



Ralston Intermediate School

ADDRESS: 2675 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002 **PHONE:** (650) 637-4880

DISTRICT: Belmont Elementary **COUNTY:** San Mateo

PRINCIPAL: Debbie Ferguson **CHARTER SCHOOL:** No

GRADE RANGE: 6-8 **ANNUAL CALENDAR:** Traditional

SCHOOL SUMMARY

Overview and Key Resources, 2004-2005

KEY FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
Student enrollment	Total number of students enrolled	852	550	706
Teachers	Total number of teachers on staff, measured as full time equivalents (FTE)	40	27	31
Students per teacher	Number of students there are per teacher	21	20	23
Average size of an English class	Number of students in an average English class	22	25	27
Academic Performance Index	The state's method of combining test scores across all subjects and grade levels	847	764	716
Students per computer	How many students share one computer	3	4	5
Internet classrooms	Number of classrooms offering Internet connections	36	61	33

Ralston is a regular middle school, offering a range of grade levels from six through eight. Ralston's enrollment was 852, which was 302 more students than the county average. If you're concerned about the size of the school, it may help to note that the number of sixth-graders who enrolled in the 2004-2005 academic year was just 283. In addition, many middle schools have adopted new ways to ease students into their program. Be sure to ask the principal if these methods are practiced at Ralston.

Students at Ralston found teachers to be about as accessible as they did at other middle schools in the county, based on the student-teacher ratio. There were about 21 students per teacher at Ralston, compared to 20 students per teacher in middle schools in San Mateo county. Of course, counting teachers and their credentials is easy, but teacher quality is far tougher to grasp. When you visit this school, we suggest you observe as much classroom teaching as possible. Ask the principal how many teachers were hired recently, how many of them hold a credential to teach middle school, and whether they've majored in the subject they're teaching.

On average, three Ralston students shared each computer. In other San Mateo county middle schools, computers were about as accessible: roughly four students had to share one computer. But the raw availability of computers may reveal very little. How are computers integrated into the school's curriculum? Are they used as research and communication tools, or simply as glorified typewriters? How do teachers use software and on-line resources as part of their lessons? Library data is not available, yet libraries help make learning possible. If this school has a library, how is it used? Is it staffed by a certified librarian? Do students have access before and after school? Are students taught how to use it?

Average Class Sizes, 2004–2005

Ralston had an average class size of 26 students in the 2004–2005 school year, which was the same as the average for other middle schools in San Mateo county.

Educators have developed new ways to ease students into middle school. So when you go on your site visit, ask how the school helps incoming students with that transition. Perhaps they use family groupings, a system where four core course teachers at one grade-level team up to assume collective responsibility for the academic success of the 100–120 students in their care. Other middle schools may structure sixth grade so that students have one teacher who is their primary advisor. Some middle schools find this system of organization allows for a more personal relation between students and teachers.

CORE COURSE	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
English	22	25	27
History	26	26	30
Math	24	25	28
Science	27	27	30

Academic Performance Index, Spring 2005

The [Academic Performance Index](#) (API) is a way of comparing schools based on student test scores. The index was created in 1998 to help parents and educators better understand how schools were doing. The API is also used to identify schools that need help.

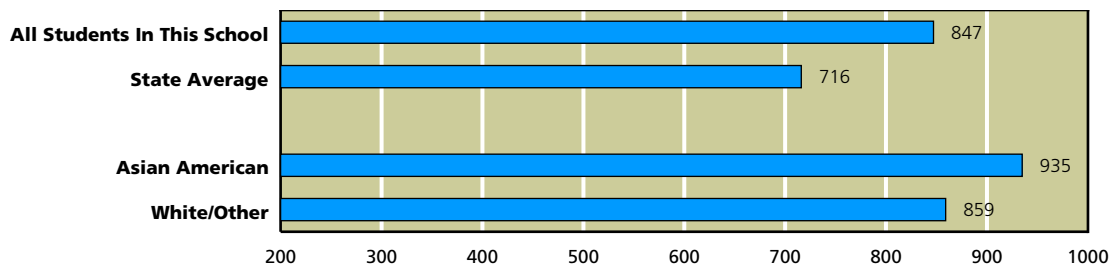
API SCORE IN 2005	847
CHANGE FROM PRIOR YEAR	+35
RANK: COMPARED TO ALL SCHOOLS COMPARED TO SIMILAR SCHOOLS	N/A N/A
MET GROWTH TARGET	YES
UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOL	NO

SOURCE: API based on spring 2005 test cycle. Growth scores alone are displayed and are current as of November 2005.

Rankings (also known as decile ranks) were not released by the California Department of Education in time to be included in this report. You should find them on the CDE’s Web site by the end of March.

