

VIDE 2019 REPORT CARD

JANUARY 21, 2020

V.I. Department of Education



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

ACHIEVEMENT UP TERRITORYWIDE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

Student achievement has increased in all subject areas and among all student subgroups in the Territory's public schools, according to the results of the 2018-2019 Smarter Balanced assessments that track student learning and measure the Virgin Islands' academic progress by testing students' ability to problem solve, apply knowledge, listen, read complex texts, and conduct research. The annual assessments measure student proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11.

While the 2019 results are encouraging, the Department of Education recognizes there is still much work to be done; thus, significantly improving student outcomes continues to be the Department's primary focus.

The Upward Trend

The Department of Education has set higher expectations—or standards—for all grade levels and is updating the curriculum to match the demands students will face in the modern world. From spring 2017 to spring 2019, each subject area showed an increase in the percent of students scoring proficient or higher (*see chart*).

Due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the territory-wide summative assessments were not administered for the 2017-2018 school year (spring 2018).

Territory-wide Overall Proficiency Rates for Grades 3-8 and 11 2017-2019			
SUBJECT	2017	2019	Change
English Language Arts	20.4	↑24.7	+4.3
Mathematics	8.5	↑10.1	+1.6

In 2019, the percentage of students that met or exceeded ELA standards increased by 4.3 percentage points from spring 2017 scores. In Mathematics, the expectations were dramatically shifted to more rigorous college and career readiness standards. These changes include requiring students to have a deeper understanding of fewer topics and applying mathematical knowledge to solve real-world situations. Although overall proficiency rates in Mathematics remain low, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of students performing at or above standards (1.6 percentage point increase from spring 2017 to spring 2019).

Moving a student who is performing below grade-level standards to proficiency requires an unyielding focus to understand the student's needs and applying effective strategies to address these needs. It is important to note that it may take several years for students falling far below proficiency to meet grade-level targets.

Data of student learning by grade showed that achievement in English Language Arts increased at all levels, except one. There was a slight decline in the percent of eleventh graders scoring proficient or higher in English Language Arts in 2019. However, high school students continue to demonstrate the highest levels of proficiency at 40.2 percent in comparison to other grade levels. This is of vital importance as the high school results are an indicator of our students' preparedness to enter higher education and the workforce where the demands for greater knowledge and skills from graduates are higher than before.

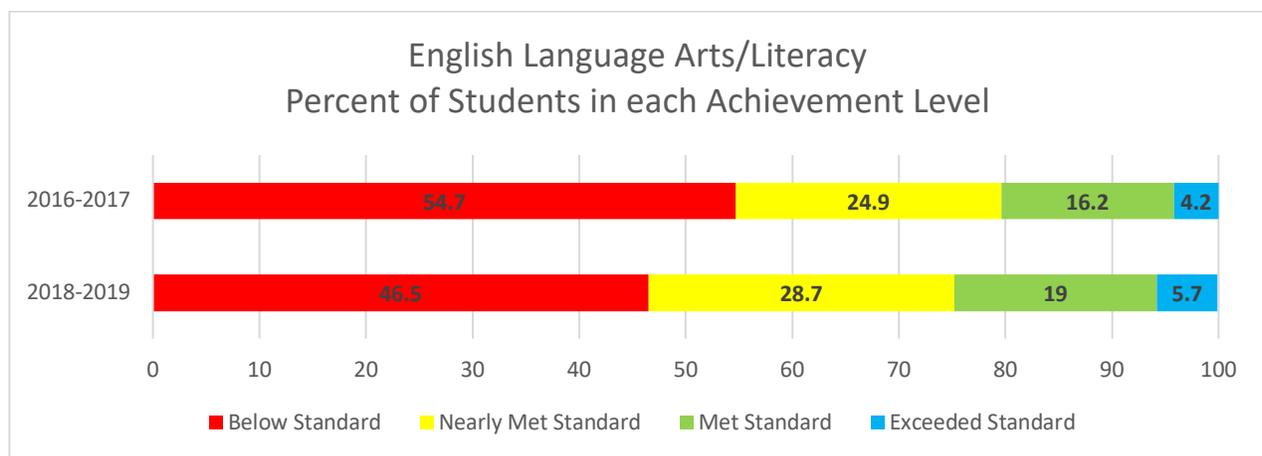
The positive news continues examining the performance of cohorts. A cohort is a group of students that enters a program or grade at the same time. For example, the percent of third graders that scored proficient in ELA in 2017 was 15.5%, and 26.1% scored proficient as fifth graders in 2019. In fact, progress is evident in all student cohorts from 2017 to 2019: fourth to sixth (increase from 16.8% to 27.3%), fifth to seventh (increase from 17.4% to 18.9%), and sixth to eighth (increase from 20.8% to 24.8%).

