



2015 ACHIEVEMENT GAP DATA

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ACHIEVEMENT DATA

The charts included in this report use data provided by SDE based on 2015 SBAC results.

They are designed to allow the reader to make comparisons across different subgroups of students.

SDE's dataset "Setting the Baseline" can be viewed here: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2748&Q=335770>

ISSUE

You asked what recent data shows about Connecticut's achievement gap.

SUMMARY

Connecticut primarily measures student performance using the Smarter Balanced Assessment, commonly called SBAC because it was developed by the multi-state Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. This report provides charts displaying 2015 SBAC results, disaggregated according to student categories selected by the State Department of Education (SDE).

The SBAC data shows that Connecticut continues to have significant disparities in the test scores between (1) racial groups, (2) high-needs and non-high-needs students, and (3) students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and those not eligible.

In addition to the charts, this report contains a guide to interpreting the data contained in the charts, an explanation of the various components of the charts, a description of two achievement gap definitions, a brief history of the transition from other forms of standardized testing to the SBAC, and a list of resources for further reading.

INTERPRETING THE DATA

SDE provides guidelines for how the information in the charts should be interpreted and suggests that SBAC results should not be compared to previous assessments. The consortium created SBAC to align with Common Core State Standards, which Connecticut adopted in 2010. The SBAC scores reflect both the degree to which the



new standards are implemented and the degree to which students have learned them, according to SDE.

In the future, it will be possible to make comparisons between new SBAC results and the results gathered in 2015. The 2015 results set the baseline for following trends in student performance.

SBAC RESULTS

The following charts were created from 2015 SBAC results. The SBAC is administered in grades three through eight and in grade eleven. Beginning this year, the SAT will replace the eleventh grade test. Figure 1 shows mathematics disaggregated by race/ethnicity and Figure 2 shows English language arts disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in Mathematics*

