

# Colorado School Test Scores Disclosed

Cortez Journal

September 16, 2013

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## TCAP scores

Percentage of students who scored proficient in TCAP standardized test subjects for the 2012-13 school year. Results by demographic category:

	Native	Hispanic	White	Male	Female	Poverty
<b>Montezuma-Cortez Re-1</b>						
Reading	25.4	50.1	66.1	46.6	58.8	42.8
Writing	12.1	29.9	44.9	27	41.4	24.2
Math	18.4	36	51.3	40	39.8	33.7
Science	9.3	22.8	44.1	34.7	26.9	21.6
<b>State of Colorado</b>						
Reading	54.5	52.7	79.9	65	74.2	53
Writing	36.6	37.6	66.5	47.6	62.6	37.1
Math	40.6	40.1	66.9	56.7	56.6	40.6
Science	33.4	28.9	63.3	50.8	50	30

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Source: Colorado Department of Education

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Across the Montezuma-Cortez Re-1 School District last year, slightly more than half of all students were proficient in reading, a third were skilled in writing, 2-in-5 were adept in math and less than a third were competent in science.

According to state test scores, reading and math scores across the district last year dropped to their lowest level in three years. Students' proficiency in writing also has steadily declined in the same time span. Perhaps the lone bright spot, science scores have virtually remained unchanged across the district over the last three years.

“Many students at all grade levels showed really high growth last year,” argued superintendent Alex Carter. “Sometimes, when one looks at averages, which is what the TCAP scores boil everything down to, it is easy to forget that these data aggregates rarely tell the true story of what is going on everyday in our schools.”

Carter said success for the district would be a result of a long and committed effort from the entire learning community, from the superintendent and the school board, to the principals and teachers, to the students and parents.

“The challenges of increasing TCAP test scores are immense,” he said. “It is simply going to take the time and will from everyone in the learning community to make the changes we need to see greatly improved test scores.”

Carter pointed out that many students were succeeding at extremely high levels. The district has graduated students who went on to further their education at Ivy League schools, all of the nation’s service academies and many of the top colleges and universities in the country.

“Every time we talk about test scores, I feel the need to remind everyone that great test scores are not the goal of this school district – they are an outcome,” Carter added. “The goal of our school district is to provide every student we serve with the tools they need to be a great citizen of this country; to experience success in whatever post-secondary learning they need to ready themselves for their chosen occupation; and, to help them to develop the skills they will need to succeed in their careers. If we do all of that, the great test scores people want will also be evident.”

### **Elementary grades**

State test scores reveal that Lewis-Ariola was the best-performing elementary school last year across the Montezuma-Cortez Re-1 School District.

“We have high expectations for our kids, and it seems to pay off,” said Lewis-Ariola Principal Dan Porter.

Porter attributes the school’s success to a strong partnership between a veteran staff of teachers and parents who are extremely involved with their children’s education.

“The support at home is critical for a student’s success,” Porter said.

Throughout the district, it’s no secret the impact that poverty plays in a child’s education. Porter explained that a single parent working multiple jobs, for example, simply doesn’t have the same time afforded to a two-parent home with a stay-at-home mother.

“It’s a tough situation,” he said.

Porter speculated that other elementary schools in the district might not have the same level of parental involvement. In defense of poorer performing schools, Porter pointed out that two or three students could drastically skew scores, especially if those schools have a smaller student body.

Students at Lewis-Ariola outpaced their peers at Manuagh Elementary, the worst-performing school in the district, by wide margins in all subject areas.

“We can point our fingers at a lot of people and a lot of places, but the truth is that the job primarily lies with us,” said Manuagh Elementary School Principal Donetta Dehart. “We have a lot of work to do.”

Of course, additional support from parents is key to improving test scores, Dehart said, adding school absences are a major source of concern. At her school, nearly 700 tardies were recorded during the nine-weeks quarter when TCAP tests were administered last year.

“Kids who come late to school miss instruction,” she said.

Dehart said a child who arrives late to school 15 minutes every week will subsequently miss an entire day of school by the end of the year. A student who comes late 30 minutes each week ends up missing three days of classroom instruction.

“We need the students here at school and on time,” Dehart said. “That’s our biggest challenge.”

Poverty, she said, is just one more obstacle educators must overcome. At Manuagh Elementary, some 85 percent of the student body receives free or reduced meals.

“Poverty presents challenges in the kids’ experiences,” she said. “Some kids in our school have never been out of Cortez, so their experiences can be limited.”

Her goal this year is to ensure her educators use expressive, formal languages to not only build stronger vocabulary, but also to serve as better role models for students.

“We want our kids to know that we care about them all the time, not just when they are within the walls of the school,” Dehart said.

### **Race and gender gaps**

The racial and ethnic gap in district test scores was most evident between Native Americans and white students. Across the district, native students received the lowest test scores in reading, writing, math and science last year as their white peers received the highest scores. However, native and white students across the district were both far outpaced by their respective cultural counterparts across the state.

In regard to the gender gap, scores were mixed. Across the district, girls outperformed boys in both reading and writing, but boys outpaced girls in science. The gender gap in math scores was near non-existent.

### **High school scores**

At Montezuma-Cortez High School last year, writing and math scores were both higher than two years ago, but there was no improvement from the previous year. Reading and science scores were also higher than two years ago, but both dipped slightly from the previous year.

“The high school has had two straight years of impressive growth in math, posting their highest scores on the state tests ever two years running,” Carter said.

Entering his second year as Montezuma-Cortez High School principal, Jason Wayman was pleased with last year’s test scores. Under new administration, he said, many times scores decrease.

