

THE VISION

AVOCA STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT CONTINUES TO SOAR:

Student achievement in Avoca continues to soar as the students in grades three through eight ranked 6th in the state on the 2008 Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) in reading, math and science. This marks the fourth consecutive year that Avoca's state ranking has improved and the second straight year in the state's top ten.

In most newspaper school rankings, journalists rely on the percentage of students who "meet" or "exceed" state standards to determine achievement standings. This is a very misleading and inaccurate method of comparison. For instance, one school might have 20% "exceeds" and 80% "meets," while a second school scores 80% "exceeds" and 20% "meets." In this ranking system, both schools would be ranked equally as 100% "meets or exceeds," even though the second school clearly outperformed the first.

Graham uses the students' scale scores (the quantitative scores each student actually achieves on the tests). This is a much more valid and reliable method to assess student performance. When the composite scale scores in reading, math and science are analyzed in third through eighth grades, actual achievement rankings are able to be ascertained. We are proud of the fact that Avoca ranked 6th in the entire state in 2008; there are over 900 school districts in Illinois.

Over the past four years, Avoca's achievement ranking has improved steadily, affirming the effectiveness of the District's talented staff and innovative programs. The following chart clearly displays the fact that Avoca's mission for continuous improvement and sustained excellence is being achieved.

Avoca's State Achievement Rankings (2005-2008 ISATs)

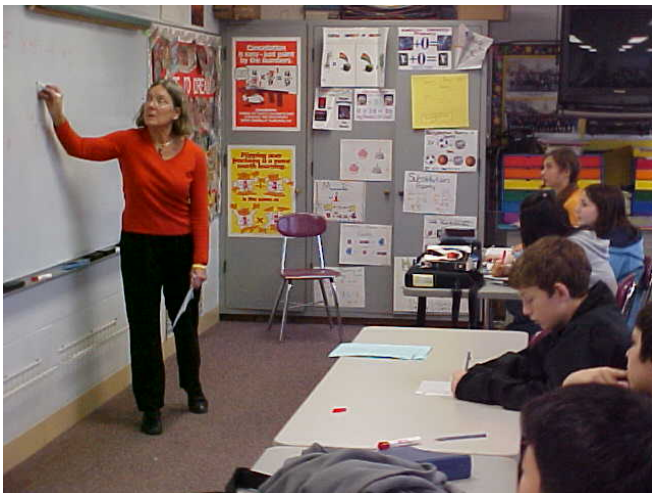
2008	-	6 th in state
2007	-	8 th in state
2006	-	14 th in state
2005	-	20 th in state

AVOCA REFERENDUM INFORMATION SHARING OPTIONS:

On Tuesday, April 7, Avoca will be conducting a tax rate referendum for the following purposes:

- Maintain current educational programs
- Balance the budget
- Secure an adequate level of reserves

It is very important that all residents are informed and educated about the issues related to the referendum. To assist in the information sharing process, Avoca has established multiple means for the community to gather the facts and have their questions answered. Whichever method works best for you, we urge you to become informed and involved in this process that is so crucial to Avoca's future.



(Math teacher Patricia Brummet works with the students in her 8th grade algebra class.)

In Avoca, we seek more meaningful and reliable data. Avoca secures the services of a nationally-renowned statistician/consultant, Dr. Clay Graham, to assist in analyzing student assessment for the purpose of continuous improvement. In his analyses for Avoca, Dr.

- **Handouts** – Included in this mailing is a two-sided handout that explains the key factors of the referendum vote.
- **Avoca Web Site** – Log on to <http://avoca37.org> and then click the “Referendum Information” link on the home page. This site includes key documents and a video of an actual presentation made about the referendum.
- **Local Cable Programming** – Beginning in January, video presentations about the referendum will run regularly on the local access cable channels in Wilmette, Glenview, Northfield and Winnetka.
- **Town Hall Meetings** – All community members are invited to attend specially scheduled town hall meetings about the referendum. Meetings are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, January 27, and Thursday, February 26, at 7:00 p.m. in Marie Murphy School (2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette). More information will be shared about the town hall meetings as the dates approach.

VETERANS DAY OBSERVED IN SCHOOLS

This was the first year Avoca School District #37 requested a waiver from the State of Illinois in order to allow its students to attend school on Veterans Day. It was the strong feeling of the staff and school board that children could better learn about and honor our veterans by participating in meaningful learning activities in school rather than a simple day off. Avoca West Elementary School Principal Kevin Jauch said, “Where better for children to learn about the struggles and sacrifices of this brave group of

patriots than at school, and who better to learn it from than those who served this country themselves?” Each classroom teacher planned a special developmentally-appropriate lesson or activity for their students, and many classrooms had veterans from the community come in as guest speakers. In addition, the Avoca West Elementary School Student Council held a pancake breakfast for the veterans, for which the motto was, “They served our country – let’s serve them breakfast!” Student Council members waited and bused tables and enthusiastically listened to the stories these men and women shared regarding their experiences during their years of service. Mr. Jauch added, “It was a wonderful, heartfelt event! The breakfast was a small gesture to be sure; but one that was very much appreciated!”

At Marie Murphy School, members of the Student Council read over the P/A system several well-thought-out statements which helped to bring special attention to the federal holiday of Veterans Day. The students honored the five branches of our military, and they remembered those who served our country in World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, the Falkland Islands, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq. They also observed a moment of silence for those heroes who battled to preserve our liberties and way of life, and who, in the process, gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Also, the PTC helped sponsor a speaker from the 1st Division Museum at Cantigny, so all students were able to hear Mr. Ed Cunningham’s personal account of his experience in Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was followed up in the sixth grade social studies classes by writing letters to the soldiers currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, in cooperation with the *Million Thanks* program. Seventh graders learned about Armistice Day, now known as Veterans Day, and also viewed slides from some of our recent Washington, DC, trips, where the students visited the WW II, Vietnam, and Korean Wars monuments as well as Arlington cemetery, where our students participated in a wreath-laying ceremony. The eighth graders delved into the history of the Vietnam War, including what American culture was like during that time period. Perhaps the most memorable quote of the day was when a student recited: “I dream of a day when a child will ask, ‘Mother, what is war?’”



(L to R: Veteran Bill Sallin shares stories with Avoca West Student Council members Jack Morahan and Adam Zelinsky during the pancake breakfast at the school on Veterans Day.)