

***Public school graduation rates generally improving; standardized test scores in rural districts lag behind***

The best estimate measurements show most counties in the region have improved their public school graduation rates in recent years. The state average has also seen improvement.

**Table 1 – Overall 8<sup>th</sup> grade-to-graduation rate estimates by county**

County	'00-01	'01-02	'02-03	'03-04	'04-05	'05-06	'06-07
Clarendon	54.3%	57.5%	57.5%	57.5%	61.3%	62.3%	66.4%
Kershaw	63.2%	64.7%	67.1%	66.0%	65.0%	67.9%	68.5%
Lee	43.5%	50.6%	52.1%	45.2%	55.8%	61.7%	47.3%
Sumter	53.1%	53.2%	58.8%	60.2%	64.7%	66.7%	67.2%
<b>STATE</b>	<b>56.8%</b>	<b>57.2%</b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>	<b>61.8%</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>67.5%</b>

*Orange indicates annual graduation rates below 60%*

*Non-diploma recipients not included; students earning a diploma or GED from Adult Ed. also excluded*

It's imperative for improvement to continue since education and technical skill acquisition are critical in the emerging and long-term global economy. Despite the improved rates, significant numbers of the region's youth are not completing high school with a diploma or are dropping out. The next chart provides the best estimates by county of public school dropouts and non-diploma recipients for each cohort class through the years.

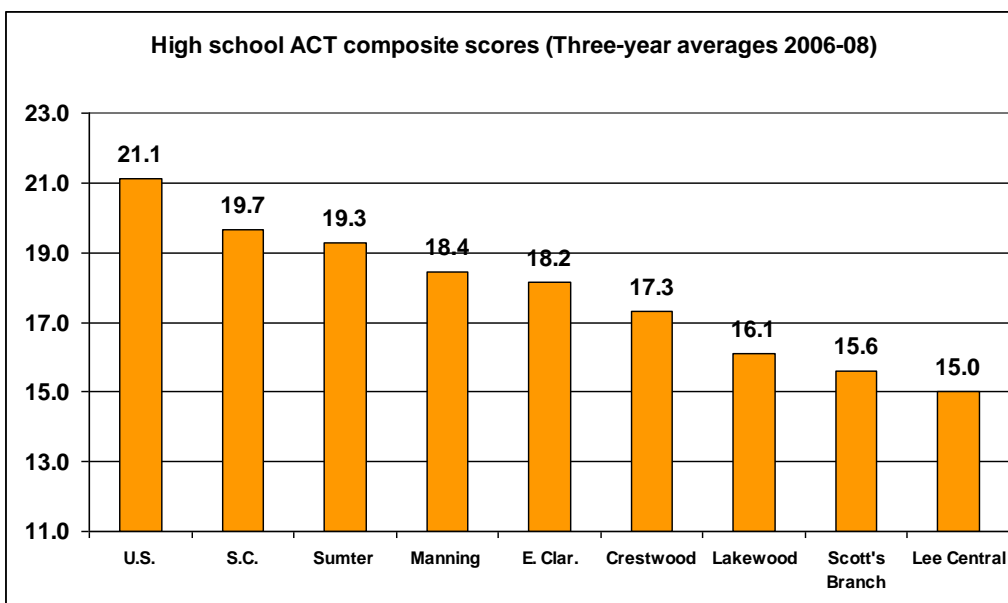
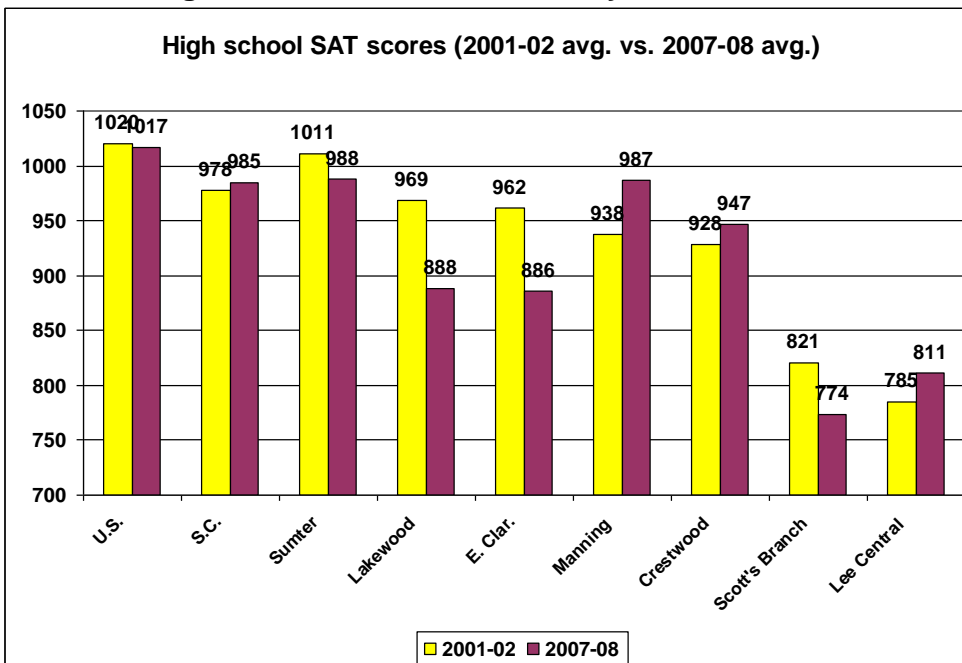
**Table 2 – Cohort class dropouts or non-diploma recipients by county (Non-graduates)**

