

## Summary of State Exit Exams and the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination (NHSPE)

### Background

The Nevada Legislature established the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam in 1979 to raise student writing standards for all high school graduates. The exam was expanded to include reading and mathematics in the 1980s, at which time the tests became a requirement for graduation. In 1994, the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act required each state to establish standards and the NHSPE was rewritten to reflect them. The first graduating class impacted by the new exam crossed the stage in 1997. Finally, Nevada added a fourth comprehensive exam in science, which became a requirement for graduation in 2010.

Subject	2011 NHSPE Pass Rate for CCSD 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Enrolled June 2011
Reading	96.3%
Mathematics	88.7%
Writing	91.5%
Science	90.9%

*Note: This data does not address diplomas or dropout rates.*

### PSAT

CCSD has provided/offered all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students the PSAT since the 2004-2005 school year.

- The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) is a program cosponsored by the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). It is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT. It also provides students with a chance to enter NMSC scholarship programs and gain access to college and career planning tools.
- The PSAT/NMSQT measures: critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills, and writing skills.
- The most common reasons for taking the PSAT/NMSQT are to:
  - Receive feedback about strengths and weaknesses on skills necessary for college study. Students can then focus preparation on those areas that could most benefit from additional study or practice.
  - See how performance on an admissions test might compare with that of others applying to college.
  - Enter the competition for scholarships from NMSC (grade 11).
  - Help prepare for the SAT.
  - Receive information from colleges.
- Additionally, CCSD uses the results to identify students for potential enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Students also receive access to MyRoad, collegeboard.com's college and career planning website that provides students the information and resources they need to explore their interests and preferences, search for colleges and career options and more, as well as access to My College QuickStart, a personalized college and career planning kit powered by individual PSAT/NMSQT test results.

### ACT

The ACT is a curriculum and standards-based educational and career planning tool that assesses students' academic readiness for college.

- The ACT motivates students to perform to their best ability and often results in increased college enrollment, especially for underrepresented students.
- Test scores reflect what students have learned throughout high school and provide colleges and universities with excellent information for recruiting, advising, placement, and retention.
- To support college and career planning, the ACT career exploration component helps students identify personally relevant career options.
- Registration includes score reporting to four colleges of the student's choice.
- The ACT is a portable, nationally recognized indicator of achievement.

### Exit Exam Policies Across the Nation

- Twenty-five states have current or planned policies that require students to pass an exit exam in order to receive a high school diploma. An additional five states require students to take an exit exam, but not necessarily pass it, in order to receive a high school diploma. Another state has planned exit exam policies, but has not decided whether or not students would have to pass the exams in order to graduate.

- The Common Core State Standards Initiative is bringing changes to exit-exam policy. Twenty-seven of the 31 states with current or planned exit exams are participating in one of the state consortia to develop common assessments. And of those 27 states, 16 plan to replace their current exit exams with common-core tests in language arts and math. Perhaps not surprisingly, those states told the CEP that they expect the new exams to be more rigorous than their current ones.
- Three states requiring high school exit exams (Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee) have changed their policies so that students no longer have to pass an exam in order to receive a diploma. Instead, a student's score on an exit exam now counts as a percentage of the student's final grade in a course required for graduation.
- More states administer or plan to administer end-of-course exams than comprehensive exams. Nineteen states had current or planned policies to administer end-of-course exams in the 2010-11 school year.
- Nevada is currently one of two states that requires students to pass a comprehensive exit exam in four subjects.
- Due to policy changes in some states, fewer students were required to pass high school exit exams in order to receive a high school diploma in the 2010-11 school year than in the 2009-10 school.
- High school exit exams are currently used by potential employers or postsecondary education institutions in only one state (Georgia), despite many states citing assessment of college readiness (8 states) and career readiness (10 states) as a purpose of those assessments.
- Sixteen states administer, or at least offer to all students, assessments that are intended to assess students' readiness for college and/or a career. Nine of the 16 states administer one of (or a combination of) assessments developed by ACT. Five of the 16 states administer the PSAT for this purpose, and an additional two of the 16 administer state-developed assessments for this purpose.

## Issues

In 2010, Nevada adopted the Common Core State Standards, and joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia with the intent to develop common state assessments aligned to the Common Core Standards for implementation in 2014-15. The Common Core State Standards Initiative is bringing changes to exit-exam policy.

