

STATE SCHOLARS INITIATIVE PERFORMANCE DATA



Student-level Outcome Data: Highlights from the Annual State Scholars Initiative Report

The State Scholars Initiative (SSI) is a national program that utilizes business leaders to motivate students to complete a rigorous course of study in high school, one that will give them a boost in college and their careers. SSI works through state-level partnerships: 20 SSI states are currently active.

The collection of student-level outcome data for the State Scholars Initiative is of paramount importance. SSI is creating an environment that allows states and districts to understand the difficult data-gathering and utilization questions that are left unanswered by other programs. That said, the ability to collect good data at the project level and within individual states and school districts has been hampered by a combination of factors, which will be discussed later in this paper.

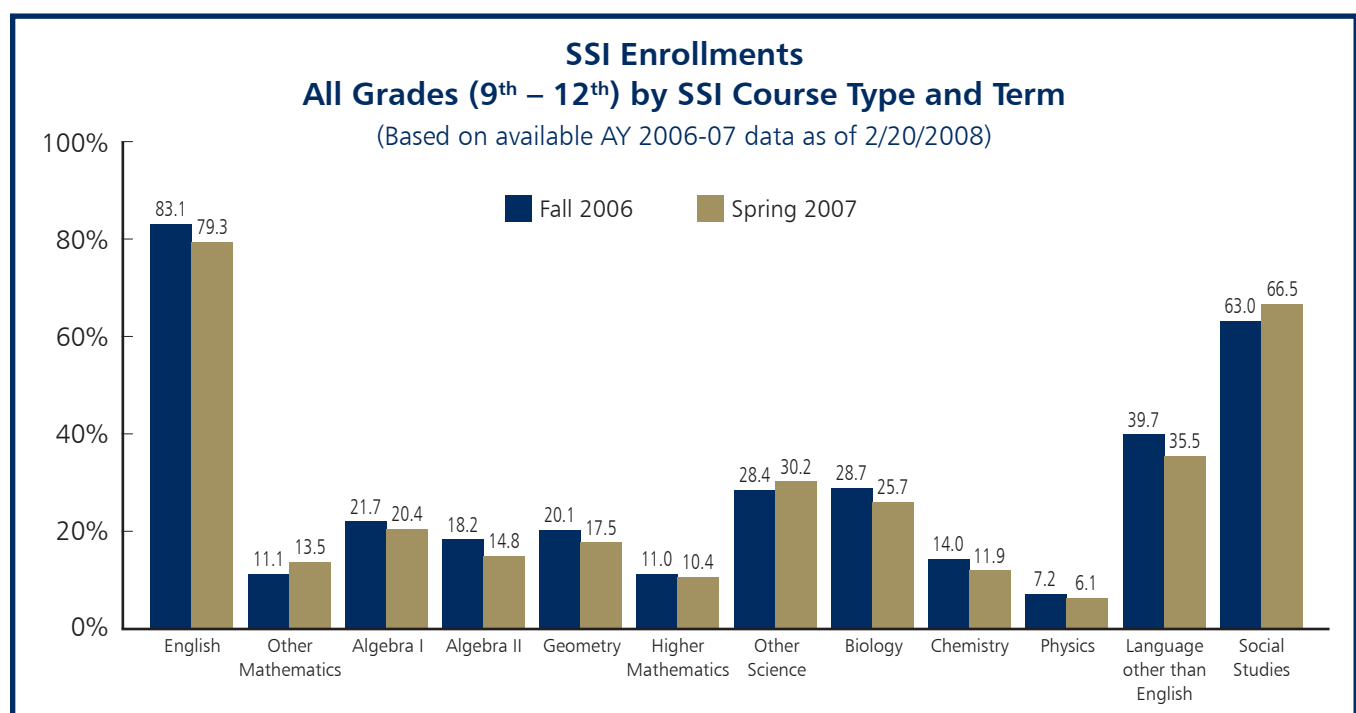
Data Findings

Included in this summary are data from 47 districts in 10 SSI states, representing 121,417 individual students with enrollments in over 1.3 million courses in 2006-07. The SSI states included in these charts are Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska,

