

Superintendent Shawn Dilly's Column 2 for May:

At the Mineral County Board of Education Meeting held April 21, 2015, I provided everyone in attendance a copy of the Mineral County Schools Assessments of achievement based on mandated test scores.

Mineral County Schools are "in transition" based the A through F grading system adopted by the State. The system sets target goals of achievement for the Year 2020 and the scores on the WestTest II reflect each school's percentage of achievement in reaching that goal. Only one school in Mineral County has reached its goal for 2020 with the current test scores.

And while that is good our other schools have not fared as well in academic proficiency.

Frankfort High School achieved the highest rating of "Success" by scoring at 118 percent of the target index score of 65.92, and based on a Year 2020 target range of 71.73 percent, and has achieved 109 percent of that goal as reflected by the WestTest II scores.

The only other school in the county to achieve "Success" was New Creek Primary School where students scored 104 percent of a target index of 68.40 and achieved 95 percent of the goal for 2020.

The other schools in the county fall into the lower categories of "Transition," "Focus," and "Support." No county school fell into the lowest category "Priority."

Elk Garden Primary School achieved a 42.83 index score which is 69 percent of the target for the test and 57 percent of the 2020 goal. Fort Ashby Primary's index score of 39.96 is 72 percent of target and 54 percent of the 2020 goal. The scores put both schools in the "Transition" category.

Frankfort Middle School achieved a 63.50 index scores which is 117 percent of target and 98 percent of the 2020 goal. Burlington Primary School's index score of 29.98 is 70 percent of target and only 40 percent of the 2020 target. These scores put both schools in the "Focus" category.

Keyser High School, Keyser Primary-Middle School, and Frankfort Intermediate School test scores put them into the "Support" category. Keyser High School scored an index of 52.04, which is 73 percent of the target index score and

73 percent of the 2020 goal. Frankfort Intermediate students had an index score of 42.61, 67 percent of the target and 57 percent of the 2020 goal.

Keyser Primary-Middle School had not been divided into the new Primary school at the time of the testing and thus the Middle School scores don't reflect the separation. The school's index score on the WestTest II is 27.25, 61 percent of the target index score and 42 percent of the 2020 goal.

That was the test that was.

By looking at each school's achievement toward the 2020 scoring goal, it is evident that test scores must come up considerably in order to meet the challenges presented by the state in the new grading system as well as the Next Generation Standards and Smarter Balance Assessment.

The line graph on Page 2 of the handout I provided shows us what happens when new testing is introduced. In 2007-08, Mineral County students were scoring in the upper 60 to 82 percent range. The test was changed and the scores started dropping. In 2008-09, they had gone down to the upper 40 to mid-50 range and by 2009-10 they bottomed out to the upper 20 to upper 30 percent range.

In subsequent years we should have seen an increase in scores in the four subject areas being tested, mathematics, reading, science and social studies, but that hasn't happened in Mineral County. I did find that in Clay County the scores did start to rise somewhat.

The assessment is not based totally on academic proficiency but also looks at attendance, drop-out rates, and graduation rates and Mineral County has done well in addressing those issues in recent years and the scores are among the highest in the state. Enrollment has also improved slightly.

The drop in test scores has been blamed on the change in tests mandated by the state.

So what is going to happen if we continue doing the same things we have been doing for the last several years?

The challenge that is looming is huge. Tests are going to change again and the tests we are facing in the future are going to be much more difficult than ever in the past.

The tests of the future will measure our accountability as educators as well as student achievement. It is for this reason, I believe we need to be more collaborative in planning for the future of our schools. That means giving teachers more time to work with each other and giving others who have a stake in our schools more opportunities to provide input and expand opportunities for students.

The summit to be held on Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Keyser High School Auditorium will be a first step on the road to greater achievement for students and you are cordially invited to attend and participate as we move forward.

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