Ralston’s API was 847. This was an improvement of 35 points compared to last year. About 100 percent of students took the test, which did meet the required participation rate of 90 percent. This school met its growth target. Statewide, 67 percent of middle schools met their all growth targets.

API, Spring 2005



Adequate Yearly Progress

In addition to California’s accountability system, which measures student achievement using the API, schools must also meet requirements set by the federal education law known as **No Child Left Behind** (NCLB). This law requires all schools to meet a different goal: **Adequate Yearly Progress** (AYP).

To meet AYP, elementary and middle schools must meet three criteria. First, a certain percentage of students must score at or above proficient levels on the CST (24.4 percent on the English/language arts test and 26.5 percent on the math test). These goals must also be met by all ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups of students. Second, the schools must achieve an API of at least 590 or increase the API by one point from the prior year. Third, 95 percent of the student body must take the required standardized tests from the prior year.

If even one group of students fails to meet just one of the criteria, the school fails to meet AYP. While all schools must report their progress toward meeting AYP, only schools getting federal funding to help economically disadvantaged students are actually penalized if they fail to make the mark. Schools that did not make AYP for two or more years in a row in the same subject enter **Program Improvement** (PI). They must offer students transfers to other schools in the district and, in their second year in PI, tutoring services as well.

FEDERAL AYP ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS	
Met AYP	Yes
Met schoolwide participation rate	Yes
Met schoolwide test score goals	Yes
Met subgroup* participation rate	Yes
Met subgroup* test score goals	Yes
Met schoolwide API for AYP	Yes
Program Improvement School	No

SOURCE: AYP is based on the Accountability Progress Report of November 2005. A school can be in Program Improvement based on students' test results in the 2004–2005 school year or earlier.

*Ethnic or socioeconomic groups of students that make up 15 percent or more of a school's student body. These groups must meet AYP and API goals. R/P - Results pending due to challenge by school. N/A - Results not available.

Adequate Yearly Progress, Detail by Subgroup

● MET GOAL ● DID NOT MEET GOAL ● NOT ENOUGH STUDENTS

	English/Language Arts		Math	
	DID 95% OF STUDENTS TAKE THE TEST?	DID 24.4% OF STUDENTS SCORE PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED ON THE CST?	DID 95% OF STUDENTS TAKE THE TEST?	DID 26.5% OF STUDENTS SCORE PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED ON THE CST?
SCHOOLWIDE RESULTS	●	●	●	●
STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY				
Asian American	●	●	●	●
White/Other	●	●	●	●

SOURCE: AYP release of February 2006, CDE.

The table at left shows where Ralston met its AYP goals. The green dots represent goals this school met; red dots indicate goals this school missed. Just one red dot is sufficient to cause Ralston to fail to attain what NCLB defines as “adequate yearly progress.”

Note: Yellow dots indicate that too few students were in the category to draw meaningful conclusions. Federal rules require at least 50 students to take the test for statistical significance.

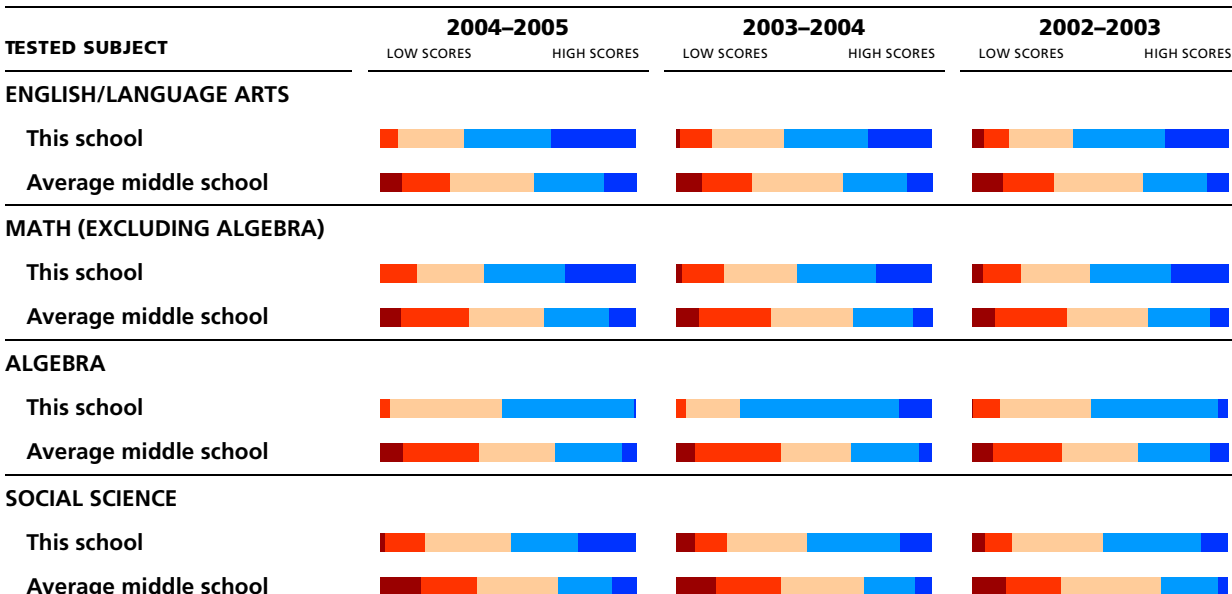
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Here you'll find a three-year summary of Ralston's scores on the California Standards Tests (CST) in selected subjects. You'll find students' schoolwide results compared to the results for students in the average middle school in California. The following pages provide more detail for each test, including the scores for different groups of students. In addition, we provide links to the California Content Standards on which these tests are based. If you'd like more information about the CST, please contact Ralston's principal or teaching staff. To find [grade-level-specific scores](#), you can refer to the STAR test reporting Web site.

