

Test scores up, while education funding dips in California

By Diana Lambert and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

It's a trend that would seem to defy conventional wisdom: As public school spending has declined in California in recent years, student achievement test scores have gone up.

Statewide, school districts spent 6 percent less from 2008 to 2010, but the percentage of second- to seventh-grade students scoring proficient on the state's standardized English test rose from 48 percent to 55 percent.

In the Sacramento region, the same held true. School districts in the four-county region cut annual spending by about \$120 million, or 4.4 percent, from 2008 to 2010, hampered by the lousy economy and state funding cuts. That translates to a 1 percent cut per student. But during that same period, their state achievement test scores improved – a lot.

The percentage of area second- through seventh-graders, for instance, scoring proficient or advanced in English jumped from 53 percent to 59 percent, while the portion scoring proficient or above in math went from 57 percent to 62 percent.

So, are educators finding ways to do more with less? Has student learning been largely unaffected by the spending cuts? The reviews are mixed.

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