

# Locals unfazed by new SAT School board votes to revisit gifted program

BY AMY THOMSON SENIOR WRITER

SAT scores for the schools in Orange County continued to outpace the national average this year, but the effects of the test's new format won't be seen until next year's scores come out.

"Our scores went up by a point, so that we have a district average score of 1185," said Stephanie Knott, assistant to the superintendent of community relations for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. "And that is the highest district average in the state of North Carolina," she added.

Orange County schools saw an increase of eight points from last year to an average of 1047, beating the state average by 37 points and the national average by 19 points.

The county school system had a 77 percent participation rate, almost doubling the national participation rate of 49 percent, according to a press release from the district.

But while local schools are per-

forming well on the old version of the test, administrators, scholarship providers and universities are struggling to adapt to the changes.

According to a press release from the College Board press release, the first new test was given in March 2005 and includes a math section with higher-level Algebra II questions, a new essay section and more critical reading questions.

According to the College Board's Web site, the test was changed to better reflect academic challenges students will face in college, and group denied that the changes were made to accommodate demands by the University of California system.

Joan Bishop, a guidance counselor at East Chapel Hill High School said that at a Teaching Fellows scholarship meeting, representatives only wanted the students to submit critical reading and math scores — omitting scores from the new writing portion.

"I'm thinking that's going to happen on a number of applica-

tions," she said.

But she also said that a student applying for early admission at UNC-Chapel Hill was required to submit all three scores. Seniors at the high school who took the old version will have to retake the test — which costs students \$41.50 every time unless the fee is waived.

The high school was part of the original field testing for the test, Bishop said, giving teachers and students lots of time to get accustomed to the new formatting — including incorporating writing exercises similar to those on the test in English classes.

There seems to be some confusion among school administrators and students who have taken the old SAT. The changes to the SAT were implemented after some students in the class of 2006 had already taken the test.

Knott said that these scores stand and that many universities reviewing them won't recognize a difference.

But, according to Bishop, stu-

## Transitioning to the new SAT test

- Area high school students are adjusting to the redesigned SAT test enacted in March 2005.
- A new writing section, which includes a student-written essay similar to the type of writing required on in-class college exams.
  - Analogies eliminated
  - Shorter reading passages added
  - New content from third-year college preparatory math, including topics such as exponential growth, absolute value, and functional notation
  - Quantitative comparisons eliminated
  - A new high score of 2400

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM](http://www.collegeboard.com)

dent will have to take the new version of the test to apply for a majority of schools, including any UNC system schools.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

BY BRIANNA BISHOP ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Only a week after its implementation in an area middle schools, a program for highly gifted students already is seeing conflict.

School administrators brought revisions to the Learning Environment for Advanced Programming — or LEAP — before the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education Thursday for approval.

The program serves highly gifted students in the fourth- and fifth-grade and just recently was extended to the middle grades as well.

If passed, the revisions would guarantee entrance to students who score above the 99th percentile on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test — one of the tests that determine eligibility for LEAP.

Students outside of that range but still above the 97th percentile would need further evidence for eligibility to be determined.

Currently, students at the 99th percentile are guaranteed admittance to the program.

But the changes were met with staunch criticism from board members and parents alike.

After much debate, school board members voted 5-2 to leave the policy as it is now and review it again in a year.

Vice chairwoman Liz Carter and school board member Pam Hemminger were the two voices of dissent.

Many agreed that the current program hasn't been in place long enough for changes to be made.

"We need to see this year through, and I think we will learn a lot this year," said Carter, who voted against the changes after voicing displeasure about the issue monopolizing board meeting time.

"We did this two weeks ago. We did this five months ago, and we're

still here now."

And Brown was not the only one who felt that the program was too young for alterations.

Frank McBride, a parent member from the Tier 1 Task Force, suggested that the vote be tabled until it could be determined whether change was necessary.

"How could we know?" he asked. "We just approved the program five months ago."

Administrative staff argued, however, that these revisions were not really changes.

Instead, they said they were making clarifications to the existing document approved by the school board last year.

