

# Humanities Education in California: Access, Enrollment, and Achievement

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# Introduction

At a time when American society has become more technologically-driven than ever before, the federal government has pointed to humanities education as a means of ensuring that “people of all backgrounds [are] masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants”<sup>1</sup> and as key in helping students receive a well-rounded education.<sup>2</sup> California policymakers have also underscored the role humanities education plays in promoting the skills students will need to engage as citizens in American democracy<sup>3</sup> and as future members of America’s diverse workforce.<sup>4</sup>

However, California is falling short in providing its students the requisite humanities education to achieve these stated goals. Measures produced by Humanities Indicators, a research project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, suggest that the state of the humanities in California trails behind most other states in the nation. For instance, in 2013, only 28 percent of fourth and eighth graders in California demonstrated reading proficiency.<sup>5</sup> Overall, California ranked the fourth lowest of any state and 8 points lower than the national average of 36 percent.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in the 2007–08 school year, California had the tenth lowest public K–12 enrollment in languages other than English of any state, with only 14.6 percent of students enrolled.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965". (20 U.S.C. 951, note) Enacted Sept. 29, 1965. P.L. 89-202, sec. 1, 79 Stat. 845; amended May 31 1984, P.L. 98-306, sec. 2, 98 Stat. 223; amended Dec. 20, 1985, P.L. 99-194, sec. 101, 99 Stat. 1332.

<sup>2</sup> Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: California Department of Education (2007). Parent Handbook for History–Social Science. Sacramento, CA.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: California Department of Education. "State Seal of Biliteracy." Last reviewed December 28, 2016. Retrieved from [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Data accessed via the NAEP Data Explorer at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/naeptools.aspx>. Data presented by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Humanities Indicators at <http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatordoc.aspx?i=10983>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> American Councils for International Education, American Council on the Teaching for Foreign Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Modern Language Association (2016) The National K–16 Foreign Language Enrollment Report 2014–15. Washington, DC: American Councils for International Education. Data presented by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Humanities Indicators at <http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatordoc.aspx?i=159>.

On behalf of California Humanities, SRI Education examined the status of humanities education in California to uncover trends in humanities coursework access and knowledge development. This study rests on the premise that all students should have access to quality humanities education because it is essential to the development of their empathy, wisdom, imagination, artistry, and cultural appreciation.<sup>8</sup> SRI's research team leveraged publicly available 2014–15 course enrollment data<sup>9</sup> and student achievement data to answer the following three questions:

- Do California students have access to humanities coursework?
- Are California students enrolling in humanities courses?
- Do California students demonstrate proficiency in the humanities disciplines?

In this study, the humanities refer to California's academic coursework in the following subjects: English language arts, history/social sciences, foreign languages, and visual and performing arts. Additional criteria were established that excluded some courses in these subject domains, such as applied arts courses and remedial English courses (see Appendix A for information about the criteria and for a list of courses included in the analysis).

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<sup>8</sup> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965.

<sup>9</sup> California Department of Education. "Staff Assignment and Course Data." Last reviewed October 13, 2016. Retrieved from [www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/df/filesassign.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/df/filesassign.asp)

# Humanities Education: A Federal and State Priority

Both federal and state policymakers have enacted policies that support humanities education. Policymakers have justified their involvement in humanities education by emphasizing the role humanities play in contributing to a well-rounded education.

## Federal Policy

The federal government codified its commitment to the humanities on September 29, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act into law. The Act called for the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), an independent agency intended to support local, state, regional, and private agencies in advancing the humanities. Since then, the Act has been amended to provide more detail about the responsibilities of the NEH and federal and state governments to support the humanities.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, the U.S. Department of Education, as part of the changes introduced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, affirmed the federal government's commitment to a multi-disciplinary, "well-rounded education." As Secretary of Education John B. King stated in a July 2015 "Dear Colleague" letter to educators nationwide,

A holistic education—one that includes access to social studies, including: history, civics, government, economics, and geography; music and art; world languages...allows educators to teach their students in a manner that promotes the promise of learning and provides students with the knowledge necessary to succeed in a complex society.<sup>11</sup>

The Department's guidance suggested both increasing student access to the humanities and improving knowledge of the humanities among teachers. The Department provided examples of multiple ways for state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) and schools to leverage various sources of support for the humanities (see side bar).

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<sup>10</sup> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965.

<sup>11</sup> King, John B. (2016). "Letter on using federal funds to support humanities and arts education." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/160713.html>.

## Examples of how federal funds can support humanities education

**Rigorous coursework in humanities for all students:** Depending on the student population to be served, program funds may be used to enhance college and career readiness through support for dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs, early college high school models, or other methods to increase access to rigorous humanities coursework.

**Out-of-school time:** SEAs and their subgrantees (*e.g.*, LEAs, community-based organizations, and other public and private entities) may use funds from the 21<sup>st</sup> century Community Learning Centers grants to provide high-quality humanities programs and activities to students in out-of-school learning settings.

**Career-based experiential learning:** Grantees may use Perkins funds to support collaborations with humanities industries, for example, in the Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications industries, to offer internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs that improve students' knowledge of careers in the humanities to the extent such careers are part of a grantee's career and technical education program.

**Humanities-focused schools and pathways:** Eligible applicants may use Charter Schools Program funds to start new humanities-focused charter schools.

**Summer school or extended learning time:** Schools may use Title I funds to help prepare low-achieving students to take advanced humanities courses in high school — for example, providing an intensive summer school course designed to accelerate their knowledge and skills, offering an elective course to prepare them to take advanced courses, or providing after-school tutoring while they are taking advanced courses.

**Field trips:** Schools operating a schoolwide program may use Title I funds to support activities such as field trips to increase access to hands-on humanities experiences and activities. Such uses must be consistent with applicable SEA or LEA policies, Federal requirements for uses of funds, and the school's comprehensive needs assessment.

Note: This text is excerpted from the Secretary's 2016 letter on using federal funds to support humanities and arts education.

## State Policy

Like the U.S. Department of Education, California's Department of Education (CDE) has set forth a vision for access to rigorous and comprehensive humanities coursework. In CDE's frameworks for each discipline, the state delineates the humanistic benefits of taking courses in history and the social sciences, English language arts, the visual and performing arts, and foreign languages (see side bar). (See Appendix B for a list of instructional resources provided by the CDE.)



## California's rationale for humanities education

**History/social sciences:** The subject areas covered in this framework offer students the opportunity to learn about the world and their place in it, think critically, read, write, and communicate clearly. History, Civics and Government, Geography, and Economics, are integral to our shared mission of preparing California's children for college, careers, and civic life. These disciplines develop our students' understanding of the physical world, encourage their participation in our democratic system of government, teach them about our past, inform their financial choices, and improve their ability to make reasoned decisions based upon evidence. Moreover, these disciplines play a vital role in the development of student literacy, because of their shared emphasis on text, argumentation, and use of evidence. (Excerpted from CDE's 2016 *History–Social Science Framework*)

**English language arts:** The ability to read, write, and communicate with competence and confidence in English across a range of personal and academic contexts expands students' opportunities for career and college success, full and wise participation in a democratic society and global economy, and achievement of their personal aspirations. Moreover, skill in literacy and language provides individuals with access to extraordinary and powerful literature that widens perspectives, illuminates the human experience, and deepens understandings of self and others. (Excerpted from CDE's 2015 *ELA/ELD Framework*)

**Visual and performing arts:** This capacity of human beings to create and appreciate the arts is just one of many reasons to teach the arts in the schools. Study and practice in the arts refine students' abilities to perceive aesthetically, make connections between works of art and the everyday lives of people, and discuss visual, kinesthetic, and auditory relationships. (Excerpted from CDE's 2004 *Visual and Performing Arts Framework*)

**Foreign languages:** Learning a language opens new doors and expands a student's opportunities to learn. Learning a new linguistic system means acquiring an objective view of one's native language and, indeed, of one's own culture. The structural elements of language, the range of ideas expressible in a language, the intense interdependence of language and culture—all these become apparent as the student becomes increasingly proficient in a new language. (Excerpted from CDE's 2001 *Foreign Language Framework*)

California also incentivizes students to study foreign languages by offering a State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) to high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing one or more languages in addition to English. The goals of the SSB are consistent with the goals of a rigorous humanities education; they include “strengthening intergroup relationships; affirming the value of diversity; and honoring the multiple cultures and languages of a community.”<sup>12</sup> In the class of 2016, there were 40,220 students who earned the SSB, which is marked by a gold seal affixed to the awarded students’

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<sup>12</sup> California Department of Education. "State Seal of Biliteracy." Last reviewed December 28, 2016. Retrieved from [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp).

high school diplomas. California was the first state to enact such a program in 2012, and since its inception 20 other states have created similar programs for bilingual high school graduates.

## High School and College Requirements in the Humanities

California students who apply to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems are required to complete requisite high school coursework to satisfy the “A–G requirements,” which include courses in the humanities (English, history/social science, foreign languages, and the visual and performing arts).<sup>13</sup> The A–G requirements are more rigorous than the state’s minimum high school graduation requirements. The UC/CSU systems call for an additional year of instruction in English, create separate requirements for the visual and performing arts and foreign language, and demand 2 years of foreign language instruction. The table below compares the two sets of requirements. To ensure students have opportunities to fulfill these requirements, all California high schools must offer courses in each of these humanities disciplines.

### California’s High School Graduation Requirements and California State University and University of California’s A–G Requirements

Subject	High School Graduation Requirements	A–G Requirements
English Language Arts	3 courses	4 years <sup>14</sup>
History/Social Sciences	3 courses	2 years
Visual and Performing Arts	1 course (any)	1 years
Foreign Language		2 years
Career/Technical Education		No requirement
Science	2 courses	2 years
Mathematics	2 courses	3 years
Physical Education	2 courses	No requirement
College-preparatory elective	No requirement	1 year

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix C for more detail regarding each A–G requirement in the humanities.

<sup>14</sup> A–G requirements define a year of instruction as equivalent to two semesters.

## Study Overview

To understand how well California is meeting its ambitious goals for humanities education, California Humanities sought information about student access to humanities coursework and the extent to which students are developing the knowledge and skills rooted in the humanities. California Humanities was particularly concerned with any differences in student subgroups and school types that may point to inequities in access to the humanities education that policymakers have determined is so vital to a student's well-rounded education.

