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By STEPHEN Di BENEDETTO - sdibenedetto@shawmedia.com, October 11, 2012

D-158 students set records

District 158 students elevated classroom achievement in 2012, setting a district record for average ACT composite and earning high marks on other state assessments.

Huntley High School's most recent graduating class made history with an average ACT composite of 22.5, beating the state average of 20.9 and the national average of 21.1, newly released district data show.

A significant percentage of elementary and junior high students also met or exceeded state standards in core subjects such as math and reading.

Chief Academic Officer Mike Moan attributed the success to the district's dedication to student achievement.

"We are happy across the board with our continued growth and achievement," Moan said. "At every level, from the board to the principals to the teachers, we are focused on helping our students achieve at a higher level."

Moan will present the 2012 achievement numbers to the district school board during the group's regular meeting today.

Board Vice President Don Drzal called student progress a "marked improvement" from years past, citing the district's willingness to challenge its curriculum each year as the primary reason for success.

The district's record 22.5 ACT composite score last year topped the 2011 class's average composite of 22.1. The composite score combines assessments in math, reading, science and English. The highest possible score is 36.

Students from third to eighth grade earned high marks in the state's assessment test.

The lowest score came from the district's fourth-graders. Roughly 88 percent of them met or exceeded state standards in reading – up from 82.4 percent in 2007.

The highest tallies came from the district's eighth- and third-graders, with nearly 96 percent of them meeting or exceeding standards in reading and math.

The district also tested more high school students in advanced, college preparation courses. Nearly 842 students were tested in AP courses, up from 555 students tested in 2011.

Despite the achievements, the district did not make adequate yearly progress – a key indicator in the federal No Child Left Behind law.

Moan said that certain student groups, including disabled students and non-English language natives, didn't meet standards in reading.

"Our expectation is we are going to keep challenging our students, see higher ACT scores and continue offering more AP courses for students," Moan said.