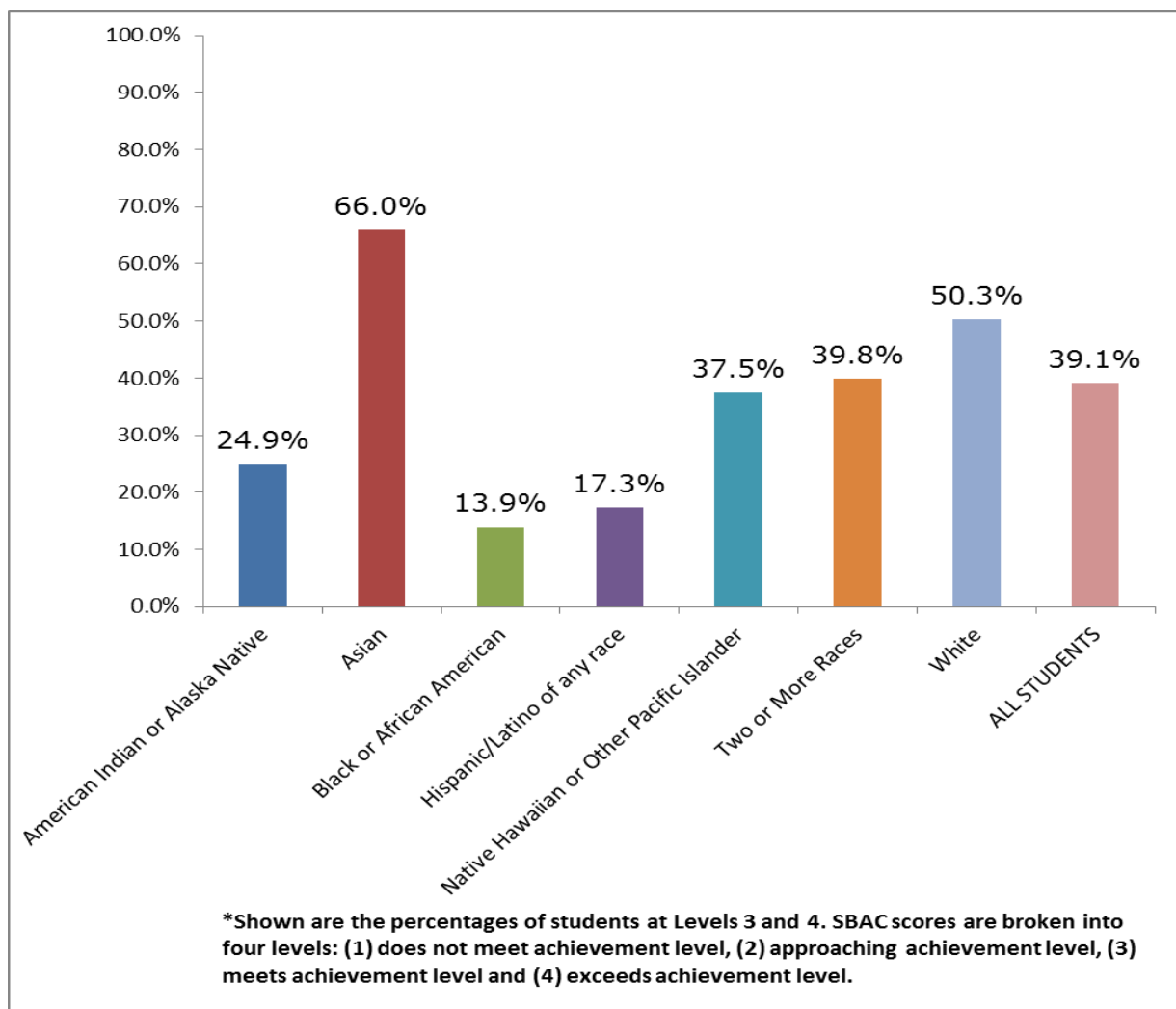