“To hold steady and actually improve in some areas is a good thing,” Wayman said. “That’s been our greatest accomplishment.”

His greatest challenge in improved test scores in the future is keeping students motivated, he said. Wayman said high school students have taken the state test since third grade, and many don’t comprehend the relevance to their life.

Admittedly naive in his first year regarding student success, Wayman said he is constantly evaluating measures that could improve test scores. His focus this year is developing stronger leadership skills and increasing the self-confidence among the student body.

“We have to address the mentality of our students, and remind them that they can be great,” he said.

The Transitional Colorado Assessment Program, TCAP, is Colorado’s standards-based assessment designed to provide a picture of student performance to schools, districts, educators, parents and the community. Students are tested in reading, writing and math from third through tenth grade, and tested in science in fifth, eighth and 10th grades.

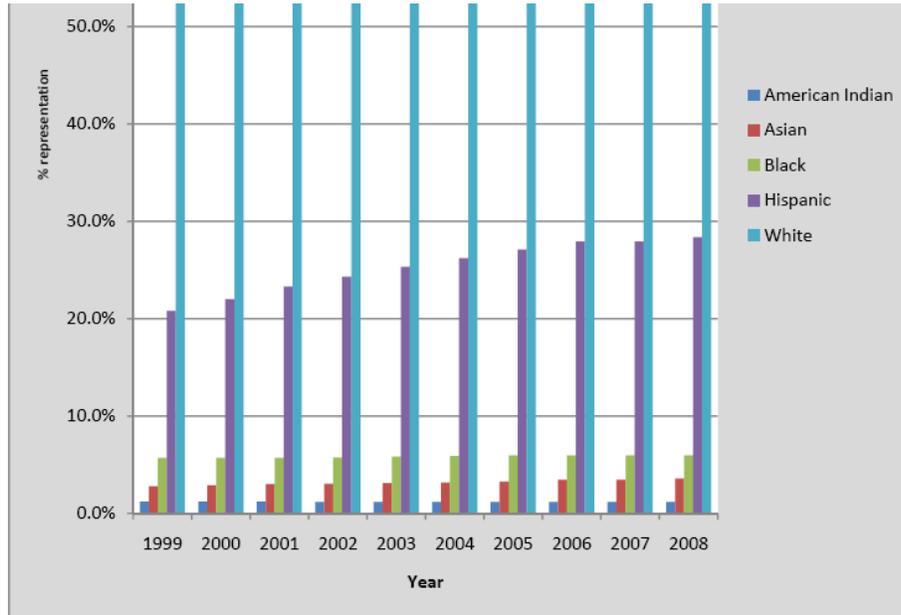
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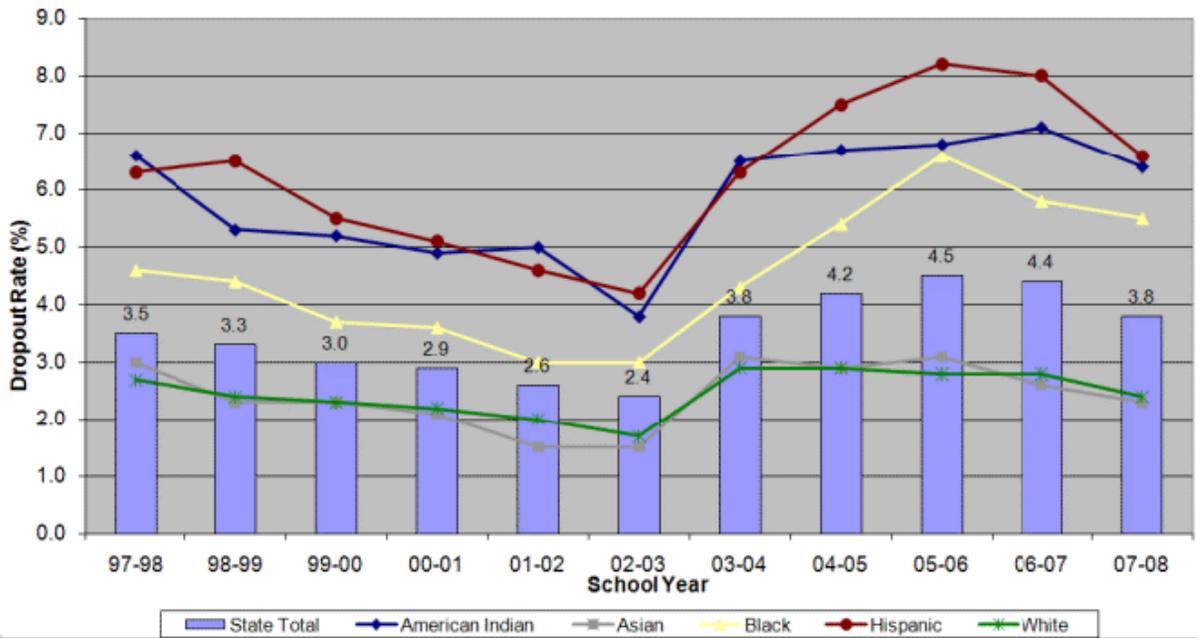
## Colorado Education Demographics

### Percent CO Students by Racial/Ethnic Group - 10 Year Trend

Among the 818,443 students in Colorado in 2008, 60.9% are white (498,713); 28.4% are Hispanic (232,226); 6% are Black (48,757); 3.6% are Asian (29,253); and 1.2% are American Indian (9,494)



Annual Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity - 10 Year Trend



Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity - 10 Year Trend

