

Grade 11 ACT Average Scores

Spring 2026 Dane County and State Peer Benchmarks

Waunakee Community School District · Secondary Curriculum and Instruction · October 2026

Summary

This report compares the average scores of Waunakee's grade 11 students on the spring 2026 ACT with the 16 public school districts in Dane County and with the 25 districts in the WCSD Comparable District Model (the state peer group). Spring 2026 was the first statewide administration of the redesigned ACT, whose composite no longer includes Science, so results are shown for both the **new composite** (English, Mathematics, Reading) and the **old composite** (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science averaged), and for each subject test, including Writing.

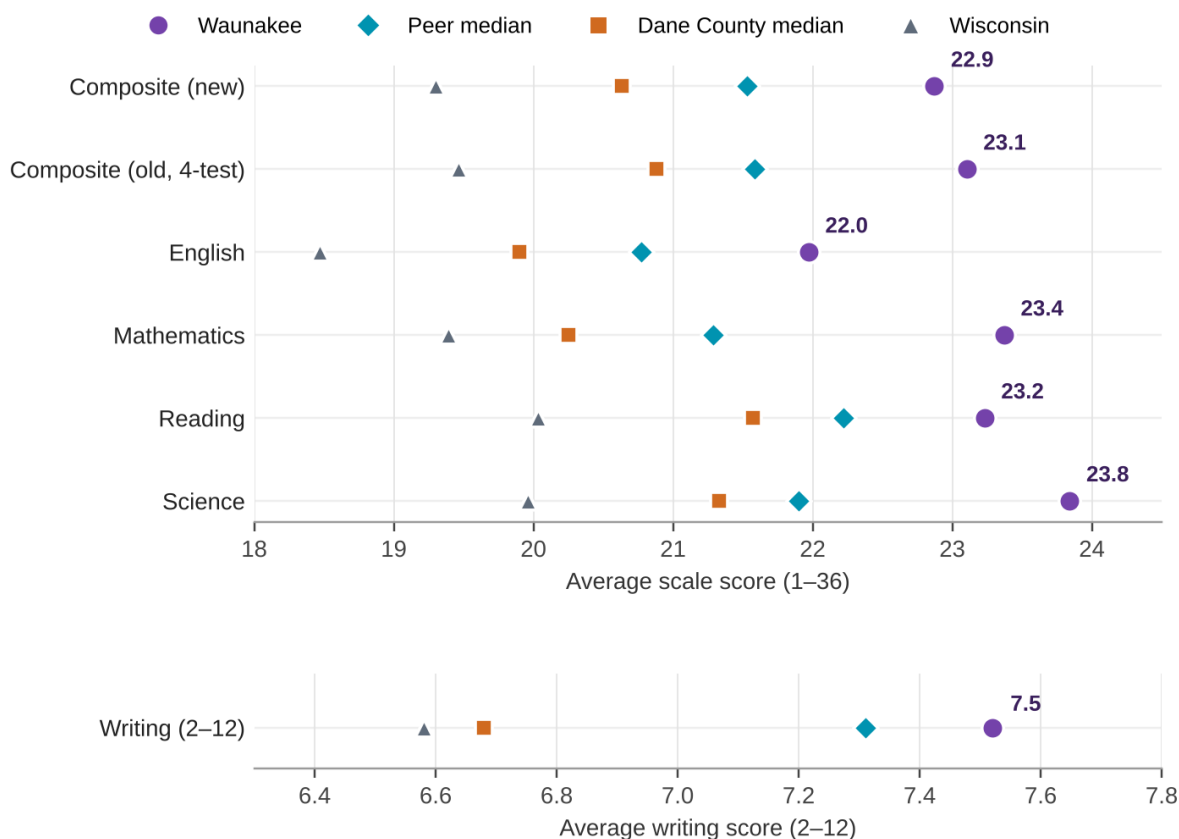
- **Composite: 22.9 (new) and 23.1 (old).** On both definitions Waunakee ranks 2nd of 16 in Dane County, 7th of 26 in the peer group, and 10th of 375 districts statewide. Only Middleton-Cross Plains Area (23.4) scored higher in the county. The new composite is 3.6 points above Wisconsin (19.3), 1.3 above the peer median, and 2.2 above the Dane County median.
- **Mathematics and Science lead the county.** Mathematics (23.4) and Science (23.8) are 1st of 16 in Dane County, 4th and 3rd of 26 in the peer group, and 6th statewide. Reading (23.2) is 2nd in the county and 7th among peers.
- **English and Writing are the relative soft spots against peers.** English (22.0) is 2nd in the county but 9th in the peer group and 18th statewide. Writing (7.5 on the 2–12 scale) is 2nd in the county, 8th among peers, and 25th statewide, where writing averages are tightly bunched.
- **A large gain from 2024-25.** On the like-for-like old composite, Waunakee rose from 21.5 to 23.1 (+1.6), while the peer median was unchanged and Wisconsin rose 0.3. Waunakee moved from 14th to 7th in the peer group and from 25th to 10th statewide.
- **Participation context.** Averages reflect tested students only. 337 of 358 enrolled Waunakee juniors (94%) took the ACT, close to the Dane County median (95%) but below the peer median (98%), 23rd of 26 in the peer group.

