

## Upward Trend for the Redwood City School District

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### RCEF Report on API Scores 2005/06

Once again, schools in the Redwood City School District (RCSD) have continued their trend of strong, consistent API score gains, as they have done since API scoring began in 1998. On the tests given last spring, 11 of our 16 schools scored 700 or higher, and the district's overall score is now 754. This is higher than Roy Cloud's 1998 score of 738, the highest result of any neighborhood school that year. At that time, only two of our schools, Roy Cloud and North Star, scored over 700.

Now nine additional schools—Adelante, Clifford, John Gill, Hawes, Henry Ford, Hoover, Orion, Selby Lane and Kennedy—have scored 700 or higher, and four schools—North Star Academy, Roy Cloud, Clifford and Orion—have scored over 800.

## Facts Worth Knowing

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- 11 schools scored over 700. In 1998 only two schools, Roy Cloud and North Star, scored over 700.
- The RCSD has had the greatest increase in API scores in San Mateo County since 2000.
- The district's overall API score now is 754. This is higher than the 738 Roy Cloud scored in 1998, the highest score of any neighborhood school that year.
- Seven schools have gained 200 or more points since 1998, including spectacular gains by Hoover (286 points), Fair Oaks (246 points), Adelante (293 points), and Hawes (243 points).
- The district's historically highest scoring schools also posted significant gains since 1998, with Roy Cloud now scoring 20% higher and Clifford 22% higher.
- North Star Academy, with an API score of 987, saw a 14-point gain over last year, and has the sixth-highest API score for elementary schools in the state.
- Despite the fact that 49% of RCSD students were classified as English language learners, compared to 25% in the state as a whole, our district API score was 34 points higher than the state average of 720.

## API Results Overview

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Since 1998, California students in grades two through 11 have been required to participate in annual assessments called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. STAR program results are used to create the Academic Performance Index (API), which is a measure used to track and rank school performance in meeting the State's curriculum standards.

When the API results are reported to the public, the scores are shown by district, by school, and by subgroups within a school, such as English language learners, students with disabilities, Asian, or white (not of Hispanic origin). The exact subgroups will vary for different schools, based on their populations.

A school with a large number of high-scoring students will typically show a high overall API score, even though there may also be lower-scoring students at the school. Similarly, a school with a large number of low-scoring students will show a lower overall API score, even though there may also be high-scoring students in attendance.

The maximum API score is 1000. The state has set 800 as the API goal that schools should strive to meet, and schools are required to meet annual improvement targets until they reach 800. Schools already at or exceeding 800 must continue to work to improve the scores of all their students, especially low-scoring subgroups, to close what is known as the "achievement gap."

## Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and No Child Left Behind

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The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that each state establish its own set of curriculum standards and program of standardized testing. California uses the STAR program, described above, as its standardized testing program for NCLB. The testing results are included in a complex formula that combines and weighs different types of criteria to determine if a school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

One of the key concerns of NCLB is to ensure that all children are being tested, and that children within different subgroups, for example children with learning disabilities or children learning English, are not left out. Last year, in California, NCLB required that 95% of students overall in a school, and 95% of students in each subgroup, take the STAR program tests.

NCLB also required last year that 24.4% of students tested, school-wide and by subgroup, had to perform at or above the proficient level in the English language arts tests, and 26.5% had to

score at or above proficient in the math tests. The targets increase every few years until 2014, when 100% of students must perform at or above proficient. Each state establishes its own definition of proficient, and California's definition is among the most stringent in the nation.

School districts are also required to meet AYP, as well as schools, and the same sets of criteria apply. The same participation and proficiency targets must be met, for the district overall, and by subgroup within the district.

## Program Improvement Status

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Schools that meet all the target criteria established by NCLB are said to have made AYP. Schools that do not make AYP, for the same reason, for two consecutive years may be placed in Program Improvement (PI) status.

Currently PI status is only applied to schools that receive specific funds under Title 1 of NCLB. Title 1 provides funds for academic support programs in schools with a large percentage of disadvantaged children.

Schools in PI status must implement a series of required changes that become more far reaching each year. Schools are removed from PI status when they make AYP for two consecutive years.

An entire school district can also be placed in PI status, if it does not make AYP, for the same reason, for two consecutive years. Again, only districts with schools that receive specific Title 1 funds can go into PI status. Districts in PI status also face a series of required changes that advance over time, and like individual schools, the district is removed from PI status when it meets AYP for two consecutive years.

## What it means for Redwood City Schools

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Both the API and AYP scores assess a school's progress toward meeting academic standards, but they differ in how they judge a school's success. A school is judged by the State of California to have reached its goals if its API scores have improved by a specific amount from the previous year. A school is judged by the federal government to have made AYP if it has met a set of participation and proficiency targets, and other goals, as established by NCLB. The two measurements are difficult to compare and trying to link them can cause confusion for parents and schools alike.

In fact, this confusion happened in our district this year, and has occurred in the past. Eight schools are now on PI status, despite the fact that they gained an average of 27 points in the last year alone, and three of them now have API scores over 700.

Hawes, for example, increased its API score by 31 points, from 672 to 703, and met 16 of 17 criteria required for its AYP. Unfortunately, the school missed meeting the 17<sup>th</sup> criterion by 1.4 percent, just two students. This was enough to put Hawes in year one of PI, despite the fact that its API score has increased 53 percent since 1998.

Currently, RCSD personnel, along with support from the San Mateo County Office of Education, are working with these schools to write plans that will help them exit PI status as soon as possible.

The RCSD also entered its first year of PI status this year, in spite of its consistent and substantial increases in API scores. As a result, the District will be revising its district-wide academic plan to improve test scores for all students at all schools for the next two years.

## What parents can do

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Parents should do their own homework when evaluating schools and educate themselves about these accountability systems in order to make informed choices. In addition, parents may wish to visit their school, stay in touch with the principal and teachers, and talk to other parents to really understand how their children are doing. Keep in mind that our schools are continuing to improve every year, providing a good education to all students in the RCSD.

## Other Resources

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NCLB: [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/index.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/index.asp) – click on “Parent Guide to School Accountability.”

API scores: [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/apireports.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/apireports.asp).

RCEF and more useful links to education resources: [www.rcef.org/](http://www.rcef.org/).

Testing and accountability in California: [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/documents/infoguide06.pdf/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/documents/infoguide06.pdf/)