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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEADLINE SUGGEST: 100% of Orange Beach City Schools' Third-Grade Students Pass ACAP Reading Assessment

Orange Beach, ALA. – Orange Beach City Schools' third-grade class earned a passing score on the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) Reading test. Each of the third-grade students met or exceeded the benchmark score of 435.

"Sufficiency and proficiency are two terms that can be easily misunderstood," commented Orange Beach City Schools' Superintendent Randy Wilkes. "Sufficiency is described as 'grade level.' Orange Beach City Schools leads the state in third-grade reading sufficiency. We have 100% of students reading on grade level."

"Proficiency relates to a higher functioning level, one that formerly was reflective of the potential to earn a B or better on college entrance courses. The goal of the district is to achieve 80% proficiency in every subject tested in every grade level," stated Wilkes. "Third graders have already debunked naysayers by achieving 85% proficiency in reading."

Even with an 8.4% state-wide improvement in testing performance, Orange Beach City Schools was the only district in Alabama to comprehensively pass the assessment. This accomplishment is

significant not only for its statistical impressiveness but also for the security it can provide for the students' academic future.

"I think that their performance on the ACAP Reading assessment will boost students' confidence in their reading abilities and enhance collective teacher efficacy, which is something we talked a lot about this year," said Mary Catherine Law, Orange Beach Elementary School Principal. "Collective efficacy is the belief in each other and the impact we all have on student achievement. State testing affects every single person in the building. I'm just so proud that the efforts of all paid off! These results will certainly enhance our school's reputation."



The third-grade class was celebrated for their accomplishment at an academic pep rally.

Student results on this assessment can dictate their ability to advance to the next grade level. Placing an emphasis on developing the skills needed throughout the school year was a priority for the third-grade teaching staff.

"The third-grade teachers have a passion for teaching and a way of motivating students to go above and beyond. They made learning fun by using creative and innovative teaching methods. Their strength was building relationships with their students and with their families," commented Law. "This is the first year that our third grade teachers were departmentalized. Team teaching allowed two teachers to focus on Reading and Social Studies and the other two to focus on Math and Science."

"Our students participated in 'Walk to Reading' each day and were provided differentiated instruction based on each student's needs by all four of the third grade teachers. Students were placed in flexible groups based on benchmark data. Data drives every decision that we make," stated Law. "This intervention block was used to help each child get what they needed whether that was enrichment or support. Our Reading Coach, Erin Dykes, was also instrumental in helping

our students reach this goal. She collaborated with teachers to share best practices and strategies that work.”

“Our teachers also had continuous professional development opportunities with Kids First coaches,” said Law. “We love the partnership that we have with Reeda Betts, Jennifer Boykin and Terri Purcell. Our teachers are trained in the Science of Reading (LETRS), use Phonics First strategies, and Open Court curriculum for a well-structured reading block. Parents and the community were also supportive of our literacy initiatives and encouraged reading at home.”

Orange Beach Elementary School provides unique learning opportunities for its students, placing emphasis on developing the next generation of well-rounded individuals. The success of the third-grade students is a testament to this commitment.

“We knew this group was special from the beginning of the year. They came to us with a strong foundation of early literacy skills from grades K-2,” said Mrs. Hampton, a third-grade Orange Beach Elementary teacher. “Their foundational skills allowed them to dive deep into the third-grade rigor, meet individualized goals, and accomplish great growth in the areas of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension during our year together, showcasing such exciting results. The students were also willing to put in the work it took to achieve this goal.”

Approaching the third school year as an independent district, Orange Beach City Schools has swiftly set high standards within all aspects of the academic experience. In addition to the third grade’s achievement, there were multiple aspects of growth and accomplishments throughout the system.

“The goal is to continue to grow and to achieve at high levels and demonstrate mastery of learning on such assessments as the ACAP and extend student learning beyond the 3Rs (relationships, rigor, and relevance) to encompass necessary 21st Century skills in leadership, digital literacy, communication, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, global citizenship, problem-solving, and team-working,” said Wilkes.