

of the test takers, up from 22 percent a decade ago. Except for Mexican-Americans, minority students continued to maintain the same scores or show improvement.

"This is encouraging progress over all," said Donald M. Stewart, president of the College Board, although "non-Asian minorities still lag significantly behind whites and Asian-Americans in academic preparation for college."

Mr. Stewart said he was especially pleased to see that women were taking college entrance tests in greater numbers. Women are also improving at almost the same rate as men, gaining two points to the men's three points on math. Both men and women maintained the same average scores in the verbal test. Women make up 59 percent of students who take advanced placement tests.

In addition, more women than men said they planned to go on for master's and Ph.D. degrees, a reversal of the situation a decade ago.

Speaking yesterday at a news

conference in Washington, Mr. Stewart acknowledged that "not all is rosy," saying that the practice of easygrading by teachers in secondary schools was "still a problem."

In the tri-state region, Connecticut students scored significantly higher in verbal skill than their neighbors in New York and New Jersey, and were well ahead of the national average, too. The average verbal score in Connecticut was 509, up two points from 507 last year. New York students averaged 495, down two points from 497. The New Jersey average was 497, down one point.

In math, New Jersey was ahead of the other two states, with an average score of 508, an increase of three points from 505 last year. Connecticut students scored 507, up from 504. New York rose to 502, up from 499.

But even as Mr. Stewart praised the virtues of this year's college-bound students, others viewed the test results more darkly.

John Katzman, president of Princeton Review, a test-preparation service, said women were still scoring 40 points lower than men on the College Board's math test because the questions were easier for men.

"It's just mind-boggling that the College Board would celebrate the fact that more women are going to college and graduate school than in the past when probably the greatest force against women in higher education is the College Board," Mr. Katzman said.

Bob Schaeffer, a spokesman for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, an organization that has long been critical of the College Board, said "gender bias" in College Board tests continued to deprive women of equal access to National Merit Scholarship money.

Mr. Stewart dismissed the accusations as "unfounded," saying that women's scores are increasing significantly in both verbal and math. ■

3. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

August 27, 1997

Extra Credit: Advanced Placement Courses Pay Off For Freshmen

By Susan C. Thomson
Of The Post-Dispatch Staff

About one-third of this fall's college freshmen are arriving on campus with some college work already to their credit, the College Board said Tuesday.

A record 399,907 students, out of a freshman class of about 1.2 million, took Advanced Placement college-level courses in high school. Of them, 32,000 took enough AP courses to qualify as college sophomores, and 1,000 took enough to be juniors.

Those courses don't automatically give those students legs up on their college educations. Some colleges don't accept AP courses. Those that do may insist on certain minimum scores on AP tests, which are graded on a scale of one to five.

Washington University, for instance, generally gives college credit only for AP scores of four or five, said Nanette Clift, director of recruitment.

Even so, she said, taking AP courses is a good idea. "It helps you tackle more

rigorous subject matter, and it prepares you for the transition to college," she said.

Compared with their immediate predecessors, this season's college freshmen have prepared harder for college - and not just with AP courses. Other evidence:

- * Sixty-nine percent took four or more years of mathematics in high school, compared with 63 percent of the class of 1987.

- * Forty-nine percent took four or more years of science, up from 37 percent 10 years before.

And higher education looms larger and longer in their plans. Fifty-nine percent want to go on for advanced degrees, compared with 48 percent a decade ago.

The College Board drew that data from surveys of students who took AP courses and the latest SAT college admissions test. Also Tuesday, the Board

released scores for that test.

The nationwide verbal average, which has fluctuated in a 10-point range for two decades, came in at 505 for the second straight year. But the math average rose three points to 511, its highest level since 1971. Scores on both parts of the test began dropping in the early 1970s and have not regained their 1960s levels.

The test, required for admission to the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities, is scored on a scale of 200 to 800.

Educators watch SAT and other college admissions scores for signs of the nation's educational health, and they don't agree on how to read them.

Some say the decline was only to be expected as greater percentages of high school graduates aspired to college and took the test. Others blame the drop on what they see as a decline in standards in the nation's public schools.

On average, men outdid women 507

NATIONAL

1. Associated Press

08-27 1:35a

SAT report suggests grade inflation in high schools

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - American high schoolers' report cards paint a much rosier picture of their academic achievement than do their scores on a major college entrance examination.

The SAT scores from the high school class of 1997, released Tuesday, showed progress in math achievement, with the average of 511 coming close to levels of 25 years ago. But at 505, the verbal score has hardly budged.

The math score, up for the sixth straight year, rose from 508 last year. Scores had fallen below 500 in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The math score was 513 in 1971, and scores were higher before that.

The verbal score was also 505 last year and has risen above that only four times in the last two decades. Scores were 540 and higher in the late 1960s.

Since 1987, however, the percentage of students getting all A's has grown from 28 to 37, while SAT scores have actually fallen for that group. This year's grade average for all SAT takers is 3.22, compared with 3.07 in 1987.

"Educators who give high grades for average performance promote a 'just good enough' attitude that is detrimental to students and society," said Donald M. Stewart, president of the nonprofit College Board, which gives the test.

Added Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, "We need to take a second look at what seems to be a rising pattern

of grade inflation."

