

September 18, 2006

To: Members of the Board

From: Tom Bishop

Subject: Articles of Interest

Attached is the following article of interest:

11.1 “Rankings show progress” – San Diego Union-Tribune, September 1, 2006

11.2 “Back to school” – Los Angeles Times, September 5, 2006

RECOMMENDED: For Information Only.

11.1 – 11.2

Rankings show progress

S.D.
Union-Tribune
9-1-06

68% of S.D. county

schools hit annual federal benchmarks

By Sherry Saavedra
STAFF WRITER

San Diego County schools made progress last year toward meeting state and federal academic goals, which will help them avoid severe sanctions.

Sixty-eight percent of San Diego County schools met their annual federal academic benchmarks, while only 47 percent met their statewide targets, according to an annual report card released yesterday by the California Department of Education.

By comparison, 65 percent of schools statewide met their fed-

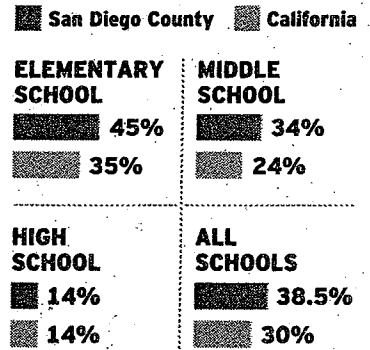
eral goals, and 52 percent hit their state marks.

The state education department released the reports to show how California's more than 9,500 public schools stack up against one another, and to hold them accountable for meeting certain academic objectives each year.

The state and federal accountability systems are two different ways of looking at the same student test scores. The dual systems produce seemingly contradictory results that show schools in some instances meeting one set of benchmarks,

How they scored

Percent of schools at or above the performance target of 800 according to the most recent Academic Performance Index:



Note: Academic Performance Index assigns schools a numerical value based on performance on statewide tests. The number ranges from 200 to 1,000 with 800 as the target for all schools.

SOURCE: California Department of Education

AARON STECKELBERG / Union-Tribune

pg. 1 of 4

but simultaneously falling short of another.

That's because the state's annual targets call on schools to show improvement from one year to the next, while the federal system under the No Child Left Behind law demands that all schools reach a minimum goal regardless of their starting point.

"We hope that some time in the future the state and federal programs will be one and the same," said Jim Peabody, director of accountability for the San Diego County Office of Education.

The state program involves an Academic Performance Index, which assigns a single numerical value to schools from 200 to 1,000 based on performance on statewide tests. The state has a goal of 800 for all schools, and expects progress toward that target on an annual basis.

While 30 percent of schools statewide hit or surpassed the 800 mark, 38.5 percent countywide met the goal, up 21.5 percentage points since 1999, the first year the state calculated API. Locally, 45 percent of elementaries have met the state goal, but only 14 percent of high schools have achieved it, according to an analysis by The San Diego Union-Tribune.

In the federal program, the benchmarks will rise nearly every year until 2014 when all students will be expected to demonstrate mastery of grade-level language arts and math.

However, meeting the federal benchmarks this year is not an indicator of stellar achievement. Schools were only required to show 20.9 percent to 26.5 percent of students were proficient in language arts and math, depending on the subject and grade.

Schools that met their federal benchmarks but didn't perform far beyond them could be in for trouble in two years, Peabody said, when the targets climb by about 10 percent.

"It may mean you're on the right track, but if you don't start moving you're going to get run over by a train," he Peabody said. "You have to deal with the other 75 percent of students who aren't proficient."

Bar unchanged

This year the federal bar didn't rise, making it easier for more schools to make their benchmarks. Countywide, 68 percent of the schools met federal targets, a 4 percentage-point gain.

Of the state's large urban districts, only San Diego and Sacramento met their districtwide federal goals.

In San Diego Unified, 65.5 percent of district schools met their federal academic benchmarks, while 42 percent met all their state goals. Thirty-one percent of the schools met or surpassed the state's 800 target, a percentage that has nearly tripled since 1999.

There are sanctions for schools that don't meet their federal targets but only for those that receive federal funding for serving poor and minority students.

Of those county schools, 143 are on the federal troubled schools list for falling short of their goals, up from 105 last school year. That's the highest number of campuses to make the list since No Child Left Behind became federal law in 2002.

Schools land on the list when they miss federal targets for two consecutive years in the same category. School districts must allow students from those schools to attend another campus and provide the transportation.

The sanctions get progressively worse. In the second year on the list, schools must also offer students free tutoring from a state-approved provider. Chronic under-performance means aggressive school reforms, including a new administration, conversion to a charter, or a breakup of a school into several smaller campuses.