Given this charge, SRI researchers drew on extant data to investigate patterns in California's K–12 humanities education and understand the extent to which environmental circumstances such as poverty may influence access. This study used data from the California Department of Education (2014–15 data) and from the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD) to examine middle and high course offerings across California's schools and course enrollment.<sup>15</sup> The research team explored variation on these indicators by school size, school poverty rate (as determined by percent of students enrolled in free and reduced-price meal programs), and student gender. To examine course offerings and student enrollment by school size and school poverty, SRI researchers divided California's schools into four quartiles based on these two dimensions, with each quartile representing about 320 public high schools. The research team created school quartiles based on the school's number of students, with the first quartile representing schools with no more than 470 students and the fourth quartile representing schools with more than 2,084 students. The research team also divided schools into four quartiles based on the percent of students at each school who qualified for free/reduced price lunch (FRPL).<sup>16</sup> In the lowest-poverty schools, no more than 36 percent of students qualified for FRPL; in the highest-poverty schools, over 78 percent of students qualified. In 2014–15, 59 percent of California students qualified for FRPL.

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<sup>15</sup> Because of the organization of K–12 schooling, and the way course data are reported, a systematic analysis of course offerings and student enrollment is only possible at the secondary (middle and high) school level. As a result, analysis of course offerings and enrollment is limited to schools identified by the CDE as middle or high schools; moreover, schools identified by CDE as alternative/other or special education, as well as schools with virtual status were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>16</sup> Eligibility for federal free and reduced-priced meals programs is commonly used as a proxy for family poverty in education research.

The team also leveraged publicly available data from the CDE and from the College Board to assess student achievement in the humanities.

In the high school analyses, the study team specifically examined course offerings and course-taking patterns in advanced humanities coursework.<sup>17</sup> The availability of and enrollment in these advanced courses are indicators of student access to rigorous humanities education. The degree to which access and enrollment diverge for subgroups of schools suggests inequities in access to and experience with the well-rounded education that federal and State policymakers envision.

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<sup>17</sup> To define advanced coursework, the study team relied upon course titles available in the CDE course enrollment data. With this, course titles that contain phrases such as “Advanced Placement, “IB” (for International Baccalaureate), or “advanced” were considered advanced coursework for this study.

## Key Findings

The study investigated three aspects of the status of humanities education in California: access, student enrollment, and achievement. The research team found that schools with a high proportion of low-income students offer rigorous humanities courses less frequently than schools with higher-income students, and (perhaps consequently) fewer students attending schools serving large proportions of low-income students are enrolled in advanced humanities courses than students attending more affluent schools. On average, these low-income students and some ethnic minority groups are performing at lower levels than state-wide averages on state assessments.

### Access to Humanities Courses

The research team examined humanities course access and enrollment across two school-level dimensions: school size and student poverty rate.

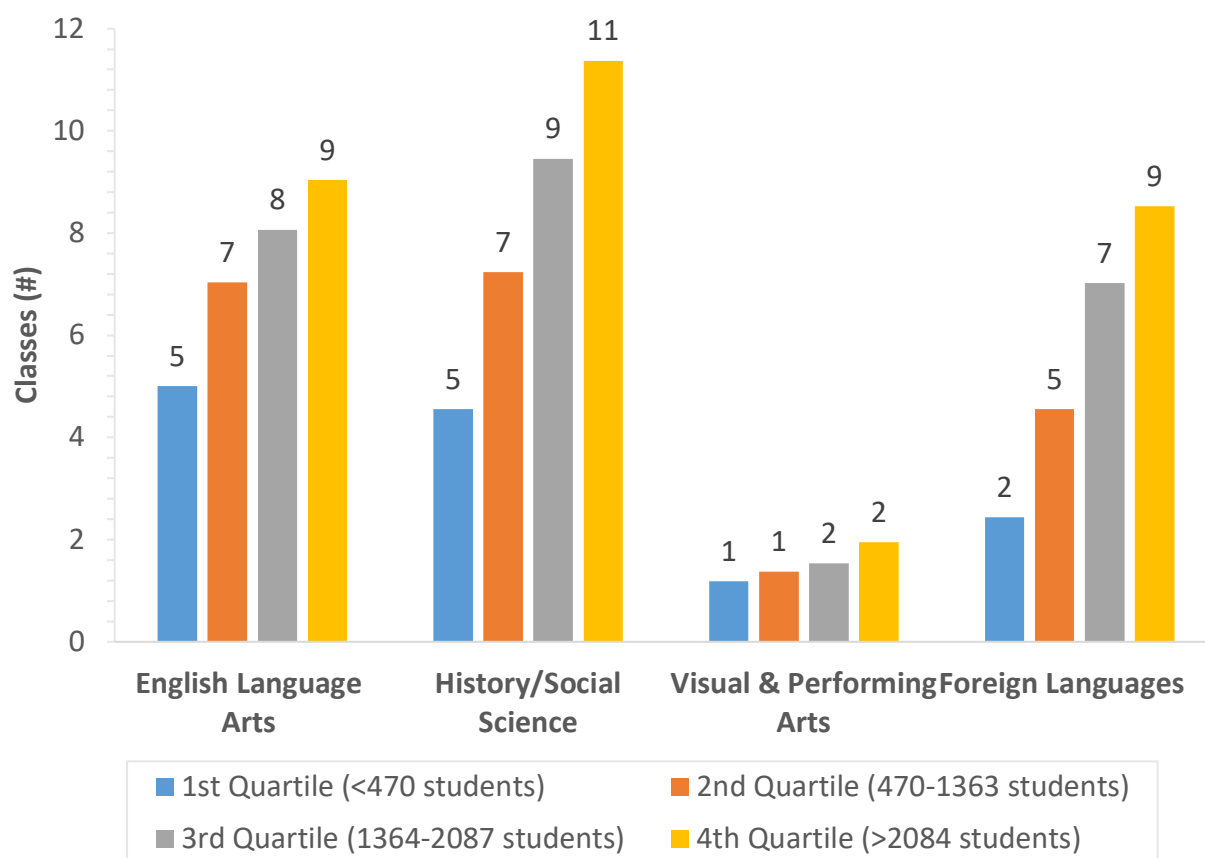
#### Humanities course offerings by school size

Schools with greater student enrollment are able to offer a wider variety of programs and courses than schools with lower student enrollment. As a result, access to humanities coursework varies by school size.

**California's largest high schools offer an average of four more English language arts courses and six more history/social science courses than the smallest schools.**

The research team first asked whether there was a difference in the number of humanities courses offered in large schools as compared to small schools. Our analysis revealed that on average, larger schools offer a greater number of courses in each humanities subject (Exhibit 1). For example, whereas the smallest schools offered an average of 5 courses in history/social science, the largest schools offered an average of 11.

**Exhibit 1. Average number of high school courses offered in humanities subjects, by school size quartile (2014–15)**



### Advanced course offerings by school poverty

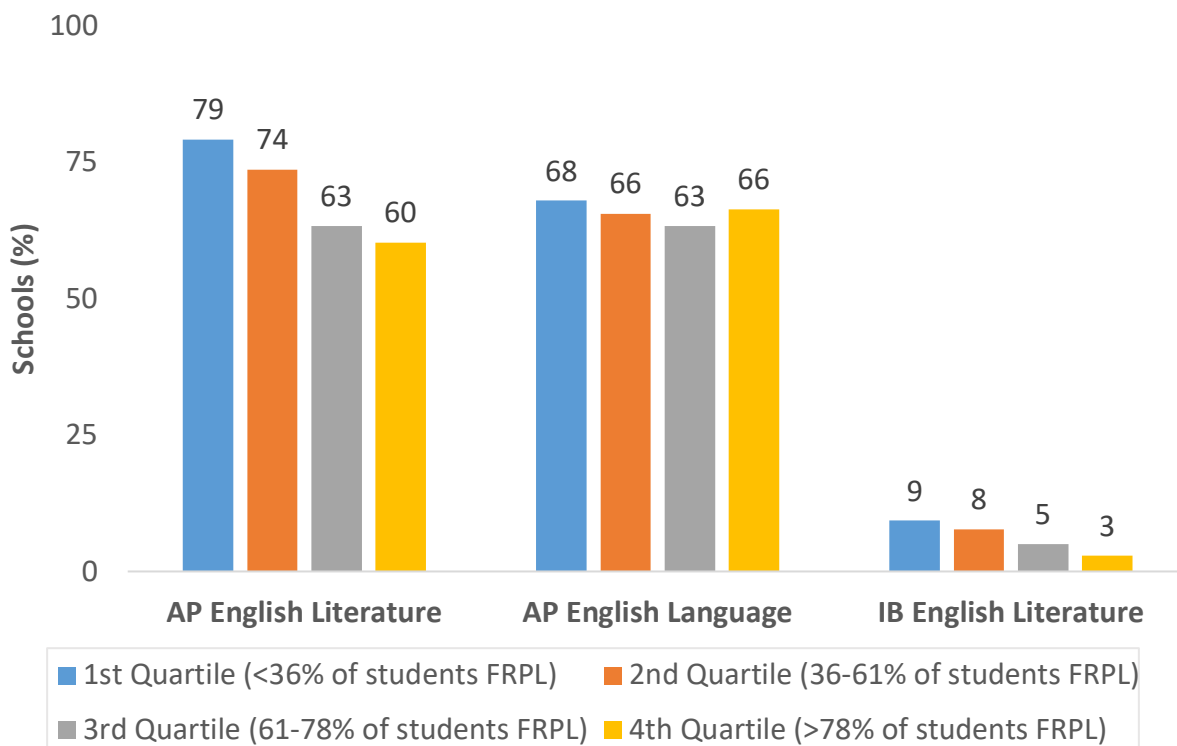
Because all California high schools offer humanities courses, the research team examined the percent of California high schools in each poverty quartile that offer each *advanced* courses in the four humanities subjects. Nearly every advanced class in every humanities subject is more frequently offered by low-poverty schools (indicated by blue and orange bars) than high-poverty schools (indicated by grey and yellow bars).

The majority of California high schools offer advanced coursework in English; access varies somewhat by the concentration of students living in poverty.

AP English Literature is offered in nearly four in five California high schools (79 percent) in the lowest poverty quartile versus three in five (60 percent) in the highest poverty high schools (Exhibit 2). Approximately two-thirds of California high schools offer AP English Language, with

little variation by school poverty quartile. IB English courses are offered in fewer than one in 10 California high schools and are more frequently offered in low-poverty schools.

