

# The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

## Another Year of SAT Doldrums 1994 Verbal Score One Point Above Bottom

According to the 1994 SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test, formerly known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores released by The College Board last August, not much progress in academics has been made by America's college-bound students. The national verbal score of 423 is just one point above the lowest score of 422 achieved in 1991 and 30 points below the 1972 score of 453, while in mathematics the 1994 national score of 479 is only one point above that of 1993 but five points below the 1972 score of 484.

Actually, there has been a steady improvement in mathematics scores from 471 in 1984 to 479 in 1994. However, the verbal score of 426 in 1984 is down to 423 in 1994. Obviously, ten years of intensive educational reform, including curriculum innovation, school restructuring, and generous raises in teachers' salaries, haven't done much, if anything, to improve academics.

In Kentucky, where they've had full-blown Outcome-Based Education since 1990, the verbal score has gone from 479 in 1984 to 474 in 1994. In math it has gone from 518 in 1984 to 523 in 1994, a five point improvement

at the cost of many millions of dollars.

In Pennsylvania, where the debate over OBE has been most intense, the verbal score in 1984 was 425, in 1994 it's 417. The math score of 462 in 1984 is exactly the same in 1994.

In Texas, where the legislature enacted Ross Perot's sweeping education reform plan some years ago, the verbal score in 1984 was 413. In 1994 it was down to 412. The math 1984 score was 453. Ten years later it was 474. Reading is down, but math is up. Why? Is reading more difficult than algebra and calculus?

The following twelve states showed declines both in verbal and math scores from 1984 to 1994: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

The following sixteen states showed improvement in both verbal and math scores since 1984: Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.

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Seventeen states showed declines in verbal scores but improvements in math scores during the ten-year period. They were: Alaska, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia.

Three states—Indiana, Maryland, and New Jersey—had the same verbal scores in 1984 and 1994 but improved somewhat in their math scores; and Maine and Pennsylvania showed a decline in verbal scores since 1984 but no improvement in math scores during the same period.

All told, 34 states showed declines or no improvement in verbal scores since 1984, and 14 showed declines or no improvement in math scores.

New Jersey, which spends more money per pupil than any other state, showed no improvement in the verbal score in the ten-year period, but went from 458 to 475 in the math score. Apparently, the students do better when little or no reading is required to solve a math problem.

Connecticut, in which 80 percent of the graduates took the SAT in 1994 and which pays its teachers more than any other state, showed a decline in the verbal score from 436 to 426, a ten-point drop since 1984. Its math score, however, went from 468 to 472. Connecticut is a big whole-language state.

## Analyzing the Scores

In analyzing the SAT scores, it is important to be aware of the percentage of graduates in each state taking the test. For example, in 1994 Utah had the highest verbal score of any state, 509. But only 4 percent of the graduates took the SAT in Utah. The other college-bound graduates probably took the ACT, which is published by the American College Testing Program, a competitor

to The College Board of Princeton, New Jersey. The SAT tests are prepared by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). It appears that schools in the Northeast prefer the SAT over the ACT, which comes out of Iowa City, Iowa.

The SAT's, which were first administered in the 1940s, are geared to assess scholastic aptitude, while the ACT's are really achievement tests that measure what the students know. The latter were first administered in 1959. The SAT is composed of half verbal and half math questions. The ACT is composed of half verbal, one quarter math, and one quarter science. Thus, students weak in math may prefer to take the ACT over the SAT.

The grading systems are also different. The SAT uses a scale of 200 to 800, while the ACT uses a scale of 1 to 36. One might say that the SAT has the greater precision of the Fahrenheit scale while the ACT scale is more like Centigrade even though it uses decimals. For example, the national average score for the ACT in 1994 was 20.8 for the entire three-part test. The policy of the American College Testing Program is not to release state scores, which then can be used by the media to compare states. That is why the SAT gets much more attention in the press. SAT scores not only permit educational achievement to be measured state by state, but also permit the detection of longitudinal trends by a study of SAT scores over a period of ten or twenty years.

A graduate can apply to take either test or both tests. The ACT seems to be favored in Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Thus, Mississippi, in which only 4 percent of the graduates took the SAT, had a verbal score of 485, while Connecticut,

in which 80 percent took the SAT, had a verbal score of 426. If one combined, or averaged, both the SAT and ACT scores in Mississippi, the aggregate score would probably be lower than Connecticut's SAT score. The 4 percent who took the SAT in Mississippi were probably private-school and merit-scholarship students.

