

Education

"THE REPORT CARD"

Test Scores

Yvonne Atkinson



Information on test scores for the Clark County School District have been prominent in the news during the past few days. Newspaper articles have appeared identifying our scholastic aptitude test scores.

Television news releases have been aired, and a number of school administrators have been questioned on the significance of this year's test results. While I will not spend time reidentifying the individual test results, for this seems to be old news, I would like to comment on the use and significance of such test results for the Clark County School District.

Each year, the school district measures a student's progress or achievement in a number of ways. First, we give students achievement tests at several grade levels.

These results are nationally normed, or stated another way, we compared our students' achievement with students from every other state across this land. Next, we give the "competency test." This is a test,

designed by the State Department of Education and just recently revised, which is administered to students as they prepare for graduation from high school.

This too is an achievement test and must receive satisfactory passing scores before any one of our students may be granted a diploma from high school. We also administer tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and the American College Test (ACT). These are tests given to junior and senior students who are preparing to go to college and use this test result as an indicator for future college or university success. Then for students who have special testing needs, we offer individual testing activities.

The number and types of tests are varied yet all are designed to measure the achievement of the students that we have, and to assist them in scheduling a program which will meet their educational needs, and hopefully, their career needs as well. What so often happens as a result of test

scores being displayed is that schools will be measured one against another. This is a common frailty of all of us to want to know how well we do in comparison to others. Herein lies a real dilemma for educators. While we offer the same basic program, the same supplies and equipment, and employ the most highly competent staff, individual schools will differ on their rate of achievement. This is due to a lot of factors.

Student interest, student motivation, socio-economic condition of the families where the students reside, the experience levels of each student who comes to school, past training in school, experience ability, home stability, and the list of variables continues. My colleagues and I sometimes spend hours explaining to the public that you can judge schools as you might judge industries who manufacture the same product. You can not judge schools as you would judge any agency which has a fixed and controlled production design.

The human element in education is a variable that must be considered, so composite test scores, whether they are the SAT or the competency tests administered by the individual school, must not be used to measure the success or failure of individual programs. They are designed to measure student achievement, and in this realm are most beneficial tools. We should never minimize the importance of such tests and when viewed

in proper perspective with a number of variables considered, they give us a gauge of the education being offered in any individual facility. When student ability is then measured against achievement, we have a good perspective of how well the program is functioning in any school location. When we look at individual student achievement, we can again begin to appreciate the success or failure of students as they progress through school. Tests are designed to aid in the educational process. But they are designed to aid students.

Let us always remember that as we measure one school against the other, we may be doing ourselves a disservice, the school a disservice, and most importantly, reviewing data which is relatively meaningless. Each year I review the test results carefully with my colleagues on the Board. Each year we ask those delicate questions about achievement and during the past five years, we have seen steady increases. The Clark County School District has scores that collectively fall above the national average. Many of our individual students have outstanding test records.

From these data, we can now correctly state that education is on a positive plateau in Clark County, but because we are here, we cannot sit on our laurels. Education must always be advancing forward. With your help as parents and community members we can make this occur.

March Music Month In Schools

March is National Music in Our Schools Month and related activities will be taking place throughout Clark County School District Schools.

The major district wide musical activities began March 1 with the Junior High School Solo and Ensemble Festival which was held at Cannon Junior High School.

The Senior High School Instrumental Festival will be a day-long event held on March 15 at UNLV's Artemus Ham Concert Hall, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Approximately 850 students in 13 bands will perform.

On March 19, the District Dance Festival, featuring approximately 200 junior and senior high school students, will be held at the Las Vegas High School Auditorium, beginning at 7 p.m.

The Junior High School Instrumental Festival, featuring the talents of 2,000 students in 21 bands, will be held at Eldorado High School on March 21, from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and on March 22, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Senior High School Choral Festival, featuring approximately 600 youngsters from 10 schools, will be held on March 22 at UNLV's Artemus Ham Concert Hall, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Clark County School District will present its Annual Senior High School Instrumental Festival on March 15 at UNLV's Artemus Ham Concert Hall from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Approximately 850 students in 13 bands will perform. The community is invited to all or part of the free concert.

Dance Festival set for Mar. 19

The Clark County School District will hold its Annual Dance Festival, featuring the performing talents of approximately 200 junior and senior high school students from 12 schools, at Las Vegas High School Auditorium on March 19, beginning at 7 p.m. The public is invited to attend the free performance.

Books available at School District

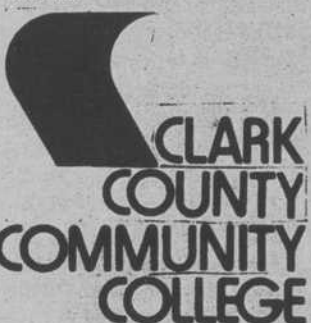
Each year, the Clark County School District collects obsolete library and textbooks from its 118 schools. They are assembled in the district's General Supply Warehouse at 4212 Eucalyptus Ave. and offered to principals, teachers and district personnel before the general public and nonprofit organizations are permitted to make selections.

This year, from the end of February until March 7, local nonprofit organizations, other school districts and Clark County residents were invited to make selections from thousands of books.

One of the many individuals and nonprofit agencies to take advantage of this offer was the Las Vegas Paradise Rotary Club. Richard Malm, the Club's spokesperson, working closely with Roland Thompson, past president of a Rotary Club in the Philippines, arranged to have approximately 2,000 text and library books transported to the Philippines via the U.S. Navy's Project Handclasp for distribution to needy children.

Project Handclasp, an official program for several years, was established to promote mutual understanding, respect and goodwill through direct person-to-person contact between Americans and citizens of other lands. All educational, humanitarian and goodwill materials donated by the generosity and compassion of American individuals and organizations are transported free on U.S. Navy ships on a space-available basis and distributed by sailors and marines directly to the needy.

All the books donated by the Clark County School District will be shipped to Subick Bay in the Philippines and distributed to the needy children and schools in Manila.



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