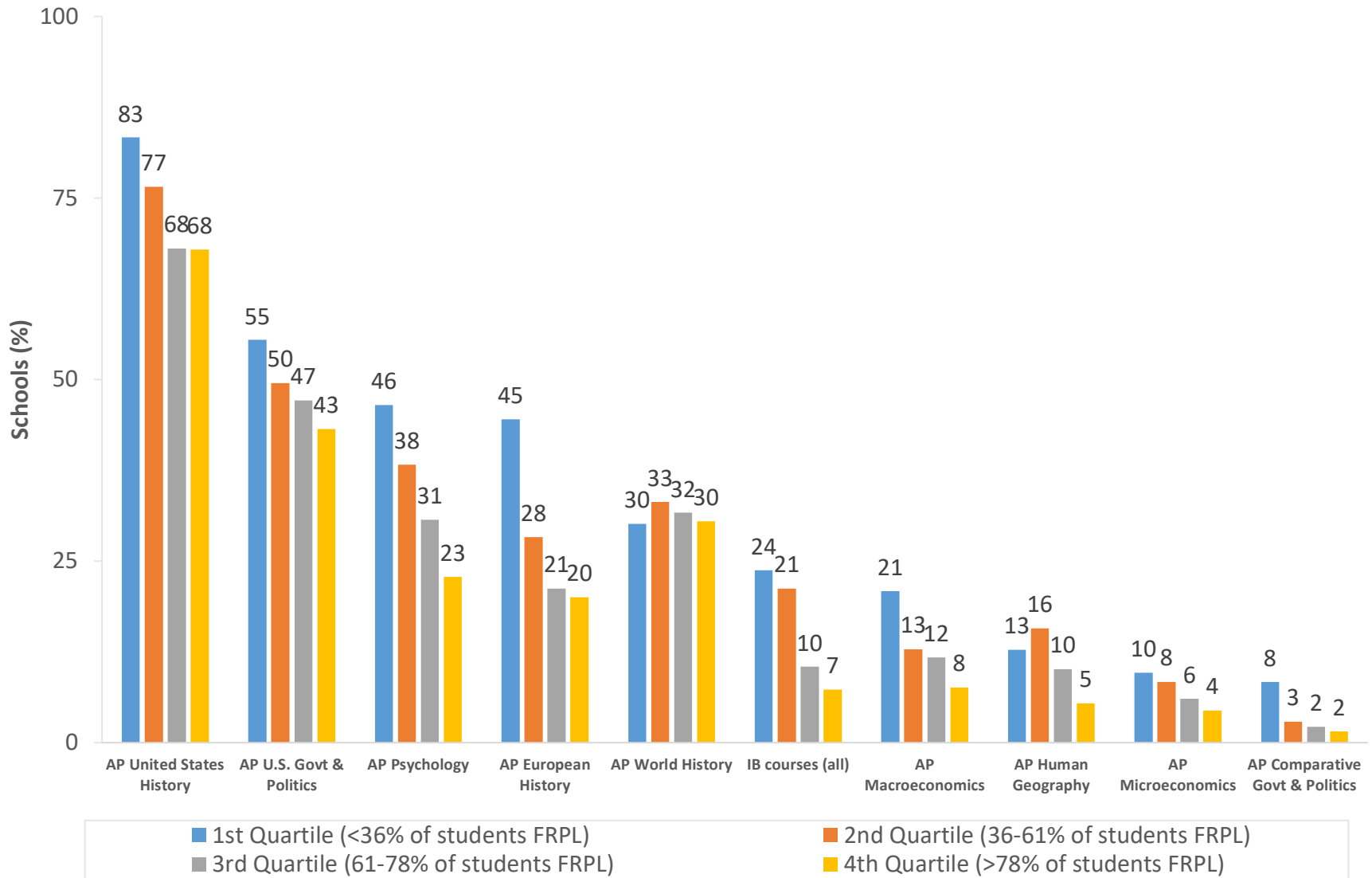
**Exhibit 2. High schools offering AP/IB English language arts courses, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**



California high schools offer a diverse set of advanced history/social science courses; however, students in more affluent schools have greater access to most courses than their peers in higher poverty schools.

A course in U.S. history is required for graduation from a public high school and for admission to the state university systems. That all students must take a U.S. history course may, at least in part, explain why U.S. History is the most frequently offered advanced course (Exhibit 3). While most California high schools offer AP U.S. History, more high schools in the lowest-poverty quartile (83 percent) offer the course compared with high schools serving larger proportions of children from low-income families (68 percent). This pattern is consistent for all advanced history courses, with the exception of AP World History (another course that fulfills California college admissions requirements and high school graduation requirements).

Exhibit 3. High schools offering AP/IB history/social science courses, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)

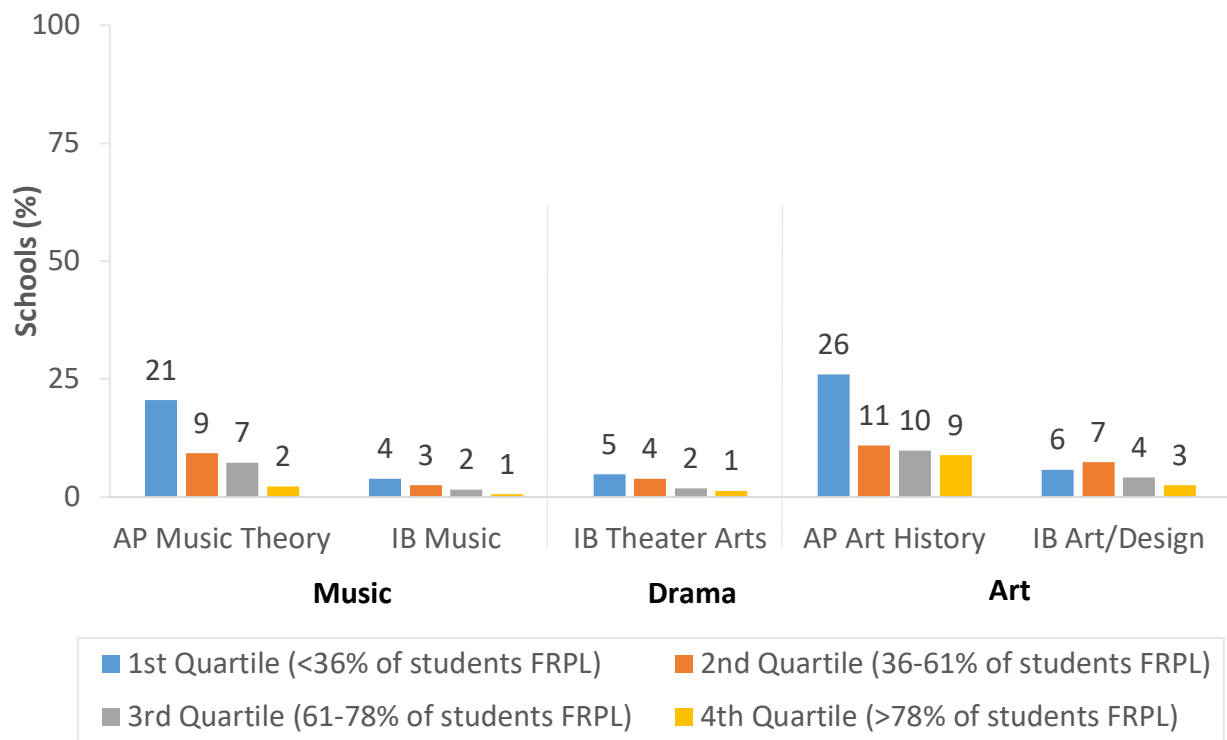




Fewer high-poverty high schools offer advanced courses focused on the history and theory of the visual and performing arts than low-poverty schools.

In the visual and performing arts disciplines, fewer medium- and high-poverty schools offer advanced history and theory courses, such as AP Music Theory and AP Art History (Exhibit 4). Instead, those courses are offered primarily in schools in the lowest poverty quartile.

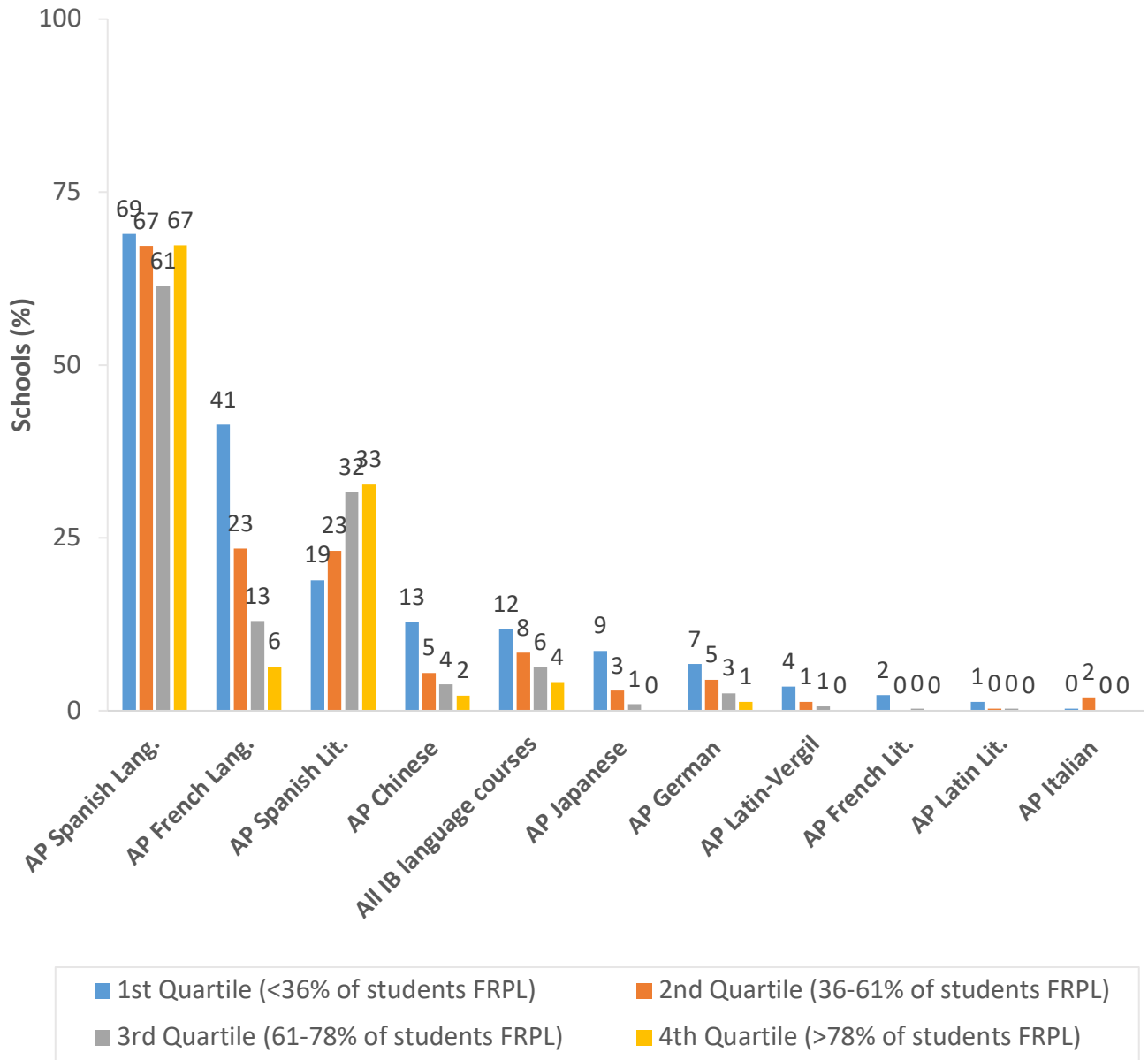
**Exhibit 4. High schools offering advanced visual and performing arts courses, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**



High-poverty schools offer advanced Spanish courses as frequently or even more frequently than low-poverty schools, but very few high-poverty schools offer advanced courses in other languages.

