



RIO RANCHO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

500 Laser Road NE
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87124

"Student Excellence"

(505) 896-0667
Fax (505) 896-0662
www.rrps.net

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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. Rio Rancho HS has now been in the cycle for four years, and therefore is considered to be a school in "restructuring." State law, in accordance with the mandates of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), establishes steps that schools 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").

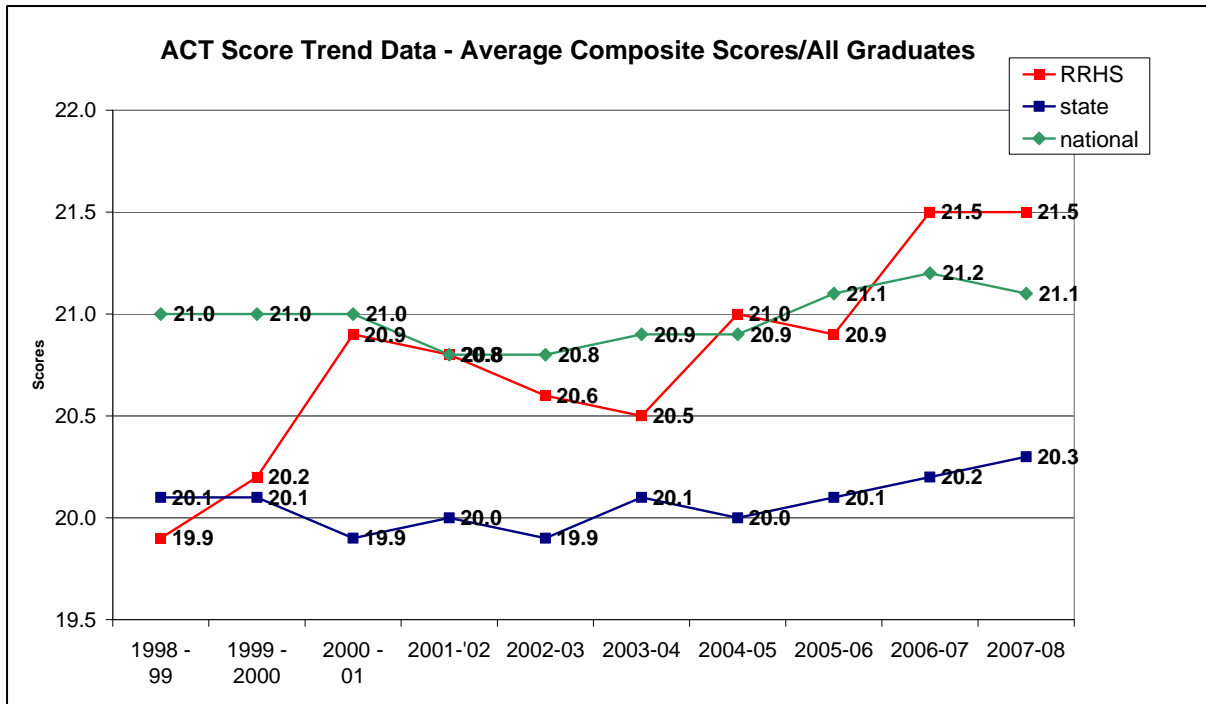
As NM Education Secretary Veronica Garcia noted in announcing this year's statewide test results, the fact that a school has been found to be "in need of improvement," does not make it a bad school. The state's school accountability system includes as many as 37 separate measures for each school. If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

How Did Our School Do?

