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Texas
Education
Agency

1701 NORTH CONGRESS AVENUE

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-1494

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<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/comm/page1.html>

April 3, 2008

Texas students earn higher scores on NAEP eighth grade writing exam than their peers nationally

AUSTIN - Students in Texas' major ethnic groups earned higher average scale scores on a national eighth-grade writing exam than did their peer groups nationally, according to results released today by the U.S. Department of Education.

Overall, however, scores on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing exam were relatively stable for Texas' eighth graders who earned an average scale score of 151. That is not significantly different from the average scale score of 152 earned by Texan students in 2002.

Nationally, eighth-grade students received an average scale score of 154 in 2007, compared to 152 in 2002.

The percentage of Texas students who performed at or above the NAEP Basic level was 86 percent in 2007, compared to 83 percent in 2002.

This exam, given to a nationally representative sample of eighth graders, covers narrative, informative and persuasive writing.

Texas' diverse student population performed well in comparison to their peers.

Texas' white students, who made up 37 percent of the eighth-grade population sampled in 2007, received an average scale score of 165, compared to 162 for white students nationally. White students accounted for 58 percent of the eighth-grade class sampled nationally.

Texas' Hispanic students earned an average scale score of 142, compared to a score of 141 for Hispanic students across the country. In this state, 44 percent of the eighth-grade class is Hispanic, compared to 19 percent for all the test-taking population in the country.

Scores for African-American students were 142 for Texas students and 140 nationally. African-Americans make up 15 percent of the Texas class and 17 percent of the group in the United States.

Among Asian/Pacific Islanders, Texas students posted an average scale score of 167, compared to 166 for the group nationally. Asian/Pacific Islander students represent 3 percent of the Texas population and 5 percent of the national population.

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Aug. 13, 2008

Texas sets new record with all-time high average on ACT

AUSTIN – For the third straight year in a row, Texas public and private school graduates increased their ACT composite score, setting a new state record with an all-time high average of 20.7, even while the national average score dropped.

Texas also set a new state record for the number of test takers, with 79,050 students in the graduating Class of 2008 taking the college admission exam, a 3 percent increase from last year. That represents 29 percent of the state's senior class and is about a 2,500-student increase over the Class of 2007. Nationwide, a total of 1.42 million 2008 graduates took this college admissions test.

“With our ACT composite scores increasing every year for three years in a row, it seems to indicate that recent educational reforms are making a difference. These scores demonstrate the importance of taking rigorous, advanced coursework and I’m proud of the Texas students who take on that challenge,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

Results released today show that Texas scores rose this year on each of the four subject-area tests for reading, English, math and science. The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36, with 36 being the highest possible score.

Texas’ white, African American, Asian American, and American Indian students earned a composite score that was higher than their ethnic group nationally.

White students in Texas posted an average composite score of 22.4, compared to 22.1 nationally. African-American students in Texas earned higher scores this year with an average composite of 17.2, a 0.3 percent increase over their national counterparts who earned a composite score of 16.9. Average score increases of 0.3 and 0.4 are unusually large gains for one year on the ACT. Typically, scores move up 0.1 and occasionally 0.2 per year.

Asian-American Texans received a score of 23.8, significantly above the 22.9 earned by Asian students nationally, while American Indian students earned an average score of 21.5, substantially above the national average for their ethnic group of 19.0.

Texas’ Hispanic students received a score of 18.4, compared to a score of 18.7 for Hispanics nationally. While lagging behind the national performance, Texas Hispanic students have increased their score for three straight years and make up 18 percent of the Hispanic test-takers nationally.

Although the state composite score rose from 20.5 to 20.7, it continued to trail the national average of 21.1, which was lower than the 2007 composite score.

“We saw exciting and substantial gains posted by Texas students. This impressive one-year growth shows that our students are increasingly prepared to succeed in college. We still have a great deal of work to do to get all students ready for college and the work force, but these results show that we are on the right track,” Scott said.

An ACT, Inc. analysis shows that Texas students who took the recommended graduation plan—four years of English, three years each of math, science and social studies—are substantially more likely than those who took less than the core to be ready for college-level coursework.

Of the Texas seniors who took the recommended core math coursework, 44 percent surpassed ACT's college readiness benchmark in math, compared to 31 percent who took less than the core. In addition, 26 percent of students who took at least three years of science met or exceeded the benchmark, with only 13 percent of those who took less than the core achieving that standard.

