

# Press Clippings 10/31/2017

---Courier News--- 10/31/17

## Vast disparities found across Illinois SAT scores

Two-thirds of high schools test below state goals

BY DIANE RADO AND JENNIFER RICHARDS

About two-thirds of Illinois public high schools posted below-average to rock-bottom scores on the SAT college entrance exam, given for free for the first time to 11th-graders last spring at school, revealing that thousands of students are still struggling even as the state pushes kids to achieve at higher levels.

Average scores ranged from the low 740s to the high 1300s, reflecting wide disparities in performance at more than 700 high schools statewide, according to data released Tuesday as part of the state's annual picture of public schools, called the Illinois Report Card.

Black and Hispanic teens fared worse on the exam compared with white and Asian peers, the data show. Some students attend classes in high-poverty neighborhoods, while others are educated in wealthy suburban enclaves and blue-collar and downstate rural areas.

Payton College Preparatory High School, a selective enrollment Chicago Public School, posted the highest SAT average in the state — a 1375. But in pockets of CPS, about two dozen schools posted the worst averages statewide, all under an 800 for math and for reading and writing combined.

The Illinois State Board of Education's report card is a conglomeration of data ranging from state exam scores for high school and grade school students, to school finance, teacher attendance and evaluations, and enrollment and socioeconomic trends, among other measures made available to families and taxpayers.

State School Superintendent Tony Smith highlighted various improvements on a media conference call Monday, but also challenges.

Third- through eighth-graders improved in English language arts between 2016 and 2017, but dipped in math.

### How area high schools performed

By SAT standardized test results for exams taken by high school juniors in spring 2017.

Composite SAT score  
Total score: 400-1600  
State average: 1015.9

School	District	City	For school	For district
Neuqua Valley	204	Naperville	1213.5	1165.9
Naperville Central	203	Naperville	1186.8	1179.7
Naperville North	203	Naperville	1175.8	1179.7
Metea Valley	204	Aurora	1149.1	1165.9
St. Charles North	303	St. Charles	1148.9	1121.5
Geneva Community	304	Geneva	1145.2	1145.2
Waubensie Valley	204	Aurora	1126.6	1165.9
Batavia Senior	101	Batavia	1117.3	1117.3
St. Charles East	303	St. Charles	1099.2	1121.5
Central	301	Burlington	1092.3	1092.3
Harry D. Jacobs	300	Algonquin	1084.8	1028
Kaneland Senior	302	Maple Park	1067.6	1067.6
Bartlett	U-46	Bartlett	1064.9	979.5
Oswego East	308	Oswego	1063	1057.6
Oswego	308	Oswego	1055.3	1057.6
Hampshire	300	Hampshire	1039.7	1028
Yorkville	115	Yorkville	1039.1	1039.1
Somonauk	432	Somonauk	1026.5	1026.5
South Elgin	U-46	South Elgin	1024.4	979.5
Dundee-Crown	300	Carpentersville	970.5	1028
West Aurora	129	Aurora	945	945
Elgin	U-46	Elgin	943.4	979.5
Streamwood	U-46	Streamwood	921.5	979.5
East Aurora	131	Aurora	921.6	921.6
Larkin	U-46	Elgin	908.7	979.5

SOURCE: Chicago Tribune analysis of Illinois State Board of Education data

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

And while four- and five-year graduation rates went up, Smith raised concerns about the extent of remedial classes. The percent of graduates enrolled in such courses dropped from 49.4 to 46.8 percent in the 2017 data.

“I would say that is worth noting, and good that’s it’s going down. But to me, that is a big area of work in this state. We have too many kids who are still taking remedial coursework,” Smith said.

One key piece was missing in the school report card data: state science exams. The delays in scoring date back to the 2016 exams. State officials said some science scores may come out next month. Fifth-grade, eighth-grade and high school students in biology take the state science exams.

And while ISBE has usually met a statutory deadline of providing school data to the public on Oct. 31, the agency will delay until Friday posting a plethora of information at [IllinoisReportCard.com](http://IllinoisReportCard.com). Reports for schools, in traditional paper format, will be available Tuesday on ISBE’s “eReport Card Public Site.”

ISBE cited a variety of reasons for the delays, including a larger load of data to handle this year. Late Monday afternoon, the agency was still making revisions to key data, such as test scores. Some districts, including CPS, have been trying to reconcile the state’s data compared with their own.

Still, the 2017 report represents the broadest picture yet on how schools and students are performing.

