

## WUSD Analyzes AIMS Test Results

The state of Arizona recently released last spring's AIMS test results and I would like to provide a quick breakdown for the community. Math and reading passage rates continue to increase moving from 72% of students passing in 2012 to 79% in 2014.

This said, the District's area of challenge relates to its "growth" scores. How growth is calculated is that each student is compared to a group of other students, statewide, which achieved the same score in the previous year. The state then analyzes the "growth" of these students in the successive year and their scores are rank ordered by percentage. As an example, those students in WUSD who scored in the bottom 25th percentile the previous year, when compared to their peers statewide grew just slightly better than average (51st percentile). In math and reading our students only grew at the 41<sup>st</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> percentiles respectively. Reasons for low growth this past year relate to two primary issues: The fact that we taught to the new Arizona College & Career Readiness Standards in math as an investment in the future success of our students and also the high percentage of new teachers who are just coming up to speed in the positions.

To see our students become some of the highest achieving in the state our growth scores must change, which we trust will begin to happen with an increased focus on individual student growth and the investment we have made in teaching the new math standards. My goal would be for our students to grow at around the 60th percentile, meaning that they grew more in one year than 60% of the other students they are compared with statewide. Sorry for the brief lesson in statistics, but I trust it helps everyone gain a clearer view of both where we are strong and where additional work is needed.

Overall, using the state's rating system the district continues to earn a "B" grade, although our total points decreased from 130 to 127, as a result of the transition to implement the new standards.

Wickenburg High School, which converted to the new standards two years ago, raised their letter grade to "B" after increasing 15 points from last year. For the past two years the high school has been implementing the ACT Quality Core Curriculum. This rigorous curriculum shift has taken time and effort and the school is seeing positive results in student data, not only on the AIMS test, but also in the number of sophomores passing the ACT Quality Core-End of Course Assessments which directly ties to graduation requirements.

The district's K-8 schools: Hassayampa, Vulture Peak, and Festival Foothills began the curriculum shift last year to the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. This shift has caused an expected dip in AIMS scores this past year moving Festival Foothills and Vulture Peak down a letter grade. This dip is partly due, as mentioned earlier, to the AIMS assessments being unaligned to the new state standards that were partially implemented last year (in math, but not reading) and will be being fully implemented this year.

This year, Arizona's State Board will select a rigorous, cost efficient, statewide assessment aligned with Arizona's academic standards and educational priorities. The new assessment will be announced at the end of October and will be administered next spring to students in grades 3-10. We look forward to this

transition so that we can see how our students are actually performing under the new standards. Although we know that initial passage rates will be low in Wickenburg and statewide, we do believe the leap in learning standards and expectations will pay huge dividends for our students as time progresses. I will be sure to keep the community informed regarding the new assessment and the work which our staff is doing throughout this year to move each student to the next academic level.