



NEWS

COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 64 Park Ridge-Niles

164 S. Prospect Avenue

Park Ridge, IL60068-4079

(847) 318-4300

FAX: (847) 318-4351

For information, contact:

Superintendent Philip Bender, 847-318-4300

Bernadette Tramm, Public Information Coordinator, 847-318-4343

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School District 64 Reports Students Achieved at Very High Levels in 2010-11; Performance Levels Rising Over Time

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 students achieved at very high levels of performance in 2010-11 and achievement levels have been rising over time, according to Diane Betts, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning. Ms. Betts reported to the Board of Education on October 17 at a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting focusing on Student Achievement. Board members heard a comprehensive, blended review of three types of assessments that collectively give a panoramic view of student learning in District 64.

District 64 Superintendent Philip Bender noted that: "Taken together, the reports give a full view of the many positive indicators that demonstrate District 64 students are learning successfully in our schools, that student performance has been growing over time, and that we are meeting our Strategic Plan goal of maintaining a very strong level of student performance," he added.

Ms. Betts focused her report on three guiding questions: defining what District 64 wants students to learn; measuring achievement and growth toward these ends; and using the data to improve educational opportunities for students.

The report included a detailed analysis of student performance on: the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) administered in March 2011; Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing; and District 64's unique Educational Ends assessments and District scorecards.

ISAT – measuring how students meet state standards

This was the sixth year that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) administered the current ISAT assessment. As required by the ISBE, all students in grades 3-8 took the tests in reading and math; only students in grades 4 and 7 were tested in science.

Ms. Betts reported that: "Strong scores are continuing in 2011. As reported on the 2011 Illinois Report Card, District 64's overall 2011 ISAT performance moved upward to 94.9% of students 'meeting or exceeding' the Illinois Learning Standards for reading, math and science, from 93.7% a year ago."

Separately, 94% of all students met or exceeded standards in reading, and 95% of students did so in math. Overall, students achieved at a minimum of 92% or higher at the meets or exceeds level on all tests at all grade levels, Ms. Betts announced.

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She pointed out several “positive trends” from the results over time, including:

- More students are scoring in the top “exceeds” level. Ms. Betts noted that in math, the percentage of students in the top category had risen at all grade levels in 2011, and had risen in four of six grades tested in reading.
- More students are scoring in the combined meets or exceeds levels, too. The percentage of students scoring in this range in science improved at both grades tested, as did four of six grades in reading and in math.

“We believe this upward trend in ‘exceeds’ scores in math and reading might be attributed to the District’s emphasis on examining and using test data to plan more differentiated instruction and to be more aware of what level of performance is needed for students to score in the ‘exceeds’ range,” she added.

Another ISAT measure is adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. By 2014, 100% of the students in every school are to meet or exceed their state’s learning standards. Ms. Betts reported that the ISBE uses only reading and math scores to determine whether each school and the District overall is making AYP, along with figures on attendance and student participation in testing.

In 2011, the ISBE set the goal that 85% of all students must score in the combined “meets or exceeds” category on both the math and reading ISATs to achieve AYP. To meet AYP, ISBE also tracks performance of students in special subgroups of 45 or more students; one subgroup is for students with disabilities. This subgroup must meet the AYP target relying on several specific “safe harbor” calculations.

Reporting on the District level, Ms. Betts announced that District 64 as a whole did make AYP for 2011. At the school level, all but two schools also made AYP. Emerson Middle School and Washington School did not meet AYP for 2011 based on scores in the Students with Disabilities (IEP) subgroup. “Even with safe harbor provisions, it can be difficult for these students who we know have learning difficulties to meet the increasing demands of AYP,” Ms. Betts stated. “We predict that increasing numbers of schools – many of them in our commonly used comparison group – did not make AYP this year for similar reasons.”

Individual test results have already been shared with parents throughout the District.

MAP tests – measuring personal student growth

District 64 also utilizes a unique kind of standardized testing, called MAP, to provide data on reading and math performance. MAP tests are taken on a computer, which adapts the questions asked each student based on how the child answered the previous question. “This captures a child’s current knowledge and what the student needs to learn next,” Ms. Betts said.

Scores are reported as a “RIT” number. “It is an equal interval scale, like feet and inches, so a student’s educational growth can be measured from year-to-year similar to how a child’s height can be measured from year to year,” Ms. Betts noted. Students in grades 3-8 are given the test twice a year, with students in grade 2 tested mid-year.

For 2010-11, Ms. Betts noted that District 64 students scored well above national averages. Looking at data over time, she reported scores had reached a five-year high. “The mean RIT scores in both reading and math are the highest they have been at all grade levels since MAP testing began in fall 2006 here in District 64,” she announced.

Educational Ends and Scorecard – measuring how District 64 educates the “whole child”

“District 64 recognizes that to educate a well-rounded child who is capable of achieving excellence and who can thrive in and contribute to a rapidly changing world, we must emphasize academics but also higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, social-emotional development, physical development, exposure to a wide range of experiences in the arts, and development of a positive attitude toward learning,” Ms. Betts stated.

“This is what we mean when we say that we ‘educate the whole child’ in District 64,” she added.

District 64 about 10 years ago began developing its own, unique set of “Ends” statements that capture this full view of what students need to learn as a result of their total educational experience.

“Because we are interested in this broader view, we actually collect data from more than 100 different sources – standardized tests and local assessments, student performance activities, student surveys and report cards – and compile it into a summary scorecard to give us a better overview,” Ms. Betts noted.

She reported that for 2010-11, 78% of the assessments were at or above their targets, compared to 56% in 2006-07, the first year the scorecard was prepared. “Overall, we are maintaining strong performance in all curricular areas and experiencing growth on some assessments, such as reading fluency in our ‘benchmark’ third and fifth grades,” she added.

Assessment data used to improve instruction

Ms. Betts told the Board that this rich data from the trio of reports would be used extensively to analyze instruction to better meet student needs and make decisions about instruction.

“Teachers and administrators will be looking collaboratively at data at every level – for each child, groups of students, grade levels, buildings and District-wide – to seek patterns and trends and plan improvement strategies,” Ms. Betts stated. “By looking at the data closely, we can identify areas of strength as well as specific areas for improvement, and take action to redirect our instructional focus, adjust our pacing and plan staff development to support these efforts,” she said.

“The valuable data gained from all these measurement tools – ISATs, MAP and our Educational Ends – is used to help us continuously improve the educational opportunities we are providing and help all students achieve at their level of personal excellence,” Ms. Betts added.

District 64 website – “on demand” reports and meeting video

The student achievement reports, the Board meeting video and further information on the Educational Ends are available on the District 64 website (www.d64.org).

The 2011 Illinois Report Card for each school as well as the District will be available on the website and in school offices prior to the official ISBE release on Monday, October 31.