



# Board Monitoring System: College and Career Readiness

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Purpose

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) exists to strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston by assuring its youth the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere. In fulfilling this goal, HISD's Board of Education has designed a program to systematically monitor the district's goals and core values. The following results inform the progress of the district as it relates to rigorous education, specifically the percentage of students at or above criterion set by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on the SAT/ACT.

Board Monitoring Scorecard				
Rigorous Education	Student Achievement: College and Career Readiness	2012–2013 Class of 2013	2013–2014 Class of 2014	2014–2015 Class of 2015
		Percentage of Students at or above TEA's criterion on the SAT/ACT	<b>14.5</b>	<b>13.8</b>

Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports 2014–2015, 2015–2016

Note: At/Above criterion is defined by TEA as a score of at least 1110 on the SAT critical reading and mathematics sections combined, or at least 24 on the ACT composite. Includes SAT School-Day Results.

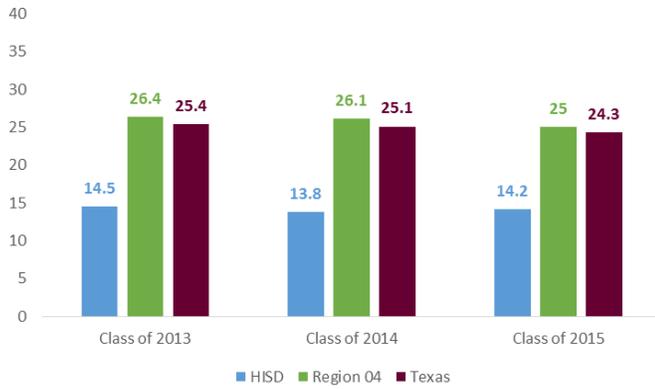
### Findings

The percentage of students who scored at or above criterion on the SAT or ACT increased by less than one percentage point from 13.8 percent for the class of 2014 to 14.2 percent for the class of 2015. The district's rate increased while Region 04's and the state's rates decreased.

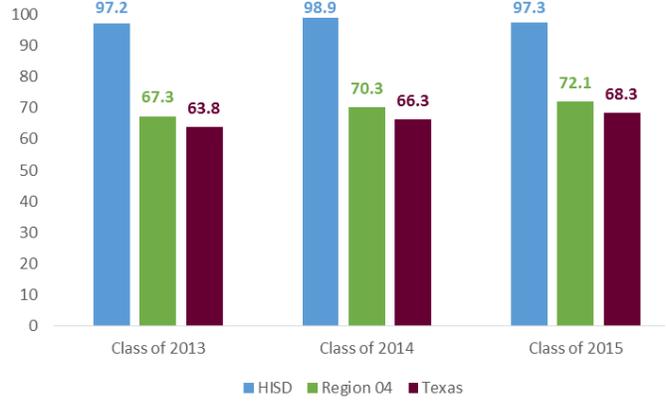
**Figure 1** shows the percentage of students who scored at or above the TEA's criterion for SAT or ACT to be considered college ready. A smaller proportion of HISD students in the class of 2015 met this benchmark compared to students in Region 04 and Texas overall. HISD performance is lower than that of the region and state, in part, because the district continues to test a substantially larger proportion of students than most other districts. For example, among the class of 2015, over 97 percent of HISD students took either the SAT or ACT compared to only 72 percent of students in Region 04 and 68 percent of students in Texas overall (**Figure 2**).

HISD's policy of exposing more students to college readiness assessments could also explain why average SAT and ACT scores tend to be lower among HISD students compared to the region and the state (**Figures 3 and 4**); and why more students are scoring at or above 500 on SAT subject tests (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 1. Percent at or Above SAT/ACT Criterion**

