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SAT RESULTS: 2004-05

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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes national, state, and county SAT data for Wake County Public School System's (WCPSS) graduating seniors who took the test any time during their high school years through March 2005. The statistics presented are primarily based on reports provided by the College Board and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The average total SAT score for WCPSS graduating seniors in 2004-05 was 1075, up from 1063 in 2003-04. The average score on the verbal subtest increased from 524 to 527, while the average score on the mathematics subtest increased from 539 to 548. The participation rate for WCPSS graduating seniors dipped slightly for the second consecutive year, from 77% in 2003-04 to 75% in 2004-05. Both the WCPSS total SAT score and participation rate, however, remain higher than the corresponding state and national figures.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The SAT, formally known as the SAT I Reasoning Test, is a national examination offered by the College Board. The exam measures potential for success at the post-secondary level and is required for admission to many colleges and universities. The SAT administered in 2004-05 was a three-hour test of general verbal and mathematical skills along with a new writing component which was added as of March 2005. The verbal and mathematics portions of the exam used a multiple-choice format, and results for the verbal and mathematics subtests were scored on a scale from 200 to 800 points. Results from the new writing component are not yet being reported. Nationwide, over 1.4 million students in the 2004-05 graduating class took the SAT, representing about half of all high school graduates.

This bulletin summarizes national, state, and county SAT data for seniors who took the test any time during their high school years through March 2005. If a student took the test more than once, the most recent score is used.

The average total SAT score for Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) seniors in 2004-05 was 1075, increasing 12 points from 2003-04. The average verbal subtest score increased from 524 to 527, while the average mathematics subtest score rose from 539 to 548.

Key Topics

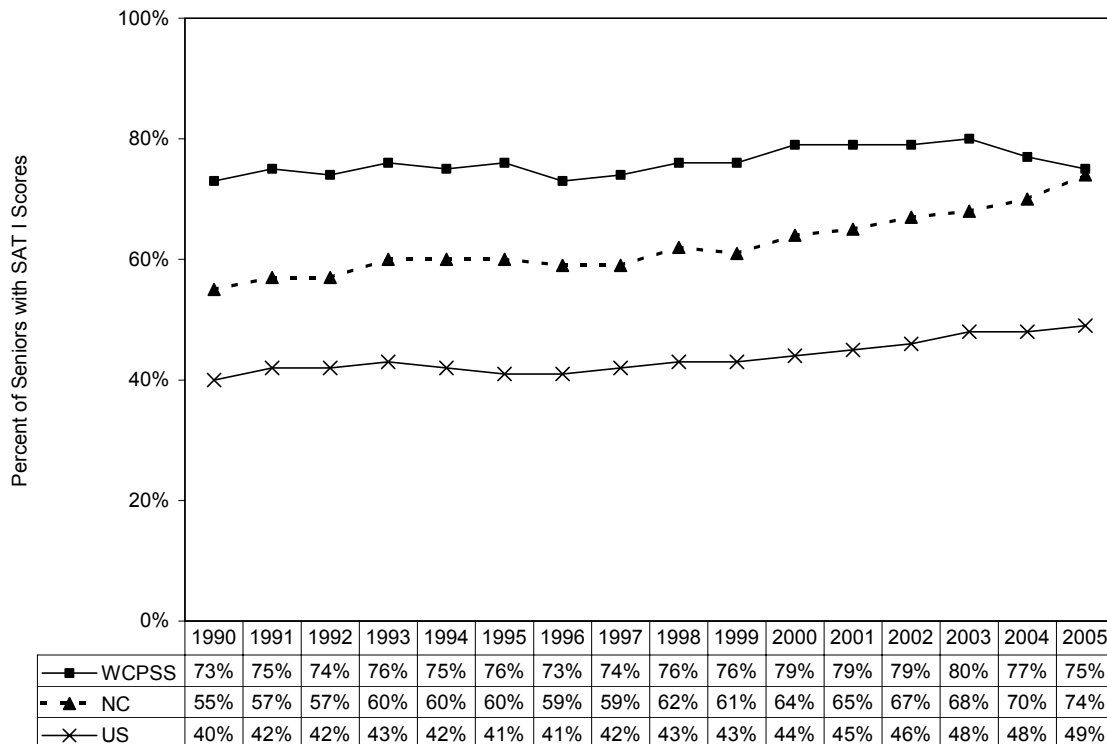
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SAT PARTICIPATION

Although students can take the SAT multiple times during their high school years, the College Board reports only the most recent test score of students who indicate they plan to graduate in the reporting year. Students are counted only once no matter how often they took the exam. According to the College Board, 4,958 students in the WCPSS 2004-05 graduating class took the SAT. Most of these students (75%) took the exam for the last time during their senior year. However, nearly 25% of graduating seniors last took the exam as juniors, and according to College Board records, a small number of students took the test in their sophomore year, at which time they self-reported that they planned to graduate from a WCPSS school in 2004-05.

The number of WCPSS graduating seniors who took the SAT rose from 4,655 in 2003-04 to 4,958 in 2004-05, a 7% increase. However, the participation rate for WCPSS graduating seniors dropped slightly for the second consecutive year, from 77% in 2003-04 to 75% in 2004-05. The participation rate for WCPSS in 2004-05 remained well above both the state and national participation rates (Figure 1).

