



News from the ESL Corner...

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Upper Merion Area Middle School
Angela Della Valle

PSSA Reading Data: Identifying and Targeting Areas of Weakness

Student Scholarships—

Dave and Michelle Evasaw, owners of Upper Merion Dance and Gymnastics Center, are genuinely interested in providing financial assistance to deserving students at Upper Merion Middle School. The couple feel a civic responsibility to reach out to our families who otherwise might not be able to have their children participate in dance and gymnastic programs.

To date, three students have qualified and benefited from the kindness extended to them on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Evasaw. Parents of our students are very appreciative, as it is a special opportunity to students who otherwise might not receive such an experience.

Of the 21 ELLs grades 5-8, there is only data available for 6 ELLs (28.5%); of the remaining students, 28.5% (n=6) of the ELLs are in their second year of schooling in the US, and were exempt last year and 43% (n=9) of the ELLs are in their first year of schooling in the US this year, also making data unavailable.

Statistical breakdown of the 6 ELLs for whom Reading PSSA data is available:

- 33% scored Basic and 67% scored Below Basic.
- When analyzing the

students' data for the Reading PSSA, the following observations can be made:

- 83% of the learners shared the same weakest skill in identifying and interpreting concepts and organization of non-fiction text (on average 20% correct);
- 67% of the learners also shared as their second-most significant weakest as understanding fiction text appropriate to grade level;
- 50% of the learners were strongest in the area

of identifying and comparing components within and across text.

Given this data, I feel supported and validated in having and continuing to select eligible content in the course of my lesson planning that target the two lowest skills shared by the learners (identifying and interpreting concepts and organization of non-fiction texts and understanding fiction text appropriate to grade level).

Annual ELL State Testing: The ACCESS

This month marks the beginning of the annual test for ELLs, ACCESS. ACCESS replaces the state's previous instrument for the annual test given to ELLs, the SELP.

The test comprises four components: speaking listening, reading, and writing and is given in grades clusters (3-5; 6-8) and tiers (Tier A for beginners, Tier B for intermediates, and Tier C for advanced). These variables necessitate the arrangement of six different testing group-

ings (Cluster 3-5 Tier A; Cluster 3-5 Tier B; Cluster 3-5 Tier C; Cluster 6-8 Tier A; Cluster 6-8 Tier B; Cluster 6-8 Tier C), which has been a challenge given the complexities of scheduling between grades already.

This assessment is used in determining whether a student qualifies to exit the ESL program and shows progress relative to each learner in each of the four domains. Furthermore, the ACCESS has been closely aligned with

content standards and assesses English language development through the core content areas: Reading, English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The ACCESS is, while time consuming, a reliable indicator concerning how successful the ELL is in the regular classroom. Reports should be issued to the school district by June.