

## RCPEP Spotlight, Issue #2

*School Board meetings are important sources of information. However, sometimes additional data and context is useful to understand the topics discussed at any one meeting. Below RCPEP has drafted a summary and provided additional data and analysis regarding the most substantial items discussed at the school board meeting on November 12, 2019. For the full video of that meeting, click [here](#). The complete minutes of that meeting will be posted [here](#).*

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NOV. 12th BOARD MEETING

- Mildred McDuffie and Lonnie Randolph - new inductees into the Richland One Hall of Fame. February 1.
- The Board voted to, based on the Superintendent's evaluation, extend his contract for a year, with a 2.9% increase in annual salary (mirroring classified staff), and a maximum contribution to the annual annuity (\$25,000). The vote was 5-1, with Commissioner King the only nay vote.
- Commissioner King raised some concerns about the committee structure, which turned into a heated conversation about the role of the committees on the Board.
- The Board approved, or had the first reading of a number of policies—about 22. Some of these [policies](#) are now open for public comment and you can do so [by emailing Susan Williams](#). These policies are very important—ranging from suspension, to when a teacher may be fired, to having a smoke-free campus.<sup>1</sup>

### THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHT: 2018-2019 HIGH SCHOOL TEST SCORES

Dr. Brossard, Chief of Teaching and Learning, presented summary data from the high school 2018-2019 state tests. You can find the documents supporting her presentation [here](#).

Let's dig into the numbers.

#### CAREER & COLLEGE READINESS

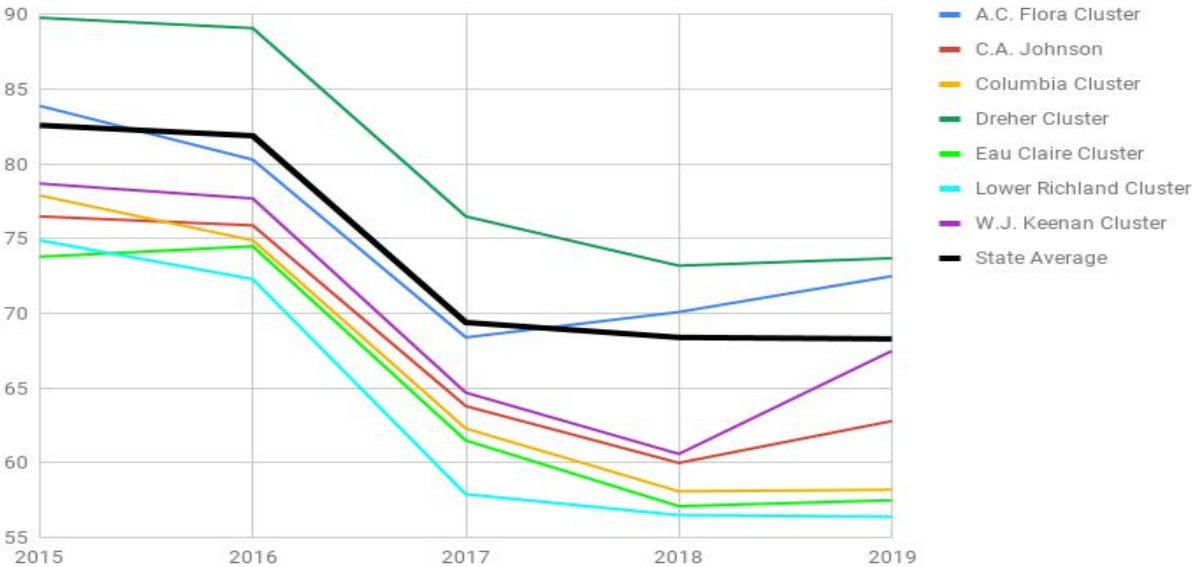
Students take a variety of assessments to determine their career readiness as well as college readiness. In addition, high school students take end of course exams (EOCs) for particular subjects. These probably provide the most objective data of the progress of a particular school and the district since every student has to take them and they are geared towards core subjects. As we saw in the elementary data, there are huge variances based on individual school. Click [here](#) for the information presented during the meeting. As is clear from these tables and with a few exceptions, the overall 5-year trend has been negative. But that also does not always tell the whole story. It usually helps to compare test scores to a larger cohort to account for variances in the difficulty level of the tests from

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<sup>1</sup> One interesting note about this conversation is that policies clearly are decided upon by district staff and the board's role is to approve them rather than to help shape them. Whenever a question was asked about a policy, the response from the General Counsel was "it was the recommendation." We didn't get to hear much about the rationale for changes or whether the changes made signify any new direction. We do know that some of the policy changes were made to be more in line with national standards for board policies.