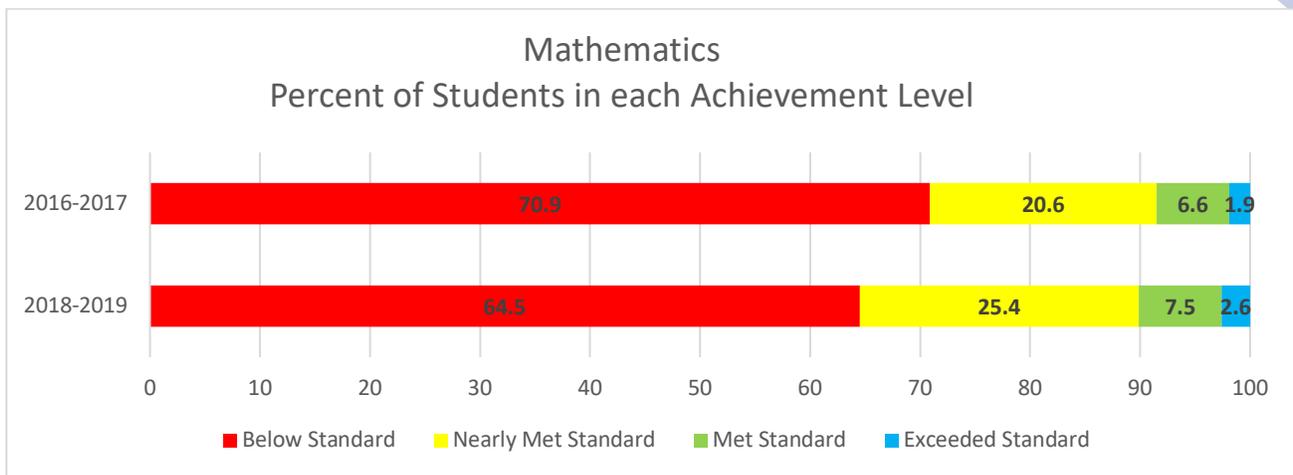
GRADE	SUBJECT	2017	2019
3	English Language Arts	15.5%	17.5% ↑
	Mathematics	13.8%	12.1% ↓
4	English Language Arts	16.8%	17.8% ↑
	Mathematics	9.2%	11.8% ↑
5	English Language Arts	17.4%	26.1% ↑
	Mathematics	6.8%	7.4% ↑
6	English Language Arts	20.8%	27.3% ↑
	Mathematics	9.3%	10.5% ↑
7	English Language Arts	16.9%	18.9% ↑
	Mathematics	5.7%	8.4% ↑
8	English Language Arts	19.6%	24.8% ↑
	Mathematics	5.0%	7.2% ↑
11	English Language Arts	42.1%	40.2% ↓
	Mathematics	10.0%	7.8% ↓

The improvements in proficiency for Mathematics were seen in grades 4-8.

Greater Gains Reached

When looking at results across all achievement levels, another trend becomes clear: more students are achieving higher levels of proficiency (Met Standard or Exceeded Standard) and fewer students are scoring at the lowest levels (Below Standard or Near Standard (*see charts directly below*)).





