

Manaugh celebrates 1st time to meet AYP standard

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Journal/Sam Green
Summer Harris hugs Principal Phil Kasper to thank him for the ice cream Friday afternoon at Manaugh Elementary School.

Choruses of "thank you" rang out Friday at Manaugh Elementary School as students and staff celebrated meeting every adequate yearly progress target in the 2007-2008 school year.

Last year marks the first time Manaugh has met adequate yearly progress standards.

Manaugh celebrated by having an ice cream party for all grade levels, and school Principal Phil Kasper mentioned the difficulty in making AYP each year.

"We have a very diverse group of students, and we made a progression in all 32 categories," Kasper said, referring to specific targets each school must make in order to make AYP. "If we had missed just one, we wouldn't have made AYP."

Adequate yearly progress is an accountability measure for schools, districts and the state, according to the Colorado Department of Education.

Some Montezuma-Cortez School District Re-1 schools made adequate yearly progress for the 2007-'08 school year, but others didn't, according to a report the education department released Wednesday.

Kasper said there are several factors that were involved in making AYP in the 2007-2008 school year. He thanked parents for bringing their children to school, as attendance is one of the major targets.

He also noted the school's reading program is a major factor, saying the Lindamood-Bell program was a "wise investment" and seeing the results of that investment was encouraging. The Lindamood-Bell program assists in student learning skills, teaching children, and adults, to read, spell, comprehend and express language.

"We also have a tiered instruction for reading development," Kasper said.

This includes 90 minutes of core reading for each student, and if a student is partially proficient, teachers will add an additional 45 to 60 minutes of reading. Kasper said if the student is still at an unsatisfactory level, there are more reading minutes added to help bring the student up to speed.

"Our biggest concentration is moving boys and girls up from the unsatisfactory or partially proficient level by giving them extra time and practice," he said. "We try to always make it about reading, but our mathematics (scores) have also gone up."

Manaugh offers an independent reading club, where kids are encouraged to read through a series of contests. Kasper said all readers get rewarded for participating. The increased reading and mathematics scores are largely due in part by the teaching staff, Kasper said.

"This is a really good staff," he said. "They are highly motivated, highly trained and are focused on the kids.

They are the key to all of this."

Kim Franchini, a third-grade teacher at Manaugh, said she and other teachers have been working hard while teaching reading and writing to the students.

"We are spending a lot more time in class working on the basic skills to make AYP," Franchini said.

Preparing students for the Colorado Student Assessment Program, or CSAP tests, can be difficult because students take the tests for the first time in third grade, Franchini said.

"The reading program we have really prepares the students for CSAP," she said, adding that the students take a weekly test that mimics the actual CSAP test.

According to Kasper, the school is ahead of where it was last year, a good sign it will make AYP in the 2008-2009 school year. The school does an assessment at the beginning of the year that "drives the instruction" for the school year.

Kasper said Manaugh is just finishing up the assessment and is coming out ahead. He said while educators are optimistic, it is still early in the year and plenty of work needs to be done.

"Our goal here is to get better, not to make AYP every year. This is something I preach and the teachers preach," he said. "The boys and girls here care about their own learning.

"We need to give the teachers and the students credit here."

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