging summer employment, relative to those who graduated. However, the group of students who would graduate in the spring reported expecting to work a higher number of hours during the summer.

### ***3.3 Post-Secondary Enrollment***

**Logistic regression analyses revealed that none of the six composite variables were significantly associated with post-secondary enrollment.** See Table 3.3 for a summary of results of these analyses. Analyses with other variables of interest from the initial survey revealed very few significant results. **Within the parent-child communication scale, a single item—having discussed “going to college” with parents was significantly associated with post-secondary enrollment.** Also, mom’s, dad’s, and self-expectation that it is important to go on to post-secondary school after high school were also significantly associated with post-secondary enrollment.

### ***3.4 Did Not Graduate, But Pursued Other Viable Educational Options***

In order to focus on what happened to students who did not graduate, multinomial regressions were run to determine what factors predicted the following four outcomes: (a) no current plans to attend school, (b) pursuing high school diploma, (c) intentions of someday going to post-secondary school, and (d) currently enrolled in post-secondary school. **None of the six composite variables were significantly associated with these outcomes.**

### ***3.5 Demographic and Achievement Characteristics***

**Logistic regression analyses revealed that student age and absences during Grade 12 were not significantly associated with passing the CAHSEE, high school graduation, or post-secondary enrollment.** Additionally, as would be expected considering previous studies, the number of credits a student had earned as of spring 2007 was associated with passing the CAHSEE, high school graduation, and post-secondary enrollment; and GPA was significantly associated with passing the CAHSEE and post-secondary enrollment. **Furthermore, in examining the association between performance on standardized achievement tests and the three outcomes, student scores on the English Language Arts section of the State standardized achievement test were significantly associated with passing the CAHSEE and high school graduation ( $p = 0.000^{**}$ ,  $p = 0.007^{**}$ ).** This finding further corroborates results indicating the importance of English language skills for students in this sample.

## **DISCUSSION**

As noted in the introduction to this report, data from the California Department of Education (CDE, 2007b) reveal that the number of dropouts in Grade 12 increased from 14,202 in 2002 to 33,286 in 2006. Furthermore, the CDE data also illustrate that by the time students are enrolled in Grade 12, there have already been a large number of dropouts (over 36,000 students dropped out from Grades 9–11 in 2006). Moreover, it is documented that 84% of students who persisted into Grade 12 passed the CAHSEE by the time they began their senior year. The present study focused on those students who had not passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as of the fall of their senior year of high school, in order to provide further information and insights into this population of students.

The following discussion of findings focuses on: (a) information regarding the characteristics and experiences of students who had not passed the exam as of the fall of Grade

12; (b) information regarding whether or not these students graduated high school and enrolled in post-secondary school, self-expectations for educational attainment, work experiences following senior year, and life satisfaction measures; and (c) information regarding what factors predict which students eventually passed the CAHSEE, as well as other educational outcomes.

### **Characteristics and Experiences of Students**

Regarding the characteristics of participating students who had not yet passed the CAHSEE as of the fall of Grade 12, the results of this study revealed information about the various background experiences of this particular population of students.

#### ***Demographic Characteristics***

The vast majority of participants were Latino students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A large number of participating students also reported being native Spanish speakers. The majority of these students were considered English Language Learners (ELL). Participants reported a relatively stronger grasp (i.e., understanding, speaking, and reading) of the Spanish language as compared to the English language. The districts from which this sample was selected included urban, suburban, and more rural communities. Although this sample is not representative of the entire state of California, it nonetheless provides sufficient information with which to better understand the factors associated with high school completion among high school seniors who have not passed the CAHSEE, particularly for Latino(a) students.

#### ***Academic Characteristics***

Students in this study demonstrated a wide range of scores on measures of academic competency. All participants reported spending some time engaged in homework each week, most reported at least 1 to 3 hours a week. Participants included both students who have had minimal attempts at passing the CAHSEE, as well as students who have tried to pass the



CAHSEE on numerous occasions prior to entering Grade 12. Approximately 15% of the participants had Special Education status during Grade 12, which is only slightly higher than district averages, and 16% reported a history of grade retention, which is a much smaller proportion than might be expected based on the relevant dropout literature. The majority of students in this sample were involved in activities to help them prepare for the CAHSEE.

### ***Discipline Characteristics***

Although many students reported having never or rarely been tardy, truant, absent, or in trouble for not following school rules, a handful did report that these behaviors/events had occurred 10 or more times. Many students reported having never or rarely been tardy, truant, absent, or in trouble for not following school rules, a handful reported that these behaviors/events had occurred 10 or more times. The majority of participating students reported not being involved in suspensions, expulsions, or transfers related to disciplinary sanctions and these factors appear to have played a minor part in whether or not these students received a diploma. In general, participants for the most part seemed motivated to attend school and did not present serious disciplinary challenges to the school staff.

### ***Individual Characteristics***

*Individual expectations.* Over three-fourths of the participating students predicted in the spring of their senior year that they would go on to graduate from high school, although the actual graduation rate was less. When students who did not believe they would graduate from high school were asked what they thought would be the reasons for not graduating, most of the students reported that they would not pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE. In fact, the CAHSEE exam itself presented the primary challenge to these students' receiving their diploma

because a majority of them otherwise participated regularly in school, received passing grades in their courses, and had enough credit to meet the diploma requirements.

*School connectedness.* A factor associated with school completion is the sense of connection students feel with the school (staff and peers). Most of this sample of students reported feeling positively connected to school, but there was a substantial minority who were neutral or not sure how they felt about their social bonds in school. The average of students' responses regarding the value of education revealed that students as a whole felt slightly connected. The majority of students reported participating in at least one extracurricular activity, with about one-third not participating at all. Most students reported spending less than an hour to four hours each week on extracurricular activities. Although there appears to be room to enhance the school connections of this group of students, not many of them reported having negative perceptions of their personal and academic connections to school.

*Education plans and expectations.* Over half of the participants reported plans to enroll in some form of postsecondary education, as most of these students planned on earning their high school diploma and/or pursuing further education. Three-quarters indicated that they expected to complete at least two years of post-secondary education. Despite what objectively can be described as having to cope with several years of educational challenges and ambiguity about their prospects of being able to earn a high school diploma, these students, as a whole, clung to their aspirations to receive as much education as possible. They generally appear to be a group of students who are looking for multiple educational opportunities and options.

*Employment.* Most students reported work experience, although the range of current and previous employment varied considerably; about one-third were currently employed. Most students planned to work during the summer. Employment is a reality for these students as it is

for many students pursuing postsecondary education. Opportunities for stable and meaningful employment are likely to be necessary for these students from low-income families to afford to attend junior college and other educational options. Employment is a variable to consider in relation to school completion because the literature has demonstrated that students who take on adult responsibilities such as working full-time tend to drop out at higher rates (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Rosenthal, 1998). However, this concern did not appear to be an issue within our sample.

*Life aspirations.* Patterns in the data revealed that the most valued life attainments included getting a good education and not only getting a good job, but also being successful or an expert in their careers. Participating students also felt strongly about giving their future children opportunities that they never had. Students in this sample had higher life aspirations than expected given extant literature regarding high school dropouts.

*Self-efficacy.* Overall, students on the initial survey reported an average self-efficacy score, indicating a modest sense of being able to control outcomes of their academic efforts through effort and persistence. Although this may not appear to be a strength for these students, it is important to note that they were at least able to maintain this positive level of self-beliefs about their educational pursuits despite several years of ambiguity about their educational status. In general, this group of students appears to have educational resilience.

