

Chippewa Valley Schools review tests

State math scores improve while district turns focus to ELA

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A higher percentage of Chippewa Valley students scored proficient or better across all subjects in all grades compared to statewide and county scores during the 2016-17 school year. (File photo by Joshua Gordon)

MACOMB TOWNSHIP/CLINTON TOWNSHIP — New math programs instituted at Chippewa Valley Schools a few years ago helped improve standardized test scores, and now administration is hoping a new English language arts curriculum can have the same effect.

The latest Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress scores from the 2016-17 school year showed Chippewa Valley students in grades three and five through eight had an increase in the percentage of advanced or proficient scores in mathematics.

Fourth-grade students remained about the same compared to the previous test scores.

Yet only two of the six grades saw increases in advanced or proficient scores in English language arts. Third- and sixth-grade students saw the percentage of proficient or above scores increase.

Superintendent Ron Roberts said new mathematics programs were implemented three years ago, with a new program in kindergarten through fifth grade and another in sixth through eighth grade.

“Nearly all grade levels improved consistently over three years, and we had only one that remained static this year,” Roberts said. “By using this program and taking the time and effort to train our teachers, you can see the difference in the performance.”

In the spring, the Board of Education approved the purchase of two new ELA programs for elementary and middle school students that went into effect districtwide this school year.

While all grades had a higher percentage of proficient or above scores compared to statewide and county scores, Roberts said the \$1.2 million investment in the new curriculums could have the same effect as the math programs.

“I hope to see at least small gains in the first year, but it is a longer range process, so I hope to have the same three-year results as with mathematics,” Roberts said. “Eighth-grade students have been taught a certain way for many years, but as they get more exposure (to the new curriculum), you should see growth.”

State Superintendent Brian Whiston also expressed a need to focus on ELA going forward after all grades but fifth across the state saw decreases in proficient scores. Statewide fifth-grade scores saw an increase of half a percentage point.

The state has invested in early childhood literacy education. Two years ago, early literacy gaps were identified as areas of focus, with policy and programming put in place to institute stronger literacy skills by the end of third grade.

Such programs include adding instructional time grants that support districts that struggle in reading; providing literacy coaches who provide direct assistance to school districts and public school academies; assessment reimbursement grants in the use of screening and diagnostics to identify special student needs; and professional learning funds to support the creation of a literacy coach network.

“It is important that we keep working with ISDs and local school districts to provide support and assistance to help all of their students achieve at higher levels,” Whiston said in a statement. “We keep moving forward on our goal to be a top 10 education state in 10 years and know that the early work we’re putting into motion will pay positive dividends in the very near future.”

In science at Chippewa Valley, fourth-grade students that scored proficient or above remained even while scores proficient or better in seventh and 11th grade went down compared to the previous school year. Still, the district’s scores were better than both statewide and county scores.

Chippewa Valley saw fifth-, eighth- and 11th-grade scores in social studies that were proficient or above go up and had a higher percentage than statewide and county scores.

Across the state, nearly 98 percent of all Michigan schools took the M-STEP assessment online last school year. The state saw the percent of students proficient or advanced increase in 10 out of the 18 tests.

That includes fifth, eighth and 11th grade in social studies; third and fifth through eighth grade in math; 11th grade in science, and fifth grade in ELA.

Roberts said he and his staff were pleased with all 18 test scores coming in higher at every grade level compared to the state and county scores. But the work is not done.

“In my mind, we have work to do until all our kids are proficient,” he said. “It is a long-term process, and we are not only reteaching students and teaching teachers, but engaging our parents. That has been our efforts, and we will see how these relate to the results.”

Complete M-STEP results can be found at www.mischooldata.org.