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





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Middletown Schools Make Progress on Connecticut Mastery Test

By MONICA POLANCO, mpolanco@courant.com
9:45 p.m. EDT, August 12, 2010
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MIDDLETOWN —

The school district has for the first time made adequate yearly progress in math and reading among elementary and middle school students who took the Connecticut Mastery Test this spring, administrators said Thursday.

The district also received "safe harbor" status for achievements among its subgroups — students of color, students for whom English is a second language, special education students and students from poor families.

Ten percent of those students scored higher than "not proficient" this year. Proficient students are at grade level, two levels below advanced students.

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It was the first time that students in all of the subgroups attained "safe harbor" status since the federal No Child Left Behind law, which seeks to close the achievement gap, was approved in 2002, said Barbara Senges, associate superintendent for teaching and

learning.

Although the district has not closed the achievement gap, students in the subgroups have posted consistent gains over the past four years, Senges said. Their gains include a 24 point jump in reading during that period among special education students, and an 18 point increase in math scores among students for whom English is a second language.

As a whole, about 82 percent of the district's students reached proficiency in math, six points higher than last year. Nearly 80 percent of the district's elementary and middle school students are now proficient in reading, five points higher than last year.

The state, which has identified the district as in need of improvement, will remove it from that list if students once again make adequate yearly progress during next year's CMT.

Senges said that the results are even more significant because student performance standards have increased every year, and more students now take the CMT than in previous years. And in Middletown, more than half the students who take the CMT are middle school students, nearly half of whom are poor, Senges said.

She attributed this year's success to changes implemented — by state mandate — in 2008-'09. Teachers throughout the district now consistently evaluate student performance to identify and resolve weaknesses quickly. The district has also added additional class time in small groups for struggling students.

Senges predicted that by 2013 the district's CAPT scores will be even higher than they are now.

School Superintendent Michael Frechette credited teachers, administrators and students for the improved test scores.

"I think all of the hard work over the years is beginning to pay off, and we're going to continue to move forward," Frechette said.

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