

Students gain in MEAP science, reading scores; dip in math

By Darrell Ciem
staff writer

Walled Lake students posted gains in science and reading scores on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests this year, but math scores dipped slightly in two of three grade levels tested.

Science scores soared, in some cases jumping by more than 20 points on a 100-point scale.

Educators offered an easy explanation: The MEAP test is usually taken by students in the fourth, seventh and 10th grades, but the science

Walled Lake Schools

portion this year was administered to pupils in the fifth, eighth and 11th grades.

The science test was moved up a grade level because many students were being tested in certain areas before they had received the instruction, said David Donovan, the Michigan Department of Education's as-

sistant superintendent for technical assistance.

Sophomores, for example, were being tested in biology, though many districts postponed teaching it until the 11th grade, Donovan said.

Moreover, the science test change relieved some of the test pressure for teachers and students at the

fourth, seventh and 10th grade levels, and it resulted in less instructional time being taken away from those same groups, Donovan said.

MEANWHILE, Walled Lake students also showed improvements in basic reading scores on the MEAP test, jumping from 85.5 to 89.9 in 10th grade, 89.1 to 93.8 in seventh grade and 88.1 to 90.2 in fourth grade.

Scores reflect the percentage of pupils who received a satisfactory score by mastering 75 percent or more of the objectives tested, said

Lola Lange, Walled Lake Schools spokeswoman.

Despite gains in basic reading scores, Walled Lake pupils showed dramatically lower scores on a new, tougher portion of the MEAP reading test administered this year for the first time. (See related story.)

In math, 10th grade scores showed progress, climbing from 73.0 points to 77.1. However, math scores dipped from 89.2 to 89.0 for fourth graders and from 82.0 to 81.7 for seventh graders.

"Overall we're very pleased with the results here," Lange said, adding that significant gains in other subjects outweighed the slight drop in math scores.

HIGH SCHOOL educators appeared pleased that their students posted gains in every subject.

"We're certainly encouraged by that," said Dennis Champnella, principal of Walled Lake Western High School. Champnella attributed the improved scores to "a more concentrated effort on the part of the department heads to work with staff and focus on the objectives that students had been falling short in."

Lange said educators will use the latest MEAP scores to examine the broad-based curriculum strengths and weaknesses and to help address problem areas for individual students.

An analysis of how Walled Lake ranked among the state's school districts will not be available until early next year, when a state analysis will be completed and released, educators said.

Walled Lake schools include northwest Farmington Hills.

New reading test was tougher, official says

By Darrell Ciem
staff writer

Fewer than half of the Walled Lake students who took the new state-mandated reading test passed both portions of it.

But results of the revamped Michigan Educational Assessment Program reading test should not be viewed as an indictment against the Walled Lake reading program, said school district spokeswoman Lola Lange.

"There's no fear here that our reading program let us down," she said.

Students in the fourth, seventh and 10th grades took the new two-part

test, aimed at measuring a higher level of reading by forcing pupils to answer test questions requiring more analytical skills.

Students were tested last September on two reading selections — a story and an informational passage similar to those found in a social studies or science textbook, Lange said.

Only 30.5 percent of 10th graders passed both portions, in addition to 42.1 percent of seventh graders and 40.7 percent of fourth graders.

SCORES on the new test were dramatically lower than scores on the older, basic reading test that also

was administered last fall. Results of the latter test showed that 89.9 percent of 10th graders passed, in addition to 93.8 percent of seventh graders and 90.2 percent of fourth graders.

Instead of measuring how well pupils comprehend what they read, however, the older test focuses more on "testing skills in isolation," such as root words, definitions and suffixes, Lange said.

"The theory behind the new test is that mastering the separate reading skills doesn't guarantee that the child will become a good reader," she said. "It's an entirely different type of test than the kids have ever

taken or we've ever administered." State officials had expected the new reading scores to be much lower than scores on the older reading test, said David Donovan, the Michigan Department of Education's assistant superintendent for technical assistance.

"It's a much more challenging test," he said.

Still, educators said the new scores can be used as a benchmark from which future reading scores can be measured. Educators expect the scores to gradually improve as school districts adapt their reading programs to the state's revised goals and objectives.

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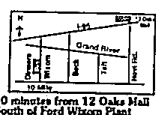
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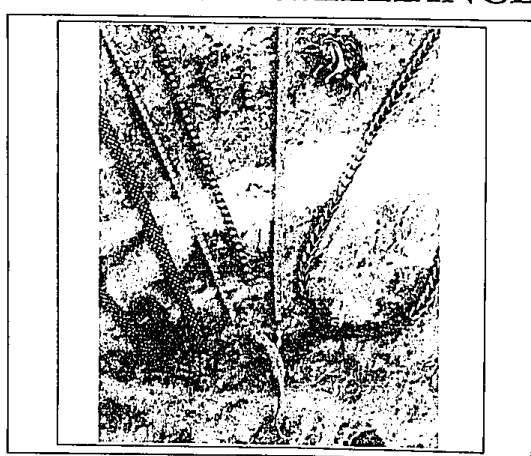
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