### ***Communication with Parents***

The overall pattern revealed that students were more likely to talk to parents about each of the topics either “sometimes” or “always,” and less likely to report “never” talking to parents about these topics. Commonly discussed topics involved grades, going to college, or getting a job after school, while current events and things that were troubling them were less common

topics among students and parents. Research using nationally representative survey data shows that adolescents who “talk school” with their parents are more likely to graduate high school, and that this finding is true across social class groupings (Ream & Palardy, in press). About one-quarter of student participants reported living with their mom only, only 5% with only their dad, and 12% without their mom or dad. By far, the majority of students perceived that mother and father expectations for their education were to attend college after high school rather than other options to do after high school, such as get a job or get married. These results indicate that participating students have fairly strong levels of family support and expectations.

### ***Friends Characteristics***

Most students reported having friends who had dropped out of high school without graduating—indicating that many of these high academic risk youths have friends who likely were also academically at-risk. The literature shows that dropouts’ friends also often drop out of school (Carbonaro, 1998; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). However, it should be noted that participants reported even more friends that were going on to postsecondary education, pointing out that education is important within their friend groups as well. Also, over three-quarters of participating students reported believing that their friends thought college was the most important thing for them to do after high school, which suggests that participating youths also had positive peer influences on their educational aspirations. Current research has found that (a) having dropout friends increases the likelihood of dropping out, but that (b) having school-oriented friends decreases the likelihood of dropping out, and that (c) student engagement behaviors influence whether adolescents have street- or school-oriented friends in the first place (Ream & Rumberger, in press).

### ***Percent Passing the CAHSEE***

Over three-quarters of participating youth did not pass the CAHSEE by the end of Grade 12. Again, for most of these students, they had taken and failed the CAHSEE multiple times, yet many steadfastly remained committed to valuing and continuing their education as indicated by their attendance at school and educational aspirations.

### **Student Outcomes at Fall Follow-up**

The fall follow-up survey conducted in August 2007 revealed information about student outcomes following the completion of their high school senior year. The follow-up survey highlighted outcomes such as whether or not these students graduated high school and enrolled in post-secondary school, their self-expectations for educational attainment, work experiences following senior year, and life satisfaction measures.

### ***Educational Outcomes***

Although only 20% of students had passed both required sections of the CAHSEE as of the spring of Grade 12, many students took advantage of the summer test administration and 47% had successfully completed the CAHSEE as of August 2007, at which time they were awarded their high school diploma. These findings reflect similarities to HumRRO's 2007 report, which found that only 18% of ELL students passed the ELA section and 23% passed the Math section by the end of their senior year. They also found that about 40% of those who did not pass by the end of their senior year continued taking the CAHSEE, and more than a quarter eventually passed within the next year (HumRRO, 2007). At follow-up in the current study, about three-]–fourths of the non-graduates reported they were unable to pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE. Fewer students reported lack of credits or passing the Math section as the main factor that

prevented them from graduating. This indicates that the ELA section of the CAHSEE was the main reason that students in this sample were unable to receive their high school diploma.

Of the students that predicted they would not graduate from high school earlier that year, three-quarters did not graduate. Among the students who in the spring 2007 survey reported that they believed that they would graduate, half eventually graduated and received their diploma by August 2007. Of those students who did not graduate high school by the follow-up survey in August 2007, one-third were attending community college in the fall following their senior year. This indicates that a large portion of students who did not pass both sections of the CAHSEE in time to graduate from high school still pursued in their educational goals by attending community college. Community college offers the opportunity to progress towards a two-year or four-year college degree without a high school diploma, which is a choice relatively popular amongst these educational persisters. In addition, one-third of these non-graduates who were attending community college were also simultaneously working on passing the CAHSEE and earning their high school diploma through extra district courses, tutoring, or independent study.

### ***Educational Aspirations***

On the initial spring survey, one-quarter of the students reported expecting to complete community college, and one-quarter reported expecting to graduate from a 4-year university. At the follow-up fall survey, these percentages increased to one-third with aspirations for finishing community college, and one-third with aspirations for graduating from a 4-year college. Students who graduated reported similar, though slightly higher, future educational expectations than those did not graduate. Again, despite their educational challenges, many of these students actually raised their educational aspirations and goals.

### ***Employment Outcomes***

In the fall following their senior year, half of the participants were employed, another 16% had a job only for the summer, 7% used to be employed but no longer were, and a third had never worked for pay. Of the students who were currently working for pay or had before, the average number of hours worked per week was 27 hours. This suggests that students in the study were not choosing full-time employment over post-secondary education.

### ***Life Satisfaction***

It was apparent that participants reported SLSS scores that are generally similar to other populations, at both initial and follow-up points of data collection. It is also interesting to note the increase in students' life satisfaction after their senior year, as compared to during their senior year.

## **Factors Predicting Student Outcomes**

This study examined variables previously revealed as important in studies of dropout and school completion, including six composite variables: (a) youth's perception of the value of education, (b) youth self efficacy, (c) life satisfaction, (d) parent child communication, (e) school connectedness, and (f) extracurricular activities (see description of each of these composite variables in Appendix 4). The four outcomes of primary interest were: (a) passing the CAHSEE (i.e., both language and mathematics as of spring 2007); (b) high school graduation (as of fall 2007); (c) post-secondary enrollment (as of fall 2007); and (d) did not graduate but pursued other viable educational options (as of fall 2007). The most surprising findings were the *lack* of significance between the composite variables and the outcomes. In fact, of the six composites entered into the logistic regression analyses only one (life satisfaction) was significantly related to passing the CAHSEE, only one (valuing education) was significantly related to high school

graduation, and none of the composites were significantly related to post-secondary school attendance.

Students whose home language was not English were significantly less likely to pass the CAHSEE. Student reports of understanding spoken English and Spanish as well as speaking, reading, and writing in English and Spanish were also significantly related to passing the CAHSEE. Students' standardized achievement test scores in ELA were significantly related to passing the CAHSEE and graduating high school. It is clear from these results that students' language backgrounds and English language abilities are influential regarding educational outcomes, perhaps especially for those comparably resilient students who persevered in school into Grade 12 (in spite of language and SES challenges) but who have yet to pass CAHSEE.

Students who reported having close friends who had dropped out of high school without graduating were less likely to graduate. Student reports of understanding spoken English as well as speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish were significantly related to high school graduation.

Having discussed "going to college" with parents was significantly associated with post-secondary enrollment. In addition, perceived mom's, dad's, and self-expectation regarding the importance of the student going on to post-secondary school after high school were also significantly associated with post-secondary enrollment.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The current study sheds light on characteristics and outcomes of a unique population of students who, despite many challenges and/or experiences of failure throughout their education, still persisted in their high school education through the end of their senior year of high school. Despite knowing that they had taken and not passed the CAHSEE multiple times, they enrolled in school during their senior year. The majority of these students attended class regularly, did not



cause undue disciplinary problems, and engaged in day-to-day academic behaviors to earn enough units to meet high school diploma requirements. The lack of significant differences between participating twelfth-grade students on the various outcomes is a significant finding within this study. In particular, results highlight that the variables that consistently predict school completion and dropout among high school students in general *do not* provide prediction of the educational outcomes among this group of twelfth-grade students who persist in school despite significant difficulty passing the CAHSEE. It may be that the results of the present study do not mirror previous studies of school completion because students who are most vulnerable to dropping out of high school may have already left the schools prior to their senior year.

Although much of the literature on dropout and school completion fails to differentiate between students who drop out of school and students who stay in high school for four years but do not graduate, the results of the current study demonstrate that these two groups appear to represent two very distinct groups of youths. There is limited research on non-graduates who persist for all four years of high school. Some previous studies have shown that non-graduate persisters resemble high school graduates much more closely than they resemble high school dropouts, according to factors such as number of school absences, ability test scores, achievement test scores, under-achievement, and special education referrals (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989). The results of the current study reveal that non-graduate persisters have aspirations to continue their education. In fact, most indicate that they want to complete at least two years of post-secondary education.

