

Tests: Central's 11th-grade marks fall below state

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Those earning level 2 or lower are behind. Statewide in all grades, students achieved a level 3 and above at a 55 percent rate for language arts and at 42 percent rate for math.

For last year's high school juniors — for whom the test is one way of showing they have mastered the skills needed to graduate — the state averages were 68.5 percent for language arts and 33 percent for math.

Central's 11th-grade scores fell below those averages, 59 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

But that doesn't mean the district will scramble to graduate more than 80 percent of the Class of 2017.

Brazeau said some of that class had already passed the test under the old format — Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills — and were "grandfathered in."

Others demonstrated those "essential skills" in math and English through

work samples submitted in class.

He said taking the test knowing that they had already achieved the skills needed to graduate may have influenced how seriously they took the test.

Brazeau said none of this year's juniors will have taken the OAKS test, so scores should shift upward accordingly.

Dallas School District's scores for 11th grade improved from the first year and were well above state averages for that grade.

Last year's juniors achieved "college and career ready" scores at a 77 percent rate in language arts, compared to 72 percent last year and 45 percent in math, up from 33 percent in 2015.

"That is really good news for us," said Steve Martinelli, the district's instructional services director.

Martinelli noted some marked improvement for last year's eighth-graders, who struggled in the inaugural year of the Smarter Balanced assessment.

"We know we have some work to do with this class, but the trend is moving in the right direction with more and more of our class of 2020 students meeting standards in reading and math each year," Martinelli said.

In Falls City, Superintendent Jack Thompson said, as in Central, many of the juniors who took the test had already achieved their essential skills.

The Class of 2017 scored college and career ready at 50 percent for language arts and 30 percent on math. That changed from 65 percent and 25 percent last year, respectively.

"We start testing them on their essential skills back as sophomores," Thompson said.

He added that the district emphasizes that juniors are supposed to perform their best on the test, but that doesn't always happen.

Thompson said he attributes the gains made in math to new Common Core-aligned curriculum added last year.

"I'm hoping that trend will continue," he said.

Perrydale saw improvement at most grade levels in both testing topics, and dramatic improvement for last year's juniors.

In languages arts, level 3 and 4 scores were up to 71 percent from 54 percent. Math scores improved from 18 percent to 38.5.

Brazeau said he hopes as the Smarter Balanced system develops, the data will become more valuable and be available to districts sooner so they can make better decisions about student placement.

"I think it is valuable to assess and to use those assessments appropriately," Brazeau said. "We don't want to be chasing test scores. We want to keep our eye focused on the true goal of getting students college and career ready. If confident if we do that, the rest will take care of itself."

For more information, or to see more results: www.ode.state.or.us.

Falls City survey shows true poverty

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — In the 2010 Census, Falls City showed a low- to moderate-income level of 48.1 percent — bad news for the city's efforts to upgrade its aging wastewater system.

To qualify for a Community Development Block Grant — which city officials say is essential for Falls City to afford the upgrade — the percentage needs to be at least 51.

City officials suspected the 48.1 number was low and conducted a mail, phone and door-to-door survey to prove it.

They were right. Results from the Portland State University Survey Research Lab show that 55.1 percent of households served by the sewer system fall into the low- or moderate-income range.

"We were successful. That was quite a big thing," said Terry Ungricht, Falls City's mayor and one of the volunteers who conducted the door-to-door portion of the survey.

Of the 157 homes connected to the sewer system,

134 completed the survey, a response rate of about 85 percent. Eighty-three families who responded fell into the low- to moderate-income range.

On Aug. 29, the state's Infrastructure Finance Authority issued the city a letter saying it accepted the results, which opened the door for the city to apply for a grant.

The deadline to apply is Sept. 30, and city staff along with the city's engineer are rushing to get the paperwork done.

"We are going to be seeking \$2.5 million for the expansion of the capacity to our sewer system," Ungricht said. "The reason we are trying to hurry is to get it in on this year's funding. If not, we've got to wait until next year's funding."

Ungricht said finance authority has \$11.5 million in resources to provide grants and between \$16 million and \$18 million in requests.

"I'm making every effort to get this done before the cutoff date," he said. "I hope we can meet the timeline. I'm not guaranteeing it."

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