Teachers have complained about pressures from parents, superintendents and principals to adjust grades, mostly to stop children from failing.

"They don't come out and say change this grade," said Tony Montanaro, a middle school science teacher and president of the East Irondequoit Teachers Association near Rochester, N.Y. "It is more along the lines of taking a second look at the criteria used for evaluating the students' work."

Critics say the SAT has engaged in its own version of grade inflation, last year adjusting scores for the first time to bring up averages. Scores are also inflated, they say, because of the widespread use of private coaching services to prepare students for the test.

"How does a college know how much a particular applicant's score was boosted because his parents could afford \$600, \$700 or even \$1500 for test preparation?" said Bob Schaeffer, a spokesman for the National Center for Fair & Open Testing in Cambridge, Mass.

The group also argues that the test is biased against girls because of the kinds of questions that are asked.

Although girls have better grades than boys and do better in comparable courses, their SAT scores still lag, Schaeffer said.

Girls scored 503 on the verbal and 494 on the math portion, compared with 507 and 530 for boys.

Gretchen W. Rigol, executive director

of admissions and guidance services for the College Board, said girls have higher grade averages because they still take fewer math courses, for which students generally get lower grades.

The exam, the most widely used part of the board's Scholastic Assessment Tests, was taken by 1.1 million high school graduates. They account for 95 percent of college freshmen this year.

The test is given largely in the Eastern United States.

Analysts said math scores are rising because students are taking more rigorous math and science courses. The same trend was noted in results released earlier this month for the ACT, another entrance examination.

More students also are taking college-level, Advanced Placement courses while in high school, the College Board said. Just over half the nation's high schools offer such classes.

But students also seem to be taking fewer English classes, and more students who speak English as a second language are taking the test, said Faith Schullstrom, executive director of National Council of Teachers of English. She characterized the verbal scores as "stable."

But others cited a serious decline in the quality of English teaching.

"English teachers don't believe in teaching vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling," said Diane Ravitch, a senior research scholar at New York University active in pushing educational standards. ■

2. The New York Times

08/27/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 21, Column 1

S.A.T. Scores Rise for Math But Stay Flat For Verbal

By WILLIAM H. HONAN

The nation's students continued to show improvement in mathematics this year on Scholastic Assessment Tests, the College Board announced yesterday.

The 1.1 million students who took the widely used college entrance examinations scored an average of 511

on the mathematics section of the College Board's reasoning test — three points higher than last year's average and the highest in 26 years. Their average score on the verbal section was 505, the same as last year. As it did last year, the board attributed the overall increase in the math scores to more students' taking

harder courses, including those that lead to the board's Advanced Placement tests.

A record 32,000 students qualified to enter college this fall as sophomores or juniors on the basis of the credit they received through the Advance Placement examinations.

Minority students made up 32 percent

had ordered a brief extension of the seven-day period, by as much as a week, apparently to give dissenting judges time to issue their opinions.

However, the order yesterday by the original three-judge panel did not mention any such extension and said the ruling would become final tomorrow. "The state has demonstrated the clear possibility of irreparable injury to its citizens if a stay . . . is granted," said the panel of Judges Diarmuid O'Scannlain, Edward Leavy and Andrew Kleinfeld. "It is clear that a state suffers irreparable injury whenever an enactment of its people or their representatives is enjoined."

The panel noted that a stay would be the equivalent of extending an injunction by Chief U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson, "which we have already held rests on an erroneous legal premise."

Henderson barred enforcement of the measure three weeks after it passed and said opponents were likely to prove it unconstitutional. He said it affected only preferences for women and minorities but left intact other preferences, such as those for military veterans and the children of college alumni.

The U.S. Court of Appeals overruled Henderson, saying Proposition 209 is a neutral measure that promotes equality. The court said race-conscious programs

are constitutionally suspect and can be abolished by a state.

Two dozen other states are considering similar measures, and ACLU officials have said they believe that the U.S. Supreme Court will review the Proposition 209 case because it restricts what state and local government can do to remedy past discrimination against minorities and women.

Connerly predicted, however, that the high court will not take up the case because the California law has similarities to a Texas anti-affirmative action law that the high court allowed to stand. ■

43. San Francisco Chronicle

August 27, 1997

SAT Scores Underline S.F. Schools' Recovery

Nanette Asimov

Chronicle Staff Writer, page A1

As more than 64,000 students return to San Francisco schools today, finances are flush, teacher relations are improving, elementary class sizes are down and test scores are up.

That's not bad for a public school district that recently knew the money woes, labor problems and academic malaise typical of urban education.

They are not typical in San Francisco anymore.

"I know of no other urban district that has had rising test scores five years straight," said education professor Pedro Noguera of the University of California at Berkeley, who has studied city districts and has served on Berkeley's school board.

"San Francisco has increased graduation requirements and taken a number of steps that point in the direction of higher standards for children."

Here are some of those steps and what they've achieved:

— For the fifth year, math and reading test scores have risen. Both have been above the national average for two years.

— Yesterday, the College Board released national SAT scores. The city's math scores leaped ahead by seven points in one year, compared with the state's three-point rise. San Francisco's average verbal score rose by one point, as did the

state's.

