

ASSESSMENT BRIEF

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SAT Results for the Graduating Class of 2017

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ABSTRACT

This assessment brief summarizes SAT results for Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) high school students who took the SAT one or more times in high school and indicated their intent to graduate during or at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Also included in the brief are data for 2016-2017 graduates who took the assessment in Virginia, in the U.S., or at an international test center. The majority of the data reported are from administrations of the new SAT, which supplanted the previous version of the test in March 2016. Scores from the new SAT are not directly comparable to old SAT scores because of major dissimilarities between the tests. The VBCPS mean section scores of 557 in Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (ERW) and 534 in Math exceeded the section mean scores of every other Hampton Roads school division. These mean scores were lower than the state means but higher than the means for all test takers in the class of 2017. This has been the general pattern for SAT exam scores since the 1990s. One exception was that the percent of recent VBCPS graduates who met the College and Career Readiness Benchmark score in ERW was higher than the percent of 2017 public school graduates across Virginia who met the same benchmark.

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BACKGROUND

The first Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was administered in 1926 to about 8,000 students. Over the next 90 years, the SAT has been revised several times.¹ The most recent “new SAT” replaced the “old SAT” in March 2016; nationally and internationally, more than 1.7 million students from the graduating class of 2017 took this latest version of the SAT.

The SAT data reported for 2017 graduates in this brief are primarily from administrations of the new SAT, which differs from the old SAT in a number of ways. While the old SAT had three sections (i.e., Critical Reading, Math, and Writing), the new SAT has two sections: Evidence-Based Reading & Writing and Math. The new SAT Essay section is optional—other revisions included reducing the number of answer choices from five to four and eliminating the longstanding penalty for guessing.² Due to these and other differences between the old SAT and the new SAT, scores of the two versions cannot be directly compared.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SAT TEST TAKERS

When students register for the SAT, they complete an online questionnaire asking them to report their school name, gender, race/ethnicity, highest level of education of their parents, and the year they intend to graduate from high school. Because questionnaires and other self-report methods rely on the honesty and knowledge of the respondents, it is possible that some data in this brief are not 100 percent accurate. The precision of the data was also affected by students who chose not to respond to certain questions, such as race/ethnicity or highest level of parental education. Readers should keep this in mind as they review and compare data in this report, including the percentages in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1 shows there were more female students than male students who took the new SAT and reported they would graduate in 2017. The percentage of female SAT test takers was somewhat higher for graduates from Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) than it was for the state, as well as for the total group (i.e., U.S. and international test takers combined).

¹Kaplan, *A Brief History of the SAT*, <http://www.kaptest.com/blog/admission-possible/a-brief-history-of-the-sat-from-kaplan-test-prep>, accessed on October 4, 2017.

²Powerscore Test Preparation, *The Old SAT vs. the New SAT*, https://www.powerscore.com/sat/help/sat_oldvsnew.cfm, accessed on October 9, 2017.

While Black/African American and White students made up the two largest racial/ethnic groups of test takers at the division and state levels, Hispanic/Latino and White students comprised the largest groups of examinees in the total group. The White student group made up over half of VBCPS and Virginia test takers. For the total group, fewer than half of the examinees reported belonging to the White student group.

Table 1
Demographic Summary of 2017 Graduates Who Took the New SAT

Characteristic	VBCPS	Virginia	Total Group
Total Number of Test Takers	3,001	57,453	1,715,481
Gender			
Female	55%	53%	53%
Male	45%	47%	47%
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian	8%	8%	9%
Black/African American	21%	20%	13%
Hispanic/Latino	11%	10%	24%
White	51%	54%	44%
Two or More Races	7%	6%	3%
No Response	1%	2%	5%
Highest Level of Parental Education			
No High School Diploma	1%	3%	8%
High School Diploma	27%	25%	28%
Associate Degree	12%	8%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	35%	33%	28%
Graduate Degree	23%	28%	20%
No Response	2%	4%	9%

Note: Percentages for characteristics may not add up to 100 due to decimal rounding and because the racial/ethnic groups comprising less than 1% of test takers were omitted.

Sources: 2017 SAT Suite Annual Reports – Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia, and Total Group.