Denise Bowling, assistant superintendent for instructional services, told board members that these alterations would not make LEAP more selective or exclude qualified students.

The changes only would imply that the students who scored at this top level be guaranteed admittance without further qualifications.

The NNAT is a screening test, but not the only means of entrance to LEAP. End-of-Grade Tests as well as parent and teacher feedback also will be taken into consideration, she said.

Bowling also reiterated that LEAP is not the district's only gifted program.

LEAP is intended for highly gifted students whose needs are above those of their gifted peers.

School board member Mike Kelley questioned the administrators' conclusions, noting a lack of trust among the community.

"I am concerned that the stated technical question is not the whole story," he said.

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# Commissioners may change elections

BY TED STRONG CITY EDITOR

Wednesday night nearly all Orange County leaders agreed that the way members are elected to the Orange County Board of Commissioners needs to be updated.

Now they have to figure out how. Whatever method is eventually selected will likely change the face of board elections for years to come.

Most proposals have centered on ensuring that rural, typically more conservative voters who have felt under-represented by the current board would have a voice.

Three proposals from the board's chairman, Moses Carey Jr., had been provided for discussion purposes, but he emphasized at Wednesday's public hearing that they only were suggestions.

Preliminary lines will have to be drawn by county staff in the days to come now that the board

has decided to look at bringing the issue to the ballot.

The issue, though, is a complex one, with a number of vague options in place but few specifics anywhere to be seen.

"How the district lines are drawn will be important," said board member Alice Gordon.

A proposal could include a district that would encompass the UNC campus.

Barry Jacobs, vice chairman of the board, said students have little impact on the board and that such representation might increase student participation in elections.

"For one thing, if you know you have a voice, you're much more likely to speak," he said.

"They're just as much of an under-represented part of the county as the rural folks," he added.

Any district, no matter whether it encompasses the academic or the

agrarian, will have to meet a long list of requirements.

One difficulty is drawing districts such that each member of the board would represent relatively equal numbers of constituents.

One option would call for one commissioner in each district.

The other approach to the one vote rule, which stipulates that districts' populations not deviate from each other by more than five percent, is to create larger, uneven districts and then assign representation proportionately.

This method still requires that lines be shifted to even population inequalities, but because fewer lines are drawn, larger chunks of contiguous land can be left together.

The other requirement for any plan is that it be popular, as it will have to be put to a referendum.

A number of issues could play into how the voters perceive the

proposal that eventually makes it to the ballot, but likely factors include which constituencies are largely kept together and whether districts apply in general elections or just primaries.

Gordon said a student-, faculty- and staff-heavy district could be a viable option, but expressed several concerns.

She said she worries that students and other members of the academic community are too far-flung to be united into one district and pointed to apathy of county issues.

Still, she said that if a workable formula could be found, such a district could be a very good thing.

"Anything that can get the University of North Carolina interested in the commissioners I'd be interested in."

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## BIODIESEL

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thing we could change fairly quickly and make a very big difference."

Richmond said he had heard other campus groups talking about the idea, and he saw promise in fusing their efforts.

"I think they just needed someone to push the matter a little bit and unite the different groups," he said.

One of those groups, the Renewable Energy Special Projects Committee, was formed in 2003 and has spearheaded campaigns to introduce alternative energy sources to campus.

The solar hot water system that will be in used in Morrison Residence Hall is one such project. The system will be in place following the Morrison renovation project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2007.

RESPC has pushed for green energy in other campus buildings, and University construction officials are considering sustainability measures in numerous construction projects.

Taking the baton from Richmond, Nathan Poslusny, chairman of RESPC, helped work with University officials during the summer to hash out the specifics of a permanent bus change.

Expenses are one issue that has kept the buses running on premium diesel and that needed to be tackled first, he said.

Biodiesel is more expensive than premium diesel, so the extra costs for the 2005-06 school year will come from the renewable energy committee — which receives a \$4-per-semester energy fee from each student as part of an approved referendum.

The extra cost probably will not exceed \$4,000, said Cindy Pollock

Shea, sustainability coalition coordinator, pointing to the amount of fuel used by P2P buses and price premiums.

