

# RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS

## MAP testing program helps Raton teachers fine-tune their lessons

By **TIM KELLER**  
The Chronicle-News

The Raton Public Schools has been developing the effectiveness of a new tool in its

teaching arsenal since the inception of the program almost five years ago. The effort now shows signs of bearing fruit.

Under the direction of District MAP Coordinator Marisa Aguirre, the Raton schools have been using the MAP tests - Measures of

Academic Progress - in grades 2-11 to assess ongoing progress in reading, language arts, and mathematics. The tests were developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), a not-for-profit organization devoted to assisting school districts throughout the country in improving learning for all students. More than 3000 districts currently participate, representing more than three million students.

In Raton, each student takes the three tests every fall, winter, and spring. MAP is computerized and adaptive. Aguirre explains that the difficulty of each question is based on how well a student answered the previous questions. "As the student answers correctly, questions become more difficult. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions become easier. The final score is an estimate of the student's achievement level."

Results give students a snapshot measure of their learning during the weeks immediately past. Students have been taught to graph their longterm results to see trends, set goals, and

make predictions. The net result has been growth in both motivation and achievement as students take increasing ownership of their own learning.

MAP test results have a high correlation to the results of the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment and the High School Competency Exam, effectively pinpointing its measurements to the high-stakes tests used by the State of New Mexico to evaluate students and school districts. "Whereas those tests are summative assessments,"

Aguirre explains, "used to measure the effectiveness of schools at the end of a school term, the MAP tests are formative assessments used to modify and validate instruction. The intent is to provide feedback throughout the teaching and learning cycle."

The program appears to have reached a tipping point as both teachers and students begin to use MAP results to effectively improve achievement rates, perhaps evidenced most dramatically in a program Friday that rewarded several dozen Raton High School students for

exceptional achievement as measured through the MAP program.

Math teacher Mary B. Mitchell, who coordinated the rewards program with colleagues Jimmie Saccomano and Christalina Donovan, says, "For us in the math department, these tests are critical because we're using the scores to develop target groups - small groups to work within our classrooms - to help raise our students' scores on their standards-based assessments. The NWEA scores show us where the holes are in their math understanding so we can adjust our curriculum to make sure those holes are addressed."

Even as students are increasingly motivated by their own graphs of progress, teachers are increasingly finding ways to apply the MAP results to their own classrooms in ways that can raise achievement for all of their students. As the effects of this process take hold, Raton's students and educators are taking pride in the results.



Photos by Tim Keller

Honorees gathered at Raton High School Friday to receive certificates and prizes for their exceptional performances in the NWEA's MAP testing program.

## Raton High School honors students for exceptional testing performances

By **TIM KELLER**  
The Chronicle-News

As its MAP testing program begins to mark impressive improvements in student achievement, Raton High School decided to begin marking that progress with recognition and awards for deserving students. Friday morning, several dozen freshmen, sophomore, and junior students were called out of classes to receive certificates and rewards for their achievements on recent MAP tests.

While many of the students were honored for exceptionally high scores, others were honored for dramatic improvements made in their scores during the course of the fall semester. Two juniors, Emilio Mondragon and Jimmy Carroll, performed the impressive feat of being in both groups - demonstrating award-winning improvement despite already being in the highest-scoring group.

Eight students were honored for being in the highest scoring group for all three MAP tests - Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics. Those students were freshmen Chelsea Chavez, Blake Washburn, and James Neary; sophomore Hayden Nichols; and juniors Dale Proctor and Jimmy Carroll.

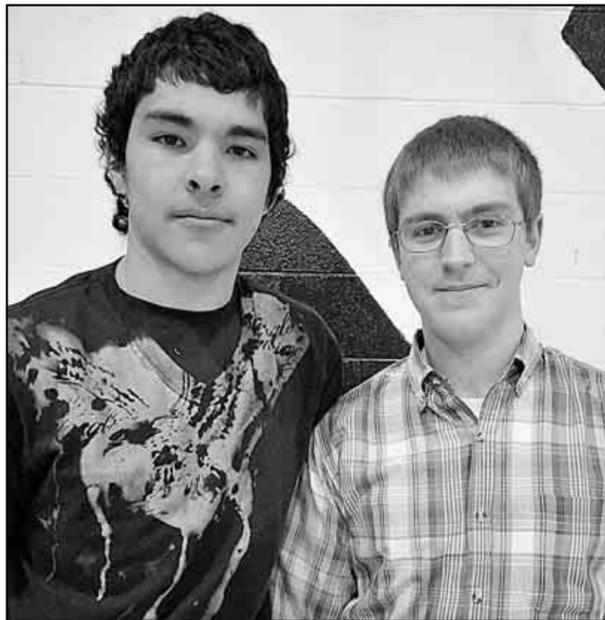
RHS teacher Christalina Donovan said, "We wanted to reward students for doing well on their NWEA tests as incentive for them to try their hardest. I've given cash prizes to my own students for the highest score and the biggest increase in score." When math teacher Mary B. Mitchell and science teacher Jimmie Saccomano began organizing a program to recognize high achievement schoolwide, Donovan decided to approach local businesses to request donations to be used as rewards for the students.

"I was pleased by the generosity of the stores I contacted. They usually support us for athletics and other activities, and they seemed happy to be encouraging academics for a change."

