

7. Third Grade Reading Scores

What It Is

The Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program in California began in 1998. The program requires all students in grades 2 through 11 to take the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9), a national norm referenced test. Reading proficiency is measured by the percentage of third grade students who had test scores at or above the national average. The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9) has been used over the past five years, and the California Achievement Test (CAT 6) is gradually being phased in. The California Standards Tests (CST) in English language arts, mathematics, science, and history-social science were added to the STAR program in 2001. CST scores are grouped according to five performance standards: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic and far below basic.

Why It Is Important

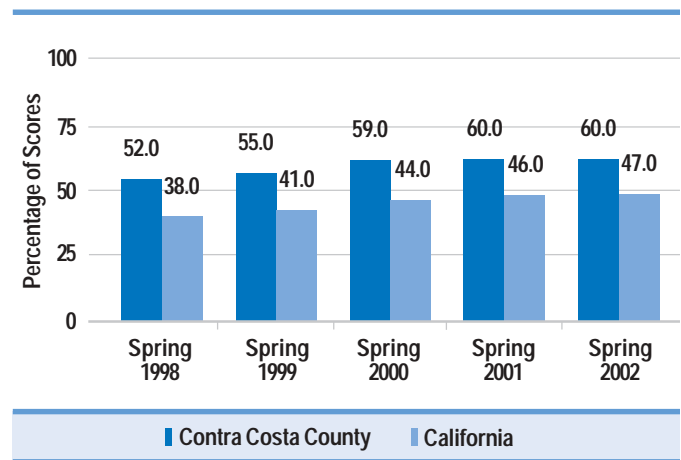
One of the most powerful indicators of later academic success is a child's reading level at the end of third grade. Strong community pre-literacy and literacy approaches can help prepare young children to tackle the exciting challenges of learning to read. Once in school, early identification of reading difficulties and intervention with additional resources are essential to help struggling students to read at their grade level.

How We Are Doing

Over the past five academic years, a higher percentage of Contra Costa County students consistently scored above the national average compared to California students as a whole. During spring 2002, 60% of third graders in Contra Costa County scored above the 50th National Percentile Rank compared to 47% statewide. SAT-9 scores varied by ethnicity with

75% of Caucasian and 76% of Asian students scoring at or above the 50th percentile as compared to 38% of African American and 35% of Hispanic/Latino students. Third grade CST scores in English Language Arts showed that 44% were proficient or advanced, with 25% of students at the basic proficiency level, 17% below basic, and 13% scoring far below basic, for Spring 2002.

Figure 7.1 — Percentage of Third Graders Reading at or Above the 50th National Percentile Rank on the SAT-9 Test



Source: California Department of Education, STAR Score Summaries Report, 2002.

Data Development

More data must be developed to measure the quality of before and after school programs for school-aged children. These programs, offered on the school site or in the community, may include tutoring, recreation, or other activities. Please refer to the Data Development Agenda section of this report for more information.