California Standards Tests

BAR GRAPHS SHOW THESE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

■ FAR BELOW BASIC ■ BELOW BASIC ■ BASIC ■ PROFICIENT ■ ADVANCED



SOURCE: The scores for the CST are from the spring 2005 test cycle. State average represents middle schools only. Whenever a school reports fewer than 11 scores for a particular subgroup at any grade level, the CDE suppresses the scores when it releases the data to the public. Therefore, our test score results may vary from CDE test score reports when missing data makes it impossible for us to compile complete schoolwide results.

California Standards Tests: Top Scores Only (Proficient and Advanced)

TESTED SUBJECT	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003
ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS			
This school	67%	58%	59%
Average middle school	40%	35%	34%
MATH (EXCLUDING ALGEBRA)			
This school	59%	53%	54%
Average middle school	37%	32%	32%
ALGEBRA			
This school	52%	74%	55%
Average middle school	32%	32%	36%
SOCIAL SCIENCE			
This school	49%	49%	49%
Average middle school	31%	28%	28%

SOURCE: The scores for the CST are from the spring 2005 test cycle. State average represents middle schools only. Whenever a school reports fewer than 11 scores for a particular subgroup at any grade level, the CDE suppresses the scores when it releases the data to the public. Therefore, these test score results may vary from CDE test score reports when missing data makes it impossible for us to compile complete schoolwide results.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHERE CAN I FIND GRADE-LEVEL REPORTS? Due to space constraints and our concern for statistical reliability, we have omitted grade-level detail from these test results. Instead we present results at the schoolwide level. You can view the results of far more students than any one grade level would contain, which also improves the statistical reliability of the results. Grade-level results can be found online at the [STAR testing Web site](#).

WHAT DO THE FIVE PROFICIENCY BANDS MEAN? Test experts assign students to one of these five proficiency levels, based on the number of questions they answer correctly. At most schools, the immediate goal is to help students move up one level. The eventual goal is to enable all students to reach either of the top two bands, advanced or proficient. Those who score in the middle band, basic, have come close to attaining the required knowledge and skills. Those who score in either of the bottom two bands—below basic or far below basic—need more help to reach the proficient level. The number of questions students must answer correctly in order to be grouped into one of these five proficiency levels is revealed in the [CDE’s technical memo](#) available on the CDE’s Web site.

WHY ARE THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TESTS (CST) AND THE CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TESTS (CAT/6) SCORED DIFFERENTLY? These two tests are quite different, and their scoring methods differ, too. When students take the CST, they are scored against five criteria. So in theory, all students in California could score at the top. The CAT/6 is a nationally normed test, which means that students are scored against each other nationally. This scoring method is similar to grading “on the curve.” Students’ CAT/6 scores are expressed as a ranking on a scale from 1 to 99.

HOW HARD ARE THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TESTS? California’s standards are very high, and the tests that measure students’ mastery are difficult. Just 41 percent of elementary school students scored proficient or advanced on the English/language arts test and 51 percent in math. Our state’s standards are considered by experts to be among the clearest and most rigorous in the country. To see for yourself how difficult the [California Content Standards](#) are, spend a few minutes reviewing them.

ARE ALL STUDENTS’ SCORES INCLUDED? Yes, the results of all students who took the test are included, with one exception. When schoolwide results are reported and fewer than 11 students in one grade or subgroup take a test, state officials remove their scores from the report. They omit them to protect students’ privacy as called for by federal law. All students in grades two through eleven are required to take these tests unless their parents have requested waivers.

