

Standardized Test Results Demonstrate Excellence in Christian Education

Please note: St. Mark's is affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and is included in the WELS test results analyzed below.

In a recent research study, ECRA Group, Inc. analyzed and evaluated the Fall 2014 TerraNova Achievement Test results for WELS students in the Classes of 2015 through 2020 who participated in the WELS annual fall assessment program. It is the purpose of this summary to focus on test results for the Class of 2015. This includes information for the approximately 1,530 grade 8 students who tested in the fall of 2014. While there is some variability in student achievement levels across WELS schools, there are three key findings from the study regarding the average performance of students across participating WELS schools.

Finding #1

- On average, the Class of 2015 outperformed the nation in the test areas of reading, language, and mathematics.
- More specifically, the average national percentile scores for the Class of 2015 in these areas were in the 72nd to 77th national percentile range, which is 22 to 27 percentile points higher than the national average.
- The high performance levels of these Grade 8 students is further evidenced by the following:
 - 80% of the students scored at or above the national average in reading
 - 75 % of the students scored at or above the national average in language
 - 81% of the students scored at or above the national average in mathematics

Finding #2

- Group findings across five years of testing indicate that the longer students attend WELS schools, the better they do in outperforming the nation in the basic skills areas of reading, language, and mathematics.
- An in-depth analysis tracked approximately 1,160 students (or 76% of the total grade 8 students tested) who attended WELS schools for each of the past 5 years, i.e. from fall grade 4 in 2010, through fall grade 8 in 2014.
- The average national percentile growth for these Grade 8 students tracked longitudinally from grade 4 in 2010 to grade 8 in 2014 were as follows:
 - Reading- The average national percentile for the group increased from the 69th national percentile in grade 4 to the 76th national percentile in grade 8
 - Language- The average national percentile for the group increased from the 68th national percentile in grade 4 to the 76th national percentile in grade 8
 - Mathematics- The average national percentile for the group increased from the 55th national percentile in grade 4 to the 79th national percentile in grade 8Note: When interpreting these performance level changes, no change in a national percentile score over time generally means students grew at a normal rate and similarly to their counter parts across the nation, while positive group average changes equate to something happening in the local instructional program that added value above and beyond what happened across the nation.

Finding #3

- The value-added benefit of the WELS instructional program is furthered evidenced for three levels of learners (above average, average, and below average) as each group consistently outperformed similar students across the country in the basic skills areas of reading, language, and mathematics.
- The high performance levels of the three levels of learners within the group of 1,160 matched grade 8 students were as follows:
 - Above average WELS students generally scored 14-17 percentile points higher than above average students across the country
 - Average WELS students generally scored 26-30 percentile points higher than average students across the country
 - Below average WELS students generally scored 31-36 percentile points higher than below average students across the country
- Whether male or female, above average, average, or in need of additional coaching and extra instructional intervention, this year's research studies for the Class of 2015 generally confirm the effectiveness of the instructional program in addressing varying student performance levels.