— The schools have spent about a quarter billion dollars in the past four years to build, renovate or design 15 new schools and modernize more than 80 others. The projects have been financed partly by the passage of local bond measures and a quarter-cent sales tax increase approved by voters three years ago.

— More than 8,000 new computers have been installed in the district's 112 schools, many of them for use by students at home.

— The size of nearly every kindergarten through second-grade class is down to 20 pupils, and most third-grade classes are at 25 pupils this year.

— Graduation requirements are among the highest in the state, because the school board recently added a third year each of math and science, and a second year each of a foreign language and the arts. The requirements will apply to the graduating class of 2001.

School district officials do not yet know whether such changes will attract any of the 25,000 private school families that avoid the public schools year after year.

Yet, many of those families are already impressed by the public school improvements.

"I think it's terrific," said Sandra Cate,

whose 12-year-old son, Sam Finn, attends the private French-American school in San Francisco.

Six years ago, Cate looked for bilingual education opportunities at the two elementary schools that had such programs: Clarendon, which has a Japanese program, and Buena Vista, which teaches classes in Spanish.

"I'm a real believer in bilingual education," Cate said. But Buena Vista was full and in a deteriorating building anyway. Clarendon's classrooms were too crowded. Besides, Cate said, no middle school had a program to continue with. So Cate chose private.

Today, 16 public schools — including three middle and three high schools — are newly designated "Language Academies." Their Web site (sf.bilingual.net) details each nascent program, although several still need fleshing out. Claire Lilienthal Elementary promises "high levels of communicative and academic proficiency in Korean and English," for example.

"I find this very encouraging," said Cate, who nevertheless wants her son to stay at the school he attends. "I would have taken the whole public school option more seriously had this existed in 1991."

Another private school family made a different decision, although it was prompted by money.

The Murray-Clarks had sent their daughter, Elsa, to the private Waldorf School. But rising tuition meant the 10th-grader would have to go to a public high school.

"It was a shock to me to go from the private school, with its manicured gardens in Pacific Heights and where all the teachers knew my kids since they were babies, to the graffitied walls and the drugs being sold," said Elsa's mother, Jessica Murray.

They chose SOTA, the High School of the Arts, because the public high school is small and artistic, like Waldorf.

"The graffiti wasn't as bad as I thought," Murray said. "Yes, there are drugs. I usually hear about marijuana and mushrooms. But I also don't think the public schools are riddled with drugs and violence of a dangerous kind. SOTA is exactly right for my daughter."

It even has manicured gardens, thanks to Ronald Chase, a volunteer.

"SOTA is a wonderful institution. The principal, Joe Rosenblatt, really cares. And he knows all of their names," said Murray. "That's what's so ironic."

Education professor Noguera offers several explanations for the changing fortunes of San Francisco schools, not the least of which is money.

In the first few years of the decade, the school district's overall budget

declined to a low of \$447 million in the 1993-94 school year. Since then, the budget has grown by 19 percent, to \$530 million last year, even as district enrollment has remained steady.

Noguera also notes support from local corporations, lucrative leased property owned by the district, and the recent bond measures and tax increases for the improvements.

But other districts have money, too, he points out. In an article Noguera recently submitted to the national newspaper, Education Week, he writes that policy changes in the district have been most responsible for change.

And for these he credits the "laserlike attentiveness" of Superintendent Bill Rojas, who has "ruffled more than a few feathers in his campaign to raise standards and improve student achievement" since arriving in 1992.

Noguera praises Rojas for initiating a sweeping new system of individual school accountability in which each is expected to meet key goals: higher scores, fewer dropouts and suspensions, and clearer academic programs.

The professor also calls Rojas' use of "reconstitution," the controversial method of transferring out all school personnel at poorly performing schools, an effective tool for improvement,

although it angers teachers. Such schools can try to avoid reconstitution during a probation period called the "Comprehensive School Improvement Program."

Although they hate it, many teachers and administrators also admit that the program has helped them focus on teaching and improvement.

Around the country, other urban districts such as Chicago and Washington are adopting reconstitution.

Rojas did not invent it, but developed the probationary portion. Now he is working with the teachers union to make the process less adversarial.

Union president Kent Mitchell said he is pleased with the efforts, and called the new relationship a "work in progress."

For his part, Rojas is in the unusual position of being able to glow over progress in a district where a third of the students speak little English and half qualify for free lunch.

"I came into a district that was struggling to stay alive financially. We've been able to make an economic recovery, so the infrastructure, supplies and materials are dramatically better," he said.

"Instructionally, the proof is in the pudding. Things are dramatically different." ■

44. Tampa Tribune

August 27, 1997

Educators covet payoff from tobacco

By DAVID COX
of The Tampa Tribune

TALLAHASSEE - Call it the same old lottery shell game, tobacco style.

Less than 24 hours after Big Tobacco settled a historic lawsuit with the state by promising to pay \$11.3 billion for children's health and educational programs, legislators were discussing whether to use the money to pay for schools.

The problem is that to do that, the Legislature may have to perform a shell game with state money reminiscent of what lawmakers did with the state lottery: Money intended for one purpose will be diverted to another.