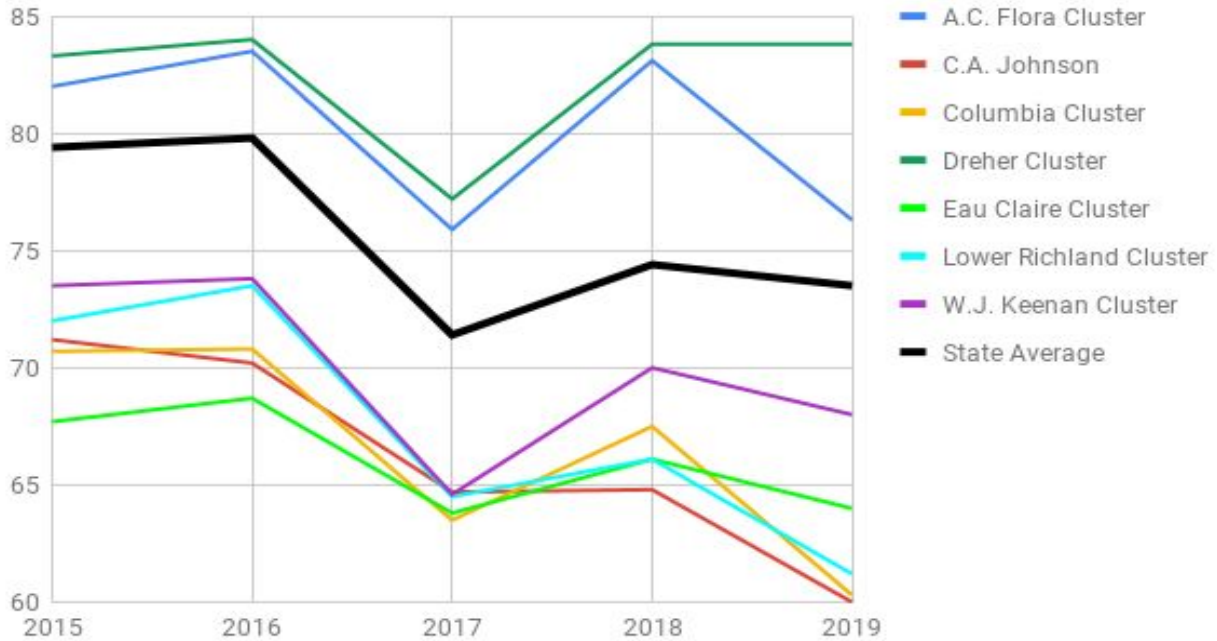
year to year. Therefore, below, we are providing charts that show the performance of each school as compared to the state average. One thing to note: while most students take the EOC's in high school some middle school students take the English and/or Math EOC in middle school. Therefore, these charts take that into account by including any middle school test takers with the high school to which the middle school feeds. This provides a more accurate comparison across clusters. All data below can be found on the State Department of Education website.

### Math EOC Scores by Cluster (with State Average Comparison)



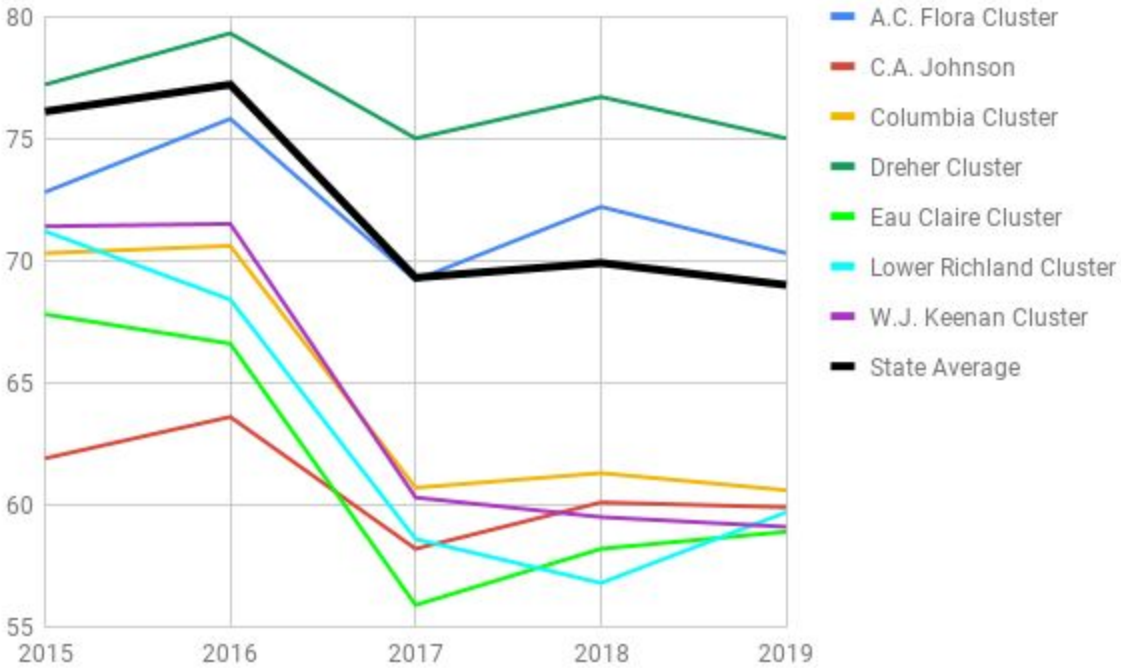
Other than Dreher and A.C. Flora clusters, no other cluster in the district is performing at the state average in math. In fact, some clusters—Lower Richland cluster, Eau Claire cluster, and Columbia cluster—have lost considerable ground to the state average in the last five years. Two clusters—Keenan cluster and C.A. Johnson cluster—show some progress in the last year that brought them closer to the state average.

