

# Clarenceville makes 'adequate progress'

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STAFF WRITER

Clarenceville Schools passed the first test in a new federal program to ensure no child is left behind. That's good news, because not making "Adequate Yearly Progress" can lead to serious consequences, said Director of Curriculum Barbara Church.

"If you are a Title I school, you will be sanctioned if you do not make Adequate Yearly Progress," she told Clarenceville School Board members recently.

Title I schools receive additional federal funding based on special needs for at-risk students. In Clarenceville, Church said, the allotment is about \$280,000, which is used for literacy programs and technology.

Boisford and Grandview Elementary both receive Title I funds.

AYP in Michigan is a measure of year-to-year student achievement on the Michigan Education Assessment Program. Church said federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires that all students achieve a "proficient" rating by

2014. NCLB requires all states to measure year-to-year progress and raise the bar incrementally each year until a 100 percent level of proficiency on state assessments is achieved.

"In reality, this will be a challenge for a variety of reasons," Church said. "The proficiency cut will be set so high, it will be above average, and at that point, it will collapse, in my opinion."

Beginning in the 2001-02 school year, the state used the federal definition of Adequate Yearly Progress, which set initial targets at the 20th percentile on statewide MEAP scores in math and reading. In actual percentages, that's a range of 31-47 percent proficient in elementary, middle school and high school math and reading scores.

While all schools met those levels in a summary report for the 2001-02 school year, Church said, Grandview was identified for improvement in reading and Clarenceville Middle School was identified for improvement in math. However, both schools have received waivers because there's a difference in the way AYP was calculated in previous years.

Three years of data are required to determine whether a school will be identified for improvement.

Grandview's school score was 70 percent in reading proficiency (target 38 percent) and CMS's math school score was 45.5 percent (target 31 percent).

"We've exceeded the target for 10 years in a row," Church said.

High school data from three years ago is not considered reliable, so those schools were excluded from the report this time around. The state expects to have sufficient data at that level this summer.

The biggest problem will be getting the requisite 95 percent of high school students to take the MEAP test; only about half of Clarenceville students do.

"Historically, a number of students, with their parents' support, don't take the test," Church said.

Schools that do not make AYP two years in a row and are identified for improvement must notify parents of their status and offer students the opportunity to transfer to a school that does make AYP. Districts will be required to pay for transportation with up to 5 percent of their Title I funds, but wouldn't

be required to use general funds if transportation costs exceed that amount. Schools will receive technical assistance to improve performance and will be eligible for additional federal funding to achieve their goals.

Additionally, schools not making AYP three years in a row must offer supplemental services to low-achieving students, which they must pay for with up to 5 percent of Title I funds.

After four years, schools must either replace staff not relevant to making AYP, implement a new curriculum and provide staff development, significantly decrease management authority, appoint an outside expert to help with a school improvement plan, extend the school year or school day or restructure the internal organization of the school.

At six years, schools must implement restructuring, reopen as a charter school, replace all or most relevant school staff, contract with an outside entity to operate the school, undergo a state takeover or undertake some major restructuring that creates fundamental reform.

# Legislation would provide tax relief

State Representative Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington/Farmington Hills) recently introduced legislation that would grant property owners up to \$300 a year or more in state tax rebates. House Bill 4442 would amend the Income Tax Act of 1967, Public Act 281, and would be available to property owners who qualify according to certain income limits. Qualifications for a credit would be reduced by 10 percent for each claimant whose household income exceeds \$73,650 and by an additional 10 percent for each increment of \$1,000 of household income in excess of \$73,650.

"The maximum amount of \$1,200 has not been changed for nearly thirty years, even though property taxes have increased an average of 300 percent," Vagnozzi explained.

"I understand that with the state's present budget crisis, my bill might not be taken up this year, but I realize also we are in extremely tough financial times and I felt it was necessary to bring this issue before the legislature as soon as possible so that some time in the future we might be able to correct a gross unfairness in this program," Vagnozzi added.

House Bill 4442 has been assigned to the House Committee on Tax Policy.

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