

Secaucus Public Schools
Superintendent's Report

**Comments on NJ State Report Card
Secaucus Public Schools**

Generally speaking, our scores are good considering that the Department of Education raised proficiency benchmarks for making adequate yearly progress in the 2008-09 school year. Although a bit of an anomaly, grades 3-5 benchmarks were lowered from 75 to 59 in language arts, and raised from 62 to 66 in mathematics. For grades 6 through 8, the benchmarks were raised from 66 to 72 in language arts, and from 49 to 61 in mathematics. At the high school level, they were raised from 79 to 85 in language arts, and from 64 to 74 in mathematics.

The scores that are published in the district's Report Card indicate the percentage of students who reached proficiency and advanced proficiency at a particular grade level. Factored in are those that did not reach proficiency, including all special populations such as special needs and limited English proficient students.

The purpose of the annual State Test is to guide the district in assessing how many students have not met the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards in the various content areas, and to assist the district in determining how to modify curriculum and select texts that will improve students' acquisition of the standards. The test is also designed to target those students in need of remediation and identify the concepts and skills needed for mastery.

An analysis of last year's data enabled us to determine district needs. As a result, we decided to implement a new reading program in grades K-2 this school year, as well as a new math program in grades 6 through 8. In 2010, we plan to install the new literacy program in grades 3 and 4, and the math program in grade 5. In 2011, we will implement the literacy program in grades 5 and 6, and the math program in grades 4, 3, and 2, with its final installment in grades 1 and K in 2012. Clearly, this is a long range plan. Texts had not been updated in over 10 years; therefore, we have some catching up to do.

During this school year, we implemented online interim assessments in grades Pre-K through 11 so that we may readily monitor our students' progress two to three times a year. These assessments require approximately one hour of instructional time. The results are automatically calculated for the teachers, allowing them to immediately begin to address their students' individual needs. With the assistance of the American Recovery and Rehabilitation Act Grants, the district was also able to supply ongoing professional development for teachers, providing them in-depth understanding of standards-based instructional strategies. Additionally, new technology in the form of interactive white boards and Safari Montage video clips has enhanced the capacity of our teachers to access standards-based resources that were previously unavailable to them.

Regarding 2008 SAT scores, we provided Princeton Review SAT preparation this past semester for more than 70 students. Included in the services were both parent workshops and teacher training. Our teachers benefitted from exposure to exam content and testing strategies that can be transposed to classroom instruction. We are hopeful that we will be able to derive improved scores from this additional training.

Regarding HSPA scores, 36 additional students were tested last year. The cut-off scores for proficiency were raised; therefore, the minor drop in language arts literacy scores is understandable. Ultimately, it is our mission to strive to meet and exceed the Standards and thus improve our overall performance on standardized assessments. The challenge for all districts becomes greater as the cut-off scores for achieving proficiency begin to get higher. By 2014, all students (100%) are expected to reach proficiency.

Cynthia M. Randina

Superintendent of Schools