

Bernalillo Gets a Big Gold Star

EDITORIAL

The improvement in TerraNova scores among students in the Bernalillo Public Schools district is striking, and more than a little encouraging.

Scores for the early grade levels indicate programs that focus on reading and on helping preschoolers are indeed having a positive effect and should be continued.

This year's TerraNova scores, recently released by the state, indicate schools in the Bernalillo district are not only improving but, in some cases, passing the national average. In TerraNova testing, scores are not based on actual points, but instead on how well students compare to other students nationally. Scores in the 50th percentile are considered average.

Less than a decade ago, some district schools had percentile scores in the single digits.

Among the standouts is Cochiti Elementary, where third-grade reading and social studies scores jumped at least 20 points, to the 60th percentile. The lowest third-grade score at the elementary was in math, a 44, which is still four points higher than last year. Cochiti Middle School also did well, with a 62 percentile in language.

Santo Domingo sixth-graders scored in the 50s or high 40s in every subject. Seventh-graders also scored in that range except for a 39 in science, but even that score is four points higher than last year.

For the first time, scores at Bernalillo Middle School went above 60. During the previous two years, sixth- and eighth-graders had scored below the average of 50 in every subject.

These scores indicate increased focus on problem areas is producing results. Specifically, programs at Santa Domingo and Cochiti coach students in English before they even attend school so that they won't be at a disadvantage when they start. Another program, Success for All, provides reading materials at a student's reading level, regardless of their enrollment grade, and has been credited with improving scores.

On the other hand, ninth-grade scores at Bernalillo High School dropped, lagging in the low 30s and low 40s, indicating attention should be focused on figuring out what is needed to help bring these students up to speed.

Overall, however, the TerraNova scores reflect a lot of hard work on the part of teachers and students in the Bernalillo Public Schools, and should be applauded.