Figure 1
SAT Participation Rates for WCPSS, North Carolina and the U. S.
1989-90 through 2004-05



The participation rate in WCPSS was calculated by dividing the number of seniors who took the SAT by the size of the graduating class. Participation rates reported by the College Board are based upon estimates of enrollment compiled through national surveys. While the College Board rates are probably accurate at the state and national level, they are not accurate at the district and individual school level. Therefore, participation rates for WCPSS in this report have been calculated from district records.

SAT RESULTS

The average WCPSS SAT score remained substantially higher than the North Carolina and U. S. averages in 2004-05 (Figure 2). The average WCPSS graduating senior in 2004-05 scored 28 points higher on the mathematics test and 19 points higher on the verbal test than the average graduate across the country (Figures 3 & 4).

Since 1989-90, the average verbal score has risen 26 points in WCPSS, and the average mathematics score has risen 50 points. The WCPSS total score increase of 76 points since 1989-90 exceeds both the corresponding national (27) and North Carolina (62) increases. Figures 2 through 4 provide information on SAT trends over time for WCPSS, North Carolina, and the nation as a whole.

Figure 2
Average Total SAT Scores for WCPSS, North Carolina and U. S.
1989-90 through 2004-05

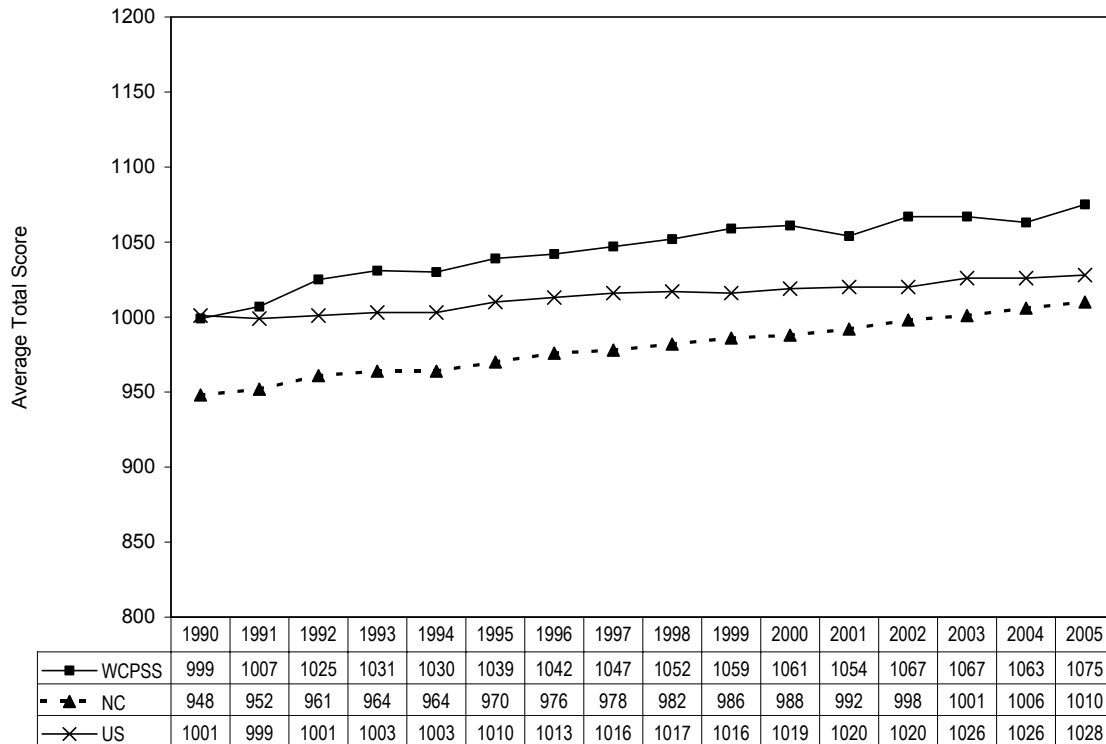


Figure 3
Average SAT Mathematics Subtest Scores for WCPSS, North Carolina and U. S.
1989-90 through 2004-05

