



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Jesus M. Gandara, Ed.D.
Superintendent

September 29, 2010

Dear Sweetwater family member,

I am writing to share exciting news about rising student achievement in Sweetwater schools. Our scores increased in *every* grade level and in nearly every subject area on the California Standards Tests, which are taken in every grade level from 7th grade through 11th grade in our district.

On the California High School Exit Exam, more 10th graders have passed both the English and math portions of the test. Our Latino students are also doing better on the exam than Latino students in San Diego's highest achieving high schools. That shows our teachers are working hard to close the achievement gap.

Sweetwater students also showed tremendous progress on the 2010 state Academic Performance Index. We posted double-digit increases from the previous year at all 12 comprehensive high schools and eight of 11 district middle schools. In addition, the Independent Study High School, which provides an alternative education option for students needing to catch-up on coursework in order to be on track for graduation, achieved a 142-point increase.

These huge leaps in school scores greatly exceed the student achievement goals set by the state. In fact, five Sweetwater schools have now surpassed the 800 target score on the API, with four more closing in on 800.

On Federal measurements, 8 of our 12 comprehensive high schools met their schoolwide Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets in language arts and math. For middle schools, seven of the 11 middle schools met their AYP targets in language arts. We're seeing phenomenal growth consistently from 7 to 12 grade levels.

My thanks and congratulations go to our teachers, staff, administrators and you for making this phenomenal achievement possible. Despite economic challenges, we have all worked together to increase the rigor of our classroom instruction, and we are seeing the positive results.

Our student performance caught the attention of the local media. Attached is an article that ran in the San Diego Union-Tribune and one that ran on the San Diego 6 News highlighting our achievement.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Together we can make a difference in the lives of our students.

Sincerely,

Jesus M. Gandara, Ed.D.
Superintendent

The Sweetwater Union High School District will fulfill the promise of 100% student success.

Sweetwater Union High School District programs and activities shall be free from discrimination based on gender, sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or the perception of one or more of such characteristics.

SUHSB Board Policy 0410.

Area Schools Celebrate Achievement Score Gains



Reported by: Sharon Chen

SAN DIEGO - Improved performance by high school students around San Diego County led to huge gains in results in standardized test scores released today by the state Department of Education.

The Academic Performance Index for the Sweetwater Union High School District showed the greatest increase among any major district in the region -- up 24 points from last year to 758.

All high schools and 8 of 11 middle schools in the district scored increases to exceed the student achievement goals set by the state.

"These scores show that student achievement is continuing to move in the right direction," said Arlie Ricasa, School Board President. "We owe our success to academic reforms that our teachers have put to work throughout the district."

The District as a whole made a 24 point gain, increasing their scores to 758. Montgomery High School made the most significant improvement with an 85 point gain. District officials say there were also higher scores when it came to English Language Learners, Latinos and also students from economically challenged backgrounds. In Sweetwater, one in four students are English Language Learners.

"English language learners accomplishments in meeting their API targets and surpassing them have been a phenomenal opportunity for all of us and this is why we're here making sure everyone understands how important that is," said Ricasa.

Sweetwater has 25 middle and high school campuses. The district has a population of just under 43,000 students and of that population, Latinos make up 73 percent.

Montgomery High School in Otay Mesa led the way with an 85-point uptick. San Ysidro High School scores were up 64 points from last year, while scores were 50 points better at Castle Park High School in Chula Vista.

Significant gains in the district, which spans middle schools and high schools from National City to the border, were made by Latino students, English language learners and economically disadvantaged pupils.

"This is a tremendous achievement when you consider that academic targets are rising every year under No Child Left Behind," Superintendent Jesus Gandara said, in reference to the federal law on school accountability. "Now, more than ever, districts must provide tailored attention to a variety of student groups to ensure academic success."

The state and federal government judge school performance not only by raw test results, but also in annual improvement in scores.

Test scores show continued gains in county schools

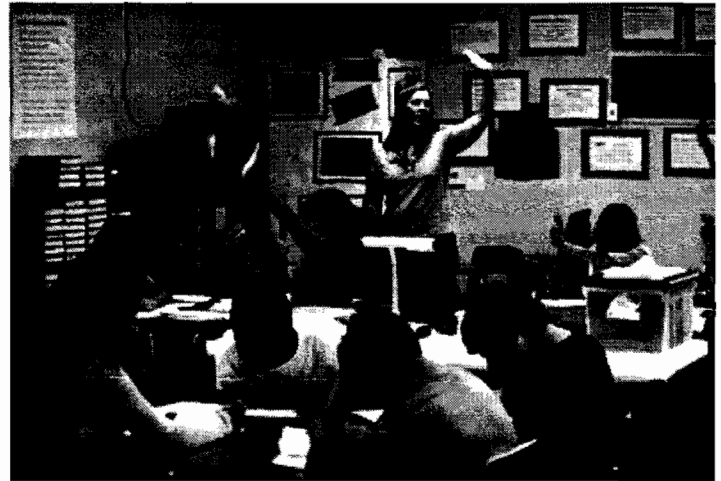
By Maureen Magee, UNION-TRIBUNE

[State test score site](#)

Even as school budgets were severely cut, students in San Diego County and throughout California made mostly steady — and some impressive — gains on standardized tests this year.

More than 373,000 students from the county's 42 districts took the 2010 California Standards Tests, a battery of exams that measures achievement in English, math, science and history in grades 2-11.

Improved scores were seen across grade levels and subjects. In English, a county record of nearly 60 percent of students achieved the state goal of proficient or advanced.



EDUARDO CONTRERAS

Freshman in English class at Hilltop High School in Chula Vista.

But results released Monday by the State Department of Education show little progress in closing the persistent achievement gap between some racial groups.

Sweetwater Union High School District

Significant improvements in virtually all grades and subjects.

- All high schools showed improved freshman English scores, ranging from 9 to 15 percentage points.
- 48 percent of freshman at Southwest High School freshmen test proficient or better in English, an increase of 17 percentage points over last year
- 64 percent of freshman at Hilltop High School tested proficient or better in English, a jump of 9 percentage points.

"We are very pleased because what we are seeing is the effect of our new districtwide effort to have consistent guidelines on how to place a student in specific courses," said Maria Castilleja, executive director of curriculum and instruction.

Sweetwater saw what it calls a predictable dip in algebra scores after it channeled more students into the course last year. The district increased the number of eighth-graders who take algebra from 38 to 52 percent. Scores dipped, but the district also saw an increase in students who tested proficient in the course.

To check scores at specific sites go to uniontrib.com/2010starscores