Greenville News 2/5/2010

Anderson, Pickens students score big on PASS

Results reveal eighth-graders have room for improvement

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PICKENS — Pickens County and Anderson District 1 students have surpassed state scores in all areas on South Carolina's new Palmetto Assessment of State Standards test.

The new PASS replaced the 10-year-old Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests, or PACT, as the state's end-of-year accountability measurement of student achievement required by federal law. Results were released Thursday by the state Department of Education.

Third- through eighth-graders are tested in writing, English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

Anderson 1 students were among the best in the state in all subjects, and the district's fourth-graders were first in the state in English language arts and social studies, said Jane Harrison, director of elementary education.

Anderson 1 students placed fourth or better statewide at all grade levels in science, and eighth-graders were second statewide at their grade level in math, Harrison said.

Fifth-, eighth- and seventh-graders scored second, third and fourth, respectively, compared to grade-level peers in language arts, and sixth-graders were seventh.

"High rankings show the high quality of instruction taking place in the classroom, but we will continue to analyze all areas and subgroups to find ways to address any weaknesses," said Wayne Fowler, Anderson 1 superintendent.

Elsewhere in the state, a third or more of students fell below grade level in some areas tested.

Pickens and Anderson 1 students shine on PASS test

■ Percentage of students who met or scored exemplary on the 2009 PASS test.

Grade	Writing	English language arts	Mathematics	Science	Social studies
PICKENS COUNTY					
3	80.0	84.4	74.6	71.9	85.6
4	80.8	83.9	82.6	80.4	86.3
5	82.1	86.7	79.7	79.9	78.0
6	77.2	77.1	74.8	73.7	84.7
7	77.8	74.4	73.5	74.4	64.7
8	70.8	70.5	64.9	67.4	72.4
ANDERSON DISTRICT 1					
3	74.1	89.4	76.6	81.1	89.4
4	79.6	92.1	85.0	86.6	93.2
5	83.2	89.4	82.2	85.2	85.4
6	82.1	82.0	83.6	81.4	90.8
7	82.7	81.5	80.8	84.4	74.1
8	79.2	83.1	79.2	78.1	79.5
STATE					
3	68.9	78.0	67.1	61.6	74.4
4	70.1	75.6	76.8	68.7	79.8
5	73.2	80.0	73.5	68.3	70.0
6	70.3	71.7	70.3	64.0	79.6
7	70.1	68.7	69.4	71.1	60.2
8	68.2	67.5	62.7	62.3	69.6

Source: South Carolina state Department of Education — SUZIE RIDDLE / Staf

LOOK DEEPER

Search our interactive database of test scores for every school in South Carolina at GreenvilleOnline.com/pass.

In Pickens County, 33.1 percent of eighth-graders were below grade level in math, yet the score is above the state average of 37.3 percent for eighth-grade math. In seventh grade, 35.3 percent of Pickens County students and 25.9 percent of Anderson 1 students were below grade level in social studies, yet still above the state average of 39.8 percent.

Statewide results mirrored past PACT findings. Scores generally were highest in English language arts and social studies and the lowest in science. Eighth-grade scores were lower than the other grades statewide, a continuing concern among educators.

That was the case in Pickens County, with more than 80 percent of elementary students at or above grade level in writing and language arts compared to 71 percent of eighth-graders. Eighth-grade scores also trailed others in math and science.

"We are always aware of opportunities for growth among our students. We will continue using all data sources to improve our instructional programs," said Brenda Turner, assistant superintendent of instructional services in Pickens County.

State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex said the 2009 PASS will give teachers "more detailed information about student strengths and weaknesses than ever before."

Debi Switzer, a teacher education professor at Clemson University's Eugene T. Moore School of Education and part of a state committee that developed the test, said, "PASS is going to feed back much more information to the teachers to recognize where the weaknesses are in their classrooms, students, and curriculum and how they can make changes quickly to help improve."