

Dear Parent or Guardian:

On November 10th, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) released the annual list of schools in need of improvement. Although the South Colonie Central School District remains in good standing with the NYSED, Sand Creek Middle School was identified as a school in need of improvement based on the performance of one specific subgroup of our students on the state English Language Arts (ELA) assessments.

New York State uses assessment data to monitor the performance of the more than 6,000 schools in the state. As a result of federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, all students must achieve state benchmarks in ELA and Math. The state looks at school results as a whole, but also breaks down the student population into subgroups.

The testing results are analyzed for each subgroup and all subgroups are expected to achieve the target designated by the state. If a subgroup fails to meet the benchmark set by the state, the school must implement changes dedicated to improving the performance of that subgroup. If that subgroup falls below the state benchmark two years in a row, the school is classified by the state as a “School in Need of Improvement (SINI).” This year 1,325 schools in New York were identified as SINI schools.

District test results show South Colonie continues to outperform many capital district schools and ranks above the state average. In fact, South Colonie ranks number 11 out of 85 school districts in the Capital Region. The rankings are based on four years of student testing data, 2008 to 2011, with the greatest weight given to the most recent year.

Despite these successes, **one subgroup – Students with Disabilities** – did not achieve the state benchmark in ELA. In response, Sand Creek Principal David Perry has reviewed all academic programs. The school is implementing new programming and is providing professional development to teachers to ensure all students, including Students with Disabilities, achieve the state benchmarks.

For students who were unable to achieve the state benchmarks in ELA, Sand Creek has implemented tiered Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Based on the needs of individual students, they receive in-class intervention, intervention in a separate setting, or achievement monitoring services.

Reading Adventures, a computer and direct instruction program that targets reading comprehension and multiple choice questions continues to be an option for students. The program mixes direct teacher instruction, modeled and independent reading, and interactive software to build reading skills.

Sand Creek has a full-inclusion model for special education students. Full-inclusion joins special education students and regular education students in classes taught by a certified

content teacher and a certified special education teacher. This teaching model provides students with differentiated instruction to meet their specific needs.

The Data Inquiry Team formed at Sand Creek meets regularly to analyze assessment data to see if gaps exist in the current curriculum. In addition, the group helps develop strategies for teachers for meeting the needs of all students.

When a school in need of improvement makes adequate yearly progress for two years in a row, it is no longer considered in need of improvement. We look forward to continuing to improve our schools and assisting all our students in meeting these state benchmarks.

Respectfully,

David Perry