## Comparing States

Thus, when making state comparisons with SAT scores, one should compare states with the same high percentage of college-bound seniors taking the test. For example, 79 percent of the college-bound seniors in Massachusetts and 80 percent in Connecticut took the SAT in 1994. Massachusetts scored 426 verbal and 475 math, while Connecticut scored 426 verbal and 472 math. In other words, both New England states, despite their glorious academic pasts, are now pretty close to the national average of 423 verbal and 479 math. The dumbing down process has in no way spared the once academic leaders of America.

A comparison between the eleven states where from 60 to 69 percent of the college-bound seniors took the SAT reveal the following:

Delaware (68%) 428V and 464M  
 Georgia (65%) 398V and 446M  
 Indiana (60%) 410V and 466M  
 Maine (68%) 420V and 463M  
 Maryland (64%) 429V and 479M  
 New Hampshire (69%) 438V and 486M  
 North Carolina (60%) 405V and 455M  
 Rhode Island (68%) 420V and 462M  
 South Carolina (60%) 395V and 443M  
 Vermont (68%) 427V and 472M  
 Virginia (65%) 424V and 469M

Six of the states scored below the verbal national average, and nine scored below the

math national average.

The three states where between 70 and 79 percent of the college-bound seniors took the SAT were:

Massachusetts (79%) 426V and 475M  
 New Jersey (71%) 418V and 475M  
 Pennsylvania (70%) 417V and 462M

Massachusetts managed to achieve a verbal score three points above the national average of 423, but all three states scored below the math national average of 479.

The States which achieved the lowest SAT scores were:

South Carolina (60%) 395V and 443M  
 Georgia (65%) 398V and 446M  
 Hawaii (58%) 401V and 480M  
 North Carolina (60%) 405V and 455M  
 District of Columbia (53%) 406V and 443M  
 Indiana (60%) 410V and 466M  
 Texas (48%) 412V and 474M

Note that South Carolina, the home of our Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, is academically at the very bottom despite the fact that Riley, as Governor, rammed through South Carolina's legislature the most expensive and far-reaching educational reform program in that state's history. The results have been dismal indeed.

Note Hawaii's math score of 480 which probably reflects the fact that Asian-Americans have the highest math score of any ethnic group in America taking the SAT's. The nationwide math score for Asian Americans was 535, for blacks 388, for whites 495. (See Table 4.)

## Private Schools Do Better

Another very important table of information supplied by The College Board are

**Table 3: SAT® Averages by State 1984, 1991-1994**

COMPARING OR RANKING STATES ON THE BASIS OF SAT SCORES ALONE IS INVALID AND STRONGLY DISCOURAGED BY THE COLLEGE BOARD.

