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The Valley Press

AV students down in English, up in math

By: Julie Drake

Antelope Valley students declined slightly in the percentage who met or exceeded state English language arts/literacy standards but made gains in the number who met or exceeded state math standards, according to results of the 2017 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress released Wednesday by the California Department of Education.

An estimated 34% of Valley students met or exceeded the English language arts/literacy standard, a 1% decrease from last year. Some 22.3% of Valley students met or exceeded state math standards, a 2.3% increase over last year.

Statewide, 48.56% of students met or exceeded the English language arts/literacy standards. In mathematics, 37.56% of students met or exceeded standards. Those numbers barely changed from the previous year, a trend most school districts also saw. In 2016, 49% of students statewide met or exceeded the standards for English language arts/literacy and 37% of students met the mathematics standards.

More than 42,000 Antelope Valley students in third through eighth and 11th grades took the computer-based test, now in its third year, last spring. The tests include a number of assessments, including the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments.

In Westside Union School District 47.3% of students in third through eighth grade met or exceeded the state English language arts/literacy standard and 32.77% met or exceeded the math standard.

"When I look at it, it looks like they're relatively flat, not great movement one way or the other," Westside Superintendent Regina Rossall said.

Rossall expressed concern about fifth-grade mathematics. For example, 45.69% of fifth-graders did not meet the math standard. For sixth-graders there were 29.02% who did not meet the standard, which is close to the 27.13% of fourth-graders who did not meet the math standard.

"I think it shows that we have lots of room for improvement. But we are making steady progress or we're maintaining," she said, adding that fifth-grade mathematics is the most inconsistent.

Lancaster School District also experienced similar flatline results.

"We did see some gains within our district," Assistant Superintendent Bart Hoffman said.

For example, 14 schools made slight gains in mathematics and five schools made slight gains in English language arts. Of the 9,109 students with scores, 31.06% met or exceeded the English language arts/literacy standard, a slight decrease from the 32% in 2016. For mathematics, 17.58% of students met or exceeded the standard, up from 16% the year prior.

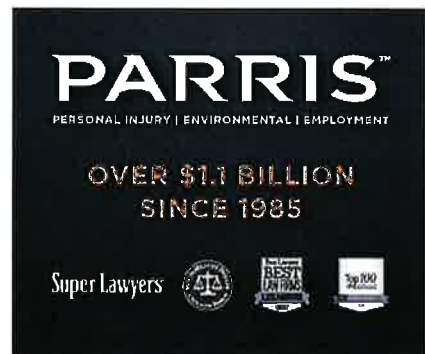
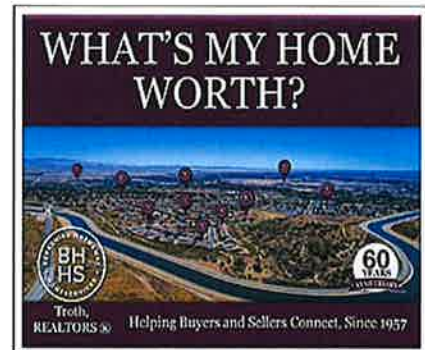
The district updated its Local Control Accountability Plan to address last year's results. The school board adopted new language arts curriculum and added more professional development this year.

"We have a good group of educators working together to solve this," Hoffman said.

In the Palmdale School District, 28.2% of students in third through eighth grade met or exceeded the state English language arts/literacy standard and 19.7% met or exceeded the math standard.

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"Accountability is a little different now than before. It's really based on growth within those different strands," District Superintendent Raul Maldonado said.

Maldonado added for Palmdale School District that means making sure the district's student subgroups, such as foster youth, English learners and low-income students, make good progress.

"Even if you start low the most important thing is to grow from that point forward," Maldonado said.

Overall, Maldonado said he wonders if the district has enough technology in its classrooms. The district purchased interactive Promethean boards - a computerized "whiteboard" that shows educational displays - for teachers.

The district is also piloting a program at SAGE Academy where all students get to use a Chromebook laptop computer. Maldonado said they ultimately hope to do that districtwide.

In the Antelope Valley Union High School District 59.5% of seventh-graders in the Academies of the Antelope Valley charter school met or exceeded the English language arts/literacy standards. Also among seventh-graders, 38.5% of students met or exceeded the mathematics standards.

Among eighth-graders, 60.6% met or exceeded the English language/literacy standards and 38.5% met or exceeded the math standards. Scores were lower for the district's 11th-graders, where 43.1% met or exceeded the English language arts/literacy standards and 12.7% met or exceeded the math standards.

"While these CAASPP scores remained relatively static in our district, as well as across the county and state, we will continue our commitment to provide multiple opportunities for our students to demonstrate their college and career readiness," Assistant Superintendent Greg Nehen said in a statement.

Nehen also highlighted a report earlier this week from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, who announced that the number of Advanced Placement exams, an indicator of college readiness, has increased statewide by 23% over the past four years.

Over that same period the number of students in the district who took at least one AP exam increased 27.62%. In addition, the number of exams passed increased by 16%.

"The AVUHSD is very proud of our focus on increasing students enrolled in AP courses and taking AP exams," Nehen said.

He added: "We are also very proud to note that the number of qualifying scores (3 or better out of 5) for our Hispanic students increased by 46.5% for the same period."

In Mojave Unified School District, 23.10% of students in third through eighth and 11th grade met or exceeded the English language arts standard and 11.2% met or exceeded the math standard.

Stephanie Newby, Mojave Unified's assistant superintendent of Student Achievement and Instruction, highlighted the district's growth on the state five-by-five placement panel. The color-coded panel provides an "at-a-glance" display on how a district is performing on the state indicators for suspension, English Learner progress, graduation and English language arts and mathematics. Districts receive credit for growth.

For example, when looking at scaled scores the district wanted to move a minimum of 20 points forward in English and 15 points forward in math. The district moved 49.6 points in English for grades three through eight.

"Overall we met our ELA goal on movement on that five-by-five," Newby said.


Math has been a struggle not only in the district but throughout the county and statewide, Newby said.

The district did see improvement in English language arts for student subgroups.

"We're seeing some good movement using the five-by-five in ELA. Math continues to be a struggle so we're going to look at what's going on in math and where the struggles are," Newby said.


Newby added the district increased the number of students who scored a 4 or higher on Advanced Placement exams to 12.9%.

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