

## District C Schools

### **Standardized Testing Programs**

Standardized testing programs are part of the college admissions process. It is important, however, to remember that they are just a part of that process. The student's grades and the difficulty of the high school program that he or she took are more important factors in the admission process. Test scores are balanced with a student's grade point average and the difficulty of his or her program. A strong performance on either the SAT I or ACT examination will give colleges an idea of potential, but usually cannot compensate for a weak academic record.

Many colleges will provide parents and students with charts indicating minimum SAT I or ACT scores for admission when compared with the student's high school GPA. The higher the student's GPA, the lower the standardized score required for admission. For the more competitive schools to which a student applies, both a high GPA and a strong standardized test score(s) are important. Standardized testing programs include:

#### ***The American College Test (ACT)***

The American College Test is given six times between the beginning of September and the end of June. The exam tests student aptitude in four areas including English (45 minutes), Mathematics (60 minutes), Reading (35 minutes) and Science Reasoning (35 minutes). Scores are reported separately for each section as well as a composite score ranging from 1 to 36.

#### ***The Scholastic Assessment I Reasoning Test (SAT I)***

The Scholastic Assessment Test consists of two 30 minute sections testing vocabulary, reading comprehension and verbal reasoning. There are also two 30 minute sections testing arithmetic reasoning and a 30 minute exam on English proficiency. SAT scores are reported as verbal and math scores with a maximum score of 800 for each section or 1600 overall. This test is given seven times a year.

#### ***The Scholastic Assessment II Subject Tests (SAT II)***

Many colleges also request that students take one or more SAT II subject tests in addition to the SAT I and/or ACT as an admission requirement. The SAT II tests are given six times a year in a wide variety of curricular areas including English, history, foreign language, science, social science and mathematics. Students are encouraged to take the SAT II tests as close as possible to the completion of the high school course in that subject area. As of 6/30/02, Score Choice is no longer an option for students.

#### ***Testing Announcements***

The American College Testing Program, which administers the American College Test (ACT) publishes a booklet concerning the test which includes the testing schedule and registration dates. The guide covers the period of examinations from October through June of the following year. The College Board publishes a booklet about the SAT I and the SAT II tests which includes registration and test dates for the academic year. These booklets are available at each high school in the College Office.

It is very important that you investigate those schools to which you plan to apply in order to have the most recent information concerning the testing requirements of that school. Proper test preparation may significantly improve a student's test performance.

## ***Important Testing Notes For Juniors & Seniors***

1. \_\_\_ Keep in mind that test results will be sent to the student's home and high school. Students can also designate colleges and scholarship programs to which they want scores sent. Test scores become part of a student's high school transcript.
2. \_\_\_ Registration fees and/or late fees must be mailed along with the application.
3. \_\_\_ Fee waivers for student registration may be available for students who have financial need. Procedures for applying for fee waivers are available from college counselor at the high school.
4. \_\_\_ Deadline dates refer to the postmark date of the registration application. Be sure that you mail the application at a location that ensures a postmark prior to registration deadlines.
5. \_\_\_ Students should take the SAT I and/or ACT at least once in their junior year, and should consider taking any exam more than once.
6. \_\_\_ To be admitted to the testing center a student must have a picture I.D. Social Security cards and birth certificates are not acceptable identification.
7. \_\_\_ Students should bring a watch to time and pace themselves during the exam.
8. \_\_\_ Bring at least three Number 2 pencils to the testing center.
9. \_\_\_ Each testing service will notify the student by mail that the registration application has been received and will send an admission ticket. It also identifies the location of the testing center.
10. \_\_\_ Procedures for changing a test date or testing center are outlined in the testing announcement booklets.
11. \_\_\_ Students with disabilities may request special accommodations for taking SAT or ACT exams. These procedures address students with learning and physical handicaps that would prevent them taking the regular test (visually and hearing impaired students are examples of students requiring special testing accommodations). Testing announcement bulletins explain special accommodation procedures.
12. \_\_\_ Standby status for students who have missed the late registration deadline is available, but should be avoided.
13. \_\_\_ Sunday testing for students who cannot take the exam on Saturdays because of religious convictions is explained in the testing bulletins.
14. \_\_\_ When completing the exam registration, students should be careful to use the correct code number for the requested test location.
15. \_\_\_ It is important that students know their high school's CEEB code number, a six digit number that identifies their high school. This number is used on all test registrations as well as on all college applications.

