SANTA ANA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

All Students UC- and CSU-Ready

Santa Ana Unified School District (Santa Ana), California's sixth-largest district, has 56,000 students. More than 90 percent are elgible for free or reduced-price lunch, 96 percent are Latino, and nearly 60 percent are English language learners (ELL). The district has decided that all of its students should graduate ready to enroll in the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). To get there, Santa Ana is implementing college- and career-ready standards, developing and rolling out high-quality, standards-aligned curricular resources, and broadening technology use.

Santa Ana's efforts have been paying off in the form of increased student eligibility for college, student learning growth, higher graduation rates, and lower dropout and suspension rates.

Santa Ana benefits from being part of a group of California districts collaborating on education reforms by joining the CORE partnership, which focuses on college and career readiness, accountability and support for schools, and promoting effective teaching and learning.

Increasing rigor to prepare students for college

One of the district's strongest commitments over the past seven years has been graduating more students from high school with the required minimum courses and grades needed to gain admission to a college within the UC or CSU system.

Between the 2009–10 and 2013–14 school years, the percentage of Santa Ana graduates who had completed the required courses for UC and CSU entrance jumped from under 17 percent to 40 percent, going from 499 graduates meeting the requirements to 1,377. District leaders say that trend continues to move upward.

"There was a lot of intentional work around getting those numbers up, starting with getting deeply into a transcript review process. The idea of that audit was to look for where the gaps were and where we were missing the mark with the kids," says David Haglund, deputy superintendent of educational services.

He says the district now is working with The Education Trust West to do another audit and dig even deeper into transcripts and other student data to help see what's still keeping students from completing the required courses. This audit includes review of policies and practices that might inhibit access. Preliminary results indicate more focused counseling efforts might help, particularly with students who are just missing one or two of the necessary courses or who are struggling with grades in one or two of the required courses.

Santa Ana Unified School District
Urban District 2014–15

61 SCHOOLS

36 elementary   **9** intermediate   **7** high
5 public charter   **4** other

2,200 TEACHERS   **63 PRINCIPALS**

56,000 STUDENTS

96% Latino
2% Asian
1% White
<1% Other Ethnicity

10% special education
60% English language learners
91% free or reduced-price lunch

⬆ Santa Ana is a CORE district, one of a group of districts in California that collaborate to improve student achievement.

⬆ Santa Ana is the sixth-largest district in California and the largest in Orange County.

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District

A Look at California's A-G Courses

A-G courses are a series of courses students are required to take and pass to enter California's public universities. The subject requirements include courses in history and social science, mathematics, laboratory science, language other than English, visual and performing arts, and a college-preparatory elective. These courses are expected to be academically challenging, involving substantial reading, writing, and lab work, and should show serious attention to analytical thinking, factual content, and developing students' oral and listening skills. Advocacy and education policy groups say more California students need access to this sequence, because high school graduation requirements are not yet strong enough to ensure eligibility for California's universities.

In the past, too many high school students were taking courses that counted as an elective at the college level but not as a core requirement for admissions. The district eliminated an algebra readiness course that didn't meet college standards. In addition, the number of earth science courses were reduced and replaced with a more rigorous physics course that has a lab component. The district generally encourages students to take this course first and then later to take an AP Physics course. There are also an increased number of students taking Biology during their freshmen year.

"The idea is not to water down their coursework; it's to give them a stepping stool that still meets the requirements and prepares and pushes them up to working at a higher level," Haglund says. "State standards used to regulate kids into an algebra class, even when success was unlikely. But it's not okay to say, 'We're going to lower the standards.' We have to keep the rigor and support the students. We have improved supports for students prior to and during their first algebra course, including boot camps and an intensified algebra offering that are helping to achieve the goal of Santa Ana students passing algebra the first time they take the course."

As part of this focus on college readiness, Santa Ana also has seen a steady rise in the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and earning a 3 or higher on AP tests, earning it a spot on the College Board's District Honor Roll.

To encourage more students to take AP classes, district leaders looked closely at student data, including achievement scores on end-of-year tests and the Measures of Academic Progress by the Northwest Evaluation Association. In addition, teachers and principals talk with students and their families about the value of taking an AP course when appropriate, says Michelle Rodriguez, assistant superintendent, K–12 teaching and learning.