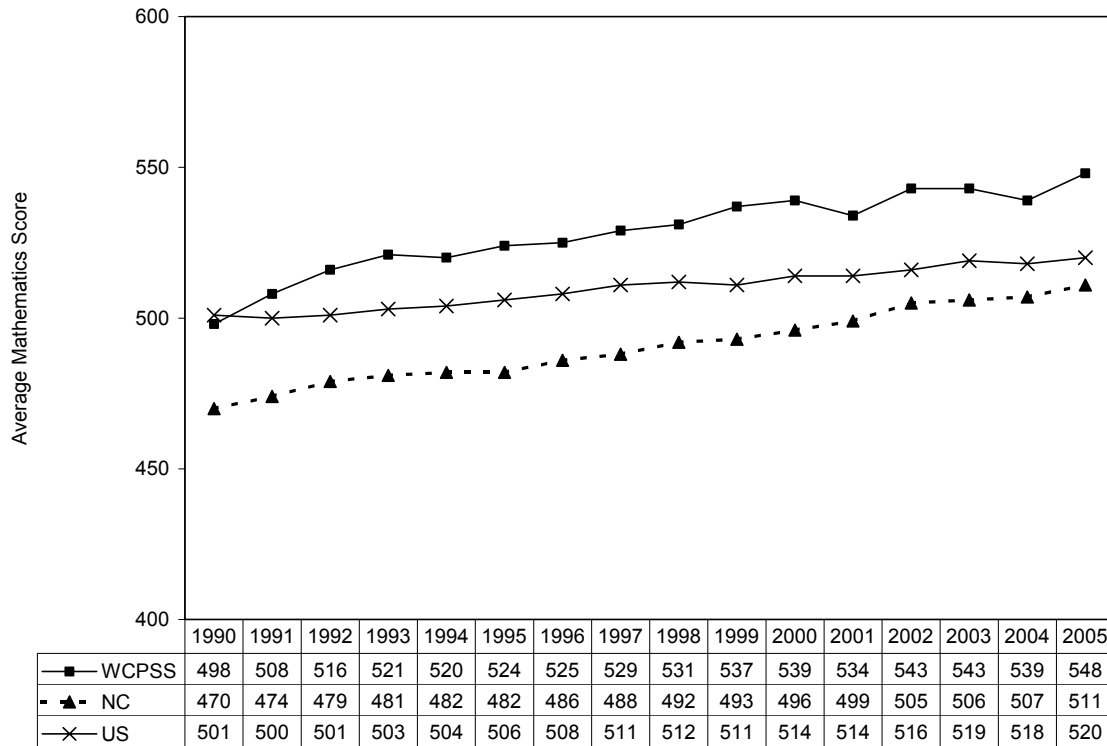
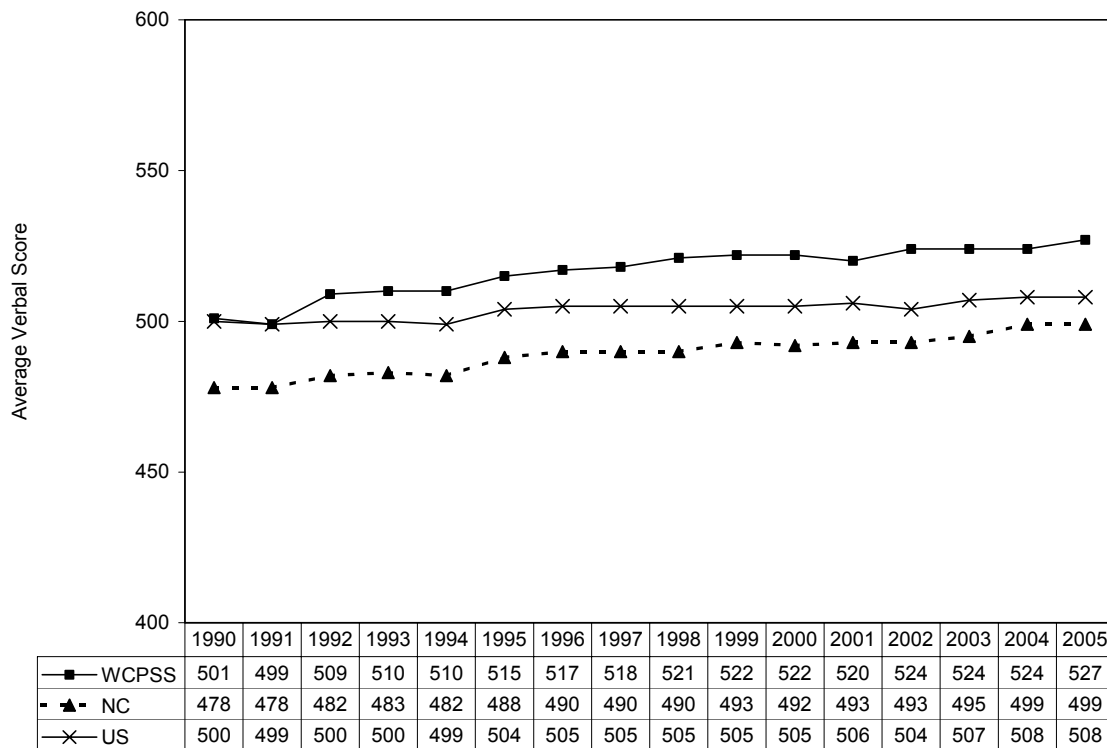


Figure 4
Average SAT Verbal Subtest Scores for WCPSS, North Carolina and the U. S.
1989-90 through 2004-05



COMPARISONS WITH OTHER DISTRICTS

In 2004-05, WCPSS tied with Clay County for the third-highest average SAT score of all North Carolina public school districts. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district continues to lead North Carolina with an average score of 1185 in 2004-05. Table 1 shows average total scores for the top five districts in North Carolina based on 2004-05 SAT scores. It should be noted that average scores in smaller districts fluctuate more from year to year than those in larger districts due to smaller numbers of test takers.

Table 1
North Carolina Districts with the Highest SAT Scores in 2004-05

School District	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	# Test-Takers 04-05 (Part. Rate)
Chapel Hill	1178	1184	1185	694 (93%)
Watauga County	1078	1057	1101	257 (74%)
WCPSS	1067	1063	1075	4,958 (75%)
Clay County	1009	1043	1075	48 (58%)
Henderson County	1049	1059	1066	382 (54%)
Buncombe County	1072	1068	1066	911 (59%)

WCPSS average SAT scores continue to dramatically outpace those of other large urban districts in North Carolina (Table 2). Furthermore, the WCPSS participation rate has remained at or near the top among those same districts.

