

2 schools top state in SAT scores

By Peter Williams
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Two area high schools out-performed the state average on a critical part of the SAT test administered last school year, according to test results released this week.

J.P. Knapp Early College High School had a math and critical reading score of 1007, and Camden County High School had a score of 1001 on the SAT, a test measuring what high school students have learned. Both scores were better than the state average of 997. The national average is 1,010.

Three schools in the area also had a higher percentage of students take the test than did high schools statewide.

Some school officials say the SAT is no longer the “must have” for high school students looking to go to college. More and more colleges are allowing the use of the ACT (American College Testing), a standardized test used for college entrance, and some colleges don’t require any test at all. Since last year, the ACT has been required of all high school juniors in North Carolina. The SAT is optional.

Statewide participation in the SAT test grew from 67 percent in 2011 to 68 percent last year. The national average is 52 percent.

Among area schools, J.P. Knapp Early College had the highest math and reading score at 1007, followed by Camden High at 1,001 and Cam Tech at 994.

Other school districts’ combined reading and math score averages include: Currituck County High, 983; Perquimans, 967; Pasquotank County High, 927; and Northeastern, 891.

The state saw math and reading scores drop to an average of 997 from 1,001 the year before.

In terms of the percentage of students taking the test, Knapp was also number one at 76.1 percent. It was followed by Camden, 73.3 percent; Northeastern, 72 percent; Cam Tech, 70.6 percent; John A. Holmes, 68.7 percent; Currituck, 66.8 percent; Pasquotank, 55 percent; and Perquimans, 49 percent.

Officials from the Currituck County couldn’t be reached for comment, but other area school superintendents noted both positive and negative aspects of the report.

“We are very glad to report an increase in the number of students taking the SAT,” said Superintendent Linwood Williams of the Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools. “Our graduation rate has improved significantly over the past several years, and we have more students graduating than ever before. At the same time, our high schools have encouraged more students to take the SAT in order to become college-ready upon graduation.”

Williams acknowledged that ECPPS math scores on the SAT dipped slightly, as did the overall state math score. He indicated more concern about the drop in performance on critical reading.

“Our critical reading score saw a more significant dip, highlighting an area that we will work to improve upon in the coming year,” he said. “We plan to use this opportunity to consider available options, such as the possibility of offering SAT preparation workshops at our high schools.

In Camden County, Superintendent Melvin Hawkins was happy that both the participation level and the average scores were higher in his district.

“We are pleased with the progress of our students and proud of the hard work of our students and staff,” Hawkins aid. “These scores are the results of teaching that started in kindergarten and goes through high school.

“The high percentage of our students taking the SAT and continuing their education beyond high school shows they understand the importance of education.”

Dwayne Stallings, superintendent in Perquimans, said the data shows the school system is improving.

“I am pleased with the growth highlighted on the SAT scores. I want to congratulate and express appreciation to Principal Chante Lassiter and the entire PCHS staff for their efforts in ensuring our students are ready for the SAT.”

The data reveals that Perquimans students achieved the highest composite scores in recent history. The math and reading numbers are 33 points higher than in 2006 and the total combined score was 1,413, or 36 points higher than 2006.

The school district is also working to increase the number of students taking the test.

“School officials in Perquimans County recognize that the emphasis on taking the SAT is a vital component for students who have plans to attend a four-year university,” Stallings said. “They are committed to supporting the efforts of those students who plan to take the test and encourage others to take the test if they plan to enter the military, attend a two-year college or enter an apprenticeship.

The test score increase at John A. Holmes in Chowan County pleased Superintendent Allan Smith.

“While our students’ scores are up over last year’s, we continue to be encouraged at the number of students who are taking the SAT,” Smith said. “Our counselors, teachers and school administrators do a great job of encouraging students to take more rigorous academic courses and participate in SAT preparation seminars offered at the school.

“With the ACT now being mandated by the state for all students and the fact that the test is recognized by most colleges and universities for entrance, we are unsure how this new requirement will affect future participation in the SAT.”