



Charter schools rank among best, worst in API scores

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High Desert charter schools placed among the best and worst Academic Performance Index scores in 2008, according to data released Thursday by the California Department of Education.

“Charter schools choose their niche — we chose science and math as our focus,” said Rick Piercy, president of the Lewis Center for Educational Research, which runs the Academy for Academic Success.

“You have charter schools that chose to serve students that have been expelled from other schools — sometimes students come into their system already far below basic in their performance,” Piercy said.

The Academy for Academic Excellence, a K-12 charter school in the Apple Valley Unified School District, scored the highest out of all high schools in San Bernardino County, with an 832 API.

The Academy of Academic Excellence rose to the top through strong parent involvement, small class sizes, longer lasting relationships between students and teachers, and hands-on projects and partnerships with experts, Piercy said.

Meanwhile, Mojave River Academy, a K-12 charter school in Oro Grande Elementary School District, dropped 22 points from 2007 and sunk to the lowest performing school in all of Victor Valley. Oro Grande’s other charter academy, Sedona Charter Academy, remains relatively low with a 537 API.

“Those are high-school-dropout recovery programs, and so they are not expected to be terribly high,” said Oro Grande Elementary School District Superintendent Kim Moore.

Moore said his district is “trying to move those scores up,” but because the schools enroll students who are at risk of not finishing school at all, he doesn’t expect the API scores to fare on the higher end of the spectrum.

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