About 27 percent of the Virginia Beach SAT test takers reported that their parents' highest level of education was a high school diploma, which was slightly less than the percentage reported by the total group. On average, the level of education for parents of SAT test takers in the total group was lower than it was for the parents of VBCPS examinees and parents of examinees across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Only 1 percent and 3 percent of the parents of VBCPS and Virginia SAT examinees, respectively, did not have a high school diploma, compared with 8 percent of the parents of the total group. Additionally, the percentage of VBCPS parents (70%) and parents of SAT test takers across the state (69%) who earned their associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree was much greater than the percentage of total group parents (56%) who earned a degree after high school.

SAT PARTICIPATION

The number of students in the class of 2017 who took either the old SAT or the new SAT at least once while they were in high school increased from the number of 2016 graduates who took either version of the test at the division, state, and total group levels, as shown in Table 2. The percentage of SAT

Table 2
Number and Percent of Graduates Who Took the SAT – Five-Year Trends

Graduation Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
VBCPS	3,122	3,110	3,156	2,998	3,085
Percent of VBCPS Graduates	64.5%	63.8%	64.5%	61.7%	62.7%
Virginia	60,640	59,906	59,621	59,268	59,942
Total Group	1,660,047	1,672,395	1,698,521	1,674,169	1,839,327

Sources: College-Bound Seniors Profile Reports, 2013-2015; Virginia Department of Education Report of Combined Term Graduates, 2013-2017; 2016 College Board Program Results, Virginia; SAT Educator Reporting Tool, SAT Class of 2017; and V. Keating (personal communication, 23 October 2017).

examinees in the VBCPS class of 2017 was also higher than the percentage for the previous year. Concurrent with the increase in SAT test takers among 2017 Virginia Beach graduates came a significant decrease in the number of 2017 VBCPS graduates who took the ACT, America's other college entrance examination. The number of SAT test takers in VBCPS grew by 3 percent over one year, but the number of ACT test takers dropped by approximately 19 percent, the first decrease in ACT enrollment for a VBCPS graduating class in over 20 years. Perceived difficulty is among the many reasons why high school students decide to take one exam instead of the other. Pundits generally agree that the new SAT is being marketed as an easier test than the ACT.³

SAT MEAN SCORES AND COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS BENCHMARKS

Table 3 on the next page shows the SAT mean scores and percentage of students who met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks in the division, the state, and for all test takers. Table 3 also provides these data for each major racial/ethnic group.

³M. Findlay, "New SAT Easier than ACT?," Applerouth (11 April 2017), <https://www.applerouth.com/blog/2017/04/11/new-sat-easier-than-act>, accessed on September 18, 2017.

In describing the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks, the College Board stated, “Students are considered college- and career-ready when their SAT section scores meet both the Math and the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing benchmarks.... college readiness is a continuum – students scoring below the SAT benchmarks can still be successful in college, especially with additional preparation and perseverance.”⁴ Based on their research, the College Board maintains students whose Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (ERW) section scores are at or above the ERW benchmark of 480 have a 75 percent probability of earning a C or better in first-semester, credit-bearing college courses in history, literature, social sciences, or writing. Likewise, students with Math section scores that meet or exceed the Math benchmark score of 530 have a 75 percent chance of obtaining at least a C in

Table 3
SAT Mean Scores and Percent Meeting Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Group	Number Tested	Mean Scores			Met Benchmarks		
			ERW	Math	Total	ERW	Math	Both
Asian	VBCPS	239	567	560	1127	83%	64%	61%
	Virginia All	4,498	590	611	1202	88%	78%	74%
	Total Group	158,031	569	612	1181	81%	76%	70%
Black/African American	VBCPS	620	497	478	975	58%	25%	22%
	Virginia All	11,324	493	469	962	56%	23%	22%
	Total Group	225,860	479	462	941	49%	22%	20%
Hispanic/Latino	VBCPS	328	550	525	1075	82%	47%	46%
	Virginia All	6,001	542	521	1063	76%	47%	45%
	Total Group	408,067	500	489	990	58%	33%	31%
White	VBCPS	1,536	582	557	1139	90%	62%	61%
	Virginia All	30,781	586	562	1149	90%	65%	64%
	Total Group	760,362	565	553	1118	83%	61%	59%
Two or More Races	VBCPS	220	554	531	1085	81%	50%	50%
	Virginia All	3,364	565	541	1106	83%	54%	52%
	Total Group	57,049	560	544	1103	80%	56%	54%
No Response	VBCPS	35	529	507	1036	77%	43%	43%
	Virginia All	1,252	529	504	1033	69%	41%	40%
	Total Group	94,199	475	485	961	48%	33%	27%
All Test Takers	VBCPS	3,001	557	534	1091	81%	52%	50%
	VA Public	51,613	558	538	1095	80%	53%	52%
	Virginia All	57,453	561	541	1102	81%	55%	53%
	Total Group	1,715,481	533	527	1060	70%	49%	46%

Note: Racial/ethnic groups comprising less than 1% of test takers were omitted.

