

# FES GROWTH MEASURE NETS A STATE HIGH- "FIVE"



Above: Students & staff enjoyed cake & cupcakes to celebrate their success.

## By Ron Barry

Deciphering how schools are rated – especially in the state of Tennessee – can be a confusing, maze-filled journey into frustration. You know that when a term like “psychometrician” is involved.

Crockett County’s Dr. Judy Hoover, Director of Instruction, Curriculum, and Assessment, says it’s taken her years to fully comprehend it all – but even then, it’s always subject to change. She **does** know good news when she sees it, though, and the news Friendship Elementary School received Thursday afternoon is **great** news.

FES has been designated a Level 5 school – the highest possible rating – for its overall growth in achievement in the past year, according to a measure called TVAAS (the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System), which measures the impact schools and teachers have on their students’ academic progress.



Above: Principal Cindy Nolen (R) was excited to announce their great news.

“The growth measure is just a part of how the state sets their final rating,” Hoover said Friday, “and the numbers for the different parts aren’t always released at the same time. So it can be very confusing, but Friendship receiving this designation is outstanding for our district.”

The TVAAS measure is on a scale from 1-to-5. A “3” is actually what the Crockett district shoots for, meaning that the school advanced its proficiency and achieved scores by a grade level for each student. To get a “4” or “5” means that a school has grown in those areas by **more** than a grade level.

Hoover’s full explanation of all the things that go into a school’s rating is much more complicated, but that’s why she’s happy at this moment to commend FES for its TVAAS score.

Friendship Principal Cindy Nolen was happy too, enough to throw a “Star Wars”-themed celebration in the school gymnasium at the end of the school day Thursday. She even unveiled a cake that said “Yoda Best” to her staff and students.

"I am so very proud of our students and staff for their hard work and dedication to making our school a place where students can grow in so many ways," Nolen said. "We are fortunate to have a small school that allows us to get to know each student and family and make personal connections. The very first thing I tell my teachers to do is to love their students and make that connection before any learning begins."

That love was evident Thursday afternoon at the celebration, which was attended by Crockett Director of Schools Phillip A. Pratt, who commended all involved on their achievement.

Nolen outlined the plan that resulted in the Level 5 rating.

"This past year our focus was on Reading and Math," she said. "Our **Save the Children** partnership and the addition of a full time Reading Ambassador in all three elementary schools was a tremendous success as our FES students read over 5 million words and racked up countless AR (Accelerated Reader) prizes and awards. They read more than any group of students I've had in the past. All teachers made small-group and RTI instruction a priority in order to close reading gaps and move students who are on the bubble of one level of testing to a higher level.

"Our Math focus was on improving our numeracy skills and mental math. We added online programs such as IXL, which allowed students to have extra practice on increasing math and reading fluency."

But Nolen cited the people involved as being key to the success of the venture.

"A **VERY** important factor in the success of the past year is the staff," she said. "They have really bonded and supported each other and became a true team. They were all rowing the boat in the same direction! They set high expectations for their students and led by example. This was the **BEST** group and they worked so many, many extra hours for our students.

"Finally, we had great support from parents, our community supporters, central office staff, and our school board members. It takes ALL of us to grow. We are blessed to be a part of the Crockett County School System. It's such a special school district and I am so proud again to be a small part of it."

Hoover said the final overall grades for schools were being delayed by a waiver situation in which the state is awaiting final approval from the federal government on accountability standards.

But for now, a high-"5" to Friendship for its growth measure is an appropriate gesture!

Right: Friendship Elementary students & staff were excited to celebrate their accomplishment.



Above: Director of Schools P.A. Pratt commending FES staff a job well done.

Left: Friendship Elementary's staff was all smiles.