



# 2016-17 SBAC: How did Hartford Students Perform?

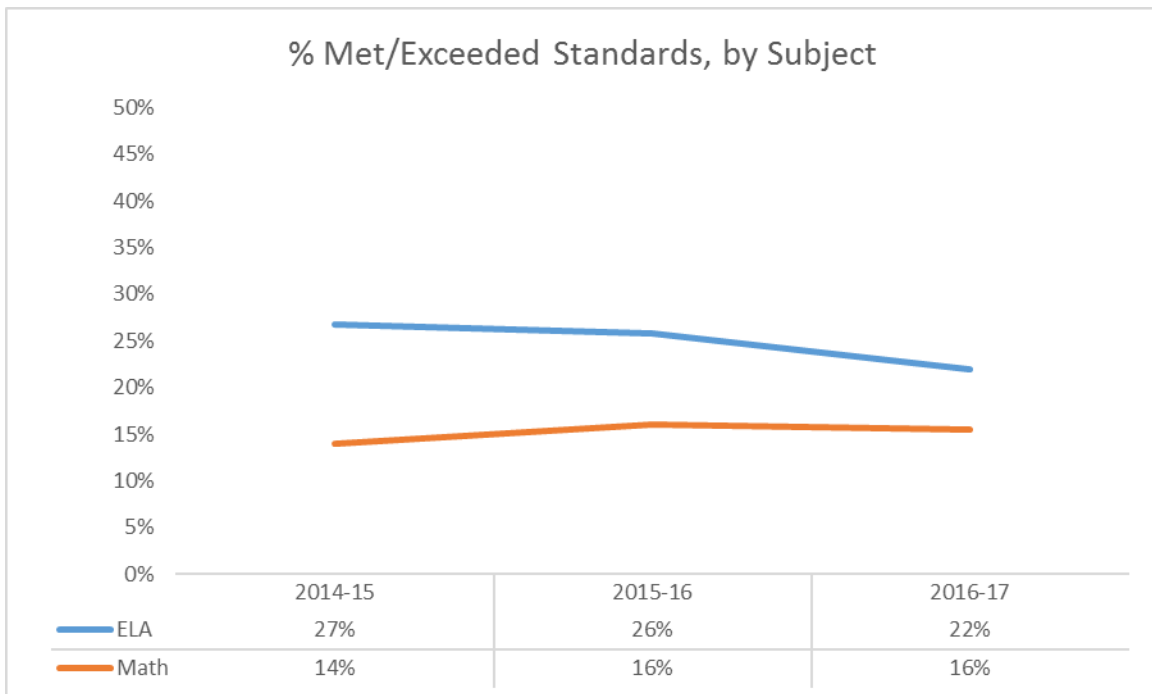
## Mini-Report 1: Grade Levels and Cohorts

### Background

The data presented in this report is the most recent SBAC performance data for students in the Hartford Public Schools (HPS)<sup>1</sup>, available from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), through <http://edsight.ct.gov>. The test is administered in the spring, and results are released in the fall. CSDE also provides important information regarding changes to the Smarter Balanced assessments in 2015-16. Due to these changes, this report will contain no analysis of testing results for Grade 11 students, and comparisons will be made based on the percent of students meeting or exceeding the standard (meaning they performed at or above grade level), not their numeric scores.

