

The ROCKET

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Rockcastle reaps CATS rewards again

Math scores soar nine points

BY NIKKI WOOD

Rockcastle County High School has once again been rewarded for an outstanding performance on the CATS assessment.

Several departments made vast improvements this year.

Math content scores jumped nine points and on demand writing made an increase as well.

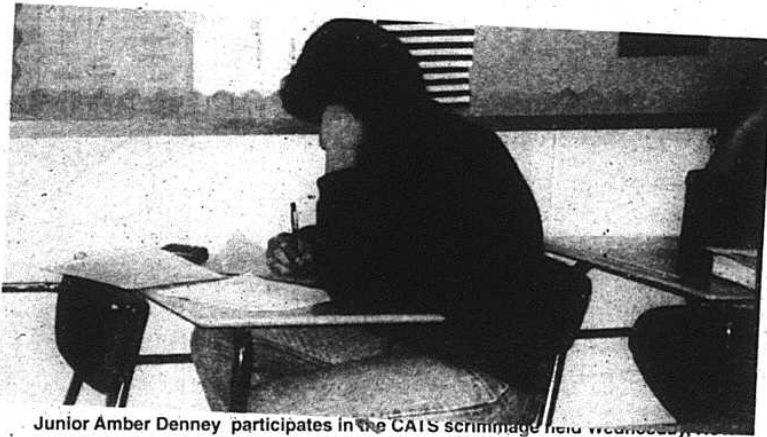
The 1999 CATS results in were a 62,9248, and they made an astonishing leap to 71,6111 in the 2000 results for mathematics.

Mr. Scott Adams, head of the math department, explained that problem solving and more hands on activities had been stressed last year in preparation for CATS.

Mr. Adams also said, "We've had more stability within the math department faculty. Not as many teachers have been hired so we are used to each other and we work really well together. We do things similarly."

The dramatic difference between scores may leave some people wondering if there was just a difference in the brain power of last years juniors and the classes before them.

Geometry teacher Ms. Dawn



Junior Amber Denney participates in the CATS scrimmage held Wednesday.

Quigley explained, "I don't think that there was really that much difference between [the class that was tested last year] and juniors that took it before."

"I think it's that our department had been handing out a common open response item every two to three weeks. The students had more practice."

On demand writing is another content area that increased its score this year.

Novice scores dropped 22% from 1999, while apprentice rose 9%, and 15% more students achieved a proficient rating.

Mrs. Jennifer Mattingly, head of the English department, believes the increased scores have something to do with the use of direct instruction in on demand writing.

"One of the things we did last year was teach the students how to take the test and break down the writing process into manageable chunks of time," said Mrs. Mattingly.

She also emphasized it is important for students to realize that on demand writings are scored using the same criteria as portfolio pieces. However, students only

have an hour and a half to complete the on demand.

Changes in other departments may increase their scores in the years to come.

One department making such changes is Social Studies.

The social studies test covers six areas: world history, American history, geography, sociology, government, and economics.

According to teacher Mr. Adam Coleman, world history is in the process of being shifted from a senior class to a sophomore class. Geography, economics, sociology, and government are all incorpo-

rated into the 18 week Global Issues. U.S. History will remain a junior class.

Soon, almost all of the core content covered by the test will be covered well before students actually take the test.

Arts and Humanities scores may be in for a change this year, as well. This year's juniors are the first class to have taken the now required History and Appreciation of Visual and Performing Arts.

Taught by Ms. Allene Cornelius, Arts and Humanities is a class focused on creative writing, dance, drama, music, art, and multicultural studies.

Each area is covered by the CATS assessment.

All other subject areas stayed at nearly the same level this year, but that level is high enough that when combined with the better math scores and increased on demand, the school will be rewarded again this year.

Just what are the rewards given to the school? Principal Ruth Allen explained that they were money given to the school from the state.

According to Mrs. Allen the Site Based Decision Making Council decides what is done with the

CONTINUED TO PAGE 15

Writing policy stresses student accountability

BY CARISSA SETTLES

Site Based Decision Making Council members reviewed a proposal on a possible writing policy at the October 5 meeting. If approved the policy will affect juniors and seniors for years to come.

Mr. Chris Frith, freshmen English teacher, presented the Writing Portfolio policy proposal, formed by the English Department.

If approved, the policy will require that all juniors and seniors will be required to have an apprentice level portfolio piece from each core content area. A novice piece will result in failure of the course.

"The writing policy will hold students more accountable for their portfolio," said Mr. Frith.

Although the proposal will affect junior and senior classes, freshmen and sophomores will not be faced with the requirements of the proposal.

"Freshmen and sophomore students will continue to have a working writing folder, but will not have a formal letter to the reviewer," said Mr. Frith.

Writing skills such as grammar, sentence structure and punctuation are all things that freshmen and sophomores will continue to improve on.

Although the policy is intended to increase test scores, some council members were unsure of the policy.

Council member Dana Singleton expressed the concern that it seemed unfair to fail a student with a one-hundred percent average due to a poor portfolio piece.

According to Mr. Frith, faculty reaction has also been mixed.

Mr. Frith feels that while some teachers believe the policy will only affect students and test scores positively, others feel that writing isn't their responsibility as a core content teacher.

Writing Cluster Leader Ms. Allene Cornelius believes teachers should not see writing as an 'add-on' responsibility.

"Writing is imperative, and a positive attitude makes writing less

of a chore and more of a challenge," said Ms. Cornelius.

The proposal is being revised, and a second reading of the policy will take place during the November SBDM session.

An update on the CATS test scores, new club information, and the Southern Regional Education Board visit were also mentioned.

A release of the Spring 2000 CATS assessment showed that Rockcastle County has been recognized as the only school district in Kentucky with all schools in rewards. RCHS Principal Ruth Allen also told council members that students scores have progressively increased, and that math scores in-

creased by an impressive nine points.

Although CATS scores were up, there was a decrease in CTBS scores. All core content departments will research in more detail to find their strengths and weaknesses, and how the weaknesses could be improved.

In other business, the council reviewed the Ethical Explorers Club, sponsored by Ms. Trina Bustle and Ms. Dana Singleton through the 21st Century Learning Center. This club will allow students to discuss alternatives to de-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15