

The Learning Curve

This page was written and designed by Education First in cooperation with the Bibb County Board of Education, the Peyton Anderson Foundation, and The Telegraph.



Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

SAT Scores Continue to Improve

Released by The College Board, the most recent SAT results for the Senior Class of 2006 show marked improvement in student achievement in the Bibb County School District. Students showed significant improvement on both the Critical Reading (3 points) and Mathematics (5 points) sections of the exam this past year. In one year, that reflects an 8 point increase in Bibb County's scores (from 901 to 909), while the State of Georgia saw a 3-point decrease.

Since 2004, students have shown exemplary improvement as their scores have increased 27 points (12 points in Critical Reading and 15 points in Math). The greatest improvement has been with our African American students who, since 2004, have seen a 20 point increase in Critical Reading and a 19 point increase in Math. Between the 2005 and 2006 scores, African American scores increased by 10 points, while the State of Georgia decreased by two points and the national scores decreased by one point.

"It can be attributed to our focus on literacy, teaching test-taking skills, and working one-on-one with the students," says Westside High School Principal Laura Perkins. "We've raised the level of expectations for our students, and they've worked to meet those expectations."

"My teachers have worked hard, and my students have worked hard," says Central High School Principal Dr. Erin Weaver. "We encourage everyone do well. Our goal is to make every child's dream come true, and we couldn't do it without the teachers, students, and parents. It truly is a community effort."

Both Principals cite SAT classes, voluntary prep courses after school and on Saturdays, online programs, and a focus on improving literacy as reasons for the increase.

"We are steadily closing the gap between our scores, the state scores, and the national scores," said Bibb County Superintendent Sharon Patterson. "Our increased expectations and focus on rigorous programs are reflected in increased scores year after year."

Skyview Elementary Teacher Awarded Graduate Scholarship



Skyview Elementary Music teacher Susan Mincey

"It bothered me that I did not have a master's degree," says Skyview Elementary Music teacher Susan Mincey. "I completed all but four master's courses to get a teaching certificate, but was only allowed to use these course hours for a certificate, not a master's degree. Therefore I did not want to start over for another master's degree."

Wanting to continue her own education, she was unsure how she could do that with a full-time teaching job. She didn't want to travel far, and she had to make sure her course load wouldn't take away from her job. When she found out about Lesley University of Cambridge, Massachusetts offering a master's degree cohort – meeting 23 hours for one week-end a month for twenty-two months at Vineville Academy, she immediately got to work. "The course load is very workable with a fulltime teaching job," she says.

Pursuing a degree in *Integrating the Arts in the Curriculum*, she's found it a perfect fit for the educating she has already done at Skyview. "I had been trying to integrate as much as I could from the academic classes of my Kindergarten through 5th grade students into my music lessons. The more a student hears the

same idea in different settings the more the knowledge becomes internalized."

Through the master's program, she is focusing on how to use the arts – music, dance and movement, poetry and prose writing, story telling, computer technology, drawing, painting, and mosaics – to experiment and explore learning of history, science, language, and other academic studies. Already she has formed the Skyview Ancestral Museum, collaborating with the other specialty teachers to help the students learn about other cultures as they relate to their own family heritage. "It is so exciting to see the eyes of children light up as they are validated for who they are and the cultural contributions made by their ancestors."

As a member of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, Mincey read about a Graduate scholarship being offered to PAGE members pursuing advanced degrees in education who agree to teach in Georgia for three years. With letters of support from Skyview Principal Gail Gilbert and Lesley University Professor Sandy Levy, she was awarded one of five scholarships in the state.

Tom Wommack, president of the PAGE Foundation, noted that each year the 65,000-member organization awards more than \$15,000 in scholarships. "Our members continue to recognize the importance of supporting educators in their efforts to improve their teaching skills through the pursuit of advanced degrees," Wommack said.

CodeMed II Back-to-School Bash

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Partners with Medical Center to Provide Community Information

Set up at tables at the Macon Mall, the Medical Center of Central Georgia and the Bibb County School District hosted the CodeMed II Back-to-School Bash, offering the community a wide array of services and information. The event was also sponsored by *The Telegraph* and WMGT-TV.

In its second year, it has already seen growth: MCCG came on as the community partner and the amount of departments and community organizations available to the community almost doubled.

"We want to create an opportunity for our departments and community organization to showcase the services available to the Bibb County students and parents," says District Safety Manager David Gowan.

A steady stream of students and parents stopped at the tables for the five-hour event, picking up flyers, asking ques-

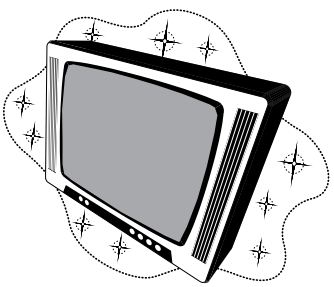
tions, and finding more ways to be involved in their education.

The event, now hosted annually and looking to continue its growth, is but one arm of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant. "It's a federally funded initiative that steers program activities which foster truancy awareness, substance abuse prevention, parent involvement, interagency projects, and student enrichment," says Project Director Sonja Shavers. The grant "seeks to demonstrate substantial intervention programming where truancy, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and parent involvement is concerned to eradicate the socio-economic disparity in the Middle Georgia community at large."

Currently, they work with several programs of work, including Safety Management (which sponsored the Back-to-

School Bash), Ripple Effects (which helps students on a one-on-one basis with school and personal related issues), the system's Truancy Center, the After School Program, and programs operating through River Edge Behavioral Health and the Macon-Bibb County Health Department.

Through their initiatives, Shavers says they are continually reaching out to community groups for support and help in working for the advancement of student safety and well-being, in and out of the school environment. By bringing the community together, they hope to combine all available resources to work for a common goal. "We want to continually build awareness [of the community's efforts]," she says. "It's a huge collaborative."



For up-to-date information and events concerning the Bibb County School District, tune in to Cox Cable Channel 17, log on to www.bibb.k12.ga.us, or read *The Learning Curve* every Tuesday in *The Telegraph*.