Table 1. Waunakee grade 11 ACT averages and benchmarks, spring 2026

Measure	Waunakee	Dane County rank	Dane County median	Peer group rank	Peer median	Wisconsin	Statewide rank
Composite (new: English, Math, Reading)	22.9	2nd of 16	20.6	7th of 26	21.5	19.3	10th of 375
Composite (old: English, Math, Reading, Science)	23.1	2nd of 16	20.9	7th of 26	21.6	19.5	10th of 375
English	22.0	2nd of 16	19.9	9th of 26	20.8	18.5	18th of 375
Mathematics	23.4	1st of 16	20.3	4th of 26	21.3	19.4	6th of 375
Reading	23.2	2nd of 16	21.6	7th of 26	22.2	20.0	12th of 375
Science	23.8	1st of 16	21.3	3rd of 26	21.9	20.0	6th of 375
Writing (2–12 scale)	7.5	2nd of 16	6.7	8th of 26	7.3	6.6	25th of 375

Rank 1 = highest. Dane County median includes all 16 districts; peer median excludes Waunakee; Wisconsin is the statewide average of all tested students. Statewide rank is among the 375 Wisconsin school districts with reported ACT averages. McFarland is represented by McFarland High School (see note in Section 2).

Figure 1. Waunakee compared with the peer median, Dane County median, and Wisconsin



Each marker uses a distinct shape as well as color. Writing is plotted on its own 2–12 scale. Values are in Table 1.

1. Two composites in spring 2026

The redesigned ACT that Wisconsin juniors took in spring 2026 is shorter and computes the composite from English, Mathematics, and Reading only. Science is still administered and reported in Wisconsin, but it no longer counts toward the composite. ACT reports that the redesigned section scores are on the same 1–36 scale as before, so section averages can be compared with prior years, although each section now has fewer items.

Because of this change, the report uses two composites. The **new composite** is the composite DPI reports for 2026. The **old composite** averages a district's English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science averages, approximating the four-test composite used from 2015 through 2025. It is the better measure for comparing 2026 with earlier years and with historical district benchmarks.

For Waunakee, the old composite (23.1) is 0.2 points higher than the new one (22.9) because Science (23.8) is Waunakee's highest section average. Across the peer group the difference is smaller (median 21.6 vs. 21.5). Waunakee's ranks are the same on both composites.

