



A Review of Ticonderoga Central School District's Academic Performance

**Hague School Advisory Committee (SAC)
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to inform parents and community members about the performance of the Ticonderoga Central School District (TCSD) and engage the community in an effort to improve the performance of Ticonderoga's schools for the benefit of all children.

This paper will show that TCSD student achievement is below average for the state and well below that of neighboring school districts, and that there are opportunities for TCSD leadership to make improvements.

Hague joined the Ticonderoga school district in 1979 with the goal of providing high quality, efficient and effective public education for our children. **The educational achievement of our children is at the heart of our mutual interest in supporting the TCSD.**

This paper will focus on the performance of TCSD students as measured by state assessments of Grade 3 to 8 student proficiency for the 2023-24 school year. All of the data were obtained from publicly available information on the New York State (NYS) Education Department website (<https://data.nysed.gov>).

NYS conducts a number of other statewide assessments, most notably the Regents Exam. We deliberately chose the student proficiency assessment results because all general education Grade 3 to 8 students must take the tests. Regents exams are taken by a sub-set of students and are not reflective of overall student achievement.

How Does NYS Evaluate Student Achievement?

NYS requires school districts to conduct annual assessments that measure the percentage of students who are proficient in the NYS learning standards by grade level and subject area - English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The assessments for ELA and Math are given to students in every grade from 3 through 8, whereas the Science assessment is conducted for students in grades 5 and 8. For example, the ELA test taken by 4th graders measures the percentage of grade 4 students who demonstrate proficiency in the learning benchmarks embedded in the state ELA standards for 4th grade students.

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for ELA by Grade

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for ELA by Grade (3-8)				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
3rd Grade	59%	62%	78%	43%
4th Grade	34%	76%	75%	47%
5th Grade	22%	76%	14%	44%
6th Grade	47%	62%	64%	44%
7th Grade	28%	60%	52%	50%
8th Grade	36%	68%	50%	46%

In grades 3 and 6, the percentages of Ticonderoga students who are proficient in ELA are greater than the state average. However, with the exception of the grade 3 results, fewer than 50% of Ticonderoga’s 4th through 8th graders are proficient in the standard for ELA.

The percentages of ELA-proficient students in the Lake George Central School District (Lake George) and the Bolton Central School District (Bolton) - with the exception of the Grade 5 students in Bolton - are above the state averages.

2023-24 Comparative ELA Proficiency Results for Combined Grades 3-8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Grade 3-8	36%	67%	57%	46%
State Rank	439	49	109	N/A

On a combined Grade 3-8 basis, only 36% of TCSD students are proficient in the ELA standards where the NYS average is 46%. The combined results for Lake George and Bolton are well above the NYS average, placing these school districts among the top school districts in NYS.

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Math by Grade

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Math by Grade (3-8)				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
3rd Grade	84%	82%	88%	54%
4th Grade	45%	83%	75%	58%
5th Grade	41%	84%	33%	49%
6th Grade	56%	67%	57%	51%
7th Grade	37%	71%	65%	57%
8th Grade	27%	60%	78%	41%

In grades 3 and 6, the percentages of Ticonderoga students who are proficient in Math are above 50% and higher than the state average. However, in all other grades the results are below 50% and lower than the state average. The percentages of Grade 3-8 students proficient in Math in Lake George and Bolton, with the exception of Grade 5 students in Bolton, are well above the state average by grade level.

2023-24 Comparative Math Proficiency Results for Combined Grades 3-8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Grade 3-8	N/A *	76%	69%	54%
State Rank	N/A	49	96	N/A

The NYS Report Card does not report data for the percentage of combined Grade 3-8 students who are proficient in Math for the TCSD. The combined Grade 3-8 student proficiency results for Lake George and Bolton students are well above the NYS average of 54% and place them among the top 100 school districts in NYS.

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Science by Grade

In NYS, assessments for Science are given in grades 5 and 8.

2023-24 Comparative Proficiency Results for Science Grades 5 and 8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
5th Grade	31%	72%	14%	35%
8th Grade	30%	50%	67%	34%
Combined Grade 8**	N/A *	59%	80%	53%
Combined 5 & 8	N/A *	67%	59%	44%
** Combined Grade 8 includes the results for students who took the Regents 8 test and the Grade 8 standard state test for Science				

In both grades 5 and 8, Ticonderoga students scored below the NYS average for proficiency in Science. The Grade 5 results in Bolton are well below the state average and below the proficiency rate of 5th Grade students in Ticonderoga.

