

Dallas School District State Test Scores

The 1998-1999 PA Assessment scores.

	1998-1999	1997-1998	st. av. 99	st. av. 98	sim. schools
Grade 6 writing	1300	1270	1240	1240	1300-1350
Dallas El. grade 5 reading	1320	1350	1310	1310	1360-1380
Dallas El. grade 5 math	1340	1330	1300	1310	1330-1380
Westmoreland grade 5 reading	1410	1350	1310	1310	1360-1380
Westmoreland grade 5 math	1340	1330	1310	1310	1330-1380
9th grade writing	1390	1380	1340	1330	1390-1450
8th grade reading	1360	1360	1300	1300	1320-1390
8th grade math	1350	1370	1300	1300	1290-1390
11th grade reading	1350	1300	1330	1300	1350-1400
11th grade math	1350	1320	1330	1300	1360-1420

Note: Tests were taken in the 1998-99 school year, when Westmoreland was open. Most of those students are now at the Wycallis Elementary school.

Test scores

(continued from page 1)

Writing in math class, as in other subjects, plays key role in the quest to enhance each student's understanding of fundamental concepts. "My fifth grade math teachers have the kids keeping math journals where they have to explain in writing how they arrived at their answers," said Sam Barbose, Dallas Elementary principal. "Describing the process is as important as getting the correct answer."

Math scores at Westmoreland and Dallas Elementary increased 10 points to 1340 on this year's PSSA, but administrators said they expect those numbers to be higher as the curriculum is modified to meet the new standards. "We think this test is very important because it gives us a chance to look at what we are doing at certain times of the year and to tailor instruction and some activities to help our students," said Barbose.

While the PSSA gives teachers and administrators a powerful tool for evaluating a school's performance, Barbose said it is only a part of the whole picture. "We did have a slide in our reading score, which is something we collectively have to take responsibility for," said Barbose. "It's not something we're worried about because such small changes can be the result of any number of factors. In general, I'd say I'm pleased with our scores but that doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement."

Tony Martinelli, Dallas Middle School principal, was similarly hesitant to draw a direct correlation between school activities and PSSA performance. "We look at the scores and say, 'You know we were a little weak in this area so let's spend another week working on that in class,' but we don't make wholesale changes based on one year's test results," he said. "At the Dallas Middle School,

"We expect students to be able to do more than read the words on the page and so we're teaching reading as a thinking activity."

Kathleen McCarthy
Principal, Wycallis Elementary

we are a model of consistency, which is not really a bad thing."

In the 1998-1999 tests, 8th graders recorded a score of 1360 in reading which is the same as the previous year's score. The math score dipped 20 points to 1350.

The 6th grade writing exam results were 30 points higher than last year. "If you want to attribute that increase to something, I'd say the kids were probably helped by our new nine-week writing course," said Martinelli. "But again, that was introduced to help our students become better writers. If it translates into higher test scores that is fine, but it wasn't added to the curriculum for that purpose."

A deliberate and extensive process is used by the district to identify areas of instruction which need to be changed in accordance with new state standards. "We have developed a curriculum map that takes all the state suggestions and puts them into a matrix or chart allowing us to look at things such as when we teach

specific skills," said Dr. Michael Speziale, Assistant Superintendent. "One of the things we found out during this process is that in some cases, not many but a few, we are teaching certain skills after the students have been tested."

Cooperation among neighboring districts enables educators to evaluate curricula and design new courses more efficiently. "We received an Educate America grant to work with Lake-Lehman, Wyoming Valley West, Pittston Area, and Wyoming Area in creating a new framework which is shared by all five districts," said Speziale. "We (Dallas) focused on writing and we are sharing our information and ideas with the other districts, which in turn are sharing their research with us."

Speziale said this statewide evolution in education would not be possible without a serious commitment from those who interact with students on a daily basis. "The whole process has involved a team of teachers, administrators and parents who put a lot of time in on their own," he said.

It is hoped the results of their work will be a better education for all students and a more effective method of assessment for all schools. "To be honest, there are so many variables to consider when you're looking at test results comparing one class to another," said Speziale. "You really have to look at how that 5th grade class does in 8th grade and 11th grade to have an indication of whether or not curriculum changes have had an effect."

"In general, I'd say I'm pleased with our scores but that doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement."

Sam Barbose
Principal, Dallas Elementary

'Explosive' experiments at Wycallis

Fourth grade students at Wycallis Elementary recently participated in a hands-on science experiment. The youngsters in Mr. Shaver's class designed and built working volcanoes. Pictured with the explosive creations are: Frank Ziegler, Jason Young, Alexandria Napierkowski and Lee Riccetti.



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Scouts plant trees on trail

Scouts from Pack 232 helped spruce up the Back Mountain Trail recently, by planting trees about a mile in from the trail head.

The whole group, above, from left, kneeling: Julian Bartorillo, Fred Hockenbury, John Frederick, Frankie Greenhalgh. Standing: Michael Supczinski, Joseph Balavage, Joey Collini, Greg Nothstein, Thomas McGrath, Carl Bartizek, Kevin Buckman, Ryan Regan.

At right, Drew Regan accompanied some Scouts bringing water and shovels to the planting site.



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