



## **NJDOE News**

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### **New Jersey's SAT Scores Remain Stable While Participation Increases**

New Jersey high school seniors who took this year's SAT exams had virtually the same scores on the verbal and mathematics sections as students did on the SATs administered in 2001. The 2002 average verbal score of 498 represented a one-point dip from 2001, and the average mathematics score of 513 was identical to last year's average.

New Jersey's scores held steady as a greater percentage of the class of 2002 took the test. The 71,163 students who took the SAT is a 4.3 percent increase over the previous year. As a result, 82 percent of New Jersey's graduating seniors took the SAT, compared with 81 percent of the previous year's graduates. Only one other state -- Connecticut with 83 percent -- had a higher participation rate, according to the College Board, the organization that sponsors the test.

"We applaud our teachers, principals and guidance counselors for encouraging so many of our students to take the SAT," said Richard Ten Eyck, assistant commissioner for the Department of Education's Division of Educational Programs and Assessment.

"When teachers tell students that they should take the SAT, they are sending a positive message of encouragement that the students should explore their academic potential to the fullest," Ten Eyck said. "With this encouragement, many high school students who may not have considered college have broadened their view and are continuing their education after they graduate."

"We do not consider a one-point difference in an SAT score to be statistically significant," Ten Eyck continued. "We do, however, consider it extremely significant that our scores are level despite the increased participation rate. Usually, a greater number of test takers will tend to lower the overall scores."

Ten Eyck noted that New Jersey's participation rate is nearly double that of the national average, which in 2002 was 46 percent. He also noted that an examination of SAT scores over time is a better way to view student performance, rather than focusing on one-year differences.

As SAT I volume builds in New Jersey, rising by 9,623 test takers since 1997, both verbal and math scores have improved for public school students. Over the past 10 years, New Jersey's mathematics score has improved by 15 points and the verbal score has improved by 5 points. This year's 498 verbal score average places New Jersey third in the region behind Maryland and Delaware, but ahead of New York and equal to Pennsylvania.

For 2002, the male verbal mean is down 1 point for public school students while the male math mean is up 2 points for more male public school students. This represents a net gain of 4 points overall for 2001.

The female verbal mean for public schools down 1 over last year, but stayed the course all students in New Jersey. The verbal mean for all females in New Jersey is 2 points above the verbal mean for public school females. Female public school math is down 2 points from last year, but is still 2 points above all New Jersey students. Female verbal is the only category in which public school students do not fare better than all students.

Seventy-two percent of the 29,197 New Jersey test takers scored 3 or higher on advanced placement exams, a 4 percent increase since 1995, when fewer than 10,000 students took the exams. The test is scored on a scale of 1 to 5, and a score of 3 or greater is required for students to get college credit for their advanced placement courses.

According to the College Board, 77 percent of all AP test takers in New Jersey were from public schools, and 72 percent of grades earned by public school students in New Jersey were 3 or better, an increase of 3 percent since 1995 in the face of a nearly 20,000 increase in test volume.

Additionally, it appears that public school students scored higher than non-public school students in some tests. For example, public school men outpaced their non-public school counterparts in the 3 or better score

distributions 75.6 percent to 74.4 percent. Public school women increased their scores of 4 by 1.8 percent over 2001, and increased their scores of 5 by 2.43 percent over 2001.

In another result, minority students continued to take the SAT in New Jersey and advanced placement exams in greater numbers and are getting better scores.

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