

New metric doesn't reflect school quality, superintendent says

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WATCHUNG - Watchung schools did not score exceptionally well in a new state rating system, though Superintendent Barbara Resko says the numbers do not tell the full story.

According to the state Department of Education, the rating system contained in the 2018 School Perfor-



BARBARA RESKO

mance Reports for middle schools is based on Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) proficiency scores, student progress on PARCC tests, and absenteeism.

The system rated all 2,100 New Jersey high schools and middle schools on a scale from 1 to 100. Private and charter schools are not included.

Bayberry School received a positive rating of 75.06, good for the 526th highest score in the state. Valley View School, however, scored a 28.88 rating, 1,479th in the state.

Resko emphasized the

scores are by no means a ranking system.

"While our score did not look that great," Resko said during a Watchung Board of Education meeting at Valley View School on Wednesday, Feb. 7, "we certainly are not a school identified in need of comprehensive support and improvement."

According to the DOE, the summative rating sys-

tem was created to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act in 2015.

The system is intended to "build on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country," according to

PLEASE SEE **RATING**, PAGE 15

RATING: More analysis coming

FROM PAGE 1

the DOE.

Resko noted the district met or exceeded marks in English Language Arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8. District-wide, she added, the district met the target goals for chronic absenteeism.

Where the district fell short, she said, was within certain subgroups, in

which "we need to take a look at what can be done in respect to student growth and chronic absenteeism."

The superintendent noted the district is working on improvement strategies with Melissa Stager, Somerset County Education Program Development Specialist, to combat trouble areas. According to Resko, Stager has been researching how "simi-

lar districts appear to be represented in recent reports of absenteeism, and student growth" to better Watchung schools' own scores.

Resko said administrators will be analyzing the data over the next several weeks, and will have a more detailed report prepared for the next board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 21.