

At a Glance

Analysis of the 2011 SAT Results

November 2011

Part I

On September 14, 2011 the College Board released the results of student performance on the SAT. The SAT is a college admission test that assesses students in three areas: critical reading, mathematics and writing. Nationally, the mean or average score of seniors taking the SAT declined in 2011 by 6 points while the number of students taking the test increased by 6.4%. In South Carolina, the mean score declined in 2011 by 7 points with a 1.8% increase in the number of total test takers.

Table 1
Mean Scores of College-Bound Seniors

	Total Test Takers		Critical Reading		Mathematics		Writing		Composite	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
South Carolina	25,992	26,452	483	482	494	490	466	464	1443	1436
United States	1,547,990	1,647,123	500	497	515	514	491	489	1506	1500

Looking at students enrolled in public schools who took the SAT in 2011, the number of public school seniors taking the SAT in 2011 increased nationally by 13.7% and in South Carolina by 6.5%. The College Board attributes the sharp increase nationally due to the following: (1) an increase in the number of minority students taking the SAT; (2) an increase in the number of first-generation college goers taking the SAT; and (3) an increase in the number of students whose first language is other than English.¹ In South Carolina the data showed that the average percent of seniors in the senior class who took the SAT in 2011 was 42%. The percentage ranged from a high of 81.5% in Lexington 5 to a low of 6.5% in Clarendon 2.

Table 2
SAT Test Takers in Public Schools

	2010	2011	% Increase
South Carolina	21,223	22,613	6.5%
United States	1,114,273	1,267,239	13.7%

In South Carolina SAT scores by district were analyzed to determine which districts in South Carolina had improvement in the mean SAT scores, especially those districts that had significant increases in the number of test takers. Across the three subject areas, the mean gains in school districts were analyzed against the increase, declines or insubstantial change in test takers. Insubstantial change was defined as a decline or increase of less than 5%. There were 85 school districts included in the analysis. The South Carolina Public Charter School District was included but the school district of Clarendon 1 was not included. In 2010 Clarendon 1 had only four seniors who took

the SAT. Due to confidentiality issues, the SAT results of these four students were not released. The analysis also included the percent of the senior class taking the SAT. For purposes of the analysis, the district senior class enrollment for both years was assumed constant.

In **mathematics** there were 25 school districts that had an increase in the mean SAT math scores. Of these 25 districts, 8 also had an increase in the number of test takers of 5% or more. The district with the largest increase in math was Marion 7 with math means of 425 and 472 for 2010 and 2011 respectively. Approximately 31% of the senior class, or 13 students, took the SAT. Dillon 1 had an increase of 23 points from 432 in 2010 to 455 in 2011 with 48% of the senior class or 22 students taking the test.

Table 3
Mean **Mathematics** Gains in Districts by Change in Number of Test Takers, 2011

	Decline of 5% or More in Test Takers	Insignificant Change in Test Takers	Increase of 5% or More in Test Takers	Total
Mean Gains:				
1 to 9 Points	0	7	4	11
10 to 19 Points	0	5	2	7
20 to 29 Points	2	2	2	6
30 to 39 Points	0	0	0	0
40 to 49 Points	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	3	14	8	25

In **critical reading** there were 37 districts with an increase in mean SAT scores. For 21 of these 37 districts, the number of test takers remained the same and for six districts there was a decrease of 5% or more in the number of test takers. These six districts that had declines in test takers and increases in scores were: Marion 7, Marlboro, Fairfield, Lexington 2, York 2 and Hampton 2. York 2 and Lexington 2 had the gains of between 1 and 9 points. Fairfield and Hampton 2 had the largest gains in the 30-39 bracket. There were 10 districts with an increase of at least 5% in the number of test takers and an increase in reading scores. Barnwell 19 had a 24% increase in students from 9 to 22 of the 55 in the class along with a 40 point increase in the mean SAT reading. Just behind Barnwell 19 was Spartanburg 5 with a 12.3% increase in test takers and a 15 point increase in SAT reading. Union was the other district with substantial growth in test takers and it had a 16 point increase in SAT reading.

¹ College Board. Press Release, September 14, 2011. <http://media.collegeboard.com/pdf/cbs_2011_nat_release_091411.pdf>.

