



Guide to PEN's Middle School Fact Sheets

About PEN's Fact Sheets

PEN's Fact Sheets provide you with a starting point for exploring Pasadena Unified School District's elementary schools. Much of the information on the fact sheets is self-explanatory. This Guide explains the school performance (test) data that you see reported on the fact sheets, and also highlights the features of the middle school fact sheets that aren't found on the elementary fact sheets.

Each fact sheet also has a space for notes. Use this space to jot down questions you'll want to ask when you tour, or to take notes during your tour. Keep in mind the following two points:

- ✓ You should always consider your neighborhood school.
- ✓ Fact sheets and test scores are no substitute for visiting schools!

If you have questions about this guide or the fact sheets, please contact us: info@penfamilies.org.

Defining "Middle School"

PUSD has defined middle school as grades 6-8. There are three stand-alone (6-8) middle schools: Eliot, Washington, and Wilson, each with their own attendance zone. There are also two K-8 schools that offer a middle school program for grades 6-8: McKinley and Sierra Madre. McKinley's middle school is housed on the same campus as its elementary program, but Sierra Madre's middle school program is housed at a separate site (the "upper campus") under the same administration. Blair is a 6-12 school with a middle school attendance zone that overlaps with McKinley K-8's elementary zone. Marshall Fundamental is also a 6-12 school, but unlike the others it is a lottery-only school. Residents of the immediate neighborhood are given preference in the lottery for Marshall seats, but are not guaranteed admission.

Excellent Middle Schools Initiative: In 2007-08, PUSD convened a team of middle school administrators and others to develop a unified, research-based, and developmentally-appropriate approach to systematically improve the District's middle school program, ensuring that all students in grades six, seven and eight across the district in the district receive high-quality, equitable educational opportunities. For more go to www.pusd.us, enter the site, click on the "District Initiatives" tab in the left-hand column, and then click on "Excellent Middle Schools".

Middle School-Specific Considerations

School hours

All PUSD schools follow a shortened class schedule on Mondays to allow for staff planning and development time. Elementary and middle schools dismiss early on Mondays. High schools and 6-12 schools start later on Monday mornings, but end at the normal time.

Teachers

In addition to the number of teachers and how many are fully credentialed, middle school fact sheets list:

- Number of single-subject credentialed teachers
- Number of counselors and counselor:student ratio
- Number of administrators (secondary schools typically have one or more assistant principal)

Note that budget cuts combined with union contract provisions resulted in a lot of newer teachers (less than five years in the District) being laid off last spring. Unless noted keep in mind that the teacher statistics given here are from 2009-10.

Discipline

Note that the number of suspensions and expulsions reported is for the school as a whole, not just the middle school grades. Questions or concerns about these numbers should be directed to the principal when you visit the school.

Curriculum and Resources

The core curriculum is essentially the same district-wide. However, arts programs (visual art, music, drama), physical education, library services, technology instruction and other programs vary from school to school. For middle schools, this section of the fact sheet also lists electives, extra-curricular programs and student clubs, and a brief description of athletic programming. (See PEN's "[Guide to Visiting Middle Schools](#)" for more about what to look for and questions you may want to ask when you visit.)

Academic Performance (Test Score) Information

Note that API Scores, state rank, AYP status, and NCLB proficiency scores for math and language arts for K-8 and 6-12 schools reflect the performance of all grades, not just the middle school grades.

California's Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 (Chapter 3, Statutes of 1999) established the Academic Performance Index (API), which summarizes a school's or a local educational agency's (LEA) academic performance and progress on statewide assessments. The API also is used as an additional indicator for federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. API Scores are the cornerstone of California's accountability system. The index measures the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures. Scores range from 200-1000; the state's goal is to have all schools score 800 or above by 2014.

A school's API score is based on student scores from standardized tests given in the spring. (See *Testing and API Reporting* table, below.) High school API scores also factor in results from high school exit exams and graduation rates. Only the scores of students who have been enrolled at a school since the previous October are considered "valid" for the purpose of calculating the school's API score.