### How did Hartford students perform on the SBAC in 2016-17?

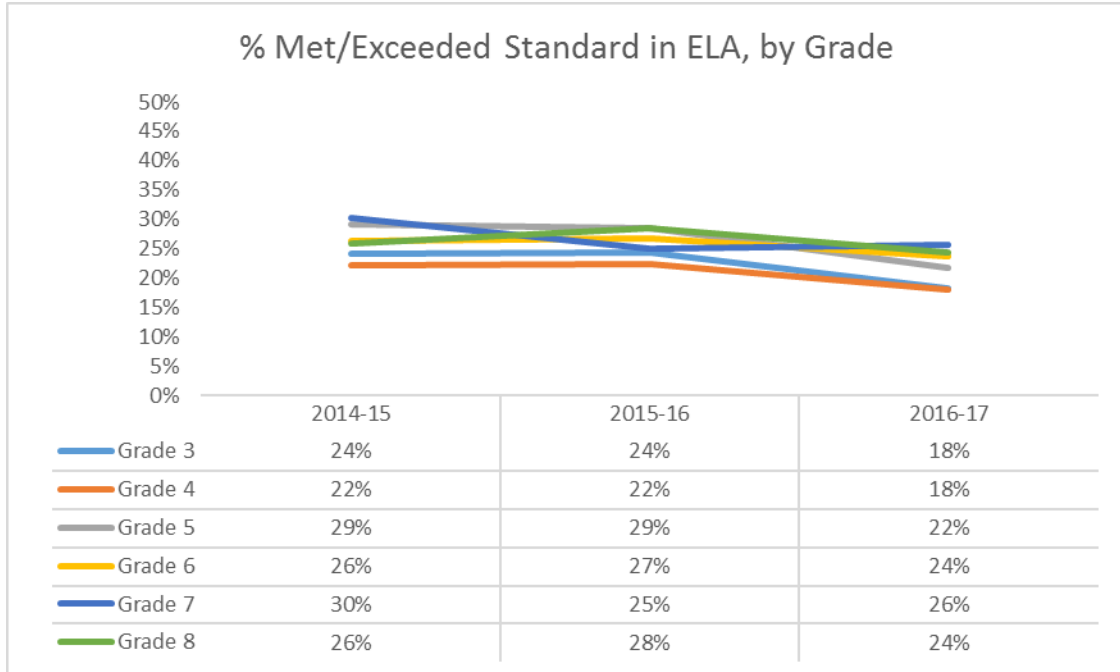
Overall, 22% of Hartford students met or exceeded the standard in English Language Arts (ELA), while just 16% did so in Math. These numbers reflect the performance of all students with scored tests from Grades 3 through 8.



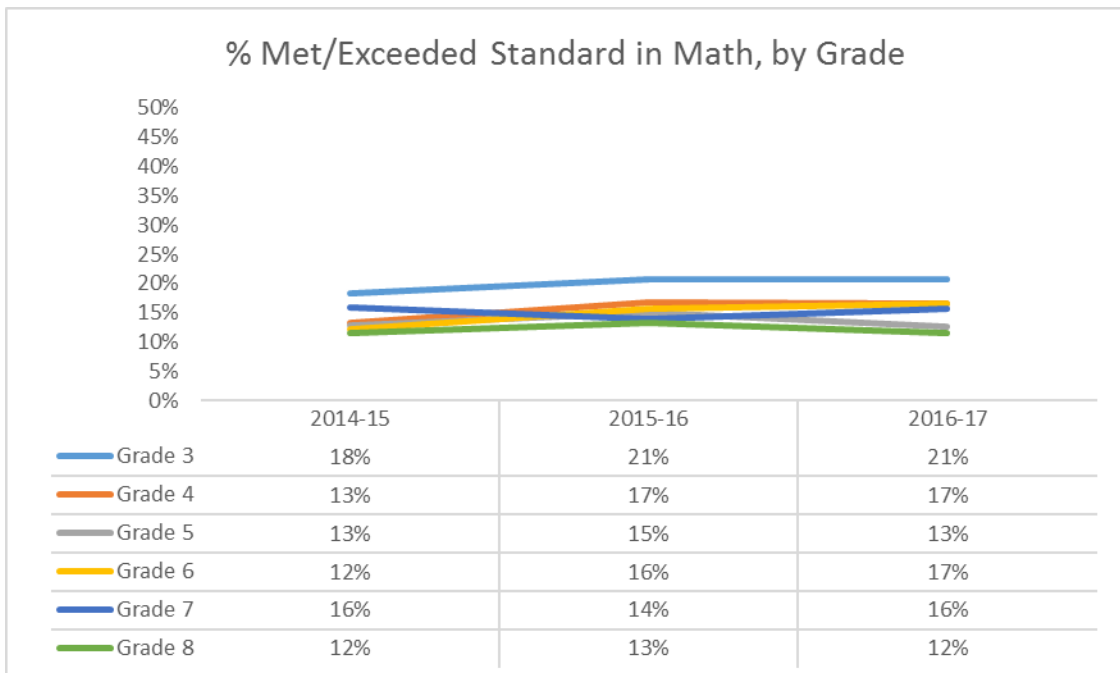
The first graph below shows that while the trend in Math is flat, the 2016-17 scores in ELA represent a decrease of four percentage points over last year. Given that we all expected the first year of administration of the new tests to yield low results back in 2015, it is startling to see the significant decrease in ELA scores now two years later. Below, we'll disaggregate the data by grade levels and cohorts to take a closer look at what these trends really mean.

