

Oconee, Pickens SAT scores above state, national average

BY GREG OLIVER
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COLUMBIA — The school districts of Oconee and Pickens counties rank above the state and national averages in SAT scores released Friday by the South Carolina Department of Education.

Pickens County's total overall average was 1085, while Oconee County's was 1050, higher than the national score of 1030 and the South Carolina score of 1019. Pickens County ranked second out of all South Carolina school districts in overall total score, while each of its four high schools exceeded state and national averages, while Walhalla High and West-Oak High did likewise in Oconee County.

Oconee County had the seventh-highest average total score among districts in South Carolina, jumping eight spots from a year ago. The district's total score increased 13 points in a year that saw a drop in both the state and national averages, as well as many district averages in South Carolina.

"We are excited to see our students perform well this year," School District of Oconee County superintendent Michael Thorsland said. "It certainly demonstrates that we are making progress toward the board of trustees' goal of SDOC being a top 10 district in South Carolina."

But Thorsland added that it is difficult to compare schools and districts based on a test that is only taken by some students. While Seneca High School did not exceed the state and national average in its SAT scores, it had the highest number of test takers in Oconee County with 103, followed by 78 at Walhalla and 69 at West-Oak.

"To have a truly fair comparison, you would need to include scores from all students," he said.

School District of Pickens County superintendent Danny Merck said he is excited about the district's SAT scores, led by Daniel High School, which also had the highest number of test takers — 153 — among the district's schools.

"I'm very proud of the work our teachers do to prepare our students for success at the college level," Merck said. "We have placed an emphasis on not only

HOW THEY STACK UP

Students in both Oconee and Pickens counties outpaced the national average on the SAT last school year. The test is not taken by all students, and some districts and schools have more participants.

State and nation

United States average	1030
South Carolina average	1019

Oconee County

Seneca High School	1010
Walhalla High School	1045
West-Oak High School	1109

Pickens County

Daniel High School	1162
Easley High School	1042
Liberty High School	1041
Pickens High School	1051

offering a wide variety of AP and honors courses, but also expanding access to those courses for more students. Our students consistently show their best performance on measures of college and career readiness, and it's encouraging to see that continue this year."

The SAT relies on two main components — evidence-based writing and writing and math — with the essay section optional. SAT scores range from 400 to 1600. SAT results are based on graduating seniors in 2020, and the report displays scores for those students who, at the time the test was administered, indicated that they would be graduating in the 2019-20 school year.

Students who take the SAT are counted only once, no matter how often they test, and only their latest score is used in those calculations.