County	'00-01	'01-02	'02-03	'03-04	'04-05	'05-06	'06-07
Clarendon	237	207	211	204	186	186	164
Kershaw	292	286	256	258	284	258	263
Lee	160	116	114	136	80	79	116
Sumter	698	679	580	592	480	459	488
<b>REGION TOTAL</b>	<b>1,387</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>1,031</b>

With improved graduation rates through the years, there are less county dropouts or non-diploma recipients per class. **Given the U.S. public school graduation rate has averaged about 72 percent in recent years, there is still room for improvement in the counties.** Most analysts believe in the “knowledge economy” that is continuing to expand across the U.S., communities with adaptive and highly skilled workers will benefit in economic development; while others will see their economies erode. **The rural Santee-Lynches Region has seen significant lower-skilled manufacturing job losses in recent years due to globalization and must increase educational attainment levels of youth to improve the skill level of future workers and have a competitive economy.** Many believe that communities and school districts experiencing close to 50 percent dropout rates should be viewed as needing emergency intervention.

**Rural districts lag behind on standardized tests**

The next two charts show high school SAT and ACT scores in rural districts in the region are markedly below the state average, which generally also ranks very low among all U.S. states. It's necessary to note, varying participation rates often affect high schools' SAT averages; however, high schools' participation levels were similar on the ACT for the years measured. The test scores generally show the college-readiness level of high school students. **Very low scores in Lee County and rural portions of Clarendon and Sumter counties reflect students generally aren't finishing high school adequately prepared for college or other post-secondary training and the increasingly competitive workplace. More educational attainment by youth results in more skilled workers for industry. When industry is supplied with skilled workers, job retention and possible expansion are feasible. Without a skilled workforce, industry faces the potential of looking to other site locations to fill worker requirements. In turn, this results in negative effects on a community in the form of reduced population and tax base.**



**SAT vs. ACT**

*The ACT is a curriculum-based skills test, meaning it tests a student's knowledge of subject matter covered in high school. The SAT isn't as straightforward and is considered a test measuring a student's reasoning or critical thinking skills. Listed SAT scores are composite scores on the traditional Math and Reading sections for comparison purposes to back years.*

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*All South Carolina colleges and universities now accept either ACT or SAT scores for admission.*