Table 2
**Average SAT Scores for WCPSS and Other Large North Carolina School Districts
2003-04 through 2004-05**

School District	2003-04				2004-05			
	Total	Math	Verbal	Part. Rate	Total	Math	Verbal	Part. Rate
WCPSS	1063	539	524	77%	1075	548	527	75%
Charlotte/Mecklenburg	1005	503	502	70%	1004	505	499	75%
Cumberland County	962	481	481	53%	955	480	475	57%
Durham County	1001	504	497	78%	1005	506	499	75%
Guilford County	1011	508	503	68%	994	502	492	70%
Winston-Salem/Forsyth	992	499	493	68%	1015	512	503	67%

Note: The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) uses 12th grade membership from April of each year rather than actual numbers of graduates to determine participation rates. Whenever the actual number of graduates is known, WCPSS uses that figure to calculate participation rates, dividing the number of seniors who took the SAT by the size of the graduating class for the district and for each high school.

Recent SAT scores for WCPSS have also compared well to similar large districts in other nearby states as shown in Table 3. The WCPSS average total score surpassed that of each comparison district except Fairfax County (VA) over the past two years..

Table 3
Average SAT Scores for WCPSS and Other Large Urban/Suburban Districts
2003-04 through 2004-05

School District	2003-04				2004-05			
	Total	Math	Verbal	Part. Rate	Total	Math	Verbal	Part. Rate
WCPSS	1063	539	524	77%	1075	548	527	75%
Cobb County (GA)	1040	519	521	83%	1047	522	525	81%
Fulton County (GA)	1056	533	523	79%	1056	536	520	N/A
Gwinnett County (GA)	1037	527	510	87%	1043	530	513	88%
Anne Arundel County (MD)	1059	536	523	48%	1056	533	523	54%
Fairfax County (VA)	1105	558	547	N/A	1114	565	549	N/A
Virginia Beach (VA)	1010	502	508	61%	1010	504	506	N/A

Note: Information on SAT results and participation rates is based on reports posted on each district's web site. Participation rates for some districts were not available.

SAT RESULTS BY GENDER

Slightly more female students than male students (2,635 vs. 2,323) in WCPSS took the SAT in 2004-05, but male students performed better on the exam than female students. The gap between male and female students, however, decreased from 37 points in 2003-04 to only 19 in 2004-05 (Figure 8). This difference continues to be accounted for by the mathematics subtest, as the score for female students actually exceeded the score for male students on the verbal subtest in 2004-05 (Figure 9).

