



# SANTA PAYS A VISIT

A jolly old elf dressed in red stopped in at last Wednesday's morning story hour at the Back Mountain

Memorial Library. He didn't read a story, but the children seemed quite impressed anyway.

PHOTOS BY CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Matthew Diaco may have been the youngest member of the audience.



Fun with Santa, from left, kneeling: Amy Heindel, Andrew Shapiro, Chelsea Heavin, Shamus Field, Michael Diaco. Standing, Michael Contreras, Santa, Molly Fabricatore.



Is this guy for real? Michael Contreras gave the old fellow a quick checkout, just to be sure.



Meghan Martin shared a few secrets, we can't imagine what they were about.

## Test

(continued from page 1)

- it's deceptive," Griffiths said. "It would be like putting students from central Philadelphia schools up against those from Bucks County. The districts' sizes, populations and overall wealth can vary greatly, even within a county."

Dallas juniors scored 80 points higher than the state average in math and 130 points higher in reading, Griffiths said.

"More than 29 percent of our juniors were in the top quarter in math and more than 30 percent were in the top quarter in English," he added. "That class has been consistently very good academically."

The state average among schools in Dallas's group was 26 percent at the top in both math and English.

Dallas eighth-graders also did well, with 30 percent of its students in the top quarter in math and 29 percent in English. The state average for similar schools was 26 percent at the top in math and 28 percent at the top in English. They scored an average 40 points higher than other schools in math and 50 points higher in reading.

Fifth-graders at Dallas also performed well, scoring 90 points above the average in reading and 32 points in math.

"Our fifth-graders came in with 45 percent if the students in the top quarter in math and 32 percent in the top quarter in reading," Griffiths said.

Griffiths and superintendent Gerald Wycallis attribute the students' high scores to a combination of good students and good

teachers. The students took the tests seriously and did their best, Griffiths said. The teachers, who had received special training in giving the assessments, worked very hard to emphasize the importance of the tests to the students. They also evaluated the previous year's scores to determine their curriculum's weak points which needed to be strengthened.

"I'm very pleased with the results," Wycallis said. "We have an exceptional number of students in the high and medium high ranges, which speaks well for both the students and the teachers."

The tests combine multiple-choice questions and written responses in reading and mathematics, Griffiths said.

"For example, a student must not only solve a particular math problem, but also set up an equation or draw a diagram, then write an explanation of how he arrived at the solution," he said. "This way, we assess their math computation skills along with their critical thinking or problem solving abilities."

In the reading assessments, students must demonstrate their ability to read a passage and write about it, using the narrative, persuasive and informational modes of writing.

While the multiple-choice questions are scored electronically, written responses are evaluated by specially trained teachers from another part of the state. Dallas, in turn, has trained teachers to evaluate other districts' writing assessments.

## Sample questions

Here are sample questions from the statewide assessment tests.

**GRADE 5** - Students at Clarksville Elementary School surveyed their classmates. They asked each student to tell them his or her favorite ice cream flavor. They found that 20 students preferred chocolate, 5 preferred vanilla, 4 strawberry, 18 Oreos and 7 chocolate chip.

a. Draw a bar graph or pictograph to illustrate these data.  
b. Using the information given in the problem, tell what flavors of ice cream the local ice cream shop owner should sell. Give reasons for your answer.

**GRADE 8** - The pages in a yearbook are 11 inches long and 8 1/2 inches wide. The yearbook printing cost is calculated by the area of the photographs and printing, so it is necessary to know each photograph's area. One page of the yearbook contains a photograph which takes up the whole page except for a 1 1/4 inch margin on each of its 4 sides. What is the area of the photograph on the page in square inches. (A picture may be drawn to help solve this task.) You must show your math work or write an explanation describing the steps you followed to arrive at your answer, even if you did your work in your head or used a calculator.

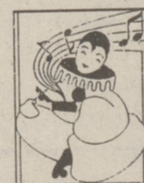
**GRADE 11** - A cow is tied to the long side of a barn, 10 feet from the corner. The barn measures 11 feet wide and 28 feet long. If the rope is 21 feet long, what is the total area of the space in which the cow can graze? Draw a picture which includes the grazing area to show how you arrived at your answer.



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