

PROFILE OF THE CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES, 2009-10

Career Academy Support Network¹
Charles Dayton, Candace Hamilton Hester, and David Stern
University of California, Berkeley, October 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State legislation launched the California Partnership Academies (CPAs) in 1984. CPAs exemplify the career academy model for preparing high school students to succeed in both college and careers. Career academies are small learning communities within larger high schools, usually enrolling students in grades 10-12. Each year students take classes together, including core academic subjects and at least one career-technical course related to the academy's career theme. A team of teachers works with the same group of students over several years, linking instruction across disciplines and over time. Employers provide internships and other opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom. Several evaluations of career academies in California and elsewhere have found positive effects on students' performance during and after high school.² Career academies have provided a model for high school reform, and have become an important part of the current Linked Learning initiative in California.

Each CPA sends an annual report to the California Department of Education. This profile is drawn from the CPA reports for the 2009-10 school year. It parallels a profile produced five years ago from the 2004-05 reports.³ More information on academies and the supporting legislation is available at <http://casn.berkeley.edu> and <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/cpagen.asp>.

Overview of the academies: locations, industry sectors, and sources of support

For the 2009-10 school year, 467 CPAs submitted reports to the California Department of Education. These academies operated in 278 of California's 1,264 comprehensive high schools. Most high schools with CPAs rank below average on the State's Academic Performance Index. The 437 CPAs that provided student-level data enrolled 48,436 students in grades 10-12 — about 3% of the State's 1.6 million students in these grades. CPAs serve 36 of California's 58 counties. California's six most populous counties—Los Angeles, Sacramento, Alameda, Riverside, San Diego, and Contra Costa —have a total of 287 CPAs.

Each CPA frames its curriculum around one of the 15 industry fields established for Career-Technical Education by the California Department of Education. The most common themes are Health Science and Medical Technology (76 academies); Arts, Media and Entertainment (66); Finance and Business (51); Engineering and Design (47); and Public Services (46).

The three sources of supplemental support for CPAs are: grants from the State; financial or in-kind support from the host school district, required to be at least equal to the State grant; and financial or in-kind contributions from local employers, also required to be at least equal to the State grant. The State grant is therefore leveraged at least two-to-one by local matching contributions. In total, State grants amounted to \$26.5 million in 2009-10, while school district matches totaled \$41.3 million and

employer matches \$48.3 million. Thus, on average, CPAs received about 23% of their supplemental support from State grant funds (all in dollars), 35% in matching district support (mostly in-kind), and 42% in matching employer contributions (mostly in-kind). The matches from the districts were primarily in the form of personnel time to support a variety of activities, including instruction, tutoring and academic support. The matches from employers were for advisory board members, speakers, field trip hosts, mentorships, and internships.

Student profile

By law, at least 50% of the students in each incoming class of CPA sophomores must meet three of the following six "at-risk" criteria (defined more specifically in the law): 1) having a poor attendance record, 2) being significantly behind in credits, 3) demonstrating low motivation for the regular school program, 4) being economically disadvantaged, 5) having low state test scores, or 6) having a low grade point average.

CPA students are 53% female and 47% male. CPA student gender balances vary considerably among industry sectors, from Fashion and Interior Design (2 academies) which is 79% female to Manufacturing and Product Development (8 academies) which is 78% male. However, most fields are fairly well balanced, almost half are near a 50-50 split, and generally the balance between genders has improved somewhat since 2004-05.

Student enrollment in CPAs is 59% Hispanic, 16% white, 10% Asian, 9% black, 3% mixed race or other, 2.5% Pacific Islander, and 0.5% Native American or Alaskan. The proportion of Hispanic students in CPAs is substantially higher than in grades 10-12 statewide; white student enrollment is substantially lower.

Student performance

As in the previous 2004-05 CPA report, the data reveal high attendance rates in CPAs. By law, CPAs receive additional state funding only for students with at least 80% attendance; 96% of CPA students in 2009-10 met this criterion. Another requirement for CPA funding is that students earn at least 90% of the credits that would be needed during the year to make normal progress toward on-time graduation. In 2009-10, 83% of CPA students met this requirement.

With respect to the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), in grade 10, 82% of CPA students passed the English Language Arts (ELA) section, compared with 81% statewide. On the mathematics portion of the exam, 83% of CPA tenth graders passed, compared to 81% statewide. In both ELA and math, statewide passing rates for tenth graders improved more than in CPAs since 2004-05. When students are compared within racial/ethnic categories, the biggest difference is for Hispanics, where the grade 10 passing rate for CPAs was 7% higher than the statewide rate in math and 6% higher in ELA.

Ninety-five percent of academy seniors graduated at the end of the 2009-10 year, compared with 85% statewide. Examining gender differences, 96% of female and 94% of male academy 12th graders graduated, as compared to 89% of female and 81% of male students statewide. CPA graduation rates from grade 12 exceeded statewide rates for all racial and ethnic groups. Among the largest differences were an advantage of 16 percentage points for African American seniors in CPAs, and 14 points for Hispanics.

