

# NEWS

## Connecticut Department of Education

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### **EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30 A.M. AUGUST 29, 2006**

#### **Class of 2006 Beats National Average on Inaugural SAT Writing Test; Performance in Reading and Math Declines; Participation Fourth in Nation**

HARTFORD – Connecticut’s 2006 public school graduates had a strong showing on the SAT writing test, while their performance in reading and math declined from 2005. The state’s 77 percent participation rate among public school students was fourth in the nation.

- Connecticut’s average in math declined by 2 points in the past year to 510. It is 4 points below the national public school average score in math.
- Connecticut’s average of 505 on the reading section (formerly called verbal) remained 5 points above the national public school average. Both the Connecticut average and the national average score in reading declined by 5 points in the past year.
- This was the first time the SAT included a writing component and Connecticut’s 2006 public school graduates scored 504. This was 12 points above the national average for public school students.

The SAT is a standardized test that The College Board administers nationally. It is one of two national tests that most colleges use as one component of their admissions process. The SAT tests students in reading, math and, for the first time this year, writing. The test results are reported on a scale of 200 to 800. The SAT is administered seven times per year. The results reported here are from the last administration taken by any public school student from the class of 2006.

All scores in this news release are based on public school students. Prior Department releases reported data for all Connecticut students. The national SAT press release of The College Board is based upon the results of all students. Recent comprehensive reporting of the results of public school students by The College Board has made this change possible.

“The SAT is one of the most widely used and respected assessments of student achievement in the nation,” said Interim Education Commissioner George A. Coleman. “Our strong performance and high participation rates year in and year out speak highly of the abilities of our students, schools and teachers.”

Since the populations of students tested may not be comparable, it is inappropriate to use the SAT or any single assessment to compare states. SAT participation rates may differ from state to state because 1) states have different percentages of graduates who plan to attend college; 2) students in other states take a different college entrance test; and 3) the community colleges in a state may not require the SAT for admission.

With the decrease of 5 points from the 10-year high of 510 established in 2005, the 2006 reading score of 505 is 1 point above the 10-year average. Despite the 2-point loss from last year’s 10-year high of 512, the math scores are well above the 499 recorded in 1996.

“I am more comfortable reviewing our results from a long-term perspective rather than a single year,” Coleman said. “We are concerned whenever we experience a decrease in our scores and encourage each school system to examine its curriculum and teaching in those areas where we didn’t make the progress we anticipated.”

**Statewide Performance and Participation**

Table 1 compares the average SAT scores of 2006 Connecticut public school graduates for reading and math from 1996 to 2006, to all public school graduates nationally.

**Table 1. SAT Public School Averages,  
Connecticut and the Nation 10-Year Trends**

Year of Graduation	Reading		Math		Writing	
	CT	Nation	CT	Nation	CT	Nation
1996	503	502	499	499		
1997	505	502	503	508		
1998	504	502	503	509		
1999	504	502	503	508		
2000	501	501	503	510		
2001	502	502	503	510		
2002	502	501	503	512		
2003	504	503	508	513		
2004	508	504	508	513		
2005	510	505	512	515		
2006	505	500	510	514	504	492

Connecticut had 161 public school students achieve the maximum score of 800 points on the reading test. These students came from 67 different high schools. A total of 122 students from 54 high schools achieved that peak in math, and 84 from 43 different high schools in writing. A total of six students scored an 800 on all three tests. These students came from Cheshire, East Lyme, Granby, New Milford, Weston and Wilton.

“A perfect score on all three tests is an amazing accomplishment,” Coleman said. “These students and their families all deserve to be congratulated.”

**Participation.** About 27,000 public school students in Connecticut took the SAT. The College Board estimates that Connecticut’s participation rate is 77 percent. This places Connecticut fourth behind New York, the District of Columbia and Massachusetts. Nationally, an estimated 41 percent of the 2006 public high school graduates took the SAT. Many college-bound students in other states, particularly those in the Midwest, take the ACT Assessment.