During the interim between the current Nevada High School Proficiency Exam and the implementation of the Common Core Assessment, the Nevada Department of Education is replacing some of the current items on the NHSPE with more rigorous items to help "bridge" the change in tested content. While this "bridging" helps, the new Common Core Assessment and the existing NHSPE are very likely to be radically different. These transition years between curricula are difficult for teachers, students, and parents to be certain how to prepare our students to pass a constantly changing HSPE and prepare for an unknown common core assessment.

It would seem prudent and fair to students during this assessment transition to suspend the High School Proficiency Exams as a requirement for earning a high school diploma. This does not mean there would be no assessment or no accountability, only that students affected in these transitional years would not have their future jeopardized by a new curriculum and assessment change. The goal is to ensure students are college and career ready, and the NHSPE was not designed for this purpose.

## Assessment Options

The Nevada Department of Education could:

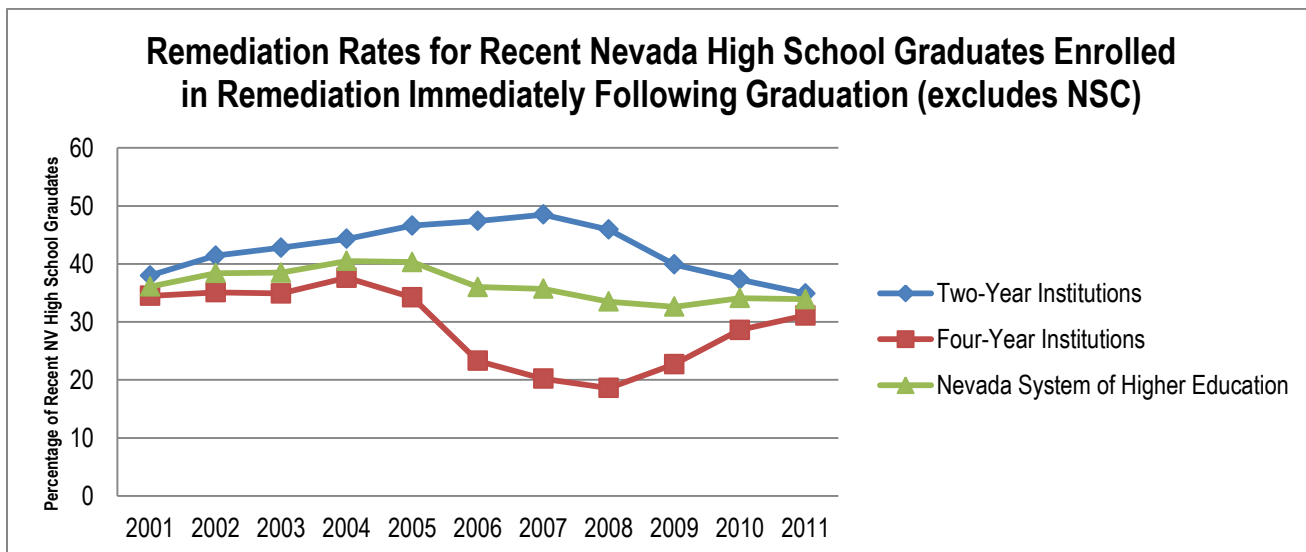
1. Administer college entrance exams, such as the ACT, to enable:
  - Students to know the extent to which they have mastered expected knowledge and skills and how their performance compares to others,
  - Parents to know if their children are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in higher education and/or a highly competitive job market,
  - Teachers to know if their students have mastered subject area knowledge and skills in the curriculum and, if not, what weaknesses need to be addressed,
  - Community leaders and lawmakers to know if students in Nevada schools are improving their performance over time and how the students compare with students around the state, and
  - Citizens to objectively assess their return on investment in the public schools.
2. Develop state-wide end of course exams for core courses,
3. Continue the current HSPE exams until the common core assessments are implemented but eliminate them as a graduation requirement, or
4. Continue the current HSPE exams until the common core assessments are implemented.

## Recommendations

The Clark County School District believes a purposeful tool should be in place that directly addresses post-secondary readiness. CCSD wants to raise expectations, not diminish them. The Clark County School District recommends adopting a valid college indicator that can be used to prepare students to be “Ready by Exit.”

