

Gearing up for the CRCT

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By John Jackson, Henry County Times

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In the midst of trivia, teacher raps, questions, prizes, and bright orange signs marked with logos of test-taking tips, the entire student body of Morrow middle watched the school's "prep" rally. Its theme: "Betcha can't do it like me!" stressed students score a "300+" or one that is above a passing mark on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, an annual state exam given at all school systems in Georgia. Organized by the

school's teachers, the hour-long rally was held to encourage the school's students to gear up for the CRCT, which began in Clayton and Henry county schools this past Monday. Morrow Middle was one of several schools in both counties that held rallies on Friday.

At Austin Road Middle School, in recent years Henry County's highest performing middle school in Math and Reading, teachers and administrators created an activity aimed at keeping CRCT preparations fun for students with their own "prep" rally. "The rally is an hour-long academic bowl of sorts, the likes of a high school homecoming pep rally and academic game show combined," said school librarian Dawn Currier.

Two weeks leading up to the CRCT, students at the middle school studied and reviewed curriculum material, with expectations of competing against each other for the school's coveted CRCT "prep" rally trophy. Thirteen-year-old Ellis Jay-Elzie, eighth grader at Austin Road Middle, said he woke up last Friday morning anxious to quench his competitive thirst. The school's three grade levels competed throughout the week before the rally to determine who would represent their grades during the event. About 16 students represent each grade and take turns in panels of four, answering multiple-choice questions that are displayed on a projector in the school gymnasium.

The CRCT — which covers Math, Science, English and Social Studies — is administered to students in all Georgia schools in grades one through eight, though it is especially important for those in third, fifth and eighth grades. Students in grade three must pass the reading portion of the CRCT while those in grades five and eight must pass Reading and Math areas in order to be promoted. This year marks the second time in Georgia history that eighth graders have to pass portions of the CRCT in order to be promoted.

In Henry, if a student scores below the state's minimum requirements in reading or math, school officials recommend the student attend summer school and take the CRCT during the summer. If the student fails the test again, the student must repeat the grade. But a parent may file an appeal. In that case, there must be a unanimous decision by a committee of parents, teachers, and the principal designee to "place" the child in the next grade or retain them. In all these cases, the student must have an instructional plan.

In Clayton, if a student does not pass CRCT, or meet state requirements, they also could take summer school courses and retake portions of the CRCT. If students fail again, they likely would have to retake the grade. Meetings with student parents and school officials could be held to determine the student's future.

One new aspect of the CRCT is how many questions students will have to answer correctly to meet standards and pass. Last week the Georgia Board of Education changed grade and content combinations for the CRCT because of the adoption of a new state curriculum commonly referred to as GPS or Georgia Performance Standards versus the traditional Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). To meet standard and pass the exam under the new curriculum, students will need to score at least an 800. Scoring an 800 would be equivalent to a 300 on the existing scale.

Improvement may be significant for Clayton County because the system did not make adequate yearly progress standards last year. Meeting AYP standards is part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

1. Thoroughly explain why standardized test performance improvement in Clayton County is imperative.
2. Compare and contrast the traditional Quality Core Curriculum with the revised Georgia Performance Standards as well as the challenges they represent.
3. Analyze and interpret the repercussions in both Henry and Clayton counties, and the state of Georgia, if one does not successfully meet the standards on the Math and Reading portions of the CRCT.
4. Why is the CRCT especially important for students in third, fifth and eighth grades?
5. Precisely what is the "CRCT prep rally" and what does it consists of? Agree or disagree? Explain.
6. If a score of 300 on the CRCT (QCC) is equivalent to about a 60%, what would a 350 equate to? 900 on GPS?
7. How confident do you feel you performed on the Reading and Math portions of the CRCT? Explain.
8. In paragraph form, explain at least five legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.