Figure 8
Average WCPSS Total SAT Scores by Gender
1997-98 through 2004-05

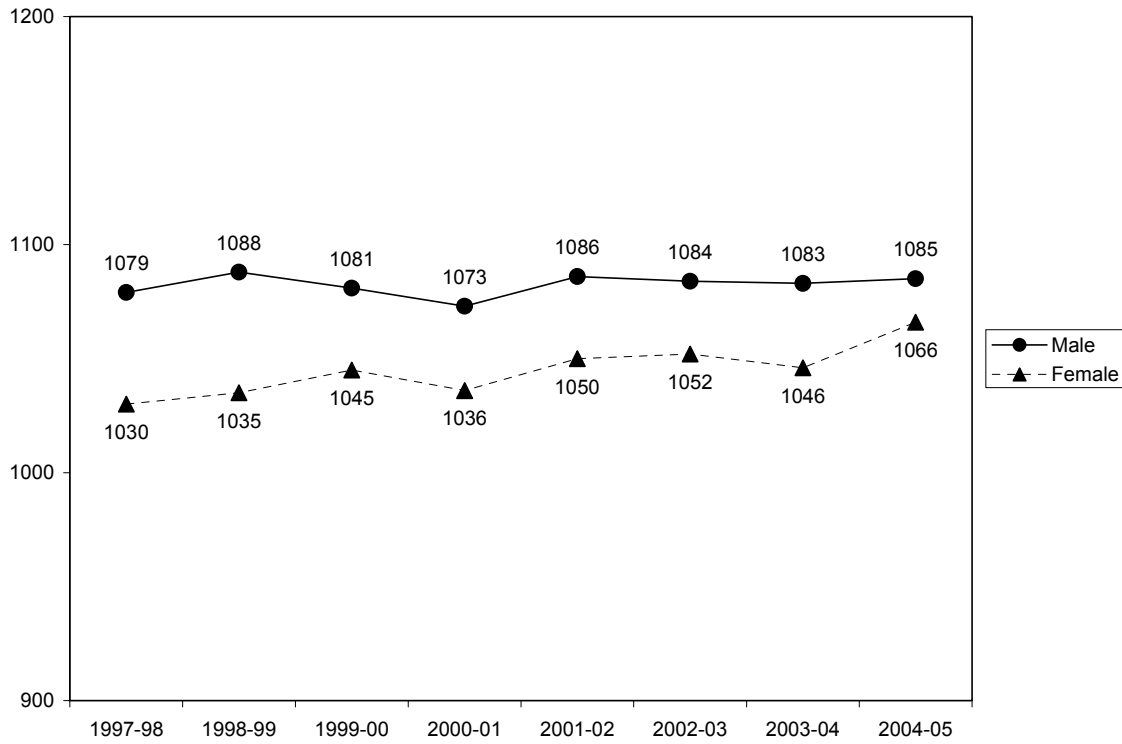
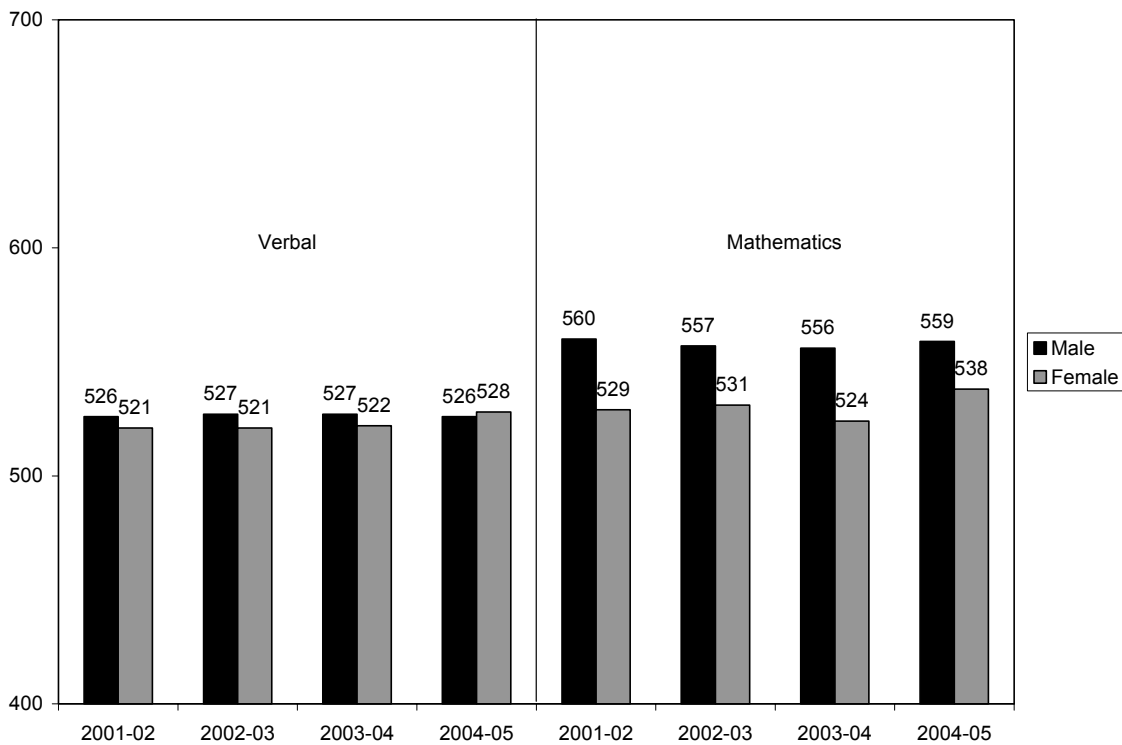
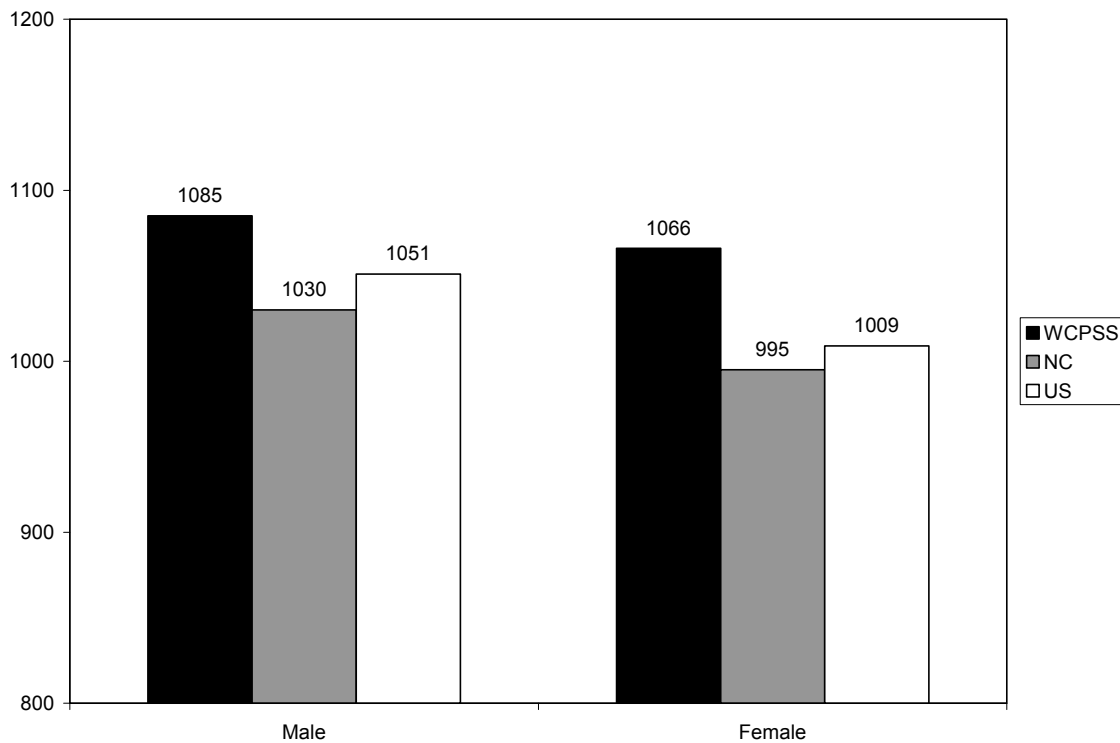


