

# School and Student Performance Data

## Standardized Tests

With implementation of the New Standards Reference Examinations (NSREs) in 1995, the Vermont Department of Education has been able to report school-specific assessment data. When the NSREs were implemented, the announced performance goal for all schools was that 80 percent of students should meet or exceed standards. On those 1995 exams, fewer than half of students tested (85 percent) met the standards in five of the seven categories tested. Scores have not shown significant improvement since the inception of NSRE testing.



	1998-99 School Year	1999-00 School Year	2000-01 School Year
Mathematical Concepts	33%	36%	37%
Mathematical Problem Solving	27%	29%	34%
Mathematical Skills	53%	56%	59%
Reading/Basic Understanding	46%	45%	55%
Reading/Analysis and Interpretation	44%	42%	51%
Writing/Rhetorical Effectiveness	39%	38%	42%
Writing/Conventions	76%	75%	73%

In 2000, a much higher percentage of Vermont high school students took the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) than is typical nationwide—70 percent versus 44 percent nationally—which placed Vermont fifth in the nation for student SAT participation. Higher participation rates are strongly correlated with lower scores; the College Board speculates that highly motivated, academically strong students make up a higher percentage of test takers in states with low SAT participation.

Vermont’s combined verbal and mathematic average score of 1021 was only slightly higher than the national average of 1019. However, when Vermont was compared to all other states with a participation rate of 60 percent or higher, the State ranked third highest in combined average scores in 2000.

Statewide 2000 Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores were also slightly above the national average: on a scoring scale of 1 (lowest score) to 5 (highest score), almost 69 percent of Vermont exams were scored at 3 or higher. This was an increase of 3 percent over the prior year and compared to 64 percent nationally. (Participation rates for AP exams are not available for comparison.)



## Decision: College Versus Career

According to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation's senior survey of the Class of 1999, 75.8 percent of post-secondary bound students had made the decision to pursue higher education by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Ninety-four percent of seniors with an A average and 74.7 percent with a B average planned to continue their education immediately after high school.

By comparison, 57.5 percent of career-bound seniors made the decision not to continue their education after their final year in high school. Sixty percent of these career-bound seniors planned to pursue some form of post-secondary education in the future, with 45.2 percent expecting to enroll sometime within the next year. The majority of seniors with a C average or below had no immediate plans to continue their education.

Females, college bound seniors and seniors with a grade point average of B or better tended to rate their high school instruction better than did males, career-bound seniors or seniors with a grade point average of C or below.

### Post-secondary attendance

In 1998, 49.8 percent of Vermont high school graduates actually enrolled in college. More than half of these students (53.6 percent) left Vermont to attend college, the third highest migration rate in the country.

### Dropout rate

An "event" dropout rate is the type of rate that has typically been collected and reported in Vermont and nationally for years. The event rate describes the percentage of students who drop out from grades 9 through 12 in a given year. For a number of years, this rate has consistently remained at 4 percent to 5 percent.

A more descriptive approach is to track the proportion of students who enter high school in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and do not graduate – this is called a cohort rate. The Vermont Department of Education's first report of cohort dropout rates, issued in 2000 shows that roughly one out of five Vermont students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade drops out of the cohort group.

#### Estimated Vermont Cohort Dropout Rate: 1999-2001

1999:	17.9 percent
2000:	19.1 percent
2001:	18.5 percent

# Community Issues

## Incarceration of our youth

Ninety-five percent of incarcerated youth ages 16 to 22 do not have a high school diploma; most dropped out in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Of this percentage, about half have special education histories. Incarcerated youth fall within the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile range on basic skill testing, according to the Wide Range Achievement Test. It costs about \$24,000 per bed per year to house an incarcerated youth.

## Risk behavior

While high schools cannot and should not be responsible for all aspects of a student's life, the risk behavior of students affects the learning environment. According to the 2001 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- Suicide plans are decreasing. Overall, 13 percent of students have made a suicide plan during the past 12 months, compared to 16 percent in 1999, 18 percent in 1997 and 22 percent in 1995.
- Sixty-nine percent of students have consumed alcohol (more than a few sips), ten percent binged on alcohol on three or more days during the past 30 days. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.
- Drug use is related to suicide, early and unwanted pregnancy, school failure, delinquency and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. One out of four American adolescents is estimated to be at very high risk for the consequences of alcohol and other drug problems.
- Following a decade of decline, marijuana use has begun to rebound. More than one-quarter of students have tried marijuana. Overall, 26 percent of students have used marijuana during the past 30 days.
- Overall, 8 percent of students reported smoking tobacco daily. Tobacco use, which accounts for one of every five deaths in the United States, is the most preventable cause of death.
- Fourteen percent of students have tried inhalants. Inhalant use is the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of common products, such as glues and cleaners, or some gases intended for medical or dental purposes to obtain a "high."
- Seven percent of students have used cocaine
- Twenty six percent of students reported being offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property.