"Oh, baby, I understand how that settlement was done. It's payback time," Education Commissioner Frank Brogan

told a joint meeting of the state House and Senate education committees Tuesday.

If the state cannot spend the settlement directly to build classrooms, Brogan said, lawmakers should consider taking money from education and health programs for children that are to benefit from the tobacco payments. Those program funds could then be transferred to education.

Brogan said the payback results from the fact that education has lost funds to social programs over the past decade.

Such talk Tuesday reminded some lawmakers of a similar trick performed on education spending after the lottery began in the late 1980s. When the lottery money began to flow to public schools, lawmakers started cutting the general tax

revenues committed to education - and transferred the money to other programs.

"You could rationalize" doing the same thing with the tobacco settlement, said Sen. Jim Horne, R-Orange Park, who helped craft a funding formula designed to more accurately address school crowding. "It's probably the right thing to do."

Chiles' spokeswoman April Herrle said she hopes the tobacco settlement does not become the lottery all over again.

"If the Legislature tries to deceive the public and use this money in other ways, it will only add to the public distrust of government," she said.

An estimated \$11 billion will be needed over the next five years to build and maintain enough classroom space to

5. The Dallas Morning News

August 27, 1997

Grade inflation increasing in high schools, study says More students taking SAT, but scores fall

By Julie Hirschfeld
The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON - This year's college freshmen are more diverse, better prepared and more interested in advanced degrees than in the past. But according to a new study, their high school teachers held them to lower standards.

Grade inflation - which has been on the rise since 1987 - hit an all-time high this year, according to the College Board's annual profile of college-bound students who took the Scholastic Assessment Test.

While the percentage of A students taking the SAT rose to 37 percent during the last decade, the average combined test score of those students dropped 14 points.

"Educators who give high grades for average, or below average, performance promote a hollow, 'just-good-enough' attitude that is detrimental to students and society," said College Board president Don Stewart. The board administers the SAT, the most widely used college entrance test in the nation.

Among the 1.1 million high school graduates taking the SAT for college entrance this year, average math scores rose three points to a 26-year peak of 511. Verbal scores remained stagnant at 505.

Secretary of Education Richard Riley praised increases in both math and verbal scores over the past five years but said the nation should take a closer look at grading.

"The message about high expectations and high standards seems to be getting through to the MTV generation," Mr. Riley said. "We need to take a second look, however, at what seems to be a rising pattern of grade inflation."

Although grade inflation may cloud overall test results, the study found clear evidence that women are challenging themselves more and performing at a higher level of achievement than they have in the past. Since 1986, they have narrowed the SAT score gap between themselves and men from 55 to 40 points.

Females also are no longer avoiding

math and science classes at the rate they were less than a decade ago. Girls are now about 10 percent more likely to take pre-calculus, calculus, chemistry, and physics than they were in 1987, according to the study of test-takers.

As Mr. Stewart pledged to undertake a study about grade inflation, National Education Association president Bob Chase said educators are dedicated to alleviating the imbalance between grades and test scores.

"We all - teachers, administrators, parents and the community - must focus our attention on addressing these problems to ensure a quality education for all students," Mr. Chase said in a statement released Tuesday.

Stephen Pultz, director of undergraduate admissions at American University in Washington, said university teachers and administrators have been recognizing the phenomenon for quite some time.

"We have teachers complaining that although academic numbers seem to rise, the reading and writing skills are not better and in some cases are worse," Mr. Pultz said. "They'll tell us the SAT doesn't accurately or effectively reflect what they're encountering in the classroom."

Still, the study said that nearly one quarter of this year's freshman class took college-level advanced placement courses in high school, including 33,000 with enough advanced placement exam credits to enter college as sophomores or juniors.

"By taking advantage of the most challenging courses available in their high schools, they now have more options for enriching and hastening their college degrees," said Wade Curry, the College Board's advanced placement director. "The growing popularity of the AP program indicates that students, teachers and schools welcome its high standards and extraordinary challenges."

Some SAT experts think the increase has less to do with high standards and more to do with increasingly stiff

competition among high schoolers for coveted college admissions slots.

"There's no question that [students' high school] course load is going to be one of the most important things for getting them into college," said Seppy Basili, director of precollege programs for Kaplan, an educational company specializing in test preparation, admissions and career services. "Students are taking more [advanced placement] courses to make sure that they have as competitive a record for college admissions as they can."

The study showed continuing ethnic and racial disparities in educational achievement, prompting renewed criticism of the SAT's testing method.

Slightly more than a third of SAT takers entering college this fall were minorities, up from 22 percent 10 years ago. But the study showed poor levels of preparation and performance among black and Mexican-American men in particular.

"Men in both these groups have the lowest levels of academic preparation for college of any racial or ethnic subgroup in the nation," said Mr. Stewart, the College Board president. "If such trends persist, our country may continue to lack a sufficient cadre of well-educated African-American and Mexican-American men well into the next century."

Overall, there still appears to be a direct correlation between income and tests - the higher the income, the higher the score. And the SAT underpredicts women's achievement in college, spokesmen for testing companies say.

Some analysts say that suggests the SAT may be biased along ethnic, gender and socioeconomic lines.