HOW STATISTICALLY RELIABLE ARE THESE RESULTS WHEN VIEWED AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL? The reliability of results depends on the number of students tested and the number of questions on the test. The scores of 300 students who answered 60 questions, for example, result in a very reliable schoolwide score. The results would be very similar if the same test were given to an identical group of students. However, if you’re reviewing the scores of only 20 students, you can expect the results to be quite different than if a different group of 20 students took the test. When fewer than 30 students’ scores are available, we do not report them because of this low level of reliability.

WHERE CAN I FIND SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS TO REVIEW? You can find sample test questions for all of the California Standards Tests by going to the [CDE’s Web site](#). These questions are examples of questions used in previous years.

WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION? The CDE has placed a wealth of resources on its Web site. First, the STAR test reporting site offers a path both to the detailed reports for schools and districts, and to assistance packets for parents and teachers. The [grades and subjects](#) covered by these tests are fully described. This site includes explanations of [technical terms](#) and scores. You’ll also find a [guide](#) to navigating the STAR reporting tool as well as help understanding how to [compare test scores](#).

English/Language Arts (Reading and Writing)

BAR GRAPHS SHOW THESE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

■ FAR BELOW BASIC ■ BELOW BASIC ■ BASIC ■ PROFICIENT ■ ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE			67%	100%	SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE: About 16 percent more students at Ralston scored proficient or advanced than at the average middle school in San Mateo county.
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY			51%	99%	
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA			40%	99%	

Subgroup Test Scores

BAR GRAPHS BELOW SHOW TWO PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

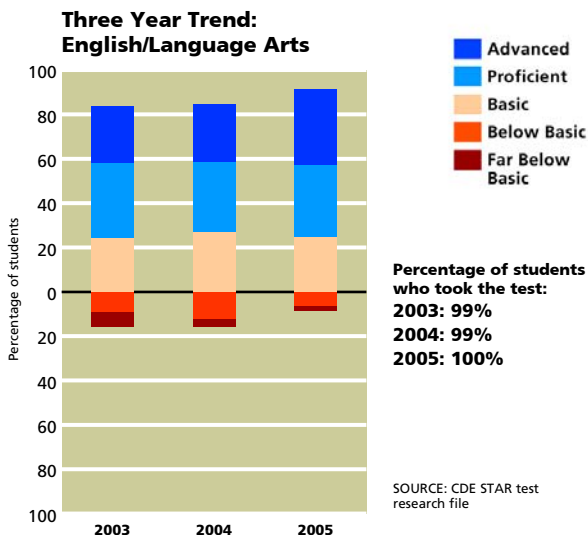
■ FAR BELOW BASIC, BELOW BASIC, AND BASIC ■ PROFICIENT AND ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
Boys			63%	430	GENDER: About seven percent more girls than boys at Ralston scored proficient or advanced.
Girls			70%	386	
English proficient			68%	793	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of English learners tested was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
English learners	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	11	
Low income	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	13	INCOME: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested from low income families was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not low income			69%	782	
Learning disabled	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	N/A	LEARNING DISABILITIES: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested with learning disabilities was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not learning disabled			71%	746	
African American	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	12	ETHNICITY: Test scores are likely to vary among students of different ethnic origins. The degree of variance will differ from school to school. Measures of the achievement gap are beyond the scope of this report.
Asian American			82%	144	
Hispanic/Latino			37%	90	
White/Other			70%	484	

SOURCE: The scores for the CST are from the spring 2005 test cycle. State average represents middle schools only. Whenever a school reports fewer than 11 scores for a particular subgroup at any grade level, the CDE suppresses the scores when it releases the data to the public. Therefore, these test score results may vary from other CDE test score reports when missing data makes it impossible for us to compile complete schoolwide results.
 N/A: Not applicable. Either no students took the test, or to safeguard student privacy the CDE withheld all results because very few students took the test in any grade.
 N/S: Not statistically significant. While we have some data to report, we are suppressing it because the number of valid test scores is not large enough to be meaningful.

The graph to the right shows how this school's scores have changed over the years. Each year's results are represented in a vertical bar, with students' scores arrayed across five proficiency bands. Progress can take many forms. When viewing schoolwide results over three years, progress can be more students scoring in the top proficiency bands (blue). It can also take the form of fewer students scoring in the lower two proficiency bands (brown and red).

You can read the California standards for English/language arts for [sixth](#) grade, [seventh](#) grade, and [eighth](#) grade at the CDE's Web site.