Perhaps the main difference between students who experienced various educational outcomes in this study revolved around language experiences. It is clear that the English Language Arts portion of the CAHSEE is the predominant challenge that prohibits many of these

students from graduating. This is not surprising given most of these students are classified as English Language Learners. Recent immigrants to the United States may not have the five to seven years necessary to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency in English (Scribner, 2002), and thus, may repeatedly fail the CAHSEE despite best efforts in school. One area in which the current study does not provide information is the influence of immigrant status. We know from this study that students in their senior year reported having taken the CAHSEE anywhere from just once to the maximum number of times allowed during their regular high school calendar. One possible explanation for this range of experience is that some students may be recent arrivals to this country and may not have been here long enough to have previous opportunities to take the CAHSEE. Future research should examine the length of time a student has been in the United States and their ability to pass the CAHSEE. Fortunately, results indicate that many students take advantage of the opportunity to enroll in community colleges, which highlights the importance of providing educational support services that can help to facilitate the education transitions of these youth, particularly ELL youth within the community college context.

The CAHSEE was developed and implemented within an era of accountability. Too often the accountability of the system to provide educational supports to at-risk students is glossed over as tests are developed that determine student graduation and punish rather than protect students. There are high stakes associated with the CAHSEE given that students must pass in order to receive their high school diploma. This test has only been required since 2006, and it is important that evaluations continue to develop in order to thoroughly understand the CAHSEE and its potential influences on high school students' experiences of school completion. It is essential that policies, processes, and resources are provided to address the needs of students who

continue to persist despite failing to pass the CAHSEE. In many ways, these students who continue to meaningfully participate in high school during the senior year represent those that society has a vested interest to support. They are persistent, attempting to cope with life challenges in a positive way, and committed to attain the skills needed to be contributing community members. Ironically, in some ways, these students are not educational “failures” because many were unable to pass the CAHSEE and earn their high school diploma within normal time limits. Rather, they may represent that group of students who embody the American dream of seeing education as a pathway to a better life for themselves and their families. This particular group of students appears willing to work hard to earn an education and appear to be looking for opportunities to achieve this objective.

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**Appendix 1. Tables**

Following is the complete collection of tables referenced in the above report. Note that the overall sample size within this study was  $N = 167$ ; however,  $n$  is listed within each table, thus reflecting any missing data for individual survey questions. Variables with an asterisk were obtained from school district archival data. All other data was obtained from student surveys or through data analyses.

Table 1.1  
*Basic Demographics*

Variable	<i>n</i>	% (or range)	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )
Socioeconomic status*			
Free and reduced price lunch – Yes	114	78%	
Free and reduced price lunch – No	33	22%	
Age at graduation*	166	17.5–21.4	18.5 (0.7)
Gender*			
Male	83	50%	
Female	84	50%	
Ethnicity*			
Latino	145	87%	
White	7	4%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	4%	
African American	6	4%	
American Indian	2	1%	

Table 1.2  
*Language Demographics*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
English as Native Language		
Yes	41	25%
No	126	75%
Native Language (for non-native English speakers)		
Spanish	116	93%
Korean	2	2%
Filipino	1	1%
Farsi	1	1%
Cambodian	1	1%
Other	4	3%
Home Language*		
Spanish	129	78%
English	25	15%
Other (Mixteco, Cambodian, Farsi, Korean, Filipino, Thai)	12	7%
Ever in an ESL course or program		
Yes	92	59%
No	64	41%

Table 1.3  
*Language Proficiency*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
English Language Proficiency*		
English only	20	13%
Reclassified English proficient	11	7%
English language learner (ELL)	127	79%
Initial English Proficient	2	1%

*Note.* English language proficiency data was obtained from school district archival data. Initial English Proficient represents students for whom English was not the home language, however these students were English proficient when initially tested.

Table 1.4  
*Perceived Language Proficiency*

Variable	Not at all	Not well	Well	Very Well
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Understand Spoken English	0 (0)	20 (12)	70 (42)	75 (45)
Speak English	1 (1)	43 (26)	69 (42)	53 (32)
Read English	1 (1)	32 (20)	78 (48)	53 (32)
Write English	1 (1)	45 (27)	65 (39)	54 (33)
Understand Spoken Spanish	11 (7)	15 (9)	45 (27)	96 (58)
Speak Spanish	16 (10)	14 (8)	34 (20)	103 (62)
Read Spanish	20 (12)	21 (13)	44 (26)	82 (49)
Write Spanish	25 (15)	25 (15)	46 (28)	71 (43)

Table 1.5  
*Academic Achievement*

Variable	n	% (Range)	Mean (SD)
GPA*	166	0.66-3.78	2.33 (.57)
State Standardized Test Scores*			
Math scale scores	115	194-383	264 (34.04)
Math performance level			
1 (Far Below Basic)	47	41%	
2 (Below Basic)	53	46%	
3 (Basic)	13	11%	
4 (Proficient)	2	2%	
5 (Advanced Proficient)	0	0%	
English scale scores	149	154-378	259 (33.55)
English performance level			
1 (Far Below Basic)	85	51%	
2 (Below Basic)	50	30%	
3 (Basic)	11	7%	
4 (Proficient)	3	2%	
5 (Advanced Proficient)	0	0%	
Credits Earned (by the end of senior year)*	166	100-335	231 (34.18)

Table 1.6  
*Time Spent on Homework*

Variable	n	%
Time Spent on Homework Each Week		
None	0	0%
Less than 1 hour each week	10	6%
1 – 3 hours	76	46%
4 – 6 hours	39	23%
7 – 9 hours	22	13%
10 – 12 hours	9	5%
13 – 15 hours	4	2%
16 – 20 hours	6	4%
Over 20 hours each week	1	1%

Table 1.7  
*Experience with the CAHSEE*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Number of times taken CAHSEE English section		
0	0	0%
1	24	15%
2	31	19%
3	38	23%
4	38	23%
5	15	9%
More than 5	19	12%
Number of times taken CAHSEE Math section		
0	1	1%
1	26	16%
2	39	24%
3	44	27%
4	33	20%
5	10	6%
More than 5	11	7%
Activities Undertaken to Prepare for CAHSEE		
No special activities	14	8%
Reviewed material in class	82	49%
Had a tutor help to prepare for the exam	44	26%
Had a special class to learn material for exam	107	64%
Where Went for Information about Passing the Exam		
Guidance counselor		
Teacher	124	74%
Coach	114	68%
Parent	5	3%
Friend	37	22%
Brother or sister	64	38%

Other relative	16	10%
Tutor	12	7%
Clergy	34	20%
Other	0	0%
	9	5%
CAHSEE Status (by the end of senior year)*		
Passed Math section	88	66%
Not yet passed Math section	46	34%
Passed English section	38	26%
Not yet passed English section	108	74%
Overall CAHSEE status		
Passed	33	21%
Did not pass	128	80%

Table 1.8  
*Educational Programs*

Variable	<i>n</i>	% (Range)
Special Education Status*		
Yes	24	15%
No	139	85%
Ever Been in Special Education Program (IEP)		
Yes	28	19%
No	116	81%
Ever Been in a Vocational Program		
Yes	24	17%
No	117	83%

*Note.* Variables with an asterisk were obtained from school district archival data. All other data was obtained from student surveys.

