

## FACT SHEET: Vermont Agency of Education Releases 2021 Statewide Assessment Results

### Context

During the 2020-2021 academic year, schools across the country were expected, mostly without exception, to administer federally required statewide assessments including the English language arts (ELA), mathematics and science assessment. Additionally, all states remain required to report assessment results from the 2020-2021 school year for those assessments that were administered.

It is critically important to be mindful of the broader context in which these assessments were administered last year. Specifically, the general student experience during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years was vastly different than in any other year.

Vermont's supervisory unions and schools took great care to offer and facilitate assessment opportunities for every student required to participate, while also maintaining a safe and secure space for students and educators. This careful and thoughtful practice provided students, families, and schools with information about how individual students were learning.

During school year 2020-2021, all summative assessments were administered in person and participation was variable for many, non-random reasons. For example, students who were medically vulnerable were often not able to test in due to being unable to come into their school building, among other scenarios.

Given these contextual features and the conditions of test administration, interpreting results in terms of growth and year-over-year trends is exceptionally challenging. The federal requirement to test was waived for the 2019-2020 school year, and, like many states, Vermont does not have assessment results (ELA, math, science) for the 2019-2020 school year. This fact, coupled with the disruption to test administration during 2020-2021 as noted above, **makes comparing 2020-2021 results to any prior year's results strongly discouraged.**

### Interpreting Aggregate Results

It very difficult to interpret 2021 ELA, Math, and Science assessment results due to lower and uneven participation rates. Because estimated participation rates appear to be much lower than prior years, the accuracy of aggregate results is questionable. This is especially true if participation rates varied based on student group membership. The accuracy of individual student results is likely unaffected by the disruption of last year and can still serve as useful indicators of student progress for educators and families, though context should still be considered in interpreting.

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Results

The Smarter Balanced assessments are administered annually in the spring to students in grades three through nine. They are designed to measure students' mastery of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

### 2021 English Language Arts Scores

The English Language Arts section of the assessment program includes sections on Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Research/Inquiry. The results from each section are combined to form a broad English Language Arts score.

**Table 1: 2021 Smarter Balanced English Language Arts Results**

Grade	Proficiency Cut Score	Average Scaled Score	Total Proficient and Above
Grade 03	2432	2412	43%
Grade 04	2473	2455	45%
Grade 05	2502	2496	49%
Grade 06	2531	2515	44%
Grade 07	2552	2548	52%
Grade 08	2567	2564	52%
Grade 09	2571	2575	54%

### 2021 Mathematics Scores

The Mathematics assessment includes tasks and questions that address Communicating Reasoning, Problem Solving and Modeling/Data Analysis, and Concepts and Procedures.

**Table 2: 2021 Smarter Balanced Math Results**

Grade	Proficiency Cut Score	Average Scaled Score	Total Proficient and Above
Grade 03	2436	2416	42%
Grade 04	2485	2455	38%
Grade 05	2528	2478	31%
Grade 06	2552	2491	28%

Grade	Proficiency Cut Score	Average Scaled Score	Total Proficient and Above
Grade 07	2567	2519	33%
Grade 08	2586	2533	32%
Grade 09	2601	2533	30%

### Results for Historically Marginalized Student Groups

Vermont also reports performance of historically marginalized students compared to students who are not historically marginalized.

Vermont reports these data by combining assessment scores of students from racial or ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, English language learners and students in poverty. The combination is necessary because the number of students that meet those criteria school-by-school or district-by-district are often quite small, and the assessment data must be suppressed to protect student privacy.

The results of the SY21 ELA and Math assessments provide evidence that substantial performance gaps between students in historically marginalized groups, when compared to their non-historically marginalized peers, remain.

**Table 3: 2021 Smarter Balanced English Language Arts Results- Historically Marginalized Status**

Grade	Prof. Cut Score	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	SS Difference	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	Prof. Difference
Grade 03	2432	2379	2448	69	27%	60%	33%
Grade 04	2473	2419	2494	75	29%	61%	32%
Grade 05	2502	2455	2539	84	32%	68%	36%
Grade 06	2531	2476	2558	82	26%	63%	37%
Grade 07	2552	2506	2589	83	34%	69%	35%
Grade 08	2567	2520	2601	81	33%	67%	34%
Grade 09	2571	2522	2615	93	34%	70%	36%

**Table 4: 2021 Smarter Balanced Math Results- Historically Marginalized Status**

Grade	Prof. Cut Score	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	SS Difference	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	Prof. Difference
Grade 03	2436	2384	2450	66	27%	57%	30%
Grade 04	2485	2422	2490	68	22%	54%	32%
Grade 05	2528	2441	2516	75	17%	45%	28%
Grade 06	2552	2451	2535	84	15%	42%	27%
Grade 07	2567	2479	2560	81	18%	47%	29%
Grade 08	2586	2486	2574	88	17%	44%	27%
Grade 09	2601	2482	2572	90	15%	41%	26%

**2021 Vermont Science Assessment Results**

The Science assessment measures students' knowledge of scientific inquiry, interdisciplinary thinking and science content to make sense of the natural world around them.

The results of the SY21 Science assessment provide evidence that substantial performance gaps between students in historically marginalized groups, when compared to their non-historically marginalized peers, remain.

**Table 5: 2021 Science Results**

Grade	Proficiency Cut Score	Average Scaled Score	Total Proficient and Above
Grade 05	60	52	35%
Grade 08	60	53	35%
Grade 11	60	57	42%

**Table 6: 2021 Science Results- Historically Marginalized Status**

Grade	Prof. Cut Score	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	SS Difference	Hist. Marginalized	Not Hist. Marginalized	Prof. Difference
Grade 05	60	45	59	14	21%	50%	29%
Grade 08	60	46	58	12	21%	47%	26%
Grade 11	60	52	60	8	28%	51%	23%

School and SU/SD level results are not yet publicly available. School systems have access to their results for planning and instructional purposes. However, superintendents have been directed to maintain the privacy of this data as it contains student information that has not yet been validated for public release. These results will be available this Winter. Complete 2021 state-level results can be found on the Vermont Education Dashboard <hyperlink>.

### **About the Smarter Balanced Assessment**

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Program is administered annually in the spring to students in grades three through nine. These assessments are designed to measure students' mastery of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

The English Language Arts section of the assessment program includes sections on Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Research/Inquiry. The results from each section are combined to form a broad English Language Arts score. The Mathematics assessment includes tasks and questions that address Communicating Reasoning, Problem Solving and Modeling/Data Analysis, and Concepts and Procedures.

Both assessments report scale scores and proficiency percentage scores for all students and scale scores for student groups.

### **About the Vermont Science Assessment**

The 2019 test year was the first operational administration of the Vermont Science Assessment (VTSA). It is designed to measure students' mastery of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), adopted by Vermont in 2013 as a foundation for science instruction.

Based on the Framework for K-12 Education, the NGSS refocuses K-12 science education to improve readiness for college and STEM careers as well as preparing students to become informed, knowledgeable citizens. The NGSS focus on helping students use scientific inquiry, interdisciplinary thinking and science content to make sense of their natural and designed world. The VTSA is designed to help parents and educators determine if students are on target to achieve proficiency in the NGSS.