Announcements for the 11.10.15 Committee of the Whole Meeting

High School

Over half of high schools in Berks, Tri-County area see performance scores slip in new data

Reading Eagle, Thursday November 5, 2015 By Karen Shuey

The report cards are in: More than half of the high schools in the Berks and Tri-County area saw their performance scores slip in new data released Wednesday by the state Department of Education.
This is the third year the profiles are being used by the department as a tool to measure academic progress in Pennsylvania's schools. But, unlike previous years, only schools that administer the Keystone Exams - which includes high schools - received profile scores.

All other schools were given a one-year reprieve to adjust to more rigorous Pennsylvania System of School Assessment standards.

The grading system, known as the School Performance Profile, gives each school a single academic score based on test scores, growth of test scores, graduation rates and other factors.

Out of the 20 local schools that received scores - data was unavailable for Boyertown and Conrad Weiser - 12 found that their scores had dropped from last year.

Pottstown saw its score plunge over 20 points. Daniel Boone, Brandywine Heights and Twin Valley also experienced double-digit declines in their ratings.

Oley Valley's score jumped by nearly 14 points. It was among the eight schools that improved over their previous score.

Local schools saw their grades fall across the spectrum.

Eight out of the 20 fell below the state's benchmark of 70. Those ranged from a low score of 40 by I-LEAD Charter School in Reading to Daniel Boone just missing the mark at 69.6.

Reading saw its score improve. It went from 60.2 last year to 65.2 this year.

Dr. Khalid Mumin, superintendent of Reading School District, said the score is impressive because the data focuses on improvement and growth over time.

"This will be used as a motivating factor for our community of learners and our dedicated staff to achieve infinite possibilities," he said.

Reading High School Principal Eric Turman said he's proud of how his teachers and students have come together.

"There has been a lot of academic growth here during the past four years, and the teachers and students can see the results of their hard work and efforts," he said. "As an urban school, we are now competing with the surrounding schools, and this academic progress gives a very clear message to any person in Berks County that students can come to Reading High, get an education and be successful."

On the other end of the scale, Pottsgrove had the highest score of 90. Wyomissing followed with 89.3.

Kutztown School District Superintendent Katherine D. Metrick said the scores mean very little right now, pointing out that they represent an average of many unrelated data points including attendance rate, graduation rate, participation on Advanced Placement tests, academic growth and academic performance.

Kutztown saw its score drop from 90.8 last year to 81.6 this year.

"While each of the data points has meaning in its pure form, once averaged, the result is not clear," she said.

State education officials developed the new grading system to replace No Child Left Behind standards.

Critics of the old system complained that the importance of test scores encouraged schools to "teach to the test" and put students with special needs at a disadvantage. The new model is designed to reward growth as much as achievement. Education Secretary Pedro A. Rivera reminded parents in a press release Wednesday that while scores can be a useful tool in assessing school performance, the department is engaged in conversations with multiple stakeholders to consider comprehensive measures in evaluating schools.

Metrick said she commends what the department is trying to accomplish.

But, she said, it will take a couple of years before the efforts are ever realized.

"Legislation will need to change before PDE can provide course corrections for this wayward ship," she said.

Only schools that administer the Keystone Exams — which includes high schools — received profile scores. All other schools were given a one-year reprieve to adjust to new PSSA standards.

HIGH SCHOOL	2013-14 SCORE	2014-15 SCORE	CHANGE
FLEETWOOD	72.6	76.7	▲ 4.1

1. Class of 2018 and FBLA will be holding their annual Holiday Craft Show on November 21st from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will be over 100 vendors and food to purchase.

Middle School

1. Girl Scout Troop 1773 from Fleetwood partnered with the Middle School for the Pass Positivity program. On November 4, the Girl Scout troop came in and put positive notes on every student locker in the building.
2. During the month of November, some of our male teaching staff are participating in a moustache contest/tournament to raise money for male cancer research! The teachers are growing mustaches and the staff and students will vote on who has the best moustache by donating spare change. Student Council will be assisting in the process as well.

