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SPRING ISAT RESULTS RELEASED

STUDENTS DO BEST IN MATH IN EARLY GRADES, SCORES DECLINE IN HIGHER GRADES

BOISE - More than 90 percent of Idaho's third and fourth graders are meeting state standards in math, however, that number drops dramatically as students advance through the grades according to Spring 2006 Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) results released by the Idaho State Board of Education.

"This year's results reveal strong scores in elementary grades, particularly in math," said Dwight Johnson, Executive Director of the State Board of Education. "We see strong scores in most content areas as students advance in school, but are concerned about the downward trend in math scores as students reach higher grades. These results coupled with ISAT data over the past few years clearly indicate the need for stronger math skills in every grade. It is essential for students to understand key concepts early in their education to make the transition to more complex math skills. The State Board continues to place academic preparation as an important cornerstone for student success in higher education, the workplace and life."

In 2001, the Idaho Legislature directed the State Board of Education to create a statewide assessment. Idaho has the distinction of being one of the first states in the nation to administer their test on the computer. Students in grades two through 10 take the ISAT in mathematics, reading, and language usage, and students in grades five, seven, and 10 take an additional assessment in science. Currently, the mathematics, reading, and language usage ISATs are administered at least twice a year. ISATs are not timed, and the results are available immediately at each school district's discretion. The ISAT is a tool to help students, parents, and teachers better gauge student growth and is also used to monitor student achievement based upon content standards as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Approximately 180,500 Idaho students in grades two through 10 took the ISAT during April and May. Each student's score in grades three through eight and 10 is translated into one of four categories: below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. Below basic and basic categorization indicates the student is not yet reaching grade level expectations in the subject tested. A proficient categorization indicates the student is performing on-grade level. The advanced category means the student has a comprehensive understanding of the subject above grade level. National and state benchmarks aim for all students to perform at grade level. Proficiency rates are calculated using the results for every student in grade three through eight and 10 who obtained a valid test score. ISAT results are one of the criteria used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for federal "No Child Left Behind" regulations.

2006 Statewide Proficiency Results:

GRADE	READING	LANGUAGE USAGE	MATH
3	82.1	83.6	91.6
4	84.9	83.7	89.7
5	82.8	78.9	88.2

6	82.1	78.3	85.9
7	85.5	78.3	76.0
8	82.6	75.3	71.8
10	83.6	80.6	71.3

10th Grade and Graduation: According to State Board of Education rule, 10th graders must score at least proficient on the ISAT as one of their high school graduation requirements. Students may take the ISAT as many as nine times beginning with the student's sophomore year. Students may bank their scores once they pass a test. For instance, if a student passed reading and language usage, but not math, the student would only need to take the math test.

The graduation requirement has been phased in over three years. Students graduating in 2006 could meet the requirement by passing the test at an eighth grade level; and students graduating in 2007 at a ninth grade level. This is the first year 10th grade students must reach the 10th grade proficiency level (see "2006 Statewide Proficiency Results" above). A senior who has not passed the ISAT may petition their school district for an alternate mechanism such as reaching a specified score on the ACT or another approved standards based exam.

What's Next?

Students take ISATs twice a year: spring and fall. Students in grades two through 10 will take the tests during September and October, 2006. ISATs are not timed, students typically average 45 minutes to one hour per test. Fall scores are used to measure academic growth from year to year, while the spring test determines a student's proficiency level.

The State Board recently introduced Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) as the new testing contractor for the ISAT. DRC is headquartered in Maple Grove, Minn. and currently holds state contracts in Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) has served as the ISAT contractor for four years and will oversee the fall test in 2006.