

## California STAR and the API– Part 2

*Because of the state's increasing emphasis on standards and mandated testing, Natomas Charter School (NCS) will be publishing a series of articles over the next few months on the California STAR Program and the role it plays in NCS's accountability status as a charter school.*

The Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 authorized the creation of a new accountability system for California public schools. PSAA has three major components:

- The Academic Performance Index (API)
- The Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP)
- The Governor's Performance Award (GPA)

Of the three components, it is the API that serves as the cornerstone of this accountability system. The other two components (II/USP and GPA) are programs which either sanction or award schools based on growth on the API.

So what is the API? The API is a numeric index or scale that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. The state has set 800 as the interim API score that school should strive to meet. Schools that fall short of 800 are required to meet annual growth targets until their goal is achieved.

The API is calculated using the results of the battery of STAR tests taken by students in the spring of each school year (see STAR article in last month's newsletter and on your NCS program website). Based on a formula too complex to detail in this article, schools are given a "base" API number and a "growth" API number (the target number a school needs to meet) each year.

Schools that meet or exceed their growth targets may be eligible to receive monetary awards through the Governor's Performance Award (GPA) program. Schools that do not meet their growth targets may be eligible to receive special assistance through the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). If schools continue not to meet their growth targets, they may be subject to local or state sanctions (This is what led to the controversial closing of Sacramento High School).

So how does Natomas Charter School fair on the API index? In the four year-period since the implementation of PSAA, NCS has done fairly well on

the API index overall, fluctuating between 708-752 on the state’s interim index of 200 to 800.

1998-1999 Base API	1999-2000 Growth Target	1999-2000 API Actual Growth	1999-2000 Growth
<b>715</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>-7</b>
1999-2000 Base API	2000-2001 Growth Target	2000-2001 API Actual Growth	2000-2001 Growth
<b>708</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>+ 44</b>
2000-2001 Base API	2001-2002 Growth Target	2001-2002 API Actual Growth	2001-2002 Growth
<b>747</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>-14</b>
2001-2002 Base API	2002-2003 Growth Target	2002-2003 API Actual Growth	2002-2003 Growth
<b>741</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<b>TBA</b>

NCS, however, did not meet its growth target in 2000 or in 2002, but exceeded its growth target in 2001, resulting in approximately \$60,000 in award money.

The award money received by NCS was allocated based on competitive mini-grants submitted by teachers in all four NCS programs. The grants have, in turn, enhanced learning opportunities for students. The following are just a few examples:

- The Student Art Gallery in the multi-purpose room
- Science computer sensors
- Digital music work stations
- Scan converters that bring computer images on television screens
- Web-based student assessment tools
- Filmmaking/video equipment
- Reading corners in language arts classrooms
- Physical fitness equipment

***In other words, the better our students do on our state tests, the more they will benefit from it!*** It is important for students to understand that the state tests are not just about “jumping through hoops.” Taking these tests seriously and working to the best of their ability will result in a richer learning environment in our NCS community.

For more detailed information on the API and to see the API scores for all public schools in California, please go to the California Department of Education Website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api.html>

*Next issue: API Ranking System and Preparing for the STAR Exam*

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