

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Perkins County Schools is proud to be highlighted in Governor Heineman’s letter addressing the state test results for Nebraska 11th graders.

Perkins County Schools was fourth in the state among Class C-2 schools on the “math” assessment and mentioned by the governor as one of the Class C-2 schools that have improved their scores on the “reading” assessment every year.

The statewide assessments were released toward the end of November as a district-to-district comparison.

“The statewide assessment system is so new that we must be careful to not get too excited about being mentioned as a high performer in the governor’s letter or for having certain sub groups performing below the state average,” said Superintendent Tobin Buchanan.

Buchanan said the state department reminds schools that several years of data from the statewide tests need to accumulate to have a solid picture of district performance.

“District scores across all assessments that include writing-reading-math-science are somewhat sporadic in what they tell us,” said Buchanan. He said the district has areas of great strength as well as areas of concern.

A small majority of PCS students scored at or above the state average on the different tests while nearly 40 percent of students were below the state average.

“Most of the areas of need indicated by the state assessments have already been identified by us through our own data collection, and strategies and interventions have been put in place to bring up those scores,” said Buchanan.

He said statewide rankings would indicate that PCS students are right at the statewide average in all assessments except reading. Students are below the statewide average by nearly seven points.

Buchanan said improvement in reading has been identified as the school improvement goal for the last two years with strategies and targeting of reading interests and motivation levels of certain sub groups already taking place in the elementary and middle schools.

“The statewide rankings are not the best way to judge schools, as they do not account for any of the differences that exist within school populations,” said Buchanan. “Schools and communities should focus on whether or not the scores indicate improvement and progress over the years more so than how they rank with other schools.”

The following table shows a comparison in scores for Perkins County Schools students in the tested subjects.

**Perkins County Schools
NeSA Testing Scores**

Reading (Percent at or above proficient)

2010	2011	2012	2012 st. avg.	
8th graders	53	57	59	73
7th graders	58	51	38	77
6th graders	81	76	77	75
5th graders	91	82	88	76

Math (Percent at or above proficient)

2011	2012	2012 st. avg.	
8th graders	43	54	62
7th graders	37	44	68
6th graders	54	64	68
5th graders	64	87	75
4th graders	53	85	72

Writing (Percent at or above proficient)

2011	2012	2012 st. avg.	
4th graders	82	79	92
8th graders	100	69	63
11th graders	63	62	

Science (Percent at or above proficient)

2012	2012 st. avg.	
5th graders	92	67
8th graders	59	68
11th graders	83	67