

Report Cards Among Many Changes

Be proactive in talking to the community
about school test scores



SESSION: MESSAGING THE SCHOOL REPORT CARD

Presenter: Eric Larsen, CESA #8 curriculum services coordinator

When you take a step back and contemplate all the changes in public education over the last few years, it's no wonder many in the education arena feel overwhelmed — Common Core State Standards, ACT suite of tests, career exploration, the Student Information System and the recent introduction of school report cards.

Eric Larsen, director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for CESA #8, helped attendees understand the many components of the school report card and the message it can deliver to your community.

“Basic’ is the new big category,” Larsen said. “Many students used to be proficient; now we need to find ways to help them achieve proficiency.”

He explained previous cut scores were as low as 13.5 percent to attain proficiency. Under the new standard,

it will take an average of 64 percent in reading and 52 percent in math to attain proficiency, with advanced proficiency for both categories reaching into the mid-90s.

Important factors in the report card include the test participation rate, the dropout rate and student attendance.

“Keeping kids in school is a big thing,” Larsen said. “Schools really need to take a hard look at what they’re doing (to improve attendance). What it all comes down to is instruction. Districts have to dig into this information.”

Points are deducted from the report card for failing to meet the standard on test participation, dropouts and attendance.

Larsen said the challenge for districts is to use the data to examine where resources are going and to whom. “We put a lot of time and effort into low-performing students, but not as much with those meeting

proficiency. Schools and teachers need to do a better job of challenging students.”

Following up on his suggestion that districts pore over the voluminous information, Larsen suggested data retreats. The WASB offers a Data First for Governance workshop for board members providing simple practices to effectively organize and present data to boards and to the public.

Larsen urged board members to “Make sure you have good talking points — be proactive about what the requirements are. If you have a low-performing school, you better have an explanation for what you’re doing to make improvements. ■

For more detail on school accountability measures visit:
acct.dpi.wi.gov/acct_accountability

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you better have an explanation for what you’re doing to make improvements.”**