

pasadenastarnews.com

## Pasadena continues improvement in California exit exams

By Brian Charles Staff Writer

Posted: 08/24/2010 08:41:16 PM PDT

**Database:** "<http://cahsee.cde.ca.gov/reports.asp>

Pasadena Unified School District students continue to improve on California High School Exit Exams, matching the gains made by Los Angeles County.

More than 1,300 PUSD students, all in the 10th grade, took exits exams in English and Math in 2010. Like their Los Angeles County counterparts, better than 77 percent of PUSD students passed both the English and Math portions of the exam on their first attempt. Statewide, 81 percent of 10th-graders school students passed the exit exam, also on the first attempt.

The news brought a smile to top PUSD administrators Tuesday.

"I think there has been good improvement throughout the district. It's encouraging that one school, Marshall has passing rates at 90 percent for first-time test takers," said Edwin Diaz, PUSD Superintendent.

Diaz added that the recent scores mark progress for the district.

"When you look at three years ago, we started at below the state and county scores on the CAHSEE, now we are even with both," Diaz said.

Clearing the CAHSEE hurdle on the first attempt means the district need not place students in state-mandated remediation courses, saving the district dollars, said Terry Dutton, PUSD consultant and former principal in the Glendale Unified School District.

Students, who often count the

days to graduation, look to the CAHSEE as a right of passage like a driver's license test. The exit exam holds the key to getting out of high school, Dutton said.

"The CAHSEE is the first hurdle you must pass to graduate," he said. "I think school districts, students and parents have finally gotten serious about the test."

As serious as students, educators and parents might be about passing the test of English and math skills, the CAHSEE test provides more evidence of gaps in academic achievement, according to the report.

Blacks, Latinos, children from poor families and English Language learners lag behind white students in the rates at which they pass the

Advertisement

### Help people in need.

Donate your car, boat or RV

Free Towing ■ Tax Deductible

**FREE**  
3 day vacation to over  
80 destinations.

Call Toll-Free

# 1-877-225-9384



 **Heritage**  
for the **Blind**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

[pasadenastarnews.com](http://pasadenastarnews.com)

exam. The gaps range from 10 and 16 percentage points on the rate of passage across the district.

"We need to find ways to get our minority students to pass the test, period," Dutton said.

As the gateway to graduation, students are acutely aware of the weight of the CAHSEE test and its direct impact on their future. With other state-mandated testing, such as the California Standards Test, not holding the same weight in the minds of students, PUSD officials wonder if kids aren't simply blowing off the other exams.

"The CAHSEE has individual implications for the student," Dutton said. "The (California Standards Test) has no implication to the student but does affect the school."

But Diaz said there are carrots to dangle in front of every student to motivate them to perform well on any test.

"There are other reasons to do well on the CST besides making the district look good. These tests are important for placement in certain classes," he said.

While more students are clearing the CAHSEE exam hurdle on their first attempt, improvement has been uneven across the district. John Muir High School students, especially its Latino and black students, continue to trail other high schools in Pasadena.

Muir students lagged between 12 and 20 percentage points behind other students in the district in math, while trailing in English by more than 13 percentage points. Muir trailed Marshall by 24 percentage points.

Diaz began a reinvention plan in 2008, shortly after he arrived. The teachers reapplied for their jobs and Diaz has instituted support programs for the students.

"Although Muir continues to improve they have a long way to go," Diaz said. "It takes a couple of years of building a foundation before you see dramatic growth."

[brian.charles@sgvn.com](mailto:brian.charles@sgvn.com)

626-578-6300 , ext. 4494

Advertisement



**SAVE** up to **64%**  
Plus, get  
**3 FREE Gifts**



Special Code: 45069ZWN

**To Order: [www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71](http://www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71) or call 1-877-586-4455**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™