Andrew Maier Elementary

1. November 10th is “Read a Shirt” day.
2. November 20th is “Hat” day.

Richmond Elementary

1. *Paws for Playground* is sponsoring a “Dinner and a Movie Night” to raise more funds for our playground equipment.
2. We have teamed up with the Reading Royals in a canned food drive for Berks Shelter Night. All students bringing in a canned item will receive a free ticket to the Royals game on November 28th.
3. Students will be treated to a performance of the *Nutcracker Ballet* on Friday, November 13th.
4. Fall conferences are currently being scheduled.
5. There are two math nights scheduled for November 2nd for Grades 3-4 and November 9th for Grades K-2.
6. Ms. Wood has also invited parents to an online tutorial workshop on November 24th. She has 3 time slots available for interested parents.

Willow Creek Elementary

1. November 6th – School Spirit Day – wear WCE or Fleetwood gear
2. November 13th – they will be holding the *Nutcracker Ballet* assembly

3. November 20th – Switch Day! Students dress like teachers and teachers dress like students
4. November 20th – PTA Movie Night
5. November 24th and 25th – Parent/Teacher Conferences

Athletic Office

1. Congratulations to both the boys and girls Cross Country Teams on their performance at the Cross Country County Championships.
   - The boys' team placed 8th overall with one of our students coming in third overall. We had strong supporting finishes several of our boys.
   - The girls had a strong race and had great performances by our girls.

   Next up ~ District III meet on Saturday, October 31st.

2. Congratulations to the boys' and girls' cross country team and their outstanding performance at their District III meet.
   - The boys' team placed 13th out of 26 teams and there were outstanding races several of the boys.
   - Many of the boys ran some of their best times of the season.
   - One student placed 5th overall and will be racing in the PIAA State Championship meet at Hershey.
   - The girls had a spectacular race as well with strong finishes. The competition was intense and the girls did a great job!

   Best of luck at the championship meet!

From the desk of Dr. Eaken

Superintendents' forum: Solving problem only a part of Common Core standards

Reading Eagle ~ Wednesday November 4, 2015 12:01 AM ~ By Dr. Paul Eaken

Since the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, districts across the country have been working to align their curriculums with those measures.

The intent of the standards is to ensure students are prepared for today's entry-level careers, freshman-level college courses and workforce training programs. They focus on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills students will need to be successful, regardless of whether they plan to enter college, a career or postsecondary training.

In Pennsylvania, the Common Core standards were the basis for the PA Core Standards that have been approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. These standards specify what students should learn and be able to do in each grade level.

They are not a curriculum, but they provide the guidance for the development of curriculums for math and English language arts.

Individual districts have the responsibility of determining how best to teach students the content and the skills identified in these standards. This includes the selection of materials used in the classroom to support the district curriculum.

The PA Core Standards represent a significant shift in what students are expected to know and be able to do in mathematics. The math standards include both content and practice standards.

The content standards identify what students must learn for each grade level, and the practice standards identify how students demonstrate their understanding, including how they apply this knowledge to solve problems.

There are a number of changes, or shifts, in the content standards.

First the instructional focus is on students gaining a deep understanding of the content identified in the standards. Fewer concepts are taught, but those concepts contain greater depth.

The content is carefully coordinated within and between grade levels to build new learning on the foundation developed in prior years. Teachers work with students to develop speed and accuracy in their simple calculations and core functions.

Students are taught both the computational skill and the conceptual understanding together, which is presented in different ways to deepen understanding. They are then taught how to apply what they have learned; identifying what a problem is asking and calculating the answer.

The standards of mathematical practice emphasize teaching students how to solve real-life math problems.

Specifically, students learn how to make sense of a problem, how to use both numbers and words to help identify the solution and how to persist in their efforts until they solve it.

They learn how to explain how they arrived at their answer, how to check for accuracy and how to compare what they did with how other students solved the problem.

To assist students in meeting these standards, school districts across the state have been revising their curriculums. Fleetwood has selected new math materials that provide repeated practice on applying skills to everyday problems and strategies to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students.

Re-teaching skills based on assessments of student progress is also incorporated into the lessons.

The new math standards require students to approach and explain their work in different ways, which will prepare them for the challenges they will face in our rapidly changing world.