

STANDARDIZED TESTING PROGRAM

Why we have a standardized testing program

Assessment of students happens daily in many ways and is ongoing: through observation, questioning and response, practice exercises, quizzes, tests, projects, hands on activities, to name a few. Teachers assess students to insure that learning is actually happening. We also have a standardized testing program that we use to give us additional information that assists us in helping students learn. While we believe that all assessment information should be evaluated together, and that no one piece has all of the answers, standardized testing provides us with the following features:

- * Information about current student achievement in a variety of areas and skills. Teachers do item analysis to pinpoint skill strengths and weaknesses for instructional purposes.
- * Annual growth of a student's achievement. Because the tests are "standardized," we can also track student growth from year to year.
- * Information about our student and school performance levels in comparison to the thousands of schools and students who use the test.

Fall Testing

Our students in grades one through seven take the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in October. Grades two, four, and seven will also take the Cognitive Abilities Tests. The Diocese of Youngstown Office of Catholic Schools made the decision to move to October testing for the above grades for the following reasons:

- * To enable the classroom teacher to institute appropriate intervention in the same year as the testing.
- * To provide a greater opportunity to explain assessment results to parents and answer your questions
- * To enable the teacher to make changes in course content during the current year for all students based on the results.

Summary of our complete standardized testing program

October: Grades 3-8 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

 Grades 4-7 Cognitive Abilities Test

March: Kindergarten through Gr. 2: Iowa tests of Basic Skills

 Gr. 2 Cognitive Abilities Test

 Grades 3, 5 and 8: Writing Competency test

May Grades 5 and 8: ACRE Test (assesses Catholic knowledge and values)

A directed reading assessment is given individually to students at the end of kindergarten to give further reading readiness information. It is used to identify students who

may benefit from Title One Reading support. This test may also be used with older students in order to gather more information about reading skills.

The school is currently in the process of choosing other universal assessments to mark student progress in different areas throughout the grades.

A school psychologist is available to provide more in depth testing on student ability and achievement if the team of parents and teachers feel it would be helpful for planning student services and interventions.

Relationship Between Curriculum Content and Standardized Testing

Our curriculum at each grade level is based on the Ohio Content Standards and the Diocese of Youngstown Courses of Study. Our Standardized Testing program (described above) is in place to provide accountability for our educational program.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, a national testing program, is a series of achievement tests in the areas of Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension, Language Skills, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Sources of Information. These tests provide us with information as to how well our students are achieving in these areas. We analyze the results both for individual students and for the school.

These tests are “norm-referenced,” which means our students are compared with students all over the country who take these tests. Scores are reported in percentiles. The percentile score indicates the performance of the typical Regina Coeli/St. Joseph student in relation to other students, nationally, in the same grade. For example, the RC/SJ average for grade 1 Reading last spring was 85. That means that the typical RC/SJ first grade student in Reading scored as well as or better than 85 out of 100 students nationally based on the national norms. The average or most common percentile that students who take these tests score at is 50. Our students typically average scores at the 70 percentile or above level. Our school is then also compared to other schools all over the country whose students take these tests. RC/SJ as a school last year scored at the 85 percentile of these schools. That means that our school performed as well as or better than 85 out of every 100 schools nationally who took these tests.

In addition to being able to pinpoint student strengths and weaknesses, by using this type of achievement test, we are also able to track student growth from year to year.

State Proficiency Testing

At the K-8 level, we do not give any of the state proficiency tests. These tests are strictly content-oriented, based on the Ohio Content Standards. These tests are the way the state monitors student achievement.

The Iowas provide us with content and skill information plus allows us to track annual growth.

At the high school level, our students do take the 10th grade state proficiency test: The Ohio Graduation test. As you saw in the 2007 Diocesan Report Card that was sent home, our Catholic High Schools score well above the state averages for passage of these tests.

Other Tests

Students in Grades 2, 5, and 7 also take a Cognitive Abilities Test. This is one way to assess expected student achievement correlated to actual student ability (or intelligence). At these levels, we are able to compare a student's ability with his/her level of achievement. It helps us to know if a child is working up to ability.

* Students in Grades 3 and 5 take a standardized Writing Competency Test in March. This gives us information on how well students are able to demonstrate content, organization, language use, and writing conventions in their writing.

* Students in Grade 8 take an Off-Grade Proficiency Test in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. This gives them practice in taking a proficiency test, plus provides another level of assessment that will be used by the high school to prepare students for the OGT.

Diocesan Report Card

Annually the Office of Catholic Schools publishes a diocesan report card that summarizes testing and attendance data.

A parent once wrote this letter to the editor to The Canton Repository as a response to a story on the Catholic Schools' Report Card: I would like to thank Repository education writer Melissa Griffy Seeton for her factual and well-written article, "Catholic Schools' Score High on Tests." Catholic Schools have always and continually produced top-notch, academically successful, civic-minded, and responsible young adults. In such a volatile time for public school districts, when superintendents and taxpayers are constantly at odds, we often overlook the bottom line-success of our children. Catholic Schools make this happen daily. Catholic schoolteachers believe in a well rounded, disciplined, religious-based environment. Our teachers are so firmly rooted in these beliefs that they are willing to forego the higher benefits available in teaching in a public school. A product of Catholic schools myself and a parent of Catholic schoolchildren, I thank these teachers. They do more than "make the grade:" they set the standard that everyone else should follow.