

Students hold their own on CAPT

By Jill K. Dion
Editor

Milford's performance on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) was OK, but there's still work to do to bring scores higher, one school administrator said this week.

"They're satisfactory," said Michael Cummings, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, "but we're still in the process of really tearing them apart."

The CAPT is administered to Connecticut public school students in grade 10 to assess reading, writing, science and mathematics skills. These assessments aim to guide curriculums and enable the measurement of progress toward educational goals established for the state. The scores represent the percentage of students at or above the state's goal in the four core areas.

The test is not an apples-to-apples com-

parison of progress, as it is given to a different class of sophomores each year, but is often used in tracking trends and identifying areas for improvement.

Cummings said Milford school officials will try to compare the CAPT results with the same group of students' results on their eighth-grade Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT). Since the tests are different, it is not a simple comparison, however, he said.

"We're looking for kids to move up in level," Cummings said. "If they're proficient, we want them to go up to goal."

In math, 49.1 percent of students tested above goal, and 82.4 percent tested at a proficient level, which marks a slight increase of the 2007 scores. In 2007, 46.6 percent of students were at goal, and 81.9 tested at a proficient level.

The numbers showed a similar trend in science, where 50.3 percent of students

tested at goal, and 87.1 were at or above the proficiency level for 2008. In 2007, 49.6 scored at or above goal, and 88.5 percent scored at or above proficient.

There was a slight drop in the percentage of students scoring at or above goal in reading. In 2007, 47 percent scored at or above goal, and in 2008 that dropped to 43.2.

As the percentage of goal-level students dropped slightly, the number scoring at or above proficiency increased from 81.2 percent in 2007 to 85.2 percent in 2008.

A fairly new graduation requirement in Milford requires this year's seniors to meet a reading requirement to graduate. Cummings expects this will boost reading scores in coming years.

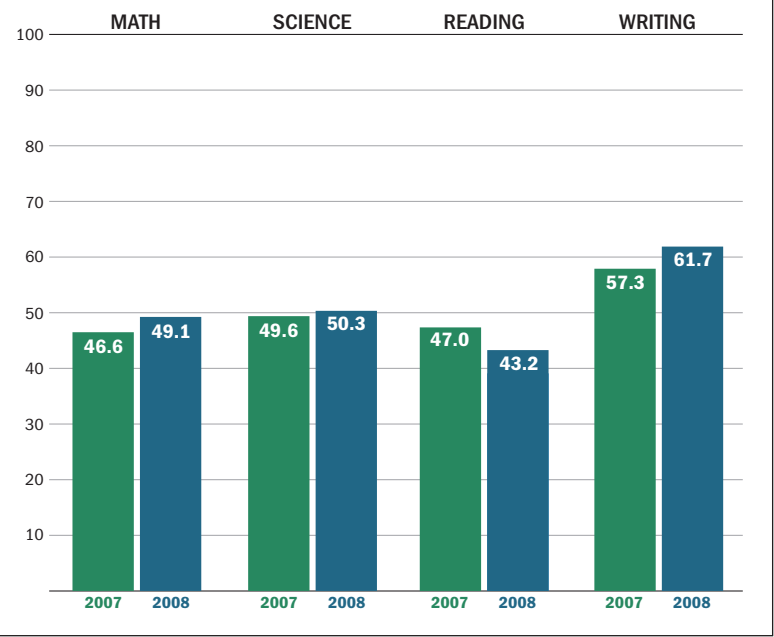
Math and writing graduation requirements have been in place for some time.

"When they made writing a gradua-

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CONNECTICUT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE TEST

PERCENT OF MILFORD STUDENTS MEETING GOAL



Emma Vaccino, 3, gives her brother, John, 5, a push on the family swingset, while friend Bella Meireles, 5, manages her own swing. John, whose nickname is "Bodie," is at the center of a city campaign to build a Boundless Playground at Eisenhower Park. (Photo by Jill K. Dion)

A playground for everyone

State funds expected to help build 'Bodie's Place'

By Jill K. Dion
Editor

If the state Bond Commission approves \$75,000 for a handicap accessible playground when it meets next week, Milford will be one step closer to introducing Bodie's Place.

A group of residents, led by Lisa and John Vaccino, hope to see the new playground built at Eisenhower Park to serve all people — children and adults — even those who use wheelchairs or canes.

