

DEVIL DOG ADMINISTRATION NEWS

March 3, 2005

SOUTH CONWAY COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Volume 1, Issue 3

Superintendent: Doug Adams

State mandated testing is set to occur for a majority of our students during the week of March 7-11. Students in Kindergarten through the 2nd grade will be assessed on a developmentally appropriate reading test. Students in grades 3 thru 8 will be assessed on a criterion referenced test in math and literacy, often referred to as the benchmark test. Additionally, students in grades 3 thru 9 will be assessed on a norm referenced test in math and reading. The test is called the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The 11th grade students will be assessed in literacy in what is referred to as the end of course (EOC) test. Algebra I and Geometry students will be assessed in April. As you can see, your sons and daughters will be very busy this week.

During the 2003 special session, the Legislature adopted Act 35, which has an impact on all of our students. I will attempt to outline some of the provisions that may impact your son or daughter. Under A.C.A. §6-15-2001, "each student's progression from one(1) grade to another be determined, in part, upon proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics." Under A. C.A. §6-15-2002, the comprehensive program for student progress shall include, "the student's mastery level with respect to the academic content standards." Additionally, if a student is not proficient on the state wide assessments, including end-of-course examinations, the student shall be remediated. An academic improvement plan will be developed for each student that is not proficient. Students who are not proficient and who do not participate in their academic improvement plan shall be retained, under A.C.A. §6-15-2003. Schools are also required to frequently monitor student's progress in meeting performance levels.

We all need to work together to ensure that our students, your sons and daughters, have achieved mastery of the academic content standards, so that they may be proficient on the state mandated tests. We will work tirelessly to achieve that expectation. Whatever it takes, we are committed to see that all of our students are proficient. We wish them well on their testing March 7-11.

Upcoming Events

March 8-10

Benchmark Exams 3rd-8th

March 11

End of Course Literacy

March 7-11

Norm-Reference Test 3rd-9th

March 18

End of the Quarter (48 days)

March 21st-25th

Spring Break—School Closed

We're on the Web!
www.sccsd.org

Morrilton High School: Brian Bunch

The End of Literacy Test will be administered to all Morrilton High School juniors on March 9th and 10th. Testing will take place in the morning each day. Therefore, it is important that students not only be at school on those days, but also that they be on time and not be allowed to check out before noon on those days.

In addition, all ninth graders will be administered the Iowa Basic Skills Test on Friday, March 11th. Again, it is important that all ninth grade students be at school on that day, be on time, and not be checked out during the day.

Morrilton High School faculty and staff ask that parents encourage their sons/daughters to strive to achieve the best scores possible. Please keep in mind that these scores could effect your child's future!

Morrilton Middle School: Robert Toney

The students at Morrilton Middle School will take the Benchmark Exams on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday March 8-10. They will take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) on Friday, March 11. The Benchmark Exams are designed to measure our students' proficiency on the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks, the curriculum developed by the Arkansas Department of Education. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is a nationally normed test that is designed to measure our students' achievement when compared to the scores of students from all over the nation.

Most parents of middle school aged students know the tips for sending their students to school ready to do their best on test day. A good night's sleep and a good breakfast have long been accepted as good ideas for children on testing days. While these are important, and in fact necessary, for optimal performance, I want to focus on another aspect of student test readiness. An additional and equally important factor for student success on the state tests is the effort that we make to show students the importance of the tests. These tests are a measure of our Morrilton students' performance as compared to other students throughout Arkansas and on the ITBS as compared to others nationwide. Our students are as strong academically as others throughout the state and nation. Our teachers rate favorably with other teachers and our community is very supportive of our students and schools. Therefore it falls to each of us, parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders to emphasize to our students to do their very best when they take the Benchmark and ITBS. Our students' results are first, a reflection of each student's academic achievement; second, a measure of our school's effectiveness; and third, a measure of the quality of our community to outside interests.

Our students have worked hard throughout the year, our teachers have provided quality instruction in an atmosphere conducive to student learning, and our administration and school board have provided the resources necessary for success. I urge each of you: every parent, grandparent, neighbor, and interested patron to provide a word of encouragement and of high expectations to your child and any other student in which you come in contact between now and March 8. With your encouragement and the preparation that our students have received, I know that Morrilton Middle School students will do their best and will be successful on these tests.