Table 1.9  
*Grade Retention*

Variable	<i>n</i>	% (Range)
Ever Been Held Back / Repeated a Grade in School		
Yes	27	16%
No	140	84%
Grade at which Retained Students Were Held Back		
Kindergarten	2	5%
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	7	18%
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	1	3%
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	2	5%
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	3%
5 <sup>h</sup> grade	0	0%
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	3%
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	3	8%
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	3	8%
9 <sup>th</sup> grade	5	13%
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	4	11%
11 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	3%
12 <sup>th</sup> grade	8	21%

Table 1.10  
*Tardies, Truancy, Absences, and Not Following School Rules*

Variable	Never <i>n</i> (%)	1-2 times <i>n</i> (%)	3-6 times <i>n</i> (%)	7-9 times <i>n</i> (%)	10+ times <i>n</i> (%)
Tardies ("I was late for school")	31 (19)	42 (25)	52 (31)	15 (9)	26 (16)
Truancy ("I cut or skipped class")	57 (35)	61 (37)	24 (15)	8 (5)	13 (8)
Absences ("I was absent from school")	36 (22)	59 (36)	36 (22)	10 (7)	22 (13)
Not Following School Rules ("I got in trouble for not following school rules")	132 (80)	22 (13)	4 (2)	1 (1)	5 (3)

*Note.* Data are based on student report of how many times each behavior/event occurred in the second semester or term of the past school year.

Table 1.11  
*Suspensions, Transfers, and Expulsions*

Variable	Never <i>n</i> (%)	1-2 times <i>n</i> (%)	3-6 times <i>n</i> (%)	7-9 times <i>n</i> (%)	10+ times <i>n</i> (%)
In-school suspensions	147 (89)	12 (7)	4 (2)	2 (1)	0 (0)
Out-of-school suspensions	153 (93)	9 (5)	2 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Transferred to another school for disciplinary reasons	160 (98)	1 (1)	3 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Expelled from school	158 (98)	2 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)

*Note.* Data are based on student report of how many times each behavior/event occurred in the second semester or term of the past school year.



Table 1.12  
*School Connectedness*

Variable	Strongly Disagree <i>n</i> (%)	Moderately Disagree <i>n</i> (%)	Neutral <i>n</i> (%)	Moderately Agree <i>n</i> (%)	Strongly Agree <i>n</i> (%)
“I feel close to people at this school”	31 (19)	58 (35)	45 (27)	18 (11)	14 (8)
“I am happy to be at this school”	62 (38)	47 (28)	33 (20)	11 (7)	12 (7)
“I feel like I am a part of this school”	52 (32)	43 (26)	33 (20)	22 (13)	15 (9)
“The teachers at this school treat students fairly”	46 (28)	51 (31)	36 (22)	19 (12)	11 (7)
“I feel safe at school”	61 (37)	46 (28)	26 (16)	16 (10)	18 (11)
Composite Variable	<i>n</i>	Range of scores	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	
School Connectedness	160	(0 – 4)	2.63	1.03	

*Note.* Possible range for the school connectedness measure was 0-4.

Table 1.13  
*Value of Education*

Composite Variable	<i>n</i>	Range of scores (0 – 4 possible range)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Belief in the Value of Education	142	(0 – 4)	3.28	0.87

Table 1.14  
*Extracurricular Activity Involvement*

Variable	No participation	Participated	Officer/Captain
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Intramural Sports (within school competition)	127 (78)	28 (17)	8 (5)
Interscholastic Sports (competition with other schools)	124 (77)	32 (20)	6 (4)
Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Choir	144 (89)	17 (10)	1 (1)
School Play or Musical	144 (89)	16 (10)	1 (1)
Student Government	136 (86)	19 (12)	4 (3)
National Honors Society (NHS) or other academic honor society	152 (94)	8 (5)	2 (1)
School Yearbook, Newspaper, Literary Magazine	137 (85)	23 (14)	2 (1)
Service Club (e.g., Key Club, Big Brother, or Big Sister)	137 (86)	19 (12)	4 (3)
Academic Club (e.g., art, computer, foreign language)	123 (77)	34 (21)	2 (1)
Hobby Club (e.g., photography, chess)	136 (87)	19 (12)	1 (1)
Vocational Education Club, Vocational Student Organization (e.g., DECA, Skills USA, VICA, FFA, FHA)	153 (96)	4 (3)	2 (1)
Ethnic Clubs (e.g., Asian Alliance, Black Student Union, MEChA)	145 (90)	13 (8)	3 (2)

Table 1.15  
*Total Hours Spent on Extracurricular Activities Per Week*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Weekly Hours Spent on Extracurricular Activities</b>		
None	49	30%
Less than 1 hour per week	25	15%
1 – 4 hours per week	55	33%
5 – 9 hours per week	11	7%
10 – 14 hours per week	11	7%
15 – 19 hours per week	8	5%
20 – 24 hours per week	2	1%
25 hours or more per week	5	3%

Table 1.16  
*Current Educational Plans – Initial Survey*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Earn a regular high school diploma by...</b>		
Re-enrolling in high school	11	6%
Enrolling in independent study in your district	3	2%
Enrolling in an adult secondary school program in district	1	1%
Enrolling in a district course to prepare for the CAHSEE	6	4%
Enrolling in a community college adult education program	8	5%
<b>Earn an equivalent high school diploma by...</b>		
Passing the CHSPE	12	7%
Passing the GED	26	15%
<b>Attend one of the following post-secondary school options...</b>		
Attend community college	68	41%
Attend vocational/trade school	15	9%
Attend a 4-year college	10	6%
No current plans to attend school	7	4%

Table 1.17  
*Educational Self-Expectations*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Less than high school graduation	4	2%
GED or other equivalency only	2	1%
High school graduation only	12	7%
1–or 2–year community college or vocational school	43	26%
Attend, but not complete, a 4–year college degree	14	8%
Graduate from college (4–year degree)	40	24%
Obtain a Master’s Degree or equivalent	22	13%
Obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree	8	5%
Don’t know	21	13%

Table 1.18  
*Work Experiences*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Employment status (Not counting work around house)		
No	52	31%
Yes, currently employed	55	33%
Yes, but only during the summer	32	19%
Yes, but not currently employed	28	17%
Year began current/most recent job		
2000	1	1%
2001	1	1%
2002	0	0%
2003	2	2%
2004	8	8%
2005	16	15%
2006	43	41%
2007	29	27%
Hours worked per week during school year (for students employed during senior year)		
0 – 9 hours	16	29%
10 – 19 hours	14	25%
20 or more hours	25	46%
Hours worked per weekend (for those who worked weekends)		
1-9	65	63%
10-19	34	33%
20 or more	5	5%

Table 1.19  
*Summer Work Plans*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Summer Employment		
Yes, continuing the one I have now	52	31%
Yes, a new job lined up	26	16%
No, but looking for one	75	45%
No, have not done anything to find a job	13	8%

Table 1.20  
*Self-Prediction of Graduation Status*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Will graduate from high school		
Yes	128	77%
No	38	23%
If not, why (mark all that apply)?		
Did not pass Math section of CAHSEE	9	24%
Did not pass ELA section	26	68%
Not enough credits	17	45%
Other	5	13%

Table 1.21  
*Views on the Importance of Life Attainments*

Variable	Not important <i>n</i> %	Somewhat important <i>n</i> %	Very important <i>n</i> %
Being successful in you line of work	1 1%	16 10%	149 90%
Finding the right person to marry	15 9%	53 32%	96 59%
Having lots of money	9 5%	82 49%	76 46%
Having strong friendships	4 2%	50 30%	112 68%
Finding steady work	1 <1%	38 23%	125 76%
Helping others in the community	4 2%	64 39%	97 59%
Giving your children better opportunities than you had	4 2%	9 5%	154 92%
Living close to parents and relatives	11 7%	68 41%	87 52%
Getting away from this area of the country	56 34%	83 50%	27 16%
Working to correct social and economic inequalities	18 11%	79 48%	68 41%
Having children	29 18%	72 43%	65 39%
Having leisure time to enjoy your interests	10 6%	70 42%	87 52%
Becoming and expert in your field of work	8 5%	23 14%	134 81%

Getting a good education	1 1%	10 6%	154 93%
Getting a good job	2 1%	6 4%	158 95%
Being an active and informed citizen	1 1%	37 22%	128 77%
Supporting environmental causes	6 4%	75 46%	84 51%
Being patriotic	23 14%	86 52%	56 34%

Table 1.22  
*Academic Self-Efficacy and Life Satisfaction*

Variable	<i>n</i>	Range of scores	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Academic Self-Efficacy	157	0.00 – 3.00	1.87	0.73
Life Satisfaction Scale	118	1.43 – 6.00	3.91	1.03

*Note.* Possible ranges for self-efficacy and life satisfaction measures were 1-6.

