

Sun Journal

SAD 17 board told SAT scores below state average

Leslie Dixon
September 16, 2014

PARIS — SAD 17 Curriculum Director Heather Manchester told school directors Monday night that SAT test scores for high school juniors remain below the state average in reading, mathematics and writing.

Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School Principal Ted Moccia tells the SAD 17 board of directors Monday night that he intends to look at SAT test data from other schools to see how local students fared in comparison.

SAD 17 board member Jared Cash of Norway tells fellow directors Monday night he's pleased the state is doing away with the SAT because of the previous comparisons of results with dissimilar school districts.

This past spring, juniors at Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School in Paris scored four points below the state average of 1,141 in reading, mathematics and writing. For the past three years, students have scored anywhere from two to four points below the state average in all three tests, according to numbers presented by Manchester.

The state average has remained stagnant.

“This seems to be a trend for us,” Manchester said. “We seem to be a little bit below the state average each year.”

In the spring of 2006, Maine began requiring all public high school juniors to take the SAT in critical reading, writing and mathematics, and a separate science assessment, the Maine Educational Assessment test, to measure the assessment standards of the Maine Learning Results.

The SAT is being phased out in favor of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment to assess student learning levels in reading and mathematics. The state will continue to use the Maine Educational Assessment to assess science in grades five, eight and 11.

Earlier this year, a report issued by the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C., showed that despite a dramatic rise in per-pupil spending on education — 180 percent in Maine since 1972 — SAT scores have declined overall by about 4 percent.

The report said Maine is one of only two states that require universal SAT testing, which by its nature means low learning student scores will be factored into the overall scores, driving the average score down. In other states, students who choose to take the test are typically those going to college.

The SAT will remain a voluntary test.

Manchester said the new test is more aligned to the Common Core state standards.

“It will be interesting to see how it all turns out in the spring,” she said, when the new tests are given.

In addition to the SAT scores, Manchester detailed the results of the Maine Educational Assessment science test results which showed grade 11 students were three points below the state average of 1,141. Grade five students were one point below the state average of 546 and grade eight students scored eight points below the state average of 850.

Oxford Hills Middle School Principal Troy Eastman said he attributed some of the eighth-grade numbers to having students at two campuses and the subsequent need to revamp curriculum into thematic semesters. This year, he said, there is a greater emphasis on the sciences.