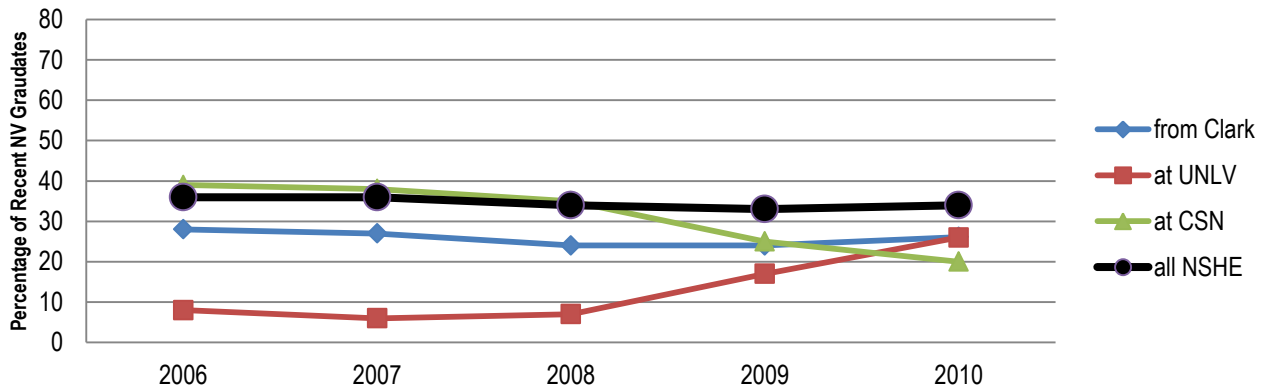
1. *Suspend the NHSPE and hold school districts accountable for preparing students to enter the work force or post-secondary education without remediation.*
  - Remove remediation classes at middle and high schools and provide rigorous interventions to support students.
  - Offer more Advanced Placement classes and encourage student participation.
  - Work with colleges and universities to provide more dual enrollments in high schools for college credit.
  - Increase Gateway curriculum, such as Advanced Placement (AP), SpringBoard, Gateway to Technology (GTT), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).
2. *Require that all students take the ACT at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade school year or the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade school year.*
  - The goal is for all students to earn an ACT composite score of 20 or higher. An ACT composite score of 20 is a nationally accepted score for passing and successfully entering college/university without the need for remediation. However, unlike the NHSPE, a ‘passing score’ would not be required, as the ACT would not be used as an exit exam.
  - Provide interventions for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who score below a 20 on the ACT. CCSD has implemented a comprehensive graduation initiative that provided tutoring, mentoring, and multiple opportunities to assist students graduate and will continue to provide these interventions.
  - ACT is national indicator to see if college ready
3. *Revisit required exit exams once Common Core Assessments are complete and implemented.*
  - Don’t want to unfairly assess students until the CCSS are in place.

## Data

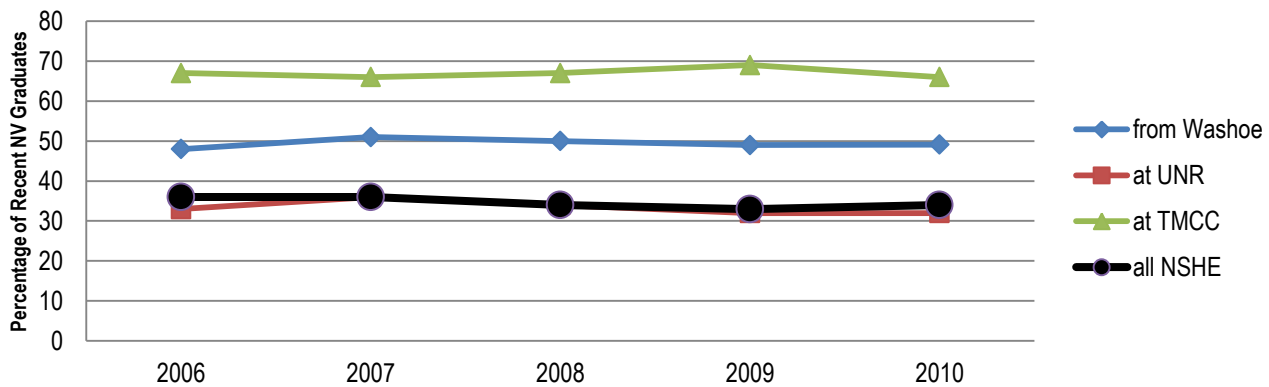


\*The increase in remediation rates at UNLV and decrease at CSN is due in large part to the expiration of an agreement in which CSN delivered remedial courses to UNLV students (page 4, Summer and Fall 2011 Remedial/Developmental Report)