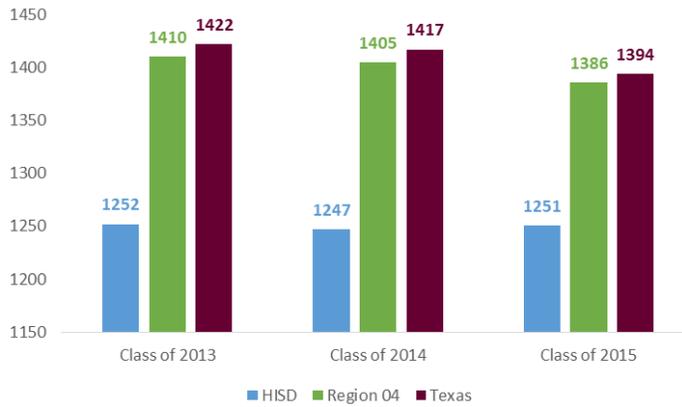


**Figure 2. Percent of Class Tested SAT/ACT**

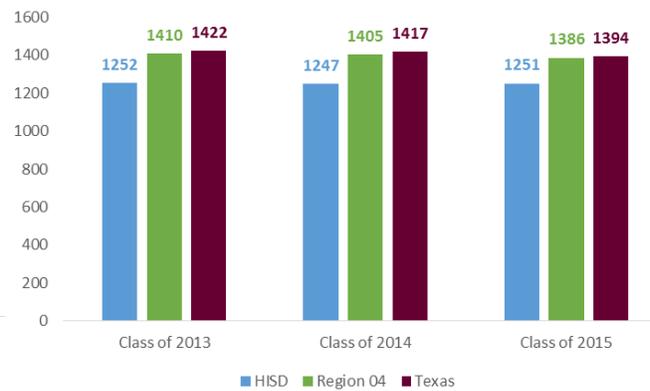


Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013–2014, 2014–2015

**Figure 3. Average SAT Scores**

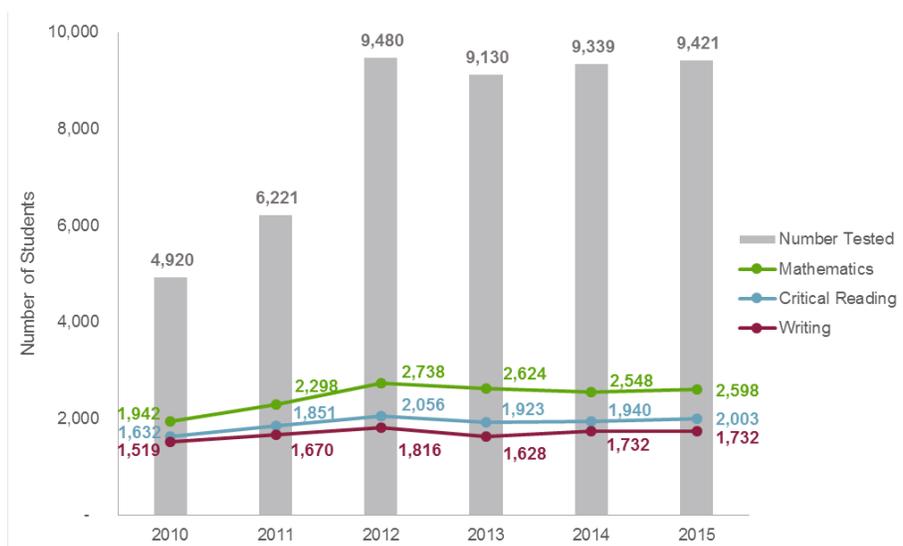


**Figure 4. Average ACT Scores**



Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013–2014, 2014–2015

Figure 5 shows the number of HISD students who scored at or above 500 on any subject of the SAT for the classes of 2010 through 2015.



Source for 2010 through 2014: HISD Research and Accountability Department, SAT Results for Class of 2014.

Source for 2015: College Board 2015 SAT data file, received September 25, 2015.

Notes: Race/ethnicity data presented for years 2010 through 2014 is self-reported by students when they take the SAT.

Race/ethnicity data for 2015 is sourced from HISD Data Warehouse, retrieved October 2015. SAT School-Day results included in counts above.

Figure 5 indicates:

- The number of students in 2015 who scored 500 or above on Math or Critical Reading increased by 50 and 63 students, respectively, from 2014.
- In 2015, the proportion of students who scored 500 or above on Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing was 28, 21, and 18 percent, respectively. This is similar to performance in 2014 when 27, 21, and 19 percent of students scored 500 or above on the same subjects.

## Administrative Response

### SAT

The district is pleased to see that the class of 2016 experienced gains in performance levels on the SAT reading and writing sections and that overall participation has nearly doubled over the past six years. However, there is still a critical need to ensure that more students are successful on the exam. To do so, the Curriculum and Instruction Division will continue to increase the level of instructional rigor through the inclusion of explicitly-embedded SAT/ACT/post-secondary items into the district's Master Course lessons and will also provide coaching to teachers around these higher-level thinking strategies. The Advanced Academics Department is also expanding more rigorous coursework, including Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB), by expanding the number of campuses that offer advanced computer science courses as a way to ensure that students are challenged to think critically. Additionally, the Advanced Academics Department continues to sponsor AP Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on district early-release days to allow teachers to collaborate and share best practices.

Special populations are also being provided targeted interventions and supports to ensure that they are being prepared to excel on the SAT. The Office of Special Education Services is ensuring that more students with disabilities receive access to their accommodations on the SAT. Training and education is

being provided to campus staff on the College Board's accommodations request process. Additionally, directed support is being provided to campuses with historically low accommodation approval rates. As a result of the prescriptive interventions that are being provided, the district has seen an exponential increase in the number of students with disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodations on College Board assessments. The Multilingual Department is also ensuring that English Language Learner (ELL) students are being set up for success by disseminating SAT testing information through efforts led by a College and Career Readiness Manager. These efforts include partnerships with high-school English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, strategic college tours throughout the year, presentations conducted at high schools, and one-on-one student conferences.

To provide students with opportunities to prepare for the SAT and PSAT, the College and Career Readiness Division launched an initiative called "You *Khan* Do It" that utilizes the online Khan Academy SAT preparation platform. Once a student links his/her College Board account to their Khan Academy account, a personalized SAT preparation curriculum is created based on his/her individual strengths and weaknesses (as assessed through their performance on the school day PSAT). The district is providing training and support so that campuses fully utilize this tool with their students. Already, some of the students who have used it have increased their SAT scores by hundreds of points.

The district is also promoting additional venues for students to meet state college readiness benchmarks (and thereby avoid having to take remedial level courses in college). These include the ACT and TSI exams. The College and Career Readiness Division is looking into the possibility of administering the TSI college placement exam to eligible students during the school year and providing support and resources to students so that they can prepare for the exam. Similarly, the district is examining data to assess the potential benefits of administering the ACT to additional students. The ultimate goal is to provide students with multiple pathways for them to demonstrate college and career readiness.

## **ACT**

The district continues to promote awareness and information around the ACT, as reflected in the increase in the number of the district's students taking the exam. Although the district does not cover the costs associated with the ACT or administer it during the school day, students are encouraged to take the exam and the district helps eligible low-income students receive fee waivers. HISD performance levels on the ACT are higher than the state and national averages, although the fact that only a fraction of the district's students take the exam does not allow the district to conclude whether the ACT is an overall better option than the SAT for its students. The College and Career Readiness division will be conducting an analysis of district students who take both the SAT and ACT to assess whether more students (particularly those from groups that traditionally have underperformed on the SAT) would benefit from taking the ACT. In the meantime, the district will continue to encourage more students to take the ACT in addition to the SAT, even if not administered during the school day.