The name "Bodie's Place" comes from the Vaccinos' son, Johnny, 5, who has cerebral palsy. Bodie is his nickname.

It wasn't long ago that Bodie was playing with his sister, Emma, 3, and his cousins at Hannah's Dream, a "Boundless Playground" in New Haven similar to the one wished for here.

"Suddenly, he could play with his sister and cousins," Lisa said. "Normally he doesn't say much. But when we got back in the car, he said, 'that was fun,'

and that was huge for him." Boundless Playgrounds is a national nonprofit developer of inclusive playgrounds for children of all abilities. It works with groups and companies to create playgrounds that meet various standards and guidelines.

The surface, which local officials described as a thick foam material, is one of the keys to the playground's design.

"Anything can roll or walk on it," Lisa Vaccino said. "Everybody can reach the highest point because it's ramped. There are multiple sensory units within the ramping and railings. There might be Braille, cozy corners where children can hide away, and there might be chimes. The one in New Haven has a sand pit where you can park in a chair and reach the digging tools, or there might be an overlook bridge over the sand."

Bodie and other children like him

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Foreclosure crisis

DeLauro: Congress was morally obligated to act

By John Kovach
Staff

Legislation recently passed in Washington to help families in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure answers a higher calling, U.S. Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (D-3) said Monday at the Stratford Town Hall.

"When challenges are overwhelming, government has a moral responsibility to stand up to the challenge, and this housing crisis is overwhelming," DeLauro said.

The American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act passed both the House and Senate, and DeLauro said that President George W. Bush agreed to sign it into law this week.

Connecticut foreclosures in the third quarter of 2007 were up 920 percent from the same period the prior year, according to a press release DeLauro supplied. The

Governor's Task Force revealed more than 70,000 subprime loans across the state, with 189 foreclosures.

"People have said the American dream has become the American nightmare," DeLauro said.

Close to 20 percent of subprime mortgages taken between 2005 and 2006 are predicted to fail, according to her office staff.

The legislation addresses predatory lending without giving borrowers in arrears a free pass.

"We're requiring homeowners to take responsibility," DeLauro said. "This is not a bailout."

Part of the law involves investing in buildings abandoned due to foreclosure. Money will be funneled to state and municipal governments to purchase such properties for renewal, with specific milestones throughout the process, DeLauro explained.

The Federal Department of

Housing & Urban Development has 60 days from the enactment of the law to devise a formula for distribution. Funds must be released within 30 days after that. The money, which will be divided based on the amount of foreclosures in a state or town, must then be spent within 18 months of receipt.

"It's to get us back on our feet again," DeLauro said. "It's putting our money where our mouths are."

It's only through working together, as government and communities, "that we can realize the promise of prosperity for all Americans, not just the privileged few," DeLauro said.

DeLauro said Washington's action was bipartisan and thanked U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Connecticut, a member of the Senate Banking Committee, for his part in championing the legislation.

"This crisis knows no political parties," she said.

Let them eat lobster



Bob Bogert loads up a plate for Natalie Leroux-Lindsey at the Milford Rotary Club's annual lobster bake Saturday at Milford Boat Works. See more photos inside. (Photo by Ralph Petitti)

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Milford mosquitoes test positive for West Nile

Mosquitoes trapped in Milford July 14 tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), state Mosquito Management Program officials announced last week.

These are the first WNV-positive mosquitoes identified in Milford by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) this year.

So far this summer, positive mosquitoes have been identified in five towns — Bridgeport,

Milford, Stamford, Greenwich and Stonington, and a resident of Sherman has tested positive for WNV infection.

The infected mosquito species trapped in Milford was Culex pipiens, a common mosquito species found in residential areas and one of the species that is responsible for spreading WNV in Connecticut, state officials said. During 2007, WNV was identified in mosquitoes in

18 towns.

"The isolations of West Nile Virus from Culex mosquitoes in four towns and the expected warm weather are clear indications that the virus is now building across the state," said Theodore G. Andreadis, chief medical entomologist, CAES. "We will continue to monitor mosquitoes through the summer and fall, and ask property owners to reduce mosquito-breeding

areas." To monitor WNV, the CAES maintains a network of 91 mosquito-trapping stations in 72 municipalities throughout the state, from June through October. Mosquito traps are set every 10 days at each site on a rotating basis. Mosquitoes are grouped for testing according to species, collection site and date.

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