ACT has established college readiness benchmarks for the four individual tests given in reading, English, math and science. A benchmark score is a minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in a corresponding college course.

The percent of Texas graduates who met or exceeded the ACT college readiness benchmarks, and are considered ready for college-level coursework, increased in all four subject areas this year.

According to the test results, 63 percent of the Texas students who took the ACT are likely to be successful in a college English composition class, while 49 percent are expected to succeed in social sciences. Of the Texas ACT test takers, 44 percent are ready for a college Algebra course and 25 percent are expected to succeed in college biology. In addition, the percentage of graduates who met all four benchmarks improved for the third straight year, with 20 percent meeting the college readiness benchmark in 2008, compared to 19 percent in 2007.

"The increase in college readiness in a single year is very significant. This gain shows what Texas educators and students are capable of. We in higher education look forward to working closely with our K-12 colleagues to continue to improve educational outcomes for the students of Texas," said Raymund Paredes, Texas commissioner of higher education.

Among Texas students, the top five universities being sent scores by ACT test takers are the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, Texas State University and Baylor University.

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Texas tops national average in the percentage of students who take Advanced Placement exams

Feb. 4, 2009

AUSTIN – Texas exceeded the national average in the percentage of students who took at least one Advanced Placement exam during high school.

Information released today by the College Board, which administers the AP program, found that 27.5 percent of Texas public school students in the Class of 2008 took at least one AP exam while in high school, compared to 25 percent for the nation.

Universities often award course credit to students who earn a score of 3, 4 or 5 on an AP test so a strong performance on these exams can save Texas students thousands of dollars in college tuition costs.

Of those who took an AP exam, 14.5 percent of Texas students earned a score of 3 or higher, compared to 15.2 percent for students nationally. Texans were more likely to earn a score of 3 or higher on AP exams in the areas of art, English and foreign languages than their peers nationally. They were less likely than their peers across the country to earn a high score on math, science, and social studies exams.

AP participation has steadily risen in this state. Among the Class of 2008, 73,008 students took at least one AP test and many take several exams. That compares to 65,958 students in the Class of 2007 and 48,628 in the Class of 2003.

The most frequently taken AP exams in Texas were English Language, U.S. History, English Literature, U.S. Government and Politics and Calculus AB. The top test, English Language, was taken by 38,440 Texans and 45 percent or 17,153 earned a score of 3 or higher.

In the 5th Annual AP Report to the Nation, the College Board cited a Texas school for its exemplary program. The report said the AP Calculus AB course at the Michael E. DeBaKey High School for the Health Professions in the Houston Independent School District had one of the largest numbers of African-American students who scored a three or higher in the country.

The State of Texas encourages students to participate in AP courses and to take AP exams through a multi-part incentive program. The state pays \$30 of the \$86 exam fee. Additional fee reductions are often available to low-income students. To ensure rigorous instruction in AP courses, the state reimburses up to \$450 for each teacher who completes a 30-hour AP training institute. The Texas Education Agency also funds campus awards, with schools being awarded up to \$100 for each student who earns a score of 3 or higher.

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ESCs - State of Texas - Texas Legislature - Web Policy and Accessibility - Military Families - Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities - Equal Educational Opportunity

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May 30, 2008

2008 TAKS scores show steady progress at most grades

AUSTIN – Consistent with their past performance, the vast majority of Texas' eighth-grade students met state promotion requirements with 95 percent passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading exam and 75 percent passing the mathematics test.

This is the first year that eighth-grade students must pass the math and reading TAKS to be promoted to ninth grade. But this represents the third time this group of students have been required to meet promotion requirements that are part of the state's Student Success Initiative. They were required to pass the third-grade reading exam and the fifth-grade reading and mathematics TAKS tests in order to move to the next grade.

Results from the second administration of the eighth-grade math exam are expected soon and should raise the cumulative passing percentage on that test above the current 75 percent before the school year's end. The reading results reported are cumulative totals for the first and second administration.

"We have set high expectations for this group of students and each year they meet or exceed them. A high percentage of the students have passed the reading test and we expect the math passing rate to rise substantially when results from the second test administration are reported, if past trends are any guide," said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

One more testing opportunity exists for those students who are still trying to master the exams. The eighth-grade math test will be given again on July 1 and the reading exam will be given on July 2.

