

July 10, 2001 San Francisco

Many African-American Students Excluded from Edison Test Scores

SAN FRANCISCO - Spring 2000 Academic Performance Index (API) results for controversial, for-profit Edison Charter Academy included scores for only about three-quarters of the school's African-American students, raising questions about publicized claims regarding African-American students' test scores.

Edison Charter Academy, operated by New York-based Edison Schools, has been at the center of a high-profile battle between the company and the San Francisco Unified School District. In a recent compromise, the district agreed to sever ties with Edison and allow the company to seek a charter from the California state Board of Education.

The school district has accused Edison of numerous violations of its contract, with allegations of "counseling out" African-American students an issue in the controversy. Edison supporters have countered with claims of test-score gains by African-American students. The new figures challenge the validity of those claims, since the API results in question are based on such a low percentage of the school's African-American students.

The API, compiled by the California Department of Education, is a numeric index based on each school's test scores.

As reported by the San Francisco Unified School District, 124 African-American students were enrolled in the grades tested, second through fifth, at Edison in the 1999-2000 school year. The number comprised 30 percent of Edison's student population. Of those 124, these were the numbers whose STAR test scores were included in the 2000 API results:

- Reading: 93 students, or 75 percent
- Math: 97 students, or 78.2 percent
- Language: 91 students, or 73.4 percent
- Spelling: 99 students, or 79.8 percent

The figures average out to 76.6 percent.

Two randomly selected San Francisco public schools with demographics similar to Edison Charter Academy's included scores for far more of their African-American students. Bret Harte Elementary results included scores for an average of 84.87 percent of its 134 African-American students, while Malcolm X Academy results included scores for an average of 92.8 percent of its 146 African-American students. Both schools posted high gains for African-American students.

Edison Charter Academy reported testing 95 percent of all its students, a figure that made it eligible for state reward money. It was unclear how the low percentage of African-American student scores factored into that total. Theoretically, some students can be tested in one subject and others in another subject, with the total tested in at least one subject adding up to 95 percent.

Edison Charter Academy's overall test scores in spring 2000, the most recent available, fall

below San Francisco's districtwide averages in all categories - far below in most categories.

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Backup and sources:

Data on number of students tested from California Department of Education,
<http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/>

Click on STAR 2000, then click on "Additional demographic reports"; find the school, then use the pulldown menu at the top of the page called "choose another demographic category" and select African-American.

Data on student enrollment from SFUSD
<http://org.sfusd.k12.ca.us/profile/pf99/pf99-517.htm>

Edison test scores compared with districtwide averages
Spring 2000
National percentile ranking for average student score

2nd-grade reading

Districtwide 56
Edison 33

2nd-grade math

Districtwide 65
Edison 57

3rd-grade reading

Districtwide 46
Edison 28

3rd-grade math

Districtwide 62
Edison 41

4th-grade reading

Districtwide 51
Edison 30

4th-grade math

Districtwide 57

Edison 32

5th-grade reading

Districtwide 47

Edison 35

5th-grade math

Districtwide 59

Edison 49

Source for SFUSD test score data:

<http://orb.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schdata/schdata.htm>