Math (excluding algebra)

BAR GRAPHS SHOW THESE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

FAR BELOW BASIC BELOW BASIC BASIC PROFICIENT ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE			59%	78%	SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE: About 11 percent more students at Ralston scored proficient or advanced than at the average middle school in San Mateo county.
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY			48%	89%	
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA			37%	84%	

Subgroup Test Scores

BAR GRAPHS BELOW SHOW TWO PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

FAR BELOW BASIC, BELOW BASIC, AND BASIC PROFICIENT AND ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
Boys			60%	342	GENDER: About the same percent of boys and girls at Ralston scored proficient or advanced.
Girls			59%	295	
English proficient			61%	616	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of English learners tested was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
English learners	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	11	
Low income	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	13	INCOME: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested from low income families was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not low income			61%	608	
Learning disabled	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	N/A	LEARNING DISABILITIES: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested with learning disabilities was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not learning disabled			64%	572	
African American	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	11	ETHNICITY: Test scores are likely to vary among students of different ethnic origins. The degree of variance will differ from school to school. Measures of the achievement gap are beyond the scope of this report.
Asian American			87%	99	
Hispanic/Latino			33%	81	
White/Other			62%	368	

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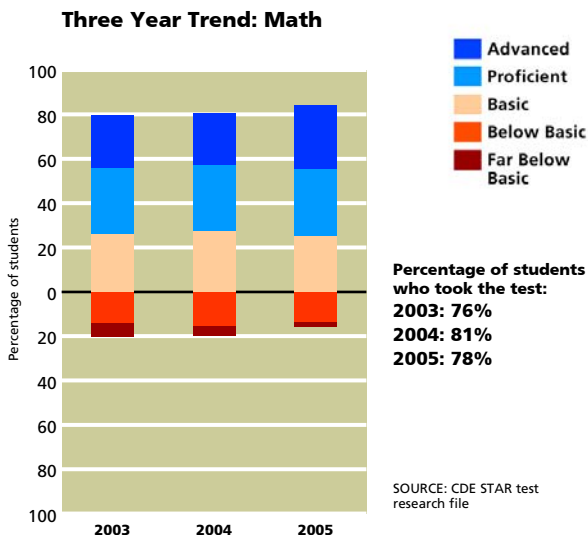
N/A: Not applicable. Either no students took the test, or to safeguard student privacy the CDE withheld all results because very few students took the test in any grade.

N/S: Not statistically significant. While we have some data to report, we are suppressing it because the number of valid test scores is not large enough to be meaningful.

All sixth and seventh graders take the same math courses. In eighth grade, however, some students take algebra, while others take a general math course. We report algebra results separately. Here we present this school's scores for all math courses except algebra.

The graph to the right shows how this school's scores have changed over the years. Each year's results are represented in a vertical bar, with students' scores arrayed across five proficiency bands. Progress can take many forms. When viewing schoolwide results over three years, progress can be more students scoring in the top proficiency bands (blue). It can also take the form of fewer students scoring in the lower two proficiency bands (brown and red).

You can read the [sixth](#) and [seventh](#) grade math standards at the CDE's Web site.



Algebra I

BAR GRAPHS SHOW THESE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

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GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE			52%	48%	SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE: About four percent fewer students at Ralston scored proficient or advanced than at the average middle school in San Mateo county. About 11 percent more students took algebra than did students in the average middle school in the county.
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY			56%	37%	
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA			32%	44%	

Subgroup Test Scores

BAR GRAPHS BELOW SHOW TWO PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

FAR BELOW BASIC, BELOW BASIC, AND BASIC PROFICIENT AND ADVANCED

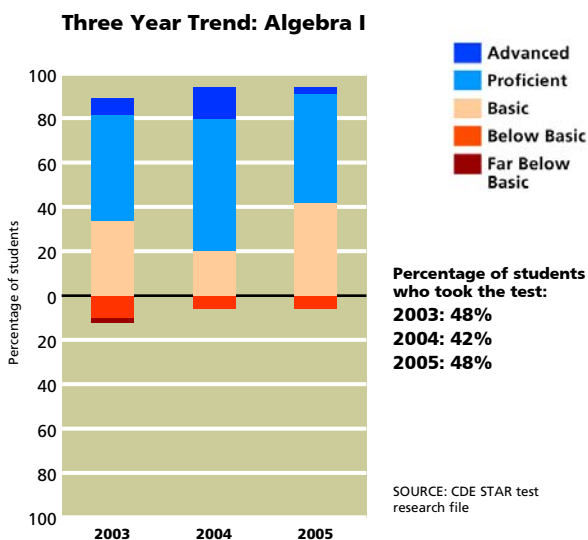
GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
Boys			54%	69	GENDER: About three percent more boys than girls at Ralston scored proficient or advanced.
Girls			51%	67	
English proficient			52%	135	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of English learners tested was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
English learners	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	0	
Low income	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	0	INCOME: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students from low income families was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not low income			53%	133	
Learning disabled	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	N/A	LEARNING DISABILITIES: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested with learning disabilities was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not learning disabled			52%	132	
Asian American	DATA STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE		N/S	27	ETHNICITY: Test scores are likely to vary among students of different ethnic origins. This variance is termed the achievement gap.
White/Other			51%	88	

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 N/A: Not applicable. Either no students took the test, or to safeguard student privacy the CDE withheld all results because very few students took the test in any grade.
 N/S: Not statistically significant. While we have some data to report, we are suppressing it because the number of valid test scores is not large enough to be meaningful.