Additionally, 90 percent of the eighth-grade class passed the social studies TAKS while 68 percent passed the science TAKS. These figures includes results from both the standard TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated), which is a form of TAKS for students served by special education who meet the eligibility requirements for certain specific accommodations.

TAKS (Accommodated), as required by federal law, tests students served by special education on material at the grade level in which they are enrolled. Test results reported today include both TAKS and TAKS (Accommodated) results. TAKS results reported in 2003-2007 are for TAKS only because TAKS (Accommodated) was not a testing option until 2008.

Third grade and fifth grade

Ninety-three percent of third-grade students have passed the reading TAKS on their first or second try. This is the exam, available in English or Spanish, that they must pass to meet the state's promotion requirements.

Results released today show that 83 percent of the 314,376 third graders who took the mathematics test in English passed on the first administration. Seventy-seven percent of the 26,769 students who took the math test in Spanish passed it.

Fifth-grade students must pass both the reading and math exams in order to be promoted. During the first or second test administration, 90 percent passed the reading exam in English or Spanish. During the first administration of the mathematics TAKS given in English, 83 percent of the students passed. Among the 5,233 students who took the math test in Spanish, 48 percent passed.

Any third or fifth-grade student who has not yet passed the reading test may retake it July 2. Any fifth-grade student who has not passed the mathematics test may retake it July 1.

Under Texas law, any student who has not met the promotion requirements in grades 3, 5 and 8 is retained, unless his or her family appeals the retention to a Grade Placement Committee made up of the principal, teacher and parent. Parents should contact their local school to begin the appeal process.

Along with math and reading, fifth-grade students also take a TAKS science exam, which 81 percent mastered. Thirty-seven percent performed so well on the test that they earned a Commended Performance notation.

Among the students tested in Spanish, 35 percent passed the science exam.

Fourth grade

Overall, 83 percent of fourth-grade students passed either the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) reading test. Eighty-four percent of the students passed the math TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated), while 91 percent met the passing standard on the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) writing exam.

When only the scores on the standard TAKS are considered without including scores on TAKS (Accommodated), scores appeared very stable with 84 percent of the students passing the reading test in both 2007 and 2008 and 86 percent passing the mathematics test both years. Passing rates on the writing test rose to 93 percent, compared to 91 percent last year.

The passing rates for students who tested in Spanish were 75 percent for reading, 74 percent for mathematics and 90 percent for writing. When just TAKS scores in Spanish are examined, the passing rates this year were within two points or less of last year's passing rates.

Sixth grade

Sixth-grade students showed strong performance with 91 percent of the 315,668 students passing the reading test in English and 45 percent of the student earning Commended Performance.

Eighty percent of students passed the mathematics test, with 37 percent achieving Commended Performance.

When just TAKS results are compared between this year and last year, passing rates on the math test rose from 79 percent to 83 percent. There was a one percentage point increase on the reading exam on the standard test.

Many students have already graduated from bilingual or English as a Second Language programs by sixth grade so only 1,370 students took the sixth-grade reading test in Spanish. This group had a 50 percent passing rate and a 21 percent Commended Performance rate on the reading test. Of the 1,246 students who took the math test in Spanish, 38 percent passed and 11

percent achieved Commended Performance. Sixth grade is the last year that a state test is offered in Spanish.

Seventh grade

Seventh-grade students were most proficient on the writing exam, with 90 percent passing and 33 percent receiving Commended Performance. Eighty-four percent of the students passed the reading test and 76 percent passed the mathematics exam.

When TAKS (Accommodated) results are excluded, passing rates increased by 2 percentage points on TAKS reading and by 3 percentage points on the math test as compared to last year, while passing rates declined by one percentage point on the writing examination.

Ninth grade

Eighty-four percent of high school freshmen mastered the reading test but just 60 percent passed the math test. When 2007 and 2008 results for TAKS only are compared, results on the reading test increased from 86 percent to 87 percent, while the mathematics passing rates rose from 60 percent to 63 percent.

