

Report card gives CPS highest ranking yet

BY JESSICA BROWN • JLBROWN@ENQUIRER.COM • AUGUST 23, 2010

CORRYVILLE – Cincinnati Public Schools achieved an “effective” ranking on the state report card system for the first time since the state report cards began 10 years ago.

It’s the highest rating ever for this district of more than 33,000 students and is a “milestone “for academic progress, officials said.

“Effective” is the third highest of six categories on Ohio’s report card, an annual rating of schools and districts based on students’ passage rates on statewide tests, graduation rates, attendance trends and other data.

“We’re thrilled to reach this milestone,” said Superintendent Mary Ronan in a news release. “It is a reflection of the hard work – and teamwork – of our school and central staffs, our parents and community partners, and, most of all, of our students themselves.”

Although the results won’t be considered official until they are released by the Ohio Department of Education, which may occur as late as Friday, many districts, including CPS, received and are publicizing their scores early.

The ratings are not likely to change.

CPS’ effective rating is especially sweet for the district because it has been mired in the “continuous improvement” category, the fourth highest, for five consecutive years.

District officials expected to retain that ranking again for a fifth year based on preliminary test scores it received two weeks ago. However, final state calculations bumped the district up into the effective category.

The bump was the result of Ohio’s “value added” measure, which measures whether the students achieved more than a year’s worth of expected growth on their test scores. Students at CPS exceeded expected growth for the past two years.

The district also met federal “adequate yearly progress” standards – another condition that can move schools up a category – on all but one of its eight student subgroups.

Of the district’s 57 schools, 18 moved up one or two report card categories, including Hartwell Elementary, which climbed two levels, from Continuous Improvement to Excellent.

Seven schools moved down one category, including the Virtual High School, which fell from academic watch into academic emergency.

Other rankings:

- **Eight schools are excellent, the second-highest category/**
- **10 are effective.**
- **15 are continuous improvement.**
- **17 are in academic watch.**
- **Seven are in academic emergency.**

None of the schools earned the state's top mark of "excellent with distinction."

Ronan Monday highlighted some of the "underdogs," including Hartwell Elementary and Taft Information Technology High school, both of which achieved excellent status for the first time.

Gains at the district's academically troubled elementary schools also boosted the district's overall performance.

Two years ago CPS targeted 16 of its worst-performing elementary schools for special help. Principals and teachers got special training and used a data-driven program to measure quarterly and weekly progress of students at such a level of detail that every child had an individual plan explaining exactly what they needed to succeed.

Thirteen of those 16 schools showed improvement in their test scores on the report card. Seven moved up one or more categories. Among those seven was Oylar Elementary. The school had floundered in academic emergency for eight years before inching up to academic watch the past two years. Preliminary data indicated the nearly 800-student school in Price Hill would again be labeled in academic watch. But final calculations pushed the school into continuous improvement—thrilling the principal and staff.

"We're excited," said Principal Craig Hockenberry. "We pushed the pace all year long. Just a nonstop effort. I kept telling the teachers or students when they were tired I said we have to push. We spent eight long years in academic emergency so to see this kind of success is overwhelming."

The school's on a mission now to improve even more next year. "We don't want to be one-hit wonder," said Hockenberry.