Current Year API (Growth)

The "Growth" API for a given year is the score based on test results from that same calendar year. So for example, the 2010 Growth API score is based on how students performed on the state's standardized tests in May 2010.

Prior Year API (Base)

The formula used to calculate API scores changes somewhat from year to year. To measure a school's progress from year to year, the California Department of Education (CDE) recalculates each school's API score from the prior year, using the current year's updated API formula. The prior year "Base" API score is the most accurate basis for comparison with the current year's "Growth" API.

One-year change from preceding three years

Each year's "growth" API is compared to the prior year's "base" API to calculate the 1-year change. A small change up or down from one year to the next may not be significant, but looking at how the API has changed over the past few years gives you an idea of whether there is an overall trend. Is the API score on its way up? Down? Fluctuating? Ask the principal about trends in the API score over recent years.

State Rank

Schools in California are given a state rank based on their API score. Each school is ranked relative to all the other schools in the state – not against an absolute standard – and placed in one of ten deciles where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. This rank is a general indicator of a school's performance.

Similar Schools Rank

In addition, the state gives each school a similar schools rank. This number (also on a scale of 1 to 10) shows how a school is doing compared to a group of 100 other schools with similar student and teacher demographics.

Testing and API Reporting Calendar (2009-2010)

Prior year (2009) Base API	Released in March 2010	Calculated using raw test score data from May 2009 and the 2010 calculation formula; used as the basis for calculating 1-year change from May 2009 to May 2010.
California Standards Testing	May 2010	Students in grades 2-11 take CSTs in English-Language Arts and Math; other specific subject tests are also given in designated grades. ¹
Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)	August 2010	Individual STAR testing results are sent to students' households and school and district results reported.
Growth (2010) API	Released late summer 2010	Calculated using valid test score data from May 2010 and the current configuration of the API formula.
State Rank & Similar Schools Rank	March 2011	<i>See explanation above.</i>
Prior year (2010) Base API	March 2011	<i>This becomes the basis for measuring growth from May 2010 to May 2011, but the 2011 Growth API against which it is compared will not be released until late summer or early fall 2011.</i>

Met No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goals (AYP)?

Each year, schools must meet several requirements to meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets under the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). For elementary schools, these include a minimum percentage of students testing proficient or advanced on statewide tests in Math and English Language Arts (ELA), and achievement of a minimum API score (which increases from year to year) **or** at least one point growth API over the previous year's base score.

The Federal NCLB goal is for all schools and all students to perform at proficient or above on statewide tests by 2014. Proficiency targets increase by about 10% per year, making it increasingly challenging to meet all AYP criteria.)

For a school to satisfy its NCLB requirements, they must meet school-wide targets as well as targets for each statistically significant subgroup. A more diverse school with more significant subgroups would have more criteria to meet. PEN's fact sheets indicate whether a school met all its targets (Yes or No), as well as how many of its AYP criteria it met.

Students meeting NCLB for Language Arts

This is the percentage of students with valid test scores who scored proficient or above on the May 2010 state ELA test. For the 2009-10 school year, the AYP target for ELA is 56.8% proficient or above.

Students meeting NCLB for Math

This is the actual percentage of students with valid test scores who scored proficient or above on the May 2010 state math test. For the 2009-10 school year, the AYP target for Math is 58% proficient or above.

Algebra 1 Proficiency (8th Graders)

The State of California's academic standards call for students completing 8th grade to be proficient in Algebra 1. PEN's middle school fact sheets include the percentage of each school's 8th graders that took the California Standards Test (CST) for Algebra 1 the previous spring, and also the percentage of 8th grade Algebra 1 CST-takers who scored proficient or above.

1. Students with significant cognitive disabilities take the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA). Eligible students in grades 3-11 may take the California Modified Assessment (CMA), a standards-based test for students with an individualized education program who meet the state's eligibility criteria. The CMA is being phased in by grade level. The first year the CMA is used at a given grade level in a given subject area, scores are reported but are not included in the school's API and AYP calculations. Once a base level has been established and calibrated, scale scores and performance levels (basic, proficient, etc.) from the CMA can be reported and included in the calculation of API and AYP.