2026 Student Achievement & Growth: CAASPP, California School Dashboard and Next Steps

Overview

Downey Unified School District presented an update on 2026 student achievement and growth, including results from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), California Science Test (CAST), and California School Dashboard. The presentation reviewed student performance in English language arts, mathematics, and science, along with graduation, English learner progress, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, and ongoing strategies to support continued improvement.

Districtwide Achievement Highlights

In 2026, the percentage of Downey Unified students demonstrating proficient or advanced grade-level knowledge and skills increased by:

- 2.1 percentage points in English language arts
- 2.8 percentage points in mathematics
- 4.7 percentage points in science

The California School Dashboard also reflects positive District performance across multiple indicators, including graduation, mathematics, English language arts, science, college/career readiness, and English learner progress.

CAASPP and CAST Results

CAASPP provides one measure of student progress toward California's academic standards. Students in grades 3–8 and 11 participate in English language arts and mathematics assessments, while science is assessed in grades 5 and 8 and once in high school.

Elementary school results showed continued growth:

- English language arts proficiency increased from 46% in 2022 to 55% in 2026.
- Mathematics proficiency increased from 38% to 50%.
- Fifth-grade science proficiency increased from 26% to 40%.

Middle school results also demonstrated growth:

- English language arts proficiency increased from 43% in 2022 to 56% in 2026.
- Mathematics proficiency increased from 27% to 42%.
- Eighth-grade science proficiency increased from 30% to 42%.

At the high school level, results varied by school and subject. In grade 11 English language arts, 2026 proficiency was 68% at Downey High School, 72% at Warren High School, and 18% at Columbus High School. In mathematics, proficiency was 35% at Downey High School, 39% at Warren High School, and 0% at Columbus High School.

California School Dashboard

The California School Dashboard is the state's accountability and continuous improvement system. It provides information about school and district performance using both current performance, or Status, and year-over-year progress, or Change.

State indicators include:

- Academic achievement in English language arts and mathematics
- English Learner Progress
- Graduation Rate
- College/Career Readiness
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Suspension Rate

The Dashboard also reports outcomes across student groups to support equitable decision-making and help identify areas requiring targeted support. The College/Career Indicator is expected to be released and shared at the January 2027 Board meeting.

Instructional Next Steps

The District identified several strategies to continue strengthening student outcomes. These include:

- Aligning curriculum, instruction, assessments, and benchmarks with essential grade-level standards.
- Using assessment and student progress data to provide targeted instruction and timely reteaching.
- Strengthening early literacy through universal reading screening and teacher training.
- Expanding accelerated and honors pathways while providing targeted academic supports.
- Strengthening mathematics instruction, fluency, and vertical articulation across grade levels.
- Expanding hands-on, standards-aligned science instruction and preparing for upcoming instructional material adoptions.
- Providing targeted supports for multilingual learners and strengthening inclusive instructional practices for students with disabilities.

English Learner Progress

The District continues to provide targeted support for multilingual learners through dedicated Teachers on Special Assignment, intervention staff, English Language Development instruction, ELPAC support, school-based monitoring, student data conversations, and the Secondary Multilingual Learner Taskforce. These efforts focus on language development, academic progress, reclassification, and access to rigorous coursework.

Attendance and Student Engagement

The California School Dashboard measures chronic absenteeism as the percentage of students who miss 10% or more of instructional days. The District reviewed chronic absenteeism outcomes by student group and identified next steps to strengthen attendance and student engagement.

Suspension and Student Support

The presentation also reviewed suspension rates and outcomes by student group. The District continues to use student support and intervention strategies while following California Education Code requirements and restrictions related to out-of-school suspension.

Continued Focus on Student Achievement

The District's 2026–27 Board Goal #1 calls for increasing College and Career Readiness for all students, including a goal of at least 5% growth in SBAC performance in grades 3–8 and 11 in English language arts, mathematics, and science, while also increasing CSU/UC a–g course completion and College/Career Indicator attainment by at least 5% for high school students.

Downey Unified will continue using multiple measures of student performance, instructional data, professional learning, targeted interventions, and student-group outcomes to guide continuous improvement and support academic achievement for all students.