

Student test scores improve, though still below pre-pandemic levels

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State Superintendent Jill Underly today touted state public school test scores while saying she's "tired of politicians claiming that our children aren't learning because they aren't reaching a proficiency score."

The Department of Public Instruction data released yesterday show public school scores have improved since the COVID-19 pandemic, though overall scores have yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. The data also show continued racial disparities in math and reading scores, particularly for Black, American Indian and Hispanic students.

Underly argued the state holds its students to much higher standards than other states.

"Instead of using test scores as a cudgel, we should all take the time to learn what a high bar proficiency on this test represents, because the truth is that our proficiency cut scores are very high in comparison to every other state in the country," Underly said.

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Overall, 38.9% of public school students had proficient scores in English language arts, while 37.4% had proficient scores in math.

The scores included below apply to public school students.

The data measure scores and participation in assessments including: the Forward Exam for grades 3-8 and 10; the PreACT Secure exam, which gauges ACT preparedness for grades 9 and 10; and the ACT statewide exam for grade 11. The data also include scores for Dynamic Learning Maps assessments for students with

significant cognitive disabilities.

In the English language arts portion of the Forward exam, 39.2% of students received proficient or advanced scores, an increase from 37% in 2021-2022. Nearly 58% of students received non-proficient scores and 2.8% weren't tested.

Black, Hispanic and American Indian students had the highest percentages of non-proficient scores. That includes 84.7% of Black students with non-proficient scores and 10.5% proficient, 77.6% of American Indian students who had non-proficient scores and 18.2% proficient and 73.1% of Hispanic students with non-proficient scores compared to 22.8% proficient.

The percentage of proficient or advanced Forward Exam math scores increased to 41.1% from 39.3% in 2021-2022, while 56.4% of students received non-proficient scores and 2.5% weren't tested.

The data show the same three groups had the highest percentages of non-proficient math scores. Of Black students, 86.7% had non-proficient scores while 8.2% were proficient, while 76.1% of Hispanic students had non-proficient scores and 21.4% proficient and 77.1% of American Indian students had non-proficient scores compared to 18.6% proficient.

Meanwhile, 37.8% of students scored advanced or proficient on the ACT statewide exam's English language arts portion, up from 35% in 2021-2022. In the most recent data, 53.4% scored non-proficient, while 8.8% of students weren't tested.

Black, American Indian and Hispanic students had the highest percentages of non-proficient scores in the English language arts portion. That includes 70.3% of American Indian students with non-proficient scores and 11.4% proficient, 68.5% of Hispanic students with non-proficient scores and 19.5% proficient, and 64.3% of Black students with non-proficient scores compared to 9.3% proficient.

For the ACT's math portion, 26.9% of students had advanced or proficient scores, compared to 27% in 2021-2022. Non-proficient scores amounted to 64.4% of students, with 8.7% of students who weren't tested.

Black, American Indian and Hispanic students also had the highest percentages of non-proficient scores for the math portion of the exam. That includes 78.6% of Hispanic students with non-proficient scores and 17.7% proficient, 75.7% of

American Indian students with non-proficient scores and 6.1% proficient, and 70.6% of Black students with non-proficient scores and 3.2% proficient.

See the press release [here](#).

See more of the data through DPI's [WISEdash portal](#).

The data DPI release also included test scores from private voucher schools.

The DPI release noted private school students in the state's Private School Choice Programs had proficiency rates of 22.1% in English language arts and 17.9% in mathematics in 2022-23.

Both rates are lower than the rates for public schools.

However, School Choice Wisconsin in a release said choice schools had outscored their public school peers when comparing data for economically disadvantaged students.

School Choice Wisconsin President Nicholas Kelly said private schools in the choice programs can provide what parents want.

"This also shows that the recent bipartisan legislation for increased funding was a sound investment in our state's future," Kelly said.

See the release [here](#).

See the DPI data [here](#).