



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *Tuesday, July 27, 2010*

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District science scores show moderate improvements

New program will bring more science instruction to middle school

(Mendota Heights, Minn.) --- The release of the 2010 Science Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) results indicate that overall, District 197 students are showing moderate gains in their science comprehension and skills. The MCAs are the mandated state tests that help districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards and meet the requirements of the federally mandated No Child Left Behind Act. Science tests are given in grades five and eight and once in high school, depending on when students complete their life sciences (i.e. biology) curriculum.

At the middle school level, gains were seen district-wide in grade five, with mixed results in eighth grade. Friendly Hills Middle School students showed improvements at both the fifth and eighth grade levels, and they continue to score above state averages. This year, fifth graders improved six percentage points over last year, with eighth grade scores increasing two percentage points.

Heritage Middle School had mixed results. Fifth grade scores improved four percent over last year, although the results still remain slightly below the state average. Unfortunately, results for eighth grade showed a slight decline and are also below the state average.

“We are clearly concerned about these results, but remain optimistic and excited about the new opportunities that will be provided for all Heritage students this year with the implementation of our new E-STEM curriculum throughout the school,” says Principal Chris Hiti. “This new curriculum will stress science, technology, engineering and math instruction in creative ways that we hope will engage students in the sciences and help them improve their skills for lifelong success.”

Last year, Heritage implemented the E-STEM program at the fifth grade level, and plans to apply the magnet program school-wide this fall. One of the new curricular programs includes Project Lead the Way, which stresses technology and engineering instruction. In addition, the school will integrate science, technology and mathematics across disciplines, so students will gain the scientific skills necessary for the high-technology world that awaits them.

Results at Henry Sibley High School demonstrate growth and continued success in science skill levels. Sibley students achieved 67% proficiency, which is an improvement of four percent over last year's scores, and also remains well above the state average of 52% proficient.

“We are pleased to see our strong science program proving successful with this continued growth in our science scores,” said Henry Sibley principal, Dr. Robin Percival. “We are proud of our tradition of high



achievement in our science program, including Minnesota’s AP Science Teacher of the Year [Jennifer Nippert] and with many of our students successfully completing Advanced Placement science courses.”

Overall, district officials are pleased with the gains seen this year, yet they remain focused on continually working on ways to improve student achievement in the sciences at all levels.

“The results from Friendly Hills and Henry Sibley are especially promising, as they show both individual improvements and stronger scores compared to state averages,” says Jean Menard, Executive Director of Curriculum. “We hope to see improvements at Heritage next year with the implementation of the school’s E-STEM program, and will continue to work at all grade levels to ensure students have the science skills they need to be successful.”

Science MCA-II % Proficient Trend

