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**Saturday,
September 13, 2014**

International Falls, Minnesota

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State test results show areas of gain, room for improvement

Administrators say tests are just a ‘snapshot’ of student progress

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

With a new school year comes fresh results for state tests taken last spring. Administrators for Koochiching County school districts told The Journal this week they are satisfied with scores, but know there is room for improvement.

The International Falls School District met its goal and saw gains in scores, according to the latest round of results from the Minne-

sota Comprehensive Assessment test.

“Overall, there is a positive trend looking at our data,” Superintendent Kevin Grover said. “We have a 5-percent goal overall and that was met...That doesn’t mean there isn’t room for improvement. There’s always room for that.”

The annual tests, required by state and federal law, are used as one tool to help schools gauge students’ progress in meeting expectations on Minnesota state standards for reading, math and

science.

This year, according to a release, test scores showed:

- One year after implementing a test that was aligned to Minnesota’s new reading standards, performance by all students groups, with the exception of English learners, improved by at least 1 percent. English learners held steady.

- Students in grades 3-8 demonstrated continued progress since 2011 on the math assessment.

- Performance on the science

More Online

To see complete Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment results, visit <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#>

assessment continues to show steady progress toward mastering the standards.

“We are seeing steady improvement in student achievement. The trend line is up, and that’s progress,” Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius said in the release. “This kind of change

is exactly what we hope to see as our teachers master how to best teach our tougher standards, so each student approaches the test confident and fully prepared. It is critical that we use these scores, along with other indicators of student achievement, to inform our efforts on how best to support our teachers as they prepare our students for career and college.”

While the Falls district landed above the state average in its math scores, reading and science fell below the rest of the state’s average scores.

MCA to A7 ►

Rainy Lake gets its first property owners association

Membership meeting planned for 7 p.m. Wednesday, Ranier Community Building

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Spurred by the frustrations caused by this summer’s flooding, a new organization is being formed in an effort to give a united voice on issues relating to Rainy Lake.

The Rainy Lake Property Owners Association, a non-profit organization, will conduct its first membership and organizational meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Ranier Community Building. The mailing address for the association is RLPOA, PO Box 484, Ranier, 56668.

At the meeting, \$40 memberships will be available, and leaders will ask for volunteers to serve on the following committees: members and marketing, research and technical, strategy and coordination.

Members are expected to include year round and seasonal residents and property owners from Minnesota and Ontario, governments, other organizations, and people who do not own lake shore property but have an interest in Rainy Lake. The latter group will be offered

an associate membership which does not include voting rights.

Tom Dougherty said the group has formed “out of the frustration of this summer’s flooding event and realizing that possibly some of our local officials and others may not completely understand how the water levels and rule curves work, things related to that, and we realized we needed a group of people, an organization, and unified to have a single voice with issues related to the water levels and riparian rights along the waterway.”

Riparian rights, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, “are property rights arising from owning shoreland. They include the right to wharf out to a navigable depth; to take water for domestic and agricultural purposes; to use land added by accretion or exposed by reliction; to take ice; to fish, boat, hunt, swim; to such other uses as water bodies are normally put.”

“It’s something that a lot of folks probably don’t even realize

Association to A7 ►

Peat project’s potential realized

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

In a Tuesday afternoon committee session, the Koochiching County Board got a positive update on the Pine Island horticultural peat bog project northwest of Big Falls.

Yves Gauthier and Claudin Berger, of Quebec-based Berger Horticultural Products, told the board because of a 16-percent growth in sales, the company will be retaining the site and beginning production.

At a March board meeting, Gauthier told the board the company was exploring options for the site, as a slower market had put production on hold. At that meeting, Gauthier agreed to come back to the board after the company had come to a decision on the site.

Tuesday, Gauthier said the sales growth provided enough investment capital for the company to retain the site and begin production. Next summer, the company would begin opening the field and getting it production-ready, which would provide 5-10 jobs. In the summer of 2016, the company will begin harvesting the peat.

Berger told the board his company began with his grandfather, who taught it to his mother, who taught him the business. He’s now taught his children the business, and has recently purchased his grandfather’s property, which had been sold.

County Administration Director Teresa Briggs said both Gauthier and Berger have a passion for peat, and it shows.

County to A7 ►

Cullen Jensen, left, and Gavin Symanietz concentrate on drawing designs on paper that they will later add to artificial lures in the “Love those Lures!” class as a part of the After School Arts program at Backus Community Center.

STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Cullen Jensen is the only one in his family that doesn’t eat fish, but he likes to catch them, he said.

Gavin Symanietz said he has an allergic reaction to eating fish, but he can hold them, touch them and catch them.

Not eating fish, however, didn’t stop the boys from attending Wednesday’s “Love those Lures!” class offered along with other classes as a part of the Backus Community Center After School Arts program.

On Wednesday, Jensen, Symanietz and other students in the three-session class led by instructor Andrea Kappelman drew designs they would in later classes add to artificial lures.

At the end of the class, Symanietz said he would give his completed lures to his father and uncle to use while fishing.

Jensen said he would use the lures he designs to catch fish himself.

There’s still time to sign up for the lure class as well as others offered in the program, Kappelman said. Contact Backus Community Center for more information.

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