Figure 9
Average WCPSS SAT Subtest Scores by Gender
2001-02 through 2004-05



As was true with the overall results, both male and female WCPSS students in 2004-05 posted higher scores than their counterparts in North Carolina and in the U.S. As shown in Figure 10, female students in WCPSS scored 71 points higher, on average, than female students in North Carolina and 57 points higher than their counterparts in the U.S. The average total score for male students in WCPSS was 55 points higher than the average in North Carolina and 34 points higher than the U. S. average.

Figure 10
Average Total SAT Scores by Gender for WCPSS, North Carolina and the U. S.
2004-05



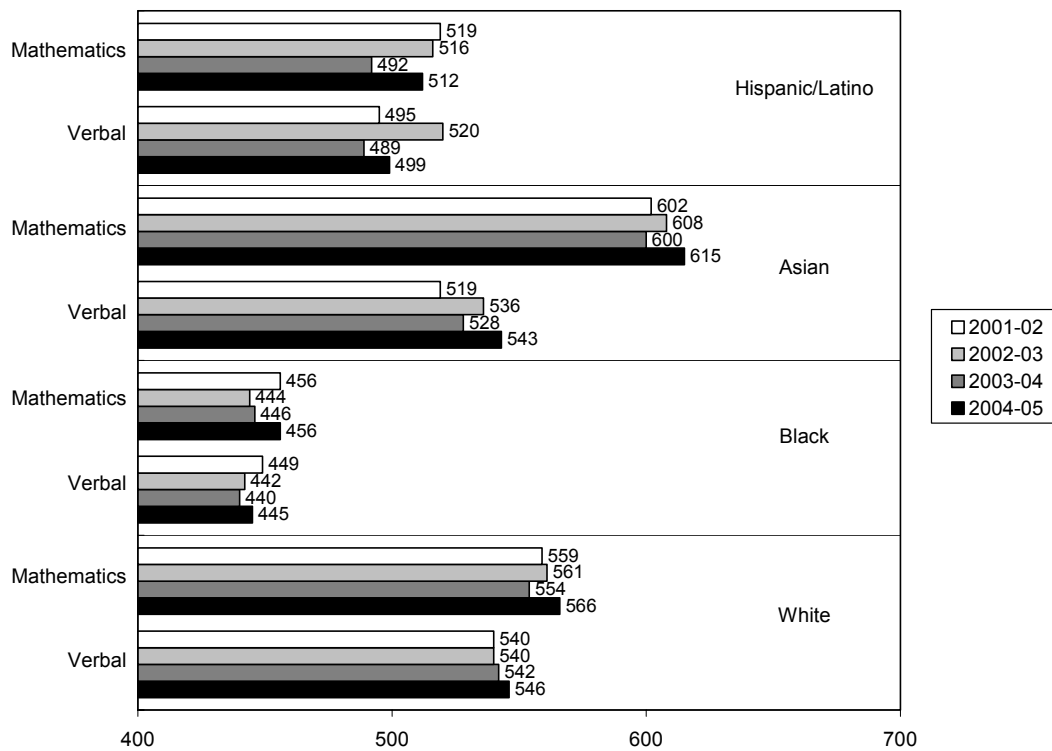
SAT SCORES BY ETHNICITY

As in past years, there were large differences in average SAT scores among WCPSS ethnic groups in 2004-05. White students scored the highest on the verbal test, with an average score of 546, while Asian students received the highest score on the math test (615). Figure 11 shows how each ethnic subgroup performed on the two sections of the SAT exam over the past four years.

The statistics presented are based on disaggregated data reported by the College Board. It must be noted that the percentage of students choosing not to report their racial/ethnic group to the College Board when they registered to take the SAT has been relatively high in recent years. Nine percent of test-takers in WCPSS and 14% nationwide chose not to report their ethnicity in 2004-05; however, this figure was 19% in both WCPSS and the U. S. in 2003-04. This raises questions about the validity of disaggregated SAT scores for ethnic groups. In addition, ethnic groups with small numbers of test-takers will experience greater fluctuations in scores from year to year.