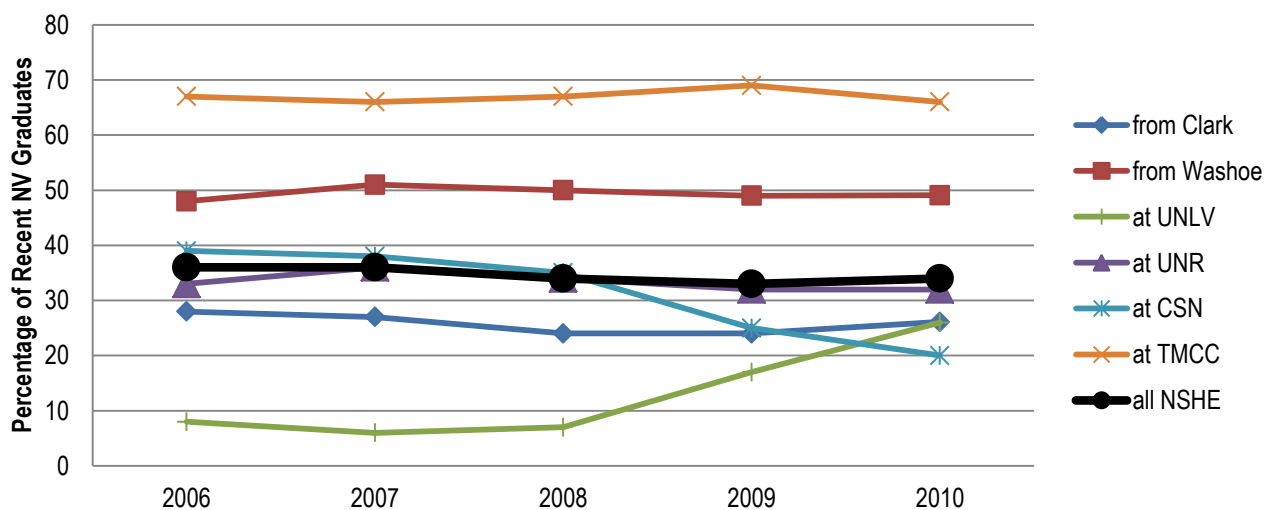
## Remedial Enrollments of Recent Graduates Clark County