Tenth grade

Sophomores take TAKS tests in four subject areas. Their passing rates were 86 percent in English language arts, which is a combined reading and writing test; 63 percent in mathematics, 88 percent in social studies and 64 percent in science. A greater percent of students - 32 percent - achieved Commended Performance on the social studies test than on the other three subject-area tests.

When TAKS test results only are compared from year to year, this class showed strong improvement. The passing rates on English language arts rose from 84 percent in 2007 to 89 percent this year. Math passing rates increased from 63 percent to 65 percent. Social studies passing rates improved from 86 percent last year to 90 percent in 2008, while science passing rates went from 58 percent last year to 66 percent this spring.

Eleventh grade

Texas students must pass four exit-level tests, which are first given in 11th grade, along with their classes, to be eligible to earn a state diploma. The Class of 2009 is well on its way to meeting its testing requirements.

Ninety percent of the students passed the English language arts exam, while 95 percent met the standard on the social studies examination. Eighty percent of the students passed the science test and 79 percent passed the mathematics test.

When standard TAKS results are compared excluding the new TAKS (Accommodated) test, this year's 11th grade students had passing rates that were one to five percentage points higher on the four tests than did last year's high school juniors.

Overall, 71 percent of the 11th graders passed all the TAKS or TAKS (Accommodated) exams they took this year. *Those who failed one or more tests will have four more opportunities to take the tests between now and the end of their senior year.*

“Our test results show that this has been a year of strong and steady growth for millions of our students. I’m thankful for all the effort the students, their teachers, administrators and parents have put into making this a successful and productive year,” Scott said.

Detailed summaries of state-level results may be found at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/>.

The Texas Education Agency does not yet have results for school districts or campuses.

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Florida Department of Education

Media Room

Press Release

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

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Florida Ranked Top Ten in the Nation in Education

~ 2009 Quality Counts report highlights the continued progress of the state's education system ~

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced that Florida's education ranking jumped from 14th to 10th in the nation, and its overall grade improved from a C-plus to a B-minus, according to the *2009 Quality Counts: Portrait of a Population* report released today. The report, issued annually by *Education Week*, tracks state policies and performance across key areas of education and assigns each state with an overall letter grade to signify their education standing in the nation. This improvement builds on last year's drastic improvement that took Florida from 31st in 2006 to 14th in 2007.

"I congratulate Florida's educators and students for their continued hard work in the pursuit of learning," Governor Crist said. "The Quality Counts report released today clearly indicates that Florida schools are on the right track and that our students are being prepared to compete with students across the nation. I am committed to building upon the tremendous progress made in the last two years and under Governor Jeb Bush's leadership."

This year's edition of the report grades states based on their performance and policies in six distinct education areas: Chance for Success; Transitions and Alignment; School Finance; K-12 Achievement; Standards, Assessments, and Accountability; and the Teaching Profession. Beginning this year, the report updates data in three of those areas (Chance for Success, Transitions and Alignment, and School Finance) and combines it with the previous report's grades for the remaining categories. The overall grade assigned to each state is the average score for all six categories.

"This is a stunning achievement that further cements Florida's status as a national leader in education," said Commissioner of Education Dr. Eric J. Smith. "We are a state with high expectations for our youth and I'm proud to see that our efforts are creating a more successful future for our children."

Florida's grade in the Transitions and Alignment category was a C-plus, which was

http://www.fldoe.org/news/2009/2009_01_07.asp?style=print

above the national average of a C. This section indicates if states have performed actions such as adopting a definition of school readiness, requiring high school students to complete a college-preparatory curriculum to earn a diploma, and adopting definitions of college and workforce readiness.

The Chance for Success category looks at a state's educational framework that spans a student's life, from prekindergarten to the workforce. Florida tied the national average in this category with a C-plus and ranked ninth and 11th in Preschool and Kindergarten enrollment, respectively. The state also ranked high in the Steady Employment indicator with a ranking of 12th place.

Florida also received high marks for the equity of its education spending, exceeding the national average in three of the four indicators for this subsection. The state's overall grade in this section was a C-minus, which was below the national average of a C-plus.

For the three previous-year categories that were factored into this year's score, Florida was ranked fourth in the nation for the Teaching Profession; seventh in the nation for K-12 Achievement; and 12th in the nation for Standards, Assessment and Accountability.