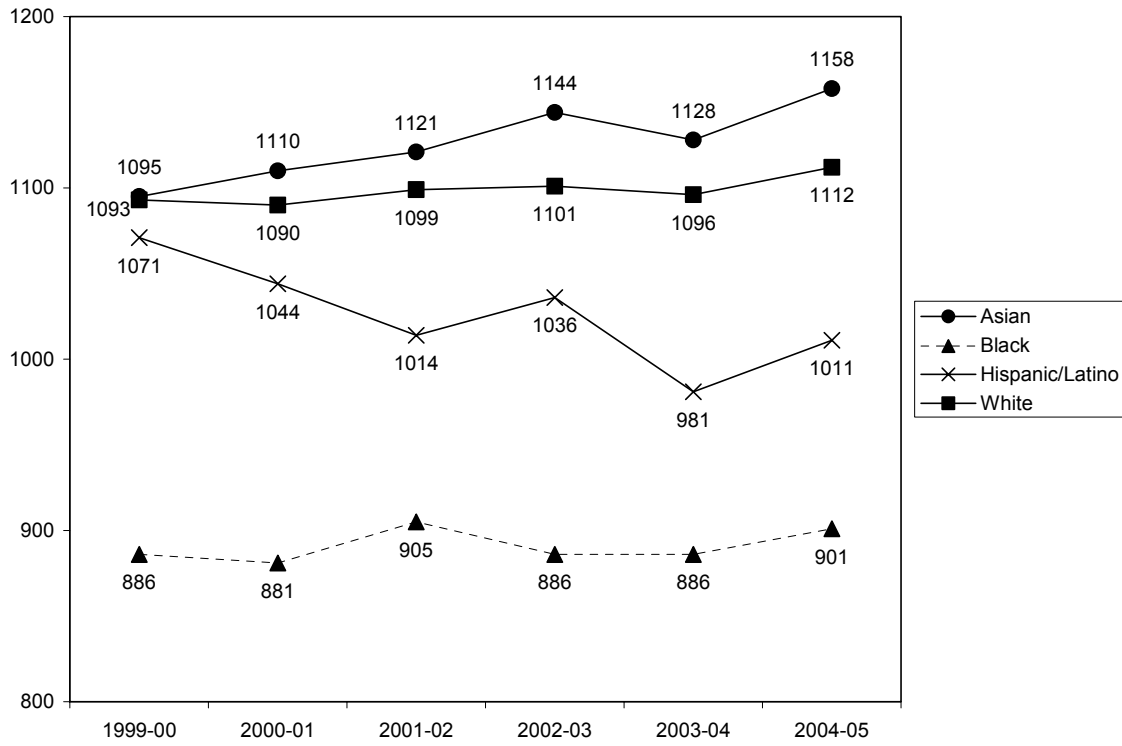
Assuming that the average scores for these subgroups are not biased by the missing ethnic data, there were some notable positive changes in scores between 2003-04 and 2004-05. SAT scores rose for all ethnic groups reported on both subtests. These increases ranged from four points on the verbal subtest among White students to a high of 20 points on the mathematics subtest among Hispanic/Latino students (Figure 11). At the total score level, both Asian and Hispanic/Latino students posted gains of 30 points in 2004-05 (Figure 12). Gains for White and Black/African-American students totaled 16 and 15 points, respectively, leaving the achievement gap between those two subgroups largely unchanged from 2003-04.

Figure 11
Average WCPSS SAT Subtest Scores by Ethnicity
2001-02 through 2004-05



Note: Data not shown for American Indian/Native Alaskan students because there were fewer than 25 test-takers in that subgroup.

