

## L.A. Now

### Southern California --

#### Lackluster test results for Mayor Villaraigosa's high-profile schools and Locke High

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**The two highest-profile school-reform efforts in Los Angeles — the mayor's schools and the conversion of Locke High into six charter schools — achieved lackluster results in [state test scores](#) released this morning.**

The picture was mixed for 10 schools overseen by appointees of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. At one school, [Markham Middle School in Watts](#), test scores declined slightly. On the brighter side, test scores bumped up strongly at [99th Street Elementary](#).



**Overall, scores at these schools rose, but so did scores at most other district schools, and the mayor's schools did not ostensibly separate themselves from the pack.**

"We are encouraged, but not satisfied," said Marshall Tuck, chief executive of the mayor's Partnership for Los Angeles Schools. "We are showing real progress and continue to have a strong sense of urgency to work at these schools to increase student achievement and give these children the high-quality education they deserve."

**At Locke High in South Los Angeles, an intensive makeover by an outside charter operator failed to bring up test scores. Last year, 12.7% of students tested proficient in English; this year the number was 12.4%. Last year, 2% of students were proficient in math; same for this year.**

But there was an important -- if more subtle -- marker of progress in the view of officials from Green Dot Public Schools, the nonprofit management organization that took over Locke. The number of test-takers exploded because the campus had more students at the end of the year and a higher percentage of them took the tests.

In May 2008, for example, 1,546 students took the state's English test; this year, that number rose to 2,130, an increase of 38%. The number of math test-takers rose by the same percentage.

**Green Dot officials claim its dropout rate plummeted by just over 86%. It counts 19 dropouts and eight expulsions compared to 223 dropouts the prior year. Those figures won't be confirmed through the state's dropout tracking system for some time, and the numbers could change considerably, but the final statistics are unlikely to wipe out all the gains.**

**Green Dot's analysis is that test scores remained stable even as hundreds of lower-performing students were kept in school.**

"A big part of this is building a college-going culture and kids feeling safe on campus," said Kelly Hurley, a senior Green Dot administrator. "I think we're there, but we have a lot of work to do in getting kids to grade level."

Statewide, test scores were up, although little progress was made on closing the achievement gap separating black and Latino students from their white and Asian counterparts. Some of the increase results from about 2% of the lowest-scoring disabled students being removed from the test pool and allowed to take a modified assessment.

In L.A. Unified, schools with some of the biggest improvements in math included [Playa Del Rey](#) and [Arminta](#) elementary schools, [Holmes](#) and [Portola](#) middle schools, and [Bell High School](#). Notable improvements in English scores were achieved by [54th Street](#) and [74th Street](#) elementary schools, [Mount Gleason Middle School](#) and [Hollywood](#) and [Fairfax](#) high schools.

-- Howard Blume

*Photo: Martha Levin, right, a science teacher at Animo Locke 4 works with a student in the computer lab in June 2009. Credit: Spencer Weiner / Los Angeles Times*