

Utah Statewide School Testing Results: 2001 Research Report #649, March 2002

Lesson Summary

Utah has used the SAT 9 to test its students since 1997. These scores are often interpreted as a measure of ability; however, many demographic factors can influence test performance. Utah's scores have remained relatively static over the last five years and are near the national median in most instances.

Related Websites

- National Center for Education Statistics:
www.nces.ed.gov
- Utah State Office of Education:
www.usoe.k12.ut.us

Utah Core Curriculum

- **Standard** 6250-10
Objective 6250-1001
Analyze the gap between "the affluent society" and "the other America"
- **Standard** 6350-05
Objective 6350-0503
Analyze social inequality based upon class stratification.

Useful Classes

American Problems, Economics, and Sociology.

This lesson plan is provided by Utah Foundation to assist in using the accompanying Research Report in high school or middle school classes. Please feel free to copy the Research Report for your students.

Find overhead masters for this lesson on our website at:
www.utahfoundation.org/schools.

Vocabulary

Augment: Increase or add to.

Caveat: Warning or a caution.

Collaboration: Working together.

Context: Circumstances that may change the meanings of words.

Demographics: Characteristics of a group, e.g. size, gender, age, and other social or economic factors.

Mean: A mathematical average.

Median: Midway between two numbers.

Multiplicity: A great number.

Norm Referenced: Made to compare to national averages.

Percentile: A number that provides a ranking against others. For example, a percentile score of 62 means a student performed better than 62% of other students who took the test

Quick Questions

1. Utah students traditionally score highest in which SAT 9 test categories?

Answer: mathematics, social science and science.

2. Why do some people believe that large enrollments in private schools hurt the test scores of public schools?

Answer: Public schools may lose a large number of talented students who would score well.

3. List three (3) demographic factors that might predict a school having lower test scores.

Answer: High Limited English Proficiency (LEP) enrollment, a high percentage of minority students, and a high percentage of low-income students in a district.

4. Some would argue that low test scores are not necessarily indicative of lower ability. What are some other factors that could affect test scores?

Answer: Culturally biased test questions, lack of resources within poorer school districts, larger class sizes, and/or weak LEP instruction.

5. What is test bias?

Answer: Test bias is: "a systematic effect on performance rating that is based on factors not related to the ability of students."

6. Overall, how have Utah scores changed over the last five (5) years?

Answer: They have not changed very much. Some have declined, but they have mostly remained the same.

7. According to the Utah State Legislature, what is the mission of the charter school program?

Answer: To encourage innovative teaching practices, empower teachers to actively design and implement learning opportunities, find new ways to measure learning outcomes and other forms of accountability, enhance the role of parents in making decisions at the school level, and foster school choice for parents and students.

8. What are three reasons why the alternative middle schools scores should not be analyzed comparatively?

Answer: the class sizes are relatively small, many smaller communities don't have separate alternative programs in place, and information for many schools is incomplete.

Critical Thinking Activities

1. Assemble groups of students to consider answers to the following questions and present those answers to the class.
 - a. How do your schools' test scores compare to the state average? The national average?
 - b. What was the predicted battery range for your school? How was that prediction calculated? Why do you think the predicted scores have such a wide range?
 - c. Why does being in an LEP program (Limited English Proficiency), a minority student, or a low-income student, or a combination of the above, tend to lower a student's test scores?
 - d. Why do some students, regardless of being identified in the above group, score above the average for their peers?

2. This simulation will help your students to develop creative problem solving solutions. They will be exploring ways to improve their own school's test scores. At the same time, they will gain an understanding of how the community views their schools.

Utah's State Government has claimed that they produce high levels of educational performance with low per pupil spending. However, careful reading of this report shows our scores are generally in the 40-60 percentile, which is hovering right around the national average.

Have the students propose activities and strategies that they think will raise scores. In the first column, list the proposed solution. In the other spaces, list the possible pros and cons of each suggestion.

Solution	Pro	Con
Example: Expand the standards for eliminating students from the testing pool.	Scores will Rise. Community Reaction will be positive.	Not an accurate reflection of overall school performance. May unfairly label some students.

Quiz Page

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Collaboration	Median	
Context	Multiplicity	

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