



NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

"WINDOWS ON OUR SCHOOLS"

**An Executive Summary of Major Testing
Programs in the School**

CMT
ACT
SAT I
SAT II (Achievement)
AP
CAPT
LAS

2008-2009

A Message to the Reader

This is an executive summary of our students' performance on various and national tests given in our school district.

New Milford's students have overall done well. This data is being studied in depth so that we may better assist our students in acquiring and mastering those skills they need to be successful in our ever changing world.

In addition to the formal testing, students are also given local assessments that help us monitor their progress.

Test results are certainly a focus of our teachers and administration. The many other accomplishments of our students are not noted here. Their community service, theatre involvement, music performances, art shows, and athletic prowess and much more, all contribute to make the New Milford schools a source of pride and accomplishment for our community.

Catherine Richard
Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools
August 24, 2009

Thomas A. Mulvihill
Retired Assistant. Superintendent
July 29, 2009

Introduction

All New Milford's students are tested annually in the autumn and the spring in grades three through eight. (Please Note: Beginning in 2005-2006 many of these assessments like CAPT and CMTs were moved to March testing dates per direction of the State Department of Education as part of their response to No Child Left Behind assessment requirements.) The tests are given all students except those exempted by their special education plan as designated by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) or those few students in an English Language Learner (ELL) programs, whose level of English proficiency makes taking the test impractical.

The students are tested in the areas of reading, language arts and mathematics using a variety of assessment tools. Those tools are:

Concepts About Print (CAP) – CAP is used to verify reading readiness skills with every kindergartner. It is administered in the fall and the spring. We use these results internally to assess students' readiness for reading.

The Degrees of Reading Assessments (DRA) - DRA is administered to measure the process of reading. Information on students reading comprehension is reported on a readability scale which allows teachers to link students' comprehension level with text at the appropriate level of difficulty.

Reading – Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) - The DRP measures how well students construct meaning from paragraphs that get progressively more difficult in terms of vocabulary and comprehension. DRP employs the Cloz method, which calls for students to make a correct word choice based on vocabulary and comprehension (see Exhibit 2 and Table 1 that follows). The content becomes progressively more difficult the higher the DRP number.

We compare DRP results in the fall to those in the spring in every classroom of Grades 3 – 8 to examine how students have grown. With spring CMT testing giving us a measure of reading annually, we now use the DRP to verify student performance.

Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT) – Connecticut General Statutes provide that the State Board of Education administer an annual statewide mastery test in language arts, reading and mathematics to students in grades 3 through 8. These tests are administered in March. These tests are criterion-referenced tests; that is to say their results are reported as the percent of students who meet a set goal or standard. The goals the State of Connecticut has set are lofty; students attaining goal levels are performing well above grade level. Students scoring in the proficiency range are considered as performing in the grade level range.

The Mastery Test is designed to improve statewide evaluation of students and ensure those students' academic strengths and weaknesses are identified. The content areas focus on the following skills: Mathematics, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), Reading Comprehension, Writing and Written Communication.

SAT I – Students at the high school take SAT exams. Approximately 90% of our seniors take the exam each year (compared to a national figure of about 45%). SAT scores are reported at this time also. The test is an aptitude test, not strictly an achievement test. Research does say that there are a number of variables that influence the scores students obtain. Those variables include gender, race, and family per capita income. However, it is also believed that SAT scores can vary somewhat by nature of the academic experiences students have – the higher level of math course a student has completed, the greater chance scores will be higher; the greater amount a student reads rigorous literature regularly, the better the chance of scoring well in the verbal sections of the SATs.

ACT – The ACT consists of curriculum based tests in English, mathematics, reading and science. The tests are designed to measure the skills that students need for success in their first year of coursework. The number of students at the high school level has grown significantly over the last five years.

SAT II Achievement Tests – SAT II tests are achievement tests; that is students may opt to take such an exam after they have completed study in an academic area. For example, a student may opt to take a U.S. History Achievement test after completing a U.S. History/American Studies course. Some New Milford students elect to take those tests. Those tests are optional and are often taken in New Milford and nationally by students seeking admission to the more competitive colleges. Those scores are reported in this packet as well. As a rule, New Milford has a greater percentage of students taking such tests as a portion of the student body than other schools similar in demographics to us. Why that fact has importance is that the greater the percent of test-takers, the harder it becomes to achieve a median score. Happily in most cases our students manage to score at or above the median anyway.

Advanced Placement Testing Results – Advanced Placement tests are criterion-referenced content exams; that is a student is expected to master a body of academic work – a standard is set and they are measured on how well they’ve met that standard. Scores on those tests range from a 5 or 4, which the Educational Testing Service describes as “comparable to college grades of A” and 3 “comparable to grades of B at many colleges”, to a 2 or 1. The most capable students take these tests nationally. New Milford’s students’ grades on those tests are also reported here.

Language Assessment Skills (LAS) – The district is now required to assess all English Language Learners (ELL) students Language Skills annually. In 1995 the district had less than 25 ESL or ELL students. Now the number is 133 students.

Students are administered the LAS test which allows a student to demonstrate his/her language skills proficiency. Students are tested in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Should a student reach a highly proficient level on the results of the assessment, they can be dismissed from ELL services. Results are shared in this packet as well.

Connecticut Academic Performance Test – In March each year, sophomores are required to take the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). The test is made up of four parts. A mathematics section, a science section, a section entitled Reading Across the Disciplines where students are given a short piece of fiction and non-fiction to read and analyze in essay form. Finally, an Interdisciplinary test entitled Writing Across the Disciplines requires students to sort through a variety of pieces of information about a chosen subject using graphs, charts, maps and primary and secondary source materials, take a position on the subject and write a balanced, persuasive essay about their position. The State of Connecticut Department of Education, as they did in the CMT’s, set a standard in these criterion-referenced exams. The exam’s standards are rigorous. Traditionally, less than one in every four sophomores across the state meet the goal on each and every one of the subtests. In New Milford, over 90% of the students perform at the proficiency levels. Those results in 2009 were far above state averages and are reported here.

Summary Statement: Sarah Noble has been designated a “School in Need of Improvement” because of the special education sub-group. While that designation still exists, it should be noted that major strides have been made in reading improvement in Grades 5 and 6 and that in many key areas over 90% of the students in the school are meeting the proficiency standards set by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Schaghticoke has also been designated as a “School in Need of Improvement” because of the special education sub-group. However, there too, the school has nearly 90% of it’s population attaining at least the proficiency levels in testing areas.

Finally, high school results compare very favorably with state high schools on CAPT test results. The high school is considered a “School in Need of Improvement” because of the performance of the sub-group of special education students.

For this school year (2009-2010), all our schools will have CALI groups (Connecticut Accountability Learning Initiatives). These groups of representative teachers and administrators will analyze data from periodic assessments of grade level students. Opportunities for grade level teachers to work together, and refine their analysis skills will be created. Groups will analyze the GLE’s (Connecticut Grade Level Expectancies) as well as the curriculum, and compared to student performance. Interventions for students will be monitored. Further professional development in SRBI (Scientific Research Based Intervention) will be provided for staff. This will enhance their ability analysis and in helping growth.