Paul Cohen, a spokesman for The Princeton Review, another educational testing company, said it is incumbent upon the College Board to take responsibility for the imbalances.

"The SAT is a gun in the face of American education, and as manufacturers of this gun, the College

to 503 on the verbal part of the most recent test. The gap widened on the math part, with men outscoring women 530 to 494.

The scores showed "encouraging progress, overall," College Board President Donald M. Stewart said in a prepared statement. At the same time he cited some "troublesome trends":

- * Low scores and poor academic preparation on the parts of black and Mexican American men.

- * Grade inflation, with a record 37 percent of SAT takers reporting A averages in high school. That compares with 28 percent in 1928.

The SAT is entrenched on the East Coast. Of the latest high school class, 79 percent took the test in Connecticut, as did 74 percent in New York. In Western states, about half of seniors took the SAT.

But in the Midwest, where colleges and universities tend to prefer the rival

ACT test, the SAT gets much less play. Only 14 percent of the high school class of 1997 took the test in Illinois and only 9 percent took it in Missouri.

Not surprisingly, average scores were generally higher in states where smaller portions of students took the SAT. Missouri students averaged verbal scores of 567 and math scores of 568. In Illinois the verbal average was 562, and the math average was 578. ■

4. Hartford Courant

August 27, 1997

Many A students are not at the head of the SAT class

By ROBERT A. FRAHM

Across the nation, more students than ever are getting A's in high school classes even as their scores on the SAT college entrance exam are slipping, says a study released Tuesday.

The College Board, which administers the SAT, said a record 37 percent of college-bound seniors maintained A averages this year, up from 28 percent a decade ago.

Nevertheless, those A students scored a national average of 13 points lower on the verbal portion of the SAT and 1 point lower in mathematics than did their counterparts in 1987. Many believe that indicates the average SAT scores of such A students are being diluted by grade inflation.

A similar pattern occurred in Connecticut, where 20 percent of this year's test-takers were A students, up from 15 percent 10 years ago.

"We need to take a second look at what seems to be a rising pattern of grade inflation," said U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley.

Educators worry that the steady rise in classroom grades marks an erosion in classroom standards and takes the luster

off getting an A.

"When you see a C on a [high school student's] record now, it becomes a greater red flag than it was 10 years ago - and an A is not as exceptional," said Christopher Small, vice president for enrollment management at Trinity College in Hartford.

While A's are becoming more commonplace, Small said a growing number of high schools no longer rank their students, forcing college admissions officials to look more closely at SAT scores, extracurricular activities and other factors in deciding whom to admit.

Trinity picks a freshman class of 500 from about 4,100 applicants, many with A averages. "Sorting among them becomes a real challenge," Small said.

The College Board conducts an annual profile of students who take the SAT and found that this year's test-takers had a high school grade point average of 3.22 on a 4.0 scale, compared with 3.07 a decade earlier.

In Connecticut, the average grade point of those who take the SAT has risen slightly in 10 years, from 2.90 to 2.97.

Grade inflation, which also has occurred among college students, is so serious that The College Board plans to begin a major study of the issue this year, said Donald M. Stewart, the organization's president.

"Grades are not reflecting as adequately as they should what students know . . . and so are less reliable," he said.

Students, too, have expressed concern about what they see as a decline in standards. In a national study this year by The Public Agenda Foundation, half of the teenagers in public schools said schools fail to challenge them, and nearly two-thirds said they could do better in school if they tried.

The reasons for grade inflation are difficult to pin down, but Kenneth Sherrick, a veteran mathematics teacher at Berlin High School, said colleagues in math associations in Connecticut and elsewhere in New England have expressed concern about the pressure to give good grades.

"There is pressure from parents and pressure from high schools themselves to watch failure rates," he said. ■

Updated

1/97

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THE TRUE PICTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

U.S. education is improving on many measures of student learning, especially in critical areas on which schools, communities, states, and this nation have focused sustained effort. Areas of long-term improvement include course-taking, student achievement, high school completion, and postsecondary enrollment.

Course-taking of more rigorous subjects and classes has improved significantly:

- *The proportion of high school graduates taking the core courses* recommended in *A Nation At Risk* (4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of science, 3 years of math) increased to 52 percent by 1994, up from 14 percent in 1982 and 40 percent in 1990. [National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study: 1982, 1987, 1990, and 1994]
- *Since 1982, the percentage of graduates taking biology, chemistry, and physics has doubled*, rising from 10.6 percent in 1982 to 18.8 percent in 1990 and 21.3 percent in 1994. [NCES, High School Transcript Study: 1982, 1987, 1990, and 1994]
- *With increased participation in advanced placement (AP) courses, the number of AP exams that scored at 3 or above has tripled since 1982.* The number of AP examinations that received a passing score rose from 132,000 in 1982 to 476,000 in 1995. [The College Board, AP Program: National Summary, various years, and National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1995, calculations by Westat]

Student achievement is generally up:

Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased, particularly in science and math, areas that have been the focus of national attention. NAEP scores in reading and writing showed small, inconsistent changes and were stable overall. The achievement gap between White and minority students narrowed substantially over the period, although improvement appears to have stalled.

