



Valuing education...we *shape the future*, today!

Parents will receive scoring reports this August

With new standards, 'proficiency' levels on state exams show sharp decline

Scores released this summer on the 2010 3-8 English and math exams showed a sharp decline in proficiency levels from recent years — not because student performance decreased but because the state has significantly changed its standards.

State officials recently announced that they were increasing the scoring targets (or “cut scores”) on the exams after research showed that a large percentage of New York’s students were not adequately prepared for college. This announcement came months after the exams were completed this past spring.

With this change, students had to score higher on the exams than they did in previous years in order to be considered proficient. For

“It’s important that parents and students understand that student performance is not on the decline. The bar has just been set higher.”

- Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Spring

example, a third grader in 2009 had to score a 650 on the English exam to meet the standard. This year, third graders had to score at least a 666. *See page 2 to compare this year’s cut scores with last year’s.*

Mohonasen Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Spring said this change doesn’t mean that students are learning less than in previous years.

“We were expecting to see a drop in the passing rate because of the higher cut scores set by the state. However, a review of our data shows that the average scores earned by our students stayed about the same across the board,” Spring said.

“It’s important that parents and students understand that student performance is not on the decline, the bar has just been set higher,” she added. “It’s clear that we need to analyze exactly what these scores are telling us and step up our game.” *See page 4 for more about raising the bar.*



On the English exam, 53 percent of students statewide and 54 percent of Mohonasen students reached proficiency. In math, the numbers were 61 percent statewide and 65 percent at Mohonasen.

By contrast, in 2009, 77 percent of students statewide and at Mohonasen were considered proficient in English. In math, 86 percent statewide and at Mohonasen reached proficiency.

See the chart on page 2 to compare proficiency rates by grade level – and to compare average scale scores. The scale score is essentially the grade that each student receives on each exam.

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

August 2010

At a glance

- ▶ **SCORING CHART**
Page 2
- ▶ **LARGER TREND TO RAISE ACHIEVEMENT**
Page 4
- ▶ **LEARN MORE**
Page 4

Q&A

Answers to your testing questions

Q. WHY DID THE STATE INCREASE THE CUT SCORES THIS YEAR?

A. State leaders said they were increasing the scores students had to get to be considered proficient in English and math in an effort to bring state standards in line with national ones. Higher standards, they said, will result in students being better prepared for high school and college. According to state officials, these changes are part of a “broader educational reform effort.” Within the next few years, the format and standards on the tests are expected to change, with the tests becoming longer and more challenging.

Q. WHY DOES MY CHILD TAKE STATE EXAMS EACH YEAR?

A. All students in grades 3-8 take a New York State

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

www.mohonasen.org

Comparing the numbers

➤ Mohonasen 3-8 ELA/math results

The chart below shows the percentage of Mohonasen students that are considered proficient by the state at each grade level. These numbers dropped significantly from last year to this year when state education leaders recently increased the Proficiency Standard Scores on each exam. Because of this change, students had to score

a higher mark this year than they did last year in order to be considered proficient in English and math.

The chart below compares this year's Proficiency Standard Scores (or "cut scores") with last year's.

The chart also shows the average scale scores Mohonasen students received

on the exams. These scores are essentially the grades that students earned on the exams and are used to classify students into one of the four performance levels -- Level 1 being below the learning standards; Level 2 meeting the basic standard; Level 3 meeting the proficiency standard and Level 4 exceeding the proficiency standard.

	% AT LEVELS 3 AND 4		MEAN SCALE SCORES		NYS PROFICIENCY STANDARD SCORE (A.K.A. "CUT SCORE")		
	08-09	09-10	08-09	09-10	08-09	09-10	
Grade 3	ELA	73	54	666.8	665.6	650	666
	Math	93	73	690.7	697.3	650	684
Grade 4	ELA	81	63	672.5	674.6	650	668
	Math	86	70	685.3	687.3	650	676
Grade 5	ELA	83	47	676.0	669.7	650	666
	Math	91	64	686.4	684.1	650	674
Grade 6	ELA	78	62	661.9	666.2	650	662
	Math	71	65	663.0	682.4	650	674
Grade 7	ELA	81	47	667.7	662.6	650	664
	Math	94	64	682.7	685.0	650	670
Grade 8	ELA	66	44	656.3	657.8	650	658
	Math	77	54	666.9	672.2	650	673

"If you want to compare apples to apples on these exams, you have to look at the scale scores. These numbers show that Mohonasen students, on average, achieved scores that were just as high – or in some cases higher – than in the past."

- Dr. Kathleen Spring, Superintendent

➤ Students not learning less

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

EXTRA HELP AVAILABLE

Under the state's testing system, the scale scores are used to classify students into one of four performance levels, with those achieving at Level 3 or 4 meeting or exceeding proficiency and those scoring at a Level 1 or 2 falling below the proficiency standard. Students who do not reach proficiency on the exam are typically entitled to receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Yet, because the Board of Regents anticipated such a shift statewide and was concerned about the costs it would carry, it has amended AIS requirements for the coming year to give districts some flexibility.

That said, Spring said Mohonasen will be offering services to any student who needs them.

Individual students' testing reports for 2010 are expected to be mailed to households in late August. Parents who have questions about their child's report should call their building principal or Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Patrick McGrath (356-8205).



...we *shape the future*, today!