Reynolds Elementary: Shawn Halbrook

Monday, March 7th, 2005, is a very important day for the learning community at Reynolds Elementary. This is the day that Reynolds will be administering the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to our students. The ITBS is a norm-referenced test that is mandated by the state of Arkansas to be given to our students here at Reynolds. A norm-referenced test is a standardized testing instrument by which the test-taker's (your student at Reynolds) performance is interpreted in relation to the performance of a group of peers who have previously taken the test. In short, our students' scores will be compared to other students' scores that have already taken the test. 50% is considered average on these types of tests.

We have been preparing for this test all school year. Some of the activities that we have been doing are teaching test taking skills and strategies, taking practice tests in class, working with small group instruction during Focus Learning time and using activity time once a week to take mock tests.

Everybody has an important responsibility in nurturing our stu-

dents' academic growth and success. Teachers, staff, parents, guardians, family members, volunteers and community members all play an important role in the education of the students here in the South Conway County School District.

To help our students be even more successful for the ITBS we ask that parents/guardians do the following for their child:

1. Ensure a good night's sleep on Sunday night
2. Ensure that they eat a great breakfast on Monday morning

Be positive, tell your child(ren) to try their best and that you love them

It is a pleasure to work with such a fine group of students and staff here at Reynolds. The staff and I are very proud of each one of them, and we believe that our students are the best! The results from the ITBS will validate all the hard work and sacrifice by all those that are part of our learning community here at Reynolds Elementary!

West Side Kindergarten: Charlotte Heidenreich

West Side Kindergarten students are preparing to take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills the week of March 7-11. Students are excited about taking the test and are being so cooperative and attentive toward all directions.

Parents, please have your child at school no later than 8:00 A.M. each day. We will begin the test each day at 9:30 A.M. The children need time to prepare and get ready for the test. NO child will be admitted to the classroom after the test has begun.

Please make sure your child gets plenty of rest and a nutritious breakfast each day. Your child may eat breakfast in the cafeteria if he/she arrives before 8:00 A.M.

Students at West Side are getting ready for their annual Kindergarten Talent Show which will be held at the H.B. White Auditorium, Friday, April 8, at 7:00 P.M. This is a fun and exciting time for students, staff, and families.

North Side Elementary: Velda Thompson

The week of March 8-10, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will be taking the Benchmark Exam, a state-mandated test that was designed to determine how well our children have learned, and how well they can apply what they have learned in problem-solving situations. The test is scored by placing the children's performance into one of four categories: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic. The children must reach the level of "Proficient" in order to meet the Arkansas educational standards. They are considered to be functioning "on grade level," if they are proficient. Act 999 of 1999, the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program, requires that we develop a Student Academic Improvement Plan for each student who does not score at the proficient level on any part of the Benchmark Exam. The improvement plan will provide for remediation in the areas in which a student has deficiencies.

On Friday, March 11, North Side students will be taking the reading and math portions of the state-mandated Iowa Test of Basic Skills. This test measures the achievement of our students by comparing their performance with that of other students across the nation, who are on the same grade level.

The results of the Benchmark Exam and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are important in determining whether our students are meeting state expectations for learning, and the guidelines for administering the test are very strict. A portion of the test will be given every morning, Tuesday through Friday. Testing will end by the time the children go to lunch.

The amount of time the children are given to complete these tests is limited, therefore, interruptions to the class are not allowed. If children arrive at school after testing has begun, they

will not be allowed to enter their classroom until that section of the test is over. Because the test is timed, classes will not be interrupted so that children can check out of school while the test is being given.

The Benchmark Exam and Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are required by the state of Arkansas, so any portion that is missed must be given as a make-up test. It takes all morning to give one portion of the test; it will take the same amount of time to make up a missed portion. It is very important that children be at school this week, unless they are sick, and that they arrive at school before 8:00 a.m. Children who are ill and are absent from school will be given a make-up test, but the test will not be given by their regular teacher or in their regular classroom.

The Benchmark measures skills in "Literacy" and "Mathematics." Children are required to read, write, and solve problems with very little direction from the teacher. The format of the test, and the way it must be given, are somewhat stressful to many children. Stress will not improve performance. At North Side, we have been practicing the format of the test through "performance assessments" that require children to solve problems and explain their answers in writing. We are hoping that the practice we have given will help to lower the stress-level of our students.

Children who are tired or hungry may have difficulty concentrating on the Benchmark Exam. You could help improve your child's ability to do his or her best by making sure the child has plenty of sleep and eats a good breakfast each morning before the test. Parental support is greatly needed and deeply appreciated during the testing week.