

R.I.-Milan School Board hears ITBS results

By Robin J. Youngblood, Staff writer

Many of the Rock Island-Milan third- through eighth-graders scored at grade-level on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills this fall.

However, on average, students who are black as well as those from low-income families did not fare well on the test, according to findings presented Tuesday to the school board.

In all test areas, students on average scored at grade level or above except in fifth-grade math and seventh- and eighth-grade reading and language.

ITBS tests students in third- through eighth-grade in reading, math and language. It is scored based on what a student should know at a certain grade level. For example, if a fourth-grader receives a math score of 5.7, that means the student knows math concepts a fifth-grader would know in the seventh month of school.

Board members did not discuss the test results during the meeting.

However, the district cannot compare this year's ITBS scores with those from previous years because the district used a different test format. Jay Marino, assistant superintendent of curriculum, said the test had several changes -- including its format and the grades taking the test -- between the February 2003 scores and this fall's scores.

``This is our baseline year," Mr. Marino said. ``This is what we'll be comparing ourselves against in the future."

In September, students in grades three through eight took the ITBS. Previously, only grades three, six and eight took it. Students also took the test in October rather than November, so teachers could find out earlier how much their students know and adjust accordingly, Mr. Marino said.

The ITBS also serves as a pre-test for the Illinois Standards Achievement Test students take in the spring.

Here is a summary of some of the tests' findings based on an average of students' scores:

-- The only minority group as a whole that didn't perform at grade level in any testing area were blacks.

-- White students, as a group, scored at or above grade level in all areas. The highest average score came from eighth-graders, who scored a 9.0, a full grade ahead in math.

-- Only third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade Hispanic students tested in reading scored at or slightly above grade level.

-- As a group, students from low-income families did not perform at grade level except for third-graders on the reading test, which scored an average of 3.9.

-- Students who are not from low-income households as a group performed at or above grade level on all tests.

Staff writer **Robin Youngblood** can be reached at (309) 786-6441, Ext. 257, or by e-mail at robiny@qconline.com