The number of students taking AP tests grew by about 18 percent between 2010–11 and 2013–14. What's more, the number of those students passing the tests grew almost 50 percent.
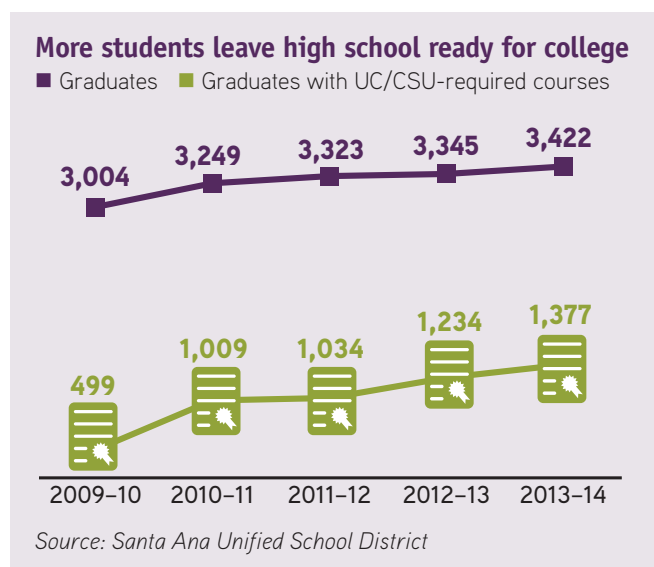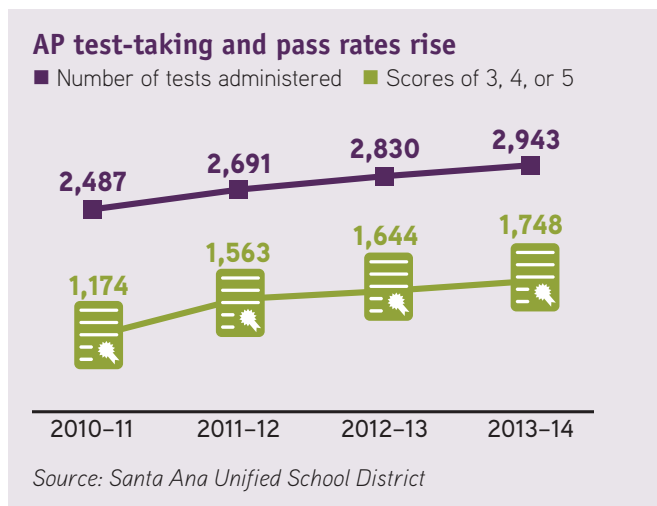
Exploring options to support students

UC and CSU require incoming students to complete four high school English courses. This requirement presents Santa Ana's high school-aged ELLs with a challenge: They must enroll in both English language arts and English as a second language courses in high school. Haglund says the district is trying to prepare as many ELL students to pass English proficiency tests before 9th grade as possible, with a particular focus on reclassifying students before they leave elementary school at the end of 5th grade.

As a result, students get more targeted time to work specifically on language skills. Schools also are integrating strategies to support ELLs in regular courses and classrooms. And the state of California offers a Seal of Biliteracy, an award given to those who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by their high school graduation. Due to the district's focused efforts to monitor, assess and celebrate language proficiency, about a third of Santa Ana graduates have earned the seal.

For high school graduates who don't immediately meet the requirements of the CSU and UC systems, Santa Ana has partnered with institutions of higher education to develop other options. High school graduates, for example, can attend Santa Ana College, a community college, with a guarantee of transferring after two years to CSU Fullerton or UC Irvine, as long as they complete the academic requirements for transfer.

Transfers from Santa Ana College to four-year universities grew slowly from 2,096 in 2011 to 2,123 in 2015. District administrators have set a more ambitious goal of seeing 2,223 students make that transfer in 2016 given their stepped-up focus on this effort.

AP test-taking and pass rates rise
■ Number of tests administered   ■ Scores of 3, 4, or 5

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Number of tests administered	2,487	2,691	2,830	2,943
Scores of 3, 4, or 5	1,174	1,563	1,644	1,748

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District

More students leave high school ready for college
■ Graduates   ■ Graduates with UC/CSU-required courses

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Graduates	3,004	3,249	3,323	3,345	3,422
Graduates with UC/CSU-required courses	499	1,009	1,034	1,234	1,377

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District

Empowering teachers to create high-quality instructional materials

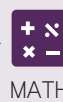**440** TEACHERS → SPENT → **3.5** YEARS → CREATING → **84** UNITS OF STUDY → IN → MATH · ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS · SCIENCE · SOCIAL STUDIES

Leading the way on aligned instructional materials and technology

College readiness requires having access to quality curriculum. Tired of waiting for textbook publishers to properly align their resources with the new Common Core State Standards, Santa Ana also has focused on creating better instructional materials. For the past three and a half years, 440 educators from the district have been creating curricular resources across grades and subjects aligned to the Common Core.

Teachers and curriculum specialists reviewed existing resources, created instructional plans around them, and then filled in gaps with new materials aligned to the standards in math and English language arts, as well as social studies and science. Among the teachers who wrote the curricular materials, about 40 left their classrooms for two years to focus on the work, while the rest did much of it during the summer. Before getting started, the district led professional development sessions on writing instructional resources for the curricula development teams.

Mariana Garate, principal of Walker Elementary, says the materials are challenging and engaging. In math, for example, the district's new materials are much more likely than the old textbooks to ask students to apply what they know to solve interesting problems, rather than just showing that they know a formula and can compute.

"The district chose the best teachers to lead this, the teachers who really had the experience in the classroom and knew what students needed. Then, the district really gave these great teachers the time to write and develop good materials," says Garate.

The resources are available for students in grades K–12 and have been posted online, available for anyone to access for free. The district partnered with a Silicon Valley-based organization, Gooru, to help manage this digital transformation of its work.