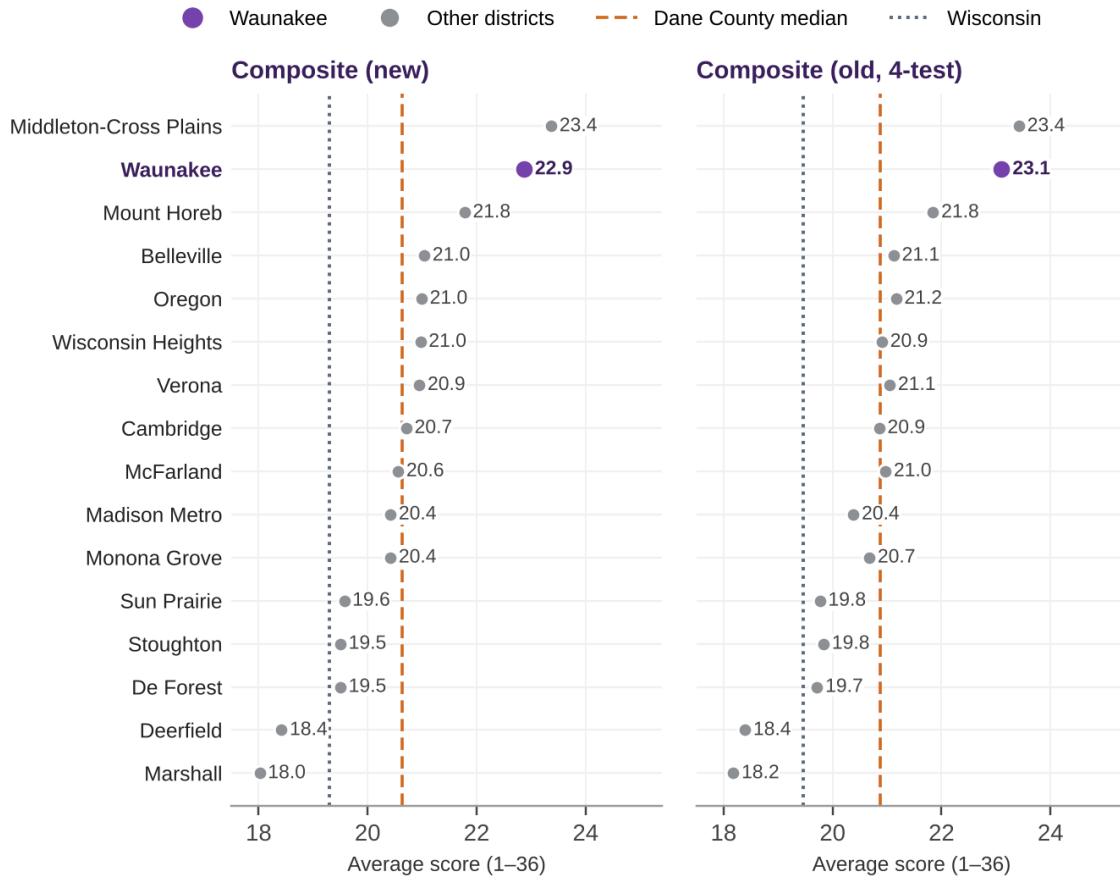
2. Dane County comparison

Waunakee's new composite of 22.9 ranks 2nd of the 16 Dane County public school districts, 0.5 points behind Middleton-Cross Plains Area (23.4) and 1.1 points ahead of 3rd-place Mount Horeb Area (21.8). The Dane

County median is 20.6. The order is nearly the same on the old composite: Waunakee (23.1) is again 2nd behind Middleton-Cross Plains Area (23.4). McFarland's figures are for McFarland High School only.¹

By subject, Waunakee is 1st in the county in Mathematics (23.4, ahead of Middleton-Cross Plains Area at 23.2) and Science (23.8, ahead of Middleton-Cross Plains Area at 23.6). Middleton-Cross Plains Area leads English (23.0 vs. 22.0), Reading (23.9 vs. 23.2), and Writing (7.56 vs. 7.52, essentially a tie). Waunakee is above the Dane County median on every measure, by 1.7 (Reading) to 3.1 points (Mathematics) on the 1–36 subject tests.

Figure 2. Dane County districts, new and old composite averages



Districts are ordered by the new composite. Dashed line: Dane County median; dotted line: Wisconsin. Values are in Table 2.

¹McFarland is represented by McFarland High School only. DPI's official McFarland district totals also include the district's virtual charter schools, which enroll students statewide; in 2025-26 those totals counted 599 tested grade 11 students with a composite average of 17.1, compared with 171 tested students and an average of 20.6 at McFarland High School. McFarland High's school-level results are used in place of the district totals in every table, chart, median, and rank in this report, including statewide ranks.

Figure 3. Dane County: Waunakee's position on each subject test



Gray dots are the other 15 districts; solid tick: Dane County median; dotted tick: Wisconsin. Rank of 16 shown beside Waunakee's value.

