

Broken Arrow, Jenks lead local suburbs in test results

By: NORA FROESCHLE
Tulsa World Staff Writer
7/25/2008

2008 Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests for Tulsa-area schools

KEY: **Math** **Reading** Figures indicate the percentage of students who earned a satisfactory or advanced score

School District	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Broken Arrow	90 95 96 98	97 92	92 88	92 86	95 94	
Jenks	91 95 94 97	97 93	97 95	97 94	96 94	
Union	82 94 87 96	92 92	93 90	85 80	88 89	
Sand Springs	80 91 84 95	92 96	95 91	79 72	92 93	
Owasso	93 99 97 98	95 95	91 92	92 93	89 90	
Tulsa	77 86 81 92	87 84	73 73	73 72	77 77	

SOURCE: School districts

Tulsa World

district's strong scores, with significant jumps in sixth- and eighth-grade math scores, is the realization of district wide goals.

Suburban school districts continue to record strong scores in reading and math proficiency on annual state tests. Broken Arrow and Jenks reported gains in third through eighth grade on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. Other large suburban districts saw mixed results.

Gayla Nida, executive director of curriculum development and school improvement for Broken Arrow Public Schools, said the

"It's a confirmation of our instructional model that we've been following through the years. Our goal is slow, steady progress," Nida said.

Sand Springs recorded dramatic gains in sixth-grade reading and math scores, but decreases in reading and math proficiency for third-graders.

Union saw significant improvement in sixth-grade math scores, but a notable drop in seventh-grade reading scores.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 requires 100 percent proficiency in reading and math for all students by 2013-14.

Marvene Johnston, director of special projects at Owasso Public Schools, said the idea of 100 percent proficiency is a "scary prospect," but the effort to reach the goal has been valuable and has focused staff on core subject curriculum. Owasso's district scores were all above the 90th percentile, but a few sites saw steep drops in math scores. Some Owasso sites did reach 100 percent proficiency in certain areas, with fifth-grade math scores at Mills Elementary jumping seven percentage points to 100 percent. Although fifth-grade math scores at Barnes Elementary did not reach 100 percent, they rose by 12 points to 98 percent. Johnston said the jump at Barnes is the result of a concerted effort.

"They didn't like their math scores last year," she said.

The teachers' effort and the addition of tutors and new computer software helped, but Johnston said the school's ability to compare the scores has its limits.

"It's a different group of kids; we're comparing last year's fifth-graders to this year's fifth-graders," she said.

The scores can, however, reveal weaknesses in curriculum, she said.

"You can see weaknesses in specific areas," such as fractions, Johnston said.

Sand Springs' scores in sixth-grade reading jumped by 15 percent. Sixth-grade math scores had a comparable jump of 12 points, up to 95 percent. Robert Franklin, assistant superintendent for

curriculum and instruction for Sand Springs Public Schools, said the jump in Clyde Boyd Middle School's scores to 91 percent and 95 percent in reading and math respectively came because of hard work.

"We struggled so mightily last year," he said.

Sand Springs saw a 14-point drop in sixth-grade reading scores, from 90 to 76 last year, prompting faculty and administrators to meet and attempt to figure out what went wrong and how to fix it.

"There were a lot of long faces with the teachers, but they rode with us, and they stuck it out," Franklin said. "I'm really proud of them."

Sand Springs' third-grade scores for reading and math were lower this year. But Franklin said the percentage of students from impoverished homes has increased within the district, and 65 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch. By the eighth grade, however, Franklin said, the school system is succeeding in increasing scores.

"If your poverty count has gone up and your test scores are going up by eighth grade that means you're doing early intervention well and making the right moves," he said.

Franklin agrees with Johnston about the positive effect of No Child Left Behind despite some flaws.

"There are some ill-advised specifics of NCLB, but it is causing us to focus, and that is a good thing," he said. "I feel like we're moving in the right direction, but we have not one week, not one day to rest, because if we let down for one second, it will get away from us."