

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Richard Paskiewicz
FROM: Debbie Murasso
DATE: January 29, 2010
RE: Monthly Report on Actions to Improve Student Achievement

Each fall as part of our ***school improvement process***, administrators and teams of school educators meet to analyze CMT and CAPT results, to celebrate the progress toward SMART goals, to acknowledge the areas of need, and to reaffirm or change actions targeted at improving student achievement. In compliance with the requirements of ***No Child Left Behind***, the district and school improvement plans for Maple Street, Northeast, Vernon Center Middle, and Rockville High Schools were presented to and approved by the Board of Education on January 11, 2010. Copies of our ***District and School Improvement Plans*** have been posted to our website and can be accessed at www.vernonschools.com. Click on "Publications."

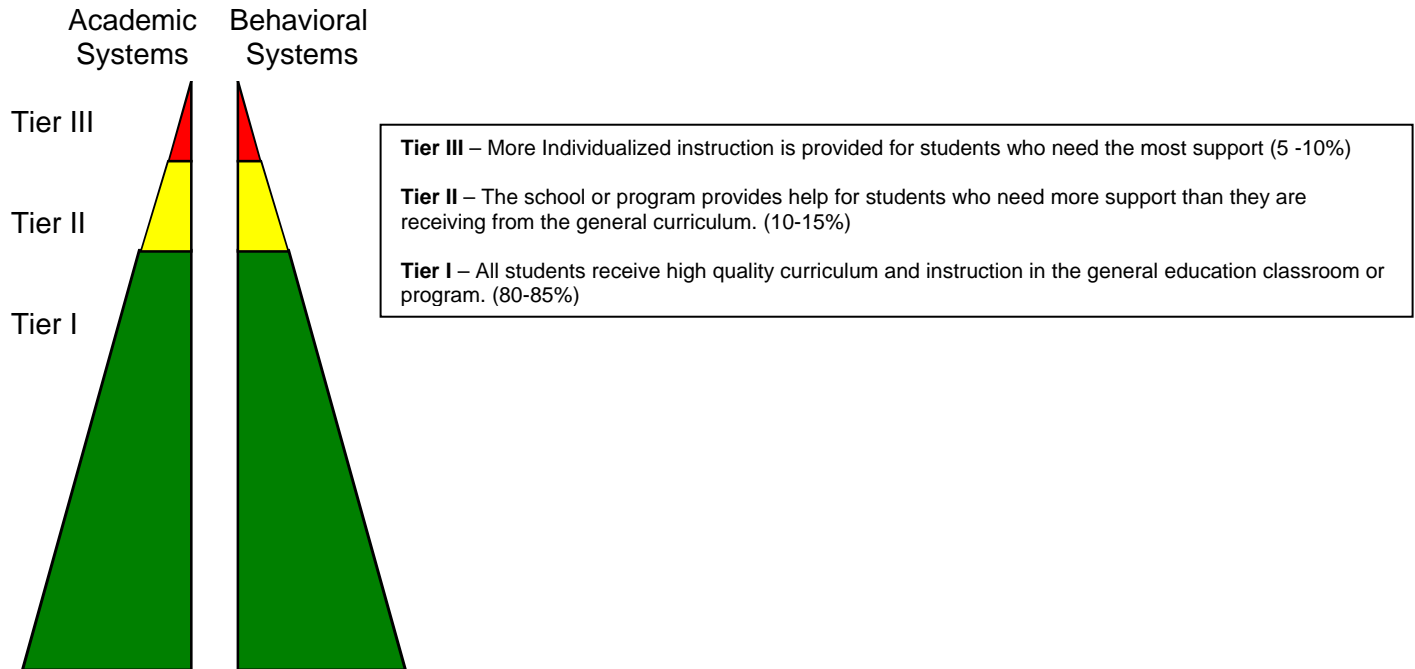
On January 19, 2010, the district held its fourth and last professional development day for certified staff. At all levels building principals planned and facilitated activities directly linked to ***school improvement (CALI)*** and to a deeper understanding of the elements of ***Scientific Research-Based Interventions***. Deepening our district's understanding and implementation is one of the three goals established for this school year:

- Goal 1. Deepen Our District's Understanding and Implementation of SRBI/RTI, K-12;***
- Goal 2: Strengthen Core Instruction and Tier I Interventions, K-12; and***
- Goal 3: Implement Universal Screenings in K-6 for Math and Reading.***

Scientific Research-Based Interventions

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) are a way to provide support and instruction to students who are struggling to learn. A student's progress is studied and findings are used to make decisions about teaching and other learning supports. SRBI are most commonly used in addressing needs in the areas of reading, math, and behavior. A ***"continuum of support"*** is developed to meet the needs of students.