Table 1.23  
*Family Structure*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Living situation		
Mother and father	93	56%
Mother without father	44	27%
Father without mother	8	5%
Without mother or father	20	12%



Table 1.24  
*Parent Expectations*

Variable	Mother		Father	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Parent expectations of the most important thing for student to do right after high school...				
Go to college	140	86%	107	70%
Get a full-time job	10	6%	13	9%
Enter a vocational or apprenticeship program	3	2%	2	1%
Enter the military	1	1%	3	2%
Get married	0	0%	1	1%
You should do what you want	3	2%	8	5%
Don't know	5	3%	11	7%
Not applicable	1	1%	8	5%

Table 1.25a  
*Parent-Student Communication*

Variable	Never	Sometimes	Often
	<i>n</i> %	<i>n</i> %	<i>n</i> %
Selecting courses or programs at school	19 12%	98 60%	47 29%
School activities that interest you	30 19%	94 58%	38 24%
Things you've studied in class	21 13%	85 52%	57 35%
Your grades	4 2%	46 29%	111 69%
Jobs you would like after high school	11 7%	60 37%	90 56%
Specific jobs you might apply for after high school	16 10%	73 45%	74 45%
Going to college	11 7%	46 28%	107 65%
Community, national, or world events	44 27%	92 57%	26 16%
Things that are troubling you	26 16%	72 44%	65 40%

Table 1.25b  
*Parent-Student Communication*

Composite Variable	<i>n</i>	Range of scores	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parent-student communication	155	0.11 – 2.00	1.31	0.41

*Note.* Possible range for the parent-student communication scale was 0.00 – 2.00.

Table 1.26  
*Friend Characteristics*

Variable	0 <i>n</i> %	1 <i>n</i> %	2 <i>n</i> %	3 <i>n</i> %	4+ <i>n</i> %
Dropped out of high school without graduating?	36 22%	36 22%	36 22%	21 13%	37 22%
Plan to have a regular full-time job after high school?	7 4%	28 17%	40 24%	40 24%	50 30%
Plan to attend a two-year community college or technical school?	5 3%	25 15%	33 20%	30 18%	70 43%
Plan to attend a four-year college or university?	20 12%	39 24%	21 13%	25 15%	60 36%
Plan to enter the military?	79 48%	46 28%	26 16%	3 2%	11 7%
Plan to become a homemaker?	83 50%	38 23%	29 17%	8 5%	9 5%

*Note.* Students responded by indicating how many close friends (0–4 or more) choose each option.

Table 1.27  
*Friend Expectations*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
What best friend thinks is the most important thing for you to do right after high school:		
College or Trade/Vocational school	124	77%
Work	10	6%
Whatever you want	14	9%
Other/Don't Know	10	6%
Enter the military	2	1%
Get married	2	1%

Table 2.1  
*Graduation Status at Follow-up*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Graduated from high school		
Yes	70	47%
No	78	53%
If did not graduate, why not?		
Did not pass ELA section of the CAHSEE	27	48%
Did not pass math section of the CAHSEE	8	14%
Did not pass both sections of the CAHSEE	5	9%
Did not have enough credits	4	7%
Did not pass ELA section of the CAHSEE, and did not have enough credits	6	11%
Did not pass math section of the CAHSEE, and did not have enough credits	4	7%
Did not pass both sections of the CAHSEE, and did not have enough credits	2	4%

*Note.* The total *n* for reasons why students did not graduate was 56. This number was less than the number for those who did not graduate (*n* = 78) due to missing data within the follow-up survey.

Table 2.2a  
*Current Educational Plans at Follow-up: All Students*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Earn a regular high school diploma by:		
Re-enroll in high school	10	7%
Receive tutoring to pass CAHSEE	1	1%
Enroll in independent study in your district	4	3%
Enroll in an adult secondary school program	6	4%
Enroll in a district course focusing on the CAHSEE	4	3%
Earn a high school equivalent		
Passing the CHSPE	1	1%
Passing the GED	0	0%
Attend community college	70	47%
Attend vocational/trade school	2	1%
Attend a 4-year college	0	0%
No current plans to attend school	14	9%
Attend further schooling at a later date, but not this fall	36	24%

Table 2.2b  
*Current Educational Plans at Follow-up: High School Graduates*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Current Educational Plans		
Attend community college	46	66%
Attend vocational/trade school	1	1%
Attend a 4-year college	0	0%
No current plans to attend school	6	9%
Attend further schooling at a later date, but not this fall	17	24%

Table 2.2c

*Current Educational Plans at Follow-up: Students Who Did Not Graduate High School*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Earn a regular high school diploma by:		
Re-enroll in high school	10	13%
Receive tutoring to pass CAHSEE	1	1%
Enroll in independent study in your district	4	5%
Enroll in an adult secondary school program	6	8%
Enroll in a district course focusing on the CAHSEE	4	5%
Earn a high school equivalent		
Passing the CHSPE	1	1%
Passing the GED	0	0%
Attend community college	24	31%
Attend vocational/trade school	1	1%
Attend a 4-year college	0	0%
No current plans to attend school	8	10%
Attend further schooling at a later date, but not this fall	19	24%

Table 2.3  
*Educational Self-Expectations at Follow-up: All Students, Graduated, and Did Not Graduate*

Variable	All Students <i>n</i> (%)	Graduated <i>n</i> (%)	Did Not Graduate <i>n</i> (%)
Less than high school graduation	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
High school graduation only	7 (5%)	1 (1%)	6 (8%)
2-year community college	52 (35%)	27 (39%)	25 (32%)
Attend, but not complete, a 4-year degree	6 (4%)	4 (6%)	2 (3%)
Graduate from a 4-year college	50 (34%)	27 (39%)	23 (30%)
Obtain a Masters Degree or equivalent	13 (9%)	6 (9%)	7 (9%)
Obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (6%)
Don't Know	14 (10%)	5 (7%)	9 (12%)

Table 2.4  
*Work Characteristics at Follow-up*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Employment status (not counting work around the house)		
No	44	30%
Yes, currently employed	69	47%
Yes, but only during the summer	24	16%
Yes, but not now	11	7%
Hours worked per week for your current/most recent job		
0-9	11	11%
10-19	7	7%
20-29	41	39%
30-39	17	16%
40-59	25	24%
50 or more	3	3%
Year started current/most recent job		
2004	2	2%
2005	11	11%
2006	19	18%
2007	72	69%



# of hours for those that worked weekends (n= 70)		
1-9	39	56%
10-19	28	40%
20 or more	3	4%

	Average Hours	Standard Deviation
Average number of hours worked	27	11.22
Average number of weekend hours	10	4.60

Table 2.5  
*Life Satisfaction at Follow-up*

Variable	<i>n</i>	Range of sample scores	Mean	Standard Deviation
Life Satisfaction mean score				
Overall sample	148	1.7–6.0	4.21	0.96
Graduates	70	2.3–6.0	4.35	0.85
Non-graduates	78	1.7–6.0	4.08	1.04

*Note.* The range for the Life Satisfaction Scale is 1–6.

