

# Students

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 all students will pass the proficiency exam. Every student has five opportunities throughout high school to do that. Our more immediate goal is that at least 50 percent of our 10th graders will pass the math portion of the [NHSPE] on their very first attempt. A challenge? Yes, because many students haven't completed all the math [skills] required for the exam," Garcia explained.

Web-based programs that students use at their own pace are helpful to those who need structured, readily available, Internet accessible, "real-time" help with their math skills and to identify problem areas, according to school officials and the developers.

Math Test provides sophomores, juniors and seniors with practice questions similar to those found on the math portion of the NHSPE. The program gives students the opportunity to take a practice exam and receive immediate feedback based on the student's individual performance, levels and needs.

The programming for Math Test was created by a well-established local company, Interactive Technologies of Nevada, a custom software developer that designs Web-based and other computer delivered programs.

"The program starts with a pre-test that identifies areas of weakness and remediates from that point," according to Joel Rector a chief officer with Interactive Technologies of Nevada.

"[The program which is used online] will assess the [students starting competency] in all of the areas that are being tested on the math portion of the proficiency exam," said Rector. "It's a 'smart system' that helps pinpoint [any area of weakness in math skills] the student has and then directs the student to those areas of [remediation built into] the program," Rector explained.

Asked if this type of program is a replacement for classroom instruction, "absolutely not," said Rector. "It is another tool for educators to help the students pass proficiency. Also, this is not just for students who are having trouble [or failing]... for kids who are still passing math it gives them a refresher in the exact areas they need," he added.

In general, the advantage for using a Web-based remedial is the relatively unlimited access a student has to the CCSD website from a personal computer with Internet access, without time or school-hour constraints.

Students are more computer literate in this era, so there is little resistance to using this type of online tool.

Also, it allows the district to track and measure increases in proficiency according to Rector.

Saskia Bates, a student at Rancho High School shared her perspective on participating in the program. She said, "I took part in the pilot program at Rancho High School. The website was a valuable tool in helping me to prepare for the math proficiency

exam. I have used the website at home, school, the library, and I think all students should take advantage of it."

Now that Math Test is available to sophomores and junior level students, more students can test earlier. Marybeth Acac, the student body President at Rancho High School commented on her participation in taking the proficiency test: "I passed the math proficiency test in 10th grade and I would encourage everyone to take the test now. It makes no sense to wait.

The earlier you take it, the sooner you will know which areas you need to study in order to pass every section of the math test."

The CCSD website where registered students go to online to use Math Test was made possible through a state grant with support from the Nevada Department of Education. More than 25,000 students are expected to take the NHSPE this year.

Student performance on the exam also determines whether or not a CCSD high

school meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), an important component of the No Child Left Behind legislation.

In 2000, only 10 percent of our 8th grade students were taking algebra. At the end of the 2003-04 school year, that number had jumped to 70 percent of our 8th graders taking algebra," Garcia said. The reason is that the state now mandates a broader math requirement for students according to a district office spokesperson.

"One of my first goals as superintendent of the CCSD was to increase the number of students taking higher level math courses," Garcia said.

With more students coming into the high schools and with higher levels of math proficiency being required, the district is working to provide "innovative" and "interactive" ways to help them like Math Test and other remedial resources, according to Rector and school officials.

*Parker Philpot contributed to this article.*



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