The **SRBI framework has three “tiers.”** Each tier provides differing kinds and degrees of support for both academic and behavioral systems.



A key component to SRBI is that all students receive high quality curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom or program (Tier I).

Another component of SRBI is that the school or program conducts **“universal common assessments.”** Universal common assessments review the progress of all students through the use of grade-age level assessments. These assessments help schools identify students who may need more support or other types of instruction. As a result, students may be identified as needing help in addition to the high quality instruction they are receiving in Tier I. Additional teaching strategies or methods that have been proven to be effective in helping students learn are used (Tier II). These teaching methods can happen in large or small groups, in or outside of the classroom.

Another key component to SRBI is **“Progress Monitoring.”** Progress monitoring is a way for teachers to better understand the growth students are making in a specific area. It shows how well the teaching strategy is working. It includes observations and other types of assessments. Progress monitoring helps determine whether a strategy is successful or needs to be changed.

When progress monitoring shows that a student is not responding to the additional help, another approach or strategy may be tried. However, when a higher level of support is needed, students may be provided individualized and/or small group instruction and the frequency and/or the duration of the intervention is increased (Tier III).

At **Rockville High School**, the **Pre-Self Study Report** has been completed and submitted to the **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)**. Thank you Sue Andrews, Jen Stachowiak, Ted Brewer, and Bryan Wright for your time and efforts in the completion of this report... With Board approval, new attendance regulations have been implemented and data will be monitored... The committee overseeing the implementation of the activities funded through the **Connecticut Consortium on School Attendance Grant** met to review progress to date and to brainstorm ideas/develop a plan for the next grant application process. A required meeting of districts that plan to submit an application will be held in early February... On the January 19th professional development day Jonathan Bauer from CREC presented an overview

of **Scientific Research-Based Interventions** for high school staff. District and school administration will be meeting soon to discuss **universal screens** in reading and math at the ninth grade level... An **after-school CAPT tutorial** has been developed for an identified group of grade 10 students... Approximately eighty students have signed up to participate in the **job shadowing event** on February 18, 2010. Students will spend all or part of a day job shadowing a variety of professionals... The **in-school suspension committee** met to share information gathered from surrounding schools as how best to serve the population. The goal for the next monthly meeting is to “design” the room and to begin to create protocol... **Data teams** continue to do well and are on track to completing three mini **SMART goals** by mid-year exams. Results are as follows:

- *The percent of grade 9 English students scoring at/above proficient in **reading for information (with a focus on using evidence from the text to support and draw conclusions)** increased from 80% to 85% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 13th.*
- *The percent of grade 10 World History 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing a response to an article** increased from 77% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7th.*
- *The percent of REACH students **identifying themselves as having friends in school** will increase from 61% to 75% as self-reported on/by March 7th.*
- *The percent of Physics students scoring at/above proficient in **factor label unit conversion** increased from 33% to 94% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 8th.*
- *The percent of Chemistry students scoring at/above proficient in **weighted averages** increased from 53% to 68% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7th.*
- *The percent of grade 9 vocational education students scoring at/above proficient in **summarizing** will increase from 87% to 92% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 1st.*
- *The percent of biology, environmental and marine science students scoring at/above proficient in **lab variables and conclusions** will increase from 42% to 52% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 27th.*

The **Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** initiative at **Vernon Center Middle School** continues to grow and evolve. Data reflects positive changes. The percent of students referred to the office decreased 26% in the second marking period. Students who have demonstrated the **core values** will be recognized with the next PBS school wide activity... Math and language arts teachers are piloting the use of the **Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)**. The current system for benchmark assessments is composed of 18 tests that mark achievement from the fall of grade 3 to the spring of grade 8 in mathematics and in reading comprehension. Administering these assessments during the specified testing windows (October, February, and May) educators can use the results to determine if students have learned the important and testable skills and concepts as reflected in the Department’s mathematics and reading comprehension grade level expectations (GLEs) and pacing guides... Preparations for the administration of the 2010 CMTs has begun. Scheduled meetings with staff to review test administration procedures, test security, alternate settings, student accommodations, and make up testing are being arranged... Data teams report the following:

- *The percent of grade 6 language arts students scoring at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** will increase from 69% to 75% as measured by a common assessment given on February 10th.*
- *The percent of grade 6 math students scoring at/above proficient in **solving customary and metric measurement conversion word problems with an explanation as to***

how the answer was derived increased from 46% to 65% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 13th.