The achievement levels summarize the student's level of performance based on responses to test questions. The Below Standard level indicates the student has shown minimal understanding of and ability to apply the content and needs substantial support. At the Nearly Met Standard level, the student has a partial understanding to apply the knowledge and needs some support to meet grade level expectations. Students performing at the Met Standard and Exceeded Standard levels have demonstrated the knowledge and skills for their grade.

Reducing the percent of student performing at the Below Standard level is another significant indicator of progress. Teachers are applying research-based strategies to help students access grade-level content and use progress monitoring to ensure interventions are addressing deficiencies. The average student score continues to increase annually.

To learn more about Achievement Levels, visit the links below:

ELA Achievement Level Descriptors

<https://portal.smarterbalanced.org/library/en/elaliteracy-alds-and-college-content-readiness-policy.pdf>

Math Achievement Level Descriptors

<https://portal.smarterbalanced.org/library/en/mathematics-alds-and-college-content-readiness-policy.pdf>

All Subgroups Improved in English Language Arts and Mathematics

The Virgin Islands Department of Education's mission is to ensure that all students are experiencing academic success, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, gender, disability or the like. In 2018-2019, all student subgroups (students with disabilities, English Language Learners, Black or African American, Hispanic, Male, and Female) improved their proficiency rates in ELA and Mathematics, compared to the 2016-2017 school year (*see chart directly below*). English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrated more gains than their general-education peers.

There is still a tremendous amount of work to do to close achievement gaps among subgroups and across subject areas.

Proficiency Rates by Demographic Group						
Demographic Group	English language arts			Mathematics		
	2016-17	2018-19	Change	2016-17	2018-19	Change
All Students	20.5	24.8	↑ 4.3	8.5	10.1	↑ 1.6
Students with Disabilities	7.8	16.1	↑ 8.3	7.4	13.6	↑ 6.2
English language learners	6.3	11.9	↑ 5.6	1.6	4.3	↑ 2.7
Black or African American	20.7	25.6	↑ 4.9	8.6	9.9	↑ 1.3
Hispanic	17.4	19.5	↑ 2.1	6.2	8.2	↑ 2
Female	25.8	30.4	↑ 4.6	9.3	10.5	↑ 1.2
Male	15.3	19.1	↑ 3.8	7.8	9.6	↑ 1.8

Due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the territory-wide summative assessments were not administered for the 2017-2018 school year (spring 2018).

The Numbers by the Districts

As territory-wide scores are up, individual district performance reflects a similar upward trend. In the St. Thomas-St. John District, English and math skills improved in 2019. There were also improvements in the 2019 numbers for English in the St. Croix district, in which 27.3% met or exceeded standards. Although there was a slight decrease of -0.8 in Mathematics from 2017 to 2019 in the St. Croix district, students in that district performed higher than the territory's average.

Proficiency Rates by District						
District	English language arts			Mathematics		
	2016-17	2018-19	Change	2016-17	2018-19	Change
St. Thomas/ St. John District	17.1	21.4	↑ 4.3	6.0	8.2	↑ 2.2
St. Croix District	24.3	27.3	↑ 3.0	11.4	10.6	↓ -0.8

Due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the territory-wide summative assessments were not administered for the 2017-2018 school year (spring 2018).

A Brief History of V.I. Standardize Testing

Following the adoption of the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards in 2010 and a five-year period of acclimating teachers and students to the more rigorous academic standards, the Smarter Balanced summative assessments were administered to Virgin Islands' students for the first time in 2015.

- 2014 – Final use of VITAL tests to measure student achievement (manual testing)

- 2014 – Pilot of Smarter Balanced assessments (online)
- 2015-2017 – Smarter Balanced assessments administered
- 2018 – Due to Hurricanes Irma & Maria in September 2017, Smarter Balanced assessments were not administered to students
- 2019 – Smarter Balanced assessments administered, but with challenges

For more on the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards, visit www.corestandards.org.

Setbacks

The administration of the Smarter Balanced summative assessments in the territory's public schools has not been without its own unique set of challenges. The 2017 storms' destruction of computer equipment and computer labs where the tests are administered proved to be a significant setback in the administration of the 2019 tests. Efforts are ongoing to replace equipment and restore computer labs. Furthermore, while the Department of Education has heavily invested in its network infrastructure and Internet, since the inception of the tests in 2015, there have been reoccurring issues with internet connectivity and power outages—services provided by outside entities—during testing. This may negatively impact student performance, as focus is broken and may not be easily regained to successfully complete the tests.