**Student Characteristics.** Of the students tested, 53.9 percent were female, 20.3 percent were minority and 15.2 percent first learned a language other than English. The percentage of female test-takers is the same as 10 years ago. The percentage of minority test-takers is 2.4 percentage points higher than 10 years ago. The percentage of students reporting they first learned a language other than English has increased 1.9 percentage points since 1996. In addition, in 2006, 56.7 percent of the students came from families in which one or both parents had earned at least a bachelor’s degree, an increase of 4.3 percentage points since 1996.

**Performance Gaps**

The performance gaps between minority and non-minority students narrowed in reading but persisted in math. Table 2 compares the reading and math performance of white graduates who took the SAT to their black, Hispanic and Asian counterparts from 1996 to 2006.

**Table 2. CT Public Schools 10-Year SAT Trends by Race**

Year of Graduation	Reading				Math				Writing			
	Black	Asian	Hisp.	White	Black	Asian	Hisp.	White	Black	Asian	Hisp.	White
1996	412	497	435	521	397	556	429	517				
1997	416	496	443	524	402	544	437	521				
1998	416	503	436	524	406	550	437	522				
1999	417	507	437	524	398	556	433	524				
2000	417	506	432	523	403	556	430	525				
2001	416	502	442	523	402	550	439	525				
2002	410	498	434	521	399	556	430	523				
2003	416	504	438	523	403	549	434	528				
2004	415	503	444	524	405	549	441	523				
2005	417	513	447	528	408	561	445	529				
2006	418	522	445	523	404	567	441	530	416	526	442	522

- The reading averages for white and Asian graduates were similar at 523 and 522, respectively. The average reading score for Asian graduates in 2006 was the highest since 1996. The average reading score of 445 for Hispanic students was 10 points above the 1996 average. The 78-point gap between white and Hispanic students is the smallest in the past 10 years. The average reading score of 418 for black students was the highest in the past 10 years, and the 105-point gap between white and black students is the smallest in the past 10 years.
- The average SAT math scores were highest for Asian graduates at 567, followed by 530 for white, 441 for Hispanic and 404 for black graduates. The average math score for

Asian graduates in 2006 was the highest since 1996. The average math score for Hispanic students was 12 points above the average of 10 years ago. The 89-point gap between white and Hispanic students is slightly greater than the gap that existed 10-years ago. The average score in math for black students is 7 points above the average of 10 years ago; however, the 126-point gap between white and black students is the largest in the past 10 years.

- The average writing scores in 2006 were 526 for Asian, 522 for white, 442 for Hispanic and 416 for black graduates. When compared with white graduates, Asian graduates averaged 4 points higher while Hispanic graduates scored 80 points lower and black graduates scored 106 points lower.

“No one should be satisfied with the scores of our black and Hispanic students. They may be up from a decade ago, but 90- or 100-point gaps between white students and blacks and Hispanics is still entirely unacceptable,” Coleman said. “We know we have to take a more surgical and individualized approach to teaching these students if they are to improve their performance and leave high school well prepared for college and the workplace.”

**Gender Subgroup Performance**

The performance gaps between males and females continue with females excelling in writing and males in math; males hold a slight edge in reading. Table 3 compares the reading and math performance of male and female graduates who took the SAT from 1996 to 2006.

**Table 3. CT Public School SAT Averages  
Male and Female 10-Year Trends**

Year of Graduation	Reading		Math		Writing	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1996	505	501	518	484		
1997	507	503	520	488		
1998	509	501	522	488		
1999	506	503	521	488		
2000	502	500	519	488		
2001	507	498	522	488		
2002	502	501	520	488		
2003	510	499	527	491		
2004	513	503	529	490		
2005	514	507	529	497		
2006	506	504	528	494	497	510

- The male average score in reading of 506 was 1 point above the 1996 average. The female average of 504 was 3 points above the 1996 average. The 2-point deficit for females compared to males is lower than it has been in many of the last 10 years and lower than the national average of 5 points.
- The male average score in math of 528 and the female average score of 494 were both 10 points above their 1996 averages. The 34-point gap between males and females has not changed during the last 10 years and is 1 point lower than the national average.

- Females outscored males by an average of 13 points in writing. Both male and female students from Connecticut public schools outscored their peers nationally.

School-by-school SAT results may be found on the Department's website at <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/national/sat.htm>.