Sources: 2017 SAT Suite Annual Reports – Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia, and Total Group.

While the aggregate SAT mean scores for the VBCPS class of 2017 adhered to the same pattern as in previous years—above the total group’s mean scores but below the state’s mean scores—not all of the benchmark data for 2017 graduates in Virginia Beach followed this trend. The percent of VBCPS test takers who scored at or above the ERW benchmark (81%) was higher than the percent for public school graduates in the state (80%). This means that 2,431 out of the 3,001 VBCPS graduates who took the new SAT and attend college are likely to succeed in their first-year in history, literature, social sciences, and writing courses.

credit-bearing algebra, statistics, pre-calculus, or calculus courses taught during first semester.

The data in Table 3 are exclusively from administrations of the new SAT to students who expected to graduate in 2017. The score range on each section of the SAT is 200 to 800, and the combination of the section scores is the total score, which ranges from 400 to 1600. It should be noted that, because mean section scores were rounded to the nearest whole number, the sum of the mean section scores shown in the table do not always match the corresponding mean total score.

Although the mean scores and percent of African American test takers in Virginia who met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks were lower than for any other racial/ethnic group in Virginia Beach, the mean scores and percent of students who met the ERW and Math benchmarks were higher for VBCPS African American test takers than for African American test takers at the state and total group levels. Hispanic SAT examinees in Virginia Beach also had higher scores on both sections of the SAT than their counterparts across the state and around the world.

⁴College Board, *SAT: Understanding Scores 2016*, <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/about/scores/benchmarks>, accessed on October 16, 2017.

SAT RESULTS BY HIGH SCHOOL

According to the College Board, “educators, the media, and others should not rank or rate teachers, educational institutions, districts, or states solely on aggregate scores derived from tests that are intended primarily as a measure of individual students.”⁵

Table 4
Number of SAT Test Takers and SAT Mean Scores by School

School	Number Tested	ERW	Math	Total
Bayside High	205	525	505	1030
Cox High	291	566	547	1113
First Colonial High	324	572	539	1111
Green Run Collegiate	66	533	500	1033
Green Run High	152	498	476	974
Kellam High	315	570	545	1115
Kempsville High	173	538	515	1053
Landstown High	318	553	538	1090
Ocean Lakes High	314	574	565	1139
Princess Anne High	281	598	577	1175
Salem High	251	540	518	1059
Tallwood High	307	547	515	1061
VBCPS	3,001	557	534	1091
Virginia Public	51,613	558	538	1095
Virginia	57,453	561	541	1102
Total Group	1,715,481	533	527	1060

Notes: The sum of the mean section scores may not equal the corresponding mean total score due to decimal rounding. The VBCPS number tested includes a four Renaissance Academy SAT examinees.
Sources: Virginia Department of Education, *VDOE News* (September 26, 2017); and *2017 SAT Suite Annual Reports – Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia, and Total Group*.

Because students who choose to take the SAT comprise a self-selected sample, mean scores from the samples may not be fully representative of the populations from which they are drawn. When comparing the SAT scores of VBCPS schools, it is also important to remember that mean scores of high schools with advanced academic programs tend to be higher than means for schools without these programs.

