

Several local districts making insufficient progress

By Michael Goot

## State says schools must do better

**CAPITAL REGION** — Some students in Schenectady and Amsterdam school districts are not making adequate progress, according to the state 2007-08 education report cards released on Wednesday.

The Schenectady City School District's three middle schools — Oneida, Mont Pleasant and Central Park — were cited for not meeting adequate yearly progress goals. The district also fared poorly in performance of its high school students in English and mathematics. It did not make adequate yearly progress in English at the high school level in any group except for Asians. For mathematics, Asians and whites made adequate yearly progress, but the rest did not.

The picture was much better at the elementary level with the district meeting the targets at the elementary and middle school level for all groups of students except those with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency.

The district's African-American graduation rate of 53 percent did not meet the target of 54 percent and the 51 percent rate for Hispanics was only slightly below the 52 percent target. This rate measures only students who complete school in a four-year period.

Under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind law, schools must show adequate academic progress is made for all of its various groups of students — whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, students with disabilities and students who are economically disadvantaged.

Superintendent Eric Ely said the district has made academic gains at all levels but just not enough.

"We're making progress in every building but in order to get off the [needs improvement] list you have to make adequate yearly progress in every subgroup," he said.

Students with disabilities are an area where the district needs particular improvement, Ely said.

The district has implemented a number of programs during the last two years to target student improvement, including extending the school day by 30 minutes, creating after-school programs and reducing class sizes.

The Albany School District also struggled and did not meet targets at the secondary level for English and math and students with disabilities.

Elsewhere, the Greater Amsterdam School District had good and bad news. Its Lynch Middle School was removed from the needs improvement list. However, McNulty Academy elementary school was added and Tecler Arts in Education Magnet School remains on it for a second year.

Superintendent Thomas Perillo said he is glad Lynch is off the list after seven years and attributed it to the addition of a literacy coach at the middle school two years ago who helps students with reading in the various subjects.

"We felt it worked so well at the middle school that starting in this year we implemented literacy coaches in the elementary schools," he said. "We're very proud of everyone over at Lynch."

Perillo said McNulty did not meet academic targets for disabled, economically disadvantaged and limited English speaking students. He said the district will assemble a school quality review team led by Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES Superintendent Geoffrey Davis to identify areas of weakness and strategies to make the school successful.

The high school is also on the list because it did not reach its English scores target for all groups of students and its math scores did not reach the target for Hispanics, disabled students and economically disadvantaged students. It also has an above-average dropout rate and lower graduation rate.

Perillo said the district used its Contract for Excellence money it receives as a high-needs district to create an alternative education program with smaller class sizes at the high school. Perillo said the goal was "to keep those students in school who otherwise may not be successful in the general population."

Starting in the fall, they are going to create a ninth-grade academy housed in a separate wing of the high school.

Other Capital Region school districts generally fared well, although some did not reach the standards in English for students with disabilities. For example, Guildertland did not meet the English target for students with disabilities at the secondary level.

In Saratoga County, Shenendehowa did not meet the target for English language arts at the secondary level for students with disabilities. The Saratoga Springs City School District did not make adequate yearly progress in one category, the graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students. Its rate is 54 percent compared to the state standard of 55 percent. Ballston Spa Central School District did not meet targets for elementary and secondary students with disabilities.

In Montgomery County, the Canajoharie, Fort Plain and St. Johnsville school districts also did not meet English targets for students with disabilities.

In Fulton County, the Gloversville City School District did not meet targets in English, math and graduation rate for secondary level students with disabilities. The Johnstown City School District did not meet English targets at the elementary and secondary levels, and Broadalbin-Perth did not meet the target for elementary students with disabilities.

In Schoharie County, the Middleburgh Central School District did not meet the English target for students with disabilities at the elementary level.

The state Education Department said much of the data contained in the report cards has already been released but now they can be accessed in one place on the Web site at [www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts).