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Sonoma and Napa schools see mixed standardized test results as students still trail state averages

Results are based on annual English Language Arts and Math assessments given in grades 3-8 and 11. Science assessments are given in grades 5 and 8 and once in high school.



Kent Porter / The Press Democrat

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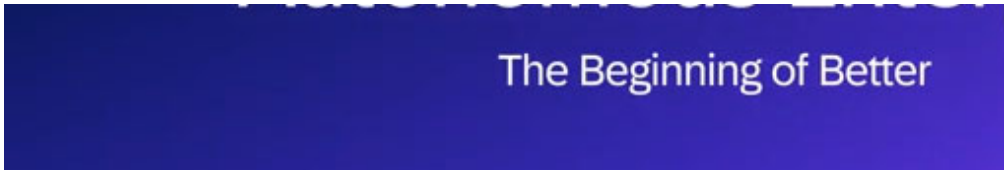
Primary and secondary school students in Sonoma and Napa counties made some gains in testing last year, mostly in science, but continue to trail behind their peers statewide across a range of academic subjects, including math and English, according to the latest data from the California Department of Education.

The data, released in October and drawn from a host of standardized tests taken annually by students starting in the 3rd grade up to grade 11, also showed that local students have yet to catch up with some pre-pandemic scores.

English Language Arts, or ELA, and Mathematics measurements are based on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment and the California Alternate Assessment, tests taken annually by students in grades 3-8 and grade 11. Science scores are based on either the California Science Test (CAST) or the California Alternate Assessment for Science, which are taken in grade 5 and 8 and once in high school.

In science, 32.28% of Sonoma County students met or exceeded standards in 2025-26, reflecting an 8.39% increase from 2024-25 and an 11% increase from 2022. (The increases or decreases over time reported in this story represent percent change figures, as opposed to percentage point differences.)





In English, 44.63% of students met or exceeded standards in 2025-26, a 1.35% decrease from the previous year, and down 1% from 2021-22, the first year fully back in classrooms for many local schools.

In math, 33.49% of students met or exceeded standards, a slight gain from the previous year and an 8% improvement from 2022. However, that mark is still down 12% from 2018-19.

Napa County students saw a similar decrease in ELA scores, down 1.18% from the 2024-25 year, but up 1% from 2021-22.

For math, 31.77% of Napa County students met or exceeded standards in 2025-26, a 5.23% increase from the previous year but a 14% jump from 2021-22. In science, the share of students meeting or exceeding standards jumped 17.84% from the previous year and nearly 20% from 2022, to 29.46%.

Overall, 49.26% of California students were proficient or advanced in ELA (down 4% from the previous year), and 38.35% were proficient or advanced in math (down 3%). In science, the statewide share of students showing proficiency was 35.99%.

Statewide, 49.26% of students met or exceeded standards for ELA, and 38.35% met standards for math. While state scores on ELA increased 5% from 2022, scores still trail 4% behind pre-COVID data gathered in 2019. For math, statewide scores showed a 15% increase from 2022 but lag 3% behind 2019 results.

Statewide data only shows improvement to and beyond pre-COVID levels in one arena: science, where students last year showed a 20% improvement from 2018-19.

For comparison, countywide, Sonoma County students are down 11% from pre-pandemic scores in English and 12% in math, while improving 11% in science.

In Napa County, English scores are down 12% from before the pandemic, 11%

In Santa Rosa City Schools, 42.2% of high school students met or exceeded standards across the three subject areas in 2025-26, a 5.13% increase from the previous year and 1% increase from 2022.

West Sonoma County Union high schoolers came in at 58.15% proficiency, down 8% from the previous year but up 9.2% from 2022.

High school students in Petaluma were at 57.08% proficiency, up 1.67% from the previous year but down 2.26% from 2022.

Among Cotati-Rohnert Park students, 42.4% met or exceeded standards, down 3.5%, and Windsor Unified school districts were at 39.3% proficiency, down about a point from the previous year.

Many students made significant improvements in math and science. Math scores for high schoolers in Santa Rosa shot up by more than 25%, while West County students improved 4% from the previous year but 32% from 2022, with 40.18% meeting or exceeding proficiency standards.

Science scores improved for three of the county's five largest districts. Santa Rosa teens were at 28.12% proficient, Cotati-Rohnert Park came in at 28.37% and Windsor came in at 31.7%.

Napa County districts

Napa County's 3rd-through-8th- and 11th-grade students saw some gains and losses.

Napa Valley Unified School District had 43.7% of students meet or exceed standards in ELA, down 2% from 2024-25. Calistoga came in at 43.13%, down about 1 point. St. Helena students tallied 62.12% meeting or exceeding ELA standards, up 6% from 2024-25. Pope Valley Elementary students made the most significant leap: 57.14% proficiency marks in ELA up 120% from the previous year and up 386% from 2022.

For math, NVUSD came in at 31.53%, up 6% from the previous year; Calistoga was at 31.73%, up 4%. St. Helena came in at 41.28%, a slight decrease from the previous year, and Pope Valley again saw a significant increase with 33.33% of students meeting or exceeding standards, up 133% from 2025.

Science scores showed substantive improvements, as well. NVUSD tested at 28.97% meeting or exceeding standards, up 18%, and Calistoga came in at 28.66%, a 42% improvement. St. Helena saw no significant change from last year at, 39.69%.

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The Sonoma Index-Tribune

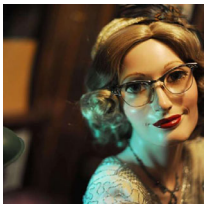
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