

Scores

Vo-Tech reading results appear to be creeping up; Central cited over poor progress among special education pupils

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The state wanted at least 35 percent of students to score proficient or better in math and 45 percent in reading.

Northwest had 34 percent of 11th grade students proficient in math, although 65 percent were proficient in reading.

Vo-Tech had 24 percent of students proficient in math and 38 percent in reading, both below thresholds.

Vo-Tech has worked for years to improve its PSSA scores, but refuses to lose sight of its mission to prepare students for the world of work, said Principal Cosmas Curry.

On tests specifically for vocational students, Vo-Tech scores well, he said.

"We had the most students score proficient or better on the High Schools That Work program in math, reading and science," he said.

The high school has changed its curriculum to better meet state standards and made a number of other changes, including incorporating more reading and writing into the shop areas to try to drive up PSSA scores.

Vo-Tech's math passing rate has shown mixed results over the last four years, but reading scores seem to be creeping higher, according to state reports.

The 11th-grade students averaged 1180 in math and 1210 in reading last year. Both were significantly below the state average of 1320 in math and 1340 in reading.

The latest PSSA reports are from tests that fifth-, eighth- and 11th-graders took in spring 2004.

Benton near bottom
Benton is changing its high

school math curriculum this year, which administrators hope will pull up its math scores.

"We've been concerned about the math scores for a while," said Superintendent Andrew Pollock.

The high school exceeded the state's proficient rate for the previous three years, but last year barely scraped out the 35 percent the state wants to see.

Reading scores were much better with 56 percent of students scoring proficient or higher. Still, the high school was below the state average in both categories. Eleventh-grade students averaged 1250 in math and 1280 in reading.

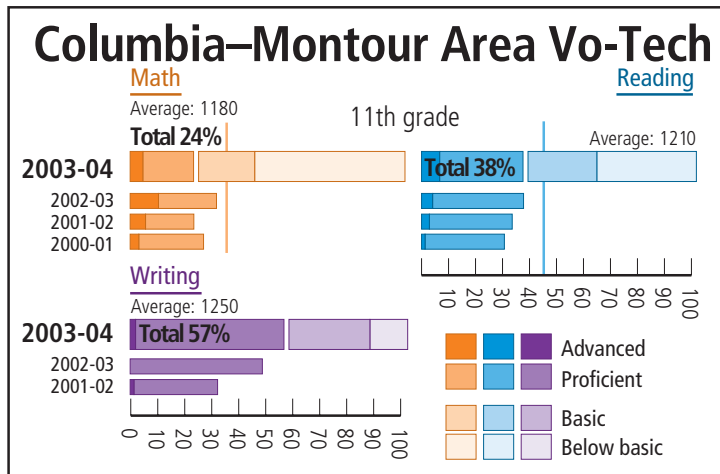
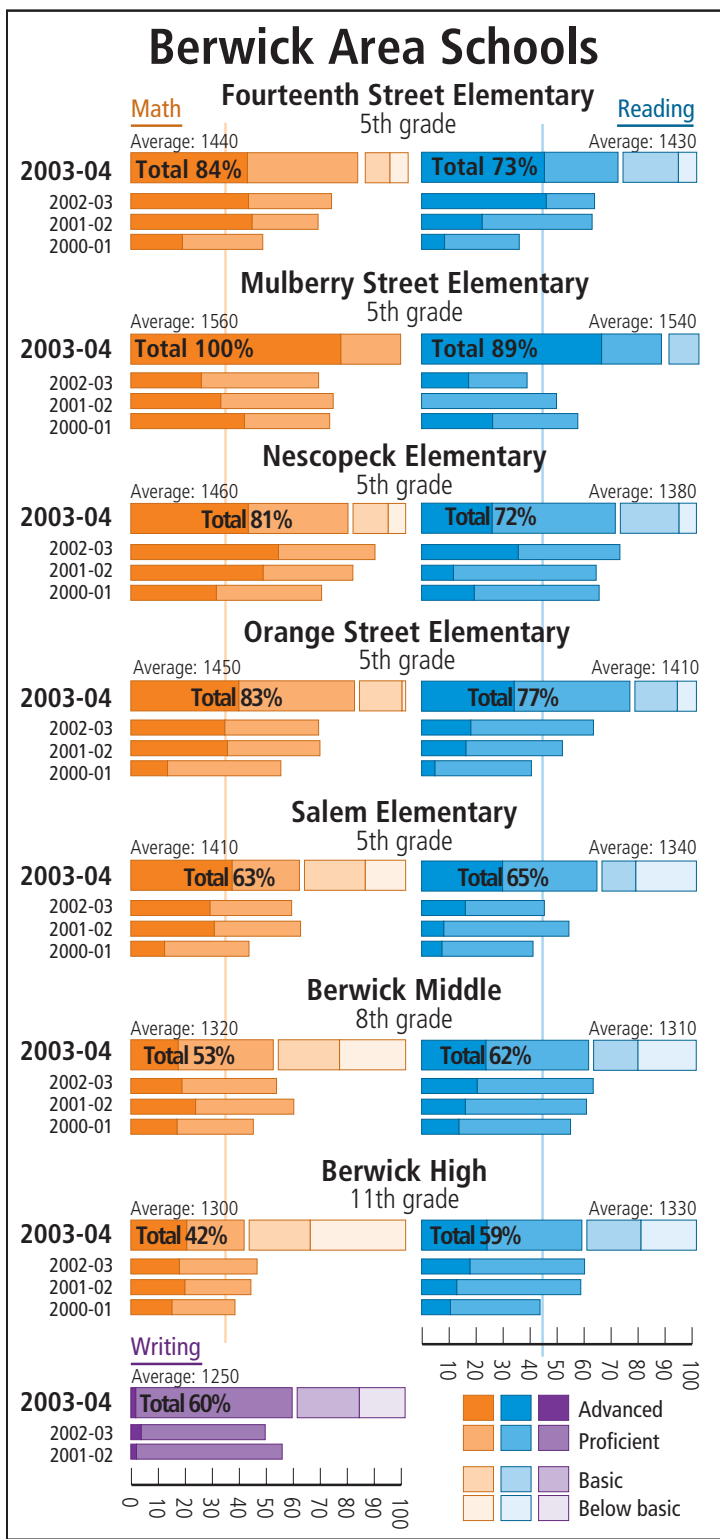
Central at the top
Central Columbia, on the other hand, was well above average in both categories last spring. On math, 67 percent of students were proficient or better, and in reading 81 percent of 11th grade students met that threshold.

