

# ACT results, new school accountability standards presented

By Thomas Franz 

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — The scores for Chippewa Valley Schools students on the ACT are on the rise, according to a presentation during a Board of Education meeting earlier this month provided by Ed Skiba, director of secondary education for the district.

Across the district, 1,285 ACT exams were taken by CVS students in 2015, with an average score of 21.1, which is higher than the state average of 20.1

The district's results in all four categories of the test — math, science, reading and English — along with the composite score, were all the highest they've been since 2011.

"We've gone through a lot of changes with the Common Core and we're constantly adjusting things, but with the ACT, we've been working at this for quite a while," Skiba said. "It just takes a few years for the things you implement to actually manifest themselves, but I think we're at a pretty good point in time because every year it seems to be going up for us."

As it relates to college readiness, Skiba's report also detailed the percentage of ACT-tested students who would be predicted to get a B or above for college-level coursework.

Skiba's report detailed that half of students who score 18 in English composition are predicted to get a B or better in college coursework, while 75 percent will get a C or better.

In math and social science, a score of 22 provides the same benchmarks for success in college courses, while a science score of 23 would do the same.

In the district, roughly 64 percent of students were determined college-ready in English, 45 percent in math, 41 percent in science, and 45 percent in social science. About 28 percent were determined to be college-ready in all four standards.

All of those district statistics are slightly above state figures.

"In the last five years or so, we've been going up every year," Skiba said. "It takes time, but they have paid off. We've put a lot of focus on strengthening our language arts and math programs, so every little thing makes a difference."

Skiba noted that his ACT report would be the last of its kind, as Michigan is switching to the SAT, as it's the required exam for college acceptance in 2016.

Skiba said that the state is saving a significant amount of money by switching, and all students will have free access to the Khan Academy, which provides online courses for SAT preparation.

"One of our goals is to have all eighth-grade kids hooked up to the Khan Academy by the time they leave middle school. They can get help with any class they want," he said.

ACT scores will still be accepted by colleges, but whereas the ACT used to be the required exam with the SAT being optional, it will now be reversed next year.

Also as part of his report, Skiba presented a new accountability system by which schools across Michigan will be ranked.

The accountability system, called Student Growth Percentiles, will determine which schools are best by comparing the growth of students who score similarly on the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress, or M-Step.

For example, Skiba said the growth of students with a score of 500 on the M-Step will be compared the following year with other students who score 500.

Schools will take this year's and next year's M-Step data to use as a baseline, and in 2017-18, schools will begin to be ranked.

"There are many states in the U.S. that use this system. We're actually one of the last ones to go this route," Skiba said. "We've been told this is the fairest system to go to, so based on the growth of each student from one year to the next, that's how our score as far as we're doing as a school, and as a district, will be determined."

The system will also reflect the effectiveness of teachers on their students.

"It doesn't matter if a teacher has a classroom loaded with low-end kids. They'll be compared to all similar kids who have those same scores. It will make for a much more fair interpretation of how well teachers have done in getting those kids, wherever they're at, to grow," Skiba said.

Skiba added that the MISD completed a mock projection for county schools with the new accountability system, and Dakota High and Chippewa Valley placed No. 1 and 2 in the county, respectively.

"In my mind, our teachers here, especially the high school teachers, have done an exceptional job of moving kids from one year to the next," Skiba said. "That's telling me that our high school teachers are taking their kids, wherever they're at, whether low, average or high ability, and moving them along as far as they can."