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County schools show little change in test scores

Disparities still remain among the races

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By Mary Niederberger Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The release of Pennsylvania test scores for 2013-14 by the state Department of Education shows that scores among Allegheny County schools for the most part hovered close to where they were a year ago.

While there were changes in some districts or schools, the highest scoring districts were predictably in more affluent areas and the lower-scoring districts in the poor neighborhoods.

Based on district overall results, which include students in grades 3-8 who took the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Exams and 11th-graders who took the Keystone exams in biology, algebra and literature, the highest-scoring district was South Fayette with 95 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in math and 93 percent in reading.

The lowest-scoring district was Duquesne with 20 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in math and 19 percent in reading. Wilkinsburg

closely followed, with 35 percent of students scoring proficient or above in math and 27 percent in reading.

Statewide averages for district overall results in math and reading are 72 percent in math and 70 percent in reading.

In Allegheny County, 26 of the 43 districts scored above the state average in math and reading.

At Wilkinsburg High School, just 5 percent of the students scored proficient on the Keystone exams in algebra, 6 percent in literature and zero percent in biology. The Keystone exams are meant to be end-of-course exams but must be taken by 11th grade.

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Test scores released

The percentage of students scoring proficient or above in the 2013-14 PSSA exams for grades 3-8 and in the Keystone exams in biology, algebra and literature for grade 11 in Allegheny County school districts.

OVERALL DISTRICT SCORES

MATH READING

Highest

South Fayette	95	93
Mt. Lebanon	92	92
Hampton	92	91
Upper St. Clair	90	90
Pine-Richland	90	89

Lowest



“The Keystone scores on the secondary level were, to be quite frank, embarrassing. It definitely begs the question of what the heck has been going on there,” said acting superintendent Daniel Matsook, who took the reins of the district in July.

The elementary level in Wilkinsburg showed improved scores in third- and fourth-grade math and third-grade reading.

In Duquesne, the most troubling score was in sixth-grade reading; 9 percent of students scored proficient or advanced.

Paul Rach, chief recovery officer for the Duquesne district, which operates a K-6 school, said that while there are too few students in the district reaching proficiency, growth measures the state uses show that the district is moving students forward, but because they enter school so far behind, the forward movement has not been enough to get them to proficiency.

Duquesne students in grades 7-12 attend East Allegheny or West Mifflin Area high schools, with a large majority at West Mifflin. Proficiency rates on the Keystone exams show 16 percent of students scoring proficient or above in algebra, 33 percent in literature and 11 percent in biology.

Proficiency rates in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, which were released in August, show small improvements. Districtwide scores increased from 57 percent proficient or above in math and 53 in reading in 2012-13 to 59 in math and 54 in reading in 2013-14. That followed two years of disappointing state test scores.

Scores through the districts show schools are still struggling to close the racial achievement gap,

In the Penn Hills School District, 44 percent of black students scored proficient or advanced in math and 43 percent in reading as compared with white students whose proficiency rates were 73 percent in math and 71 percent in reading. The Steel Valley School District had a similar gap; 34 percent of blacks scored proficient in math and 33 percent in reading while 69 percent of white students scored proficient or above in math and 66 percent in reading.

Districtwide in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, 48 percent of black students scored proficient or advanced in math and 43 percent in reading; their white counterparts had proficiency rates of 75 percent in math and 71 percent in reading.

Test scores for individual school districts were included in the School Performance Profiles the state Department of Education released in November. The overall district and grade-level scores were released Friday as part of its reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of Education, spokesman Tim Eller said.

This is the second year the state Department of Education has used the SPP, which uses multiple factors, including test scores, to measure schools' academic progress. In the past test scores were the sole measure.

To access the scores, go to <http://www.escafedreport.com>.

Duquesne	20	19
Wilkinsburg	35	27
Sto-Rox	34	33
Clairton	46	41
McKeesport	50	46

Source: Pennsylvania
Department of Education

PG graphic: Testscores
(Click image for larger version)

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