

California School Tests--Weaver Elementary Already High Scores Keep Getting Better, McGaugh Elementary and Los Alamitos Show declines

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Last week the California Department of Education released the results of the statewide testing for 2009. The California Standards Tests (CSTs) are standards-based tests which, for elementary schools, measure the achievement of state content standards in English-language arts, mathematics, and science. Once again, with scores already way above district, county, and statewide averages, the results at Weaver Elementary improved--proving that even with scores in the 90 percentages, they can still get better.

The CST is the primary component of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program. Under the STAR program, California students attain one of five levels of performance on the CSTs for each subject tested: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. The State Board of Education has established the proficient level as the desired achievement goal for all students.

According to the Department of Education, "The proficient level represents a solid performance. Students demonstrate a competent and adequate understanding of the knowledge and skills measured by this assessment, at this grade, in this content area."

While the state goal is certainly not easy, it may not be as impossible as it seems. This goal does not mean that 100% of the students must get 100% of the questions correct. The percentage of correct answers needed to be considered proficient or above, varies from test to test, but it generally requires a student to get around 2/3 of the questions correct.

Last year, The scores at Weaver for English and Math were in the 90 percentages and science was at 88.5%. Despite these high scores, Weaver improved in all three tests. They increased their science score by 2.5 points to 91 points. They also improved their English scores by 2.5 points, bringing that score up to 94.8.

The best score in the district was Weaver's Math score, which even though at 93.1 last year, still improved by 3.7 to 96.8 this year. Thus, all scores for Weaver are above 90%. The only other district scores in that elite club are the 91.1 math score at Hopkinson and the 91.9 score in science at McAuliffe Middle School.

Of the elementary schools, Hopkinson gets the award for the most improved. Even better, their total scores for last year were second only to Weaver. Again, debunking the idea that schools with high scores cannot show gains. Hopkinson improved their results in all three tests, going up by 7.5 points in English, to a total score of 88.0. In math, they improved their score by 5.1 to a total score of 91.1 and up by 8.0 to 89.1 in science.

Lee had the second best improvement of the district's elementary schools with solid gains in all three tests. Close behind Lee for total improvement was Rossmoor Elementary, which had strong gains in English and math, but reported a drop in their science score.

Both Los Alamitos Elementary and McGaugh Elementary had decreases in their scores. At Los Alamitos, the English scores improved by 3.2, to a total score of 70.0, but they had lower scores for both math and science. The scores fell in all three tests at McGaugh, where the English score dropped by 1.4 points to 76.3, was lower by 5.9 points to 78.4 in math, and down by 4.0 points to 69.0 in science.

Your Editors previously reported on the test results for Los Alamitos High School, McAuliffe Middle School, and Oak Middle School. All of the scores referred to in this article are the percentage of students who scored proficient or higher, verses the total number of students taking the exam.

The Los Alamitos Unified School District provides K-12 public schools for over 9,000 students in the cities of Los Alamitos and Seal Beach, the community of Rossmoor, and other adjoining areas. The district includes the Los Alamitos High School, a comprehensive high school, Laurel High School, a continuation high school, McAuliffe

Middle School, Oak Middle School and 6 elementary schools.