- The percent of grade 7 math students scoring at/above proficient in **subtracting fractions** increased from 41% to 81% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 13th.
- The percent of grade 6 science students scoring at/above proficient in **interpreting graphs** will increase from 63% to 75% as measured by a common assessment given on February 10th.
- The percent of grade 7 social studies students scoring at/above proficient in **text to self connections** increased from 47% to 69% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 8th.
- The percent of grade 8 social studies students scoring at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** increased from 58% to 72% as measured by a common assessment given on January 13th.
- The percent of grade 8 special education students scoring at/above proficient in **pictorial representation of numbers** will increase from 55% to 64% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 10th.
- The percent of special education **students suspended** decreased from 27% to 23% as measured by comparison data for the period September through January 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Toward a deeper understanding of the **SRBI framework**, the staff at **Skinner Road School** kicked off their January 19th professional development day with a book discussion of Ellen Cohn's **Response to Intervention**. Educators then shared their expertise in specific areas: Maureen Kearney and Karen Eckblom on Nancy Boyle's target approach, Christina Dwire on Nancy Boyles in the classroom, and Paula Hughes on fluency centers. The day continued with an overview of Lexia, **a standard protocol Tier I intervention**, and ended with a sharing of lessons learned... Data teams report the following:

- The percent of grade 1 students scoring at/above proficient in **making a prediction and supporting it with at least one detail** increased from 3% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 2, 2010.
- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying a simile** increased from 38% to 98% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 1, 2010.
- The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **forming a general understanding, developing an interpretation, and examining content and structure** increased from 6% to 60% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 26, 2010.
- The percent of grade 4 students scoring at/above proficient in **author's craft** increased from 58% to 84% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 1, 2010.
- The percent of grade 5 students able to **form a general understanding** increased at the proficient level from 33% to 73% and at the goal level from 13% to 58% as measured by a common assessment.

January was a busy month for the staff at **Northeast School**. On January 11-12, the **School Wide Assessment Team (SWAT)** administered the second round of **universal screenings** to all students in grades K through 5. And on January 19th (PD day) the results of these screenings were reviewed to identify students in high, medium, and low categories of risk and to develop a revised schedule of intervention support. All teachers were introduced to Lexia, a **standard Tier I protocol intervention**... Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will be participating in the **Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)**... Data teams report the following SMART goals:

- The percent of grade 1 students scoring at/above proficient in **reader text connections** will increase from 50% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 1st.
- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying main idea and detail** will increase from 72% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 5th.
- The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing number stories** will increase from 61% to 81% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 3rd.
- The percent of grade 4 students scoring at/above proficient in **estimating solutions to problems** will increase from 56% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 2nd.
- The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above proficient in **forming a general understanding** will increase from 63% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17th.

At **Maple Street School** students in grades 3-5 participated in the **Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)**... Results of reading and math **universal screening data** revealed improved performance when comparing fall to winter results... Eight kindergarten students have begun receiving **additional instructional support** extending beyond the regular kindergarten day... A second **Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** reward day will be scheduled for February. On a quarterly basis students' positive behavior will be celebrated. Students who do not earn the reward (based on their behavioral data) will participate in re-teaching sessions geared toward re-emphasizing school wide behavioral expectations... Data teams report the following:

- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing** increased from 26% to 54% as measured by a writing prompt administered in December.
- 71% of first graders earned a score of 80 or higher on the district's 2nd quarter math benchmark assessment; 83% earned a score of 70 or higher.
- Students in both the kindergarten and 2nd/3rd grade recess/lunch waves met their behavioral goal for the month of January.