Foreign language offers an exception to the trend seen in other humanities disciplines: AP Spanish Language is offered at a comparable rate across school poverty quartiles, and AP Spanish Literature is more frequently offered by high-poverty schools than low-poverty schools (Exhibit 5). However, other advanced courses such as AP French Language remain most frequently offered by low-poverty schools (to the extent they are offered at all).

**Exhibit 5. High schools offering AP/IB foreign language courses, by school poverty quartile (2014—15)**



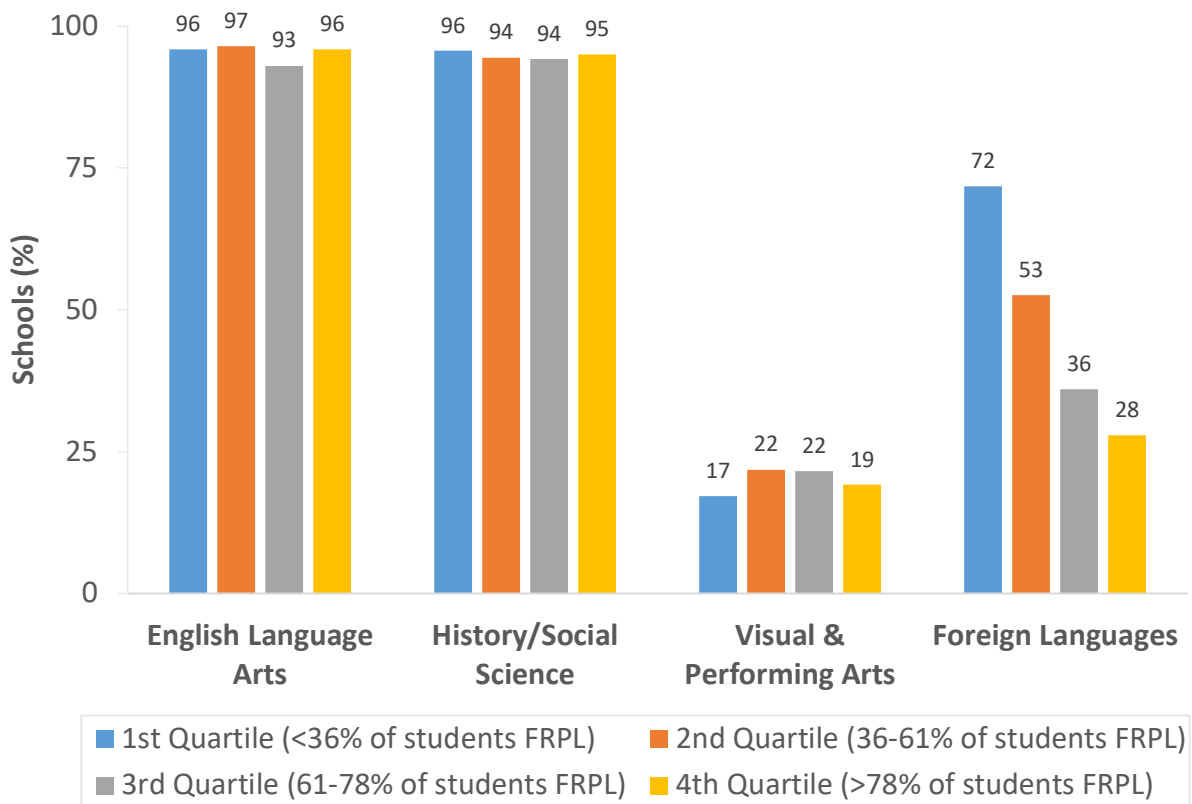
## Middle school course offerings by school poverty

Middle schools offer about the same number of courses per subject in each poverty quartile with the exception of foreign languages.

Low-poverty middle schools offer more than twice the number of foreign language courses than high-poverty middle schools.

While all middle schools offer courses in English language arts and history/social science and few offer non-applied arts courses (e.g., art history and music theory), students experience a marked disparity in access to foreign language instruction across California's middle schools: 72 percent of low-poverty schools offer foreign language classes, compared with only 28 percent of high-poverty schools (Exhibit 6). The lack of access to foreign language instruction in middle school may limit students' opportunities to enroll in advanced foreign language coursework in high school.

**Exhibit 6. Middle schools offering instruction in humanities subjects, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**



## Enrollment in Humanities Courses

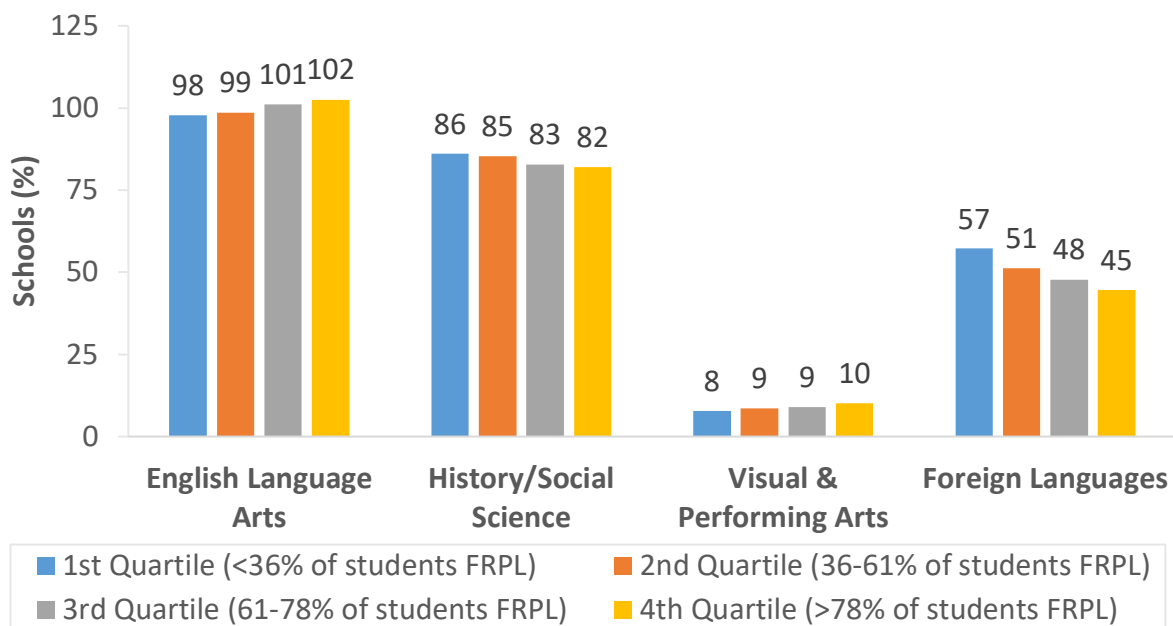
The research team examined student enrollment in humanities courses by school poverty quartile. We looked at all humanities courses and advanced humanities courses.

Student enrollment in humanities courses is comparable across the four poverty quartiles, except for foreign language courses.

The graph below shows that, at any given time (in this case the 2014—15 school year), all (or nearly all) high school students are enrolled in an English language arts course (Exhibit 7). In the two higher poverty quartiles, student enrollment in English language arts courses exceeded 100 percent because students who take more than one ELA courses simultaneously are double-counted in these analyses.

Statewide, fewer than ten percent of students were enrolled in non-applied visual and performing arts courses (e.g., Art History and Music Theory). And, while approximately half of California students were enrolled in a foreign language course, student enrollment was 12 percentage points higher in the lowest-poverty schools compared with the highest-poverty schools.

**Exhibit 7. High school student enrollment in humanities disciplines, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**

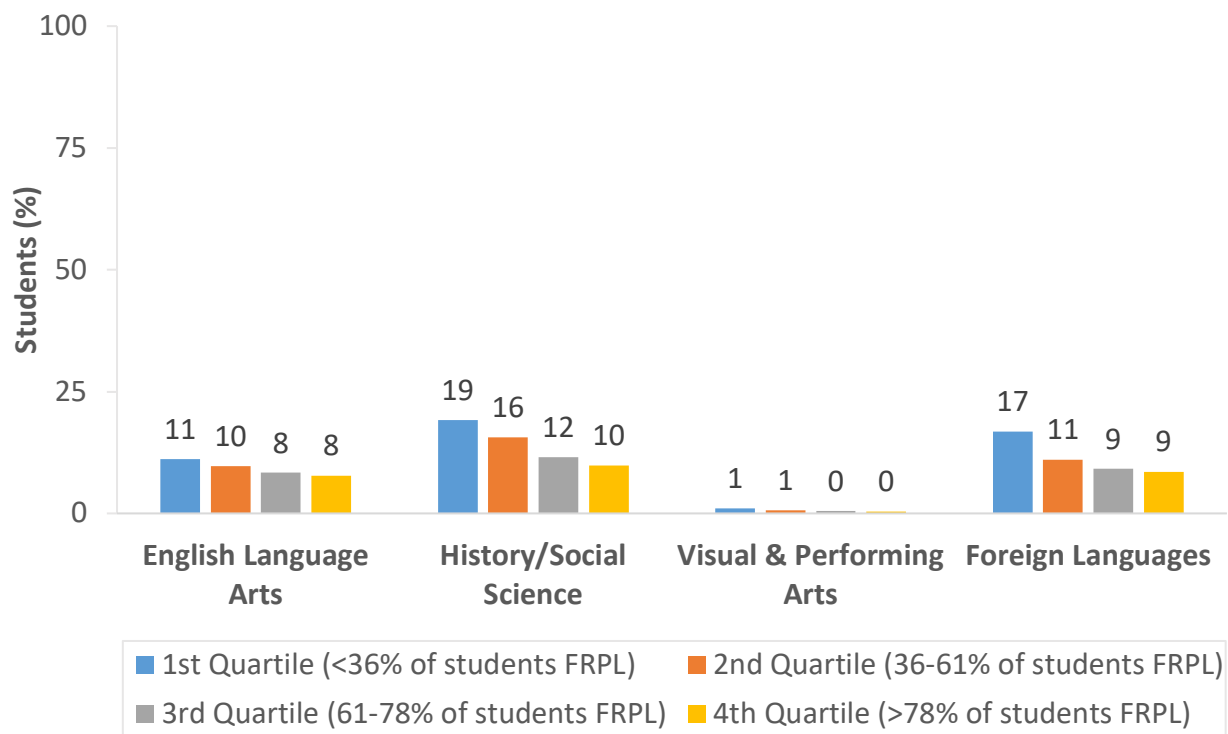


More students in low-poverty schools are enrolled in **advanced** humanities courses than students in high-poverty schools.