In addition to the six categories, the report includes an in-depth examination of the condition of English-language learners (ELL) in schools across the nation. While this section did not receive a grade, it did single out states in its analysis. Florida was highlighted for leading the nation in the number of certified teachers in Federal Title III language instruction programs, and is one of only three states that requires all prospective teachers to show they are competent to teach ELL students.

For more information about the report, visit www.edweek.org.

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Florida Department of Education

Media Room

Press Release

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

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Florida's High School Graduation Rate Continues to Climb

~ Increased number of minority graduates push graduation rate to highest point ever ~

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced that Florida's graduation rate reached its highest point ever last year at 75.4 percent, according to results released today by the Florida Department of Education (DOE). This rate exceeds the previous year's rate by three percentage points and represents an overall improvement of 15.2 percentage points since the 1998-99 school year. The results indicate that rising numbers of minority graduates continue to play a significant role in the improvement of Florida's overall graduation rate.

"I am so proud of our schools, teachers, and students for this tremendous achievement," said Governor Charlie Crist. "By giving our high school students a complete education, we are giving them the foundation they need for a successful future. Their success will make Florida's workforce and economy stronger."

"These results reinforce the tremendous academic progress our students have made over the last decade and prove that Florida is home to some of the best teachers in the nation," said Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. "It is vital that we continue to build on our progress by elevating the expectation for our children and preparing them with the skills they need to succeed in today's global economy."

Similar to last year, graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students showed some of the largest growth this year, increasing by 3.8 and 3.1 percentage points, respectively. White students also showed sizeable growth, with a 2.6 point increase in their rate compared to 2006-07.

The DOE bases its graduation rate on data that follows every single student from ninth grade to graduation, a method that more accurately calculates the number of students who graduate high school. Florida currently stands alone nationally in its practice of *compiling and following individual student records to determine a true, four-year graduation rate. In October, the United States Department of Education announced that all states must adopt a uniform graduation rate calculation by the year 2010-11. Consequently, the DOE is reviewing its graduation rate to determine what changes are*

needed to meet the new federal requirement.

Decreased Dropout Rate

As Florida's graduation rate continues to rise, its dropout rate continues to decline. According to the results, Florida's annual high school dropout rate dropped to its lowest point ever this year at 2.6 percent. This rate is a decrease of 0.7 percentage points compared to last year's rate, and a decrease of 2.8 points since 1998-99.

Increased minority achievement was the leading force behind this decline. From 2006-07 to 2007-08, the dropout rate decreased for African-American, Hispanic, American Indian and multiracial students, with African-American students showing the most significant improvements in dropout reduction.

For more information about Florida's 2007-08 graduation and dropout rates, visit http://www.fldoe.org/news/pdf/grad_rate_data.pdf (PDF, 164KB).

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Florida Department of Education

Media Room

Press Release

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

DOE Press Office
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Record Number of Florida Students Take SAT and AP Exams

~ Florida's minority SAT and AP exam-takers outperform their national counterparts ~

TALLAHASSEE – Nearly 100,000 Florida students took the SAT this year, the most ever according to the 2008 SAT results released today by the College Board. In addition to record participation levels, the results also indicate that Florida's Hispanic and African-American students outscored their national counterparts on the reading and mathematics sections of the SAT by 37 points (953 combined score) and five points (861 combined score), respectively.

"These results are a strong indication that more Florida students are setting themselves on a path to a postsecondary education," said Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. "While I am highly encouraged by this trend, we must continue to emphasize the need for increased access to rigorous coursework to ensure that our students are prepared for the challenges ahead."

The SAT consists of three major exam sections including reading, mathematics, and writing. Each section receives a score on the scale of 200–800. Traditionally, state and national averages are reported using a combined score of the reading and mathematics sections only. Even with increased student participation, Florida's average combined reading and math SAT score remained the same as last year at 993. For individual exam sections, Florida's average score was up two points in writing (481), up one point in mathematics (497) and down one point in reading (496) compared to 2007.

The SAT is a voluntary college entrance exam, and scores from the test can be used for admission to a state university, the Talented 20 program, for meeting qualifications in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program or for placement into regular college courses. Students may access information about the SAT and other college entrance exams through Florida's online student advising system, the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students at www.FACTS.org.

