

## **The API School Ranking System and Preparing for the STAR Exam – Part 3**

*Charter School (NCS) has published a series of articles over the past few months on the California STAR Program and the role it plays in NCS's accountability status as a charter school.*

The Academic Performance Index (API) serves as the cornerstone of the public school accountability system established by Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999. The API is a numeric index or scale that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. This index measures the performance and progress of a school. 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.

Each year, all California public schools, including charter schools, receive a “statewide rank” and a “similar schools rank.” This information shows where schools rank on a scale of 1-10, compared to other schools in the state and with 100 other schools with similar demographic characteristics (respectively). Both of these ranks provide the school and the public with a reference point for judging its academic achievement with those of other schools. It is important to note that a school’s API and API ranks may change from year to year because the API is calculated annually based on current test results and on current demographic information.

The California Department of Education (CDE) offers the following general guidelines for looking at similar school ranks:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <i>9 or 10</i> | <i>Well above average for elementary, middle or high schools with similar characteristics.</i> |
| <i>7 or 8</i>  | <i>Above average for elementary, middle or high schools with similar characteristics.</i>      |
| <i>5 or 6</i>  | <i>About average for elementary, middle or high schools with similar characteristics.</i>      |
| <i>3 or 4</i>  | <i>Below average for elementary, middle or high schools with similar characteristics.</i>      |
| <i>2 or 1</i>  | <i>Far below average for elementary, middle or high schools with similar characteristics.</i>  |

The chart below lists the API scores and ranks for Natomas Charter School:

<b>1998-1999 Base API</b>	1999-2000 Growth Target	1999-2000 API Actual Growth	1999-2000 Growth	<b>1999 API Statewide RANKING</b>	<b>1999 API Sim. School RANKING</b>
<b>715</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1999-2000 Base API</b>	2000-2001 Growth Target	2000-2001 API Actual Growth	2000-2001 Growth	<b>2000 API Statewide RANKING</b>	<b>2000 API Sim. School RANKING</b>
<b>708</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>+ 44</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2000-2001 Base API</b>	2001-2002 Growth Target	2001-2002 API Actual Growth	2001-2002 Growth	<b>2001 API Statewide RANKING</b>	<b>2001 API Sim. School RANKING</b>
<b>747</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>-14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2001-2002 Base API</b>	2002-2003 Growth Target	2002-2003 API Actual Growth	2002-2003 Growth	<b>2002 API Statewide RANKING</b>	<b>2002 API Sim. School RANKING</b>
<b>741</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

NCS is very proud that its students perform at a standard well above average compared to other schools in the state and other schools with similar demographics. However, NCS did not achieve its 2002 growth target (as noted in the March newsletter). A new API growth target of 744 (+3 from this year's API of 741) has been established for NCS for 2003. Meeting our established growth target for 2003 may result in additional awards money and will prove that our school is making satisfactory progress in meeting the state's goal of 800 on the API. Therefore, we encourage as much student participation as possible on the STAR exams this May.

### **Helping Your Children Be Successful on State Tests**

NCS will be administering the STAR Exam during the week of April 28<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>. There are many ways that parents can assist in preparing their child to achieve better results during state testing periods.

- Discuss upcoming tests with your children and try to reduce any anxieties
- Encourage your children to put their best effort forward – we want to get an accurate assessment of their skills and knowledge
- Make sure your children get a good night's rest and breakfast before a big exam

Remember, students and parents will receive *individual* student results on the STAR exam, providing us with information on whether the student is “on-track” for promotion or graduation. Additionally, the *cumulative* student performance on these tests has a significant impact on the NCS and the educational options that charter schools are able to offer. The more students who take these tests seriously

and work to the best of their ability, the richer the learning environment of the NCS community will be.

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>

For more detailed information on the STAR Program and how to read your child's STAR Test results, please go to the California Department of Education Website:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/star>

-Ting L. Sun, Ph.D.  
NCS Educational Programs Director