**Once again, the testing announcement bulletins are the authoritative source of information regarding testing for each exam.**

## ***Preparing For Standardized Tests***

Students and parents should review the following testing preparation strategies to insure student readiness to take the ACT, SAT I and/or the SAT II. Each test will examine a student's abilities in English and mathematics that have been acquired over a decade of education. There are ways students can prepare effectively for these tests. Also, each test has a specific format and awareness of these formats will help students answer questions effectively. Preparation services may also help students budget their time during exams, understand testing formats and methods of answering problems and demystify the exam.

Preparation can make a difference in a student's scores. Standardized test preparation should be a part of every student's schedule.

- Talk with the high school counselor regarding the availability of testing preparation programs offered at the high school. Many times, schools will offer, preparation programs at no cost for the SAT I, ACT and/or SAT II. Also ask how teachers prepare students for these exams in the classes that they take between 8th and 12th grade. Do teachers work with students on vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms and analogies as a regular part of any English class?
- Visit your local bookstore and look at the SAT I, ACT and/or SAT II preparation booklets. It is never too early to purchase these books and begin to "study" for these tests. The earlier a student starts, the more effective his or her performance will be. Parents and students should consider making test preparation a regular part of a student's study schedule.
- Each testing service publishes a free preparation booklet. They are available beginning in August of each year. You can pick up a copy from your college counselor and have your child review it as part of his or her study schedule.
- There is a variety of test preparation services that provide programs for a fee. Private test preparation programs in some cases can make a difference for a student. The student's results will relate to the quality of the service as well as the effort that the student puts into preparation. When considering a testing service, look at the following items:
  - *Who will be teaching the preparation courses?*
  - *How many students are in a preparation class?*
  - *Where are preparation classes held?*
  - *How many sessions are there and what is the length of the class(es)?*
  - *What is the "track record" of the preparation service?*
  - *Do they have a guarantee?*
  - *If the student does not improve by a certain number of points, can he or she continue the preparation service at no cost?*
  - *Is the program one-on-one or in a group?*

- Many public and private colleges and universities offer a test preparation program at a cost that is usually lower than that of private agencies. Once again, ask the same questions that you used in evaluating private programs in order to make an informed decision.
- Effective preparation services normally work with students from eight to six weeks before the test date.
- **Every student should take the PSAT.** The PSAT is the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test and it is given to high school and middle school students during the month of October. The PSAT is a preparatory SAT I exam. It provides students with an opportunity to take an exam under SAT testing conditions. Those scores can also be a general indicator of how well a student may do on the SAT I. Those scores, however, need to be measured against the student's progress through at least geometry. If a student hasn't taken geometry yet, his or her scores cannot be expected to be as competitive as they will be later.

PSAT scores can also be an indicator of the need for further test preparation before the student takes another PSAT test or the SAT I or ACT. Combined scores of 900 or less would be a strong indicator that the student could benefit from some type of preparation program. **Parents and students should discuss this with the high school counselor.**

Students will also receive a composite report of questions answered correctly and incorrectly. Students can use these score reports to pinpoint areas of weakness where they should concentrate prior to taking the next examination.

The PSAT score report is one of the most effective test preparation services available to students – if they take the time to review each missed question using the test booklet.

Finally, The PSAT program provides scholarships for juniors who take the PSAT and whose scores rank them in the top percentage of juniors taking the exam that year. Students can become National Merit Commended Scholars, Semi-Finalists or Finalists and may be eligible for scholarships.

Students and parents are again reminded that standardized tests are one of several considerations made by colleges and universities when making admission decisions. Some students simply do not test well. Students need to be reminded that their admission to college will be based on many factors with the most important being their achievement in high school, the difficulty of their high school courses and their grade point average.