



SALEM'S TEACHERS GET SOL NEWS DURING LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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Leaders and representative teachers from each of Salem's schools gathered together this morning preparing for the upcoming school year at the Division's annual "Leadership Conference" when Superintendent Alan Seibert informed the educators that each of Salem's 6 schools and the division as a whole had met or exceeded all of the required "No Child Left Behind" targets by posting exceptional SOL test scores.

But the just received news from the Virginia Department of Education was not met with applause or cheering, but rather concern and discussion about how the small percentage of students who didn't made the grade can become part of the equation in the coming months.

"My heart breaks for these children who are judged by a single standardized test," says Seibert. "Test scores are important because they are indicators of student progress, but we teach children, not percentages and more importantly, we teach children for 180 days a year and not just the day of an assessment."

Salem is one of only 21 school divisions in the entire state to meet all of the federal indicators both as a division and at each of its individual schools as required by the "No Child Left Behind" guidelines. For a school or a school division to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), at least 81 percent of students overall must pass the Standards of Learning and other assessments in reading, and 79 percent must pass state tests in mathematics.

In 2009, 94 percent of the total number of student who were tested in Salem City Schools passed the English-Reading tests and 92 percent of the total number of students passed the Math tests.

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) numbers are just one variable in a much larger equation when it comes to educating young people, and Seibert made that point on the state level back in June when he addressed the State Board of Education in Richmond asking its members to be more flexible and innovative when it comes to measuring the progress of all students when it comes to end of the school year tests such as the SOLs.

"In Salem City Schools, we are not waiting for end-of-grade or end-of-course SOL tests or even a periodic benchmark assessment," says Seibert. "Instead, we are instituting a division-wide emphasis on formative assessment so that the needs of every child can be met every day...like a doctor using lab results from this morning to prescribe treatment for this afternoon."

Salem's annual "Leadership Conference" is a two day kick-off to the school year that is comprised of far more teachers than administrators.

"In Salem every teacher is a leader in the classroom," says Seibert. "Strategic plans and innovative approaches will only make a difference in the life of a child if a caring, committed, and highly skilled teacher makes it happen."

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