We report this school’s algebra results separately because of the central importance of algebra in the California math standards. It is also a gateway course for college-bound students, who should start high school ready for geometry.

The graph to the right shows how this school’s scores have changed over the years. Progress can take many forms. When viewing schoolwide results over three years, progress can be more students scoring in the top proficiency bands (blue). It can also take the form of fewer students scoring in the lower two proficiency bands (brown and red).

About 48 percent of Ralston’s students took the algebra standards test, compared to 44 percent of all middle school students statewide. You can review the algebra standards on the CDE’s Web site.



History/Social Science

BAR GRAPHS SHOW THESE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

FAR BELOW BASIC BELOW BASIC BASIC PROFICIENT ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE			49%	99%	SCHOOLWIDE AVERAGE: About eight percent more students at Ralston scored proficient or advanced than at the average middle school in San Mateo county.
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY			41%	99%	
AVERAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA			31%	99%	

Subgroup Test Scores

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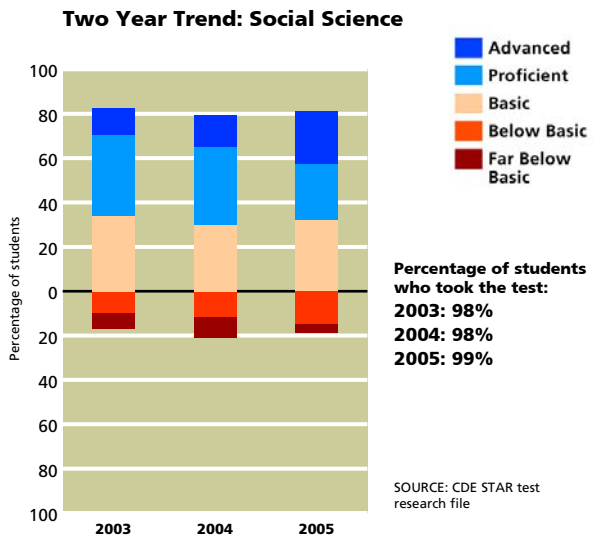
FAR BELOW BASIC, BELOW BASIC, AND BASIC PROFICIENT AND ADVANCED

GROUP	LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES	PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED	STUDENTS TESTED	COMMENTS
Boys			45%	139	GENDER: About nine percent more girls than boys at our Ralston proficient or advanced.
Girls			54%	142	
English proficient			50%	278	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of English learners tested was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
English learners	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	0	
Low income	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	0	INCOME: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested from low income families was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not low income			51%	269	
Learning disabled	NO DATA AVAILABLE		N/A	N/A	LEARNING DISABILITIES: We cannot compare scores for these two groups because the number of students tested with learning disabilities was either zero or too small to be statistically significant.
Not learning disabled			54%	252	
Asian American			73%	45	ETHNICITY: Test scores are likely to vary among students of different ethnic origins. This variance is termed the achievement gap.
Hispanic/Latino			10%	31	
White/Other			51%	177	

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 N/S: Not statistically significant. While we have some data to report, we are suppressing it because the number of valid test scores is not large enough to be meaningful.

The graph to the right shows how this school's eighth grade students' scores have changed over the years. Each year's results are represented in a vertical bar, with students' scores arrayed across five proficiency bands. Progress can take many forms. When viewing schoolwide results over three years, progress can be more students scoring in the top proficiency bands (blue). It can also take the form of fewer students scoring in the lower two proficiency bands (brown and red).

You can read the [eighth](#) grade history/social science standards at the CDE's Web site.



STUDENTS

Students' English Language Skills, 2004–2005

LANGUAGE SKILL	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
English proficient students	Percent of students proficient in English	98%	75%	79%
Students learning English	Percent of students who are still learning English	2%	25%	21%
Advancement rate to English proficiency	Percent of students learning English from 2003–2004 who graduated to English proficiency	0%	15%	13%

At Ralston, 98 percent of students were considered to be proficient in English, compared to 75 percent of middle school students in San Mateo county overall. Of the two percent of Ralston students who were still learning English, zero percent advanced to English proficiency in the prior year. Immersion in the English language is now the preferred method of teaching students who are new arrivals. The phasing out of bilingual methods starting in 1999 is likely to have had an effect on English learners and their teachers. It's well worth asking about on your visit.

