ZCES, WHS standardized test score results a bit lackluster

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – It was a mixed bag of news as principals from Zephyr Cove Elementary and Whittell High schools gave the board of education an update this month on test scores.

ZCES Principal Nancy Cauley didn't have concrete reasons to give why her K-6 school went from being classified as "high achieving" to being on the "watch" list.

Board member Cindy Trigg questioned whether the death of a student just before the December holidays could have had a lasting impact on students' ability to learn or stay focused during the mandatory state and federal tests.

Cauley said counseling resumed for students, teachers and parents after the break.

"There was a cluster of students who could not move forward," Cauley said at the Oct. 12 meeting. "It was probably last April for three children before they were no longer breaking down. It was a difficult time. I do think we are stronger for it. We sent a message to the kids that that choice is not acceptable."

The death was a suicide.

To address the academic issue, flexible math groupings have been expanded from the primary grades to the whole school. Teachers will be receiving professional development in Math Investigations.

Districtwide fifth-graders are having difficulty mastering the curriculum, Cauley said, not just at her school.

She wants a more blended teaching strategy to take place so it’s not just 50 minutes of reading, 50 minutes of math, 50 minutes of science. Cauley told the board it would be better for students to have those components integrated throughout the curriculum, throughout the day.

Crespin Esquivel had the unenviable task of presenting stats to the board from tests when he was not an employee of the district. He took over as principal of Whittell this school year.

Although many of the test areas saw arrows reflecting a decrease in percentages from the prior year, Whittell High remains a high achieving school. With it being a 7-12 school, the would-be middle school grades came in at adequate.

Better addressing the needs of students whose first language is not English is being looked at.

Both principals pointed to the transient rate as contributing to problems for some students who come mid-year.

Esquivel also said he will be looking at the master schedule to see how best to meet the needs of his students.