Figure 12
Average WCPSS Total SAT Scores by Ethnicity
1999-00 through 2004-05

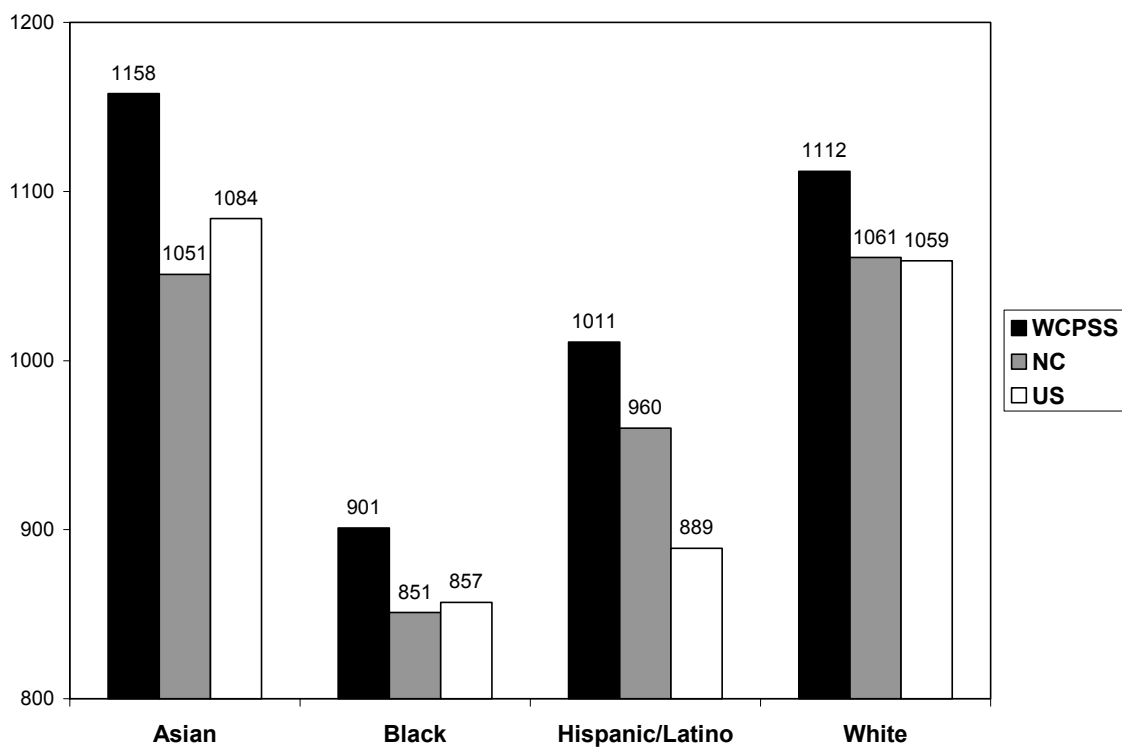


Note: Data not shown for American Indian/Native Alaskan students because there were fewer than 25 test-takers in that subgroup.

Average total SAT scores for ethnic subgroups were higher in WCPSS than in North Carolina and the U.S. in 2004-05 (Figure 13). White students in WCPSS had an average score 51 points higher than White students statewide and 53 points higher than White students nationwide. Similarly, Black/African-American students in WCPSS outscored their counterparts in North Carolina by 50 points and in the U. S. by 44 points.

Asian students in WCPSS had an average total score 107 points higher than their North Carolina counterparts and 74 points higher than Asian students nationwide. Hispanic/Latino students outscored their counterparts in North Carolina by 51 points and in the U. S. by 122 points.

Figure 13
Average Total SAT Scores by Ethnicity for WCPSS, North Carolina and the U. S.
2004-05



SAT RESULTS FOR WCPSS HIGH SCHOOLS

The average total SAT scores rose at ten WCPSS high schools in 2004-05 and declined at four others (Table 4). The three schools showing the largest increases were Millbrook (34 points), Broughton (29) and Enloe (25). The only high schools showing decreases in average total scores were Leesville (7 points), Wake Forest-Rolesville (5), Sanderson (4) and Green Hope (4).

Average total SAT scores varied widely across area high schools in 2004-05. Enloe continued to lead WCPSS with an average score of 1178, followed by Broughton and Green Hope at 1110. Thirteen of the 16 WCPSS high schools reporting SAT data had averages surpassing the national average score of 1028.

Participation rates at the 16 comprehensive WCPSS high schools reporting SAT data during 2004-05 ranged from 50% to 96% of graduating seniors. The highest participation rate was at Green Hope (96%), followed by Broughton and Enloe at 90%. Schools with the lowest participation rates were East Wake (50%), Garner (55%) and Fuquay-Varina (56%). The percentage of seniors taking the SAT exam exceeded the national rate at every WCPSS high school in 2004-05, and ten out of the 16 also exceeded the statewide rate.

Compared to the previous year, SAT participation rates in 2004-05 increased at five WCPSS high schools and decreased at seven. The high schools showing increases in participation were Apex (6 percentage points), Green Hope (6), Wake Forest-Rolesville (4), Enloe (4) and Athens Drive (1). The high schools showing the largest decreases in participation were East Wake (15 percentage points), Sanderson (10), Garner (7), Fuquay-Varina (6), and Wakefield (6).

Table 4
WCPSS School-by-School SAT Scores and Participation Rates
2002-03 through 2004-05

	2002-03				2003-04				2004-05			
	Rate	Verbal	Math	Total	Rate	Verbal	Math	Total	Rate	Verbal	Math	Total
US	48%	507	519	1026	48%	508	518	1026	49%	508	520	1028
North Carolina	68%	495	506	1001	70%	499	507	1006	74%	499	511	1010
WCPSS	80%	524	543	1067	77%	524	539	1063	75%	527	548	1075
Apex	82%	542	565	1107	76%	530	560	1090	82%	532	561	1093
Athens	87%	527	564	1091	76%	532	557	1089	77%	532	566	1098
Broughton	94%	526	554	1080	93%	537	544	1081	90%	544	566	1110
Cary	77%	522	540	1062	75%	535	536	1071	75%	535	538	1073
East Wake	66%	476	486	962	65%	472	488	960	50%	472	493	965
Enloe	92%	572	574	1146	86%	573	580	1153	90%	588	590	1178
Fuquay-Varina	61%	500	516	1016	62%	506	516	1022	56%	508	533	1041
Garner	58%	482	504	986	62%	481	491	972	55%	475	497	972
Green Hope	95%	546	565	1111	90%	545	569	1114	96%	540	570	1110
Leesville	86%	535	557	1092	83%	543	566	1109	82%	538	564	1102
Middle Creek	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	64%	509	528	1037
Millbrook	80%	509	531	1040	75%	497	514	1011	75%	507	538	1045
Sanderson	84%	510	531	1041	76%	531	532	1063	66%	517	542	1059
SE Raleigh	83%	507	520	1027	87%	504	513	1017	86%	511	524	1035
Wakefield	85%	516	541	1057	84%	515	532	1047	78%	518	539	1057
Wake Forest	68%	509	520	1029	64%	506	517	1023	68%	503	515	1018

Note: The participation rate is the percentage of graduating seniors who took the SAT at each school. The College Board reported average SAT scores for the first time in 2004-05 for Middle Creek High School, which opened in 2002-03.