Table 2. Dane County districts, grade 11 ACT averages, spring 2026

District	Tested (% of enrolled)	Composite (new)	Composite (old)	English	Math	Reading	Science	Writing
Middleton-Cross Plains	530 (93%)	23.4 (1)	23.4 (1)	23.0 (1)	23.2 (2)	23.9 (1)	23.6 (2)	7.6 (1)
Waunakee	337 (94%)	22.9 (2)	23.1 (2)	22.0 (2)	23.4 (1)	23.2 (2)	23.8 (1)	7.5 (2)
Mount Horeb	165 (98%)	21.8 (3)	21.8 (3)	21.4 (3)	21.0 (5)	22.9 (3)	22.1 (4)	6.7 (8)
Belleville	70 (95%)	21.0 (4)	21.1 (5)	20.7 (5)	20.8 (6)	21.8 (6)	21.3 (9)	6.5 (10)
Oregon	306 (94%)	21.0 (5)	21.2 (4)	20.6 (6)	21.0 (4)	21.4 (11)	21.7 (5)	7.4 (3)
Wisconsin Heights	60 (98%)	21.0 (6)	20.9 (8)	20.1 (8)	20.3 (8)	22.5 (4)	20.8 (11)	6.3 (13)
Verona	392 (92%)	20.9 (7)	21.1 (6)	20.7 (4)	20.2 (9)	21.9 (5)	21.4 (8)	7.3 (4)
Cambridge	73 (95%)	20.7 (8)	20.9 (9)	20.4 (7)	20.1 (10)	21.4 (10)	21.4 (6)	6.6 (9)
McFarland*	171 (100%)	20.6 (9)	21.0 (7)	18.6 (13)	21.3 (3)	21.7 (7)	22.3 (3)	6.8 (6)
Monona Grove	299 (95%)	20.4 (10)	20.7 (10)	19.4 (10)	20.3 (7)	21.6 (8)	21.4 (7)	6.2 (15)
Madison Metropolitan	1586 (86%)	20.4 (10)	20.4 (11)	19.7 (9)	20.0 (11)	21.5 (9)	20.4 (13)	6.5 (10)
Sun Prairie	616 (90%)	19.6 (12)	19.8 (13)	18.9 (11)	19.2 (13)	20.7 (12)	20.3 (14)	6.9 (5)
De Forest	289 (98%)	19.5 (13)	19.7 (14)	18.4 (14)	19.6 (12)	20.4 (14)	20.4 (12)	6.2 (14)
Stoughton	198 (97%)	19.5 (13)	19.8 (12)	18.9 (12)	19.1 (14)	20.5 (13)	20.8 (10)	6.5 (12)
Deerfield	50 (98%)	18.4 (15)	18.4 (15)	18.3 (15)	17.7 (15)	19.1 (16)	18.4 (16)	5.4 (16)
Marshall	66 (89%)	18.0 (16)	18.2 (16)	17.1 (16)	17.5 (16)	19.5 (15)	18.7 (15)	6.8 (7)
Dane County median	— (95%)	20.6	20.9	19.9	20.2	21.6	21.3	6.7
Wisconsin	56,161 (—)	19.3	19.5	18.5	19.4	20.0	20.0	6.6

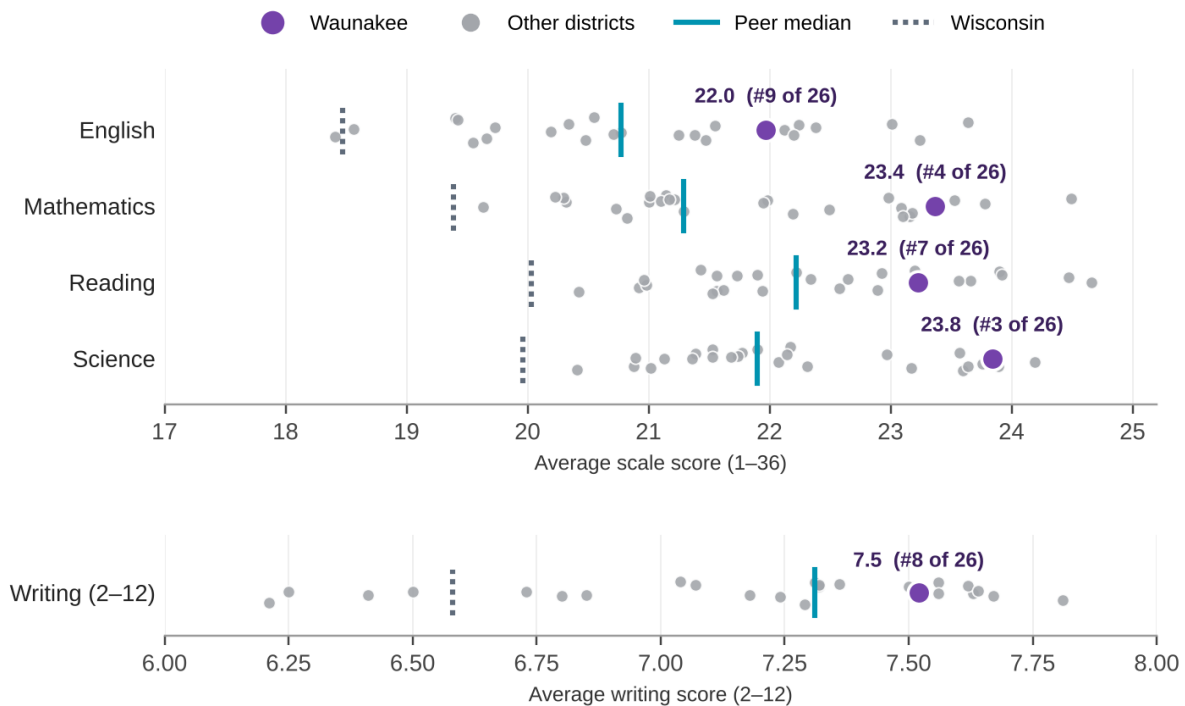
Average scale score with rank of 16 in parentheses (1 = highest). Composite (new) = English, Mathematics, Reading; Composite (old) = average of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. Writing is on a 2–12 scale. Tested = students with a composite score; percentage of students enrolled at testing. *McFarland High School only.