North Carolina is one of the highest consumers of biodiesel in the United States, Shea said. And it's on its way to becoming a major producer also.

One biodiesel producer, Piedmont Biofuels, is located in Pittsboro.

Richmond said he believes the UNC community has been ready for the change for a while.

The Wolfline at N.C. State University and Duke University Transit both already run on biodiesel.

"Not only are we now caught up to Duke and N.C. State, but we're at an opportunity where we can do more," Richmond said.

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## UNION SPACE

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number of rooms available, but problems arose because of the lengthy lines on the first day of class.

The process will change for the next registration period because of the number of complaints, she said.

Bozeman said the process will begin the day before classes start next semester so as not to interfere with classes.

She added that regular meeting rooms still are available in the Union and elsewhere on campus for student organizations to reserve, but there is a limit to the remaining auditorium space this Spring.

Next semester, Gerrard Hall, one main venue that student organizations can reserve for meetings, will be closed for renovations.

Bozeman said the availability of Manning Hall's auditorium,

Manning 209, is also questionable for Spring 2006 use because the Union has not received confirmation about whether the building will undergo renovations next semester.

The Campus Y relocated Aug. 1 to room 2500 in the Union while renovations are being made to its building for the first time since it was built in 1907.

The move from its longtime home to the Union resulted in some concerns — mainly about office space — but the organization is working hard to adjust despite the space limits.

"In some respect, yes, we have a little bit less personal space, but the Union has been really helpful in finding accommodations," said Kamal Menghrajani, co-president of the Campus Y.

Don Luse, director of the Union, said his staff is doing its best to help the large student organizations during this transition process.

"The Campus Y does have less office space, but hopefully we are helping them by supplying other meeting rooms and space upon request for various activities," he said.

## GRAD RATES

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maintain a 2.0 grade point average, while University of Virginia students must earn a 1.8 grade point average. Students then are placed on academic probation with varying levels of improvement to avoid dismissal.

Shelton said that although UNC is not in direct competition with those universities, they could provide insight for setting reasonable goals for graduation.

"It's important to have a sense of where you are," he said. "You want to have a sense of whether you are completely out of line."

Students who find themselves in the position of graduating after more than four years are still eligible for financial aid with certain restrictions, said Shirley Ort, director of scholarships and student aid.

"The federal government permits us to give federal aid for up to 150 percent of the ... required graduation 120 (credit hours)," she said.

"For UNC's aid — like our named scholarships or the Carolina Covenant — we give them nine semesters. We want to keep them moving."

## FRESHMAN

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maybe in three years we will come to realize what that is," she says.

Liz Kelly, a senior marshal, defines the contrast in classes by the differing current events of each year. Her class entered UNC with Sept. 11 fresh in their minds.

This year's freshmen have an additional worry.

"They are going to be dealing with Iraq," Kelly says.

Stephens says his peers aren't done dealing with the terrorist

attacks.

"We have been just as barraged with all the rhetoric as they have but we have had less access to a critical or more-aware view of 9/11 and the events after it," he says.

"We might be behind in thinking about 9/11 but we're behind in everything because we're freshmen."

Kelly says the best way to avoid being behind is to get out of the dorm right away.

"I would say get involved right off the bat, it's the biggest thing that will make or break your four years at Chapel Hill," she says.

"Mine was UNC Dance Marathon — I wish I had gotten involved with that earlier."

Freshman Abbas Rattani, who already is getting involved on campus, says he thinks the difference between the seniors and the freshmen is confined to the level of knowledge and experience, and that technology hasn't changed all that much in four years.

"We're more distracted," he says. "There's so much to see and do, I have two planners."

Seniors can't help dispensing advice to their plebeian underlings,

and Filopoulos also has a few morsels of wisdom for the class of 2009 based on his own experience.

"Find a mentor — find a professor in your field that you are interested in and try to develop a relationship with them," he says.

Rattani will have to pencil that into his busy schedule — he has his years at UNC already planned out.

"I just poured the cement in, I'm just waiting for it to be hard by senior year."

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