

# **MB city schools stay stellar**

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Manhattan Beach students must be eating their Wheaties for breakfast.

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District's Academic Performance Index (API) scores increased by eight points in the most recent round of testing, from 907 to 915, making it the fifth highest performing unified school district in the state.

API is a state-required school performance indicator, and the primary way state education officials measure schools' improvement.

The API is calculated by converting a student's performance on statewide assessments across multiple content areas into points on the API scale, according to Carolyn Seaton, executive director of educational services for the district. Those points are then averaged across all students and all tests. The highest API score that can be attained is 1000. All Manhattan Beach schools met the statewide performance target of 800 in the 2008-09 school year.

Pennekamp Elementary boasted the highest API score in the district this past year, improving to 966 from 949 the year before. Grand View Elementary's API score increased from 930 in 2007 to 955 in 2008.

The students' Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) scores have the biggest impact on the API, Seaton said.

The students take the STAR tests in the spring. The elementary schools are tested in English Language Arts (ELA), math and science. The middle school students are tested in ELA, history, math and science, while Mira Costa High School students take ELA, history, math and science tests.

Across the district, 86.6 percent of students scored proficient or advanced in ELA, 78.8 percent scored proficient or advanced in math, 83 percent in science and 76.3 percent in history.

Grand View Elementary's ELA score increased from 84.1 percent proficient or advanced in 2007 to 90.5 percent in 2008, while the science scores increased to 94.8 percent from 85.8 percent.

As part of the No Child Left Behind act, 55.6 percent of students in unified school districts are required to score proficient or above in ELA and 54.8 percent must score proficient or above in mathematics. By 2014, 100 percent of students must be scoring at the proficient and advanced level in ELA and math, according to the act.

The highest scoring school district in the state was San Marino Unified with an API score of 952. La Canada Unified scored 926, Piedmont City Unified scored 922, Palo Alto Unified scored 920, with Manhattan Beach rounding out the top five. The top four schools all are funded with the help of a parcel tax.

"It could show in tough fiscal times, that school districts are depending more and more on parent involvement to be able to maintain a level of excellence because the state is not able to provide the full spectrum of programs that are needed," Seaton said. ER

