Upstate students show slight SAT gains

Scores in Pickens, Anderson 1 among the highest in state

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Despite the fact that South Carolina's graduating seniors posted lower scores on the SAT college entrance exam for the fourth consecutive year, Upstate students generally showed modest gains and held their own in state rankings, according to data released Monday by the tests' administrator.

The Pickens County School District raised its SAT average by 17 points to rank No. 2 among all districts in the state, while Anderson 1 was up six points and ranked third. Greenville was up two points to rank No. 15.

D.W. Daniel High in Pickens County had an average of 1620 on a 2400 scale, ranking No. 4 in the state, behind only the two Governor's Schools and Charleston's Academic High School.

Riverside High had an average of 1577, ranking eighth. Greenville Tech Charter High had an average of 1557.

While the Greenville district's overall score was up over last year, both state and national averages dropped over the same period by five and four points, respectively.

"One of the most positive indicators we've found is not only that the test scores increased, but the test scores increased in a year when many more students were administered the SAT," said Jason McCreary, director of accountability and quality assurance for the Greenville County district.

The largest school district in the state, Greenville County was one of 32 districts in which 50 percent or more of graduating seniors took the SAT exam. Participation increased about 4 percent from 2,760 students to 2,872 students, 64 percent of seniors. Overall statewide participation increased less than 2 percent.

McCreary said the school district has initiatives to encourage more students, even those who may only be consid-

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ering college, to take the exam.

"Our teachers and our leaders are trying to keep in the minds of the students that graduation is not the end," he said.

In Pickens County, Daniel High students bested the state average by nearly 200 points with an average score of 1620, an increase of 50 points over 2011.

Principal Danny Merck gave credit not only to the students but also to the teachers and parents at Daniel and the elementary and middle schools that prepare students along the way.

"There's not a weak link in this area," he said. Daniel students, he said, "are going to have a wide range of opportunities in the future."

The average score, which comprises critical reading, math and writing scores, was 1422 for South Carolina public schools and 1477 nationally.