Students typically enroll in advanced humanities courses in their latter 2 years of high school. As such, enrollment rates for the student body as a whole are expected to be much lower than for non-advanced courses. However, despite the fairly low rates of enrollment overall, these analysis reveal that a greater proportion of students in schools serving more affluent populations are enrolled in the advanced humanities courses that may prepare them to develop the deeper knowledge and more robust skills rooted in the humanities disciplines.

In the history/social science and foreign language subjects, students in low-poverty schools are enrolled in advanced courses at a rate nearly twice that of high-poverty schools (Exhibit 8). This may be at least in part because students at low-poverty schools have more access to advanced courses to begin with (see Exhibits 3, 4, and 5.). Across all school-poverty quartiles, very few students are enrolling in advanced courses focused on the history and theory of the visual and performing arts, such as AP Music Theory and AP Art History.

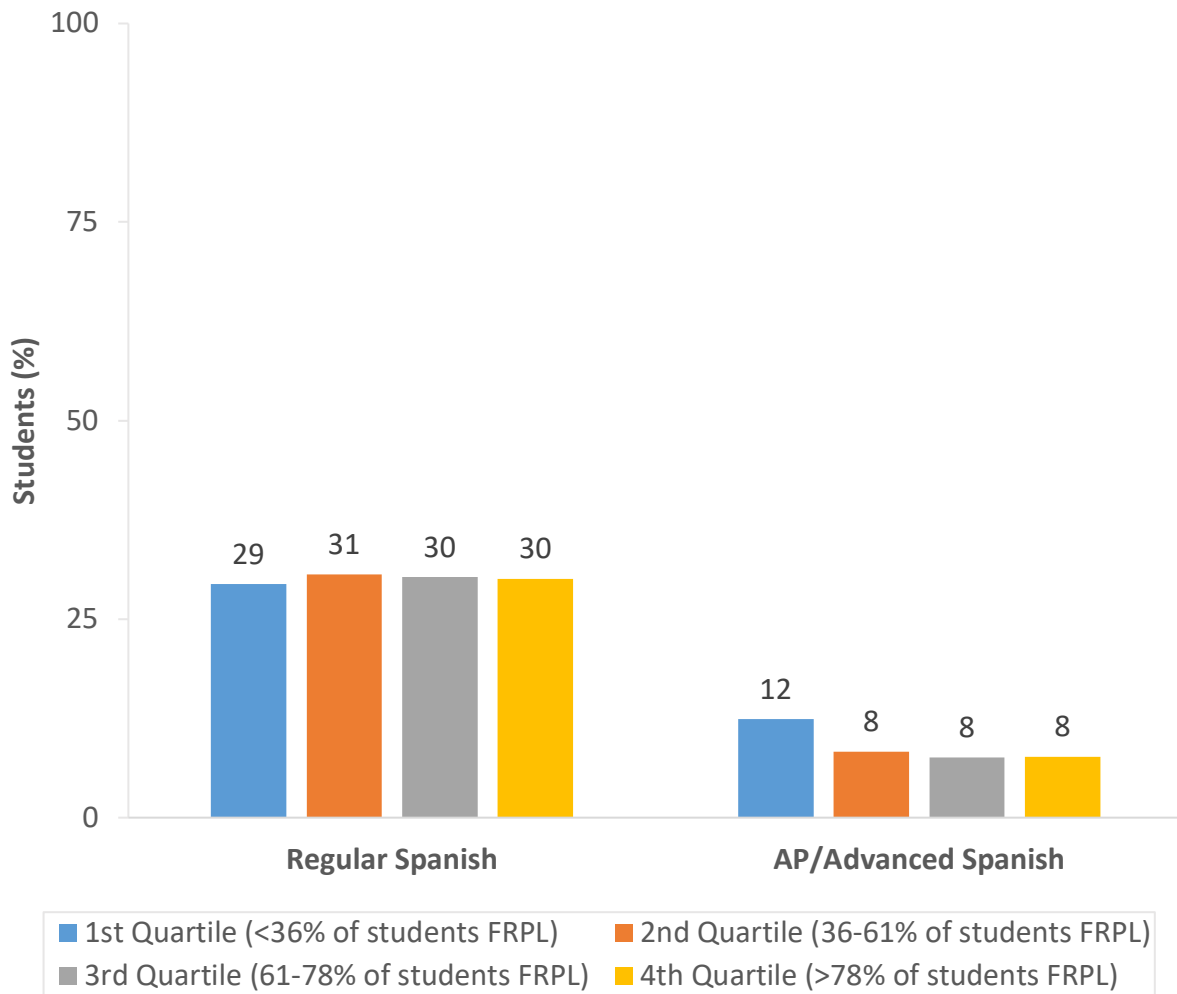
**Exhibit 8. High school student enrollment in advanced humanities courses, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**



Students in high-poverty and low-poverty schools enroll in regular Spanish courses at similar rates, but students in the lowest-poverty schools enroll in advanced Spanish courses more frequently than those in other schools.

The research team identified “regular Spanish courses” as those offered to first- and second-year learners or native speakers, and “advanced Spanish courses” as those offered at the advanced (third year) or AP levels. Though high-poverty schools offer advanced Spanish courses at similar rates as low-poverty schools (see Exhibit 5), a greater proportion of students in more affluent schools are enrolling in advanced Spanish courses (Exhibit 9).

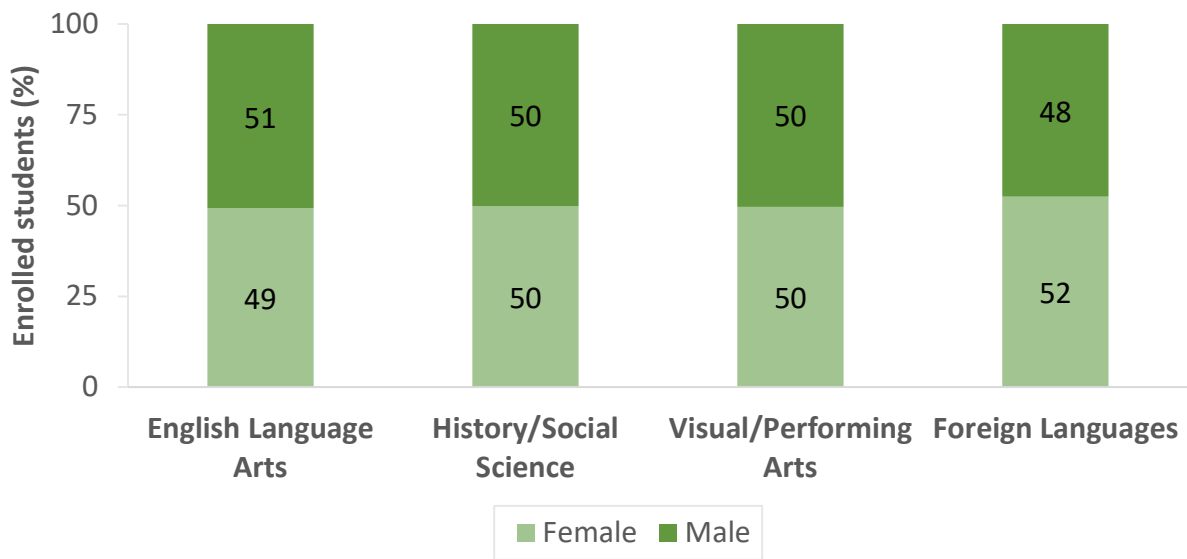
**Exhibit 9. Enrollment in high school Spanish courses, by school poverty quartile (2014–15)**



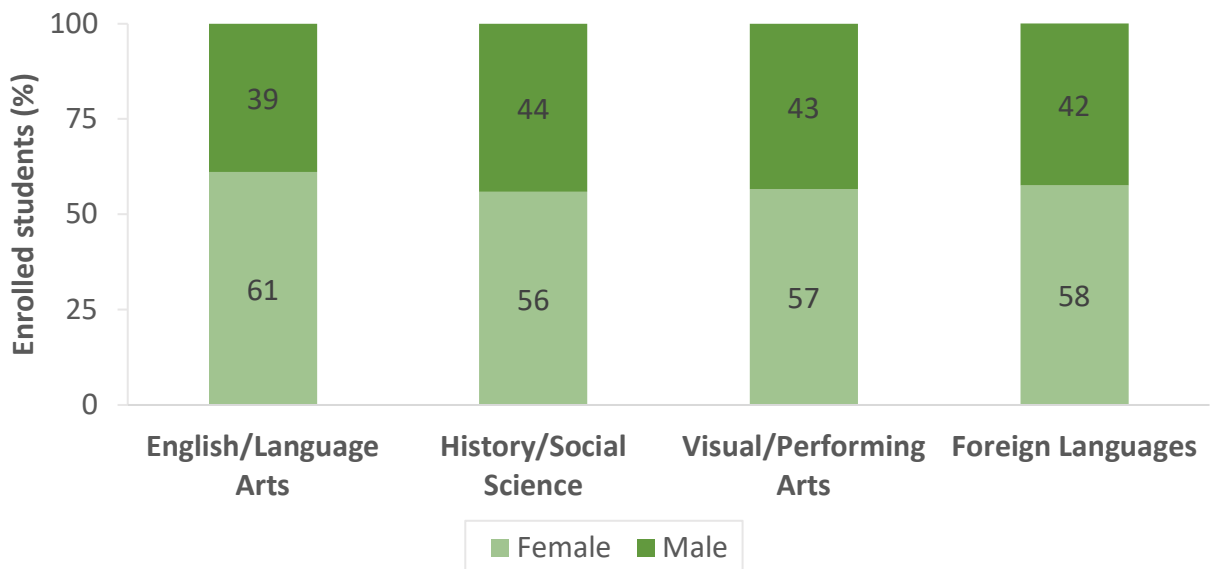
Statewide, male and female students enroll in humanities disciplines at similar rates; however, female students make up the majority of students enrolled in **advanced** humanities courses in all four disciplines.

Of all students enrolled in the humanities, about half are female and half are male (Exhibit 10). However, of all students enrolled in advanced humanities courses, 56 to 61 percent are female, while 39 to 44 percent are male (Exhibit 11).

**Exhibit 10. Gender composition of high school students enrolled in humanities courses (2014–15)**



**Exhibit 11. Gender composition of high school students enrolled in advanced humanities courses (2014–15)**



## Student Achievement in the Humanities

To determine whether California students were developing proficiency in humanities subjects, the research team accessed publicly available student achievement data on multiple standardized exams in the English and history subjects: the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium exam, the California Standards Test end-of-course exams, and Advanced Placement exams. The team also observed remediation rates at California's community colleges and state university system to determine whether students were prepared for college-level English coursework.