% Graduates Taking SAT\*

	1984		1991		1992		1993		1994		
	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	
Alabama	467	503	476	515	476	520	480	526	482	529	8
Alaska	443	471	439	481	433	475	438	477	434	477	49
Arizona	469	509	442	490	440	493	444	497	443	496	26
Arkansas	482	521	482	523	474	516	478	519	477	518	6
California	421	476	415	482	416	484	415	484	413	482	46
Colorado	468	514	453	506	453	507	454	509	456	513	28
Connecticut	436	468	429	468	430	470	430	474	426	472	80
Delaware	433	469	428	464	432	463	429	465	428	464	68
Dist. of Columbia	397	426	405	435	405	437	405	441	406	443	53
Florida	423	467	416	466	416	468	416	466	413	466	49
Georgia	392	430	400	444	398	444	399	445	398	446	65
Hawaii	395	474	405	478	401	477	401	478	401	480	58
Idaho	480	512	463	505	460	503	465	507	461	508	16
Illinois	463	518	471	535	473	537	475	541	478	546	14
Indiana	410	454	408	457	409	459	409	460	410	466	60
Iowa	519	570	515	578	512	584	520	583	506	574	5
Kansas	502	549	493	546	487	546	494	548	494	550	10
Kentucky	479	518	473	520	470	518	476	522	474	523	11
Louisiana	472	508	476	518	471	520	481	527	481	530	9
Maine	429	463	421	458	422	460	422	463	420	463	68
Maryland	429	468	429	475	431	476	431	478	429	479	64
Massachusetts	429	467	426	470	428	474	427	476	426	475	79
Michigan	461	515	461	519	464	523	469	528	472	537	11
Minnesota	481	539	480	543	492	561	489	556	495	562	9
Mississippi	480	512	477	520	478	526	481	521	485	528	4
Missouri	469	512	476	526	475	529	481	532	485	537	10
Montana	490	544	464	518	465	523	459	516	463	523	21
Nebraska	493	548	481	543	478	540	479	544	482	543	9
Nevada	442	489	435	484	434	488	432	488	429	484	30
New Hampshire	448	483	440	481	440	483	442	487	438	486	69
New Jersey	418	458	417	469	420	471	419	473	418	475	71
New Mexico	487	527	474	522	475	521	478	525	475	528	12
New York	424	470	413	468	416	466	416	471	416	472	76
North Carolina	395	432	400	444	405	450	406	453	405	455	60
North Dakota	500	554	502	571	501	567	518	583	497	559	5
Ohio	460	508	450	496	450	501	454	505	456	510	24
Oklahoma	484	525	476	521	480	527	482	530	482	537	9
Oregon	435	472	439	483	439	486	441	492	436	491	53
Pennsylvania	425	462	417	459	418	459	418	460	417	462	70
Rhode Island	424	461	421	459	421	460	419	464	420	462	68
South Carolina	384	419	395	437	394	437	396	442	395	443	60
South Dakota	520	566	496	551	490	550	502	558	483	548	5
Tennessee	486	523	487	528	484	529	486	531	488	535	12
Texas	413	453	411	463	410	466	413	472	412	474	48
Utah	503	542	494	537	496	545	500	549	509	558	4
Vermont	437	470	424	466	429	468	426	467	427	472	68
Virginia	428	466	424	466	425	468	425	469	424	469	65
Washington	463	505	433	480	432	484	435	486	434	488	49
West Virginia	466	510	441	485	440	484	439	485	439	482	17
Wisconsin	475	532	481	542	481	548	485	551	487	557	9
Wyoming	489	545	466	514	462	516	463	507	459	521	12
National	426	471	422	474	423	476	424	478	423	479	42

\*Based on number of high school graduates in 1994 as projected by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and number of students in the Class of 1994 who took the SAT.

Source: College Board, 1994.

**Table 1: SAT® Averages for Men, Women, and All College-Bound Seniors, 1969-1994**

Year	Verbal			Mathematical		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1969	459	466	463	513	470	493
1970	459	461	460	509	465	488
1971	454	457	455	507	466	488
1972	454	452	453	505	461	484
1973	446	443	445	502	460	481
1974	447	442	444	501	459	480
1975	437	431	434	495	449	472
1976	433	430	431	497	446	472
1977	431	427	429	497	445	470
1978	433	425	429	494	444	468
1979	431	423	427	493	443	467
1980	428	420	424	491	443	466
1981	430	418	424	492	443	466
1982	431	421	426	493	443	467
1983	430	420	425	493	445	468
1984	433	420	426	495	449	471
1985	437	425	431	499	452	475
1986	437	426	431	501	451	475
1987	435	425	430	500	453	476
1988	435	422	428	498	455	476
1989	434	421	427	500	454	476
1990	429	419	424	499	455	476
1991	426	418	422	497	453	474
1992	428	419	423	499	456	476
1993	428	420	424	502	457	478
1994	425	421	423	501	460	479

Averages for 1969 through 1971 are estimates. *College-Bound Seniors* reports were not prepared in those years.

**Table 4: SAT® Averages by Ethnic Group, 1976, 1984, 1987-1994**

	Verbal										Change Since 1976
	1976*	1984	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	
American Indian	388	390	393	393	384	388	393	395	400	396	+8
Asian American	414	398	405	408	409	410	411	413	415	416	+2
Black	332	342	351	353	351	352	351	352	353	352	+20
Mexican American	371	376	379	382	381	380	377	372	374	372	+1
Puerto Rican	364	366	360	355	360	359	361	366	367	367	+3
Other Hispanic	NA	NA	387	387	389	383	382	383	384	383	NA
White	451	445	447	445	446	442	441	442	444	443	-8
Other	410	388	405	410	414	410	411	417	422	425	+15
All Students	431	426	430	428	427	424	422	423	424	423	-8

  