Table 3.1  
*Logistic Regression Analyses for Predicting CAHSEE Status (Pass/No Pass)*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald's $\chi^2$	Sig.
Extracurriculars	0.07	0.06	1.16	0.28
School Connect	0.02	0.04	0.20	0.66
P-C Commun.	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.99
Self-efficacy	-0.06	0.06	1.23	0.27
Value education	-0.03	0.02	3.27	0.07
Life satisfaction	0.07	0.03	5.15	0.02*

Table 3.2

*Logistic Regression Analyses for Predicting High School Graduation*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald's $\chi^2$	Sig.
Extracurriculars	0.04	0.07	0.28	0.60
School Connect	0.00	0.03	0.02	0.90
P-C Commun.	-0.05	0.04	1.49	0.22
Self-efficacy	-0.02	0.05	0.10	0.75
Value education	-0.04	0.02	4.31	0.04*
Life satisfaction	-0.84	0.57	2.15	0.14

Table 3.3

*Logistic Regression Analysis for Predicting Post-secondary Enrollment*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald's $\chi^2$	Sig.
Extracurriculars	0.03	0.07	0.15	0.70
School Connect	-0.00	0.03	0.00	0.96
P-C Commun.	0.06	0.04	1.70	0.19
Self-efficacy	-0.01	0.05	0.02	0.89
Value education	0.01	0.02	0.20	0.65
Life satisfaction	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.87

## ***Appendix 2. Brief Summary of Participating School Districts***

The districts from which this sample was selected included urban, suburban, and more rural communities. Although this sample is not representative of the entire state of California, it does provide sufficient information with which to better understand the factors associated with high school completion among high school seniors who have not passed the CAHSEE. A random sample of students was obtained from each of the participating school districts.

The first school district serves urban communities and includes over 180,000 students in grades 9-12 in 65 comprehensive high schools, and 45 continuation high schools. Students across these schools are 73% Latino and 9% Anglo. As an example of student enrollment, two sample comprehensive high schools have student enrollments in grades 9-12 of about 4,800 to 5,200 each, with 99% Latino, 0.3% Anglo, 56% socio-economically disadvantaged (as measured by eligibility for the free/reduced price lunch program), and 52% English Learners in one and 99% Latino, 0.2% Anglo, 68% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 63% English Learners in the other.

The second school district serves suburban communities and includes about 7,500 students in grades 9-12 in three comprehensive high schools, and one continuation high school. Students across these schools are 45% Latino and 45% Anglo. As an example of student enrollment, two comprehensive high schools have student enrollments in grades 9-12 of about 2,300 each, with 52% Latino, 41% Anglo, 33% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 22% English Learners in one and 44% Latino, 48% Anglo, 27% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 20% English Learners in the other.

The third school district serves rural communities and includes about 7,600 students in grades 9-12 in two comprehensive high schools, and two continuation high schools. Students

across these schools are 58% Latino and 30% Anglo. The two comprehensive high schools have student enrollments in grades 9-12 of about 2,500 each, with 81% Latino, 9% Anglo, 69% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 38% English Learners in one and 36% Latino, 52% Anglo, 25% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 8% English Learners in the other.

The fourth school district serves suburban communities and includes about 5,800 students across three comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school, and two alternative high schools. Students across these schools are 38% Latino and 49% Anglo. As an example of student enrollment, two of the comprehensive high schools have student enrollments in grades 9-12 of about 2,200, with 33% Latino, 56% Anglo, 20% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 18% English Learners in one and 40% Latino, 50% Anglo, 32% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 19% English Learners in the other.

**Appendix 3. Initial Survey**

UC SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Q. Name

Please provide us with your name: First, middle Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Q. District

What school district are you currently attending?

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

1. What year did you first enter the ninth grade?

- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003

2. Did you first enter ninth grade at the high school you are now attending?

- Yes
- No

2a. What is the name of the high school you first attended?

High School Name \_\_\_\_\_

3. Were you ever held back (had to repeat) a grade in school?

- Yes
- No

3a. What grade(s) did you have to repeat? Please choose all that apply.

- Kindergarten
- 1st grade
- 2nd grade
- 3rd grade
- 4th grade
- 5th grade
- 6th grade
- 7th grade
- 8th grade
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

4. Have you ever been in any of the following kinds of courses or programs in high school?

	Yes	No
Special Education Program (IEP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
English as a Second Language (ESL)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocational program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Placement (AP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Attendance Review Board (SARB)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Did you participate in the following school-sponsored activities this school year?

	Did not participate	Participated	Participated as an officer, leader, or captain
Intramural sports (competition between teams in your school)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interscholastic sports (competition with teams from other schools)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Band, orchestra, chorus, choir	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School play or musical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National Honor Society (NHS) or other academic honor society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School yearbook, newspaper, literary magazine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service club (such as Key Club, Big Brother or Big Sister)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic club (such as Art, Computer, Foreign Language, Debate)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hobby club (such as photography, chess)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocational education club, vocational student organization (such as DECA, Skills USA, VICA, FFA, FHA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnic clubs (such as Asian Alliance, Black Student Union, MEChA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. In a typical school week, how many total hours did you spend on all school-sponsored extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, or other activities)?

- None
- Less than 1 hour per week
- 1-4 hours per week
- 5-9 hours per week
- 10-14 hours per week
- 15-19 hours per week
- 20-24 hours per week
- 25 hours or more per week

7. During the past school year, about how many hours did you spend on homework each week, both in and out of school combined?

- None
- Less than 1 hour each week
- 1-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-9 hours
- 10-12 hours
- 13-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- Over 20 hours each week

8. How many times did you take the Math and English sections of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	more than 5
English section	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Math section	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Where have you gone for information about passing the exam? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other relative    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coach              | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent             | <input type="checkbox"/> Clergy            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____       |

10. What activities did you undertake to prepare for the exam? Please choose all that apply.

- No special activities
- Reviewed material in class
- Had a tutor help me prepare for the exam
- Had a special class to learn material for exam

11. Have you ever worked for pay, not counting work around the house?

- No
- Yes, and you are currently employed
- Yes, but this was a summer only job
- Yes, but you are not currently employed

12. When did you start your current or most recent job?

Month:

- |                                |                             |                                 |                                |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> January  | <input type="radio"/> April | <input type="radio"/> July      | <input type="radio"/> October  |
| <input type="radio"/> February | <input type="radio"/> May   | <input type="radio"/> August    | <input type="radio"/> November |
| <input type="radio"/> March    | <input type="radio"/> June  | <input type="radio"/> September | <input type="radio"/> December |

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

13. How many hours did you usually work each week on your current or most recent job during this school year?

- |                         |                          |                          |                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 7  | <input type="radio"/> 13 | <input type="radio"/> 19           |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 8  | <input type="radio"/> 14 | <input type="radio"/> 20           |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 9  | <input type="radio"/> 15 | <input type="radio"/> more than 20 |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 10 | <input type="radio"/> 16 |                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 11 | <input type="radio"/> 17 |                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 | <input type="radio"/> 12 | <input type="radio"/> 18 |                                    |

14. How many of those hours each week are/were on the weekend (Saturday or Sunday)?

- |                         |                          |                          |                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 7  | <input type="radio"/> 13 | <input type="radio"/> 19           |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 8  | <input type="radio"/> 14 | <input type="radio"/> 20           |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 9  | <input type="radio"/> 15 | <input type="radio"/> more than 20 |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 10 | <input type="radio"/> 16 |                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 11 | <input type="radio"/> 17 |                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 | <input type="radio"/> 12 | <input type="radio"/> 18 |                                    |

15. Do you have a regular, full-time job lined up for the summer?

- Yes, you'll continue the job you have now
- Yes, you have a new job lined up
- No, but you are looking for a job
- No, you haven't done anything yet to get a job

