



Health/Education

Students do Better in Math, Worse at Writing

Achievement divide among racial and ethnic groups continue

Oregon elementary and middle school students improved in their ability to do complex math problems this year but lagged in writing ability, according to state educators.

Fifth-graders posted the biggest jump—76 percent met or exceeded state benchmarks in math compared with 64 percent last year and 32 percent five years ago.

The math problem-solving and writing results for fifth- and eighth-graders are the latest of the 16 exams in math, science, reading and writing that measure how well students are learning.

Of the 14 test results announced so far by the Oregon Department of Education, 10 scores are higher this year than last, three are lower and one score was unchanged.

"We continue to see steady progress in student achievement," said state Superintendent Stan Bunn.

Wayne Neuburger, state testing director, said the gains in math problem-solving may reflect the fact that it is a relatively new test, started in 1997. Scores were low at first because teachers and students didn't know what to expect, so the improvement curve is higher once the test becomes familiar, he said.

In contrast, Neuburger said the writing test has been given since the mid-1980s in some schools and scores have leveled off.

Portland Public Schools had two of the highest-scoring schools in the state on the latest math problem-solving and writing tests. Among fifth-graders at Markham Elementary

School, 98 percent reached the benchmark in writing, and 96 percent did so in math.

Other middle schools scoring high were the Howard Street Charter School in Salem, Fernwood in Portland, Sunset in Coos Bay and Athey Creek in West Linn.

Portland also had one of the lowest-scoring elementary schools on the state tests, Sitton, with only 19 percent of fifth-graders meeting the writing standard and 45 percent meeting the math problem-solving standard.

Two Portland middle schools, Whitaker and Lane, also were among the lowest-scoring schools in the state.

Neuburger said in general that scores on the math problem-solving

test closely mirrored those of the math knowledge test.

Neuburger said the problem-solving test, which measures students' ability to take what they know about math and apply it to a problem, is probably the more significant of the two math tests.

The results showed stark differences among racial and ethnic groups, a continuation of the achievement gap that has dogged state testing since it began.

Latino, black and Indian students trailed whites in both reading and math problem-solving, with the greatest gap, 25 percentage points, between whites and Latinos in eighth-grade writing. Asian American students outperformed all groups in fifth and eighth grade.

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Damon Stoudamire Blood Drive Saves Lives

Kelly Ryan takes a blood donation Saturday from Jacob Deitas at the Damon Stoudamire Summer Blood Drive at the American Red Cross on North Vancouver Avenue. Stoudamire, a member of the Portland Trail Blazers and a Portland native, points out that in the time it takes to play just one game, 1,440 people will need blood. To become a donor, call the Red Cross at 503-284-4040.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/ THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Administrator Wins Praise for Healthcare Advances

A hospital administrator from the Portland area is winning praise for her work to promote minority healthcare.



Jacqueline Gaines

Jacqueline Gaines, the operations administrator at Providence Milwaukie Hospital, received special recognition for her advancement and development of Black healthcare leaders, and for her efforts to elevate the quality of

healthcare services rendered to minority and underserved communities.

The efforts were outlined in Gaines' President's Award honor from the Baltimore Chapter of the National Association of Health Ser-

vices Executives.

The non-profit association presents the award in recognition of outstanding service.

Last year, Gaines left Baltimore to join the Providence Health System.

Conjoined Twins' Weak Heart Gives Out

Conjoined twin girls born with a shared heart died Thursday at Legacy Emanuel Hospital & Health Center.

Jessica Faith and Emily Hope were joined at the torso and weighed a combined 12 pounds, 15 ounces. They were delivered by Caesarean section July 16.

Doctors say it is impossible to separate twins that share a heart, and there was no indication that an attempt was made. The mother and her husband, who are from Longview, refused to have their names released and requested that little medical information be revealed. "Jessica and Emily's mom and dad were blessed to be able to hold, rock and feed their babies throughout the night," according to a statement written by the parents and released by the hospital. "Despite the highest quality of care and the best technology modern medicine could offer, the babies' shared heart was unable to sustain either of them."

The parents knew the twins were conjoined four months before the birth, according to the hospital.

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