



# RIO RANCHO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

500 Laser Road NE  
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"Student Excellence"

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September 3, 2008

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The New Mexico Department of Public Education has released its annual school ratings for 2008. The ratings are based on the results of the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessments (NMSBA), achievement tests given to students in grades 3-9 and grade 11 in the spring of 2008.

Schools may achieve a rating of "Meets AYP" or "AYP Not Met". AYP stands for "adequate yearly progress", and refers to the federally-mandated goal that all students demonstrate proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014. The academic data is reported in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency targets.

Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years enter the school improvement cycle. Puesta del Sol Elementary falls into this category and has been designated by the state as a school "in need of improvement." State law, in accordance with the mandates of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), establishes steps that schools found to be in need of improvement must take to inform parents of this designation and to provide parents with the opportunity to transfer their child to a school that has not been found "in need of improvement" (referred to as "school choice").

As NM Education Secretary Veronica Garcia noted in announcing this year's statewide test results, the fact that a school has been found to be "in need of improvement," does not make it a bad school. The state's school accountability system includes as many as 37 separate measures for each school. If a school does not reach targets in any one of these measures, the school does not make AYP.

## How Did Our School Do?

The chart below shows how Puesta del Sol Elementary students scored on the tests given in the spring of 2008:

Puesta del Sol Elementary										
<b>Proficiency:</b> Expressed in terms of the percentage of students in a subgroup demonstrating proficiency in the subject area. A school meets AYP if the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency meets or exceeds state targets. <b>Participation:</b> Indicates whether at least 95% of students in the subgroup completed the test.										
Percentage of indicators meeting AYP: 84% (21 of 25 rated areas)										
School rating: AYP Not Met		School improvement status: School Improvement I (SI-1)					Years in school improvement: 1			
Subgroup	All students	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific	American Indian	English-language learners	Students with disabilities	Economically disadvantaged	Additional indicator: Attendance
Mathematics proficiency	46.1 Meets AYP	50.4 Meets AYP	**	42.3 Meets AYP	**	**	44.4 Meets AYP	20.0 AYP Not Met	38.7 Meets AYP	Meets AYP
Reading Proficiency	52.3 AYP Not Met	54.1 Meets AYP	**	52.1 Meets AYP	**	**	51.1 Meets AYP	19.6 AYP Not Met	42.8 AYP Not Met	
Mathematics Participation	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	**	Meets AYP	**	**	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	
Reading Participation	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	**	Meets AYP	**	**	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	Meets AYP	
**Subgroups with fewer than 25 students <u>do not</u> receive an AYP designation based on the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency. Subgroups with fewer than 40 students <u>do not</u> receive an AYP designation for participation.										

**What we are doing about it:**

Puesta del Sol showed gains in some areas in 2008. In other areas there was no growth and some areas in fact declined. It is not for lack of hard work -- our teachers are dedicated to help every student succeed. But the strategies we have employed do not seem to be giving our students the results we expected.

Puesta del Sol Elementary								
Subgroup	Reading				Math			
	Proficient & Above 2007	Proficient & Above 2008	Difference	% difference	Proficient & Above 2007	Proficient & Above 2008	Difference	% difference
All Students	53.4%	52.3%	-1.1%	-2.0%	46.8%	46.1%	-0.7%	-1.6%
Caucasian	63.9%	54.1%	-9.8%	-15.3%	51.4%	50.4%	-1.0%	-1.9%
African-American	46.7%				40.0%			
Hispanic	46.9%	52.1%	5.2%	11.1%	46.1%	42.3%	-3.8%	-8.2%
Asian*	66.7%	80.0%	13.3%	20.0%	66.7%	70.0%	3.3%	5.0%
American Indian*	39.1%	29.2%	-9.9%	-25.4%	26.1%	33.3%	7.2%	27.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	41.5%	42.8%	1.3%	3.1%	37.1%	38.7%	1.6%	4.3%
Students w Disabilities	25.0%	19.6%	-5.4%	-21.6%	18.8%	20.0%	1.3%	6.7%
English Language Learners	35.0%	51.1%	16.1%	46.0%	50.0%	44.4%	-5.6%	-11.2%

Our school and the school district are planning a number of steps that will help us improve our instructional practices and teaching and learning for your child. The school district will work with us on some important changes to improve teaching and learning:

- We will devote two hours of uninterrupted time daily to improving reading and literacy skills. Reading is especially important because strong reading skills are required in order for students to excel in math, science, social studies, and other subjects.

During this reading and literacy “block”, teachers will work with students on awareness of letter sounds, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension (understanding what they read). Teachers will use district-approved materials and assure the curriculum is consistently taught across the district.

- Students who have not learned the skills they are expected to know at their grade level will receive additional help beyond the two hour reading block.
- Every week, teachers will assess each student’s progress in reading, review the results with other teachers, and make changes to help the student as needed.

As a school:

- We will carefully review the data from the NMSBA and other tests to identify what we are doing well and target those areas the data indicates need improvement.
- We will develop specific plans to improve teaching and learning that include a “continuous improvement” cycle of planning, putting those plans into operation, evaluating the results, and making needed changes. This process is called “Plan-Do-Study-Act” or PDSA.

- We plan to use a number of different methods to work with students, including adapting teaching styles to individual students' needs, providing small group instruction to students who need it, and providing extra help to students who have fallen behind. This tactic recognizes that students do not all learn in the same way or at the same speed.
- We will develop individual plans for each student who is not proficient in reading and/or math to help them get back up to grade level.
- We will work with the school district to identify "best practices" teachers can use to most effectively teach reading, math, and writing, will provide teachers with the training they need to carry out these plans and strategies, and will make sure these practices are used by all teachers throughout the school.

