

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

PDF versions can be found at www.ncforum.org

Volume 11, Issue 9

August 29, 2008

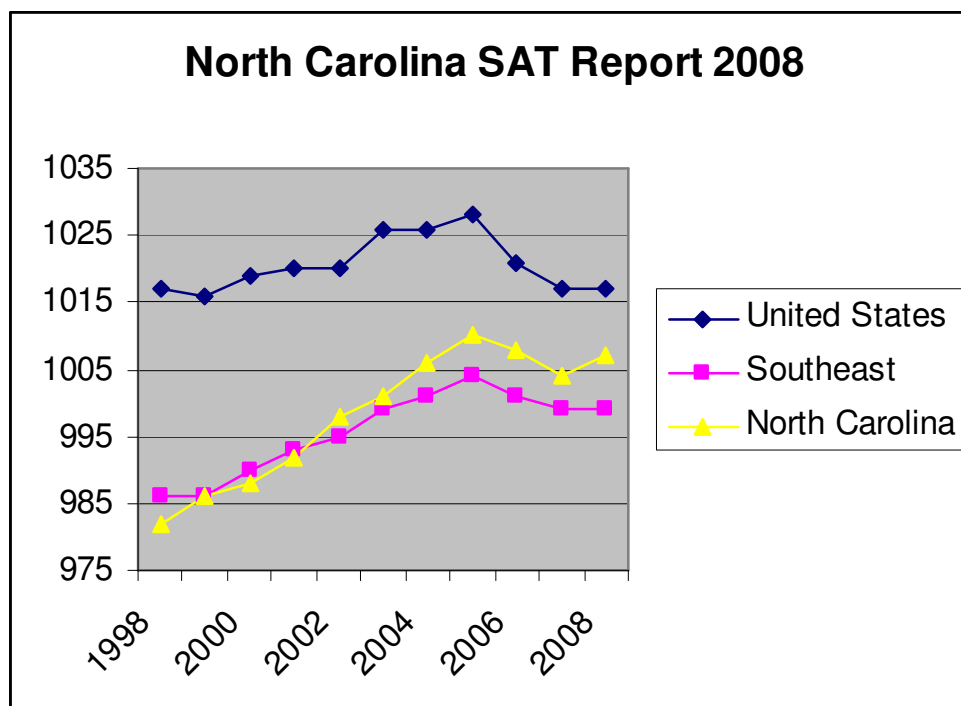
“The News is Positive”

NC Gains on the National Average

State Superintendent June Atkinson held a press conference this week to announce North Carolina students' performance on the 2008 College Board exam. North Carolina's average SAT score in 2008 increased from 1004 to 1007, bringing the state within 10 points of the nation's average.

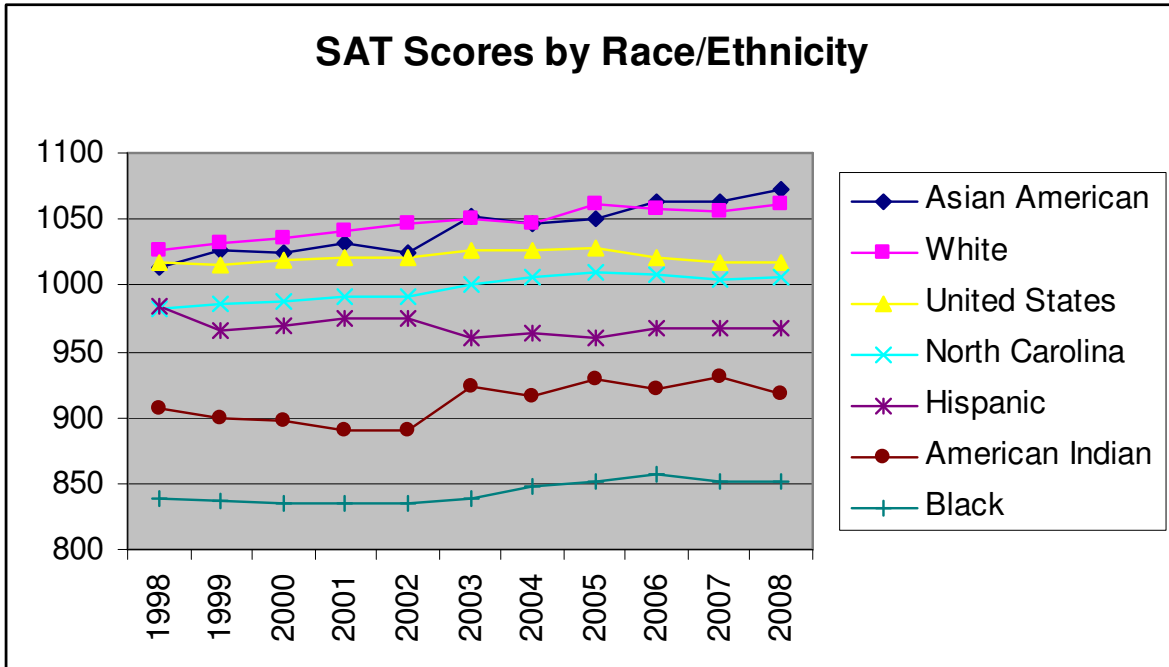
Among states with more than 50 percent of their students taking the SAT, North Carolina tied with Vermont as the state with the second largest 10-year improvement in average scores. Our neighbor, South Carolina has the largest improvement during that time, although its average score (985) is lower than North Carolina's.