---

16. What is the name of the job or occupation that you expect or plan to have this summer?

- Fast food worker, waiter/waitress, host/hostess, dishwasher/busboy
- Babysitter or child care
- Cashier, grocery clerk/bagger
- Salesperson, customer service
- Lawn work or odd jobs
- Camp counselor, lifeguard, coach, umpire, or referee
- Farm worker
- Construction work
- Computer related job (e.g., repair, Web-design, network installation)
- General office or clerical worker
- Warehouse worker
- House cleaning or janitorial work
- Hospital or health worker
- Beautician, hair stylist, barber
- Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

17. How many hours per week do expect to work?

- |                          |                          |                          |                                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1  | <input type="radio"/> 11 | <input type="radio"/> 21 | <input type="radio"/> 33           |
| <input type="radio"/> 2  | <input type="radio"/> 12 | <input type="radio"/> 22 | <input type="radio"/> 34           |
| <input type="radio"/> 3  | <input type="radio"/> 13 | <input type="radio"/> 23 | <input type="radio"/> 35           |
| <input type="radio"/> 4  | <input type="radio"/> 14 | <input type="radio"/> 24 | <input type="radio"/> 36           |
| <input type="radio"/> 5  | <input type="radio"/> 15 | <input type="radio"/> 25 | <input type="radio"/> 37           |
| <input type="radio"/> 6  | <input type="radio"/> 16 | <input type="radio"/> 26 | <input type="radio"/> 38           |
| <input type="radio"/> 7  | <input type="radio"/> 17 | <input type="radio"/> 27 | <input type="radio"/> 39           |
| <input type="radio"/> 8  | <input type="radio"/> 18 | <input type="radio"/> 30 | <input type="radio"/> 40           |
| <input type="radio"/> 9  | <input type="radio"/> 19 | <input type="radio"/> 31 | <input type="radio"/> more than 40 |
| <input type="radio"/> 10 | <input type="radio"/> 20 | <input type="radio"/> 32 |                                    |

18. Will you graduate from high school this year?

- Yes
- No

19. Please select the reason(s) why you will not graduate from high school this year. Please choose all that apply.

- You did not pass the math section of the CAHSEE
- You did not pass the English section of the CAHSEE
- You did not have enough credits for a diploma
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_



20. What are your current educational plans?

❖ Earn a regular high school diploma by...

- Re-enrolling in your current high school next fall
- Enrolling in an other high school or program in your local school district
- Enrolling in independent study in your local school district
- Enrolling in an adult secondary school program in your district
- Enrolling in a district course that prepares students to pass the CAHSEE
- Enrolling in a community college adult education program

❖ Earn an equivalent diploma by...

- Passing the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE)
- Passing the General Educational Development (GED) test

❖ Other

- Attend a community college
- Attend a vocational, technical, or trade school
- Attend a four-year college or university
- I have no current plans to attend school

21. What is the name of the school or program you plan to attend?

School or program \_\_\_\_\_

22. When do you expect to enter this school or program?

**Month:**

- |                                |                             |                                 |                                |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> January  | <input type="radio"/> April | <input type="radio"/> July      | <input type="radio"/> October  |
| <input type="radio"/> February | <input type="radio"/> May   | <input type="radio"/> August    | <input type="radio"/> November |
| <input type="radio"/> March    | <input type="radio"/> June  | <input type="radio"/> September | <input type="radio"/> December |

**Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

23. As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get?

- Less than high school graduation
- GED or other equivalency only
- High school graduation only
- Attend or complete a 1- or 2-year program in a community college or vocational school
- Attend college, but not complete a 4- or 5-year degree
- Graduate from college (4- or 5-year degree)
- Obtain a Master's degree or equivalent
- Obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree
- Don't know

24. Do you live with your father?

- Yes  No

25. Do you live with your mother?

- Yes  No

26. What do the following people think is the most important thing for you to do right after high school?

**Your mother (or female guardian)**

- Does not apply
- Go to college
- Get a full-time job
- Enter a vocational-technical or apprenticeship program
- Enter the military
- Get married
- He/she thinks you should do what you want
- You don't know

**Your father (or male guardian)**

- Does not apply
- Go to college
- Get a full-time job
- Enter a vocational-technical or apprenticeship program
- Enter the military
- Get married
- He/she thinks you should do what you want
- You don't know

**Your best friend(s)**

- Does not apply
- Go to college
- Get a full-time job
- Enter a vocational-technical or apprenticeship program
- Enter the military
- Get married
- He/she thinks you should do what you want
- You don't know

27. How important is each of the following to you in your life?

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
Being successful in your line of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding the right person to marry and having a happy family life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having lots of money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having strong friendships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being able to find steady work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping other people in your community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being able to give your children better opportunities than you've had	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living close to parents and relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting away from this area of the country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working to correct social and economic inequalities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having leisure time to enjoy your own interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming an expert in your field of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting a good education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting a good job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being an active and informed citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting environmental causes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being patriotic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. How many of your close friends...

	0	1	2	3	4 or more
Dropped out of high school without graduating?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan to have a regular full-time job after high school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan to attend a two-year community college or technical school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan to attend a four-year college or university?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan to enter the military?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan to become a homemaker?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. How much do you agree with the following?

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel close to people at this school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am happy to be at this school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am feel like I am a part of this school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teachers at this school treat students fairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. In the second semester or term of this past school year, how often have you discussed the following with either or both of your parents or guardians?

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Selecting courses or programs at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School activities or events of particular interest to you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Things you've studied in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jobs you would like to have after high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specific jobs you might apply for after high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community, national, and world events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Things that are troubling you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. How many times did the following things happen to you in the second semester or term of this past school year?

	Never	1-2 times	3-6 times	7-9 times	10 or more times
I was late for school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cut or skipped class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was absent from school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got in trouble for not following school rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was put on in-school suspension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was given out-of-school suspension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was transferred to another school for disciplinary reasons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was expelled from school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. Is English your native language?

- Yes  No

33. What is your native language (the first language you learned to speak when you were a child)?

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Spanish             | <input type="radio"/> German                       | <input type="radio"/> Portuguese                     |
| <input type="radio"/> A Chinese language  | <input type="radio"/> Greek                        | <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Japanese            | <input type="radio"/> Polish                       | <input type="radio"/> Cambodian                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Korean              | <input type="radio"/> Arabic                       | <input type="radio"/> Other Southeast Asian language |
| <input type="radio"/> A Filipino language | <input type="radio"/> Farsi                        | <input type="radio"/> American Indian language       |
| <input type="radio"/> Italian             | <input type="radio"/> Urdu                         | <input type="radio"/> Other                          |
| <input type="radio"/> French              | <input type="radio"/> Indian subcontinent language |  |

34. How well do you do the following?

	Very well	Well	Not well	Not at all
Understand spoken English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand spoken Spanish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak Spanish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Spanish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write Spanish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. How much do you agree with the following?

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
My life is going well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My life is just right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to change many things in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I had a different kind of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a good life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have what I want in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My life is better than most kids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. How often do these things apply to you?

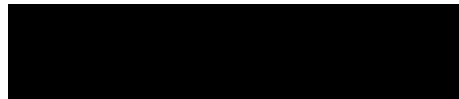
	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
When I sit myself down to learn something really hard, I can learn it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I decide not to get any bad grades, I can really do it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When studying, I keep working even if the material is difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I want to learn something well, I can	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When studying, I put forth my best effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Education is the key to success in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If everyone in America gets a good education, no one has to be poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing well in school does not lead to job success later on	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way for poor people to get ahead is for them to get a good education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Young people have a chance of making it if they do well in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort in school leads to job success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regardless of where you come from, or who you are, if you work hard and get a good education, you have a chance to make it in America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School success is not a clear path to a better life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know people who flip burgers for a living even though they finished school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even if I don't work hard in school I can make future plans come true.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know people who make good money and haven't finished high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What I don't learn in school I can always pick up later	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students with bad grades often get good jobs after high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even without a good education it is likely that I will end up with the kind of job I want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my friends at home think school is a complete waste of time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because my friends don't think its cool, I don't try as hard as I can in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends at home believe that too much education makes a person give up his or her real identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends at home believe that too much education makes a person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At this school, it is not cool to be smart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.