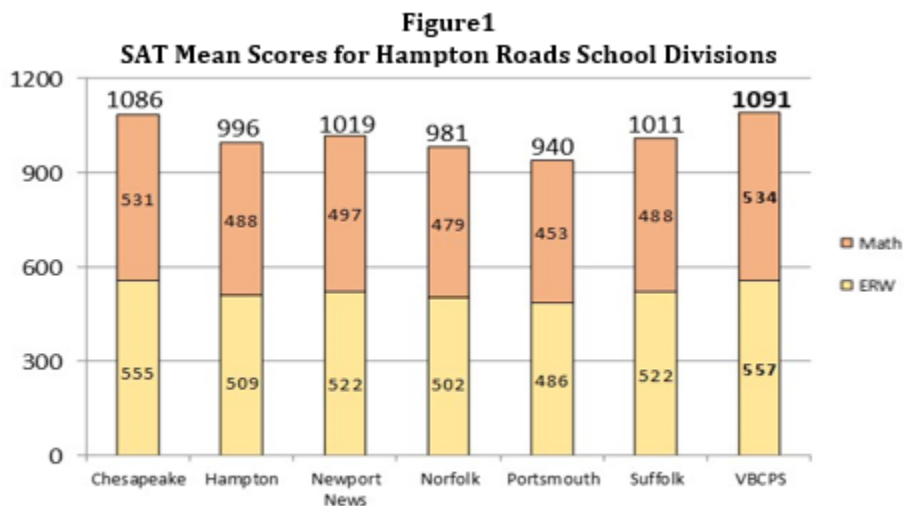
The data in Table 4 are for students who took the new SAT and graduated in 2017. Green Run Collegiate—with its first-ever graduating class of 74 students—was the only VBCPS school that had fewer than 150 SAT test takers in last year’s senior class. First Colonial, Kellam, Landstown, Ocean Lakes, and Tallwood high schools had the most SAT test takers in Virginia Beach, as over 300 students in the class of 2017 at each school took the new SAT.

While Princess Anne and Ocean Lakes high schools had the highest and second-highest mean scores on both sections of the SAT, the mean scores for Cox, First Colonial, and Kellam high schools all surpassed the corresponding mean scores for 2017 public school graduates in Virginia. The students at these five schools also distinguished themselves by attaining higher SAT mean total scores than the mean score for all recent Virginia graduates, including private school and home-schooled students.

COMPARISON WITH LOCAL SCHOOL DIVISIONS

The mean SAT section scores and mean total scores for graduates in the class of 2017 in Hampton Roads school divisions are shown in Figure 1. The seven school divisions include Chesapeake Public Schools, Hampton City Schools, Newport News City Public Schools, Norfolk Public Schools, Portsmouth Public Schools, Suffolk Public Schools, and Virginia Beach City Public Schools. VBCPS continues to lead all other Hampton Roads school divisions in mean section scores, shown inside the bars, and mean total scores, shown above the bars.

In addition, more VBCPS students take the SAT than any other division in the area. The combined total of 2017 graduates who took the SAT in the next two largest divisions (i.e., Chesapeake and Norfolk) was less than the number of Virginia Beach students in the class of 2017 who took the SAT.



Note: The sum of the section scores may not equal the corresponding total score due to decimal rounding.
Source: College Board, *Virginia Public School Divisions, SAT, AP, 2017*.

⁵College Board, *Guidelines on Uses of College Board Test Scores and Related Data*, <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/guidelines-on-uses-of-college-board-test-scores-and-data.pdf>, accessed on October 20, 2017.

SUMMARY

A total of 3,085 students, or nearly 63 percent of the VBCPS graduating class of 2017, took the SAT at least once during high school. A large majority of these students—3,001 in all—took the latest version of the SAT, which the College Board released in March 2016. Fifty-five percent of the new SAT test takers in Virginia Beach were female, and just over half (51%) of all 2017 graduates who took the SAT were White students. The next two largest racial/ethnic groups of VBCPS test takers were African American (21%) and Hispanic (11%) students.

Once again, the mean scores for VBCPS graduates topped the mean scores of every other school division in Hampton Roads on each section of the SAT. The Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (ERW) mean section score of 557 and Math mean score of 534 surpassed the ERW and Math mean scores for all test takers, but were somewhat lower than the ERW and Math mean scores at the state level. Five VBCPS high schools recorded mean scores on all both SAT sections that were higher than the state's mean section scores.

Eighty-one percent of the Virginia Beach students who took the SAT and graduated in 2017 met or exceeded the ERW College and Career Readiness Benchmark score; this was higher than the percentage of 2017 Virginia public school graduates who met the benchmark. Fifty-two percent of VBCPS graduates reached the Math College and Career Readiness Benchmark on the SAT, which was one point lower than the percentage of Virginia public school graduates who scored at or above the benchmark score.