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Beyond the silver lining

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The 2004 SAT scores are out and, according to Texas, major newspapers and the Texas Education Agency, the news is generally good. A closer look at the details, though, raises serious questions about the performance of Texas, most able students and the honesty of reports on public education.

As reported, the good news is SAT scores are up for Hispanic and African-American students while the achievement gap between student groups narrowed. A larger number of students took the test while scores held steady from previous years.

The bad news, generally obscured or ignored, is that scores for whites, Asians and other racial

groups fell. The achievement gap was largely narrowed by bringing top scores down.

If students were ranked according to their peers in other states, a comparison discouraged by the SATs governing College Board, Texas would rank among the lowest 10 states in the nation.

It's time for some tough questions: Why is the outcome of Texas public schools so dismal in comparison to other states? Why is the achievement of our most proficient students declining? Why are fewer students taking college readiness tests?

When Texans look beyond the silver lining of reports about public schools and press for proven solutions, we can create a system of public education that will serve all children.