

Some juniors say test's 'too easy'

# Results of exit test promising

Associated Press

Juniors across Texas who took a skills test they must eventually pass if they want a high school diploma apparently fared better than predicted in the first try, with some of the students saying the test was almost "too easy."

Although statewide totals are not expected to be released until Friday, and then only partial returns, an informal survey of Texas school districts Thursday showed 80 percent to 100 percent of juniors passing the test.

The exam is designed to measure minimum competency in basic mathematics and English, and must be passed by all would-be 1987 graduates.

Dr. William Kirby, state education commissioner, had estimated that 75 percent would be a realistic number for students passing the exam on the first try.

"I think it shows that students can do the work if they are motivated," said Linus Wright, superintendent of the Dallas school district.

The students topped the predicted passage rate, said Port Arthur school board president Al Dugan, "simply because the teachers did their job — they took the bull by the horns."

Statewide the results of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills, or TEAMS test, were viewed as an important benchmark for measuring the quality of education. The graduation test is part of the sweeping reforms approved by the Texas Legislature in 1984.

Dallas saw about 80 percent of the students taking the test pass the math portion, and about 83 percent pass the language arts portion — better than the two-thirds rate some school officials had predicted earlier.

In Highland Park, 100 percent of the students who took the test passed both parts.

Amarillo reported a 92 percent on the language arts, and a 90 percent on math. In El Paso, 89 percent of the juniors passed the math portion and 90 percent the language arts portion.

In Port Arthur, 79 percent of the juniors taking the mathematics portion of the test passed, and 80 percent mastered the language arts section.

San Antonio reported that only one of eight school districts fell below the predicted 75 percent.

The state education board set 50 percent as the minimum passing grade for mathematics and 62.5 percent for language arts for 1985-1986.

Keith Cruse, director of the Texas Education Agency-administered tests, attributed higher-than-ex-

pected scores to school district's preparation of students — cram courses ranging from distribution of sample tests to tutoring.

But some administrators and students said the high marks came because the test was too simple.

"I don't think it was anything that any 11th grade student couldn't do," said Reggie Parmer, a Bay City high school student, after taking the test in October.

The test was given Oct. 1 and 2 to an estimated 200,000 11th-graders statewide. Juniors who failed can take the test again this spring and two more times their senior year if necessary to pass. Without it, they won't graduate from high school.

Many administrators said they took special steps to prepare their students for the test but that the results are even more valuable in finding and helping students who need an extra boost to graduate.

Slouch

By Jim Egan



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