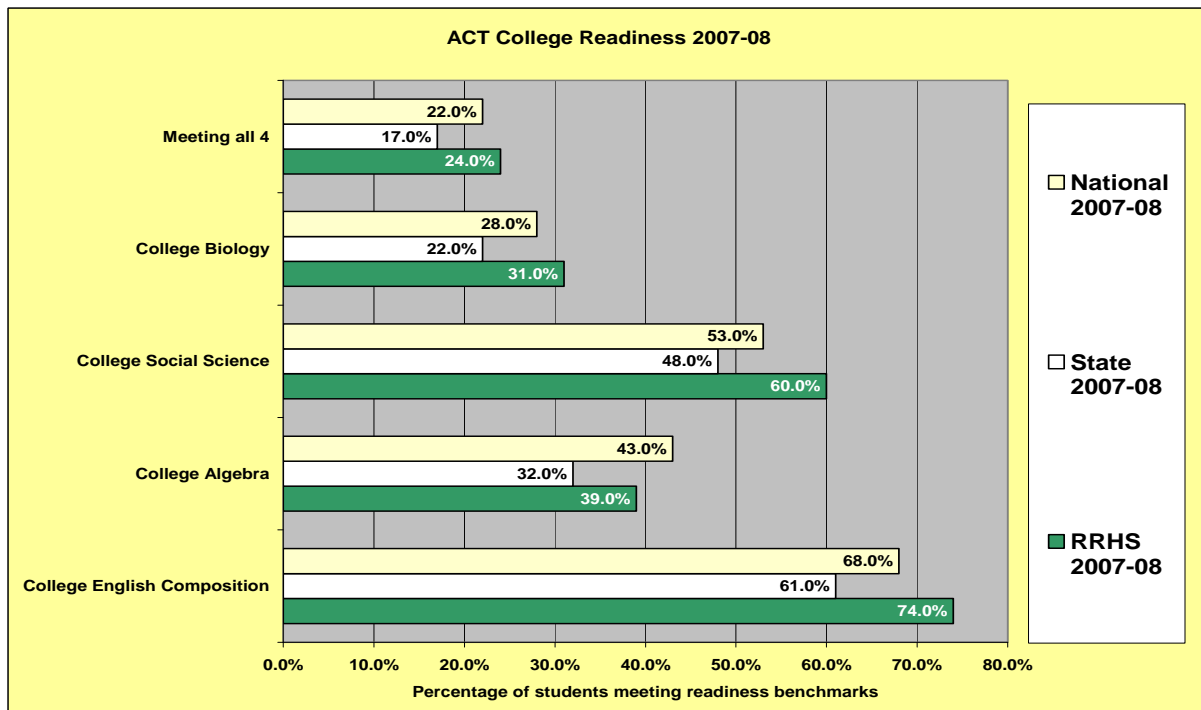
The chart below shows how Rio Rancho High eleventh graders scored on the tests given in the spring of 2008:

Rio Rancho High School										
<p>Proficiency: 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.</p> <p>Participation: Indicates whether at least 95% of students in the subgroup completed the test.</p>										
Percentage of indicators meeting AYP: 84% (26 of 31 rated areas)										
School rating: AYP Not Met			School improvement status: Restructuring I (R-1)					Years in school improvement: 4		
Subgroup	All students	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific	American Indian	English-language learners	Students with disabilities	Economically disadvantaged	Additional indicator: Graduation
Mathematics proficiency	52.8 Meets AYP	59.3 Meets AYP	30.0 Meets AYP	45.9 Meets AYP	**	46.9 Meets AYP	10.3 AYP Not Met	14.6 AYP Not Met	36.7 Meets AYP	Meets AYP
Reading Proficiency	58.4 Meets AYP	62.0 Meets AYP	52.5 Meets AYP	54.1 Meets AYP	**	46.9 Meets AYP	15.4 AYP Not Met	16.4 AYP Not Met	44.9 AYP Not Met	
Mathematics Participation	Meets AYP	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	Meets AYP	
<p>**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.</p>										

The NMSBA, the state’s achievement test, is just one of the measures we use to gauge student progress and success. Another is the ACT (American College Test), the college admissions exam required by most New Mexico and western U.S. colleges and universities and becoming widely accepted at major universities across the country. Nearly three-quarters of last year’s senior class took the ACT, so its results represent the accomplishments of a substantial number of seniors. The ACT scores exceed state averages in all areas, and the national average in all areas but math (where we’re close).



The ACT also measures college readiness. Our results show we still have plenty of work to do, but again, in all areas but college algebra, RRHS students did better than students across the state and nation.



Rio Rancho High School - NMSBA								
Subgroup	Reading				Math			
	Proficient & Above 2007	Proficient & Above 2008	Difference	% difference	Proficient & Above 2007	Proficient & Above 2008	Difference	% difference
All Students	63.1%	58.4%	-4.7%	-7.4%	53.1%	52.8%	-0.2%	-0.5%
Caucasian	68.0%	62.0%	-6.0%	-8.8%	60.0%	59.3%	-0.7%	-1.2%
African-American	50.0%	52.5%	2.5%	5.0%	32.1%	30.0%	-2.1%	-6.7%
Hispanic	57.0%	54.1%	-2.9%	-5.1%	42.7%	45.9%	3.2%	7.5%
Asian*	66.7%	73.7%	7.0%	10.5%	61.1%	63.2%	2.1%	3.4%
American Indian*	38.5%	46.9%	8.4%	21.9%	53.9%	46.9%	-7.0%	-12.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	50.0%	44.9%	-5.1%	-10.2%	39.6%	36.7%	-2.9%	-7.3%
Students w Disabilities	23.2%	16.4%	-6.8%	-29.2%	10.0%	14.6%	4.6%	46.0%
English Language Learners	13.3%	15.4%	2.1%	15.5%	8.5%	10.3%	1.8%	20.6%

What we are doing about it:

The chart above shows the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency last year and this year in the tested core subjects of reading and math. It should be noted that this chart compares two completely groups of different students, last year's 11th graders to 11th graders from two years ago. With two different groups of students, there could be many reasons that the percentage of students scoring at the "proficient" or above level could increase or decline from year to year.

That said, this year's scores support our belief that major changes in our educational program needed to be made in order to improve student achievement at Rio Rancho High School.