3. State peer group comparison

Among the 26 districts in the peer group (Waunakee and its 25 comparable districts), Waunakee's new composite of 22.9 ranks 7th, 1.3 points above the peer median of 21.5. Elmbrook (24.2), Cedarburg (23.9), Middleton-Cross Plains Area (23.4), Mequon-Thiensville (23.1), Pewaukee (23.1), and Hamilton (23.0) score higher. The top tier is tightly grouped: Waunakee is within 0.3 points of 4th place, and Muskego-Norway (22.8) is just behind. On the old composite, Waunakee (23.1) is again 7th, within about 0.1 points of Hamilton (23.2) and Pewaukee (23.2).

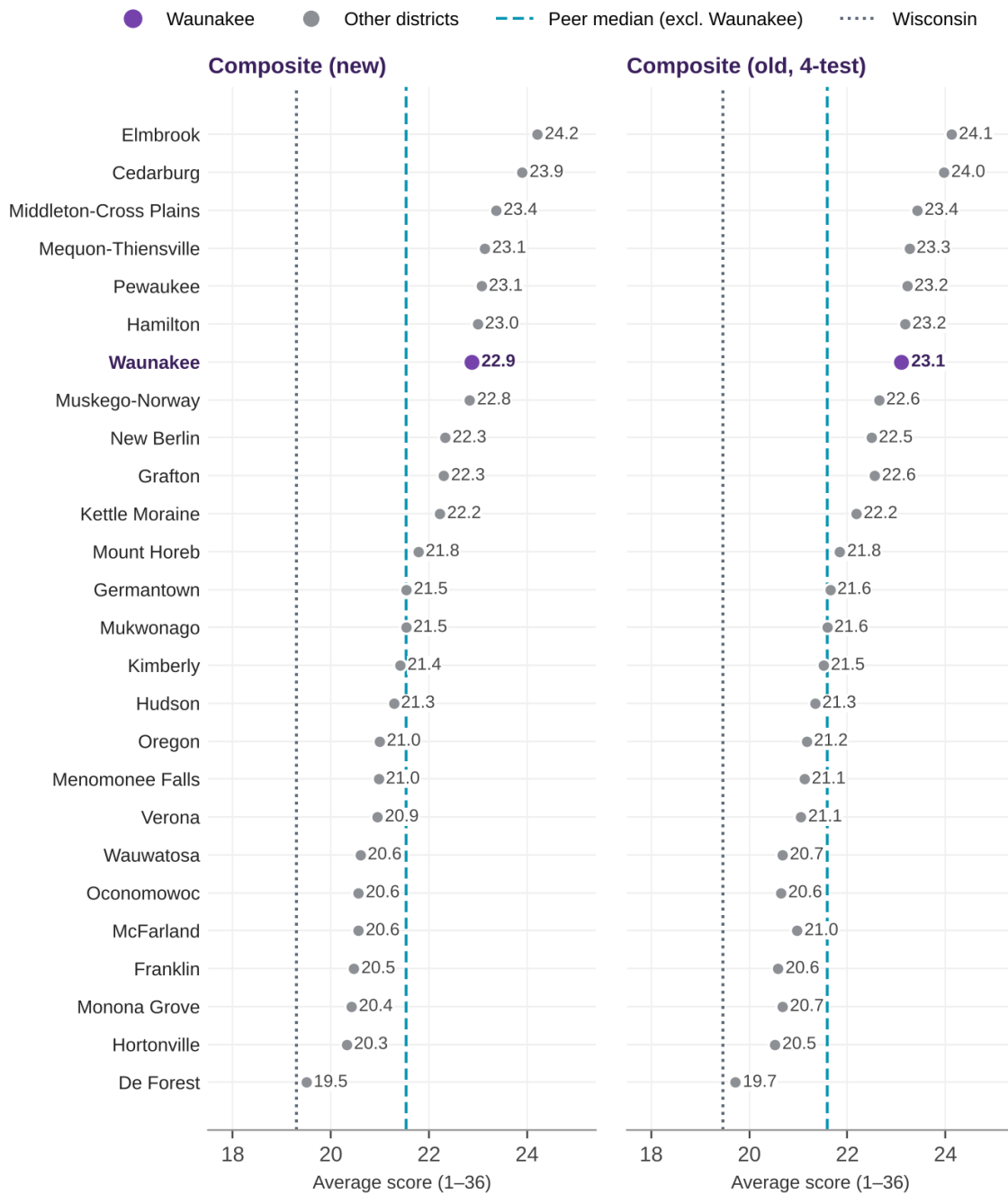
Subject results separate more clearly. Waunakee is 3rd of 26 in Science (23.8, behind only Cedarburg and Elmbrook) and 4th in Mathematics (23.4, behind Elmbrook, Cedarburg, and Mequon-Thiensville). Reading (23.2) is 7th. English (22.0) is 9th, 1.7 points below peer leader Elmbrook (23.6), and is the subject where the strongest peers have the largest lead. Writing (7.5) is 8th; peer writing averages run from 6.2 to 7.8, and Hamilton leads at 7.8.