	Mathematical										Change Since 1976
	1976*	1984	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	
American Indian	420	427	432	435	428	437	437	442	447	441	+21
Asian American	518	519	521	522	525	528	530	532	535	535	+17
Black	354	373	377	384	386	385	385	385	388	388	+34
Mexican American	410	420	424	428	430	429	427	425	428	427	+17
Puerto Rican	401	400	400	402	406	405	406	406	409	411	+10
Other Hispanic	NA	NA	432	433	436	434	431	433	433	435	NA
White	493	487	489	490	491	491	489	491	494	495	+2
Other	458	450	455	460	467	467	466	473	477	480	+22
All Students	472	471	476	476	476	476	474	476	478	479	+7

\* 1976 is the first year for which SAT scores by ethnic group are available.

the contrasting scores of public schools, religiously affiliated schools, and independent schools. In 1994, the number of SAT takers from the public schools was 831,605 (83% of the total takers) and they scored 419 Verbal and 477 Math. Religiously affiliated schools accounted for 122,499 takers (12%). Their scores were 443 Verbal and 480 Math. Independent schools had 50,199 takers (5%) and their scores were 469 Verbal and 532 Math. Clearly, the independent preparatory schools, where the well-to-do send their kids, produced the best academic records, while the public schools produced the worst. There was also a category of "Not Known," which accounted for 46,083 test takers. Could there have been a bunch of homeschoolers among them? We hope that The College Board will begin classifying homeschoolers in their own category so that their performance can be compared to the performance of the others.

## Recentering

Perhaps the most controversial decision made by The College Board in 1994 was that of "recentering" the scoring scale. What has happened since the original 200-800 scale was made in 1941 is that today's average test taking student scores well below the 500 average of previous generations, which simply reflects the steady dumbing down that has taken place in American education. Today's verbal "average" is 423, some 77 points below the original 500 average, and the math "average" of 479 is 21 points below the 500 average. Which means that even the 469 verbal score made by independent school test takers is well below the 1941 average of 500! And yet those same test takers scored 54 points above the current "average" of 423.

In other words, today's average student is dumber than the average student of 1941, and most of today's smarter students are dumber than the average students of 1941.

The College Board explains in its booklet, *Balancing the SAT Scales*:

The group of test takers who took the SAT in 1941 consisted of about 10,000 students applying to the most selective colleges in the country. The average score for this group was 500 for both math and verbal on the College Board scale of 200 (lowest) to 800 (highest). This group has been used since 1941 as a point of reference to which all other test takers are compared. . . .

Beginning with the high school class of 1996, the College Board will recenter the scales, based on a more contemporary reference group. This means that the average score will once again be at or about the center of the scale—500—for a new reference group from the 1990s. This will allow students (and high schools and colleges) to more easily compare and interpret their scores with the scores of a similar group of college-bound seniors.

Setting the average verbal and math scores at 500 means that most students' scores will be higher. So if a student scored a verbal score of about 430 and a math score of about 470 before recentering, the score would be about 500 for both verbal and math when the test is recentered. . . .

Recentering merely reestablishes the average score at about 500. This has nothing to do with the difficulty of the test, nor does it change the rank order of the students taking the test.

Percentiles will remain virtually unchanged. For example: a student who scored a 420 or 430 on the verbal section in 1993 (about the average verbal score for that year) would be at the 50th percentile. After recentering, that student's score would change to about 500 but the percentile would still be at 50 percent. So even though the score changes, the percent of test takers who score higher and lower remains the same.

In other words, the SAT merely provides admissions personnel with a comparative study of scholastic aptitudes so that the colleges can select those above average rather than those below average. The students might all be morons, but the morons who score above the average will be the morons who get into the best colleges. What we will lose in the recentering process is the ability to compare today's students with the students of previous years. Longitudinal analyses will become much more difficult, like trying

to compare the value of today's dollar with that of 1941. But we are told that "an equivalence table" will be available to students, high schools, and colleges which will relate old scores to the new ones.

## America's Shrinking Brain

What has declined in America, is not a score on a relativistic number scale, but the brain power of American students, easily detectable in the declining verbal scores. This was corroborated in 1971 by John Gaston, former director of the Human Engineering Laboratory in Fort Worth, who told a columnist from the *Dallas Morning News* (8/26/71): "[T]he present generation knows less than its parents. All of our laboratories around the country are recording a drop in vocabulary of 1 per cent a year. In all our 50 years of testing it's never happened before. . . . Can you imagine what a drop in knowledge of 1 per cent a year for 30 years could do to our civilization?"