**Performance by grade levels**

The decrease in ELA scores cannot be accounted for by a problem at a specific grade level. As seen below, every level except Grade 7 saw a performance drop of at least four percentage points over last year, and all grades scored lower in 2017 than when the test was first administered in 2015.

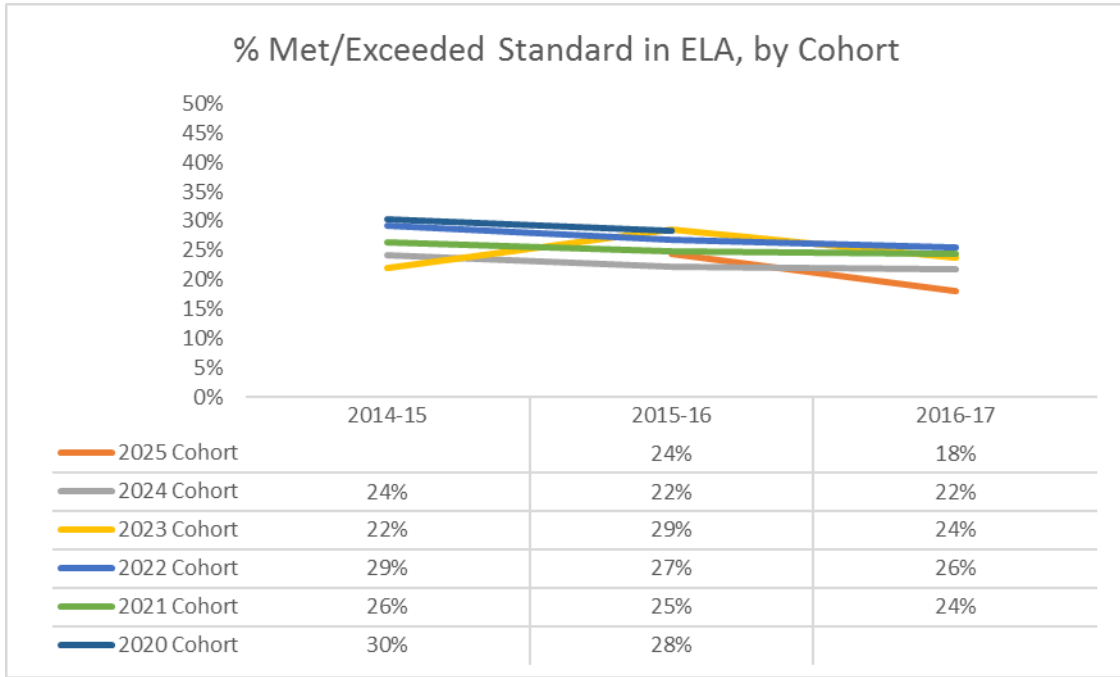


A side effect of this dip is that while Math scores have remained flat, students in Grade 3 performed better in Math than ELA<sup>ii</sup>. This is worth noting, as the share of students meeting their ELA standard typically exceeds the same for Math by several percentage points.