## English EOC Scores by Cluster (with State Average Comparison)



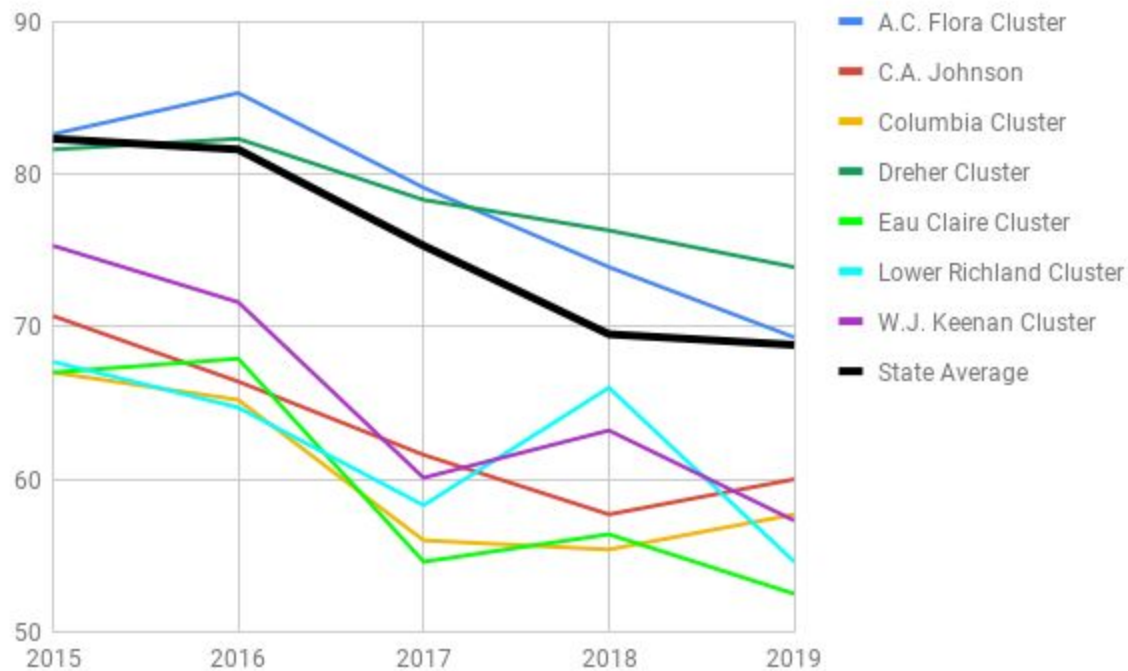
As with math, there are only two clusters—Dreher and A.C. Flora clusters—performing at or above the state average in the English EOC. And three clusters—C.A. Johnson cluster, Columbia cluster and Lower Richland cluster—have lost considerable ground to the state average in the last five years.

## History EOC Scores by School (with State Average Comparison)



Again, we see that only two schools—A.C. Flora and Dreher—are performing at or above the state average. What is most worrisome is the huge gap between the state average and the remaining five schools. And most of the schools have lost ground to the state average in the last five years.

## Biology EOC Scores by School (with State Average Comparison)



As with history, we see the same two schools performing at or above the state average and the remaining five schools well below this average without any real progress towards closing this gap.

### Some Follow Up Questions

Dr. Brossard discussed some focus areas for curriculum going forward, with a focus on critical thinking at the secondary level. For more detail on the focus areas, [see this presentation](#). It would be good to hear hypotheses from the District about what is going on to cause the declines in the clusters that have been struggling. Also, with these declines, are they worried about graduation rates in the future?

### What can we take away from this data?

Similar to what we saw with the elementary data, we have some bright spots—and certainly, on aggregate, some numbers have improved. However, the variation between clusters is concerning—some schools went down significantly. While test scores are certainly not everything, we want to make sure that every student in every school in the district is achieving—and that learning is not based on zip code. We still have too many students not passing EOCs, scoring poorly on the SATs or ACTs, and not either career or college ready. On the Ready to Work test (the WIN), nearly ¼ of our students did not earn any sort of certificate. Our high schools, even more than our elementary schools, vary dramatically from one to another, and we'll see this trend in the AP and IB scores which we will try to address in a subsequent spotlight.