*Appendix 4. Follow-up Survey*

**UC SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS  
Follow-Up Survey**

1. Did you graduate from high school last year?

\_\_\_\_\_ No -- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes → **SKIP TO QUESTION 4**

2. Will you graduate from high school this year?

\_\_\_\_\_ No -- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes → **SKIP TO QUESTION 4**

↓

3. If No, is it because:

**(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- a. You did not pass the math section of the CAHSEE..... O
- b. You did not pass the English section of the CAHSEE..... O
- c. You did not have enough credits for a diploma..... O

4. What are your current educational plans?

**(MARK ONE RESPONSE)**

- a. Earn a regular high school diploma by
  - i. Re-enrolling in your current high school next fall..... O
  - ii. Tutoring to pass the CAHSEE exam..... O
  - iii. Enrolling in an other high school or program in your local school district ..... O
  - iv. Enrolling in independent study in your local school district.....O
  - v. Enrolling in an adult secondary school program in your district.....O
  - vi. Enrolling in a district course that prepares students to pass the CAHSEE..... O
  - vii. Obtaining a high school diploma through enrolling in a community college's adult education program. .... O
- b. Earn an equivalent high diploma by
  - viii. Passing the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE) ..... O
  - ix. Passing the General Educational Development (GED) test..... O
- c. Attend a community college..... O
- d. Attend a vocational, technical, or trade school..... O
- e. Attend a four-year college or university ..... O
- f. I have no current plans to attend school.. ..... O → **SKIP TO QUESTION 7**

5. What is the name of the school or program you plan to attend:

---

6. When do you expect to enter this school or program?

\_\_\_\_ Month      \_\_\_\_ Year

7. As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get?

**(MARK ONE RESPONSE)**

- Less than high school graduation.....
- GED or other equivalency only.....
- High school graduation only.....
- Attend or complete a 1- or 2-year program in a  
community college or vocational school.....
- Attend college, but not complete a 4- or 5-year degree.....
- Graduate from college (4- or 5-year degree).....
- Obtain a Master's degree or equivalent.....
- Obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree.....
- Don't know.....

8. Have you ever worked for pay, not counting work around the house?

**(MARK ONE RESPONSE)**

- No.....  → **SKIP TO QUESTION 12**
- Yes, and you are currently employed.....
- Yes, but this was a summer only job.....
- Yes, but you are not currently employed.....

9. When did you start your current or most recent job?

\_\_\_\_ Month      \_\_\_\_ Year

10. How many hours do you usually work each week on your current or most recent job?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

11. How many of those hours each week are/were on the weekend (Saturday or Sunday)?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

12. How much do you agree with the following?

**(MARK ONE RESPONSE ON EACH LINE)**

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My life is going well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My life is just right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I would like to change many things in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I wish I had a different kind of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I have a good life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I have what I want in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. My life is better than most kids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## ***Appendix 5. Description of Composite Variables and Recategorized Variables***

*School connectedness.* School connectedness as reported in section 1.12 was measured with a scale used by Resnick and colleagues (1997) in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). See question 29 in Appendix 2 for test items. Resnick and colleagues (1997) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75 for this scale. Student responses were computed into a composite score ranging from 0–4, with zero being the lowest possible level of school connectedness and 4 the highest.

*Value of education.* Value of education as reported in section 1.13 was measured using 4 statements regarding the value of education, including; *education is the key to success in the future, the way for poor people to get ahead is for them to get a good education, and young people have a chance of making it if they do well in school, and regardless of where you come from, or who you are, if you work hard and get a good education, you have a chance to make it in America.* Students could respond that they strongly disagree (score of 0), disagreed (1), felt neutral (2), agreed (3), or strongly agreed (4) with each statement. See question 37 in Appendix 2 for items. Student responses were computed into a composite score ranging from 0–4, with zero being the lowest level of belief in the value of education and 4 the highest.

*Academic self-efficacy.* Academic self-efficacy as reported in section 1.22 was determined in the current study based on a combination of two scales used in the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS; Burns et al., 2003). See question 26 in Appendix 2 for the academic self-efficacy scale used in the current study. The following items came from the ELS scale "Control Expectation:" *When I sit myself down to learn something really hard, I can learn it; If I decide not to get any bad grades, I can really do it; If I want to learn something well, I can.* The following items came from the ELS scale "Effort and Persistence:" *When studying, I*

*keep working even if the material is difficult; When studying, I put forth my best effort.* Student responses were computed into a composite score ranging from 0-3, with zero being the lowest level of academic self-efficacy and 3 the highest.

*Life satisfaction.* Life satisfaction as reported in section 1.22 was determined through using a scale originally cited in the Initial Development of the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS, Huebner, E.S., 1991). See question 35 in Appendix 2. Student responses were computed into a composite score ranging from 0–6, with zero being the lowest level of life satisfaction and 6 the highest.

*Parent-student communication.* Information on parent-student communication as reported in section 1.25 was obtained from a question originally asked in the NELS 1988 study. See question 30 in Appendix 2. Student responses were computed into a composite score ranging from 0–2, with zero being the lowest possible level of parent-student communication and 2 the highest.

*Current educational plans.* Students' current educational plans at follow-up were determined based on question 4 of the follow-up survey (see Appendix 3). Students reporting the following option were categorized as still pursuing a high school diploma in Section 3 analyses: *re-enroll in high school; tutoring to pass the CAHSEE exam; enrolling in another high school or program in your local school district; enrolling in independent study in your local school district; enrolling in adult secondary school program in your district; enrolling in a district course that prepares students to pass the CAHSEE; Earn an equivalent diploma by passing the GED.* If students reported current involvement in the following options: *attend a community college; attend a vocational, technical, or trade school; or attend a four-year college or university,* these students were categorized as currently being enrolled in post-secondary school.

If students indicated in question 6 of the follow-up survey (see Appendix 3) that they would not begin post-secondary school until after the fall of 2007, these students were categorized as having plans to *attend further schooling at a later date, but not this fall*.

*Extracurricular activities.* Extracurricular activity involvement as reported as composite scores in Section 3 analyses was assessed from a 12-item scale based off the original scale used in the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS; McLaughlin et al., 1997). See question 5 in Appendix 2. This scale required students to indicate whether they *did not participate, participated, or participated as an officer, leader, or captain* in various school-based extracurricular activities. Student responses were computed into composite scores ranging from 0–3, with zero being the lowest possible level of involvement in extracurricular activities and 3 the highest.

*Educational self-expectations.* Students' educational self-expectations as reported in Section 3 analyses were determined using a question originally asked in the NELS:88 survey. See question 23 in Appendix 2. Students who endorsed any of the response options related to post-secondary school attendance (*attend or complete a 1– or 2–year program in a community college or vocational school; attend college, but not complete a 4– or 5–year degree; graduate from college (4– or 5–year degree); obtain a Master's degree or equivalent; obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree*) were considered to have self-expectations of attending post-secondary school, and all other students were categorized as not having self-expectations of post-secondary school.

*Parent expectations and friend expectations.* Parent and friend expectations as reported in Section 3 analyses were measured using student responses to a question originating from the ELS 2002 study. See question 26 in Appendix 2. Students answered the question for their mother

(or female guardian), father (or male guardian), and best friend(s). If students indicated either of the following response options: *go to college*, or *enter a vocational-technical or apprenticeship program*, this response indicated parent expectations for future post-secondary education—whereas all other responses were interpreted as a lack of parent expectations for future post-secondary education. The same rule was used to determine friend expectations.