

# Math Proficiency Among Students in USVI Drops Sharply to 6.1 Percent; Literacy Drops to 17.5 Percent in Latest Annual Smarter Balanced Assessments

Education / **Published On December 28, 2022 05:59 AM /**

Elesha George **December 28, 2022**

Image not found or type unknown



The V.I. Dept. of Education's annual Smarter Balanced territory-wide assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for the 2021-2022 school year, have highlighted the ongoing need for acceleration programs to address learning loss.

Data for that period show a sharp decline in student scores compared to before 2019, when there was a steady growth rate in test scores.

The percentage of students' standards in literacy in spring 2022 declined by 7.3 percentage to 17.5 percent passes when compared to the spring 2019 administration of the tests.

In mathematics, the percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency was 6.1 percent in spring 2022, which is a decline of 3.9 percentage points from spring 2019.

Though the declining trends locally are also being experienced on the U.S. mainland, according to the [2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), the national scores are still significantly higher, with 54.8 percent of 8th graders scoring above proficiency, representing a drop of 8 points (274 out of 500 points) compared to 2019. National reading scores declined by 3 points (260 of 500 points), or 52 percent.

Education Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington said the results are not surprising as public schools in the territory were behind in resuming classes as opposed to institutions on the mainland.

“A lot of what we are experiencing now has been experienced across the country in terms of learning recovery,” she said during a meeting discussing the results.

Alexandria Baltimore-Hookfin, state assessment director at D.O.E. said in English, writing was identified as the weakest point while for Mathematics, students struggled with applying the concepts to solve problems.

Loss of instructional time during the early stages of the pandemic and the transition to virtual learning are to be blamed for territory’s decrease, Education officials said. Students’ participation was also lower in 2021, dropping to 80 percent and just under 95 percent in 2022.

“What we aim for, for the annual assessment is a 95 percent participation across all students’ groups” ... “and usually we met that participation rate but given that the 2021 summative assessments were administered remotely, we had challenges,” Ms. Baltimore-Hookfin noted.

Those challenges included faulty devices, unstable internet service, and the unavailability of parents to help students to prepare for the assessments at home.

In Spring 2021, tests were administered remotely and test blue prints were shortened for the last two assessments in Spring 2022, to accommodate the changed learning structure and to increase instructional time between students and teachers.

Spring 2022 also marked the first administration of the D.O.E. Science Assessment, which is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Students in grades 5, 8 and 11 took the Science Assessment, and the baseline scores show that 27.3 percent of students scored proficient or higher on the assessment.

When measuring the districts, D.O.E. found that as territory scores declined, district performance reflected a similar trend. In the St. Thomas-St. John District, the percentage of students that scored proficient or above declined by 6.3 percentage points in ELA and three percentage points in math from pre-pandemic (2019) to 2022. In the St. Croix District, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency decreased by 8.3 percentage points in ELA and 4.8 percentage points in math from pre-pandemic (2019) to 2022. Students in the St. Croix District performed higher than the territory’s average in ELA and math.

D.O.E.'s end-of-year test assesses the literacy and mathematical potential of students from grades 3 to 8 and those in grade 11. The recent results are based on historical data from when the program began collecting information at the end of spring in 2015.

The data, Mrs. Wells-Hedrington said, would allow her team to look at a holistic approach to improving the gaps in education.

“Data cannot be looked at it in terms of grade levels; you have to look at cohort,” she stated. “So what we do is that we look at the growth in our students.”

The acceleration program aims to cover teaching areas that were lost as a result of the pandemic.

“We are meeting students where they are and accelerating them to where we want them to be, and so our efforts are really to provide that quality educational experiences,” she added.

These will include extended learning and summer programs.

St. Thomas-St. John District Superintendent, Dr. Stefan Jurgen, described it as offering “a continuum of services” tailored to students that will allow them to succeed.

“We are so elated at the fact that our students are back in school and we believe that in-person instruction is going to get us some of the scores that we want to see,” he said.

Individual schools are also working on improvement plans and developing specialized programs for their students who are struggling.