



EAST WHITTIER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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East Whittier City School District Aces State Exams

EAST WHITTIER – East Whittier City School District students outperformed state and county averages and showed substantial improvement on their year-over-year performance in the state’s second round of standardized testing on the new California Standards for English language arts (ELA) and math, according to a state report.

The two tests are the focal point of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), administered to grades three through eight. The exams, created by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, assess writing, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills far beyond the scope of California’s previous standardized tests.

The new test scores offer the first chance for schools to track growth in student understanding of the California Standards, implemented three years ago. The standards focus on student-driven instruction, collaboration, integration of technology and critical thinking.

“We are incredibly proud of the performance of our students,” East Whittier City School District Superintendent Mary Branca said. “We have an amazing team working hard to help our students achieve academic excellence.”

The number of East Whittier students testing proficient in ELA jumped by almost 6 percentage points while math proficiency climbed by almost 5 percentage points. English Learners showed the greatest improvement with a substantial 8 percentage point upswing in ELA and an almost 7 percentage point increase in math.

The District credits its rising scores to its frequent monitoring of student progress, which calls for teacher and administrator review of formative and summative assessments for language arts and mathematics every six to eight weeks. In addition to classroom teachers, each school site has an English learner lead teacher that serves as a liaison with the school staff to share student data, properly place students in their respective language programs, and continue monitoring their progress.

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“This frequent monitoring of student progress provides our teachers and administrators the necessary information to guide the instruction, assessment and intervention needed at each of our schools,” said Gabriela Tavitian, East Whittier City School District assistant superintendent of educational support services.

District leaders say they expect to see further growth in test scores based on their analysis of recent results to identify student areas of growth and need. The District also has intervention specialists at the elementary school level to provide intensive and strategic intervention to students who are at risk in ELA and math. Each intervention specialist provides small group instruction with engaging materials to meet the needs of their students. Many of the elementary school sites also provide before- and after-school tutoring.

At two of our middle schools, students receive intensive reading intervention through a program called Read 180, which provides reading instruction for students reading below two or more grade levels. There is also block scheduling intervention, which allows for smaller class sizes and a strategic instructional plan designed to fill any academic deficiencies that may be preventing students from accessing grade-level materials in their other core subjects.

Additionally, the District provides after-school and on-site opportunities for students who are identified as Gifted and Talented (GATE). In 2015-16, the District arranged for an outside consultant to provide GATE students with project-based academies entitled Eco-Station Biosphere Sciences, Art & Optics, and Robotics and Engineering.

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