

Cynthia J. O'Hora's Speech - given at the May 1, 2006 school board meeting

For the past five years, I have expressed my concerns to board members and administrators regarding SASD's scores on the math PSSAs. I have compiled a ranking of where our students stand as compared to the other IU16 schools.

Across Pennsylvania, 140 school districts had 90% or more of their 3 graders score proficient or advanced on the exam.

In 5th grade - 146 school districts had 80% or more of their students achieving proficiency or advanced.

Their success has raised the bar beyond the 45% benchmark set by No Child Left Behind. The Pennsylvania statewide average has advanced for each group tested. In 2005, it exceeded the mandated AYP of 45 percent for all groups.

SAMS has made demonstrable improvements in the 8th grade scores. This year they exceeded AYP. They exceeded the state average and they exceeded the IU16 average. They are to be commended for this.

As you can see by the rankings, we are below the average in the State, as well as, in the IU16 schools for the other 3 groups tested. The Mathematics standards were approved in 1999. I find it troubling that we have not had substantive success in meeting them in all our schools.

We have agreed to implement All Day K which will benefit the students in the class of 2020 and beyond.

But what of the students who are currently enrolled? How are we supporting their improvement and success?

Do our policies support and encourage student achievement of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards?

Are existing resources allocated in a manner designed to facilitate student achievement?

Is the District meeting the Strategic Plan's timeline for the Curriculum and Assessment Process?

This district has many strengths. The faculty is highly qualified. The teaching and administrative positions are filled. We have made substantial investments in teacher training. Class size has been kept low in the primary grades.

"We all know that resources are scarce and that the education dollar can be stretched only so far. But these are competitive times and a competitive workforce demands an educated workforce." Joan Benso, Investing in education, PSBA Bulletin, April 2006.

I urge the Board to examine how we can support our students achieving greater success in meeting the academic standards.