- *Average performance in mathematics improved between 1978 and 1994* for all three age groups tested and in every quartile, with the largest gains made by 9-year-olds. The improvement was equivalent to at least one grade level. [National Center for Education Statistics (1996), NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress Figure 1 and Table 4.1; John Bishop (1996), "The Impact of Curriculum-Based External Examinations on School Priorities and Student Learning," International Journal of Educational Research (in press)]
- *Performance in science in 1994 was higher* in all three age groups than in 1982, particularly in applying science skills and knowledge. For every quartile in each age group, scores are higher in 1994 than in 1982. In addition, more 9, 13, and 17-year-olds reached higher proficiency levels in 1992 than a decade earlier. [NCES (1994), NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress, Tables 1.1 and 2.1]
- *The gap in performance between White and minority students has narrowed since the 1970's in all subjects NAEP tests.* In the early 1990's, however, the gap began to widen. [NCES (1996), NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress, Figure 1.4, 4.4, 7.4, 10.4]

U.S. students score near the top on the latest international assessment of reading. American 4th graders outperformed students from all other nations except Finland. [Binkley, Marilyn and Trevor Williams (1996), Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics]

States and local communities are setting more challenging standards and student achievement is improving as a result:

- ***Kentucky's comprehensive school reforms*** are showing substantial improvement in student performance. Scores of Kentucky's 4th, 8th and 12th graders rose on the state's 1993-94 assessment and showed continued improvement on the 1994-95 assessments, with the most dramatic gains experienced by 4th graders. In all grades, the percentage of students performing at the proficient/distinguished level in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies increased over time. [Kentucky Department of Education Press Release, 1/30/96].
- ***The New York Times (5/9/95) reports that tougher graduation requirements in New York City public schools*** are spurring thousands more high school students to take and pass college-preparatory mathematics and science courses. The number of Hispanic and black students who passed the science test more than doubled from the previous year. Entering freshmen at the City University of New York are the best prepared academically in two decades [The New York Times, 12/10/95]. Grade schools in the city continue a four-year rise in test scores [The New York Times, 6/21/96]. In 1993 then-Chancellor Ramon Cortines required all high school students to take tougher Regents-level math and science. State Education Commissioner Richard Mills announced that all students would be required to take Regents-level classes [The New York Times, 4/23/96].

Tests used for admissions or placement in higher education have also posted increases at the same time that the numbers of high school students taking the tests have increased.

SAT

- ***The combined verbal and math scores on the SAT increased 16 points from 1982 to 1996.*** This figure is not affected by the College Board's recent "re-centering" of SAT scores because previous scores have been adjusted for equivalence with 1996 scores. Improvement is occurring at the same time as the numbers and diversity of test-takers are increasing. ["College-Board Reports Continuing Upward Trend in Average Scores on SAT I," News from the College Board, 8/22/96]
- ***Since 1992, the 10th anniversary of A Nation at Risk, scores are up 7 points on math and 5 points in on verbal.*** ["College-Board Reports Continuing Upward Trend in Average Scores on SAT I," News from the College Board, 8/22/96]
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- ***Over the past decade, dropout rates for Whites and Blacks have fallen substantially.*** For Blacks, the dropout rate had fallen from 18.4 percent in 1982 to 12.1 percent in 1995--a 34 percent decrease. For Whites, the rate had fallen from 11.4 to 8.6 percent over the same period--a 25 percent decrease. [NCES, draft Digest of Education Statistics: 1996, Table 101]

The gap between Whites and Blacks in high school completion rates has closed:

- ***In 1995, for the first time, Blacks and Whites completed high school at the same rate (87 percent of 25 to 29 year-olds).*** [Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, "Educational Attainment in the United States: March, 1995, 1996].

College going has risen dramatically:

Over half of all high school graduates enter college right after graduation, and college enrollments are at an all-time high. Over the past decade total fall enrollment in postsecondary institutions increased 15 percent from 12.5 million students in 1986 to 14.4 million in 1996.

- ***The percentage of high school graduates ages 18-24 enrolling in college reached an all-time high in 1994;*** the percentage also increased over 1992 levels for students ages 25-34 and 35 or older. [U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, as reported in National Center for Education Statistics: The Condition of Education: 1996, p.54]
- ***Similarly, the proportion of people ages 25 to 29 who have completed four or more years of college reached an all-time high in 1995,*** increasing from 23.6 percent in 1992 to 24.7 percent in 1995. [NCES, draft Digest of Education Statistics: 1996, Table 8]

This is all positive progress -- but still not fast enough. That's why President Clinton is committed to continue working for high standards, safe schools, technology in the classroom, quality teachers and increased access to college. When we focus sustained effort and careful investments on critical education issues at school, neighborhood, community and national levels, students and the Nation progress.

Significant but Spotty Gains Found for Science and Math in U.S. Schools, Report Says

By PETER APPLEBOME

Despite a persistent gloom about the nation's schools, a comprehensive assessment of science and mathematics education, from elementary to graduate levels, finds significant progress in test scores, curriculum and academic preparation.

The report by the National Science Foundation, made public yesterday, found that elementary schools are devoting more time to math and science, more high school students are taking advanced science courses, and student achievement for all ethnic groups has improved over the last 15 years on standardized tests.