New Hampshire, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

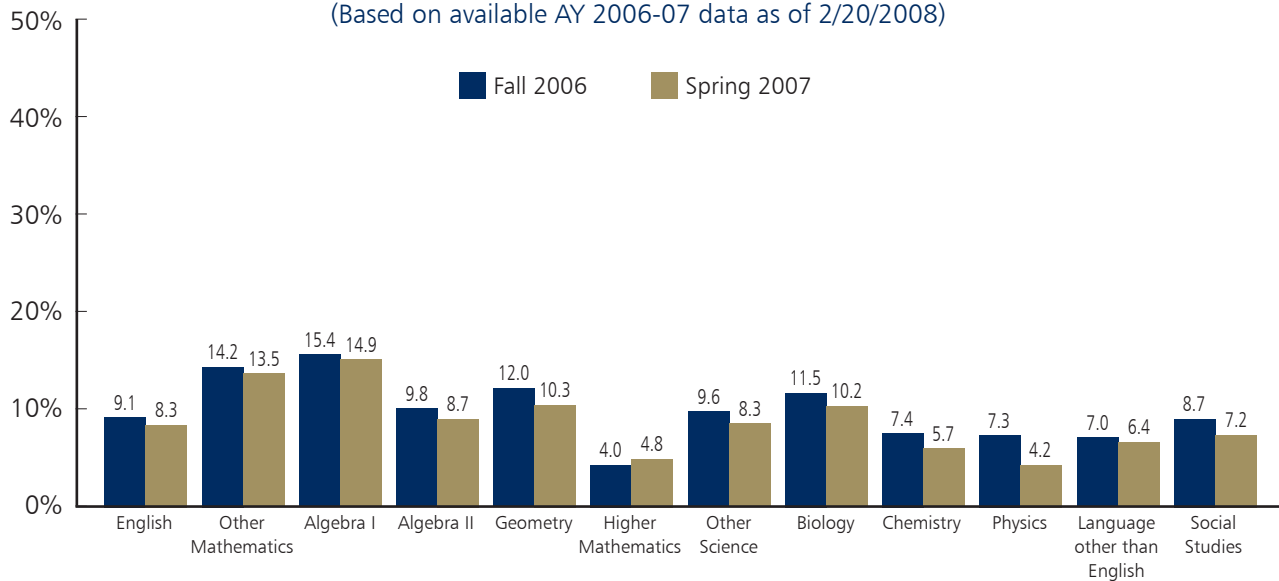
The State Scholars Core Course of Study recommends four years of English, three of math (algebra I and II, geometry), three and a half of social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, and government), and two of a language other than English. Nearly 80 percent of students in the 47 districts took English; over 60 percent enrolled in some form of social studies. However, despite physics being offered by all these districts, less than 7 percent of students enrolled in this class. And only about 35 percent enrolled in a language other than English during the academic year.

Because many are concerned about students' ability to do well with a rigorous course of study, data were also collected on how SSI students fared. Data demonstrated that the vast majority of SSI students successfully completed their courses. However, higher failure rates were seen in some areas, especially in "gateway" courses for academic sequences in mathematics and science. In spring 2007 about 15



Percent of SSI Students Who Fail a Course All Grades (9th – 12th) by SSI Course Type and Term

(Based on available AY 2006-07 data as of 2/20/2008)



percent of the students failed algebra I (but only 9 percent failed algebra II). In the sciences, 10 percent failed biology, while 4 percent failed physics.

Data Challenges

While SSI has successfully collected student-level outcome data, there have been some data challenges. These challenges present opportunities for educators, data personnel, and policymakers to improve data systems, particularly in three areas.

- ★ **Staff.** Schools, districts, and states lack personnel capable of extracting data from student information systems, or they have no funds to pay for these individuals' time.
- ★ **Data infrastructure.** Many student information systems and data-reporting mechanisms currently in use make it hard to collect and then use good data; they must be revamped to allow for more flexibility and transparency of analyses.
- ★ **Policy.** Privacy laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), while of paramount importance, provide convenient excuses for district and state personnel not to

collect data. We need to focus on building safeguards for privacy that still allow the use of aggregate data for decision making.

The student-level outcome data that SSI was able to collect from 47 of its districts are:

- ★ Defensible.
- ★ Parallel, internally consistent, and comparable across states and districts.
- ★ Understandable to experts and lay people alike.

And those data show that SSI courses are available to students; that a high percentage of students are taking these classes; and that the vast majority of students are passing them. To truly make the case for a rigorous course of study, however, we need more data – and for that, we need to address the data challenges outlined above.

To access the full SSI report, go to www.wiche.edu/statescholars.

This brief was prepared by Karen Paulson, an SSI evaluator and senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).



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