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5th-graders make gains

80% in city pass the state social studies test, up from 51% in 2002

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Staff writer

Months of hard work paid off for the fifth-graders at School 2 on Reynolds Street. Ninety-one percent passed the New York state social studies exam.

Scores for schools across the City School District were announced Thursday night at a district board meeting. Eighty percent of district fifth-graders passed the exam, given in November. The scores reflect the third consecutive year of improvement; 51 percent passed in 2002.

The results also show more students from all ethnic groups passing the exam, with the gap between them decreasing. More students with disabilities passed the exam, 61 percent in 2005 versus 44 percent in 2004.

School 2 teacher Alex Johnson began preparing his students for the social studies exam shortly after the school year started.

He said a combination of factors led to the students' success. Tutors from Monroe Community College and McQuaid Jesuit High School worked with the fifth-graders. Johnson also focused on writing and test-taking skills.

"This made them more confident," he said. "They were familiar with the format of the test so they weren't surprised and they didn't freeze up."

Some students also attended extended-day sessions twice a week and took practice tests on a Saturday before the exam.

Rickeirah White, 11, whose teachers are Michelle Morris and Faith Smith, said the after-school and Saturday sessions helped her prepare for the exam.

"The stuff we learned in the Saturday school was on the test," Rickeirah said.

Morris and Smith incorporated social studies into other subject areas, incorporating fun exercises and games. All 21 of their students passed the exam.

Students and faculty celebrated in the hallways when Principal Michele Liguori-Alampi was notified of the results by e-mail, said Assistant Principal Najmah Abdulmateen.

"The kids are really quite pleased with themselves," Abdulmateen said.

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