

## News Release

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For immediate release

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### **STAR brings good news to schools**

*Proficiency levels up, English learners make gains,  
and low-performing districts improve*

Sonoma County public schools begin the school year with good news from the state's annual Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. STAR test results for 2009 were released today, showing that Sonoma County students have made solid achievement gains in all content areas. The results summarize student performance on the STAR tests that were administered in the spring.

In English-language arts, performance at all grade levels increased. Fifty-five percent of all Sonoma County students scored proficient or above on this portion of the STAR test, which is an increase of five points over last year. All but four Sonoma County school districts reported growth in English-language arts achievement this year. Four local districts posted double-digit gains—Guerneville, Geyserville, Cinnabar, and Petaluma City Elementary.

With this release of this STAR test data, Sonoma County now exceeds the state average for English-language arts proficiency by five percentage points.

County results for mathematics were also very positive, with gains in grades 2-7, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. Fifty percent of Sonoma County students tested proficient or above in math, an increase of four percentage points over 2008. This compares favorably to the statewide percentage of students proficient in math, which stands at 46 percent. Six local districts—Alexander Valley, Cinnabar, Guerneville, Fort Ross, Geyserville, and Bellevue—improved by more than ten percentage points. Only three districts saw math proficiency decline.

**Proficiency levels increase for English learners:** Today's release of the STAR results was also positive for Sonoma County's English-language learners. The percentage of English

learners testing proficient or above in English-language arts increased at every grade except one (grade 9), where it was even with last year. In math, proficiency increased in grades 2-6, Algebra I, and Geometry. In both content areas, the percentage point gain for English learners in grades 2, 3, and 5 exceeded the county average.

**Lower performing districts advance:** Another piece of good news in the STAR report is the evidence it provides regarding academic improvement in lower performing districts. Specifically, five of the six districts that had the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient in English-language arts in 2008 boosted their proficiency levels in this content area by significantly more than county and state averages. They also realized above-average gains in math. These five districts—Bellevue, Cinnabar, Cloverdale, Geyserville, and Roseland—have been working with a team of Sonoma County Office of Education specialists to bring a broad range of expertise to district school sites with a goal of raising student achievement.

Geyserville Unified School District superintendent Joe Carnation credits this approach for the significant progress the district made this year. “Working with the team from SCOE, our staff has had many hours in professional development over the past few years, where they learned new strategies and worked to unify the curriculum. I congratulate the Geyserville staff and SCOE team for bringing the building blocks of our success together—consistent instructional materials, effective assessments, and data to help teachers understand exactly what students are learning.”

At Cinnabar School, superintendent/principal Robert Ecker says his staff implemented three key strategies to increase student achievement. “We grouped students for reading and language arts by achievement level rather than grade, provided more before- and after-school programs for struggling students, and emphasized vocabulary and English language development schoolwide.”

Bellevue Union School District superintendent Tony Roehrick explains that this year’s gain for his diverse district is especially gratifying because it was “in every school, at every grade level, and for all subgroups of students.” He says that teachers, support staff, and principals used ongoing student assessment to focus mathematics instruction. “That way, we truly know what the gaps in knowledge and skills are for each student. This allows teachers to target those gaps in a systematic way to ensure that students are not falling behind. We have worked with the Sonoma County Office of Education team to put this structure in place. We

have been successful because everyone is working toward a common purpose—to increase the opportunity of success for our students. Everyone here expects our students to excel.”

The STAR results are the first of the annual testing and accountability reports that the state provides for schools and the community. STAR forms the foundation for the Academic Performance Index (API) and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reports, which will be released in the next several weeks and provide more detailed information about each school’s rate of academic growth and success at serving student subgroups.

School, district, county, and state results for the 2009 STAR program are available at the California Department of Education website, <http://star.cde.ca.gov>.

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*Attachment: STAR, Sonoma County Results*

# STAR Sonoma County results

## English-Language Arts ■ *California Standards Test*



	Percent of Sonoma County students scoring at or above proficient					Change		State
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1-year	5-year	2009
Grade 2	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>54</b>	9	10	53
Grade 3	<b>37</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>	5	9	44
Grade 4	<b>54</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>	5	12	61
Grade 5	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>	5	11	54
Grade 6	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	6	12	52
Grade 7	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	7	10	54
Grade 8	<b>47</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	5	8	48
Grade 9	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>57</b>	2	5	50
Grade 10	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47</b>	2	2	44
Grade 11	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>45</b>	4	1	40

## Mathematics ■ *California Standards Test*



	Percent scoring at or above proficient					Change		State
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1-year	5-year	2009
Grade 2	<b>60</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>65</b>	7	5	63
Grade 3	<b>55</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>64</b>	6	9	64
Grade 4	<b>52</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>	5	14	66
Grade 5	<b>44</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>58</b>	6	14	57
Grade 6	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>56</b>	7	10	49
Grade 7	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	1	4	43
General Math	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	0	5	26
Algebra I	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	4	6	28
Geometry	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	5	-2	26
Algebra II	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	1	0	28

## History-Social Science ■ *California Standards Test*



	Percent scoring at or above proficient					Change		State 2009
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1-year	5-year	
Grade 8	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	5	6	42
World History	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	1	1	38
US History	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>	6	4	44

## Science ■ *California Standards Test*



	Percent scoring at or above proficient					Change		State 2009
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1-year	5-year	
Grade 5	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	1	19	49
Grade 8	–	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	7	–	56
Grade 10 Life Science	–	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	2	–	44
Biology	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	1	10	42
Chemistry	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	0	4	36
Earth Science	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39</b>	-2	6	28
Physics	<b>42</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>61</b>	-2	19	46

STAR results compiled by the  
Sonoma County Office of Education