Table 4

Mean **Critical Reading** Gains in Districts by Change in Number of Test Takers, 2011

	Decline of 5% or More in Test Takers	Insignificant Change in Test Takers	Increase of 5% or More in Test Takers	Total
Mean Gains:				
1 to 9 Points	2	13	7	22
10 to 19 Points	0	6	2	8
20 to 29 Points	2	2	0	4
30 to 39 Points	2	0	0	2
40 to 49 Points	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	6	21	10	37

In **writing** there were 31 districts that had an increase in the mean SAT writing score. In these districts only 7 had a significant increase in the number of test takers. Five districts, including Greenwood 51 had fewer test takers. For the seven districts with higher writing scores and more test takers, Florence 4 had 20.4% more tested and produced a 20 point increase in the writing SAT. Unfortunately, Florence 4 also experienced a 25 point decline in SAT reading.

Table 5

Mean **Writing** Gains in Districts by Change in Number of Test Takers, 2011

	Decline of 5% or More in Test Takers	Insignificant Change in Test Takers	Increase of 5% or More in Test Takers	Total
Mean Gains:				
1 to 9 Points	2	8	4	14
10 to 19 Points	2	8	2	12
20 to 29 Points	1	3	1	5
30 to 39 Points	0	0	0	0
40 to 49 Points	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	5	19	7	31

In looking at Tables 3, 4 and 5, there were 44 districts that had gains in the mean score of one or more sections of the SAT in 2011. The following table lists these districts and shows the gains or losses in mean scores as well as the change in the number of test takers. Of these 44 districts, (those shown in red), 18 had positive gains in the mean critical reading, mathematics and writing scores on the SAT in 2011. Of these 18 districts, nine school districts, noted in bold, also did not have a net reduction in the number of test takers in 2011. These nine districts were: Berkeley, Darlington, Hampton 1, Jasper, Lexington 3, Marion 1, Orangeburg 4, Spartanburg 5, and Union.

Table 6

Districts with Positive Gains in Mean SAT Scores in **Math, Critical Reading and Writing**, 2011

	District	Senior Class	% Change in Number of Test Takers	Change in Math Score	Change in Critical Reading	Change in Writing
1	Allendale	98	-2.0	12	27	15
2	Anderson 3	154	-1.3	-2	9	2
3	Anderson 4	175	5.1	6	-10	-4
4	Anderson 5	750	5.8	10	0	0
5	Bamberg 1	117	4.3	-21	6	25
6	Barnwell 19	55	23.6	-12	45	3
7	Berkeley	1672	2.1	5	10	9
8	Chester	345	5.3	-5	-12	2
9	Colleton	295	-4.7	-4	4	17
10	Darlington	657	0.5	4	10	6
11	Dillon 1	69	15.9	23	5	0
12	Dillon 3	95	1.0	5	-13	-30
13	Dorchester 4	140	0.0	-25	14	0
14	Edgefield	280	-1.4	2	4	10
15	Fairfield	188	-8.0	28	31	19
16	Florence 1	968	-0.3	-4	3	2
17	Florence 2	72	-2.8	26	7	0
18	Florence 4	51	29.4	-4	-25	20
19	Georgetown	495	-2.0	5	5	12
20	Greenwood 51	68	-16.2	-17	-20	3
21	Hampton 1	140	7.2	14	3	9
22	Hampton 2	99	-7.0	-1	31	9
23	Horry	2203	3.5	-3	3	6
24	Jasper	180	0.6	5	1	8
25	Laurens 55	332	0.6	17	2	-2
26	Laurens 56	209	10.6	3	7	0
27	Lexington 2	557	-5.7	-6	5	-8
28	Lexington 3	119	1.6	17	10	10
29	Marion 1	188	1.6	1	5	7
30	Marion 2	98	-4.1	14	7	21
31	Marion 7	42	-9.5	47	22	12
32	Marlboro	228	-14.4	22	29	22
33	Newberry	358	4.5	0	10	16
34	Orangeburg 4	295	5.7	2	3	6
35	Richland 2	1715	6.7	-2	1	-3
36	Spartanburg 1	324	-2.2	18	20	24
37	Spartanburg 5	530	12.3	3	15	12
38	Spartanburg 7	511	9.4	-5	1	0
39	Sumter 2	586	-2.6	20	17	15
40	Sumter 17	533	-0.2	-1	8	11
41	Union	275	5.1	25	16	10
42	Williamsburg	353	4.8	-2	-2	8
43	York 2	414	-5.1	-14	5	-4
44	York 4	663	7.8	-6	5	-3