The shifting averages of the SAT scores have acted as a kind of seismographic indicator of cultural decline. By recentering the scale, the educators will be able to deceive the public into believing the illusion of educational improvement while the dumbing down process continues unabated.

That the smart are getting dumber, while the dumb are getting still dumber can be proven by the SAT scores themselves. For example, in 1972, the number of test takers who scored between 750 and 800 on the verbal test was 2,817. (The number of test takers in 1972 was 1,022,820.) In 1994, that number who achieved that highest verbal score was down to 1,438. (The number of test takers in 1994 was 1,050,386.) With more students taking the test, one would have expected an increase in the number at the top. But where the increase occurred was at the bottom.

For example, the number of test takers who achieved the lowest verbal score of 200-290 in 1972 was 71,084. In 1994 that number was up to 136,841. One could find no better proof of the dumbing down of Americans than in these figures.

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## Joycelyn Elders' Son Gets 10 Yrs in Jail

The son of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders was sentenced on August 29, 1994 to 10 years in prison for selling cocaine. Kevin Elders, 28, was convicted in July of selling one-eighth ounce of cocaine to an undercover agent in December. The state Circuit Court judge, John Plegge, said Arkansas law in effect at the time of the offense required the sentence. Kevin Elders unsuccessfully argued during his nonjury trial that he was entrapped by police informants. (*Boston Globe*, 8/30/94)

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## Elders Witness Commits Suicide

A man whose testimony helped convict the son of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders at a cocaine-purchasing trial has apparently committed suicide, police said. Police said it appeared Calvin Walraven, 24, shot himself early Thursday morning, July 28, 1994, at his Hot Springs, Arkansas, home. "We have no reason to believe it's anything other than a simple suicide, and certainly no evidence of anything else," police officer Tim Hoover of Hot Springs, said. Walraven testified last week that he was working as a police informant when he bought a small quantity of cocaine from Kevin Elders, 28, in 1993. Elders was convicted and will be sentenced

Aug. 29. (*Boston Globe*, 7/30/94)

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## Students Supply Sperm Bank

California Cryobank, which opened an office on Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology a year ago, is bracing for its busiest time of the year.

When the sperm bank opened last September, it was deluged with college men hoping to earn \$35 a pop for a few minutes of work. Business slowed after the initial crush, bank workers say, and now they are looking forward to the return of students.

"A lot of guys left for summer vacation, and we were sad to see them go," said a Cryobank official. "We're looking forward to their return a great deal."

Dozens of vials of sperm rest frozen in a tank of liquid nitrogen at 190 degrees below zero Celsius, but with the students gone, the Playboy magazines sit idle on a table in the donation room.

The bank will intensify its advertising in campus newspapers at Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Boston University and Northeastern and will put up posters all over these campuses. They entice the students with promises of up to \$480 a month, for what usually amounts to less than an hour's work. About 20 men currently contribute. Only about 8 percent of applicants are accepted. Most are rejected because they are considered too short, too young or old, haven't completed a year of college, don't have sufficient sperm counts, or have a family history of cancer, heart disease or other ailments.

Sperm specimens are usually purchased by women who want to get pregnant. Some men have their sperm frozen for later use in the event they have a vasectomy or become impotent. (*Boston Globe*, 8/21/94)

## Comment:

The whole operation smacks of a stud farm. Some of these students may father ten children or more who may want to know some day who their father is. They may want to know who their aunts and uncles are, who their paternal grandparents are. They may want to claim inheritances. And if their fathers got married, they may want to know who their half brothers and sisters are. Can these student sperm donors claim no responsibility for their offspring? When human beings take it upon themselves to upset God's natural order, disorder will result.

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## Boston SAT's: The Pits

With Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of its students lagging 160 points behind the state and national averages, Boston school officials said that the system has a plan to help students do better. But Superintendent Lois Harrison-Jones declined to discuss specifics of the SAT improvement plan.

Boston students who took the SAT last spring scored an average of 339 on the verbal portion of the test (84 points below the national average of 423) and 402 on the math portion of the test (77 points below the national average of 479) for a combined score of 741 (national average 902) out of a possible 1600.

While Boston's SAT scores have declined since 1983 when the average combined score was 769, this year marks the first year since 1990 that scores did not drop. Boston officials say scores here are comparable to other urban school districts with a student population affected by a variety of social and economic problems. (*Boston Globe*, 8/26/94)