

Holyoke School District Re-1J CSAP tests reviewed

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) test results were released Aug. 10 and Holyoke School District's highlights were presented at the Aug. 17 School Board meeting.

The raw data included here is only part of the bigger picture. Supt. Bret Miles explained, "CSAP has been with us for a while and is regarded by parents and staff as important information about the effectiveness of our school system. However, the summary scores available to the public tell only part of the story and our staff will dig into the data further and appropriate areas to improve instruction to help kids reach these high targets."

During the first teacher inservice on Sept. 3, teachers and administrators will conduct Data Driven Dialogue, where they will analyze CSAP data in order to outline plans to adapt classroom instruction accordingly. A comprehensive report on the 2010 CSAP results, including growth data, will be given to the Board of Education at the regular meeting Sept. 7.

CSAP tests are administered in February and March each year. Colorado students grades 3-10 complete tests in reading, writing and math. Grades 5, 8 and 10 also test in science. In total there are 27 tests to be considered.

A Standard of Excellence Team was created last year to monitor student achievement on CSAPs. The team is comprised of teachers, staff, parents, business leaders and other community members. One goal set to work toward is that the district will be in the top 25 percent of the state in each of the 27 tests.

Based on this year's results, there is still a long way to go in order to rank in that top 25 percent. Supt. Miles acknowledged, "We will not be in the top quarter of the state in each test overnight, but we do have a plan and we will continue to monitor our achievement and modify instruction to put our students in the best position possible."

Despite the progress that needs to continue to be made, there are several notable achievements from this year's testing.

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There are a number of ways to look at CSAP results. Students in each school district are traditionally compared to the state average of the number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on each test.

By this measure, Holyoke scored higher than the state average on nine tests. Although lower than ideal, this number is up slightly from last year's eight. In addition, there were three tests only one student away from meeting the state average.

Tests in which Holyoke was higher than the state average include third grade reading, writing and math; fourth grade reading and math; eighth grade math; and 10th grade reading, writing and math. Those only one student short were fifth grade reading, eighth grade writing and tenth grade science.

Both third and 10th grade classes showed strong results in all tests. Holyoke had an all-time high on third grade writing, in which 76 percent of the students scored at or above proficient. Third grade also had no Unsatisfactory scores in any of their three testing areas.

Grade 10 reading had the highest proficiency within the district, with 80 percent of students in Proficient and Advanced scores. Compared to the state average, local 10th grade math was 11 percent higher.

Also of note is the fourth grade math test. 77 percent of the students were proficient or above. Making up the 77 percent, 44 percent were proficient and an impressive 33 percent were advanced. This means 13 fourth grade students scored advanced on their math CSAP.

Another way to evaluate CSAP results compared to the state is to look at growth. Last year, students earning the same score on a particular test were placed in a group together. The group members are then compared to each other on the test this year to see how a student has grown, compared to others who started in the same place.

In this measure, the goal is to score greater than the 50th percentile, or higher than the middle student in the state.

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This year, Holyoke only had growth over the 50th percentile in three tests. Compared to last year's growth, however, Holyoke improved its growth percentage in eight of 21 tests. Both grades 9 and 10 kept growth percentiles over 50th for the second year in a row.

Students in fifth grade at the time of testing achieved their second consecutive year of high growth, with 55 percent growth this year.

In addition to comparing Holyoke students to the state average, the district compares this year's results to its own past results. When comparing the same test last year and this year, Holyoke improved in 12 of the 27 tests. Of course, this model compares different students.

When longitudinally comparing the same students as they progressed to the next grade level, the district found that students improved proficiency in 8 of 21 tests.

"Our teachers are not looking at excuses," Miles commented. "We understand that we have many challenges to overcome in order to reach our goals. However, by monitoring our results and adjusting our instruction, we know we can have the majority of our students performing at distinguished levels."