CPA and California 12th-grade graduation rates, 2004-05 and 2009-10

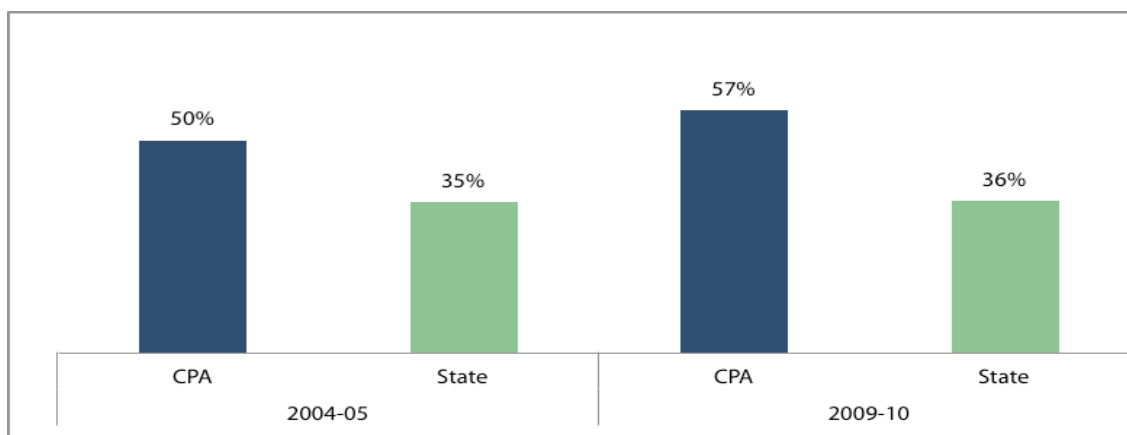


Student intentions and experiences

Most CPA seniors plan to combine college and work after they graduate. Three out of five students plan to attend a community college, and 28% a four-year college; a large majority of these plan to work while attending college. These plans are highly consistent with the CPA goal of preparing students to pursue a range of college and career options after high school.

CPAs are designed to prepare students for both college and careers. In California, a key indicator of preparation for college is completion of the “a-g” courses required for admission to the University of California or California State University. For 2009-10, CPAs reported that 57% of their graduates fulfilled the a-g subject requirements, compared to 36% of high school graduates statewide. Among the experiences provided by CPAs to help prepare students for careers are mentorships and internships. In 2009-10, 71% of CPA 11th graders participated in mentorships, while 52% of seniors participated in a work-based learning experience. These indicators are consistent with those reported in 2004-05.

Graduates reported to meet a-g subject requirements, 2004-05 and 2009-10



Matching contributions from school districts and employers

By law, each CPA is required to receive financial or in-kind support from the host school district in an amount at least equal to the CPA grant from the State. In 2009-10, 96% of CPAs met the district matching requirement. The CPA law also requires each academy to receive financial or in-kind contributions from employers that equal or exceed the amount of the State grant. In 2009-10, 93% of CPAs met the employer matching requirement.

Comparing newer and older academies

Since some CPAs operating in 2009-10 have been in existence for more than 20 years, while others are much newer, it would be useful to know whether an academy's age is related to quality of implementation or level of student performance. However, comparing three groups of academies — those that started before 1994, between 1995 and 2005, and after 2006 — did not reveal any consistent relationship. The newest academies appear strongest on a-g completion, the academies that started in the 1995-2005 period look strongest on CAHSEE, and the oldest academies appear strong on all comparisons except senior internships. Graduation rate from grade 12, which is arguably the most consequential measure, is virtually the same among these three groups of academies.

Comparing academies by industry sector

Since CPAs now exist in all 15 of the State's career-technical education sectors, it is useful to consider whether academies in different sectors face different challenges and opportunities. The 12th grade graduation rate is quite consistent across sectors, but the a-g completion rate varies widely, for reasons that are not apparent. Mentorships and internships tend to be more available in sectors where student enrollment is predominantly female.

Commentary

Now in their 27th year of operation, California Partnership Academies have proved a durable model, although CPAs remain rather sparsely distributed throughout the state, occurring in just 22% of high schools. The average annual state funding of about \$547 per student is quadrupled by local matching contributions. CPAs support a broad range of career themes. Ethnic data suggest good diversity, and gender balance in the large majority of academies is also good. Academy students slightly outperform statewide averages on CAHSEE pass rates, substantially outperform them in meeting a-g course requirements for UC and CSU, and report much higher graduation rates for seniors, especially among students of color. These results are encouraging since, by law, at least half of the students entering a CPA must meet specific "at-risk" criteria, and most CPAs are in low-performing high schools.

While these are generally positive findings, we must point out that the information comes from academy self-reports, which may not always be accurate. Information that is contained in official student records — such as attendance, credits, demographic data, graduation, and CAHSEE passing rates, among others — may be more accurate than information that must be estimated by respondents, including a-g course completion and the value of contributions by employers.

With that caveat, this profile of California Partnership Academies in 2009-10 is consistent with the profile from 2004-05. The academy approach — which combines small learning communities, integrated academic and career-technical curriculum, and partnerships with employers and higher education — evidently continues to prepare students for both college and careers.

1. This report was prepared for the California Department of Education, with support from the Department and the James Irvine Foundation. The full report is available at http://casn.berkeley.edu/downloads/CPA_Report_2009-10.pdf

2. David Stern, Marilyn Raby, & Charles Dayton, *Career Academies: A Proven Strategy to Prepare High School Students for College and Careers*; CASN, UC Berkeley, 2010. Available at http://casn.berkeley.edu/resource_files/Proven_Strategy_2-25-1010-03-12-04-27-01.pdf

3. Denise Bradby, et al., *A Profile of the California Partnership Academies, 2004-05*; ConnectEd California, 2007.