
2008 PSSA RESULTS

Neshaminy flunks scholastic goals

All other public school districts in Lower Bucks achieved No Child Left Behind benchmarks in this year's state PSSA tests

By JOAN HELLYER
STAFF WRITER

Seven out of eight school districts in Lower Bucks County earned Adequate Yearly Progress status on the 2008 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests, according to information released Thursday by the state education department.

The Neshaminy School District is the lone public school system in the area that did not achieve AYP on the standardized mathematics and reading tests as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The tests are administered each spring to students in third through eighth grade and 11th grade.

In order to achieve AYP, at least one of the three grade spans identified by the state needs to meet specified performance and participation targets, state education officials said. The three grade spans are third through fifth grade, sixth through eighth grade and ninth through 12th grade. None of Neshaminy's grade spans were able to meet every target, according to state information.

In addition, several Neshaminy schools are either in Corrective Action or School Improvement status or received a warning because not enough economically disadvantaged or special education students achieved proficiency on the PSSA tests.

Those schools are: Neshaminy High School, Carl Sandburg and Neshaminy middle schools and Albert Schweitzer, Oliver Heckman, Samuel Everitt, and Walter Miller elementary schools.

The state warning comes as Neshaminy is trying to reach a new contract agreement with its teachers union.

School board President Richard Eccles declined Thursday to comment about how the PSSA results will affect contract talks until the board has a chance to review the data. The Courier Times was unsuccessful Thursday in reaching Louise Boyd, the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers leader, for comment after leaving a message at the union office.

Neshaminy Superintendent Paul Kadri said he doesn't think the PSSA results will have an impact one way or another on the negotiations. "Student achievement is a focus onto its own," Kadri said.

Most of the warnings have to do with special education students, he said. The district has already implemented a reading intervention program to address the issue.

Other area schools also received a warning or were put into School Improvement or Corrective Action status because either not enough of the overall student population achieved proficiency or because not enough minority, special education or economically disadvantaged students performed at grade level on the tests.

Those schools include: Bucks County Technical High School, Samuel K. Faust, Benjamin Rush, and Valley elementary schools in Bensalem; Bristol Borough Junior/Senior High School; Clara Barton, Lafayette and Abraham Lincoln elementary schools in Bristol Township; Centennial's Log College Middle School and Willow Dale Elementary School; the Center for Student Learning at Pennsbury and Fallsington and Penn Valley elementary schools in the Pennsbury School District.

Fewer schools across Pennsylvania earned AYP status this year than in 2007, said Gerald L. Zahorchak, the state secretary of education, during a conference call with reporters Thursday morning. That's because the proficiency rate targets were increased from 54 percent to 63 percent in reading and 45 percent to 56 percent in math, he said.

In 2007, 77 percent of schools across the state achieved proficiency. That dropped to 72

percent in 2008, Zahorchak said.

The state is slowly increasing the proficiency rate targets to ensure that all students achieve proficient or better on the PSSA tests by 2014, as required by No Child Left Behind. The current thresholds will be in place until 2011, and the education secretary said he expects a greater number of schools will achieve proficiency by then.

The focus needs to be on high school students, he said, because two out of every five Pennsylvania juniors are performing below grade level on the tests.

"Clearly, we need to do more to improve the high school experience and ensure those students stay engaged and challenged through graduation," Zahorchak said. "We simply cannot afford to be content with the status quo."

Staff writers Manasee Wagh and Rachel Canelli contributed to this story. Joan Hellyer can be reached at 215-949-4048 or .

On Sunday, the newspaper will begin a week-long, back-to-school series.

The

A

Sun: An in-depth, school-by-school look at new PSSA test score results

Mon: Bensalem and School Lane Charter profiles

Tues: Bristol Township and Bristol Borough

B

Wed: Pennsbury, Morrisville, Montessori Charter and Center for Student Learning

Thu: Neshaminy and Council Rock

Fri: Centennial

C

Sat., Aug. 23: Bucks County Technical High School and Middle Bucks Institute of Technology

Sun., Aug. 24: Private schools, local colleges

of your
schools