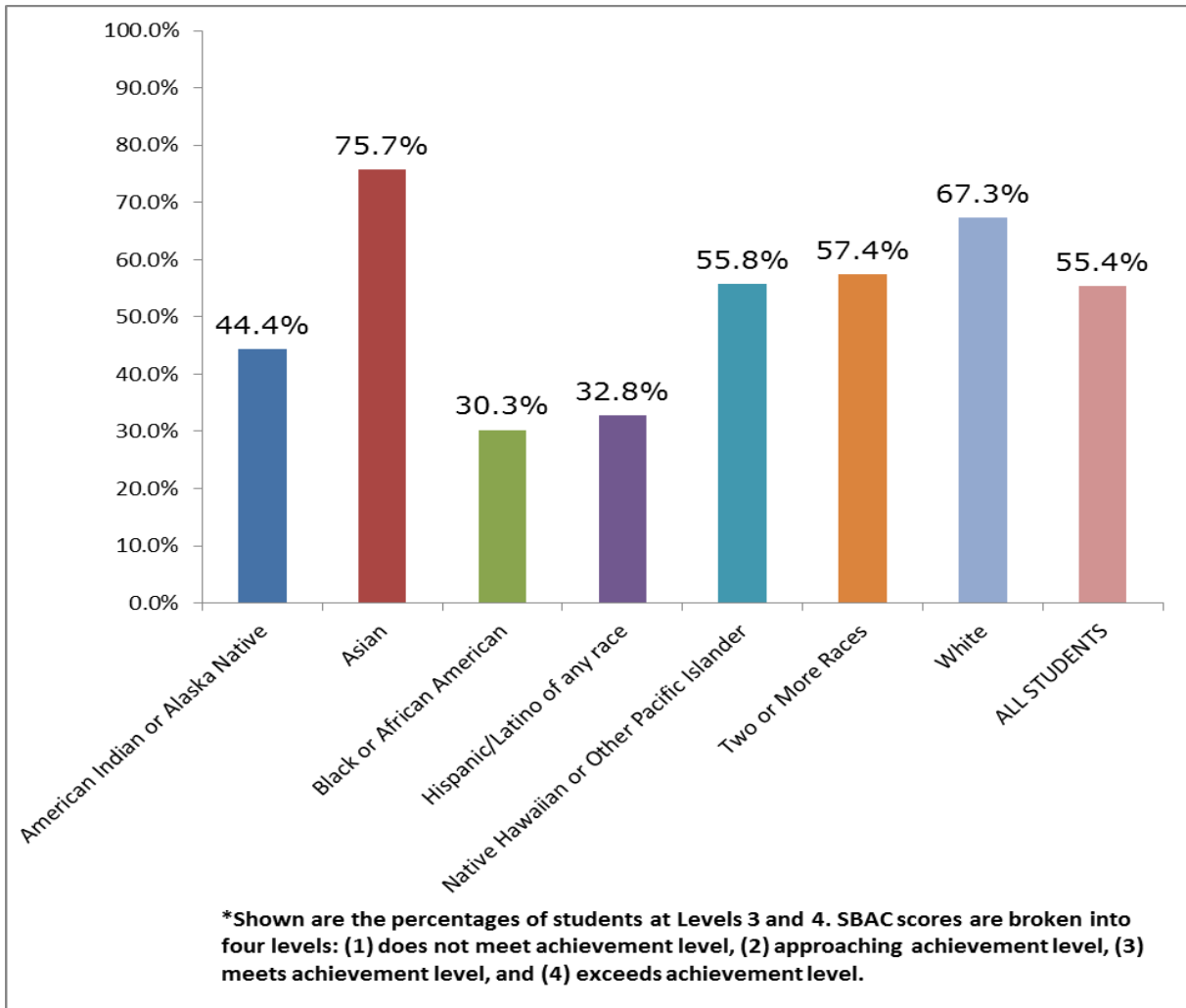