## Remedial Enrollments of Recent Graduates Washoe County

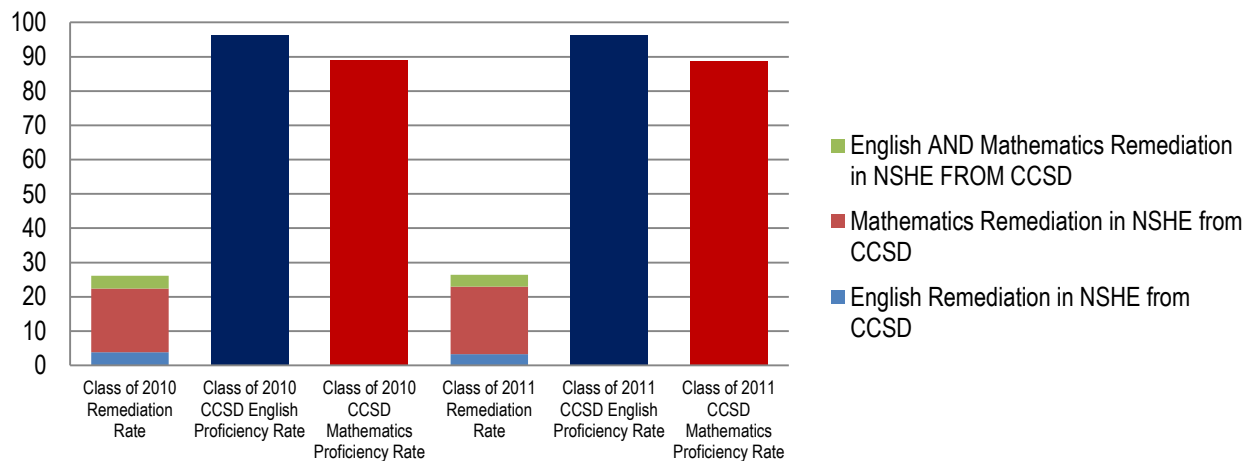


## Remedial Enrollments of Recent Graduates

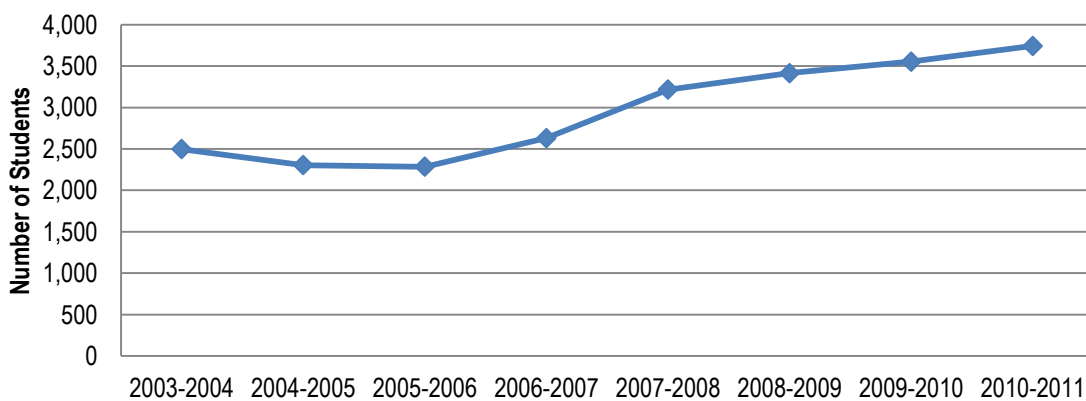


In 2010, it cost recent Nevada graduates enrolled in NSHE approximately \$1,863,128 for remedial credit hours. Graduates from Clark County School District paid approximately \$632,049 while graduates from Washoe County School District paid approximately \$638,776. (page 26, 2010 Remedial Enrollments by High School with Cost Estimate)

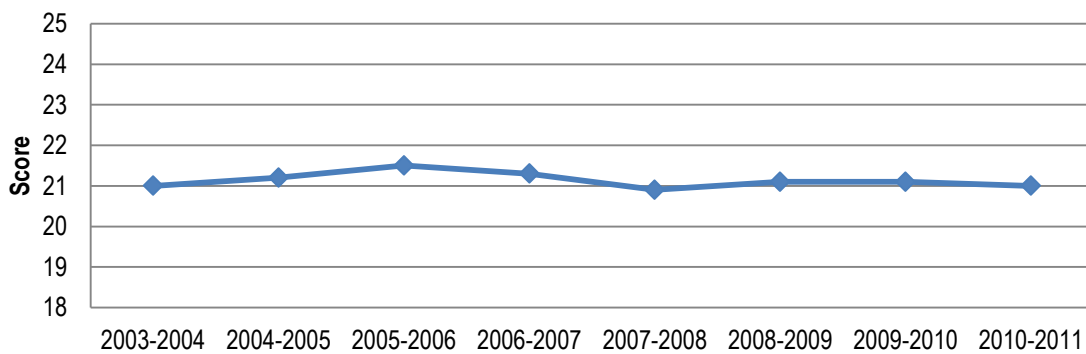
## CCSD NVHSPE Proficiency Rates (*student enrolled June 2012 only*) and NSHE Remediation Rates



## CCSD Students Taking ACT



## ACT Composite Scores in CCSD



## CCSD Graduation 2012

- Class of 2012 began with 23,078 students as freshman
- 15,000 are expected to receive diplomas in June
- Six percent increase from 2011
  - September 2011—52% on track to graduate
  - May 2012—65% on track to graduate
  - Summer 2012—Additional graduates

### HSPE Not Passed

August 2011	April 2012
5,916	2,341

### Credit Deficient

August 2011	April 2012
4,218	1,828