

# Center's CSAP scores show puzzling trend

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*Photo by Teresa Benns Haskin Elementary teacher Ms. Dieckman helps students better visualize their lessons by using a smart board.*

CENTER Although Center High School students achieved state growth proficiency on CSAP tests in most areas, administrators are still trying to address low scoring trends for elementary students and slow growth at the middle school level in reading.

Haskin Elementary scored poorly on the test, Center Consolidated Schools Superintendent George Welsh confirmed, with "third grade reading and math scores the lowest the district has ever seen."

With 22 of 35 third-grade students taking the test classified as English language learners, writing skills scores were the lowest recorded for the school since the CSAP test became mandatory. The fourth grade scores, for the most part, also were low. Overall proficiency dropped in reading, writing and math when comparing the same students to their third-grade year, Welsh said. One bright spot, though, in fourthgrade results was the partially proficient and above category, which showed the second highest performance ever when measured at this rate.

Fifth grade results were encouraging, showing an increase in advanced performance areas. A nine percent increase in both reading and writing proficiency was seen from fourth to fifth-grade scores. Science proficiency skyrocketed at the fifth grade level and math proficiency increased by four

percent. A Colorado Growth Model graph charted by the Colorado Dept. of Education (CDE) on their School View site shows that Haskin overall has seen significant growth in math skills and good growth in writing proficiency in the past year, although reading is down by one percent. Two of three of these areas fall below the 50th percentile however, which Haskin must consistently score above to reach average grade level performance as measured by state standards.

"Even if we reach the 50th percentile in all tested areas, that's good, but it's not good enough to catch up to the rest of the state," Welsh said.

Reading scores for Skoglund Middle School sixth and seventh graders improved, but writing scores fell slightly. Math scores remained flat for sixth graders and declined in seventh grade results. Science scores at the eighth grade level were the highest ever.

The CDE School View site shows Skoglund exceeding the 50th percentile in everything but reading. "The goal is to push Skoglund over the 50th percentile line in reading to bring them up to state standards of average grade-level performance," Welsh said. High school students at Center did well in improving reading scores, but writing and math scores fell noticeably among ninth graders. Tenth grade reading and writing scores rose, but math declined below state proficiency levels.

Yet on the School View site, Center High School is rated as an "extremely high growth campus." For four years in a row, Center High School has realized growth higher than the state average. This year CHS grew at a level even greater than last year, when the school received its award as a "Center of Educational Excellence." Boosting elementary performance

Welsh believes that the problems with performance seen in Haskin Elementary students might well be traced to a lack of resources including special education and English as a Second Language funding necessary to address the student population at the school. This could be resolved if the concerns expressed in the Lobato v. State of Colorado suit were addressed.

"It goes right back to the Lobato suit," Haskin Elementary Principal Kathy Kulp agreed. The suit was filed in 2005 by parents in Center and later would be joined by parents and school districts statewide. It demanded adequate funding for students struggling in high poverty districts because state funding was lacking to provide the necessary services that would help guarantee proficiency and academic success.

Welsh explained that this lack of sufficient funds needed to target those with learning problems early in their school career has resulted in an actual reversal of trends seen statewide on CSAP scores -greater proficiency at the elementary and middle school levels with proficiency declining at the high school level.

Center is seeing proficiency surges at a high school level and proficiency deficits at the elementary level. "It takes so long for English language learners to catch up," Welsh said. "So we're defying the statistics - it's backwards for Center."

However Center Schools isn't waiting for a win on the Lobato suit to catch up. Using \$1.5 million in Transformation grant funds received this spring to help improve elementary academic performance, they are forging ahead to address the problems and eventually improve scores. Welsh points out that tackling the true source of reading deficiencies typically occurring in highpoverty , second-language-learner students will solve the problem. By implementing the Lindamood-Bell reading strategies process that increases neural connections in the brain, success can be realized, he said.

Lindamood-Bell strategies guide each student through a process of visualizing words, verbalizing sounds and doing so in a scientifically based, repetitive manner to increase student vocabulary, comprehension and fluency . The regimen is coupled with special after-school and summer Reading Academies and a curriculum alignment with built-in aids to help teachers comply with new instructional standards. Coaches and facilitators, and also a Lindamood-Bell Interventionist will ensure that staff is properly implementing the new curriculum according to the new instructional standards.

" We n o w h a v e r e s o u r c e s administratively and through teacher training to make these improvements take hold," Welsh said. "And we will make the grade because of this."