The percentage of third- through eighth-graders meeting or exceeding standards in English language arts on the PARCC assessment increased from 36.2 percent in 2016 to 37 percent in 2017. In math, the percentage changed from 30.5 percent in 2016 to 31.2 percent in 2017.

One of the newest data pieces — and likely the most surprising for educators and families — are the SAT results and how the state is interpreting those scores under a tough new standard that expects juniors to get at least a 540 in math and in reading and writing. That will be a challenge based on current data.

Overall, the College Board’s SAT scores range from 400 to 1600, based on math, and reading and writing sections. Each section’s scores range from 200 to 800.

The statewide average for last spring’s exam was 1015.9 — a 511.5 in reading and writing and a 504.4 in math. The total figure — based on juniors taking the test for free at school — equates to at least a 19 or closer to a 20 on the familiar ACT , according to the College Board’s SAT analysis.

In recent years, when juniors were taking the ACT at school, average scores ranged between 20.3 and 20.6.

Illinois’ SAT average would also put the state in the middle of the pack — around the 50th to 52nd percentile — based on a national sample.

The Tribune reviewed average SAT scores at all Illinois public high schools, finding that roughly 32 percent of schools posted higher scores than the state's average of 1015.9. The remaining two-thirds of high schools posted below the average, the data show.

To be clear, the state's average is not the same as SAT's national average, which includes both public and private students. For the 2017 graduating class, the national SAT average was 1060 — 533 on the reading and writing section, and 527 in math.

College Board officials cautioned that comparisons are difficult across states, and the most fair comparison would likely be in several states that administered the SAT at school, just like Illinois.

Illinois will now be using the SAT to determine whether students are meeting academic standards in reading, math and writing. That will require at least a 540 on each section of the exam to be considered proficient.

The spring 2017 statewide administration of the SAT found that 39.8 percent of 11th-grade students achieved proficiency in English language arts and 36.4 percent in math.

The analysis gets more complicated because the College Board itself uses scores lower than 540 to determine if students are considered prepared for key freshman classes at college. Those scores are generally at least 480 for reading and writing, and at least 530 for math. Those figures mean that students likely could get a C or higher in key classes in the first semester of college.

So parents looking at SAT score reports could find that their child is prepared for college classes, but the state doesn't rate their child as proficient.

Educators are now trying to make sense of the SAT proficiency scores that just recently were approved.

"This quick undertaking ... seemed rushed and shortsighted and noninclusive," said Kevin O'Mara, executive director of the Illinois High School District Organization.

"The toothpaste is out of the tube and our high school superintendents are left holding the bag and trying to explain how you can be college-ready but not make the (proficiency) cut," O'Mara said. "It is still a difficult thing."

In the suburbs, the top-scoring SAT schools were New Trier Township, Stevenson, Lake Forest, Libertyville, Deerfield, Hinsdale Central, Neuqua Valley, Glenbrook North and Hersey.

---Courier News--- 10/31/17

## State test scores drop in most suburban schools, but changes coming

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY



Third-grade English language arts teacher Kathy Hansen quizzes students Monday at Centennial Elementary School. The Bartlett school's students have shown consistent growth on the PARCC test.

Standardized test scores declined at a majority of suburban elementary and middle schools, while high schools have no historic reference for such achievement testing, according to [2017 Illinois School Report Card](#) data released today.

Roughly two-thirds of Illinois students are not meeting expectations on the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, test](#) administered to third- through eighth-graders last school year. And of 540 suburban schools surveyed by the Daily Herald, 309 schools saw declines in the number of students meeting and exceeding proficiency; 220 schools showed improvement, and 11 remained flat.

High school juniors, meanwhile, took the revised SAT college entrance exam for the first time last school year. And on that test, proficiency benchmarks are different between the state and those recommended by the SAT itself.

Statewide, student performance improved in English language arts on the PARCC test, though math scores dipped slightly. There were gains in four-year graduation and college enrollment rates and other areas, said Tony Smith, state superintendent of education, at a media briefing Monday.



**2017 Illinois School Report Cards:** Find all the vital data for your school and district, plus lists of the top schools in the state. [Click here for 2017 school report cards.](#)

Results are from the third year the controversial PARCC test has been used to measure student performance, and it continues to draw criticism.