Figure 4. Peer group: Waunakee's position on each subject test



Gray dots are the other 25 districts; solid tick: peer median; dotted tick: Wisconsin. Rank of 26 shown beside Waunakee's value.

Figure 5. Peer group districts, new and old composite averages



Districts are ordered by the new composite. Dashed line: peer median (excluding Waunakee); dotted line: Wisconsin. Values are in Table 3.

Table 3. Peer group districts, grade 11 ACT averages, spring 2026

District	Tested (% of enrolled)	Composite (new)	Composite (old)	English	Math	Reading	Science	Writing
Elmbrook	635 (97%)	24.2 (1)	24.1 (1)	23.6 (1)	24.5 (1)	24.5 (2)	23.9 (2)	7.6 (5)
Cedarburg	250 (98%)	23.9 (2)	24.0 (2)	23.2 (2)	23.8 (2)	24.7 (1)	24.2 (1)	7.6 (4)
Middleton-Cross Plains	530 (93%)	23.4 (3)	23.4 (3)	23.0 (3)	23.2 (5)	23.9 (4)	23.6 (6)	7.6 (6)
Mequon-Thiensville	276 (98%)	23.1 (4)	23.3 (4)	22.4 (4)	23.5 (3)	23.6 (6)	23.6 (7)	7.2 (16)
Pewaukee	213 (99%)	23.1 (5)	23.2 (5)	22.2 (6)	23.1 (7)	23.9 (3)	23.6 (5)	7.5 (10)
Hamilton	346 (99%)	23.0 (6)	23.2 (6)	22.1 (7)	23.2 (6)	23.7 (5)	23.8 (4)	7.8 (1)
Waunakee	337 (94%)	22.9 (7)	23.1 (7)	22.0 (9)	23.4 (4)	23.2 (7)	23.8 (3)	7.5 (8)
Muskego-Norway	384 (96%)	22.8 (8)	22.6 (8)	22.2 (5)	23.0 (9)	23.2 (8)	22.1 (12)	7.6 (3)
New Berlin	359 (99%)	22.3 (9)	22.5 (10)	21.2 (13)	23.1 (8)	22.6 (11)	23.0 (9)	7.3 (12)
Grafton	178 (99%)	22.3 (10)	22.6 (9)	22.0 (8)	22.5 (10)	22.6 (12)	23.2 (8)	6.5 (23)
Kettle Moraine	329 (99%)	22.2 (11)	22.2 (11)	21.5 (11)	22.2 (11)	22.9 (10)	22.2 (11)	7.7 (2)
Mount Horeb	165 (98%)	21.8 (12)	21.8 (12)	21.4 (12)	21.0 (20)	22.9 (9)	22.1 (13)	6.7 (22)
Germantown	315 (98%)	21.5 (13)	21.6 (13)	20.5 (17)	22.0 (12)	22.2 (14)	21.9 (14)	7.3 (15)
Mukwonago	353 (98%)	21.5 (14)	21.6 (14)	21.6 (10)	21.1 (18)	21.9 (15)	21.7 (16)	7.3 (14)
Kimberly	367 (97%)	21.4 (15)	21.5 (15)	20.8 (14)	21.9 (13)	21.6 (19)	21.8 (15)	7.6 (6)
Hudson	367 (94%)	21.3 (16)	21.3 (16)	20.3 (18)	21.1 (17)	22.3 (13)	21.5 (18)	6.4 (24)
Oregon	306 (94%)	21.0 (17)	21.2 (17)	20.6 (16)	21.0 (19)	21.4 (22)	21.7 (17)	7.4 (11)
Menomonee Falls	288 (95%)	21.0 (18)	21.1 (18)	20.2 (19)	21.2 (15)	21.6 (19)	21.5 (18)	6.8 (21)
Verona	392 (92%)	20.9 (19)	21.1 (19)	20.7 (15)	20.2 (25)	21.9 (16)	21.4 (21)	7.3 (12)
Wauwatosa	434 (94%)	20.6 (20)	20.7 (22)	19.4 (23)	20.7 (22)	21.5 (21)	21.0 (23)	7.1 (18)
Oconomowoc	361 (96%)	20.6 (21)	20.6 (23)	19.6 (22)	21.2 (16)	21.0 (24)	20.9 (24)	7.0 (19)
McFarland*	171 (100%)	20.6 (21)	21.0 (20)	18.6 (25)	21.3 (14)	21.7 (17)	22.3 (10)	6.8 (20)
Franklin	402 (99%)	20.5 (23)	20.6 (24)	19.7 (20)	20.8 (21)	20.9 (25)	20.9 (25)	7.2 (17)
Monona Grove	299 (95%)	20.4 (24)	20.7 (21)	19.4 (24)	20.3 (24)	21.6 (18)	21.4 (20)	6.2 (26)
Hortonville	329 (99%)	20.3 (25)	20.5 (25)	19.7 (21)	20.3 (23)	21.0 (23)	21.1 (22)	7.5 (9)
De Forest	289 (98%)	19.5 (26)	19.7 (26)	18.4 (26)	19.6 (26)	20.4 (26)	20.4 (26)	6.2 (25)
Peer median (excl. Waunakee)	— (98%)	21.5	21.6	20.8	21.3	22.2	21.9	7.3
Wisconsin	56,161 (—)	19.3	19.5	18.5	19.4	20.0	20.0	6.6