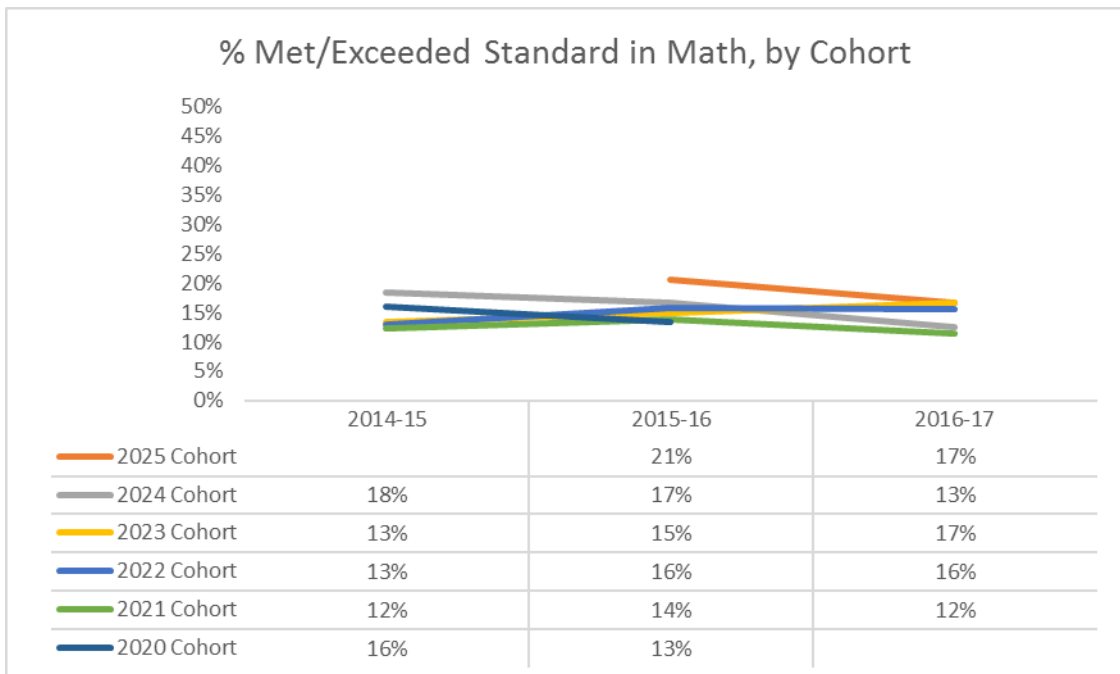


**Performance by cohort**

The next two graphs show performance broken down by the year each cohort will graduate from high school. Only cohorts for which there are at least 2 years of data are graphed. In ELA, we see an unambiguous negative trend for every cohort except the class of 2023, meaning that as each cohort progresses through their schooling, fewer of them meet the standard each year.



We do not see this trend so clearly in Math. In the older cohorts, the trend is flat, while it seems negative for the youngest cohorts. It may be that decreases in Math SBAC achievement take place mostly in the earliest grades.



**Conclusion:**

Now that we have three years of test results, we can draw tentative conclusions on the trends in student achievement on SBAC in the Hartford Public Schools. Soon we will release reports which disaggregate this data by schools and various student characteristics, and we will be able to draw even more nuanced insights.

Of course, we do not believe in using test scores alone to judge the efforts of Hartford’s students and teachers. Still, we cannot ignore these results, which tell us two things:

1. the planning and efforts of our previous Superintendent and her team did not have the desired effect on teaching and learning in Hartford as many had hoped; and
2. the planning and efforts of the new Superintendent and her team must make evident a re-thinking of how to educate the students of the Hartford Public Schools, else we should expect more of the same.

Not only does the school district need to change its practices—something we at Achieve Hartford! have been saying for the last five years—we all do. We must all approach the problems our city faces in different ways than before. Achieve Hartford! has been drastically changing its approach, and we hope to help others change theirs as well. Our kids and the future of our city, region and state demand nothing less of us.

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<sup>i</sup> In previous years, we have recalculated the numbers for Hartford to include the Achievement First Hartford Academy District (AF), due to an agreement that exists between HPS and AF. For various reasons including a desire for consistency with state reporting, this will no longer be our practice. This is a very recent change, and a previous version of this report mistakenly used “HPS + AF” data from [last year’s report](#), while using only HPS for the 2016-17 results. This has been corrected. There is no data on AF included in this report. This change does not affect any of the analysis, commentary, or conclusions included in this report.

<sup>ii</sup> A previous version of this report mistakenly stated that this was also true for Grade 4. This has been corrected.