Florida's AP Participation and Performance

The College Board also released Advanced Placement (AP) results, and for the third year in a row, Florida had the greatest one-year increase in the number of public school AP exam-takers (increase of 14,151 exam-takers for a total of 117,698) when compared

to all other states. Increases in Florida AP exam takers were highest among minority students. According to the College Board, Florida had the greatest one-year increase (30 percent) in the number of African-American public school AP exam takers when compared to all other states and the third greatest increase (14 percent) in the number of Hispanic exam takers.

Florida students also performed well on AP exams. Florida had the third greatest increase (5.9 percent) in the number of students passing (receiving grades of 3-5) AP exams when compared to all other states from 2007 to 2008. Nationwide, one out of every eight African-American AP exam-takers, and one out of every seven Hispanic AP exam-takers awarded a passing grade or higher was from a public high school in Florida.

For more details on Florida's performance on the SAT and AP, visit www.fldoe.org/evaluation.

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Florida Department of Education

Media Room

Press Release

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Tom Butler
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2008 FCAT Reading, Math and Science Results Indicate Gains In Student Learning

~ Florida students continue long-term gains and narrow achievement gap ~

TALLAHASSEE – More of Florida students are performing at or above grade level (Achievement Level 3 and above) in reading and mathematics compared to all test years since 2001, according to the 2008 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) results released today. Additionally, more students in grades 5, 8, and 11 are performing at or above grade level in science compared with previous years. The results also indicate that African-American and Hispanic students have narrowed the achievement gap with white students in both reading and mathematics.

“Florida’s students are to be commended for their hard work and steady progress in reading, math and science,” Governor Charlie Crist said. “We are grateful to the teachers of our students, as well as the parents, who reinforce each day the importance of continued learning and strong skills.”

“Academic achievement in Florida continues to rise and these results are a clear indication of the high quality of education our students are receiving,” said Education Commissioner Eric J. Smith. “I’m particularly pleased with the results we are seeing in math and reading and the focus our schools have maintained on these important subjects. The hard work of our teachers and endless learning capacity of our students impresses me daily.”

Overall, 60 percent of students in grades 3 through 10 are reading at or above grade level compared to 58 percent in 2007. Sixty-six (66) percent of Florida students are demonstrating mathematics skills at or above grade level compared to 63 percent last year. Highlights of this year’s results include:

Elementary School (Grades 3 – 5 reading and mathematics, and grade 5 science)

- **Seventy (70) percent of elementary school students are reading at or above grade level, the same percentage as last year and up 16 percentage points since 2001.**
- **Seventy (70) percent of elementary school students are demonstrating mathematics skills at or above grade level, up two percentage points from last year and 18 points since 2001.**

- Forty-three (43) percent of fifth grade students are achieving in science at or above grade level, up one percentage point from last year and 15 points since 2003.

Middle School (Grades 6 – 8 reading and mathematics, and grade 8 science)

- Sixty-one (61) percent of middle school students are reading at or above grade level, up three percentage points from last year and 13 points since 2001.
- Sixty (60) percent of middle school students are demonstrating mathematics skills at or above grade level, up two percentage points from last year and 13 points since 2001.
- Forty (40) percent of eighth grade students are achieving in science at or above grade level, up two percentage points from last year and 12 points since 2003.

High School (Grades 9 and 10 reading and mathematics, and grade 11 science)

- Forty-two (42) percent of high school students are reading at or above grade level, up four percentage points from last year and 10 points since 2001.
- Sixty-seven (67) percent of high school students are demonstrating mathematics skills at or above grade level, up four percentage points from last year and 15 points since 2001.
- Thirty-eight (38) percent of eleventh grade students are achieving in science at or above grade level, up one percentage point from last year and five percentage points since 2003.

Additional highlights include:

- Hispanic students narrowed the achievement gap with white students by seven percentage points since 2001 in both reading and mathematics.
- African-American students narrowed the achievement gap with white students by three percentage points in reading and seven percentage points in mathematics since 2001.

Beginning at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 12, parents may view their students' scores via the [FCAT Parent Network](#) using the secure login and password provided by their school. School districts and schools can access electronic copies of their reports today. Printed reports, including individual student reports, school reports, district and state reports, will be delivered to school districts next week.

To view the 2008 Reading, Mathematics and Science FCAT fact sheet, visit <http://fcat.fldoe.org/mediapacket/2008/pdf/2008FCAT3-11FactSheet.pdf>. To view school, district and state FCAT reports, visit <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcainfopg.asp>.