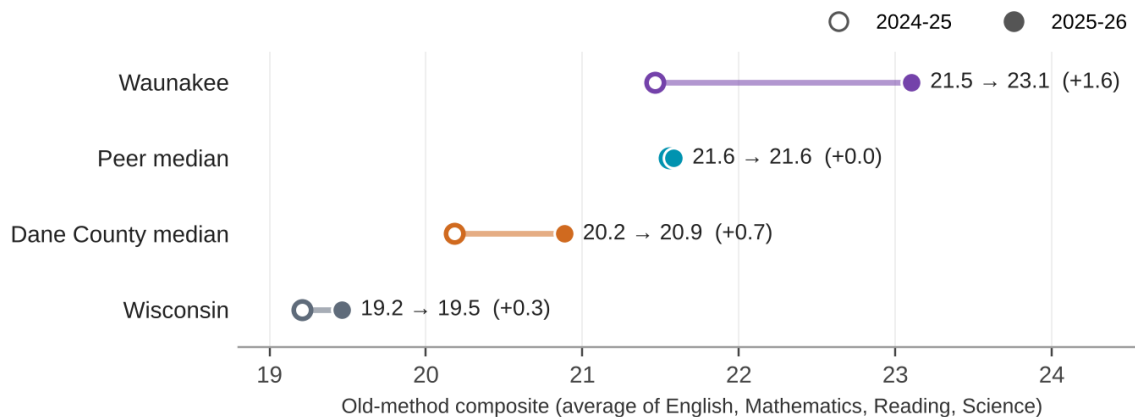
Average scale score with rank of 26 in parentheses (1 = highest). Peer median excludes Waunakee. Composite (new) = English, Mathematics, Reading; Composite (old) = average of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. Writing is on a 2–12 scale. *McFarland High School only.

4. Change from 2024-25

Because the 2025-26 new composite has no 2024-25 equivalent, year-over-year comparisons use the old composite, computed the same way for both years, and the individual subject tests. Waunakee's old composite rose 1.6 points, from 21.5 to 23.1. Over the same period the peer median was unchanged (21.6 to 21.6), the Dane County median rose 0.7, and Wisconsin rose 0.3. Because the state and peer averages barely moved on the redesigned test, Waunakee's gain appears to reflect more than the change in test design.