The district also has sought rigorous reviews of the materials, including external reviews from Achieve, the CORE Districts, the Irvine Math Project, Science@OC, the Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative and Quality Teaching for English Learners.

Haglund says the district plans to create additional resources but also will consider using curricula and textbooks created by others, including traditional publishers. "We're going to always look for the best learning resources for our kids," he says. The district supplements its curriculum with online resources, such as Khan Academy, Gooru, MyON, Smarty Ants, Achieve 3000, Go Math, Lexia5 and No Red Ink.

Listening to tech-savvy students

Santa Ana has listened to students to get close to a 1:1 student-device technology ratio so students can access online tools. District leaders frequently meet with and survey students, particularly high school students. Students who have their own personal devices, such as cell phones, use them in school for learning purposes. The district also dramatically improved the hard wiring of schools and expanded bandwidth to enable access and use of education videos from Khan Academy and elsewhere.

Students also expressed concern that some of their homes don't have broadband or even Internet service, creating equity issues. The district has worked with community partners to increase hotspots across the district and supplied some students and their families with mobile Wi-Fi devices they can use at home.

Supporting teachers

Santa Ana currently uses the state's teacher evaluation system, although one school, Valley High School, is developing and piloting its own system that is likely to serve as a districtwide model. Going beyond the California requirement, Santa Ana's future system is expected to include student growth on assessments as one of several measures of effectiveness. Tenured teachers in the district are usually formally evaluated every two years and non-tenured teachers annually per state policy. But Santa Ana leaders encourage principals to be in and out of classrooms far more often than that, observing closely and providing actionable feedback.

After an observation, Todd Irving, principal of Spurgeon Intermediate School, says he always asks the teacher,'"What did we see that was successful today in your classroom, and what would you do differently?' Teachers are always honest in that conversation about what they could have done better," he says.

Rodriguez says principals are evaluated based on student outcomes, such as student learning and biliteracy rates, as well as access to and success with rigorous coursework. Another factor in principal evaluation is school culture and climate, which may be shown in a variety of ways including a reduction in school suspensions.

Results

Santa Ana is seeing its reform efforts pay off in the form of student success. More students are graduating from high school ready for college. They are taking and passing more rigorous courses.

♠ Between 2009–10 and 2013–14, the percentage of seniors graduating with the requirements needed to enter a UC or CSU college grew from about 17 percent to 40 percent.

♠ Between 2011 and 2014, the percentage of graduating high school students in Santa Ana who went on to postsecondary institutions rose from 64 percent to 71 percent (with 40 percent of those students attending UC or CSU campuses). According to district staff, persistence rates for these students also grew at three colleges the district monitors: Santa Ana College, UC Irvine, and CSU Fullerton.

♠ Graduation rates also have steadily increased from 79.7 percent to 87.3 percent between 2009–10 and 2013–14. And dropout and suspension rates are down, according to the district's accountability office.

♠ The percentage of students taking AP tests grew by about 18 percent between 2010–11 and 2013–14. The percentage of those students passing the test rose almost 50 percent.

♠ Scores on the statewide assessment are more difficult to assess since California did not administer a statewide test in 2013–14 and in 2014–15, students took the more challenging Smarter Balanced test. Between 2009–10 and 2012–13 (the most recent year for comparative data), the district made some progress: up 3.0 percentage points in English language arts, 1.9 points in math, 6.1 points in history and 4.9 points in science.
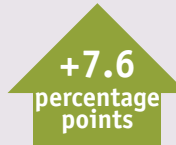
Conclusion

Nearly all Santa Ana students are low income, and the majority speak English as a second language, but district leaders and educators are intent on ensuring that all of the district's young people get a high-quality education that prepares them for college and careers.

The district's early and sustained efforts to prepare students for entry into California's universities is paying off. The percentage of students graduating ready for UC and CSU four-year colleges has more than doubled. The laser-like focus by administrators and educators to ensure that instructional materials are challenging, engaging, and aligned to new college- and career-ready standards distinguishes Santa Ana.

While there is certainly room for growth, Santa Ana appears headed in the right direction: one that will put more students on a path toward success.

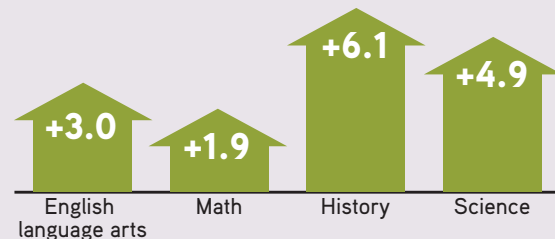## More students are graduating ready to enter college

+7.6 percentage points
Increase in graduation rates (2009–10 to 2013–14)

+23 percentage points
Increase in students graduating with postsecondary requirements (2009–10 to 2013–14)

Statewide assessment scores rose in all subjects (2009–10 to 2012–13)
Percentage points

English language arts	Math	History	Science
+3.0	+1.9	+6.1	+4.9

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District

Graduation rates are rising

87.3%

79.7%

| 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 | 2012–13 | 2013–14 |

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District