Figure 2. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in English language arts*



High-Needs Subgroup

The SBAC data contains a subgroup marked “high-needs.” The high-needs subgroup contains students with disabilities, English language learners, and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver, each state must create the category “focus schools” to capture schools that, while not necessarily having poor performance overall, have significant achievement gaps between students in the high-needs subgroup and those not in that subgroup. The state must select enough focus groups to equal at least 10% of the state’s Title I schools. An updated list of Connecticut’s focus schools is forthcoming by January 31, 2016, according to SDE.

Figures 3 and 4 show results disaggregated by the subgroups that make up the high-needs category for mathematics and English language arts respectively. Figure 5 compares mathematics results between students in the high-needs subgroup and the non-high-needs subgroup while Figure 6 compares English language arts results between students in the high-needs subgroup and the non-high-needs subgroup.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in Mathematics*

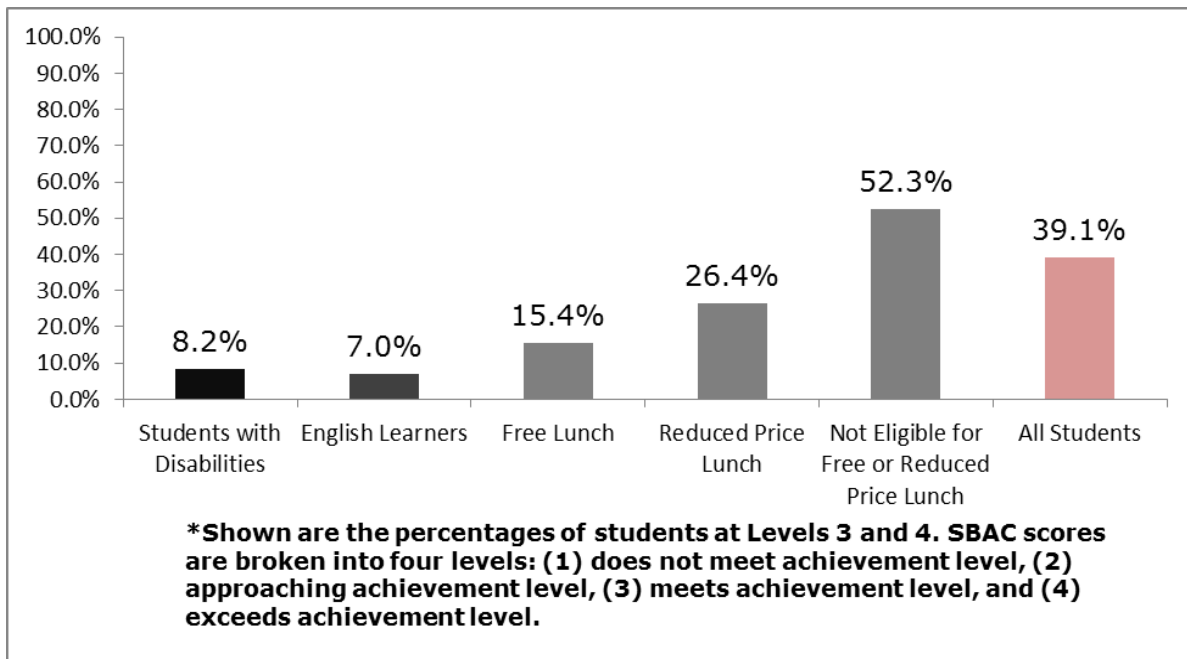


Figure 4. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in English Language Arts*

