



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STAMFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Question 1: What are the highlights of Stamford Public Schools' recent Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) results?

Answer: CMT and CAPT highlights are summarized below:

CMT Highlights:

Stamford Public Schools (SPS) made many grade-level gains on the 2008 CMTs, particularly in grades 4 and 7 in math, reading, and writing. Improvement in grades 4 and 7 was most notable among students in the NCLB subgroups: Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Special Education subgroups.

Math:

- **ALL STUDENTS:** The gains made by SPS in grades 4 and 7 outpaced or were on par with gains statewide. The percentage of SPS grade 4 students at/above GOAL increased four points, compared to a decrease of one percentage point statewide; in grade 7, SPS and the state increased three points.
- **SUBGROUPS:** Among grade 4 students, all federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) subgroups (Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners) demonstrated substantial gains from 2007 to 2008 at the at/above GOAL level, compared to the same groups statewide, which posted zero or negative gains.
- **SUBGROUPS:** All Grade 7 NCLB subgroups showed an increase in the percentage of students at/above GOAL, except for the White student group, which maintained the same rate in 2007 and 2008.

Reading:

- **ALL STUDENTS:** In reading, SPS increased the percentage of students at/above GOAL in grades 4, 5, 6 and 7, most notably in grade 7 (a five point increase).
- **SUBGROUPS:** Among grade 7 students, all NCLB subgroups (Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners) demonstrated substantial gains from 2007 to 2008 at/above GOAL level, most notably among Black students (a nine point increase), Economically Disadvantaged students (a nine point increase) and English Language Learners (a 12 point increase).

Writing:

- **SUBGROUPS:** In writing, the percentage of students at/above GOAL in grade 7 increased among Black students (11 points) and Economically Disadvantaged students (6 points).

CAPT Highlights:

- Gains on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) posted by grade 10 students in SPS outpaced those made by students in similar communities and across the state on the 2008 CAPT. SPS grade 10 CAPT gains in all subjects tested (math, reading, writing, and science) surpassed those made by other cities in its District Reference Group (Danbury, Meriden, Norwalk, Ansonia, Derby, East Hartford, Norwich and West Haven) as well as those made by neighboring communities, some of which experienced declines.
- SPS grade 10 students posted the largest gains in writing, where 85% of students achieved at/above the PROFICIENT level (a 12-point increase) and 47% of students achieved at/above the GOAL level (a 12-point increase).
- In Math, 72% of students achieved a/above the PROFICIENT level (a 9-point increase) and 38% achieved at/above GOAL (an 11-point increase). In science, 72% of students achieved at/above the PROFICIENT level (a 1-point increase) and 33% of students achieved at/above GOAL (a 5-point increase). In Reading, 79% of students achieved at/above the PROFICIENT level (a 3-point increase) and 35% of students achieved at/above GOAL (a 1-point increase).

Question 2: What is the status of Stamford Public Schools relative to NCLB and the State?

Answer: The status of the SPS district is **Year V In Need of Improvement**. The chart below shows each school’s status:

ALL CLEAR (AYP targets achieved)		
Westover Magnet Elementary		
AYP NOT ACHIEVED (AYP targets not achieved for one year)		
Toquam Magnet Elementary*	Scofield Magnet Middle	AITE
SAFE HARBOR AND YEAR I IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT (AYP targets achieved for 2007-2008, following two years of not achieving AYP)		
Newfield Elementary		
YEAR II IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT – (AYP targets not achieved for three years)		
Hart Magnet Elementary*		
KT Murphy Elementary*		
Rogers Magnet Elementary*		
Springdale Elementary*		
Stillmeadow Elementary*		

YEAR III IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT – (AYP targets not achieved for four years)		
Davenport Elementary* Roxbury Elementary	Dolan Middle	
YEAR IV IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT – (AYP targets not achieved for five years)		
Northeast Elementary Stark Elementary*	Cloonan Middle Rippowam Middle	Stamford High
YEAR V IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT – (AYP targets not achieved for six years)		
	Turn-of-River Middle	Westhill High

* Title I School

Question 3: How does the State determine Adequate Yearly Progress/In Need of Improvement?

Answer: The State determines Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by the level of student participation and achievement in Math and Reading on the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) in grades 3-8 and on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in grade 10. These tests are administered annually.