On the other hand, the report, which largely deals with material gathered from 1977 to 1993, found that achievement varies enormously from state to state and from region to region. Some states, particularly in the Midwest, perform at a level comparable to that of the best performing nations, including South Korea and Taiwan. Others, particularly

in the Southeast, perform at a level equal to the worst, Jordan.

And the report finds continuing chasms in performance among racial groups. Black and Hispanic students, who make up a rapidly increasing percentage of the school population, continue to lag dramatically in test scores, participation in the teaching force and in receiving degrees in math and science.

For example, the report said that of 366 colleges and universities that awarded doctorates in science and engineering, nearly two-thirds awarded no doctorates to black students, and more than half awarded none to Hispanic students. And the number of black males receiving science and engineering doctorates, always a small fraction, has declined over the last 10 years; in 1992, blacks accounted for only 2 percent of such degrees.

Still, the report mostly provides a much more positive view of the nation's schools and colleges and the direction in which they are headed

than the conventional wisdom of incessant educational decline.

"Achievement is up, and there are clear signs that the system is changing for the better," said Luther Williams, assistant director for education and human resources at the National Science Foundation. "I think that has to bode well for the future."

But the signs of progress are more incremental than dramatic.

"The overall trends are up for all groups," said Terrence Russell, executive director of the Association for Institutional Research, an organization of higher education researchers based in Tallahassee, Fla. "That doesn't mean there aren't big differences between different ethnic groups and different regions. Good is not best, but better is better than worse."

The report, the second to result from 1991 legislation requiring the National Science Foundation to make biennial assessments of the state of science and mathematics education in the nation, is a compila-

tion of figures on tests, graduation rates, curriculum changes and other assessments, including national and international studies like the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It makes particular efforts to gauge recent progress in curriculum and standards.

On the N.A.E.P. test, the primary source on student achievement in the United States and most recently given in 1992, performance on math and science tests "has improved slightly for all ages and racial ethnic groups over the past 15 years," the report said. For example, the percentage of 13-year-old black students who were found proficient, scoring 250 out of 500 on the test, increased to 51 percent in 1992 from 29 percent in 1978.

And there are signs that students are taking more demanding courses. In 1980, fewer than 20 percent of the states required two or more years of mathematics; in 1992, 86 percent did.

In 1982, 79 percent of high school graduates had studied biology; in 1992, the figure was 93 percent. For

beginning algebra, the figures were 68 percent in 1982 and 79 percent in 1992. For chemistry in the same period they were 32 percent and 56 percent. For advanced algebra, they were 37 percent and 56 percent.

But the report found what it called a "startling" level of diversity in academic achievement between states. Math scores for 13-year-olds in the best performing states — Iowa, North Dakota, Minnesota and Maine — ranked with Taiwan and Korea. The lowest performing states — Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi — and the District of Columbia ranked with lowest rated nation, Jordan, of 15 surveyed.

Overall, disparities between black and Hispanic students and white and Asian students narrowed, the report said. For example, since 1977, the number of 9-year-olds who scored 200 or above on the test increased by 24 percentage points for black students, 14 percentage points for Hispanic students and 9 percentage

points for white students. Scores for Asian students were not broken out.

The gaps existed even among students of the same socioeconomic status. On the N.A.E.P. science test, instead of the gap narrowing, the number of 13-year-old black students reaching a proficient level grew more slowly than the percentage of white and Hispanic students.

And, despite the increasing diversity of the nation's schools, there has been no corresponding increase in the diversity of the teaching force. In 1992, white teachers taught about 93 percent of 12th grade science and math students.

There were conflicting figures on the performance of male and female students. On science tests, both had comparable scores in elementary school. Boys did better in middle schools and high schools, but the gap narrowed considerably from 1977 to 1992. But male students did significantly better than female students on Scholastic Assessment Test and American College Test scores.

THE TRUE PICTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

U.S. education is improving on many measures of student learning, especially in critical areas on which schools, communities, states, and this nation have focused sustained effort. Areas of long-term improvement include course-taking, student achievement, high school completion, and postsecondary enrollment.

Course-taking of more rigorous subjects and classes has improved significantly:

- ***The proportion of high school graduates taking the core courses*** recommended in *A Nation At Risk* (4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of science, 3 years of math) increased to 52 percent by 1994, up from 14 percent in 1982 and 40 percent in 1990. [National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study: 1982, 1987, 1990, and 1994]
- ***Since 1982, the percentage of graduates taking biology, chemistry, and physics has doubled***, rising from 10.6 percent in 1982 to 18.8 percent in 1990 and 21.3 percent in 1994. [NCES, High School Transcript Study: 1982, 1987, 1990, and 1994]
- ***With increased participation in advanced placement (AP) courses, the number of AP exams that scored at 3 or above has tripled since 1982.*** The number of AP examinations that received a passing score rose from 132,000 in 1982 to 476,000 in 1995. [The College Board, AP Program: National Summary, various years, and National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1995, calculations by Westat]

Student achievement is generally up:

Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased, particularly in science and math, areas that have been the focus of national attention. NAEP scores in reading and writing showed small, inconsistent changes and were stable overall. The achievement gap between White and minority students has narrowed.

