

## COVENTRY

# Local schools make strides in test scores

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COVENTRY — Coventry students are making improvements academically in math and ELA (English Language Arts), according to test results for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the district's director of curriculum, instruction and assessment Dan Cowart, who recently gave a presentation to the school committee on how the district fared in the most recent round of tests administered in the spring of this year.

There are five different performance levels students are assessed at on the PARCC test, including exceeded expectations, met expectations, approached expectations, partially met expectations and did not yet meet expectations.

This year the district compared their most recent data against that of the last two years to determine how much growth was made. Students scored 8 percent higher than last year in ELA and 16 percent higher compared to 2015. In mathematics, students improved 2 percent over last year and 11 percent over 2015. Basically, 50 percent of Coventry students met or exceeded grade level standards in ELA and 37 percent met or exceeded the standard in math.

Significant improvements were made in fourth and seventh grade ELA as well as in

fifth grade math and Coventry High School Geometry. Fourth grade ELA moved from 51 percent of students meeting or exceeding the standard to 61 percent, seventh grade ELA from 38 percent to 55 percent, fifth grade math from 35 percent to 46 percent and high school geometry from 23 to 54 percent. The district scored above the cross-state and state average in almost every grade level for ELA and math.

Cowart pointed out an overall trend in the results, namely that the number of students exceeding expectations is rising from year to year, while the number of students not meeting expectations is steadily decreasing, particularly in ELA.

"We're trending in the right direction here," said Cowart. "More kids are meeting and exceeding expectations and fewer are not meeting them."

Cowart also pointed out, "it's very difficult to exceed the standard on PARCC" and said that one thing all of the strongest performing communities in the state have in common is that they are shrinking one side of the scale while growing the other, more important end.

"We need to continue to shift all the numbers in that direction," he added.

Math will be the district's focus area going forward, though Western Coventry Elementary did experience

See SCORES, page A3

## Scores

Continued from page A1

significant growth of 33 percent since 2015 in this category.

Students in grades 10 and 11 also scored better on the PSAT/SAT than ninth graders did on the PARCC, but Cowart pointed out that those tests are often taken much more seriously than the PARCC is.

"It makes me think about the way the kids take the test in terms of their seriousness," he said. "They know the PSAT and SAT matter. There is an attitude that the PARCC doesn't matter as much. It shows me what our kids can be is probably much stronger than what the PARCC is giving us."

Next year students will be switching to the RICAS, a variation of the

Comprehensive Assessment System, which is described as being less intensive than the PARCC but administered in a similar format.

"I think what this shows is the power of a collaborative, cooperative approach to leadership," said Coventry Schools Superintendent Craig Levis. "We started working last year identifying administrators and working with leadership to be focused on student performance and

we've seen that improvement."

Coventry School Committee Chairperson Katherine Patenaude said she is "worried about the math" but happy to see improvements.

"I think there's more growth that can be made with a lot of work," she said. "I hoped we would start to tend up so it's nice to see that."

"It's very encouraging to see the improvement in

geometry," said committee member Ann Dickson. "I know there was a concerted effort at the high school and it shows when you focus your efforts on a committed group of people you can do much better."

Vice chairperson David Florio said he looks forward to seeing the data from students in the district participating in all-day kindergarten.

"We've only had all-day

K for one year, this is our second," he said. "So I'm assuming those children as they move through the system will do better."

Their goal is to continue making curriculum changes in grades preK through 12 based on this data to improve scores further in the years to come, Cowart concluded.

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