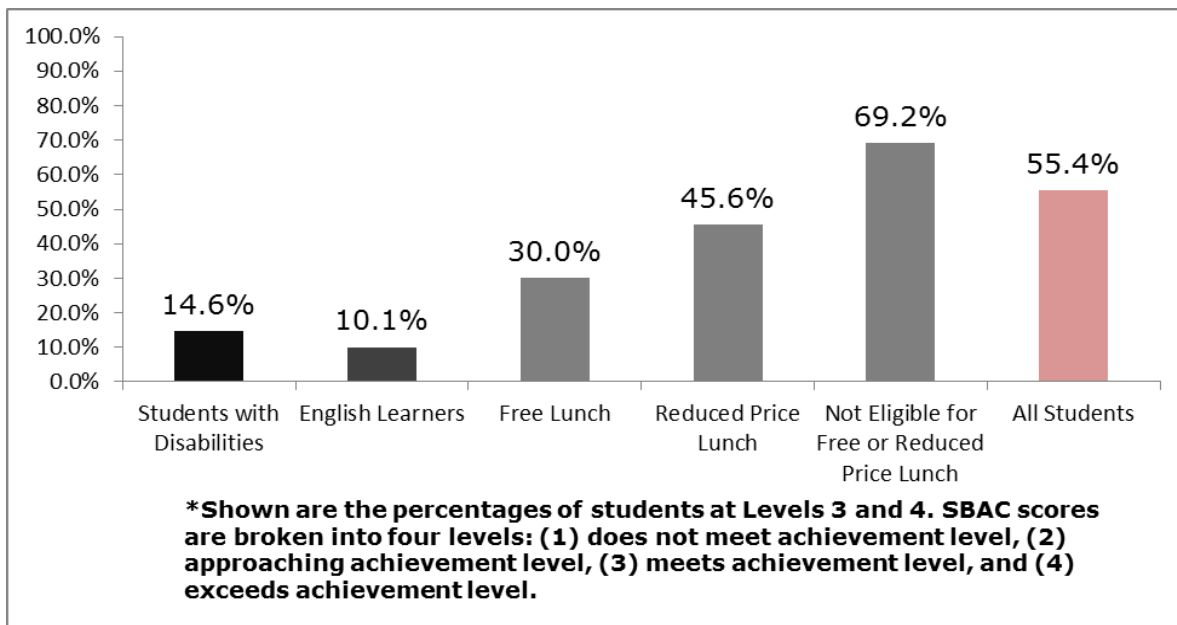


Figure 5. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in Mathematics*

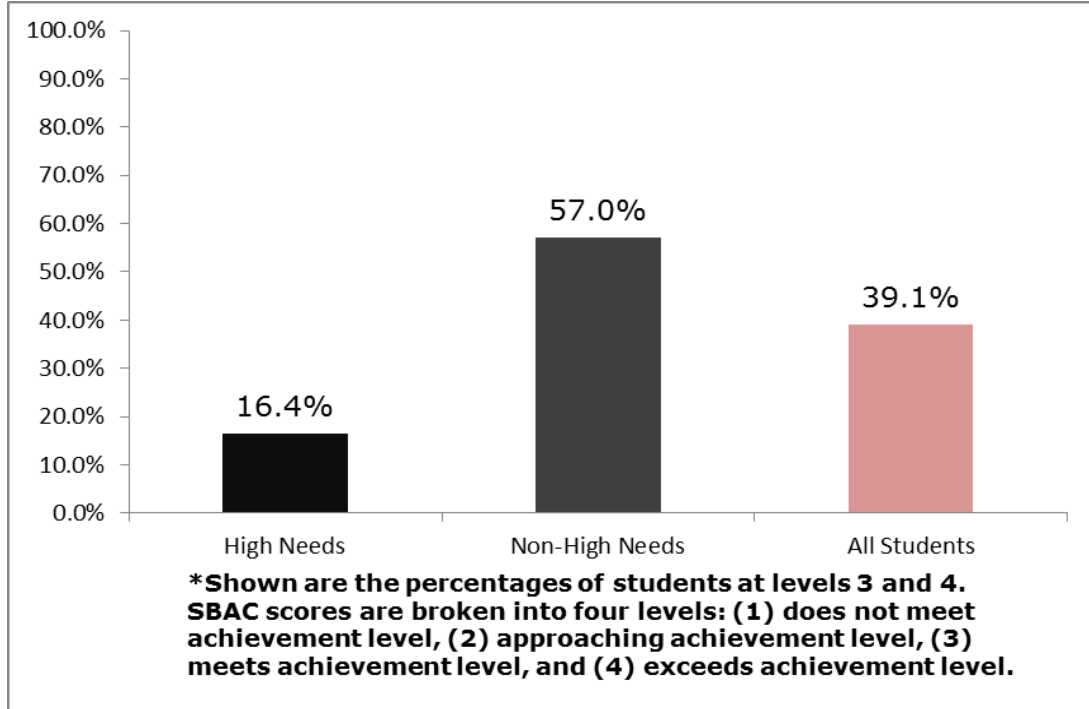
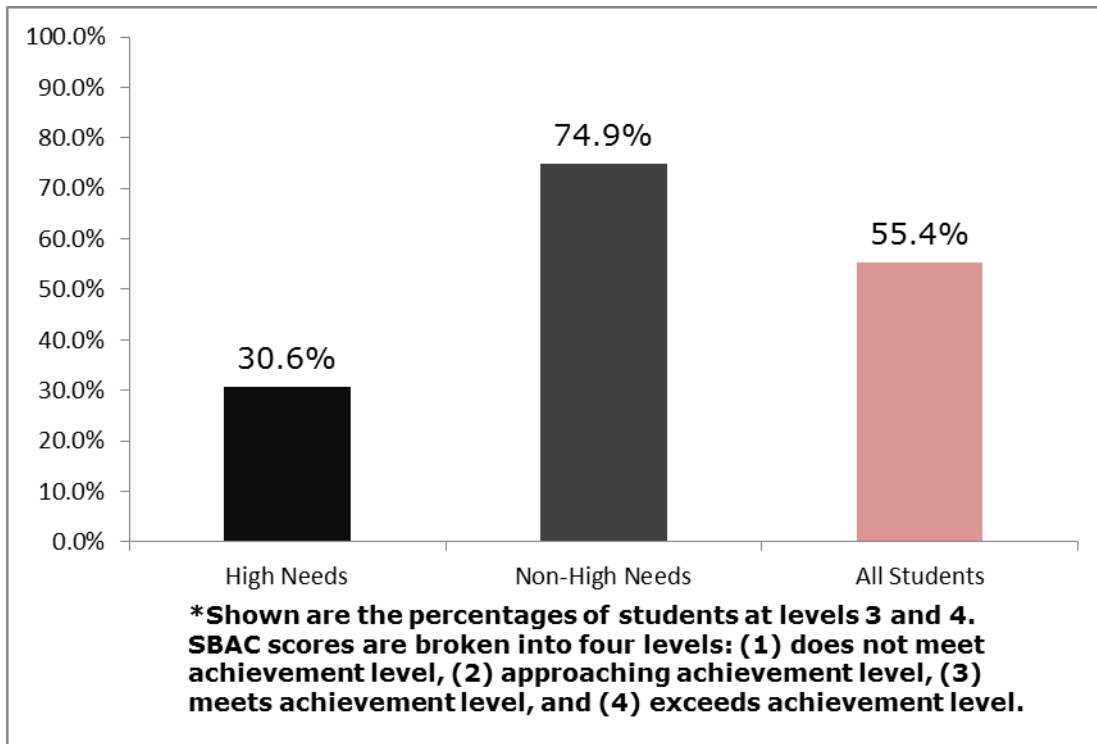