- ***Average performance in mathematics improved between 1978 and 1992*** for all three age groups tested, with the largest gains made by 9- and 13-year-olds. The improvement was equivalent to at least one grade level. [National Center for Education Statistics (1994), NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress Figure 1; John Bishop (1996), "The Impact of Curriculum-Based External Examinations on School Priorities and Student Learning," International Journal of Educational Research (in press)]
- ***Performance in science in 1992 was higher*** in all three age groups than in 1982, particularly in demonstrating general science skills and knowledge. In addition, more 17-year-olds reached higher proficiency levels in 1992 than a decade earlier. [NCES (1994), NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress, Table 2.1]
- ***The gap in performance between white and minority students has been narrowing.*** Scores of 13-year-olds, for example, increased by at least one grade level in mathematics between 1973 and 1992; scores of African-American 13-year-olds rose by more than two grade levels over the period. [NCES (1994), NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress, Figure 4.2]

U.S. students score near the top on the latest international assessment of reading. American 4th graders outperformed students from all other nations except Finland. [Binkley, Marilyn and Trevor Williams (1996), Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics]

States and local communities are setting more challenging standards and student achievement is

improving as a result:

- ***Kentucky's comprehensive school reforms*** are showing substantial improvement in student performance. Scores of Kentucky's 4th, 8th and 12th graders rose on the state's 1993-94 assessment and showed continued improvement on the 1994-95 assessments, with the most dramatic gains experienced by 4th graders. In all grades, the percentage of students performing at the proficient/distinguished level in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies increased over time. [Kentucky Department of Education Press Release, 1/30/96].
- ***The New York Times (5/9/95) reports that tougher graduation requirements in New York City public schools*** are spurring thousands more high school students to take and pass college-preparatory mathematics and science courses. The number of Hispanic and black students who passed the science test more than doubled from the previous year. Entering freshmen at the City University of New York are the best prepared academically in two decades [The New York Times, 12/10/95]. Grade schools in the city continue a four-year rise in test scores [The New York Times, 6/21/96]. In 1993 then-Chancellor Ramon Cortines required all high school students to take tougher Regents-level math and science. State Education Commissioner Richard Mills announced that all students would be required to take Regents-level classes [The New York Times, 4/23/96].

Tests used for admissions or placement in higher education have also posted increases at the same time that the numbers of high school students taking the tests have increased.

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- **Highest SAT Scores In Over Two Decades.** According to figures from the College Board, the average combined SAT score in 1996 was higher than in any year since 1974, at the same time that the number and diversity of students taking the SAT has increased dramatically. *Scores are up for both women and men, in both the verbal and math tests.* [News from the College Board, 8/22/96]
- **ACT Scores Are Also Up.** ACT scores also are up since 1992, increasing or holding steady in each of the last four years. The ACT attributes the increased scores to better preparation and secondary education and students taking more higher-level courses. [News from the ACT, 8/15/96]
- **Percentage of Students Taking the Number of Core Courses Recommended in A Nation At Risk Has Increased** from 40% in 1990 to 52% in 1994 (recommended 4 years of English, and 3 years of math, science, and social studies). [National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study]
- **Percentage of High School Graduates Enrolled in College Is Up Since 1992 -- and the percentage of high school graduates ages 18-24 enrolled in college reached an all-time high in 1994** [1994 is the latest year for which data is available. Bureau of the Census, CPS]
- **Record Number of College and University Degrees Conferred.** There were increases in the number of degrees conferred between 1991-92 and 1993-94 (latest year available) at all levels: associate, bachelor's, master's, first-professional, and doctoral; bachelor's degrees alone increased by over 32,000 nationally. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1996, table 239 (forthcoming))
- **Record Share of People Ages 25 to 29 Have Completed 4 or More Years of College --** the proportion increased from 23.6 percent in 1992 to 24.7 percent in 1995 -- the highest ever. [NCES, draft Digest of Education Statistics: 1996, Table 8, unpublished manuscript]
- **43% Increase in the Share of Schools Connected to the Internet in Just 1 Year.** As of the fall of 1995, 50% of U.S. public schools had access to the internet, up from 35% in the fall of 1994; over the same period, the percentage of instructional rooms across the country with Internet access tripled (but still low). (National Center for Education Statistics: Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1995, February, 1996, p. 3.)
- **250 Charter Schools Today From Only 1 in 1992.** In 1992 there was only one charter school; in 1995-96 there were roughly 250 charter schools in operation, serving an estimated 72,000 students (based on an average school size of 287 students in 1994-95 reported by Medler and Nathan (1995)). The President's balanced budget proposes funding to help set up up to 3,000 new charter schools over 5 years. (Ted Kolderie, Center for Policy Studies, The Charter Idea: Update and Prospects, Fall 1995; U.S. Department of Education)
- **48 States Are Developing Standards.** 48 states are developing common academic standards for their students in core subject areas, with 38 states developing new or revised academic standards documents in the last year. (Making Standards Matter 1996, American Federation of Teachers, August 5, 1996, p. 13).
- **42 States Developing Assessments Linked to Core Subjects.** 42 states either have or are in the process of developing assessments linked to their standards. (Making Standards Matter 1996, American Federation of Teachers, August 5, 1996, p. 22).