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Kansas City Area: Dropout Rates Fueling Violent Crime

Nineteen of the top 25 largest U.S. cities have school districts where 40 percent or more of students do not graduate on time. Research shows that high school dropouts are three and a half times more likely than graduates to be arrested and eight times more likely to be incarcerated. Nearly 70 percent of all inmates in our nation's prisons failed to earn a high school diploma.

In Kansas City area schools, more than 40 percent of students fail to graduate from high school on time. The new report, entitled "School or the Streets," includes research showing that high-quality pre-kindergarten is the most effective deterrent against high school dropouts.

A landmark study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool- which Head Start is modeled after - showed the program greatly improved graduation rates and curbed future crime, increasing graduation rates by 44 percent among those who participated.

Early childhood education is the most widely implemented school reform that increases graduation rates and has been proven to increase school readiness among young children and prevent dropouts.

Increasing graduation rates by 10 percentage points would prevent 25 murders and 1,700 aggravated assaults in Kansas, and more than 70 murders and 4,400 aggravated assaults in Missouri annually.

Long-term benefits of early childhood education and care include higher graduation rates, college enrollment and income levels, as well as significant reductions in crime.

Kansas and Missouri report:

<http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/fcik-dropout-mo-kan.pdf>

Missouri SAT Report

A record number of students in the class of 2008 took the SAT this year, with a higher percentage of first-generation students than last year and a high rate of minority student participation, the College Board announced today. This year's average scores mirror those of last year, indicating that student performance held steady despite the increase in the number of test-takers.

The number of SAT takers rose to more than 1.5 million (1,518,859), an 8 percent increase from five years ago and a 29.5 percent increase from 10 years ago. The SAT continues to be the nation's most widely taken standardized college admissions test. Combined with high school grades, the SAT is also the best predictor of college success.

Average scores for the class of 2008 remained stable at 502 for critical reading, 515 for mathematics and 494 for writing.

SAT Takers in the Class of 2008

- This year's class is the most diverse class on record with historic increases in the number of Hispanic, African American and Asian American students taking the test.
- Minority SAT takers comprised 40 percent of all test-takers, up from 33 percent 10 years ago.
- The number of first-generation students has increased over the last decade and from last year. In the class of 2008, 36 percent were first-generation students, compared to 35 percent in the class of 2007.

- Females have narrowed the performance gap with males in critical reading, closing the gap to 4 points, compared with 7 points a decade ago, and females continue to outperform males on the writing section — by 13 points this year.
- A record number of students in the class of 2008 received fee waivers, with 221,962 students qualifying for and receiving them. This indicates an increase in the number of traditionally underserved students preparing for college success.
- The writing section of the SAT is the most predictive section of the test among all racial and ethnic minority groups.
- The inclusion of the writing section has also contributed to an increased emphasis on writing in the classroom.

Trends in Participation

Minority SAT takers have experienced substantial growth in participation during the last decade. Hispanics have expanded the most rapidly, more than doubling in number. Growth among Asian Americans and African Americans reached 61 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

Female students continue to form a majority of test-takers among all ethnic groups. Female students made up 57 percent of Hispanic and 57 percent of African American SAT takers in 2008. More than half of the Asian American (51 percent) and white test-takers (53 percent) were women.

Low-income students' participation has also remained steady. These students are increasingly taking advantage of the College Board's fee-waiver program, which granted \$22 million in fee waivers and free services to qualifying students in 2008. About one out of every seven students in the 2008 cohort who took the SAT this year received free registration for up to two SAT tests and two SAT Subject Tests™, four free flexible score reports, and discounted SAT Readiness Program™ materials.

The **Missouri** report is available here:

http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/Missouri_CBS_08.pdf

Seven Public Schools Earn National “Blue Ribbon” Honors

Seven public schools in Missouri have been selected as 2008 Blue Ribbon Schools, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings [announced Tuesday](#). The Missouri schools,

among 320 across the nation to be honored, are:

- **Ballard High School**
- Ballard R-II School District
- John Siebeneck, principal
- **Jefferson High School**
- Jefferson C-123 School District, Conception Junction
- Timothy Jermain, principal
- **Kearney High School**
- Kearney School District
- Randy Wepler, principal
- **Lincoln College Prep Academy**
- Kansas City School District
- Jamia Dock, principal
- **McKinley Classical Junior Academy Middle School**
- St. Louis Public Schools
- Brenda Smith, principal
- **Metro Academic and Classical High School**
- St. Louis Public Schools
- Wilfred Moore, principal
- **Stanberry High School**
- Stanberry School District
- Gregory Dias, principal

All of the schools were honored earlier this year in the state-level Gold Star Schools program, conducted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The “No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools” program honors schools that are achieving at a high level or making significant progress in closing achievement gaps. Every Blue Ribbon school also must meet the state’s annual target for adequate yearly progress (AYP), as required under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

Missouri's History Teacher of the Year

Terence Verstraete, a history teacher at Webster Groves High School, recently received the Gilder Lehrman American History Teacher of the Year award.

Mr. Verstraete teaches U.S. history, government, U.S. military history and world geography. His creative classroom projects and lessons include coordinating student correspondence with current military personnel and veterans; inviting veterans to speak to social studies classes on Veterans Day; and recreating a World War I battlefield in his classroom. In 2004 he developed a mock voter registration and election for the entire student body.

Mr. Verstraete's previous honors include the 2007 Outstanding Teacher of American History Award from the Missouri State Society of the Daughter's of the American Revolution and the 2007 E. A. Richter Award for Citizenship Education from The Missouri Bar Association.

Inaugurated in 2004, the History Teacher of the Year Award is designed to promote and celebrate the teaching of American history in classrooms across the United States. It honors one exceptional K-12 teacher of American history from each state and U.S. territory. Only secondary teachers were eligible for nomination this year. Nominees for the History Teacher of the Year Award must meet several criteria:

- Have at least three years of classroom experience in teaching American history.
- Have a strong commitment to teaching American history, including local and state history.
- Show creativity in addressing literacy and content beyond state standards.
- Give close attention to primary documents, artifacts, historic sites and other primary materials of history, including oral history.
- Show evidence of thoughtful assessment of student achievement.