In the past year, the school district provided additional staff members to Puesta del Sol to work with teachers and students. These staff members, called interventionists and instructional coaches, work directly with high-need students and provide training for teachers. The district will continue to provide and enhance this support as needed.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all students, including students with limited proficiency in English and students with disabilities, to meet the same rigorous standards of proficiency in reading and math. Our special education teachers and students have worked very hard to bring the achievement levels of students with disabilities up to the same level as all other students. However, we have not had the results we had hoped for and are still struggling to find the answers to help that group of students. We are taking specific steps this year to evaluate and improve learning for students with disabilities at Puesta del Sol and throughout the district:

- The general education curriculum (subject areas such as math, science, reading, English, and social studies) must be taught consistently throughout the district, with instruction adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities as needed.
- Students with disabilities who need extra help to become proficient will be provided with extra help using tried-and-true methods and materials approved by the district..
- We are in the process of bringing in an outside team of specialists to take a look at our special education programs and make recommendations for improvement
- We will bring together teachers from around the district who have been especially successful in teaching students with disabilities to share their best practices and develop strategies and programs they can share with other teachers.

Many factors contribute to making a school successful. Achievement tests like the NMSBA are just one measure: a snapshot of how our students performed at one particular point in time. The tests provide us with useful information about where our instruction is effective and where students need extra help. We use this and other data, including student performance on assignments throughout the year, to adjust our instructional strategies for your child and our children in general.

## How We Compare:

The following chart compares the overall performance of Puesta del Sol Elementary with other elementary schools in Rio Rancho and with the state averages:

Elementary School	Percentage of all students scoring at the "proficient" level or above	
	Reading	Math
Cielo Azul (new school)	Not rated	Not rated
Colinas del Norte	65.1%	55.6%
Enchanted Hills	79.1%	74.4%
Ernest Stapleton	65.8%	60.4%
Maggie Cordova	79.4%	81.1%
Martin Luther King, Jr.	73.0%	66.8%
Puesta del Sol	52.3%	46.1%
Rio Rancho ES	66.7%	53.3%
Sandia Vista (new school)	Not rated	Not rated
Vista Grande	78.9%	67.8%
State average (all schools)	53.3%	36.0%

Data on all of our schools may be accessed through the RRPS Web site: <http://www.rrps.net/Achievement/Instruction/08SchoolAYPReports.htm> This site also includes links to the Public Education Department (PED) reports containing complete data for each school.

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## School Improvement and Your Options for School Choice:

Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years enter the school improvement cycle. The first year of "school improvement" is called "School Improvement I" (SI-1). When a school goes into SI - 1 status, parents must be offered the option to transfer their child to another school within the school district that has not been identified for improvement. Subject to certain cost limitations, the district must also either offer transportation to the school it designates as an option or reimburse parents for transporting their children.

As a parent of a student at Puesta del Sol Elementary School, the following options are available to you:

- Your child may remain enrolled at Puesta del Sol.
- Your child may transfer to either Cielo Azul Elementary School, or to Colinas del Norte Elementary School. Both schools offer similar academic programs to Puesta del Sol. Colinas del Norte is especially known for its strong bilingual programs.

For as long as funding is available, the district will reimburse parents whose students transfer under the NCLB school choice provisions 32 cents per mile for transportation to and from school. The district is currently unable to provide school bus transportation for transfer students.

If the demands for transfers exceed the available funding and/or space in the school in which students can be safely accommodated, the priority is to accommodate low-achieving low-income students.

**If you would like to exercise the transfer option, please pick up a transfer form from the school office, fill it out, and return it to Victoria Tafoya in the office of Federal and Bilingual Programs at the Rio Rancho Public Schools District Office within 30 days of the receipt of this letter.**

Test scores are just one factor in determining if a given school is the best place for your child. If you have questions about your child's or our school's test results, please feel free to contact me. Along with your child's teacher, I will be glad to work with you and your child to help you understand the results and determine whether your child would be best served by remaining at Puesta del Sol or by transferring to another school.

In addition to offering parents the option to transfer, schools in the first year of school improvement must also schedule a public meeting to provide an explanation of what the identification means and why the school was identified as a school in need of improvement. This meeting will be held **Thursday, September 11, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM in the Puesta del Sol Elementary School Media Center, 450 Southern Blvd. SE**. At the meeting, the school must provide data for other schools in the district and statewide, and an explanation of how parents can become involved in addressing the issues. The law also requires the school to evaluate and revise its Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS), a process our school has always followed.

Whether you decide to request a transfer for your child or not, we encourage you to take an active role in your child's education. Parents are our partners in supporting school improvement and play a very important role in their child's success in school. Here are some ways you can help.

- **Attend the community forum on Thursday, September 11, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM in the Puesta del Sol Elementary School Media Center, 450 Southern Blvd. SE**
- Become involved with your School Advisory Council and/or the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher
- Help your child at home with reading and math (your child's teacher can help you learn how)
- Read to your child nightly
- Make sure your child comes to school well-rested, fed, and ready to learn

Please remember that if you do not complete and return the transfer application **within 30 days** or your child will remain at Puesta del Sol. If you have any questions or need additional information about your school choice options, I would be glad to speak with you to help you determine which options might be best for your child. You may also contact or visit Victoria Tafoya, Director of Federal and Bilingual Programs for Rio Rancho Public Schools, 500 Laser Rd. NE, Rio Rancho, NM 87124, (505) 896-0667 ext. 171.

Sincerely,

Bryan Garcia  
Principal  
Puesta del Sol Elementary School