

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

DECEMBER 2024

Statewide standardized test scores show small improvement

Statewide test scores improved in 2024, but student achievement has not returned to pre-Covid levels, according to an [article](#) at EdSource.

English language arts test scores increased slightly, with 47 percent of students meeting or exceeding proficiency standards, as compared to 46.7 percent last year. Math and science scores also edged up, with 30.7 percent of students in both subjects meeting or exceeding proficiency standards, compared with 30.2 percent in 2023.

In 2019, before the pandemic, 51.7 percent of students performed that well in English and 37.1 percent met or exceeded state standards in math.

Students from low-income households showed larger gains, but the achievement gap for Black and Latino students shows little improvement, EdSource says.

California school districts have received billions of dollars in federal pandemic relief money to address learning loss, but that funding has come to an end. Districts are finding creative ways to maintain programs that address student achievement.

In another [article](#) at EdSource, Linda Darling-Hammond, president of the State Board of Education, says test results show “our public schools are continuing to turn the corner on pandemic recovery, with gains on

OC students score higher in tests

Statewide standardized test results were not stellar, though they showed improvement, but students in Orange County scored much higher, according to an [article](#) by the Orange County Department of Education.

In Orange County, 58 percent of students met or exceeded English language arts standards and 48 percent met or exceeded standards in mathematics. In science, 41 percent of local students met or exceeded standards.

Nevertheless, achievement gaps in the county got wider. “Specifically, smaller percentages of Orange County foster youth, English learners and students who are homeless met or exceeded the standards in English and math in 2024,” the article states.

“These results are reflective of our successes and, crucially, the areas where we must intensify our efforts in collaboration with the districts we serve and other educational partners,” said Orange County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Stefan Bean.

You can see test results for your school district and individual schools [here](#).

most assessments, while highlighting areas where we have more work to do.”

She points out that the number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students has increased during the past three years, with an additional 60,000 students falling in this category in the past year. However, academic achievement for these students increased more than the statewide average at every grade level. Darling-Hammond credits state-sponsored programs like community schools, after-school enrichment and literacy coaching for these improvements.

She also says, “California’s Smarter Balance assessments are more rigorous than those in most other states as they focus on higher-order skills and critical thinking, and measure more standards.”

California’s English language tests “include reading, writing, listening, and even research, as well as open-ended questions and performance tasks that require students to analyze multiple sources of evidence and explain their conclusions.”

Math tests measure “data analysis, problem-solving, and how well students communicate their reasoning through additional performance tasks in which students must solve a complex real-world problem and communicate their reasoning.”

“The states that created and use these assessments believe that when students are asked to learn and show higher-order skills, they are better prepared for later schooling and life than if they were only prepared to bubble in answers on a multiple-choice test,” Darling-Hammond says.

Sacramento here we come!

Sacramento Safari February 24 and 25

Don't miss the most interesting and exciting advocacy event of the year!

Registration is now [open](#) at FourthDistrictPTA.org

Book your flights early, as prices will be higher closer to the event.



Family engagement resource from National PTA and Johns Hopkins

National PTA and the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University have teamed up to launch **Family Engagement Solutions**, a free online tool to help district and school leaders, educators and advocates find evidence-based programs that strengthen family-school partnerships and improve student outcomes. Family Engagement Solutions is spearheaded by National PTA's **Center for Family Engagement**, in collaboration with CRRE's **Evidence for ESSA** initiative.

"Every strategy to accelerate learning should include families as decades of research shows family engagement is just as essential as a rigorous curriculum and effective leaders and teachers," said Yvonne Johnson, president of National PTA. "National PTA and the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University share a sense of urgency around supporting schools and districts in engaging families in ways that are proven to drive better outcomes for students, families and schools, and we are proud to launch Family Engagement Solutions."

Through FamilyEngagementSolutions.org, district and school leaders, educators and advocates can find pro-



grams that will contribute to learning and improvement goals, what it takes to implement the programs, where they are being used across the country, and which student populations benefit from them. Programs featured in Family Engagement Solutions meet federal standards demonstrating that

they are at least promising/Tier 3 in their impact and have been vetted and curated by:

- Family engagement experts who track innovations and best practices to uncover programs that are successfully being used by schools in a diversity of contexts.
- Parent and community leaders who identify whether a program has a sufficient focus on family engagement, and if so, assess how the program aligns to the **National Standards for Family-School Partnerships**.
- Education researchers who conduct a thorough review of every evaluation that has been conducted for a program and determine the strength of its evidence in relationship to federal requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

"We have heard from school and district leaders that they want ideas for more impactful ways to use their limited budgets on strategies to engage families," said Nathan R. Monell, CAE, National PTA executive director. "With Family Engagement Solutions, school and district leaders can find family engagement programs that are proven to work somewhere else to help them make informed decisions around what would be the best fit for their students, families and schools."

Save the Date

Plan to come to our next Fourth District PTA Advocacy Forum, January 24, 9:30 to 11:30.

Here's what Ruth Anne Kurkjian, Los Alamitos Unified Council PTA president, said about our November Advocacy Forum:

This was my first time attending and I will make it my mission to never miss another one. I learned a ton! I am going to yell from the rafters: everybody needs to make time to come to these events. They're so useful and so amazing!

CAPTA Advocacy Calls

Be sure to participate in monthly Advocacy Calls with the California State PTA Advocacy Team. The virtual meetings will provide you with up-to-date information that will help you do your job as the advocacy representative for your PTA unit or council. The next call is on Monday, December 16 at 7 p.m.

For information and registration go to CAPTA.org.

California State PTA Convention

The 2025 California State PTA Convention will be held May 1 to May 4 at the Ontario Convention Center.

Every PTA can send at least two voting members to participate in the business of the organization, which includes voting on resolutions that help direct PTA's advocacy efforts. In 2025, elections will be held for the State PTA officers who will serve for the next two years.

The State Convention is an opportunity to network with PTA members from around the state, attend workshops on a variety of topics and hear from inspiring speakers. There will be an Exhibit Hall with vendors offering assemblies and fundraisers for your school. There will also be a gallery of artwork by Reflections winners.

More information is available [here](#).

California State PTA

Legislation Conference

February 3 to 4

Sacramento

Attendees will hear from engaging speakers, influential legislators, and insightful experts. See the Capitol and meet with lawmakers about your key issues.

More information at CAPTA.org.

*The Advocacy Communicator is published by the Fourth District PTA Advocacy Team and is intended for distribution to local PTA units and councils. President: Ellen Gravitt. Director of Advocacy: Candi Kern. Communicator Editor: Gisela Meier
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