Next Steps

In order to continue the promising upward trend of U.S. Virgin Islands' student achievement, and to further expand and accelerate this trend, the V.I. Department of Education has clear goals in mind:

- **A move toward multiple measures of academic progress**

The 2018-2019 school year is the final year the V.I. Department of Education will report about achievement for student groups based solely on proficiency. Beginning with the spring 2020 Smarter Balanced assessments, the Department will move toward a model of measuring student achievement through the implementation of a new accountability system. Schools will be measured on student growth—how much students show academic improvement in ELA and Mathematics from one year to the next. Focus will also be placed on improving the language proficiency of English learners, reducing the percent of students and teachers who are chronically absent, proficiency, graduation rate, and increasing post-secondary indicators, including dual enrollment, SAT and ACT scores, Advanced Placement results, and industry certification. Using multiple measures of academic progress will enhance determinations about how schools are preparing students for college and careers.

Additionally, in order to produce well-rounded students that can positively contribute to society and thrive, much more than academic achievement is required. As such, the Department will be giving equal focus to non-academic assessment of student preparedness, such as social and emotional learning, school climate, and participation in extra-curricular activities.

- **Greater focus on early childhood learning**

Children who receive quality early childhood preschool education have improved social skills, perform better in school, and are more likely to become lifelong learners. Currently, 50 percent of USVI students enter kindergarten with below-age skills in language, which is the foundation for literacy. To improve kindergarten readiness skills, the Department has implemented the following initiatives: Granny Preschool, strengthened partnerships with Head Start, and offer programs to help students and parents with the transition from preschool to kindergarten (KinderCamp). These programs also incorporate approaches to develop numeracy skills and improve students' understanding of early mathematical concepts.

- **Expansion of Career Technical Education**

Career Technical Education (CTE) not only teaches skills for specific careers, the program also teaches skills that all students will need to enter the workforce. The Department of Education is committed to improving existing programs and developing new CTE pathways for students, training traditional academic guidance counselors to be 'career counselors,' expanding public/private partnerships to allow for student on-the-job training with potential employers. Furthermore, the Department is working closely with the Bryan-Roach Administration's Workforce Development Initiative to prepare students for the local workforce.

- **Ongoing professional development for educators**

Teachers across the territory receive ongoing training in personalized learning to strengthen their skills in order to customize learning based on each student's strengths, needs, and interests. Additionally, educators have greater access to student data and receive guidance from the district and State in using the data to inform instructional decisions.

Both districts have invested in online interventions, including iReady, Edmentum, and Motivational Mathematics. These tools supplement the core curriculum and are used by teachers to target students' deficiencies and monitor progress. Furthermore, educators are utilizing online lesson planning software, such as Design Studio and GoPlans, to develop and share lesson plans that serve as a step-by-step guide to help students meet the objectives of the course.

"It is encouraging to see the incremental gains we are making in student learning, but it is clear we still have much work to do," said Education Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin. "As the Department continues to assess its practices and make the necessary changes from the classroom to the boardroom, in the best interests of our students, we anticipate greater achievement outcomes."

For more information on 2019 school and district results, visit <https://vivisdata.vi.gov/Nimble/asp/Main.aspx>.

Please see the steps to access the school and district report card.

- *(kindly note that these steps take time to fully load)*
- Click on the *K-12 Public Schools* tab at the top

- Click on *Reports*
- Under *Transitional Report Card* at the bottom of the page,
 - o click on Profile Report (for summary)
 - o click on Attendance Rate Report
 - o click on Assessment Participation Rate Report
 - o click on Assessment Proficiency Rate Report
 - o click on Graduation Rate Report (high schools only)

Practice tests are also available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/assessments/samples/>, to learn how the Smarter Balanced test works, what's expected of students and what kind of questions are included.