Waunakee's average rose on every subject test. The largest gains were in English (+2.3) and Mathematics (+1.7), where the peer median declined by about 0.3 points. In the peer group, Waunakee moved from 14th to 7th on the old composite, from 20th to 9th in English, from 13th to 4th in Mathematics, and from 24th to 8th in Writing. Each year's results reflect a different class of juniors, so these figures compare cohorts and do not measure the growth of the same students.

Figure 6. Old composite, 2024-25 to 2025-26



Open circle: 2024-25; filled circle: 2025-26. Values are in Table 4.

Table 4. Change in grade 11 ACT averages and ranks, 2024-25 to 2025-26

Measure	Waunakee 2024-25	Waunakee 2025-26	Waunakee change	Peer median change	Dane median change	State change	Peer rank (of 26)	Dane rank (of 16)	State rank
Composite (old, 4-test)	21.5	23.1	+1.6	±0.0	+0.7	+0.3	14 → 7	4 → 2	25 → 10
English	19.7	22.0	+2.3	-0.3	+0.9	+0.2	20 → 9	6 → 2	69 → 18
Mathematics	21.7	23.4	+1.7	-0.3	+0.7	+0.2	13 → 4	3 → 1	28 → 6
Reading	22.1	23.2	+1.1	+0.7	+0.9	+0.5	10 → 7	3 → 2	20 → 12
Science	22.4	23.8	+1.4	-0.1	+0.5	+0.1	8 → 3	2 → 1	16 → 6
Writing (2–12)	6.5	7.5	+1.0	+0.2	+0.1	±0.0	24 → 8	10 → 2	205 → 25

Changes are differences between the rounded averages shown. Ranks are 2024-25 → 2025-26 (1 = highest); state ranks are among 375 districts each year. The 2024-25 old composite is calculated the same way as 2025-26 (average of the four section averages). DPI's official 2024-25 composite for Waunakee was 21.6.

Notes and methodology

- Sources.** Wisconsin DPI district-level ACT public data files for 2024-25 and 2025-26 (2025-26 released October 1, 2026), and DPI's school-level file for McFarland High School. Statewide averages match DPI's published 2025-26 statewide ACT averages (WISEdash, downloaded September 26, 2026).
- Population.** All grade 11 students enrolled in each district at testing who took the ACT (DPI public reporting basis, not the FAY accountability population). Averages exclude students with no test and students who took the DLM alternate assessment. Waunakee's new composite from these files (22.87) matches the 22.9 in the district's student-level records.
- Comparison groups.** Dane County: the 16 public school districts DPI assigns to Dane County, including Waunakee (the Isthmus Montessori Academy independent charter is excluded). Peer group: the 25 districts of the WCSO Comparable District Model, the Wisconsin districts of 1,800–10,000 students most similar to Waunakee on economic disadvantage, adult educational attainment, median income, and enrollment. Seven districts belong to both groups (De Forest Area, McFarland, Middleton-Cross Plains Area, Monona Grove, Mount Horeb Area, Oregon, Verona Area). The Dane County median includes all 16 districts; the peer median excludes Waunakee.
- McFarland.** McFarland is represented by McFarland High School only, excluding the district's virtual charter schools. See the note in Section 2.

- **New composite.** DPI's reported district composite average for 2025-26, based on English, Mathematics, and Reading.
- **Old composite.** The simple average of a district's English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science averages. The official pre-2026 ACT composite rounded each student's four-test average to a whole number, which made it about 0.1 point higher than this calculation (0.13 points on average across Wisconsin districts in 2024-25). For that reason, the old composite should be compared only with figures calculated the same way, as in Section 4.
- **Wisconsin and ranks.** Wisconsin figures are averages of all tested students statewide. Statewide ranks are among the 375 school districts with reported averages (independent charter schools excluded; three small districts had no reported averages). Ranks use unrounded averages, so districts that appear tied at one decimal may have different ranks.

Preparation and environmental note

AI disclosure. This report was drafted with AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic) from Wisconsin DPI public ACT data files. All figures, text, and charts were reviewed and approved by Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Waunakee Community School District.

Environmental impact. Preparing this report used an estimated 0.15 kWh of data-center energy, or about 60 g CO₂e. That is roughly equivalent to streaming Netflix for about 1 hour 40 minutes, or driving a car that gets 30 miles per gallon about 0.2 miles (roughly 1,000 feet). Conversion factors: about 36 g CO₂e per hour of streaming (IEA); 8.89 kg CO₂ per gallon of gasoline (U.S. EPA); about 0.39 kg CO₂e per kWh (U.S. average grid). The energy figure is an order-of-magnitude estimate because per-session use is not metered.