Schools must meet all their federal targets for two consecutive years to get off the list, a difficult task for many.

Finding success

Keiller Leadership Academy in San Diego's Jamacha neighborhood has been racking up sanctions on the list for years, but for the first time met every state and federal benchmark.

"I'm so excited I'm coming out of my chair," said director Patricia Ladd of her school, where 86 percent of the students are low income and one in five is in a foster home.

"We've been in the gutter for years."

To improve, the middle school converted to an independent public charter last school year, freeing it from the bureaucracy of San Diego Unified, Ladd said.

As a charter, Ladd was able to hand-select her teachers, and 60 percent of the instructional staff was replaced.

She also outsourced custodial services, saving her school \$18,000, which then went toward educating students. And, the academy adopted a more challenging math and science curriculum, a shift that would have been slowed by red tape if she'd needed district approval, Ladd said.

"We were in complete control of our budget now, our curriculum and our hiring and look what happened," Ladd said.

San Diego Unified's superintendent, Carl Cohn, said he's happy for Keiller and is taking Ladd's comments seriously.

"If in fact district bureaucracy is impeding progress, I look at this as an opportunity to learn," Cohn said.

Federal focus

The federal benchmarks measure four key areas — proficiency in language arts and math, graduation rates, participation on statewide tests and performance in the state's accountability program.

A key feature of No Child Left Behind is that students must meet these benchmarks not only schoolwide but also in various subgroups, including those that chronically underperform, such as English learners and special education and low-income students. The law's intention is to force schools to adopt the mantra that they aren't successful unless all their students are making academic strides.

This year, the percentage of county schools meeting all of their state growth targets dropped 21 percentage points to 52 percent. The reason for the decline is that the state changed its criteria.

Schools were asked to show gains in two new subgroups, English learners and special education, which involves students who are historically low achieving. That brought down the number of schools meeting their targets.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said this highlights the lagging achievement of some minorities.

"I remain concerned about the achievement gap in California, specifically as it relates to African-American students and English learners," he said. "Improving their progress will be a particular focus of mine in the coming years."

Local schools on federal list

San Diego County has 143 schools that landed on a federal list of schools in need of improvement. School districts must give parents the option of sending their children to a school not on the list. Schools that persistently miss targets face other consequences that could include replacing instructional staff, hiring new administrators or breaking into smaller schools with different principals.

To land on the list, a school must have missed at least one federal target for two consecutive years in math or English, or one of the other categories, including high school graduation rates or performance in the state's accountability system. Some schools only fell short on the percentage of students taking statewide tests.

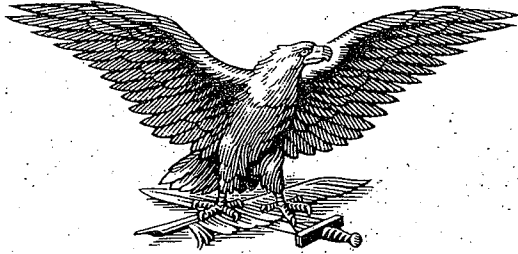
To get off the list, a school must meet all of its goals for two consecutive years.

This list has no relation to whether schools met their state benchmarks.

Bonsall Union Sullivan	King Lincoln Mission Reynolds	SDHS CIMA SDHS Media/Arts SDHS School of Business SDHS SCITECH Taft Tubman Charter Twain Junior/Senior Wangenheim Washington Whitman Wilson
Borrego Springs Unified Borrego Springs Middle	Poway Unified Valley	San Marcos Unified San Marcos Elementary San Marcos Middle Woodland Park
Cajon Valley Union Cajon Valley Middle Cuyamaca Greenfield Middle Johnson Lexington Montgomery Middle	Ramona Unified Peirce Ramona Elementary	San Ysidro Beyer La Mirada San Ysidro Middle Smythe Willow
Chula Vista Elementary Chula Vista Learning Harborside Hilltop Drive Juarez-Lincoln Lauderbach Otay Parkview Silver Wing Vista Square	County Education Juvenile Hall Summit Schools	South Bay Union Bayside Berry Central Mendoza Nestor Nicoloff Oneonta Pence Sunnyslope
Encinitas Union Ecke Central	San Diego Unified A.L.B.A. (Alt) Adams Baker Balboa Bayview Terrace Bell Brooklyn Carson Clairemont Clark Correia CPMA Crawford CHAMPS Dana Edison Emerson/Bandini Encanto Farb Garfield Garfield (Cont) Gompers Hoover Horton Keiller Kimbrough Kroc Middle Language Lewis Logan Madison Mann Marston Memorial Academy Montgomery Morse Muir (Alt) Education New Dawn O'Farrell Pacific Beach Middle Parks Perkins Pershing Roosevelt	Sweetwater Union High Castle Park High Castle Park Middle MAAC Charter Mar Vista High Mar Vista Middle Southwest Jr High Southwest Senior High Sweetwater
Escondido Union Farr Avenue Glen View Grant Juniper Lincoln Primary Pioneer Rose		Valley Center-Pauma Pauma Valley Center Lower
Fallbrook Union Ellis Frazier Potter		Vista Unified Beaumont Bobier Crestview Foothill Oak Elementary Grapevine Hannalei Elementary Lincoln Monte Vista Olive Temple Heights Elem. Vista Academy Washington
Grossmont Union High Chaparral (Cont) Gateway West		
La Mesa-Spring Valley Bancroft Kempton La Presa Middle Spring Valley Elementary		
Lemon Grove Golden Avenue Lemon Grove		
Mountain Empire Unified Hillside Jr/Sr (Alt) Mountain Empire Jr. High Potrero		
National Central		
Oceanside Unified Ditmar		