January was a productive month at **Lake Street School**. Progress made on **Professional Growth Objectives (PGOs)** was reviewed at scheduled mid-year evaluation conferences... In early January all students participated in **universal screenings in reading and math** and on January 19th (PD day) grade level teams analyzed the data to identify students in need of support and to develop programs aimed at addressing student needs. **Targeted interventions** were initiated and **progress is being monitored** to determine effectiveness... Teachers also completed the mid year administration of the **Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment** and have assessed student growth from the initial assessment administered in October... Report cards were completed for the second quarter and will be distributed on February 5, 2010... Data teams report the following:

- The percent of kindergarten /grade 1 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying main idea** will increase from 74% to 90% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17th.
- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above goal in **identifying cause and effect** will increase from 60% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17th.

- *The percent of grade 5 student scoring at/above goal in **identifying the main idea with supportive details** increased from 50% to 90% as measured by a common assessment administered on/by January 20, 2010.*

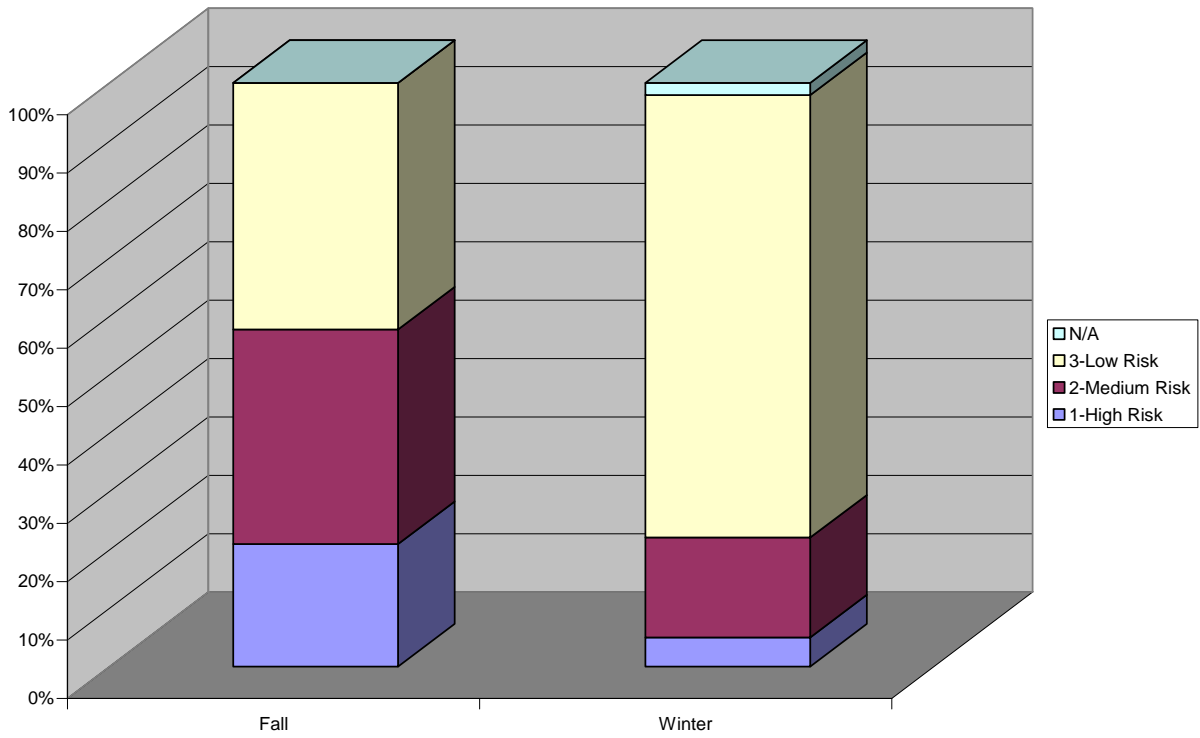
January was a busy month for the staff at **Center Road School** as they transitioned to a new building principal... Professional development was a focus of the January 19th inservice day; the topic was technology. In the AM, teachers had the opportunity to explore Lexia and its usefulness as a **Tier I intervention**. They also had time to delve deeper into the software that accompanies the reading and math programs. In the PM staff attended a session about SMART board software presented by second grade teachers Theresa Hoyt and fifth grade teacher Jennifer Miller... The school's focus on homework completion continues to show good results. First grade had 81% of their students bring in their homework and fourth grade had 84% of their students bring in their homework... Data teams report the following:

- *The percent of kindergarten students scoring at/above goal in **forming a general understanding (Strand A)** increased from 67% to 75% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 11th.*
- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above goal in **integrated understandings (Strand 25)** increased from 74% to 89% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 14th.*

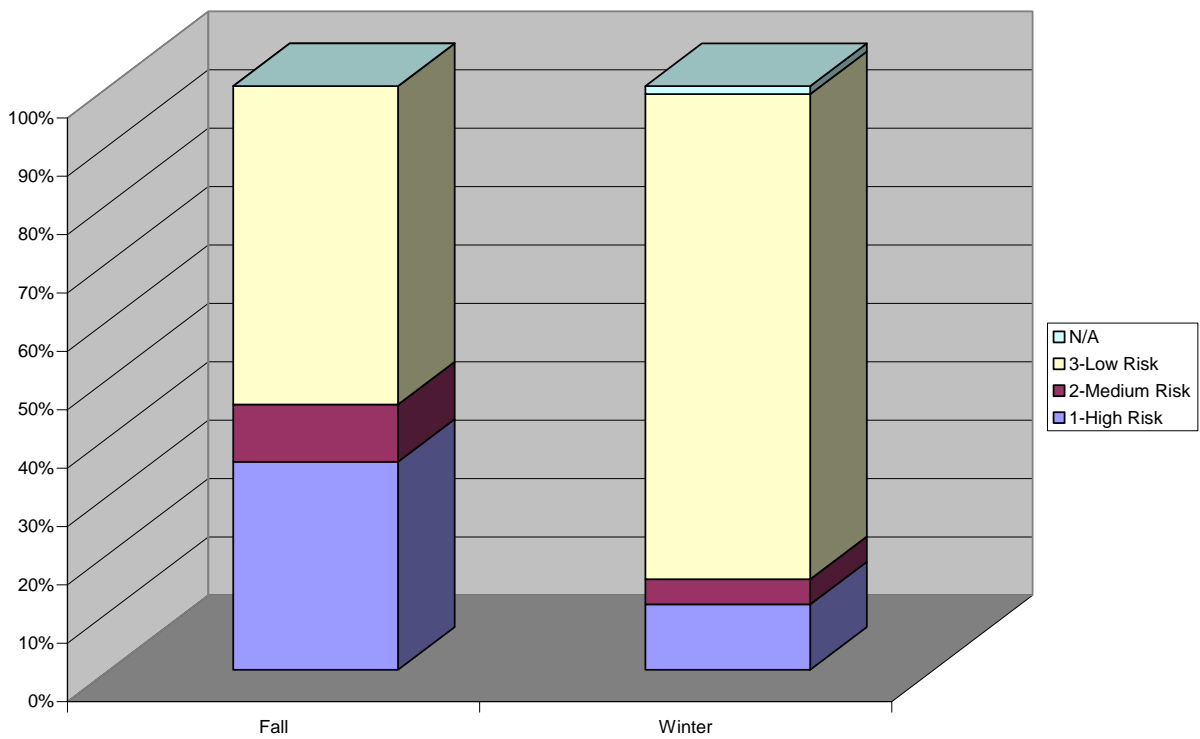
At the district level, coordinators and supervisors continue their efforts to **improve teaching and learning**:

- At the February meeting of the ESP (Elementary School Principals), Chris Ozmun shared bar graphs displaying the results of the **fall and winter universal screens** in mathematics. Increasing the percent of students at low risk and decreasing the percent of students at high risk is a goal of the work surrounding this district's implementation of the **SRBI framework**. Examples follow:

Quantity Discrimination-Grade 1 Winter 2010



Grade 5 Concepts & Applications Results Winter 2010



- World language teachers at the high school collaborated in the development of common mid-year exams... Following a workshop on **common formative assessments**, middle school teachers worked their way through the steps of developing a common formative assessment:

- Step 1: *Selecting an important topic*
- Step 2: *Identifying matching power (priority) standards*
- Step 3: *“Unwrapping” selected power (priority) standards*
- Step 4: *Creating a graphic organizer*
- Step 5: *Determining the big ideas*
- Step 6: *Writing the essential questions*
- Step 7: *Writing selected-response items*
- Step 8: *Writing constructed-response items*
- Step 9: *Creating answer keys and scoring guides*
- Step 10: *Reviewing and revising common assessment items*

