

Administrators pleased with M-Step scores

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Administrators from Chippewa Valley Schools were largely pleased with the results of the first Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-Step).

The M-Step replaced the MEAP assessments, which had been administered for 44 years. Students took the M-Step in spring 2015 and received their score reports this past January. Students in grades three through eight, and 11th grade, took the exam.

Students are categorized into four scoring levels, 1 through 4, and they must achieve a 3 or 4 to be considered “proficient” in any area.

In comparison to the rest of Macomb County and the state, Chippewa’s district results were best in the mathematics portion of the test. The district outperformed county and state averages in every grade level.

In third grade, 63.5 percent of district students were considered proficient, which was a county best. The same was true for the district’s 11th grade students, as 43.5 percent were deemed proficient, as compared to a county average of 27.9 percent and a state average of 28.5 percent.

Those results were a dramatic turnaround from as recent as 2013, said Superintendent Ron Roberts.

“The last time the MEAP was given in the spring or fall of 2013, our district’s middle school scores in math were below county and state average in every single grade,” Roberts said. “We knew we had a problem.”

Since then, the district has implemented a pair of math programs. The district’s “Bridges” program for K-five students began at the start of the 2014-15 school year. The middle school’s “CMP3” math program has existed for three years.

"I think the Board of Education has made a real commitment to support change in that area," Roberts said. "Hence, we have for the first time, the M-Step is given where we are above state and county levels in all three middle school grades in math. To me, that's a dramatic shift."

Chippewa schools also outperformed county and state averages at every grade level in English language arts, but the margin between the district and those averages was smaller as opposed to math.

"That's why we're making a concerted effort now to look at what we're doing in language arts because the materials that we as a district provide to our teachers in language arts, those materials could be 14-16 years old," Roberts said.

Roberts added that those materials do not align with how teachers are expected to instruct now.

"The thinking is if we can have that kind of a turnaround in math by having the right materials and providing professional development for the right kind of instruction, we can do the same thing with language arts, so that's kind of our next area of focus," Roberts said.

Dr. Pam Jones, the district's director of curriculum and assessment, said there's "tremendous" urgency to update those materials.

"We're working with teachers. They're evaluating programs that are on the market that will probably take us a couple months, but we're hoping in the next year or so we'll have a decision on what's best for our students and have them in place in the next year or so," Jones said.

The only grade level and subject in which district students did not outperform the state average was in fifth-grade social studies, where 20.3 percent of district students met the "proficient" standard, as opposed to 22.2 percent for the state and 18.4 percent for the county.

Jones said the district has already begun working to improve that by having implemented the district's TCI program for fifth-graders last year. It has already been used at other grade levels since 2011.

Altogether, Jones said the district was thrilled with its results on the exam. Looking ahead, Jones said the state superintendent has set a goal that 85 percent of state students achieve proficient status across all subject matter and grade levels by 2025.

"We still have room to grow. We know there's room to improve, but we're definitely very excited about where we're at right now," Jones said.