

measure progress with its Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

The state is requiring schools to target students who fail to meet math and reading standards, a chronic problem. In Orange and Osceola counties, for example, at least 30 percent of eighth-graders scored below the 25th percentile on reading and math achievement tests. That means they did worse than 75 percent of kids across the country.

There is a push to get kids up to speed early on, particularly in reading. A state law that takes effect next year won't allow grade school kids who don't read well enough to be promoted. Seminole County has new elementary school tests to diagnose reading problems. In Lake County, there are 250 reading volunteers in elementary schools. Orange County this year will have summer school in at least 19 low-achieving elementary schools—more than double the number last year.

[From the Orlando Sentinel Online]

TEACHER'S DIARY: 'APPARENTLY, I SPEAK A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE THAN THEY DO'

Today, I gave a test. As always, the students were allowed to use their notes. The way I see it, I serve them better by honing their note-taking and comprehension skills, as opposed to their memorization skills. I have been giving open-note tests since day one.

Even so, every time I lecture, I have to remind them to copy what I write on the board. They have been in class for 150 days. When will they catch on that it will be beneficial to have notes?

Last week, I put a note on the board about when the test would be. Every day since, I reminded them. Yesterday, I gave them a list of the topics that would be covered. Last night, I put a reminder on my homework hotline.

Apparently, I speak a different language than they do, because a quarter of them came in this morning and said, "We have a test today? You didn't tell us we had a test today! Can we use our notes?"

Now, it's 8 o'clock and I have just finished grading the tests. My spouse has gone into the other room, tired of hearing me yell, "How many times did we go over this!?" as I drew a line through another wrong answer.

More frustrating than the students who answered incorrectly are the ones who don't even attempt an answer.

I explain to them before every test that I will give them partial credit if I can see they knew at least a little about the answer.

Even if their answers are different from what we discussed in class, I will give credit if they can explain their point of view.

Believe it or not, I have had students choose to take a zero because they left their notes at home. What do they do in other classes? What were they doing for the last week when we were learning about the ideas that test covers? Where is their survival instinct?

I encourage what is known as "thinking out of the box." I want my students to disagree with me. I want them to think, to seek alternatives. Sadly, most of them just can't. Sadder still, many don't want to. They want to be given the answer; they want to write it on the test from memory; and then they want never to think about it again.

I think that the theory that high expectations will cause kids to rise up to meet those expectations is only true if the kids already have some foundation to stand on. But by the time they reach the upper grades, their feet are already mired in quicksand.

One foot is stuck in their own inescapable kid-ness, which causes them to try and get out of as much work as possible.

But the other is mired with teachers who don't expect them to do anything but memorize. I have kids who are about to go to college whose teachers actually give them a copy of the upcoming test to use as a study guide.

And do you know what? Even after that, some of them fail. Why should I try to teach them to think?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ACTIVITIES DURING THE DISTRICT WORK PERIOD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BOB SCHAFFER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like it go through a number of issues. Wednesday evening is the opportunity for the freshmen Republican class to spend a little time on the House floor and brief our colleagues and, indeed, the rest of the country on some of the activities that we are pursuing throughout America in our respective districts.

I know for me out in the Fourth District of Colorado that I represent, which is essentially the eastern plains of the country, I spent the last two weeks over the Easter break working pretty hard, actually. It was not much of a break at all. We did a lot of town meetings and a lot of visits at school sites throughout the district and so on.

I wanted to spend a little bit of time tonight just telling my colleagues about some of the activities that I had pursued with the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities that made a site visit out to my district recently, and report back on some of the comments that we received at that subcommittee.

It was a subcommittee of the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations led by the chairman of that committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA). They came out to the town of Timnath, Colorado, which is a little bit east of Fort Collins, and Timnath is a community that includes an elementary school that we went to visit, Timnath Elementary School.

The school was a unique one and one that I think provided perhaps the best snapshot of education in my district as far as at the elementary level, because this particular community is located just on the outskirts of a bigger city, the City of Fort Collins, but still has a large rural component. So we have an interesting mesh of children from urban as well as rural settings, and of

course that is representative of the district overall.

We met for a day-long hearing of the subcommittee, again, part of the Crossroads in Education program of the committee which has taken place in several States throughout the country under the leadership of the committee.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, about some of the individuals that we heard from. Our focus was asking local leaders about what works and what is wasted in public education today. We heard from Don Unger, who is the superintendent of the Poudre School District in the town of Fort Collins.

He cited one of the biggest problems that he is confronted with as a superintendent of a relatively large school district in Colorado. He said that we continue to receive increased Federal mandates. What he focused on, for example, were the changes made in the IDEA bill last summer, which are taking well over 100 hours of staff time with no new resources provided to support this additional mandated requirement.

He also spoke about parent and staff litigation against the school district which he said caused a major demand on staff and dollars. These litigations are coming from three areas, he said: the Office of Civil Rights; right to due process under IDEA; and through parental and staff complaints to the State government.

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He said that some of the things that are working very well are the efforts here in the Congress to consolidate Federal programs, and, in fact, this Congress accomplished that in the last session with a number of education titles that we reviewed and consolidated here. He spoke about some of the literacy programs that we have promoted as a Republican Congress, and commented that they are working very well in his district.

Secondly, we heard from a woman named Pat Chase. She is the president of the Colorado Association of School Boards, and she takes in a perspective in her testimony of the entire State and all of the school boards that she represents, which are 176 in number, of locally elected school board members, and all very dedicated to education.

She says that the efforts in the State to lead local school districts in establishing standards are being received very positively, and have had a very positive impact on local schools. She, once again, hit on the issues of public school mandates, and described the Federal mandates that we are handing down to school districts as being particularly detrimental. She said the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act has been somewhat of a problem that imposes drug and alcohol testing requirements on school bus drivers, and she said that the mandate has the best of intentions. And on a State level and local level it is something that, in fact, Colorado would