Less than half of California students reached the proficiency threshold on the 2016 SBAC English assessment, indicating that they are on track to graduate ready for credit-bearing English courses in college.

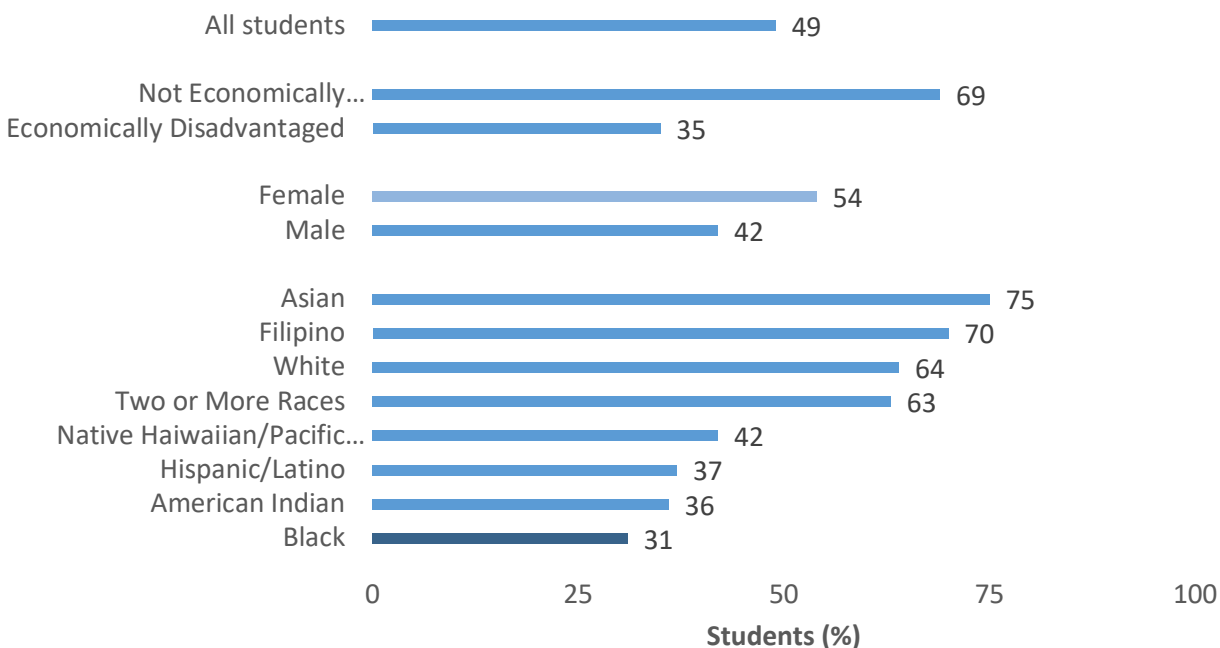
To assess student knowledge and skills in the humanities, the study team examined achievement data on the 2016 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test in English language arts, administered to 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. SBAC summative assessments are aligned to Common Core State Standards, providing an indicator of whether students are meeting these standards for college- and career-readiness.<sup>18</sup> Overall, less than half (49%) of California students met the proficiency benchmark and the tests revealed marked disparities by family income and race/ethnicity (Exhibit 12).

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<sup>18</sup> Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: Alignment Study Report. 2016. Retrieved from <https://portal.smarterbalanced.org/library/en/smarter-balanced-assessment-consortium-alignment-study-report.pdf>



**Exhibit 12. Percent of California students who met or exceeded the 2016 SBAC ELA standard**



**Many first-time freshmen in California’s community colleges and the California State University system require remedial English instruction.**

Large numbers of students in California’s public colleges and universities require remedial English instruction. Placement in a remedial English course suggests that a student is not adequately prepared for credit-bearing humanities courses in college. Data reported by the California Community College system and the California State University system reveal that 45 percent of first-time freshmen in California’s Community Colleges enrolled in remedial English in 2009–10, and 23 percent of first-time freshmen in CSU campuses needed remediation in English in 2016.<sup>19</sup> Because of differences in how postsecondary remediation is tracked and reported, comparing reliable measures across states is a challenge.<sup>20</sup> However, in a 2016 report, the Center for American Progress attempted to compare remediation rates across states

<sup>19</sup> The California State University. “Fall 2016 Final Regularly Admitted First-time Freshmen Remediation Systemwide.” Retrieved from [http://asd.calstate.edu/performance/remediation/16/Rem\\_Sys\\_Final\\_Fall2016.htm](http://asd.calstate.edu/performance/remediation/16/Rem_Sys_Final_Fall2016.htm); California Community Colleges. “2017 Student Success Scorecard.” Retrieved from [scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=000#home](http://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=000#home).

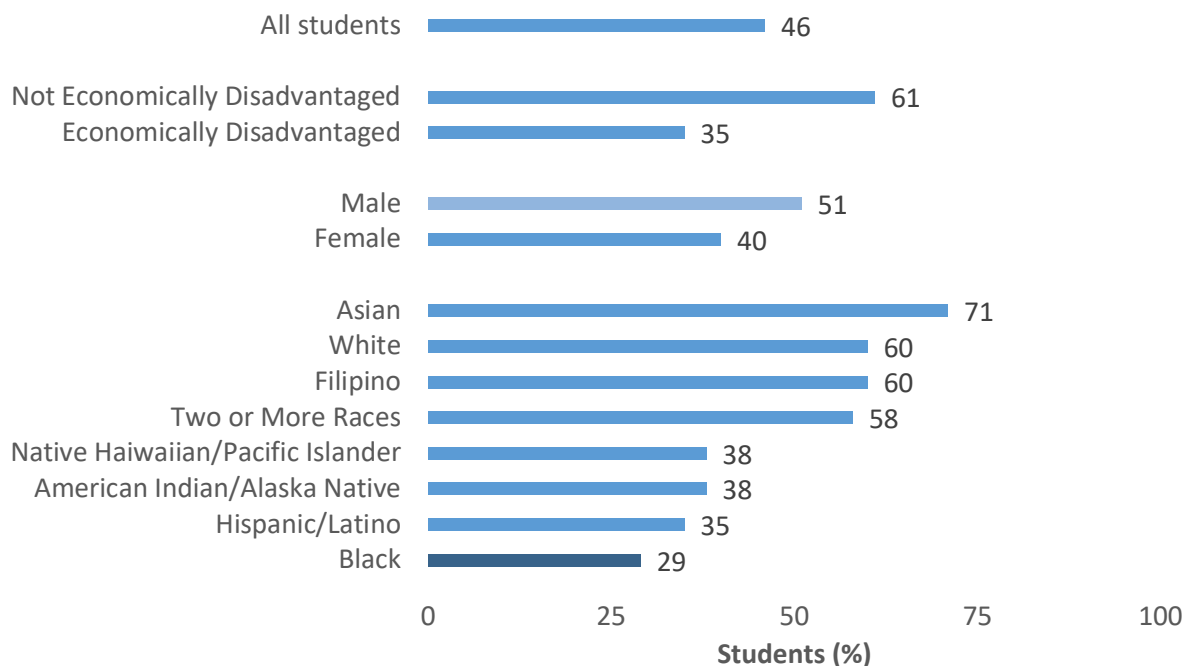
<sup>20</sup> Gianneschi, M. & Fulton, M. *A cure for remedial reporting chaos: Why the U.S. needs a standard method for measuring preparedness for the first year of college.* (2014). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from [www.ecs.org/docs/Cure-for-Remedial-Reporting-Chaos.pdf](http://www.ecs.org/docs/Cure-for-Remedial-Reporting-Chaos.pdf).

and found that California had the sixth-highest remediation rate of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with 47 percent of first-time students enrolled in remediation in math and English.<sup>21</sup>

**Fewer than half of California students met proficiency standards on state-wide history exams, and some student subgroups performed only half as well as others.**

The research team also measured student achievement in history/social science by reviewing scores on the 2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in World History, typically administered to 10th grade students enrolled in a World History course; in U.S. History, typically administered to 11<sup>th</sup> grade students; and on the History—Social Science exam administered to 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>22</sup> These assessments revealed significant achievement gaps between students of different ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds: for example, the performance of not-socioeconomically disadvantaged students was nearly twice that of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Exhibits 13, 14, and 15).

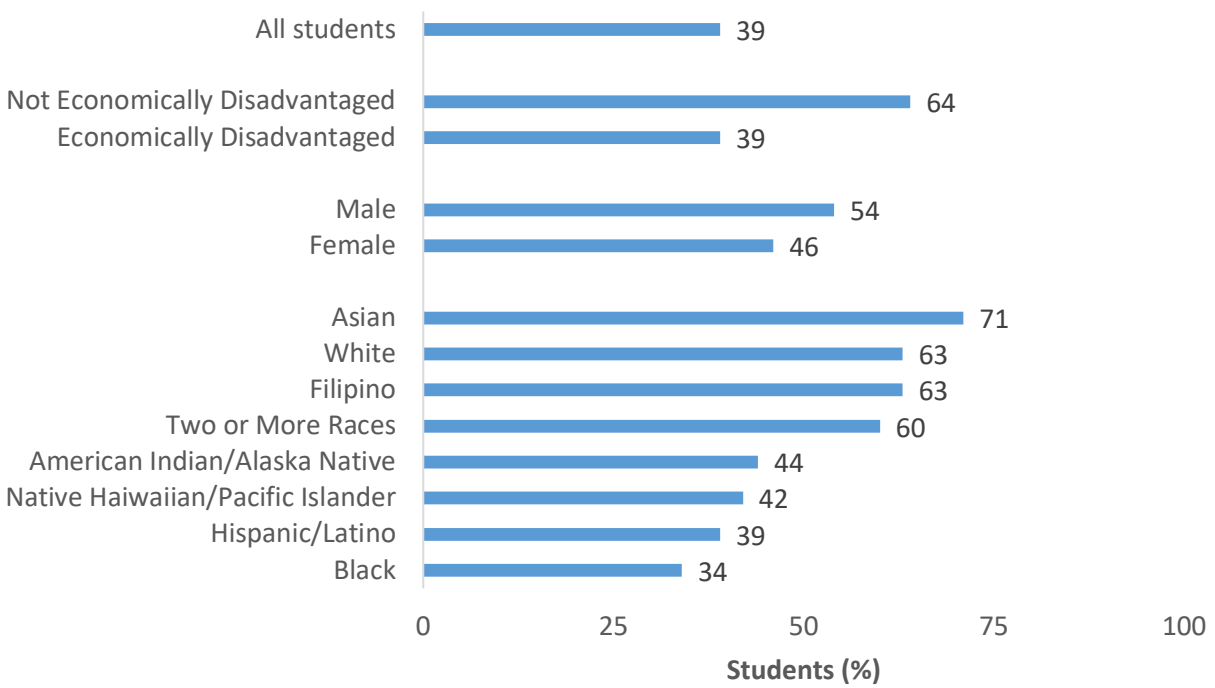
**Exhibit 13. Percent of students who met proficiency on the 2013 CST World History exam**