It is expected that 95% of all students in grades 3-8 and 10 participate in CMTs and CAPT testing.

Student achievement in Math and Reading on the CMTs and CAPT is evaluated on a five point scale. For purposes of AYP, the percent of students achieving at/above Level 3 (Proficient) is calculated in Math and Reading for the district, for each school in the district, and for the NCLB student subgroups: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners.

Schools are labeled In Need of Improvement when they do not meet AYP targets in the same subject, either Reading or Math, for two years in a row on the CMTs or CAPT.

Question 4: How did Stamford Public Schools do in comparison to the State?

Answer: The increases in the Proficiency targets in Math and Reading from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008 presented a challenge for Stamford Schools as well as for schools across the State. In 2006-2007, 16 of Stamford’s 20 schools had not achieved AYP for one or more years; in 2007-2008, 19 of the 20 schools had not achieved AYP for one or more years. Statewide, 415 schools (40%) did not reach AYP in 2007-2008, 100 more than in 2006-2007.

Question 5: What are the implications of not making AYP for Stamford Public Schools?

Answer: The State requires Stamford to develop a District Improvement Plan. This plan is aligned with Stamford's Strategic Plan and the Board of Education's goals for improving student performance K-12. Additionally, all Stamford schools write School Improvement Plans with input from administration, staff and parents. These plans include specific goals, performance indicators, and strategies to address student achievement.

School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services (learning and enrichment opportunities beyond the school day) are offered to families in the Title I schools. Qualified families may receive Supplemental Education Services or transfer to a Choice School, but not both.

Stamford Public Schools will continue to partner with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to meet all accountability requirements. Ten schools in the district (those in Need of Improvement Year III or higher, as well as the district itself) will participate in CSDE assessments, which will yield valuable information about reform strategies in high-need schools. Seven Title I schools In Need of Improvement will receive technical assistance from CSDE in the areas of curriculum and instruction and data driven decision making. The district will also participate in CSDE's Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) workshops.

Question 6: How can Stamford Public Schools make progress on standardized tests such as the CMT, CAPT, and SAT and yet be labeled a District In Need of Improvement?

Answer: There are varied ways to measure student achievement. One approach is to look at the progress of students. For example, educators can look at the achievement of third graders in one school year in comparison to the achievement of third graders in the following school year. Or, we can compare the achievement of third graders in one school year to the achievement of these students in subsequent years.

A second approach is to evaluate student achievement against specific targets. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation uses this method. The percent of students achieving at/above Proficient in Math and Reading in a given year is evaluated against targets set by the Connecticut State Department of Education for that year.

It is very possible for students to demonstrate substantial progress, but fall below expected targets. By analogy, it is possible to be on a weight loss program and consistently lose pounds each week, but yet not reach a desired outcome.

Several states have petitioned the U.S. Department of Education to add a measure of progress to the existing NCLB approach. At present, a few states have been permitted to experiment with growth models which emphasize the progress of students over time. Connecticut has begun to pursue the growth model approach to evaluating student achievement.

In the meantime, Stamford will continue to evaluate the progress of our students over time, while at the same time assessing the outcomes of our students against NCLB targets.

Question 7: What are our strategies to improve performance?

Answer: The mission of SPS is to prepare each and every student for higher education and success in the 21st century. Although test scores are one indicator of achievement, SPS has invested in several long-term strategies to increase college readiness for all students: core curriculum; accountability; and family and community engagement. We have begun implementing rigorous, standards-based core curriculum in all content areas for all students, first with Everyday Mathematics for K-5. Our accountability work will increase our use of data to identify progress and areas for improvement in addition to test scores. The new SPS Office of Family and Community Engagement will capitalize on the strengths of our students' families and the greater Stamford community to ensure that the needed interventions and supports are available to all students.

Question 8: Where can I go for more information?

Answer: Each year, the Stamford Public School district mails all families who have children in grades 3-8 and 10 written copies of CMT and CAPT reports. All families with children in grades K-12 receive reports on school and district performance on the CMTs/CAPT.

School and district performance on the CMTs and CAPT can also be accessed on the CSDE website, www.sde.ct.gov as well as on www.ctreports.com

Additional information is available from the following resources:

No Child Left Behind
www.ed.gov/nclb/

U.S. Department of Education
1-800-USA-LEARN
www.ed.gov

"Education News Parents Can Use"
www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/index.html