SOURCE: California Department of Education

eg. 4084



Los Angeles Times

JEFFREY M. JOHNSON
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer

News

DEAN BAQUET *Editor*

Managing Editor DOUGLAS FRANTZ *Managing Editor* LEO C. WOLINSKY *Associate Editor* JOHN MONTORIO

Deputy Managing Editor MELISSA MCCOY *Creative Director* JOSEPH HUTCHINSON

Assistant Managing Editors
 JOHN ARTHUR, JANET CLAYTON, COLIN CRAWFORD,
 MARC DUVOISIN, SIMON K.C. LI, JOEL SAPPPELL

Opinion

ANDRÉS MARTÍNEZ *Editorial Page Editor*
 MICHAEL NEWMAN *Deputy Editorial Page Editor*

EDITORIALS

Back to school

TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY of school for 418,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District, who will be expected to put the scrapes and slights of summer behind them and focus on learning. The same expectation applies to the adults in the aftermath of the political fight over Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's plan to assume some control over the Los Angeles schools.

That fight is over, with his victory last week in Sacramento. The legislation creating a power-sharing arrangement among him, the school board and the district superintendent is about to become law — the governor is expected to sign it any day now — and will take effect Jan. 1. The priority now is how to make this new system work. We have not always agreed with the mayor's approach, though we support his ultimate ambition of assuming responsibility for education in this city. We wish him well in his endeavor.

Yes, his plan raises important constitutional issues that may need judicial resolution. But our main objection to the legislation was that it promised too little mayoral control, not too much. Whatever the courts decide, we are not among those hoping that a legal setback will defeat the cause of mayoral control.

On the contrary. It is both desirable and inevitable for big-city mayors, as the most representative local elected officials, to assume control over public education and to be held accountable for the performance of schools, just as they are held accountable for public safety and other vital services. Villaraigosa's law, after he negotiated its details with teachers unions hostile to the concept of mayoral control, is an imperfect first step toward the goal of true mayoral control. But it is in everyone's interest that this experiment become just that: a first step, not a disappointing dead end.

The mayor's undeniable political skills could help minimize the plan's flaws. It is essential in coming weeks that he and the school board set aside their re-

cent animosity, and any animosity stemming from litigation, when it comes to choosing a new superintendent. The mayor formally will have no say in the matter until January, but it is in the best interest of the district to have a superintendent backed and respected by both the board and the mayor.

Collaboration and trust between the mayor and the board also will be crucial in smoothing out some of the law's rough edges — areas in which ambiguity presents a danger and an opportunity.

For instance, the law pays an alarming amount of lip service to the notion of empowering the community on school construction decisions and local teachers on curriculum choice. Community input is a laudable goal, but it would be a setback to Supt. Roy Romer's legacy if construction decisions became overly politicized. On curriculum matters, the reference to empowering teachers need not be interpreted too generously. Maybe, as in Boston, local schools can have a greater say in their budgets and curriculums only if they meet stringent performance standards.

There will be less ambiguity, of course, when it comes to the cluster of low-performing schools that Villaraigosa will run directly. This will be the pilot program for true mayoral control.

Last week, after his triumph in Sacramento, Villaraigosa said he felt as hopeful as a kid on his first day of school. We now have the opportunity, he said, "to do something truly meaningful for our kids." It's time to end the political struggle over what form this opportunity should take and focus on fulfilling it.