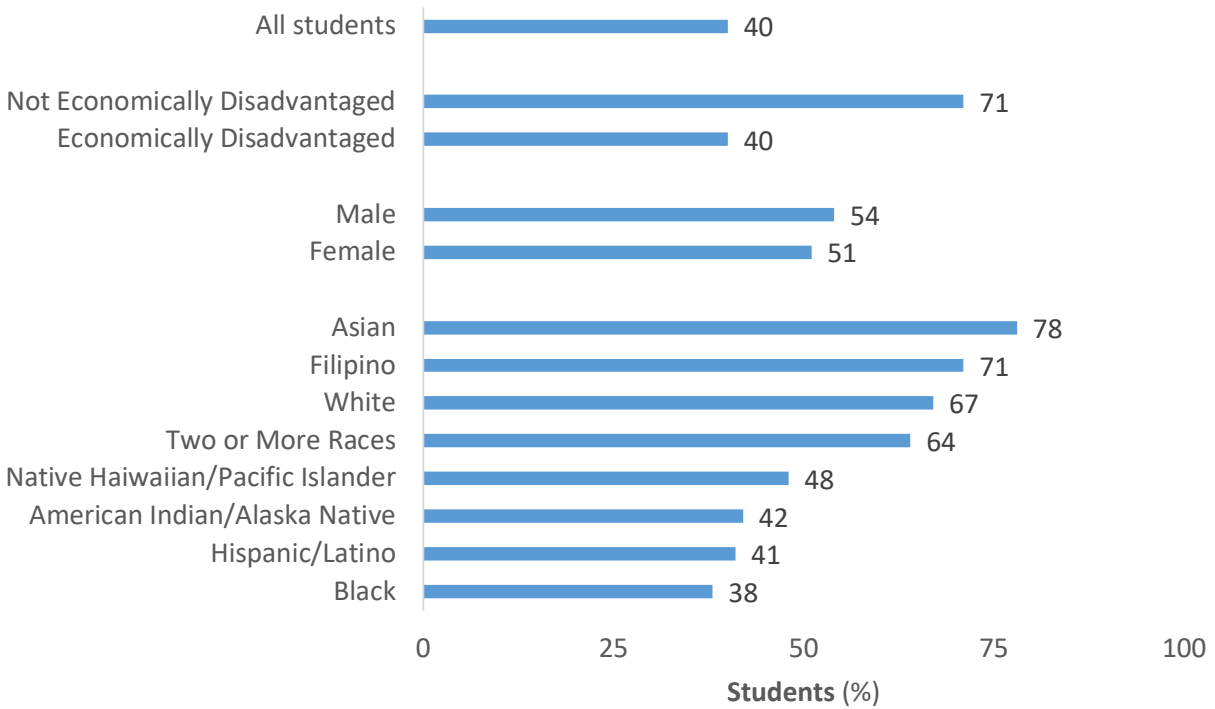
<sup>21</sup> Jimenez, L., Sargrad, S., Morales, J., & Thompson, M. Remedial education: the cost of catching up. (2016). Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2016/09/29120402/CostOfCatchingUp2-report.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> 2013 was the last year that California administered a history-social science assessment. In January 2014, the California Department of Education (CDE) stopped administering the California Standards Tests (CSTs) for English language arts, mathematics, and end-of-course assessments in mathematics, history-social science, and science.

**Exhibit 14. Percent of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who met proficiency on the 2013 CST U.S. History exam**



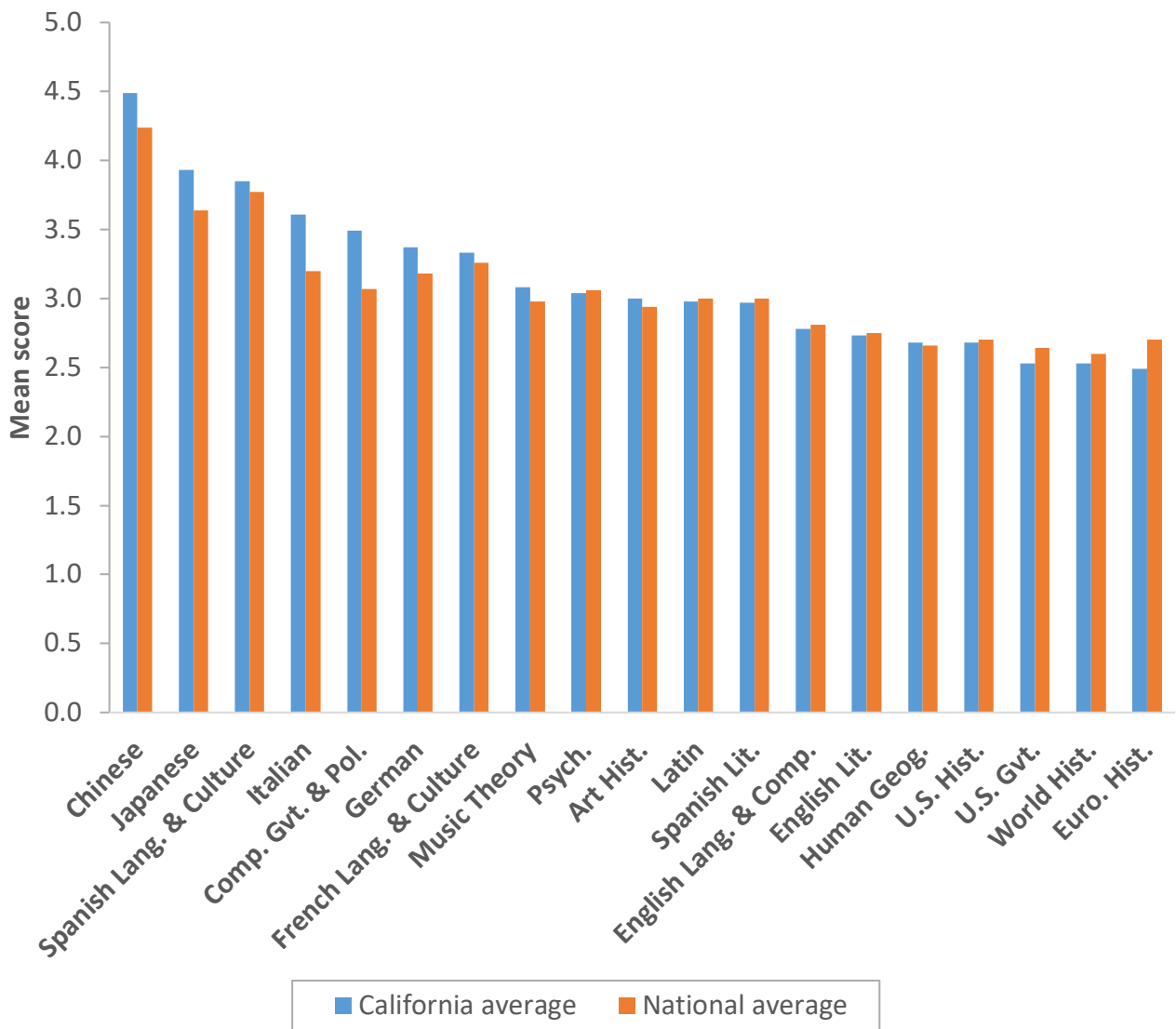
**Exhibit 15. Percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who met proficiency on the 2013 8<sup>th</sup> grade History—Social Science exam**



Overall, California’s students do as well or better than national averages on Advanced Placement exams in the humanities.

When compared to national averages, California performs at about the same level on Advanced Placement exams as students across the country (Exhibit 16). California outscored national averages in several subjects, particularly foreign language exams: Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, German, and French.

**Exhibit 16. Average AP scores in the humanities: California vs. national averages (2016)**

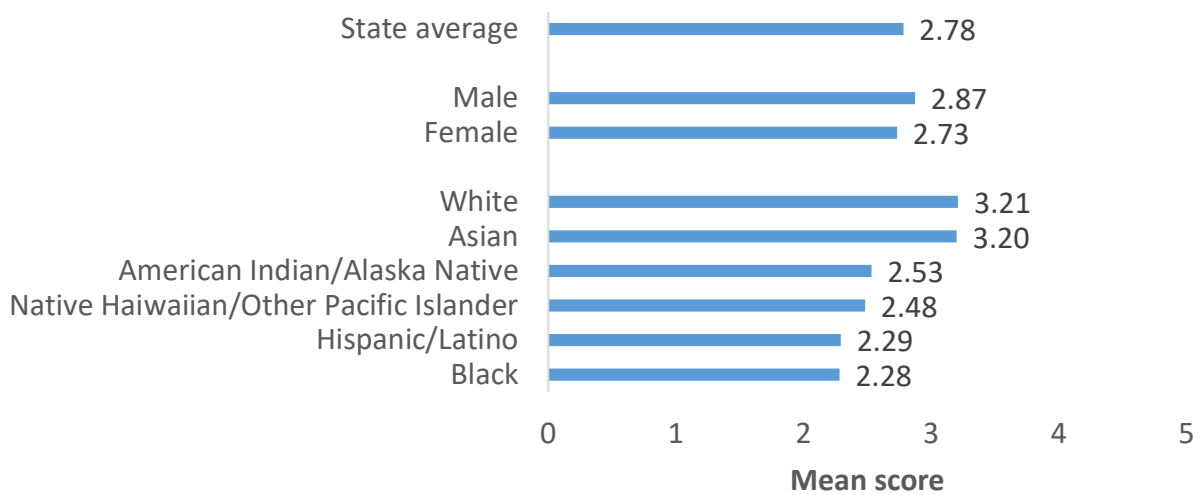


Source: AP Program Participation and Performance Data 2016

However, California’s White and Asian students scored about an entire point higher than Black and Hispanic/Latino students on AP English and history exams.

