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Virginia Students Again Outperform Peers Nationwide on SAT *Increased Participation Seen as Impacting National and State Average Scores*

Virginia’s 2011 public school graduates outperformed their peers nationwide on the SAT college-admissions test, according to results released today by the College Board. The commonwealth’s graduating seniors achieved at higher levels than public school students nationwide on all three SAT subsections:

- The average reading score of 509 for Virginia public school students is 15 points higher than the national average.
- The average mathematics score of 507 for Virginia public school students is one point higher.
- The average writing score of 492 for Virginia public school students is nine points higher.

Asian, black and Hispanic Virginia public school graduates outperformed their peers nationwide on all three SAT subsections.

2011 SAT Virginia Public School Mean Scores

Group	Critical Reading		Mathematics		Writing	
	Virginia	Nation	Virginia	Nation	Virginia	Nation
All Public School Students	509	494	507	506	492	483
Asian	533	519	577	575	531	521
Black	434	425	427	425	419	413
Hispanic	489	447	486	460	472	439
White	536	523	530	533	517	510

The College Board also reported that Virginia’s 2011 graduates represented the largest and most diverse pool of college-bound students in the state’s history; four out of every 10 Virginia public school graduates who took the SAT were members of a minority group. A total of 53,457, or 67 percent, of 2011 public school graduates in the state took the SAT — a five-percent increase in participation over the previous year.

“More students are taking the SAT and indicating their intent to continue their education and acquire the skills they’ll need to compete in today’s global economy,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “Students, who in previous years might not have viewed themselves as college material, are being encouraged to take the SAT by educators who recognize their potential.”

The increase in the number and diversity of test takers in Virginia and nationwide, and a decline in the number of students retaking the SAT and improving on their initial performance, were cited by the College Board as contributing to one-year declines in the average scores of public school graduates in the commonwealth and nationwide.

“Long-term trends are more important than one-year fluctuations in achievement,” Board of Education President Eleanor B. Saslaw said. “Nevertheless, these results underscore the importance of the board’s work in raising standards across the curriculum to ensure that Virginia graduates have the college-ready knowledge and skills required for success during their freshman year and beyond.”

(more)

The average scores for 2011 Virginia public school graduates dropped by one point in critical reading, four points in mathematics and two points in writing. Among public school students nationwide, achievement dropped by three points in critical reading, four points in mathematics and three points in writing.

Since 2007, average scores of Virginia public school students have increased by three points in reading on the SAT. The average mathematics and writing scores of 2011 public school graduates were identical to those public school seniors in 2007.

Overall average achievement of Virginia high school seniors — including private and home-schooled students — increased by one point in reading, declined by two points in mathematics and one point in writing.

- Virginia’s all-student average of 512 in reading is 15 points higher than the national all-student average of 497.
- The commonwealth’s all-student average of 509 in mathematics is five points lower than the national average.
- Virginia’s all-student average writing score of 495 is six points higher than the national average.

While the number of Virginia students taking the rival ACT is increasing, the SAT remains the dominant college-entrance examination in Virginia.

The College Board also reported that the number of Virginia public school students who took at least one Advanced Placement (AP) examination during their high school career increased by 7.4 percent this year and the number of tests taken increased by 8.8 percent.

2011 AP Virginia Public School Participation & Achievement

Group	Test Takers			Exams Taken		Number of 3-5 Scores	
	Total	Increase from last year	% of Total	Total	Increase from last year	Total	Increase from last year
All Students	66,288	7.4%	100	122,269	8.8%	71,469	7.0%
Asian	8,376	9.1%	12.6	18,397	11.2%	11,606	11.7%
Black	7,550	9.7%	11.4	11,865	12.2%	3,616	8.8%
Hispanic	4,436	12.9%	6.7	7,469	14.4%	3,808	8.6%
White	40,264	6.5%	60.7	74,636	9.1%	47,142	7.7%

The number of AP examinations taken by 2011 public school graduates that qualified for college credit increased by 7 percent. Of the 122,269 AP tests taken by Virginia public school students, 71,469, or 58.5 percent, earned a grade of 3 or higher.

The College Board’s February 2011 *Advanced Placement Report to the Nation* ranked Virginia third in the nation in achievement on AP examinations. The College Board will use the AP data released today to update its state rankings early next year.

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