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BCHS PSAE scores raise by 27

By CHRISTA HALL

Brown County High School demonstrated significant gains on the Prairie State Achievement Exam, administered to all juniors in April.

The PSAE is a state mandated test measuring academic progress in reading, math and science.

The largest increase was made in reading, which has been the school focus for several years, according to Principal Van Wilson.

BCHS had 67.1 percent of eleventh graders meet state standards in reading, compared with 40 percent last year.

Math scores were up from 45 percent in the meet and exceeds category in 2008 to 58.6 percent in 2009.

Science scores rose from 43.55 to 58.6 percent.

With that BCBS scored above state averages in all three categories for the first time in school history.

Specifically, students scored 10.2 percent higher in reading, 7 percent higher in math and 8.1 percent higher in science when compared to all eleventh graders in the state.

"There was a combination of factors which may have led to the gains," Wilson said.

Participation and hard work demonstrated by all faculty during professional development activities is one factor and increased student effort and motivation is another factor, according to Wilson.

"We also changed to a traditional schedule so students could get instruction from teachers every day, although the overall success of that move will be better judged in the years to come," Wilson said.

The district's hiring of an academic skills instructor in December has been helpful, according to Wilson.

The instructor works with students on study skills and test preparation.

Wilson credits the districts' three-year affiliation with Focus on Results, which has resulted in more collaboration among teachers, an emphasis on collecting and analyzing student data, and an increased effort to involve families by encouraging more participation in parent and teacher conferences.

"I believe these changes have resulted in increased expectations and a better learning culture in all of our buildings," Wilson said. "The students and faculty deserve the credit for making this come about."