News

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SAT up two points as national average stalls; AP scores see significant increase

South Carolina high school seniors in the Class of 2008 raised their average SAT scores by two points, the College Board said today. Seniors continued a dramatic improvement trend on college Advanced Placement exams.

South Carolina seniors' average composite score for critical reading, math and writing was 1,461, up two points from 2007. The national average stayed at 1,511. Critical reading was 488, math was 497 and writing was 476, compared to national averages of 502, 515 and 494.

The College Board, which tracks 10-year SAT trends, said the state's 34-point improvement since 1998 in reading and math (the writing test is only in its third year) remained the nation's best among states where more than half of the high school seniors take the SAT. Vermont was second with a 30-point improvement, while North Carolina was third with a 25-point improvement.

South Carolina students continued their improvement on the College Board's Advanced Placement tests. An all-time high of 15,362 scored high enough to earn college credit, a 3 percent increase over last year's 14,922. The number of exams attempted rose from 26,117 to 26,872, also an all-time high. The percentage of students scoring 3-5 stayed the same at 57.1.

State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex said that although African-American students continued to make major strides in closing the "achievement gap" with white students on Advanced Placement tests, the gap widened on 2008's SAT results.

"It's vital that we get a grip on this," Rex said. "We need to replicate these dramatic AP achievement gap successes in other areas. We need to focus on approaching every class the way we're approaching AP classes - with quality teachers, top-notch teacher training, clearly understood goals and high expectations for kids."

In the last five years, the number of AP exams taken by South Carolina African-American students increased from 1,545 to 2,258, an increase of 46 percent. The number of African-American students scoring high enough to earn college credit increased during that same period from 496 to 620, a 25 percent increase.

In 2008 alone, the number of South Carolina African-American students who took AP tests increased by 11 percent, and the number whose scores qualified for college credit increased by 5 percent.

Rex said more students should be taking the preliminary SAT test (PSAT), which provides useful feedback to students and educators alike. The state pays the testing fees for both the PSAT and its ACT counterpart, PLAN. The State Superintendent urged students and their parents to take advantage, and he encouraged school districts to pay for the practice test that the state doesn't cover.

Rex said PSAT and PLAN results are underutilized by high schools. He noted that the test results boast a wealth of useful data on students' academic strengths and weaknesses that can be used to:

- Find "holes" in school curricula so that improvements can be made.
- Identify students who might perform well in Advanced Placement classes.
- Help guidance counselors work with students on skills that need extra attention.
- *Help career counselors work with students under the provisions of the Education and Economic Development Act. In cooperation with parents and counselors, each high school student creates a personalized graduation plan centered on his or her goals. That plan includes selecting an academic focus - a "career cluster" - that organizes high school coursework around each student's individual strengths and interests.*

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Rex noted the 126-point difference between 2008 South Carolina seniors who took the College Board's recommended courses before taking the SAT and those who did not. "It's important for guidance counselors to work with students and their parents to make sure that kids take high-quality courses before they take either the ACT or SAT."

Additional 2008 South Carolina SAT highlights:

- This is the third year for data from the newly redesigned SAT, which now includes a writing section, tougher math problems and more reading analysis. It takes 45 minutes longer – a total of nearly five hours, including breaks – to complete. Scoring on the three sections – math, critical reading (formerly known as verbal) and writing – ranges from 200 to 800 points, so that a perfect score is now 2400 instead of 1600.
- The average SAT math score of South Carolina's 2008 high school seniors was 497, compared to the national average of 515. The state's average critical reading score was 488, compared to the national average of 502. The average score on the new writing section was 476, compared to the nation's 494.
- Slightly fewer high school seniors in the Class of 2008 took the SAT than in the previous year, a decrease of 1,015 students (from 24,081 to 23,066). The percentage of seniors taking the test was 61 percent.
- Hispanics in South Carolina outperformed their counterparts nationwide on all three SAT subtests, by a total of 67 points. There was a 10 percent increase in the number of South Carolina Hispanics taking the SAT, on the heels of a 23 percent increase last year.