"How can you consistently gauge how students are performing?" [Community Unit District 300](#) Superintendent Fred Heid said. "There's still a lot of questions that PARCC and state have to answer in order to solidify and build trust in this data. They have to report it faster. It should be used to move kids, hire staff, to better support different program implementation. How the heck do I change course midyear? Parents see the score and they are struggling with what it means. Next year is where the rubber hits the road."

Heid suggested some scores dipped because of the switch to online testing. Other educators say special education and gifted students might have skewed the numbers at some schools.

Next year is when the assessment process will be torn up again. PARCC and SAT testing are likely to continue, but such standardized tests will be only one part of a new accountability system that will include academic growth, success on college entrance tests and other factors.

### Standards too high?

Illinois began statewide PARCC testing in March 2015 of students in third through 11th grades in English language arts and math. At the time, it was administered over two testing periods as performance-based and end-of-year assessments. A year later, the test was shortened and taken at one time.

Suburban educators who favored tried-and-tested college entrance exams to PARCC prompted the state to drop the test in high schools. The revamped SAT was given last school year after the state stopped funding its predecessor, the ACT college entrance test -- administered for free to juniors for 15 years.

The state's minimum SAT score to meet college readiness -- 540 for both math and reading and writing, or a composite 1,080 -- is higher than the [College Board's](#) SAT college readiness benchmarks -- 480 in reading and writing and 530 in math, a 1,010 composite.

Of 75 suburban high schools surveyed, 62 schools scored above the state's average of 38 percent of students deemed college ready. Sixty-two suburban high schools' composite scores met SAT's benchmark of 1,010, but only 39 schools met or exceeded the state's guideline of 1,080.

For some educators, the state's SAT standards for college readiness are too high.

"If you look at the ACT, it used to be if your kids scored between 19 and 21 they met state standards," said Scott Helton, superintendent of [DuPage High School District 88](#). "That equates to a 1,010 on an SAT. To meet state standards, our kids need to be in the top

### SAT benchmarks

The Illinois State Board of Education set higher SAT benchmarks than the SAT itself. Here's how schools measure up to the different standards.

	Statewide	Suburbs*
Number of schools	688	75
Number of H.S. meeting ...		
<b>SAT composite (1010)</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>62</b>
SAT ELA (480)	469	69
SAT Math (530)	104	45
Both ELA/Math	104	45
<b>State composite (1080)</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>39</b>
ELA (540)	89	38
Math (540)	77	37
Both ELA/Math	70	35

\* Schools examined by the Daily Herald

one-third of the country. Eventually we need to get out of attainment and measure growth."

[Northwest Suburban High School District 214](#) Superintendent David Schuler, an outspoken critic of PARCC, said he was relieved the transition to the SAT has been seamless. During the first year of PARCC, the district had some of the highest percentage of students -- more than 80 percent at some schools -- refusing to take the exam.

Despite promising SAT scores -- the district's six high schools scored between 40 percent and 72 percent of students meeting and exceeding SAT standards -- the district continue efforts to redefine what it means to be college ready by helping students graduate with college credit, industry credentials and apprenticeships or internships.

"We are not going to let one test define us," Schuler said. "We believe in a multi-metric approach in our district. I'm much more concerned with how successful our students are after graduation than how many of our students graduate."

### **New accountability**

A new measure, the [Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA](#), starts in August 2018 and gives more weight to student growth and graduation rates.

Signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2015, it replaces the federal [No Child Left Behind Act](#) that served as a benchmark for 14 years. That law drew considerable criticism for its emphasis on test scores, its labeling of some school districts as "failing" and its punitive nature for schools not making the grade.

Illinois is "moving to an era where it's not just sorting and ranking to punish," state superintendent Smith said. The focus rather will be on "who is doing well so we can learn."

School quality will be measured through standardized tests, alternative assessments, academic growth, English language proficiency, science scores, success on college entrance tests and graduation rates, as well as factors such as chronic absenteeism and school climate surveys. Funding and support would be provided to schools struggling the most.

"They have actually tried to look at the whole child, as well looking at other indicators," said Erika Schlichter, assistant superintendent for learning and innovation for [Huntley Community School District 158](#). "It's a good change. It makes us more well-rounded. There just needs to be a combination of metrics. (PARCC) gives us a piece of the pie, not the entire pie."

Meanwhile, the state's contract with PARCC ends June 30. Some educators suggest the backlash against it has been so strong that it is likely to be replaced with another standardized assessment.

But Smith said the test is staying.

"Currently, PARCC is the highest-rated assessment ever," he said. "There is no intention to stop using the assessment of readiness. We are all in with PARCC."