Home Languages of Students Learning English, 2004–2005

Please note that this table describes the home languages of just those 14 students who speak a language other than English at home. At Ralston, the language most often spoken at home by these students was Spanish. In California, it's common to find students who are learning English in classes with students whose English skills are well honed. So when you visit classrooms like this, be sure to ask the principal how their teachers work with language differences among their students.

LANGUAGE	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
Spanish	36%	85%	87%
Vietnamese	0%	0%	2%
Hmong	0%	0%	1%
Cantonese	0%	2%	1%
Filipino/Tagalog	7%	3%	1%
Khmer/Cambodian	7%	0%	1%
Korean	0%	0%	1%
All other	50%	10%	6%

Ethnicity, 2004–2005

ETHNICITY	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
African American	Percent of students who identify themselves as African American	3%	5%	8%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	Percent of students who identify themselves as Asian American/Pacific Islander	20%	19%	11%
Latino/Hispanic	Percent of students who identify themselves as Latino/Hispanic	11%	37%	45%
White/European American/Other	Percent of students who identify themselves as White/European American/Other	66%	38%	36%

Most students at Ralston identify themselves as White/European American/Other. In fact, there are about three times as many White/European American/Other students as Asian/Pacific Islander students, the second-largest ethnic group at Ralston. Overall, the ethnic composition of Ralston's student body looks somewhat different from San Mateo county's student body. You may notice that the percentages in the table above may not sum to 100 percent. The state of California allows citizens to choose more than one ethnic identity, or to select "multi-ethnic" or "decline to state." One of the consequences of this method of accounting is that the sum of all responses may not equal 100 percent.

Family Income and Education, 2004–2005

KEY FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
Low income indicator	Percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch	0%	36%	50%
Parents with some college	Percent of students who have one parent who has either attended or graduated from college	80%	65%	55%
Parents with college degree	Percent of students who have one parent who has graduated from college	65%	45%	31%

The “free or reduced-price lunch” subsidy goes to students whose families earn less than \$34,873 a year (based on a family of four). At Ralston, zero percent of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, compared to 36 percent of students in San Mateo county. Keep in mind that a school could be half-filled with students whose families earned between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year, and 50 percent of its students would be qualified for free or reduced price lunches. Another school could be made up entirely of students whose families earned between \$30,000 and \$33,000, and 100 percent of its students would also qualify for free or reduced price lunches. So this is not a great comparative measure of the financial well-being of the students at different schools.

The parents of 80 percent of the students at Ralston have attended college, and 65 percent have a college degree. This information can provide some clues to the level of literacy children bring to school. One precaution is that the students themselves provide this data when they take the battery of standardized tests each spring. So it may be less accurate than it appears. About 74 percent of the students who took the standardized tests provided this information.

AWARDS

2002–2003 Governor’s Performance Award issued by California Dept. of Education

TEACHERS

Education and Experience, 2004–2005

KEY FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
Higher education	Percent of teachers holding a master's degree or higher	26%	29%	32%
Teaching experience	Average years teaching experience	12	12	12
Newer teachers	Percent of teachers with one or two years of teaching experience	16%	16%	14%
Employed in district	Average years employed in this district	10	9	10

About 26 percent of the teachers at Ralston have earned a master's degree or higher. This compares to 29 percent of middle school teachers in San Mateo county. But to find out if this advanced degree matters, we recommend that you ask the principal if she's assigned teachers to teach in the field they majored or minored in. A math teacher who holds a master's degree in English literature and a minor in history is likely to be ineffective in teaching trigonometry, for example. This is not an entirely hypothetical example. Only one out of every three middle-school math classes in California is taught by educators who majored in math.

Ralston's teachers have, on average, about 12 years of experience, compared to about 12 years of experience for middle school teachers throughout the county. But when evaluating the quality of a school's teachers, you can't automatically equate experience with greater wisdom or skill. While some teachers find ways to keep improving on the job, others get stuck in a rut. To judge teaching quality, we recommend two methods. First, talk to students between classes or at lunch. They are almost always fair, clear and candid about their teachers. Second, observe teachers at work. In fact, observing as many teachers in as many grade levels as possible will give you the firmest base of experience for making your assessment.