At Rio Rancho High, you are already living these changes:

- The new eight-period class day is designed to improve "continuity of instruction" and help students better retain what they have learned:
 - Students are required to take four full years of the core courses: English/language arts, social studies, science, and math, and to take these classes all year every year at RRHS. With the former four-block schedule, students could go a year or more without taking a math or science class -- ample time for many to forget what they had learned. We believe the new schedule will help students to better retain their knowledge and skills in the core subjects and be better prepared for college or the workplace.
 - The class schedule includes a mandatory advisory period during the school day for students struggling in the core subjects. During this period, a teacher works with students who need help to get them back on track and help them master the skills they need to be successful. Tutoring with a highly qualified tutor in core areas is also available all eight periods.
 - RRHS retains its rigorous standards and graduation requirements: to earn an RRHS diploma, students must earn 28 credits. This means they must pass every class, from 9th grade through 12th grade, in order to graduate.

Under NCLB all students, including students with limited proficiency in English and students with disabilities, are required 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. These are the specific steps your school and the school district are taking this year to evaluate and improve learning for students with disabilities at Rio Rancho HS 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 Our Schools Compare:

The following chart compares the overall performance of Rio Rancho HS with other elementary schools in Rio Rancho and with the state averages:

High School	Percentage of all students scoring at the "proficient" level or above		Data on all of our schools may be accessed through the RRPS Web site: http://www.rfps.net/Achievement/Instruction/08SchoolAYPReports.htm This site also includes links to the Public Education Department (PED) reports containing complete data for each Rio Rancho school. Data for all schools in New Mexico is available on the PED Web site, www.ped.state.nm.us .
	Reading	Math	
Rio Rancho High (grades 10-12)	58.4%	52.8%	
Rio Rancho Mid-High (grades 8-9)	76.4%	62.2%	
Independence HS	21.4%	2.0%	
Rio Rancho Cyber Academy	69.6%	17.4%	
State average (all schools)	53.3%	36.0%	

School Improvement and Your Options for School Choice:

Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years enter the school improvement cycle. Once entering this cycle, schools must make AYP for two consecutive years in order to leave school improvement status. This is becoming increasingly difficult, because each year the targets schools must meet in terms of the percentage of the students who demonstrate proficiency are higher (this year, by 11%). With only a couple of exceptions, all of New Mexico's large high schools are now in some phase of school improvement.

Each year a school does not meet AYP targets, the federal law requires additional changes and interventions. Like many highly-regarded high schools in New Mexico, Rio Rancho HS is now in what is called

“Restructuring I”. While this sounds ominous, we didn’t wait for the federal law to tell us we needed to make some major changes, and in making the schedule and other changes described above have already met some of the state’s requirements for restructuring.

When a school is in “school improvement: 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 if such a school is available. Currently, Rio Rancho High offers few alternatives for transfer, since the district has no schools serving 10th - 12th graders that are not in school improvement status. However, parents may consider transferring their child to Independence HS or the Rio Rancho Cyber Academy, both of which are in school improvement but which offer programs that may meet their child’s needs:

- Independence HS offers “career pathway” programs in culinary arts, film and health care (Certified Nurse Assistant) in cooperation with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM). Independence also offers flexible scheduling for working students and programs and day care to support teen parents.
- The Rio Rancho Cyber Academy offers educational programs delivered online, with support from the school’s teachers and lab facilities.

Both schools accept students through an application process. Parents wishing to transfer their child to Independence or the Cyber Academy should contact the school to inquire about available slots and begin the application process. If the demands for transfers exceed the available space, the priority is to accommodate low-achieving low-income students. Transportation is provided to students accepted at Independence and the Cyber Academy.

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 the school 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. We 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 Rio Rancho HS or by transferring to another school.

In addition to offering parents the option to transfer, schools in the school improvement cycle 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 **Tuesday, September 9, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM at the Rio Rancho Mid-High School Cafeteria, 1600 40th St. NE**. 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. Finally, the school is required to develop an “alternative governance structure” with input from parents and teachers. This plan could include: replacing all or most of the staff as allowed by law, turning over management of the public school to the state public education department, making other governance changes, or implementing any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that is consistent with the principles of restructuring.

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 public meeting on our school’s academic status on **Tuesday, September 9, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM at the Rio Rancho Mid-High School Cafeteria, 1600 40th St. NE**

- Become involved with your School Advisory Council and/or the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
- Communicate regularly with your child's teachers
- Encourage your child to become involved with extracurricular school clubs or activities such as athletics or music, or in community or church groups. Students who feel connected to school and are involved with their school and community tend to do better academically.
- Help your child at home with reading and math
- Make sure your child attends class and 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**, your child will remain at Rio Rancho HS. As noted above, if you have any questions or need additional information about your school choice options, please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Richard VonAncken
Principal, Rio Rancho HS