**State Students Outscore National Average on SAT Test**

*Who are the stakeholders?*

Students have a big stake in this story, of course, but they're not the only ones. So do parents, high school teachers and administrators, as well as universities who make admission decisions based in part on SAT results. Don't forget the companies whose business it is to prepare students to take the tests, and the companies that produce the test materials. Local governments and taxpayers also have an interest in anything that suggests their investment in schools is paying off in better student performance.

*What's the problem?*

Higher scores in and of themselves may not be a problem. But look closer: did students in our state really do better this year or did the national average decline? You'd also want to know whether more or fewer students took the test this year compared to last. It's possible that scores have gone up only because the pool of students taking the test was better prepared or qualified. And are students in general doing better or just some of them? How do the scores vary by school district, by race or by gender? How do they vary based on whether students have taken the PSAT or a prep course?

*Where does [did] this story come from and where is it going?*

Some states encourage all students to take the PSAT in 10th grade; others do not. Some school systems pay the PSAT fee for students who cannot afford it, allowing a larger percentage of students in those systems to take the test. Other school systems provide free test prep courses, usually online. But some universities have turned away from the SAT as a college admissions requirement. Has that discouraged some school systems from supporting student prep courses or tests?

With all of these questions in mind, here's one way you might have approached this story:

Let's find out if students in school systems that subsidize test preparation actually do better on the SAT.

Sources you might want to consult:

* State department of education
* School superintendent in our county
* Local school administrators
* Students and teachers
* College Board, which administers the PSAT and SAT