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Statewide STAR scores highest since 2003

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Students across California have continued to increase their standardized end-of-year test scores in math and English-language arts, although scores in San Bernardino County remain lower than the state average.

In June, 4.7 million students in grades two through 11 statewide took the California Standardized Testing and Reporting exam, commonly known as the STAR test. Of that number, 57 percent of students scored proficient or better in English-language arts and 51 percent scored proficient or better in mathematics.

A press release from the California Department of Education said that this year's statewide STAR scores are the highest they have been since the tests were fully aligned to California's content standards in 2003.

"In less than a decade, California has gone from having only one student in three score proficient, to better than one student in two," State Superintendent of Schools Tom Torlakson said in a press release. "That's nearly 900,000 more students reaching proficiency than in 2003 — a remarkable achievement that represents real, sustained improvements in learning."

In San Bernardino County, 52 percent of students scored proficient or better in English-language arts and 46 percent scored proficient or better in mathematics. That's a 2 percent increase from last year's scores in English-language arts and a single percentage point increase in math.

In the High Desert, the Academy of Academic Excellence had the highest percentage of students who scored proficient or better in English language arts, and Victor Elementary School District had the highest percentage of students who scored proficient or better in math.

A persistent achievement gap exists for black, Latino, English learner and low-income students. However, VESD, which serves a large number of minority and low-income students, attributes their high test scores to weekly assessments and a teaching tool known as "spiral review."

Maureen Mills, assistant superintendent of Educational Services for VESD, said these reviews and weekly assessments allow teachers to teach to the state standards and review the material with each other and the students constantly. She also said foundation tools, such as multiplication tables are introduced to students earlier than usual, and that students are capable of picking up the concepts and are given more time to do so before they are tested on them.

"We are going to continue with these methods because they've been successful," Mills said. "We are very proud of our students and our teachers and we continue to strive to do the best we can for the students."

The STAR exams are given at the end of the school year as a way to measure students' achievement in core subjects, including science and history. The results are grouped into five

levels: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic and far below basic. The state goal is for all students to score proficient or advanced in all subjects.

“Like every teacher, parent and principal, despite the progress we’ve seen I won’t be completely satisfied until every child has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential,” Torlakson said.

Full results can be found at <http://star.cde.ca.gov>.

DISTRICT SCORES

Here is the percentage of students in local districts (or charter schools not included in district totals) who scored proficient on state STAR exams compared with county and state averages, with English-language arts scores first, followed by math scores:

Academy for Academic Excellence — 76/55

Adelanto Elementary School District — 42/43

Apple Valley Unified School District — 56/45

Barstow Unified School District — 47/46

Excelsior Education Center — 53/23

Helendale Elementary School District — 56/41

Hesperia Unified School District — 50/42

Lucerne Valley Unified School District — 41/34

Mojave River Academy — 20/4

Options for Youth Charter — 32/7

Oro Grande Elementary School District — 61/45

Snowline Joint Unified School District — 56/48

Victor Elementary School District — 53/60

Victor Valley Union High School District — 43/23

San Bernardino County 2011 — 50/45

San Bernardino County 2012 — 52/46

California — 57/51

Source: California Department of Education

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