Figure 6. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Achievement Level in English language arts*



ACHIEVEMENT GAP DEFINITIONS

The term “achievement gap” is defined in two ways in Connecticut: (1) a statutory definition and (2) SDE’s federal ESEA waiver definition.

Statutory Definition

In 2011, the legislature enacted [PA 11-85](#), An Act Concerning Closing the Academic Achievement Gap. Among other things, this act created a task force designed to consider effective approaches to closing the achievement gaps.

For the purposes of the task force, the achievement gap was defined as “the existence of a significant disparity in the academic performance of students among and between (1) racial groups, (2) ethnic groups, (3) socioeconomic groups, (4) genders, and (5) English language learners and students whose primary language is English” ([CGS § 10-16mm](#)).

Since the task force was created, the legislature added the same definition to the laws creating (1) an intensive reading program for the early grades and (2) for a model curricula and frameworks for reading and math ([CGS §§ 10-14u](#) and [10-16oo](#)).

SDE Definition

In 2015, SDE submitted its ESEA Flexibility Renewal Request to the U.S. Department of Education, and as part of this, included a definition of the achievement gap. This is the federally approved request for waivers from certain requirements of the ESEA (commonly referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act).

The waiver defines the achievement gap via a calculation using two metrics that have not yet been established as of this report’s publication. The two metrics are the (1) performance index score and (2) annual measurable objective (AMO) target.

A district or school is identified as having an achievement gap if its (1) performance index score gap between the high-needs and the non-high-needs subgroups is at least one standard deviation greater than the statewide performance index score gap in any area and (2) AMO target for its high-needs subgroup is not met.

(Since the waiver was approved, Congress enacted a reauthorization of ESEA in December 2015. Under this new law all waivers will be null and void and have no legal effect starting August 1, 2016 (P.L. 114-95, § 4).)

TRANSITION TO THE SBAC

Prior to the 2013-14 school year, Connecticut measured student performance primarily via the Connecticut Mastery Test. In 2014, approximately 90% of school districts opted to administer the SBAC; 2015 marked the first year that the SBAC became mandatory.

FURTHER READING

- More information on SBAC implementation:
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2748&Q=334488>
- Brief overview on SBAC interpretation:
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2748&Q=335770>
- SDE's in-depth guide to SBAC interpretation:
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/student_assessment/smarter_balanced/reporting/connecticut_smarter_balanced_interpretive_guide_2015.pdf
- OLR report from 2011 on the achievement gap in Connecticut and the surrounding states:
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/rpt/pdf/2011-R-0301.pdf>
- OLR report on federal reauthorization of ESEA:
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2015/rpt/pdf/2015-R-0300.pdf>

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