Most participating businesses gave from five to twenty gift certificates with values up to \$20 each. Those businesses included All Seasons Restaurant, Dairy Queen, Denny's, El Matador, Enchanted Grounds, K-Bob's, KFC of Trinidad, La Cosina Cafe, McDonald's, Sands Restaurant, Sports Arena, Spur Lanes, and Subway. In addition, RHS teacher Mike Phillips and principal Mike Sparaco each contributed \$10 bills to the reward pool. Students drew numbers to determine which rewards they received.



Jimmy Carroll, Hayden Nichols, James Neary, and Dale Proctor scored high on all three MAP tests - Reading, Language Arts, and Math.



Emilio Mondragon and Jimmy Carroll held the distinction of being the only two RHS students in both honored groups - high score and most improved.

As the honored students trickled back into their classrooms after the program, many received ovations from their classmates, adding to the sense of success for impressive academic achievement.

In addition to the students named above, honored freshmen included Carlos Arguello, Jeremy Armijo, Brandon Baker, Victor Barrera, Chelsea Chavez, Freddie Duran, Bryan Encinias, Devon Encinias, Kara Findlater, Mariah Fleming, Tyson Floersheim, Haley Gansz, Brittni Garcia, Ryan Garcia, Tamara Gonzales, Megan Holland, Maggie Honeyfield, Jeralyn Jiron, Merissa Mares, Aubrey Martinez, Tanner Martinez, Colton Milson, Leesha Nichols, Matthew Ortiz, Sara Ortiz, Peyton Richards, Alvin Romo, Kevin Salazar, Jeremy Sisneros, and Jordan Valdez.

Additional sophomores honored were Alexis Abaza, Augusta Ahlm, Hunter Allen, Sam Bayliss, Landon Berry, Callie Blackmore, David Duncan, Chris Fissel, Cody Gurule, Katrina James, Elisha Martinez, Joshua Martinez, Phillip Mendez, Sara Mayes, Craige Nichols, Caitlin Romero, Nathaniel Roybal, Toni Sproule, Darlene Tapia, and Riley Wilson.

Juniors also included Jarrod Arguello, Jewel Berry, Tamara Brooks, Kayce Bustos, Damien Casias, Anthony Cordova, Franko Donati, Danny Gallegos, DeAndra Gonzales, Rebeka Henson, Alexis Hester, Erica Hopper, Erika Martinez, Holly Montano, Megan Neurauder, Corey Poe, Sarah Record, Jeffrey Redlick, Julio Sanchez, Matthew Taylor, Robert Trujillo, and Shana Trujillo.



Photo by Tim Keller

An hour after his anti-drug program, Diggity Dave was still greeting fans, answering questions, signing autographs, and posing for pictures.

## MTV's Diggity Dave brings his message to fans at Raton High School

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"You can't do that on drugs," he said. He listed successful stars such as Ludacris who are drug free, then contrasted them to "train wrecks" like Paris Hilton and Britney Spears. "So many people crash and burn, and it always involves drugs."

Aragon's program at Raton High School was a fundraiser for Colfax County's DWI Student Task Force which will apply the proceeds to the cost of sending fifteen of its young members to Washington, D.C., in early April. Program Coordinator Mary Gansz - who is also Aragon's step-sister - spoke to students about the pro-

gram and invited them to join the student task force next year. She pointed out that kids have a perception that the majority of them are doing drugs and alcohol, but that's not true. As a recent article in The Chronicle-News documented, 60% of RHS students are actively engaged in school clubs and sports teams. You can't do that AND drugs, Diggity Dave would point out: sooner or later, you have to make a choice.

The chain around his neck reminds him every day of his own choice. Now he travels the country with other stars speaking to teens with his anti-drug message in a program called "Pimp My Pride." Friday's program included testimonials

from seventeen members of the DWI Student Task Force. Aragon contrasted their leadership to other teens who spend their time "getting high", challenging each student in his audience to "be a leader, not a follower."

After the program, Aragon hosted a receiving line in a meet-and-greet session that lasted three times longer than the program itself. A couple hundred students and adults waited their turns at asking him questions (including "Do you do your own hair?"), getting autographs, and getting their pictures taken with a visiting star. An hour after the program's end, Aragon was still surrounded by dozens of happy fans.

## COLFAX COUNTY CALENDAR

### MARCH 16

Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Meeting- 9 a.m. at CYFD office  
Diabetes & Obesity Prevention Meeting- Noon at DOH office.  
Suicide Prevention Meeting- 1:00 p.m. at Methodist Church fellowship hall.

### March 18

"Madame Butterfly" simulcast at El Raton Theater starting at 7 p.m. Tickets available at Shuler Theater, El Raton, and Enchanted Grounds.

### March 23

Maternal Child Health Meeting - Noon at the Sands Restaurant.

### Tuesday, March 24

7:30 pm Grand Derangement. High energy Canadian music and dance ensemble. Presented by Raton Arts and Humanities Council and State Oil Co. Tickets at www.ratonarts.org or (575) 445-2052.

### March 26

Health Council Meeting - Noon at International Room of International Bank.

### March 27

Substance Abuse Prevention Meeting - 10:00 a.m. at YES office.

### March 28

Schwann's truckload sale to benefit the Christian Motorcycle Association's "Run for the Son" (888)413-0003.