The average scores of 1420 on math and 1470 in reading were both at least 100 points above the state average. Fifty points is considered statistically significant.

"It's no accident we get the results we get," Superintendent Harry Mathias said. Central stays focused on academics, and that's reflected in the results.

"Keep your eye on the ball. Well, what's the ball? Quality instruction," he said. Students receive good instruction, the most important part of learning, Mathias said. Also, the district is carefully aligning its curriculum to state standards.

"That's huge work, and it never seems to end," Mathias said. Central administra-



tors are always studying the newest standards and most recent practices for what and how students should learn.

Central also watches each student's scores, "targeting kids who are in need of assistance," Mathias said.

Ironically, Central was one of three area districts cited this year for not meeting state requirements on test scores. Special education students there did not improve their scores enough to satisfy the requirement that all groups make "Adequate Yearly Progress" toward 100 percent proficiency.

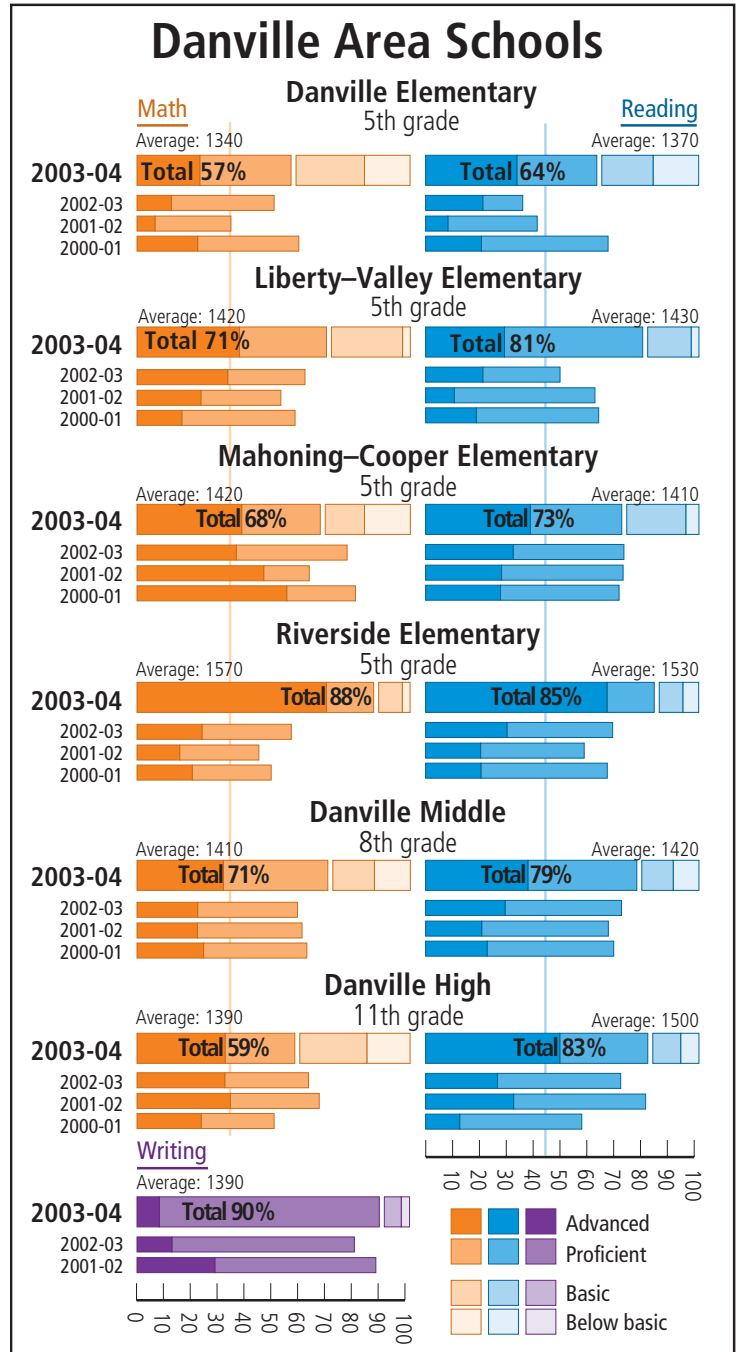
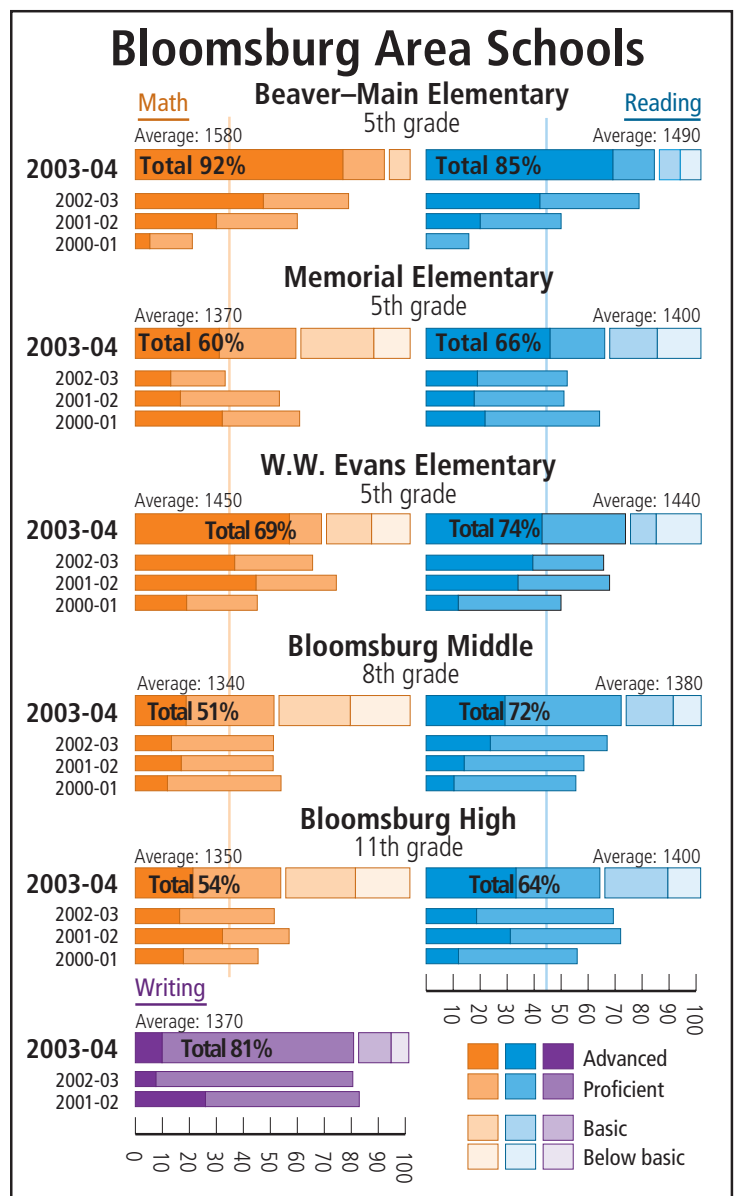
"Clearly our high school is a very high-performing school," Mathias said. "That's what makes the AYP report so vexing."

Danville doing well

Danville High School saw a large gain in the number of proficient reading students to 83 percent, but slipped some in math to 59 percent, noted the district's curriculum coordinator, Gwen Belding.

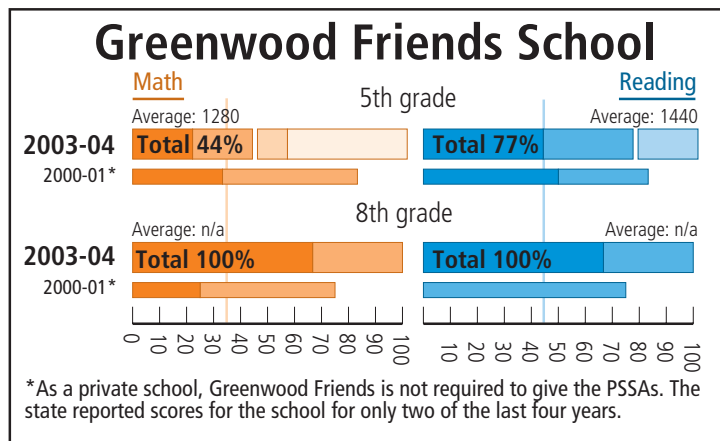
Still, the high school's average scores of 1390 in math and 1500 in reading were both significantly above the state averages.

"We were very pleased. We



commend the students and the teachers for their very hard work and not just on the PSSAs, but all year," Belding said.

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*As a private school, Greenwood Friends is not required to give the PSSAs. The state reported scores for the school for only two of the last four years.

