

# STATE SCORES: BELOIT PUPILS STILL STRUGGLE

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BELOIT - The School District of Beloit experienced decreases in English language arts and math and had increases in science and social science, according to testing data released by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on Tuesday.

The Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) consists of the Forward Exam given in grades through through eight, the ACT Plus Writing given at grade 11 and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) given across all tested grades to students with significant cognitive disabilities. WSAS results are a foundational component of school and district report cards that will be issued later this year.

Beloit scores continued to lag behind state averages.

According to the DPI, 43.1 percent of all Wisconsin students scored proficient or advanced in English language arts in 2017-2018, down from 44.5 percent in 2016-2017. There were 44.5 percent of Wisconsin students scoring proficient or advanced in math, up from 43.5 percent the previous year. There were 50.5 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in science, up from 50.3 percent the previous year. The numbers include Forward and DLM assessments.

In Beloit, 20.1 percent of all students scored proficient or advanced in English language arts in 2017-2018, down from 25.1 in 2016-2017. There were 18.9 percent of Beloit students scoring proficient or advanced in math, down from 19.7 percent the previous year. There were 21.4 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in science, up from the 20.4 percent the previous year.

In 2017-2018, for English language arts in the School District of Beloit, 2.4 percent of students scored in the advanced category, 17.6 percent in the proficient category, 36.4 percent in the basic category and 42.6 in the below basic category.

In 2016-2017 in the School District of Beloit, for English language arts, 4.2 percent were advanced; 20.3 were proficient; 36.0 were basic; and 38.6 below basic.

In 2017-2018, there were 2.4 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in math; 16.7 percent, proficient; 34.2 percent basic; and 45.7 below basic.

In 2016-2017, there were 2.3 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in math; 17.3 percent, proficient; 35.1 percent basic; and 44.5 percent below basic.

In 2017-2018 there were 3.8 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in science; 18.1 percent, proficient; 40.4 percent basic; and 36.8 percent below basic.

In 2016-2017, there were 3.3 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in science; 16.4 percent, proficient; 41.9 percent basic; and 37.6 percent below basic.

In 2017-2018, there were 8.6 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in social studies; 18.6 percent, proficient; 25.1 percent basic; and 45.9 percent below basic.

In 2016-2017, there were 7.9 percent of Beloit students scoring advanced in social studies; 17.0 percent, proficient; 27.1 percent basic; and 46.1 percent below basic.

The Beloit composite ACT score was 16.6 in 2017-2018, the same as the composite score as in 2016-2017. The state average score in 2017-2018 is 19.8.

According to Beloit's 11th grade ACT for ELA in 2017-2018, 17.4 percent of Beloit students are college ready compared to 40 percent for the state. In math, 14.6 percent of Beloit students are college ready, compared to the state average of 37.2. In English, 24.6 percent of Beloit students are college ready, and 52.9 percent of Wisconsin students are college ready. In science, 13.3 percent of students are college ready in Beloit while 34 percent of Wisconsin students are college ready.

"While our student performance is disappointing, we have a number of initiatives in place we believe will increase performance over time," said Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning and Innovation Anthony Bonds.

All of the school and teacher goals are aligned with the the strategic plan which focuses on improvements in literacy, math, the learning environment and family engagement. This year the district added full-time math interventionists at elementary and intermediate schools. In elementary schools the district added behavioral specialists who are charged with promoting a positive learning environment which allows principals the ability to monitor classroom instruction.

The district has expanded its Advancement Via Individual Determination program (AVID) program to help students increase study skills and college readiness, and the district expanded summer school offerings resulting in a 24 percent participation increase.

The academy model at the high school has been expanded along with initiatives to reduce cell phone distractions and increase attendance. The district will continue professional development for staff and leadership training for administrators and will continue to partner with the city on the Literacy for Life Initiative.

While there was an overall slight decrease in reading and math achievement, Bonds added a quick analysis of the data shows areas of growth for some groups of students in various subject areas. A few examples include: the percentage of students who were proficient or advanced on the third grade math assessment increased from

27.5 to 32.7 with increases for all student groups. The percentage of eighth grade students also increased in math, moving from 13.6 to 14.3. And, the percentage of eleventh grade students meeting the ACT readiness benchmark increased slightly for 14.9 to 15.

Interim Superintendent Donald Childs noted it can take three to five years to see an increase in student performance after massive initiatives are launched. Three years ago the district updated its reading curriculum and updated its math curriculum last year.

Childs also noted this year's poverty rate for the school district is up to 82 percent.

Childs said he believes turnover among staff, administration and on the board may have had some impact on scores.

"It can't help but affect what happens in classrooms," Childs said. "Morale and trust begin from the top of an organization."

Childs said he is working to instruct the board on governance so if and when new board members join, there will be a pattern of continuity and consistency. He said three of the newly appointed board members have said they won't be seeking election in April.

"Continuity and consistency will have a positive impact on morale and trust on the administrative team," Childs said.

Newly-appointed board members Jeff Klett and Nora Gard confirmed they are not running for the office in April, in response to a question posed by the *Beloit Daily News*. The newspaper was unable to reach John Wong by press time.