- The second elementary interactive whiteboard workshop was held. The first video production workshop was held. Both workshops provided training on **using technology as a tool for classroom instruction**... Becky Broderson, Jill Goldberg, and Jerry Griffin met to refine the requirements for the **Multimedia Communications Career Cluster** and to plan for its promotion and implementation.
- Educators in the **Vernon Preschool Collaborative** attended two days of training in January. Topics focused on **preschool frameworks, differentiated instruction, effective use of large and small group instruction, and Head Start performance standards**... Sally Sherman was invited to serve on the Family Development Center Advisory Board of ECHN. At its January meeting held at Manchester Memorial Hospital the Board discussed the coordination of services for families of preschoolers... Geri Rowell, CSDE Education Program Manager for School Readiness attended the January meeting of the **Vernon Early Childhood Community of Practice**... Local state legislators attended the January luncheon of the **Vernon School Readiness Collaborative**... The “Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA)” committee of the **Vernon Preschool Collaborative** is in the process of developing and refining practices for preschoolers entering the program. Under consideration is a single point of entry for families interested in enrolling.
- To strengthen **core instruction and Tier 1 interventions**, Judy Latonie worked with the VPS Information Technology department to install a free trial of Lexia (Phonics Intervention Program) in all five elementary schools and to train reading specialists in the effective use of this tool in the classroom as a Tier 1 intervention... Winter **universal screenings** are complete. Close observation and support of the **SWAT (School Wide Assessment Team)** in each building show them to be skilled, efficient, and confident. Student assessment data was entered directly into our new **SRBI data base** and was immediately available for reflection and analysis!... We are fine tuning our response to the universal screening data to reflect the following:
 - Universal screening with general outcome measures
 - Triangulate the data – Weed out false positives by looking at the relationship between universal screening data and other student data
 - Diagnose specific areas of concern
 - Intervene in those areas
 - Progress monitor intervention efforts
 - Apply standard decision rules to determine if intervention is working
- The **K-12 PE/Health Data teams** have been working hard analyzing fitness data... The district’s grade 4 students showed an increase of 18.8% in meeting the fitness standards. The district’s 6th and 8th grade students improved their fitness levels to 57.5% and 63.6% respectively while the district’s grade 10 students showed the greatest gain of almost a 25% increase... PE teachers are targeting one specific skill, the mile run... RHS Health teachers have developed a **summarizing rubric** to use when evaluating “understanding the main idea” during current events readings.

- Planning for the transition of students in the autism program (from VCMS to RHS) is underway... Ten hours per week of hands-on instructional career services have been developed for ASEP, TALC, Next STEP, and RHS special education students.

Recognitions

Congratulations to the students and staff in our ESL (English as a Second Language) Program. In her communication dated December 15, 2009, CSDE Bureau Chief Deborah Richards acknowledged the positive results of the Vernon Schools in meeting its Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs):

*97.6% of ELLs made progress in attaining English language proficiency; and
75.2 % of ELLs attained English language proficiency.*

Congratulations and thanks to RHS grade 9 teachers and Link Crew members who organized and provided a successful "Cocoa and Cram" event for students the Monday night before mid-year exams.

Thank you to the MSS reading team (Kelly Brown, Julie Culos, Gayle Golas, and Linda Redekas) for your continued tireless work analyzing multiple sources of reading data and adjusting interventions to better help the needs of students.

Congratulations to World Language teacher Babacar Ndao for receiving the Mead Award from the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers.

Congratulations to Alba Osorio who received the MEAD scholarship from the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Thank you elementary teachers Gayle Golas, Beth Brown, Kristen Chepeleff, Marian Murphy, and Pam Hoyt for developing mathematics activities for summer school.

Thank you Judy Latonie, Jerry Griffin, Jim Harrison, Mike Savignano, and Maralee Parker for developing a proposal for the new 21st Century Learning Environment Grant.

A huge thank you to the K-8 reading department for taking the lead in scheduling, administering, scoring, and entering the winter universal screenings. You made it seem easy!

Congratulations to Heather Crowne, Jill Goldberg, Sherri Nevins, Sally Robinson, and Heidi Stacer, whose students' art work was selected and awarded in the 2010 Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards Program. This highly competitive statewide competition recognizes the "best of the best" in students' visual arts achievements.

Thank you Diane Provenzano for your five years of dedicated service to our NextSTEP Program. Best of luck in your new position at CREC.