Credentials Held by Staff, 2004–2005

KEY FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
Elementary credential holders	Percent of staff holding an elementary credential (multiple subject)	49%	68%	53%
Secondary credential holders	Percent of staff holding a secondary credential (single subject)	84%	48%	62%
Trainee credential holders	Percent of staff holding an internship credential	2%	7%	6%
Emergency permit holders	Percent of staff holding an emergency permit	0%	3%	5%

About 84 percent of the faculty at Ralston hold the secondary credential, which is sometimes called the single subject credential. This is above the average for San Mateo county middle school teachers, which is 48 percent. Please note that teachers may have earned more than one credential. When they do, it is possible for the sum of all credentials held by teachers to exceed 100 percent. If teachers hold special waivers, it is possible for the sum of all credentials to fall short of 100 percent.

At Ralston, two percent of our faculty hold trainee credentials. In comparison, seven percent of middle school teachers throughout the county hold trainee credentials. Trainees are essentially interns or student teachers. They have had classroom experience, and are working under the supervision of tenured teachers. Because they have all earned B.A. degrees, and have passed their teaching exam, the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), it is possible that a teacher who holds a district or university intern certificate is more qualified than someone who holds an emergency permit.

None of the faculty at Ralston hold emergency permits. In comparison, three percent of middle school teachers throughout the county hold these emergency permits. For reference, emergency permits are issued by school

districts when no credentialed person is available for a position. Districts also issue emergency permits when the person available for a job doesn't meet the formal employment criteria. The holder of an emergency permit will hold a bachelor of arts degree, and will have passed the teaching exam called the CBEST test. But she will usually lack the preparatory coursework that California requires before issuing a regular credential.

Please be aware that there is no middle-school credential. We believe that teachers holding credentials to teach high school are better prepared to bring mastery of their course content to their students. This is why we believe that middle schools hiring teachers with secondary credentials are more likely to be academically rigorous. The teacher shortage of prior years has eased up considerably as newer teachers have been laid off by districts forced to cutback staff to make ends meet. In many districts, teachers with math and science experience are still in short supply. Our advice is to use these facts about Ralston's faculty as a starting point for your discussions with the principal.

Teacher Ethnicity, 2004–2005

ETHNICITY	DESCRIPTION	THIS SCHOOL	COUNTY AVERAGE	STATE AVERAGE
African American	Percent of teachers who identify themselves as African American	0%	4%	5%
Asian America/ Pacific Islander	Percent of teachers who identify themselves as Asian American/Pacific Islander	5%	6%	6%
Latino/Hispanic	Percent of teachers who identify themselves as Latino/Hispanic	12%	10%	12%
White/European American/ Other	Percent of teachers who identify themselves as White/European American/Other	84%	80%	77%

Most teachers at Ralston identify themselves as White/European American/Other. In fact, there are about seven times as many White/European American/Other teachers as Latino/Hispanic teachers, the second-largest ethnic group at Ralston. Overall, the ethnic composition of Ralston's staff looks roughly the same as staffs throughout San Mateo county. You may notice that the percentages in the table above may not sum to 100 percent. The state of California allows citizens to choose more than one ethnic identity, or to select "multi-ethnic" or "decline to state." One of the consequences of this method of accounting is that the sum of all responses may not equal 100 percent.

TECHNICAL NOTES

DATA RECENCY: Most data is taken from the 2004–2005 academic year. The facts about teachers and students come from the California Basic Educational Data System census, which occurred in early October 2004. The California Standards Test results and the CAT/6 results are both from the spring 2005 test cycle. The Academic Performance Index and Adequate Yearly Progress results were released between September 2005 and November 2005. College enrollment data comes from the California Post-Secondary Education Commission, and describes the freshmen enrollments of those high school seniors who graduated June 2004. The CDE may require as long as nine months from the date they acquire the data before they are able to release it.

DATA SOURCES: Almost all the data comes from the California Department of Education annual census program called the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS). The California Standards Test results are released separately by the test publisher, Educational Testing Service, to the Department of Education. The California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition, (CAT/6) is a McGraw-Hill product, and is also part of the STAR test program.

COMPARATIVE METHODS: We offer two benchmarks in the data tables to which you can compare a school: county and state averages for middle schools. In the text that follows each data table, we prefer county level comparisons, but only when there are enough schools to make those comparisons statistically meaningful. When there are fewer than 20 middle schools in the county, we favor using statewide averages for comparison purposes.

DISCLAIMER: We make every effort to assure the accuracy of the information contained in your school profile. But we can't guarantee that it's perfectly correct or completely current. In legalese, here's what this means: **School Wise Press makes no express or implied warranties for this product, and we are not responsible for any errors or omissions. Nor are we responsible for any damages caused by the use of the information contained herein.** Before making decisions based on this information, we strongly recommend that you visit the school and ask the principal to review and comment on the data itself. That's the best safeguard against errors that may occur at any point in the process, from the initial self-reporting of teachers and principals to the final compilation.