The NYS Report Card does not report data for the combined Ticonderoga Grade 5-8 Science results. In Lake George and Bolton, some 8th graders took the Regents 8 Science exam in place of the standard state 8th Grade Science test. It does not appear that any Ticonderoga students took the Regents 8 Science test. The state provides a combined Grade 8 result reflecting the achievement of students who took either of the two 8th Grade Science tests. Combined Grade 5 and 8 Science proficiency results for Lake George and Bolton students are well above the state average.

2023 and 2024 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rates

The 4-Year High School Graduation Rate is a broad measure of how well a school district prepares its students to enter the work force, skilled trades, military and post-secondary education. The results presented are the 4 Year Graduation Rates reported by the NYS Department of Education website (<https://data.nysed.gov>) for 2024 and 2023.

2024 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rates				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Graduation Rate	83%	92%	100%	86%
Drop Out Rate	11%	7%	0%	5%

2023 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rates				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Graduation Rate	91%	96%	100%	86%
Drop Out Rate	9%	3%	0%	5%

The 2024 High School Graduation Rate for the TCSD is notably below the results in 2023 and the drop-out rate is well above the NYS average in both years. There can be some variability year over year especially in cases where the graduating classes are small, so more data collection and analysis would be worthwhile to evaluate over time to determine if there is a sustained trend of improvement or decline.

Comparing the Ticonderoga graduation rate and drop-out rates with those for Lake George suggests there are opportunities to improve TCSD results. If 6 (out of 66) more TCSD students had graduated in 2024, the graduation rate in Ticonderoga would have been 92% - this should be an achievable objective for the TCSD.

Overall Findings:

- The Grades 3-8 learning proficiency results for the TCSD in ELA, Math and Science are below the NYS average and compare less favorably with the results of our neighboring districts of Lake George and Bolton.
- The 2024 High School Graduation rate at Ticonderoga High School is three percentage points below the state average. The high school graduation rates in Lake George and Bolton are substantially higher.

Concerns:

- If foundational skills are not mastered in the elementary and middle schools, it is challenging to improve the achievement of High School students.

- The lower than average high school graduation rate should be concerning to parents in the district, especially when compared to nearby districts.

What Can be Done - What Can I do - What Can We Do Together?

“Our history is not our destiny.”

Be Bold – *Expect Excellence!*

Ticonderoga has communicated about academic excellence before. In the 2015-2018 TCSD “Strategic Plan for Continuous Improvement” the leadership set out an ambitious Vision and Mission Statement:

Vision: We aspire to be the national model of excellence in rural education

Mission: We engage and inspire a community of learners today and into tomorrow

The current TCSD website contains little information about how the district plans to achieve excellence. The only statement we can find is from the Ticonderoga Superintendent’s message from August 2023: *“We will remain committed to the social and emotional well-being of our students and staff throughout the 2023-2024 school year, while continuing to pursue academic success.”*

In contrast both Lake George and Bolton websites have Mission, Vision, Value Statements or Goals featured prominently.

Lake George Mission:

“The Lake George Central School District will personalize opportunities that empower all students to be lifelong learners, leaders and global citizens.”

Lake George Vision:

To foster academic and personal excellence, responsibility and cultural awareness, we are dedicated to creating:

- An engaging and innovative learning environment for each student
- A comprehensive K-12 instructional program using best practices
- Student connections to extra-curricular opportunities
- An appreciation for diversity and local traditions

Bolton Superintendent Message (2024) - “We strive for academic excellence and remarkable experiences in a supportive community, which will exceed all expectations.”

Bolton District Goals:

Goal 1 - Provide a progressive, collaborative academic program in order for students to maximize their individual potential.

Goal 2 - Promote a culture of collaboration with the town by engaging in opportunities that develop shared strategies, which will benefit the community as a whole.

Goal 3 - Provide a safe and nurturing environment through continued investment in our facilities.

Goal 4 - Explore strategies that address enrollment to ensure a strong student body for many years to come.

Improving student achievement is difficult and challenging work that requires leadership, perseverance, commitment, determination and most importantly community engagement and support. It will take time, and setbacks will occur, ***but there is no reason to believe that the current level of performance is inevitable or impossible to change.***

It will take parents and community and business leaders to express their concerns persistently to the School Board and School Leadership team to encourage them to take on the challenge of excellence boldly and be accountable for improvement.

One of the first steps that can be taken is for the School Board and District Leadership Team to engage all of the stakeholders in the district – teachers, parents, parent associations, local government, police, residents, businesses, social service providers, alumni, community and professional groups, and regional and state organizations for assistance, expertise and direct support for students and their families. A successful school is most definitely proof of the saying “that it takes a village.”

If these strategic initiatives are pursued and everyone is given an opportunity to contribute to the district’s success, then detailed plans and actions can be developed and implemented to directly improve student performance.