



NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

“WINDOWS ON OUR SCHOOLS”

TEST RESULTS

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

2005 - 2006

A Message to the Reader

The New Milford Schools keep a close eye on student performance. This document, "Windows on New Milford Schools", is designed to allow its readers a look at our schools' academic performance.

There are lots of numbers associated with the scores on the following pages. Many of those numbers – most actually – present New Milford's students' achievement in a favorable light; students ordinarily do pretty well in achievement areas. However, occasionally some do not. We make no attempt to hide our blemishes. We use that data to work with staff to improve performance and to address areas of concern.

There also is a veritable alphabet of assessment measures that educators use to look at student performance – DRP, SAT, SAT II, CMT, CAPT, LAS, and AP. The first section of this booklet attempts to provide a very brief explanation of those tests to the non-professional educator without the jargon and without the "educationese" that often accompanies such test results. Our explanations are designed to be straightforward and easy to grasp. Sometimes in doing so, we risk not explaining a nuance about a test that may be important to educators, but perhaps is not as vital to the reader. If we have over simplified some explanations, we apologize, but we hope that the reader will appreciate that this document is designed to be read. Creating too technical a document will mean it probably won't be read. We hope this report provides a snapshot of how our students are performing in a context that helps parents see both the system's successes and the challenges that remain.

One last thing of note is that this document does not include mention of significant successes that don't get measured by an alphabet of common assessments, but that are important to many of our students and teachers. For example, neither student performance in juried art shows nor the high school band's winning performance at a music festival nor our champion athletic teams get measured in a quantifiable way that can be reflected here as test results. Yet all of those events represent powerful and significant learning experiences for the students involved in them.

As a rule, New Milford's students perform above state and national averages. Our students' performance remains competitive when compared to communities that are deemed as demographically most like us. As a general rule, the longer at student is with us, the better they tend to perform against both state and national averages. Our high school results look much stronger as a rule than do our fourth grade results.

Thomas A. Mulvihill
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

September 8, 2006

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 CMT's 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:

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 grades 3 - 8

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 students in grades 3 through 8. These tests were generally administered in March, 2006. Those tests are criterion-referenced tests; that is to say their results are reported as the percent of students who meet a set goal. 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, SAT II and AP Tests - Students at the high school take SAT exams. Approximately 95% of our seniors take the exam each year (compared to a national figure of about 48%). 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.

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 a U.S. History Achievement test after completing a U.S. History/American Studies course. Some New Milford seniors and juniors 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 is important 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 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.

One hundred twenty five (125) students (unduplicated count; some take more than one AP test) students took 209 Advanced Placement Exams in 2006 at New Milford High School. Keep in mind the scores are reported on a 1-5 basis: 5 = Extremely Qualified; 4 = Well Qualified; 3 = Qualified; 2 = Possibly Qualified; 1 = No Recommendation. Those scores are also reported in this packet.

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 exceeds 125 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, though most would be deemed proficient. In New Milford, better than 1 in 3 met the goals in every subject area and over 90% of the students perform at the proficiency level.

Educational Reference Group - (DRG) - Some tests - Connecticut Mastery Tests and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests - are reported by the State Department of Education officials by something called the DRG. The Demographic Reference Group factors in a number of demographic traits of a town such as - per capita income, percentage of the population with college or professional degrees, and the percentage of the population receiving economic aid. New Milford is deemed an DRG "D" town, which groups it with twenty other communities.

DRG communities in which New Milford is grouped include:

Berlin	East Granby	North Haven	Wallingford
Bethel	East Hampton	Old Saybrook	Waterford
Branford	East Lyme	Rocky Hill	Watertown
Clinton	Ledyard	Shelton	Wethersfield
Colchester	Milford	Southington	Windsor
Cromwell	Newington	Stonington	

New Milford's performance on the CMT and CAPT can be compared by DRG. Where that data are available we have reported the figures.

Summary Statement - The data and report show that New Milford students perform above state averages on most every measure. Our students usually perform competitively with DRG averages as well. Generally, the scores against the state national or ERG averages improve the longer the student is in New Milford's schools.

The school system is not satisfied. There are lots of opportunities for improvement. Reading scores tend to be not quite as strong as mathematics results for example; writing performance at some grade levels in 2006 were disappointing. System educators look carefully at these results and create school and system-wide initiatives to always improve student performance.

DRP

DEGREES OF READING POWER

2005 - 2006