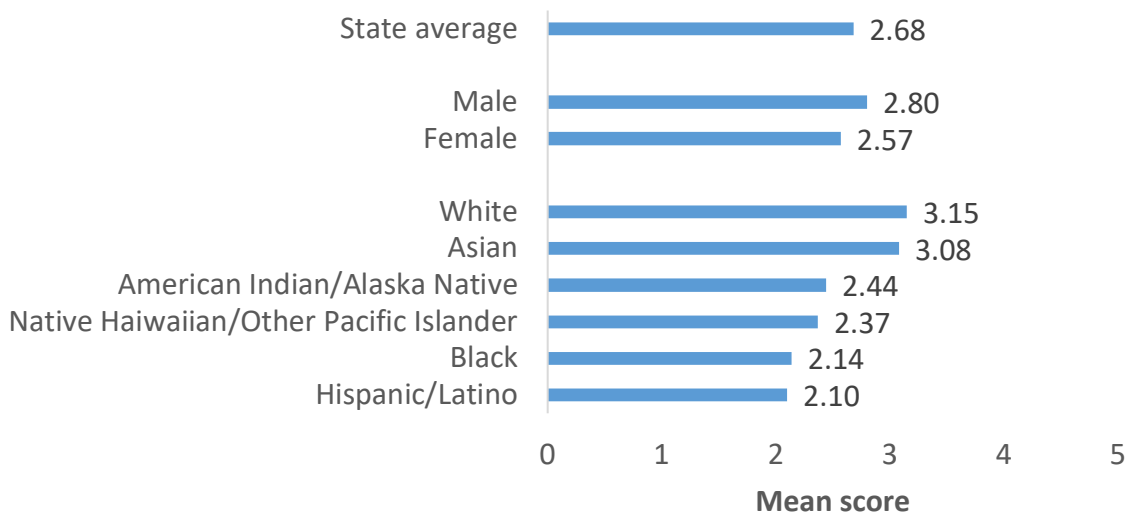
Looking at scores on two of the most popular AP exams in the humanities, English Language and Composition and U.S. History, within California, White and Asian students are scoring as much as an entire point higher than Black and Hispanic/Latino students. Male students also outperformed female students on both exams (Exhibits 17 and 18).

**Exhibit 17. Mean scores of California students on the 2016 AP English Language exam**



Source: AP Program Participation and Performance Data 2016

**Exhibit 18. Mean scores of California students on the 2016 AP U.S. History exam**



Source: AP Program Participation and Performance Data 2016

## Summary

Consistent with prior research in California<sup>23</sup> and nationally,<sup>24</sup> these analyses reveal disparities in student access and enrollment in the four humanities disciplines offered in California’s public schools. Students in more affluent schools (i.e., those serving fewer students living in poverty) have greater access to rigorous humanities courses than students in higher-poverty schools. Students attending more affluent schools are also enrolled in advanced courses more frequently than their peers in higher-poverty schools. These disparities were most pronounced in foreign language, with access and enrollment in this discipline greater in low-poverty middle and high schools than in higher-poverty schools. These disparities in access and enrollment may contribute to achievement gaps on K–12 assessments of English and history, where wealthier and White and Asian students consistently outperform their poorer and Black and Hispanic/Latino peers. More specifically, key study findings include:

### Access to Humanities Courses

- California’s largest high schools offer an average of four more English language arts courses and six more history/social science courses than the smallest schools.
- The majority of California high schools offer advanced coursework in English; access varies somewhat by the concentration of students living in poverty.
- California high schools offer a diverse set of advanced history/social science courses; however, students in more affluent schools have greater access to most courses than their peers in higher poverty schools.
- Fewer high-poverty high schools offer advanced courses focused on the history and theory of the visual and performing arts than low-poverty schools.

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<sup>23</sup> Finkelstein, N.D., & Fong, A.B. (2008). Course-taking patterns and preparation for postsecondary education in California’s public university systems among minority youth. (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2008–No. 035). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

<sup>24</sup> Planty, M., Bozick, R., and Ingels, S.J. (2006). Academic Pathways, Preparation, and Performance—A Descriptive Overview of the Transcripts from the High School Graduating Class of 2003–04 (NCES 2007–316). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- High-poverty schools offer advanced Spanish courses as frequently or even more frequently than low-poverty schools, but very few high-poverty schools offer advanced courses in other languages.
- Low-poverty middle schools offer more than twice the number of foreign language courses than high-poverty middle schools.

## Enrollment in Humanities Courses

- Student enrollment in humanities courses is comparable across the four poverty quartiles, except for foreign language courses.
- More students in low-poverty schools are enrolled in advanced humanities courses than students in high-poverty schools.
- Students in high-poverty and low-poverty schools enroll in regular Spanish courses at similar rates, but students in the lowest-poverty schools enroll in advanced Spanish courses more frequently than those in other schools.
- Statewide, male and female students enroll in humanities disciplines at similar rates; however, female students make up the majority of students enrolled in advanced humanities courses in all four disciplines.

## Student Achievement in the Humanities

- Less than half of California students reached the proficiency threshold on the 2016 SBAC English assessment, indicating that they are on track to graduate ready for credit-bearing humanities courses in college.
- Many first-time freshmen in California's community colleges and the California State University system require remedial English instruction.
- Fewer than half of California students met proficiency standards on state-wide history exams, and some student subgroups performed only half as well as others.
- Overall, California's students do as well or better than national averages on Advanced Placement exams in the humanities.
- However, California's White and Asian students scored about an entire point higher than Black and Hispanic/Latino students on AP English and history exams.

## Appendix A. Course Sample

To establish criteria with which to determine which courses to include in its sample of K–12 humanities courses, SRI researchers and California Humanities began with the federal government’s definition of the humanities as including, but not limited to:

the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.<sup>25</sup>

Applying this definition to California school course offerings led to the decision to include courses in English language arts, history/social sciences, foreign languages, and visual and performing arts with the following exceptions:

- Remedial and/or developmental English courses
- *Applied* visual and performing arts courses (e.g. band, orchestra, choir, dance)

A complete list of the courses included in the study sample from each of the humanities subjects is listed in the following pages. Courses marked with an asterisk (\*) were included in analyses of advanced coursework.

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<sup>25</sup> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965.



## English Language Arts

- Advanced Composition
- American Literature
- AP English Language\*
- AP English Literature\*
- Composition
- Comprehensive English
- English 10
- English 11
- English 12
- English 9
- English Literature
- Ethnic Literature
- Expository Reading and Writing
- Forensics
- IB Language A1\*
- Journalism
- MYP Language A
- Other English course
- Other Literature
- Science Fiction
- Speech
- World Literature

## *Middle school only:*

- Basic English/Language Art (Proficiency Devel.)
- Language Structure/Language Arts

## History/Social Sciences

- Anthropology
- Any humanities course
- AP Comparative Government and Politics\*
- AP European history\*
- AP Human Geography\*
- AP Macroeconomics\*
- AP Microeconomics\*
- AP Psychology\*
- AP U.S. Government and Politics\*
- AP United States history
- AP World History\*
- California History
- Comparative Political Systems
- Comparative World Religions
- Current Events
- Economics
- Ethnic studies
- History—Social Science (Grades K-8)
- IB Economics\*
- IB Geography\*
- IB History\*
- IB Philosophy\*
- IB Psychology\*
- IB Social and Cultural Anthropology\*
- IB Theory of Knowledge\*
- International Studies
- Law-related Education
- MYP Humanities (History and/or Geography)
- Other history, culture, geography: survey
- Other social science course
- Philosophy
- Physical Geography
- Principles of American Democracy/Government and Civics
- Psychology
- Sociology
- United States History
- Women's History
- World Cultures
- World History: Survey
- World Regional Geography

## Foreign Languages

- American Sign Language
- AP Chinese Language and Culture\*
- AP French Language\*
- AP French Literature\*
- AP German Language\*
- AP Italian Language and Culture\*
- AP Japanese Language and Culture\*
- AP Latin Literature\*
- AP Latin-Vergil\*
- AP Spanish Language\*
- AP Spanish Literature\*
- Chinese (advanced)\*
- Chinese (first and second year)
- Chinese for Native Speakers
- Filipino (advanced)\*
- Filipino (first and second year)
- French (advanced)\*
- French (first and second year)
- German (advanced)\*
- German (first and second year)
- IB Ab initio\*
- IB Classical languages\*
- IB Language A (non-English)\*
- IB Language A2\*
- IB Language B\*
- Italian (advanced)\*
- Italian (first and second year)
- Japanese (advanced)\*
- Japanese (first and second year)
- Korean (advanced)\*
- Korean (first and second year)
- Korean for Native Speakers
- Latin (advanced)\*
- Latin (first and second year)
- MYP Language B
- Other foreign language course
- Other language course for native speakers
- Portuguese (advanced)\*
- Portuguese (first and second year)
- Russian (advanced)\*
- Russian (first and second year)
- Spanish (advanced)\*
- Spanish (first and second year)
- Spanish for Native Speakers
- Vietnamese (advanced)\*
- Vietnamese (first and second year)

## Visual and Performing Arts

- AP Music Theory\*
- IB Music\*
- Music Appreciation/History/Literature
- Music Theory
- MYP Music
- AP Art History\*
- Art Appreciation (elementary school standards)
- Art Appreciation (secondary school standards)
- Art History
- IB Visual Arts\*
- Multicultural Art/Folk Art
- MYP Visual Arts
- History/Appreciation Of Theater Arts/Film
- IB Theatre\*
- MYP Drama

## Appendix B. State Instructional Resources

The California Department of Education offers frameworks, standards, and assorted resources for humanities educators on its website. Content standards were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level. Frameworks refer to guidelines for implementing the content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education that are developed by the Instructional Quality Commission. Below is a list of the dates of the most recently published standards and frameworks for each humanities subject, as well as the date of the most recent K–8 instructional materials adoption.

### History/social science

- 2016 History-Social Science Framework
- 2005: K–8 instructional materials adoption (next scheduled for 2017)
- 1998 History-Social Science Content Standards

### English language arts

- 2015: K–8 instructional materials adoption
- 2014 English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework
- 2010 Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

### World language

- 2009 World Language Framework (scheduled to be revised in 2020)
- 2009 World Language Content Standards
- 2003: K–8 instructional materials adoption (next scheduled for 2021)

### Visual and performing arts

- 2006: K–8 instructional materials (next scheduled for 2022)
- 2004 Visual and Performing Arts Framework (scheduled to be revised in 2021)
- 2001 Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards

# Appendix C. A–G Humanities Requirements

## History / social science ("a")

**Two units** (equivalent to two years or four semesters) of history / social science required, including:

- One year of world history, cultures and historical geography, and
- One year of U.S. history, or one-half year of U.S history and one-half year of civics or American government.

## English ("b")

**Four units** (equivalent to four years or eight semesters) of college-preparatory English composition and literature required, integrating:

- Extensive *reading* of classic and modern literature and content-rich works of non-fiction,
- Frequent *writing*, from brainstorming to final paper, and
- Practice *listening* and *speaking* with different audiences.

## Language other than English ("e")

**Two units** (equivalent to two years or four semesters, or through the second level of high school instruction) of the same language other than English (three units recommended) including:

- Emphasis on *speaking* and *understanding*
- Development of *awareness* and *understanding* of the *cultural context* around the target language
- Practice with *reading* and *composition*
- Instruction on *grammar* and *vocabulary*

## Visual and performing arts ("f")

**One unit** (equivalent to one year) required, chosen from one of the following categories:

- Dance
- Music
- Theater
- Visual arts (e.g., painting, web/graphic design, film/video, inter/multimedia arts)

Two one-semester courses from the same discipline is also acceptable.



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