

Pacifica STAR Scores: Analyzing Results

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Students in California schools participate each spring in an extensive testing program designed to determine if students are meeting grade level expectations. Beginning in 2nd grade, all public students take the STAR test. Individual student scores are reported to parents. A summary of school and district testing results is provided to the public by the state and school districts. The good news is that Pacifica School District test scores are substantially above the state average and improving yearly. The bad news is that the state releases the testing information in bits and pieces making it extremely difficult for anyone to understand the information.

The most appropriate way to review the test results is by using the state's Academic Performance Index (API). The API information was first available on the state website on August 31st. The API is a single number that summarizes all of the different tests from many students into one number for each school and each district. The API ranges from 200 to 1000. The state regards 800 as the "magic number" indicating that a district or school has a successful instructional program. Only a small percentage of schools and districts in the state meet this standard. For example, the state's API for 2005 is 709. For the second year, Pacifica School District's API has been at the 800 level. Three schools (Cabrillo, Ocean Shore and Vallemar) also have an API above 800.

	2004 API	2005 API	Change
Pacifica School District	800	813	+13
Cabrillo	847	871	+24
Ingrid B. Lacy	745	764	+19
Ocean Shore	848	870	+22
Ortega	New school in 2005	780	
Sunset Ridge	757	766	+9
Vallemar	861	859	-2

The STAR test is actually a group of different tests covering several subjects. The tests change slightly from year to year. In the spring of 2005, STAR included tests on the required California Content Standards.

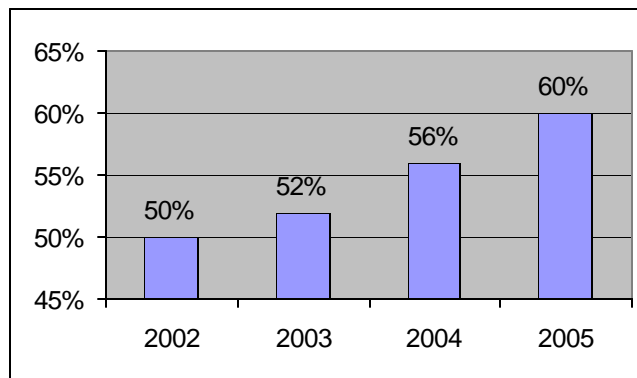
- ?? Language Arts tests for 2nd – 8th graders
- ?? General Math tests for 2nd – 7th graders
- ?? General Math or Algebra test for 8th graders
- ?? Science test for 5th graders
- ?? Social Studies test for 8th graders

Students in 3rd and 7th grades also took the California Achievement Test, 6th Edition, (CAT6) in reading, language, spelling and mathematics. This is actually a national test designed to show how California students are doing compared with the nation.

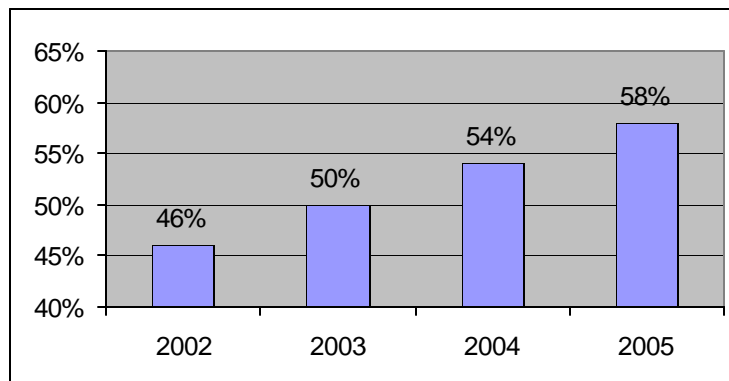
The state uses the results of all of the tests to calculate the API scores.

On the Content Standards test, student scores are reported in five categories: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic. Students who test Advanced or Proficient are seen as having “met standard”. The total percentage of students in Pacifica meeting standard has steadily increased since the STAR program began.

**Percentage of Pacifica Students Meeting Standard
2nd – 8th Grades
Language Arts**



**Percentage of Pacifica Students Meeting Standard
2nd – 7th Grades
Mathematics**



Newspapers generally print the percentages meeting standard for selected grade levels – most commonly 4th and 7th. The major problem is that comparing 4th graders in 2004 with 4th grades in 2005 compares a different set of students. That system works well for large district where thousands of students are tested in each grade. In Pacifica only about 350 students per grade take the test. As a result, there are variations between groups of students. Looking at the scores of only one group often paints an incomplete picture as each grade tests differently. A system that paints a more complete pictures compares the 3rd graders in 2004 with the 4th graders in 2005 – the same set of students over time.

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards

**Language Arts
2nd – 8th Grades**

Grade	2004	2005
2 nd	48%	59%
3 rd	47%	50%
4 th	63%	64%
5 th	65%	62%
6 th	58%	62%
7 th	58%	62%
8 th	53%	65%

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards

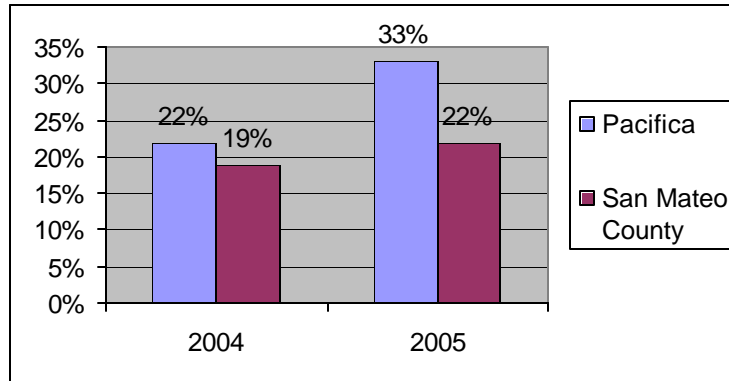
**Mathematics
2nd – 7th Grades**

Grade	2004	2005
2 nd	61%	70%
3 rd	60%	66%
4 th	63%	57%
5 th	52%	55%
6 th	47%	57%
7 th	45%	44%

In 2nd – 7th grades all students take the general math test. However at 8th grade, students may take either the general math test or the Algebra I test. While students may take either test, only students who pass the Algebra I test have met the grade level standard. Newspapers frequently report the percentage of students who took and passed the Algebra test. Districts can ensure that results “look good” by having only the highest performing students take the test and therefore ensuring that the vast majority of the

students pass. However, in Pacifica the majority of the students take the Algebra test and more students each year are passing.

Percentage of 8th Graders* Meeting Standards on Algebra Test



* Percentage calculation: the number of 8th grade students who met standard on the Algebra test divided by the total number of 8th grade students who took the STAR test in mathematics (general math and Algebra).

Pacifica School District is pleased with the STAR testing results in 2005. The scores demonstrate an effective and improving academic program. However, the district's goal is to have an API over 900 and for all the schools to be at or above 800.