

EVENT WATCH

YOU CAN'T STOP THE BEAT

Witness

Dec. 18

HOLIDAY HEADSTART

Visit the auditorium during your lunch period to be dazzled by the Orchestis holiday performance.

Dec. 20

TAKE A BREAK FOR WINTER

Enjoy time off school for the holidays! Celebrate the new year with a big bang – you have until the 6th to catch up on sleep.

Dec. 21-Jan.6

FINAL DESTINATION

Sharpen your pencils and change the batteries in your calculators because semester finals begin.

Jan. 16-18

WHAT IS: SCHOLASTIC BOWL

Members of the varsity Scholastic Bowl team will compete at Fremd from 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Encourage the team to another victory!

Jan. 19

I HAVE A DREAM

Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life during this four day weekend.

Jan. 21-22

SPRING INTO THE SEASON

Ignore the cold weather and bloom into spring early with the Floral Show at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

Jan. 22

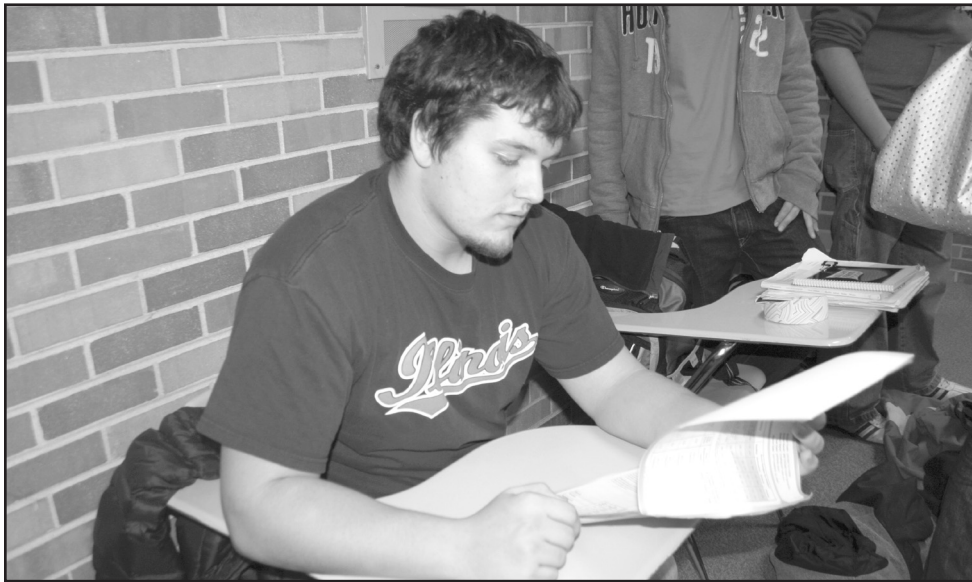
CONTEMPLATE YOUR FUTURE

Juniors, have you begun to think about college? If not, here's an opportunity to do so. Come to the college planning seminar in the auditorium at 7 p.m.

Jan. 31

SHARE A GOOD READ

Check out the Summer Reading Committee link on the Fremd website for an opportunity to suggest books for next summer's reading list.



Logue photo by Dana Hogan

GETTING OUT THE NUMBER TWO PENCILS. Students taking the PSAE test may feel pressured to improve after the drop in last year's scores.

PSAE test scores suffer statewide

Ricky Ollerer
Staff Writer

A drop in state reading scores in the April 2007 Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) has school districts across the state alarmed.

The PSAE test combines the ACT, a science assessment created by the Illinois State Board of Education, and one Work Keys assessment for reading and one for math.

Schools use WorkKeys tests to determine how prepared students are for the job market. However, the WorkKeys reading scores dropped this year, and District 211 schools reflected the statewide decline.

Once the district realized a decline had occurred, it immediately looked into the problem, according to Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Jeff Butzen.

"We came to [the conclusion that] we really need to look at the causes," Butzen said.

Butzen explained that the problem may have occurred because of the way the test was scored. With standardized assessments, there are two ways to grade the exams, the first of which is criterion-referenced. This exam averages the scores together for that given year, and a student's score is then judged against that average.

The other way a test can be graded is norm-referenced. On this kind of exam, after every student has taken the test, 50 percent of the students are assumed above

average and 50 percent below. A student's score would reflect not how the student did individually, but rather how he or she did in comparison to the other students.

Although the PSAE is supposed to be graded as a criterion-referenced test, results suggest the Apr. 2007 PSAE was scored as a norm-referenced exam, which would explain the 4-4.5 percent drop, according to Butzen.

