

Low Competency Test Scores Reported In Warren

By KAY HORNER
Staff Writer

The results of the N. C. Competency Test administered to Warren County juniors last fall are in, and the percentage of students who failed is "embarrassingly" low, Rachael Ricks, assistant superintendent of instruction of Warren County schools, told members of the county Board of Education Monday night.

Of the 216 students taking the reading portion of the test, 18 percent failed, and of the 218 taking the math portion, almost 25 percent failed.

The scores of Warren County students were among the lowest of the 18 schools in region three, separated only by fractional points from Halifax, Franklin City and Durham City schools on the math por-

tion and from Halifax County Schools on the reading portion.

Mrs. Ricks said statewide, Warren County is at the bottom, "and we're not happy there."

However, she cautioned that although the figures were disturbing, they did not mark "the end of the world."

"We are concerned that this many failed the test the first time around," she said. "But they will eventually pass the test."

Juniors who fail the test initially are given three more opportunities to pass the test before graduation.

In Warren County last year, only one student failed to graduate because of the competency test, Mrs. Ricks said.

The test is designed to evaluate students' performance on basic skills of reading and math and is targeted to the middle school grade levels of six, seventh, and eighth grades, according to Mrs. Ricks.

"Although these are juniors in high school," she commented, "the problem doesn't lie there. They are tested on things they have learned from kindergarten on."

"In meeting with principals and staff, the only reaction has been 'let's get busy.' I've had a very positive reaction. There's been no placing of blame, but we've tried to analyze what we need to do to improve these scores."

School board members discussed several factors related to the competency test scores, including the county's drop-out rate.

"Our drop-out rate is consistently below the state average," Mrs. Ricks said. "We take pride in that we do keep our students longer."

Superintendent of Schools Mike Williams commented that the low drop-out rate could affect the test scores.

"If those who drop out are the least capable, and stay," he said, "then that could explain some of the difficulty."

Mrs. Ricks also noted that approximately 45 percent of the failures were from special education classes, whose students will eventually pass the test and graduate.

Each school system has the option of exempting special education students from taking the competency test, Mrs. Ricks commented. But in Warren

County, if the student does not take the test, he does not graduate with a diploma.

Students can opt to receive only a certificate, rather than a diploma, and avoid competency testing.

"We are pleased that our special education students do go on to graduate," she said.

Mrs. Ricks said the staff and faculties of the schools will be identifying "high risk" pupils through the Warren County Survival Skills test, based on the same skills as the competency test, and administered to seventh and eighth graders in the fall and spring.

Effort will be made to insure that these students get help in the areas in which they are not proficient, better preparing them for the competency test.

Mrs. Ricks prefaced her presentation to the board with the results of a survey taken of high school juniors by the College Entrance Examination Board that administers the SAT tests.

In Warren County, 39.3 percent of the juniors tested indicated that they wanted to continue their education and obtain a BS or BA degree, as compared with 38.7 percent in North Carolina and 32.7 percent in the nation.

"When we compare these figures with the scores, we must ask, 'Are we doing the best we can with our boys and girls,'" Mrs. Ricks said. "Are we preparing them for this goal?"

The competency test was first given on a trial basis in 1978. At that

time, 16 percent of Warren County juniors failed the reading portion and 27 percent failed the math portion. Since that time, scores have been up and down, with a high passing rate of 89 percent in 1979 on

the reading portion and 83 percent in 1979 on the math portion.

In 1982, 88 percent of the juniors passed the reading portion, as compared with 81.9 percent last fall, and 75.2 percent passed the math

portion as compared with 80 percent in 1982.

A further statistical breakdown presented to board members indicated that students' skills became progressively weaker as the problems became

more abstract.

"For a long time, we assumed that higher thinking skills were caught, not taught," Superintendent Williams told the board.

"Now we know they must be taught."

CALENDAR

Booster Club To Meet

Warren County Eagle Booster Club will have its regular monthly meeting Monday, Jan. 23, at 7:30 p. m. at Warren County High School library.

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Card Of Thanks

We would like to thank the Hampton Institute Alumni Association for T-shirts used for the Special Olympics, and gifts for the children at Christmas. We would like to thank the members of the Oxford-Henderson Alumni Chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for their check of \$100.00. We would like to thank the Warren County Junior Women's club for the

The children and staff of the Warren County Child Development Center would like to extend a special thanks to those persons in the community and organizations who have helped us in the past.

filmstrips and the fun train that was presented to the children. We would like to thank the Warren County High Home Economics Association for the parties that brought joy to the children at Halloween and Christmas. Thanks to The Carriage House for the delicious meals during the summer months. Thanks to Mrs. Gordo Wilson for her generous donation and to Mrs. George Walton for her thoughtful contributions. Thanks to Mrs. Ada Johnson for the lovely Easter baskets and special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fitz and Mrs. Dora Robbins for their love and assistance.

The Warren County Child Development Center is progressing with your support and we really appreciate your contributions. We hope you will continue your support in the future. We welcome you to visit us at All Saints Episcopal Church.

Sincerely,
FONDA W. KIRK,
Director
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