



CALIFORNIA BUDGET PROJECT

# The Need for Basic Skills Education in California

Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economic Development, and the Economy  
Hearing on the California Enterprise Zone Program

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A PRESENTATION BY  
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# Thousands of Californians Have Not Mastered Basic Literacy and Math Skills

Table 1: Measures of the Need for Basic Skills Education in California

California High School Dropout Rate, 2007-08	31.7%
California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Passage Rate, 2007-08	90.2%
Number of Californians Age 25 or Older Without a High School Degree, 2007	4,610,311
Share of Californians Age 16 or Older Who Cannot Read an English-Language Newspaper, 2003	23.1%
Share of Entering Students Who Lack College-Level Math and/or Literacy Skills	
Community Colleges*	83.8%
California State University, Fall 2007	56.3%

\* Data were collected in April through June 2009 from a small sample of community colleges, refer to math skills, and may include some individuals who were not new to community college.

Source: Cabrillo College, California Department of Education, California State University, National Center for Education Statistics, and US Census Bureau

# Many Basic Skills Students Have Very Low Skills

Table 2: Entering Skill Level of WIA-Funded AEP Students, 2007-08

Educational Functioning Level	General Grade or Skill Level	Number of Students at This Level	Share of Students at This Level
Adult Basic Education		122,601	20.3%
Beginning	Grade level 0 to 3	31,057	5.2%
Intermediate	Grade level 4 to 8	91,544	15.2%
Adult Secondary Education		71,579	11.9%
Low	Grade level 9 to 10	47,442	7.9%
High	Grade level 11 to 12	24,137	4.0%
ESL		408,657	67.8%
Beginning	Ranges from no reading or speaking ability to the ability to speak in phrases and read some words	141,654	23.5%
Intermediate	Can read simple text on familiar topics and engage in simple conversations	200,782	33.3%
Advanced	Some conversational fluency; can read and write simple narratives	66,221	11.0%
Total		602,837	100.0%

Note: Grade-level equivalents for Entering Functional Levels are provided by the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and are used here to give a general sense of skill development for each Educational Functioning Level. CASAS, which analyzed the data on Educational Functioning Level that are presented here, discusses limitations of grade-level comparisons for Educational Functioning Levels in *Why CASAS Scale Scores Are Better Than Grade Level Equivalents* (n.d.), available from [www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org).

Source: CASAS and US Department of Labor