The SAT is one of the college admissions tests accepted and required by colleges and universities and the one most commonly taken in North Carolina. The other test, taken by 14 percent of North Carolina students, is the ACT. North Carolina students not only increased their performance on the ACT college admissions exam in 2008, they out performed the nation for the first time in at least five years. North Carolina's average composite score increased by 0.3 points (21.3) compared to the national average composite score that decreased 0.1 points (21.1).



Troubling Gaps between Racial Groups Remain

While the number of students taking the SAT increased across all racial categories, performance varied. While American Indian students' scores dropped, Asian, black, Hispanic and white students all increased their average scores. Asian students had the largest gain from 2007 with eight points, followed closely by white students who had the second highest gain with seven points. The gap between racial groups has consistently grown over the past five years from 200 points to a 220 point gap in 2008.



Budget Shortfalls Threaten Educational Programs Nationwide

As state budget situations continue to worsen this fiscal year, educational programs are feeling the threat of cuts across the country. According to a report by the Denver-based National Conference of State Legislatures, as of June, 31 states reported budget gaps ranging from \$10 million to \$2 billion. A dozen of these states, including Alabama, Kentucky, Nevada and Rhode Island, have already made cuts to certain educational programs. While states typically try to spare schools from budget cuts, the current economic downturn is forcing many states to consider reductions in educational funding.

K-12 programs are not the only ones at risk. State education departments are feeling the pinch as well. Many states, including New York and South Carolina, have already seen cuts in their education agency budgets. Jim Rex, South Carolina's Superintendent of education, froze hiring and cut travel in response to the budget situation. Now he must figure out how to cut 3 percent from K-12 school funding, as ordered by the state's Budget and Control Board.

Budget Shortfalls (cont'd)

Some school officials argue that the economy is cyclical, and that these downturns can be endured. Not every state is feeling the crunch. Several energy-rich states like Alaska and Wyoming are benefiting from the energy crisis and are seeing their budget reserves growing. Texas, a state known for its oil is expected to have a \$107 billion budget surplus going into its next legislative session. But inflation and revenue problems continue to threaten educational funding in those states with budget deficits.

Upcoming Events...

Gubernatorial Candidates' Forum on Education

Friday, September 19th the North Carolina Cable Telecommunications Association and Time Warner Cable will sponsor a Candidates' Forum on Education. The program will be shown on cable television outlets around the state numerous times until Election Day. The Forum will take place on the SAS campus in Cary, Building V, from 10:30 to 11:30 am and will be co-sponsored by the Education: Everybody's Business Coalition.

This is the third election cycle that the Cable Association has collaborated with the Education: Everybody's Business Coalition to highlight educational issues during an election year. The Education: Everybody's Business Coalition, brings together the NC Chamber, the NC Council of Local Chambers, the NC School Boards Association, the NC Association of School Administrators and the Forum.

Seats for the Candidates' Forum are still available and registration is underway on a first-come-first-serve basis. Readers wanting to attend the Forum can register by emailing Debra Jordan their name, position and address to djordan@ncforum.org. Because of security policies on the SAS campus, participants must be registered in order to attend the Forum.

State Superintendent Candidates to Debate

Democratic incumbent, Dr. June Atkinson and Republican nominee, Richard Morgan will be participating in a debate on October 20th at the SAS Institute Auditorium in Cary. The debate, co-sponsored by the NC Association of School Administrators, the NC School Boards Association, NC PTA, Wake Education Partnership, Teach for America and the Forum, will be held from 7:00-8:00 p.m. The registration RSVP list is limited to a first come, first served basis and can be accessed by clicking here.

New Schools Presents: "Graduation by Design"

Join educators and leaders from business and government at Graduation by Design: Creating Schools that Prepare All Students for College, Career and Life conference. Among the presenters will be the Asia Society, the Coalition of Essential Schools, Expeditionary Learning, New Tech and several innovative high schools supported by the North Carolina New Schools Project.

New Schools (cont'd)

Graduation by Design will take place at the [Raleigh Marriott City Center](#) on Thursday, October 9, 2008, beginning at 9:00 a.m. For more information, contact Linsey Dyson by telephone at (919) 277-3774 or by e-mail ldyson@newschoolsproject.org.

Forum News...

2008-2009 Teaching Fellows Scholarship Applications Available for High School Seniors

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission has announced that the 2008-2009 application for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program is now available online at www.teachingfellows.org.

The deadline for students to return completed applications to a Teaching Fellows Liaison Counselor in a high school is October 17, 2008, by the end of the school day.

Jo Ann Norris, Associate Executive Director for the Public School Forum and Administrator of the Teaching Fellows Program, states, "In order to meet the increasing demand for top quality teachers for North Carolina's public schools, the program was created by the General Assembly in 1986, upon the recommendation of the Public School Forum of North Carolina."

Each Teaching Fellow receives a \$26,000 scholarship/loan from the state, payable in \$6,500 annual increments. The full loan is forgiven after the Fellow has completed four (4) years of teaching in North Carolina's public schools. Dr. John D. Denning, Chair of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission issues a challenge to North Carolina high school seniors. "I encourage high school seniors willing to make dreams come true for future North Carolina students to apply for this one-of-a-kind opportunity."

Additional program information is available online via the Teaching Fellows website at www.teachingfellows.org. Applications may be downloaded from this site.

Forum Closed Monday for Labor Day

The Public School Forum office will be closed on Monday, September 1st and will reopen on Tuesday. Have a wonderful and relaxing Labor Day.

The *Friday Report* is published weekly by the Public School Forum of NC and is distributed to Forum Board members, legislators active in education policy, the press, and Forum subscribers. Archived editions can be found at www.ncforum.org/doclib.