Q&A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

exam every year in English language arts (ELA) and math. District leaders use the scores on these exams to track student progress and determine areas of weakness – both for individual students and within each grade level.

The scores on these exams are also used to determine school and district accountability under federal education guidelines set by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. In the five years since this scoring system has been in place, all of Mohonasen schools have met the testing targets and have been considered “in good standing.”

Q. WHEN ARE THE EXAMS TAKEN? WHEN ARE THE SCORES RELEASED?

A. In 2009-10, the exams were administered in late April and early May. In 2010-2011, the exams will be administered in May. For exact dates, visit www.mohonasen.org. The results are typically released by the state during the summer.

Q. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD PASSED THE STATE EXAMS?

A. Each student receives a scale score on each exam. These scores are then compared to the Proficiency Standard Scores – sometimes called cut scores – that are set by the state. Based on how his/her score compares to the cut score, each student is classified into one of four performance levels:

- ★ Level 4: Exceeding the proficiency standard
- ★ Level 3: Meeting the proficiency standard
- ★ Level 2: Meeting the basic standard
- ★ Level 1: Scoring below the learning standard

If a student scores at a Level 3 or 4, he/she is considered proficient,

sometimes referred to as “passing” the test. Students scoring at Levels 1 or 2 typically receive extra help to strengthen their English and math skills.

Q. MY CHILD SCORED A 2 ON THE ENGLISH EXAM. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

A. There are a variety of reasons why a student may not have reached proficiency on one, or both, of the state exams. For this reason, school leaders look at each child’s test results to see what his/her strengths and weaknesses are. By doing this, they can target individual instruction to better meet each student’s needs – and find larger patterns to identify problem areas within each grade level or across the curriculum.

One thing it doesn’t mean is that your child learned any less this past school year or is achieving at a lower level in school.

Any parent who is concerned about their child’s performance on either the state ELA or math exam – or in school in general – should call their child’s building principal or the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

Q. MY CHILD SCORED A 2 ON BOTH OF THESE EXAMS FOR THE FIRST TIME. WILL HE RECEIVE EXTRA HELP NEXT YEAR?

A. Yes. Any Mohonasen student who scored at a Level 2 or below on one or both of the 2009-10 state exams will receive some type of academic intervention services (AIS) next year, depending on their individual needs.

Parents of students who require AIS services will be contacted by their child’s school.



Q. MY CHILD SCORED A 4 ON BOTH EXAMS. WHAT IS BEING DONE TO MAKE SURE SHE IS BEING CHALLENGED IN SCHOOL?

A. There are several opportunities for Mohonasen students who excel in school to be challenged. Parents should contact their child’s building principal to learn more.

Q. HOW IS MOHONASEN PREPARING FOR THIS “BROADER, STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL REFORM EFFORT”?

A. While district leaders agree that it is difficult and frustrating to see proficiency rates decline so drastically as the result of these changes in scoring procedures, they also agree with state and federal education officials when they say we need to ensure that more students are prepared for college – and the 21st-Century workplace.

District educators continue to look at the state testing data to determine areas of weakness and they will be using this data to make necessary changes and curriculum improvements at all levels. Along with this will come increased and more focused professional development to ensure that all teachers receive any necessary training that accompanies higher state standards for students.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dominic Cafarelli, *President*
Gary Spadaro, *Vice President*
Tom Andriola
Nancy del Prado
Eileen French
Mark Sabatini
Joseph Salamone

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Kathleen Spring

EDITOR

Adrienne Leon

*Produced in cooperation with the
Capital Region BOCES Communications
Service.*

Mohonasen

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2072 Curry Road
Schenectady, NY 12303

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 797
Schenectady, NY

POSTAL CUSTOMER



➤ Larger trend to raise student achievement

The new changes to the scoring method were based in part on a series of studies indicating that scoring a Level 3 was not by itself a strong enough predictor of a students' future success on high school Regents exams or college coursework, according to the state education department.

Within the next few years, the format and standards on



the state tests are expected to change as well, with the tests becoming longer and more challenging.

The changes were announced in late May by the Board of Regents as part of a broader educational reform effort to align the state curriculum with national standards.

"Proficiency' on our exams has to mean something real; no good purpose is served when we say that a child is proficient when that child is not," Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch said in a recent news release.

Spring said district leaders are still reviewing Mohonasen's testing data to identify problem areas – both for individual students and each grade level.

"As always, our goal is to see every student succeed to the best of their ability and these exams are one indicator of many that aid us in achieving this goal," Spring said. "We will continue to take a close look at these results and look for ways to improve teaching and learning for the students of Mohonasen."

While Spring said it is difficult to see such a large drop in proficiency levels, she adds that Mohonasen is already focused on making sure students are more prepared for college and the 21st-Century workplace.

"We applaud this move by state leaders to increase standards," she said. "Now we must all work together to implement these standards in ways that are good for kids."

Learn more

The New York State testing system and the No Child Left Behind legislation are very complex and can leave many parents and taxpayers wondering, "What does this mean for my child?" or "How does this affect me and my family?"

Anyone with questions about the tests, an individual child's score, a school or the district's overall proficiency numbers or anything else relating to New York State exams, should call the district's Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Patrick McGrath at 356-8205 or any of the building principals. More information can also be found on the New York State Education Department's website at www.nysed.gov.