Principal Marina Scott says the drop might have been a coincidence. After all, the same class is not tested every year.

"We're looking at a totally different group of students," Scott said.

Scott also said that although Fremd's PSAE reading scores did reflect the drop that occurred throughout Illinois, the school's average is still higher than the state's. Fremd also raised its math scores.

The accuracy of the PSAE also is important because the state determines if the school has met its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) with these scores. AYP is enforced according to No Child Left Behind, which aims to get every child meeting certain educational goals.

A third party auditor was recommended to the state to ensure scores will not drop in the future and to ensure that exams would be graded as criterion-referenced.

Out of 646 Illinois schools, Fremd PSAE scores ranked 20th, the highest in District 211, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

Freshmen take EXPLORE test again

Nick Stoner
Staff Writer

Current Fremd freshmen will be required to take the eighth grade EXPLORE test to reassess their knowledge.

The EXPLORE test is an ACT administered exam that judges incoming freshmen's abilities in English, reading, science and math. The results are used to determine which classes students are placed in once they arrive at Fremd.

The school is hoping to get an indication of how effective the first semester curriculum is by having students take the Explore test as freshmen, according to guidance counselor John Baima.

"We want to judge whether the students have improved since when they took it a year before," Baima said. "The results from the ninth grade test will also be used to determine which students are placed into the summer school program."

Freshmen whose EXPLORE test scores indicate they need support in math and reading will be enrolled in Fremd's Sophomore Academy, according to Student Ser-

vices Director Mark Kovack.

"There's a six week program for help in both reading and math, but there's also a three week program for each separate subject," Kovack said.

Out of a possible 25, students will need to score 16 or higher to avoid enrollment in summer school for reading. In certain math courses, students also will take a separate MAP test to determine if they need to take math in summer school.

Freshman John Reising is not excited about the new policy.

"I was unaware that we had to take the test again," Reising said. "I'm not happy about it."

However, other students have more positive outlook.

"Whatever they give me, I'll ace it," freshman Jimmy McGlade said.

The Explore test was administered to eighth graders on Dec. 1. Freshmen will take the math and science portions of the test during school hours between Dec. 3 and Dec. 14. The EXPLORE English and reading sections will be taken between Jan. 28 and Feb. 8 in the new year.

Lockdown drill performance raises concerns

Sarah Gallo
Contributing Writer

With the rising number of school shootings in the past 10 years, the lockdown practice drill this November was crucial to ensure student safety in a crisis situation, according to Principal Marina Scott.

"We have to err on the side of safety," Scott said. "The lockdown drills are a learning experience because the police walk through the hallways and critique our performance."

The drill took place on Nov. 6 at 9:15 a.m. At the end of second period, an announcement instructed all students to go to the nearest secure place, like a classroom.

During these drills, once students are in a safe area, they are expected to sit silently against a wall in the dark to simulate the appropriate actions for a crisis situation.

This time, however, some students stalled in the hallways and talked once in their "safe zones," possibly because they knew the lockdown was a practice.

"I was talking to people in my classroom, and the other students didn't act like it was a real lockdown," junior Sam Breen said.

Many students adopt an attitude that Fremd is a safe school in a good neighborhood and that a crisis situation will not occur.

"[The lockdown drill] was pretty much ridiculous," junior Becca Van Kollenburg said. "If a situation is not serious, teens don't take it seriously."

Scott says the administration works very closely on cases concerning student violence to ensure that Fremd is safe.

"We practice drills just in case. It is most important that we are proactive," Scott said.

These drills began four years ago and are usually an annual event, but students can probably expect another lockdown in the spring due to the results of November's lockdown and the increasing need to prepare for dangerous situations.

"We need to practice more seriously," Scott said. "We're fortunate not to have had a crisis."

Because school shootings are usually premeditated, Fremd takes all threats seriously, according to Scott. Some threats are not spread through word-of-mouth but rather by student websites.

Youtube videos sometimes precede school violence. Last month, an 18-year-old Finnish student killed eight of his fellow students after posting a warning on Youtube. If the threat had been reported, experts say the shooting may have been averted.

If students learn of a plan for a school attack, whether online or by word-of-mouth, they should inform the administration promptly, even if the threat is not certain, according to Scott.

If serious threats are made known to the administration, the principal and superintendent work together to determine the next course of action.

Scott explained that as soon as students hear an announcement for a lockdown, whether it is a drill or a real problem situation, they should immediately get into a classroom and sit against a wall, far away from the doors and windows.

The lights should be turned off, and students should be silent in order to reduce the chance of becoming the victim of an attacker.