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From the Principal's Office: CST Scaled Scores

With the warmth of Spring comes another long-standing tradition of California public education: state standardized testing. All year, staff and students have worked diligently on the El Marino curriculum, which is based on the California State Standards.

Beginning on May 3rd, all students in grades 2-5 will be taking the California Standards Test (CST) in Language Arts and in Math. 5th graders will also take the CST in Science. Scores from these tests will be sent to your homes sometime in August, and will also become a part of your child's cumulative academic record. These scores, as a whole, also serve to help us evaluate our programs and report to the general public standardized assessment data.

But what do those scores mean to you as a parent? What does it mean for your child to receive a score of Proficient one year, then Advanced in another year? Is your child struggling if he/she dropped one level? The answers lie in the numbers, known as "Scale Scores," which determine the achievement levels -- Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic. If your child is in third grade or above, you will have scores from last year's CST. Take a moment now to find those scores and compare the numbers with the chart below:

English Language Arts Scale Score Ranges

Grade	Far Below Basic	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
2	150-261	262-299	300-349	350-401	402-600
3	150-258	259-299	300-349	350-401	402-600
4	150-268	269-299	300-349	350-392	393-600
5	150-270	271-299	300-349	350-394	395-600

Mathematics Scale Score Ranges:

Grade	Far Below Basic	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
2	150-235	236-299	300-349	350-413	414-600
3	150-235	236-299	300-349	350-413	414-600
4	150-244	245-299	300-349	350-400	401-600
5	150-247	248-299	300-349	350-429	430-600

source: CA Dept. of Education

I find the scale scores provide a better picture of a student's achievement level, simply because the numbers show whether a student is solidly placed in a certain level or has a score just a few points from moving up or down a level. That is, if a student scores 344 on a given test, chances are that student is one answer away from placing in the Proficient range. Scale scores also can show how the same score can, in different years, produce a different level. For example, a student who scores 429 in math every year will come out at an Advanced level every year *except in fifth grade, where a score of 429 comes out at the Proficient level.* For parents, this information is crucial in their understanding of achievement data and its relation to their children's performance. After all, the CST is one test among many assessments that your child takes in a year. As always, the best way to really know how your child is doing is to maintain regular communications with your child's teacher. And, if you have questions about these scale scores, I'd be happy to go over them with you. My door is always open!

~Tracy Pumilia

Curious about what's on the CST? Go to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/css05rtq.asp> for questions from past years