Top Performers

Eight South Carolina districts had average SAT composite scores – critical reading, math and writing – that exceeded the national composite average of 1,511: Aanderson 1 (1,540); Anderson 2 (1,567); Anderson 4 (1,540); Barnwell 45 (1,514); Lexington 1 (1,543); Lexington/Richland 5 (1,537); Spartanburg 1 (1,528); York 4 (1,558).

Forty schools had composite reading, math and writing scores that surpassed the national average: Aiken High (Aiken) 1,521; South Aiken High (Aiken) 1,526; Palmetto High (Anderson 1) 1,547; Wren High (Anderson 1) 1,537; Belton-Honea Path High (Anderson 2) 1,567; Pendleton High (Anderson 4) 1,540; T.L. Hanna High (Anderson 5), 1,524; Barnwell High (Barnwell 45) 1,514; Hanahan High (Berkeley) 1,589; Stratford High (Berkeley) 1,521; Academic Magnet High (Charleston) 1,855; Charleston County School of the Arts (Charleston) 1,608; James Island High (Charleston) 1,513; Wando High (Charleston) 1,569; Lewisville High (Chester) 1,537; Central High (Chesterfield) 1,545; Chesterfield Senior High (Chesterfield) 1,521; Mayo High (Darlington) 1,610; Waccamaw High (Georgetown) 1,568; Eastside High (Greenville) 1,537; Greenville Tech Charter High (Greenville) 1,543; James L. Mann High (Greenville) 1,535; Riverside High (Greenville) 1,614; Academy for the Arts and Sciences (Horry) 1,526; Aynor High (Horry) 1,620; Green Sea-Floyds High (Horry) 1,575; Camden High (Kershaw) 1,538; Lexington High (Lexington 1) 1,589; Chapin High (Lexington/Richland 5) 1,531; Dutch Fork High (Lexington/Richland 5) 1,574; Seneca High (Oconee) 1,523; Tamassee-Salem High (Oconee) 1,600; Walhalla Senior High (Oconee) 1,533; D.W. Daniel High (Pickens) 1,551; A.C. Flora High (Richland 1) 1,520; Spring Valley High (Richland 2) 1,529; Landrum High (Spartanburg 1) 1,626; Fort Mill High (York 4) 1,558; Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, 1,749; and Governor's School for Science and Math, 2,057.

Advanced Placement exam scores

- AP courses – and the accompanying College Board exams that demonstrate mastery of the course material – let students earn college credit while still in high school. Since 1984, South Carolina has paid for AP instructional materials, paid students' test fees and offered specialized training for teachers. Every student enrolled in an AP course is required to take the test.
- The five most-taken AP exams in 2008 were United States History, English Literature and Composition, English Language and Composition, Calculus AB and Biology.
- Although the "achievement gap" between white and African-American students increased by 11 points on the SAT, the news was considerably better on AP tests. The number of exams taken by African-American students increased by 15 percent compared to a 1 percent increase by white students, and the number of exam scores qualifying for college credit increased 5 percent for African-American students compared to 2 percent for white students.

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

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South Carolina test scores improving in reading and math, national report says

South Carolina student test scores in reading and mathematics have risen since 2002, according to a new national report.

The report, "Has Student Achievement Increased Since 2002? State Test Score Trends Through 2006-07," was released by the nonpartisan [Center on Education Policy](#). It analyzed state test data from all 50 states as well as trends through 2007 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only federally administered assessment of reading and math achievement.

The CEP study focused on two questions: whether reading and math achievement has increased since 2002 and whether achievement gaps between subgroups have narrowed.

According to the CEP report, South Carolina students made moderate to large gains in reading at the elementary level from 2002 to 2007. Reading performance dropped slightly at the middle school level and rose slightly at the high school level. In math, there were moderate to large gains at the elementary level, and slight gains at the middle and high school levels.

Test score gaps between African-American and white students narrowed in middle school reading and high school math. Other trends were mixed.

Gaps between low-income and all students widened in reading and math at the elementary grade analyzed. At the middle school level, gaps in percentages of students scoring proficient narrowed in reading and widened in math.

"We've seen some progress, and that's good," said State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex. "But educators know that the pace of improvement has to accelerate if South Carolina students hope to be competitive with students in other states, and in other nations. We've got to be more creative, we've got to be more innovative, and we've got to work harder."

CEP describes itself as an independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools.

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