

College Corner

Northland Preparatory
Academy

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Sorting Out the College Tests

ACT, SAT, SAT II, PSAT...It's amazing how many items that deal with college are unclear— such as the name of all of the tests! It is important that students are familiar with these tests, because all students eventually take them.

Informational:

The PSAT is given every Fall, in October, here at NPA and is geared for Sophomores and Juniors. (Parents, this information is out in the announcements and the students must sign up with me.) When they sign up I give out a flyer that explains more about the test as well as a pre-test.



(see Sorting on page 2)

The Common Application

The Common Application has been used for more than 25 years by hundreds of colleges to create a time-saving advantage for students and counselors. The Common Application allows students and counselor's to fill out the form once and then use it for multiple applications, since most of the key information colleges want is the same. For items specific to a college, such as essay questions, there is a supplemental form for each specific college, usually found on the college's website.

Those that accept it are committed to give equal consideration to those who use the Common Application versus the school's specific form— however, some publications have questioned this commitment. With this in mind, students should use specific forms when applying to their top schools.

For more details and the electronic version, visit www.commonapp.org

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A Thought to Ponder

.....
At the desk where I sit, I have learned one great truth. The answer for all our national problems - the answer for all the problems of the world - come to a single word. That word is "education".

- Lyndon B. Johnson



ACT & SAT: Why Take Both?



- While many students may receive similar scores on both tests, other students may test better on one test than the other. The tests have some significant differences, so a student may find one test may fit their strengths better than the other. Since most colleges accept both scores the student can choose which score to send.
- The student will have the widest available options when applying for colleges, since they will be prepared

to submit either test score if the college requires or prefers a certain one.

- If a student scores well on both exams, they can send both scores to the colleges, using one score to reinforce the other. There is some margin of error when taking a single exam, but if a student scores well on two different exams, the colleges can better reflect the student's capability.

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

- Ronald E. Osborn

Did You Know....

The SAT will be changing its format effective with the 2005 tests. (The PSAT in October 2004 will use the new format).

- The Verbal section will become Critical Reading. It will add some shorter reading passages along with the existing longer ones. It will still include sentence completion questions which will be eliminated.
- The new math section will add items from Algebra II but quantitative com-

parison questions will be eliminated.

- There will be a new Writing section, with students being asked to write an essay, as well as to answer multiple choice questions about English usage.
- Each section will still use a 200-800 scoring scale, so a perfect score will now be 2400 instead of 1600!!

Sorting: continued from Page 1

The ACT Assessment, or "A-C-T" as it is commonly called, is a national college admission examination that consists of tests in:

- English**
- Mathematics**
- Reading**
- Science**

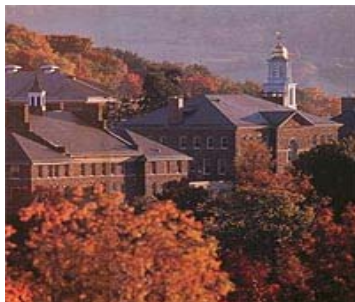
ACT results are accepted by virtually all U.S. colleges and universities.

The ACT includes 215 multiple-choice

questions and takes approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes to complete with breaks. Actual testing time is 2 hours and 55 minutes.

In the U.S., the ACT is administered on five national test dates, in October, December, February, April, and June. In selected states, the ACT is also offered in late September.

For more info see: www.act.org





SAT (or SAT I)

The SAT is an objective, standardized, three-hour test that measures verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities that students develop over time, both in and out of school. Many colleges and universities use the SAT for admission purposes because it helps to predict successful performance in college.

SAT Question Types

Verbal

- Two 30-minute sections plus one 15-minute section
- Emphasis on critical reading
- Vocabulary tested in the context of

SAT II: Subject Tests

The SAT II: Subject Tests are designed to measure knowledge, and the ability to apply that knowledge, in specific subject areas. Students take the Subject Tests to demonstrate to colleges their mastery of specific subjects like English, history and social studies, mathematics science, and language. The tests are independent of any particular textbook or method of instruction. The content of the tests evolves to reflect current trends in high school curricula, but the types of questions change little from year to year. Subject Tests fall into five general subject areas (at right).

All Subject Tests are one-hour, multiple-choice tests. However, some of these tests have unique formats:

PSAT/NMSQT

PSAT/NMSQT is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT I: Reasoning Test and SAT II: Writing Test. It also gives you a chance to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. The PSAT/NMSQT measures: verbal reasoning skills, critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills and writing skills **You should definitely take the PSAT/NMSQT in your junior year.**

reading passages and in analogy and sentence-completion questions

- 78 questions

Mathematics

- Two 30-minute sections plus one 15-minute section

- Emphasis on data interpretation and applied math questions

- Calculator use permitted but not required

- 10 questions require students to produce their own answers and enter them in special grids on the answer sheet

- 60 questions

The **Writing Test** includes a 20-minute essay section and a 40-minute multiple-choice section.

The **Biology E/M Test** contains a common core of 60 general-knowledge multiple-choice questions, followed by 20 multiple-choice questions that emphasize either ecological (Biology E) or molecular (Biology M) subject matter. After completing the core questions, test takers choose the section for which they feel most prepared.

Language Tests with Listening

(Chinese, ELPT, French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish) consist of a listening section and a reading section. Students taking these tests are required to bring an acceptable cassette player

Many students benefit from also taking it earlier, typically in their sophomore year. If you take it earlier, recognize that the PSAT/NMSQT is a junior-level test, so don't get discouraged if your score is low. Your score will usually increase as your years of study increase.

For more PSAT/SAT info see:
www.collegeboard.com

SAT II: Subject Tests

English

Writing
Literature

History and Social Studies

United States
History *
World History

Mathematics

Math Level IC
Math Level IIC

Science

Biology E/M
Chemistry
Physics

Languages

Chinese with
Listening
ELPT™
(English Language
Proficiency Test™)
French
French with
Listening
German
German with
Listening
Modern Hebrew
Italian
Japanese with
Listening
Korean with
Listening
Latin
Spanish
Spanish with
Listening



Northland Preparatory Academy

Northland Preparatory Academy
3300 E. Sparrow Ave.
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Phone: 928-214-8776 ext. 202
Fax: 928-214-8778
Email: apost@northlandprep.org

Andrew Post
School Counselor



Occupational Handbook



What you do on the job.

What training and education is needed

www.bls.gov/occ

Career Information


Check it Out

Early Planning For College

Planning for college can start in the junior high school years. No, you don't have to decide where to apply quite yet, but there are many other things that can be done to build a solid foundation for college planning.

Before high school, students should be encouraged to develop good study skills. These are often learned and students should be encouraged to set goals and learn to effectively manage their time.

When a student gets to high school, they need to be aware that any grades received starting in 9th grade will be a part of the transcript that colleges receive with the application. While the emphasis should still be on learning, not grades, it may be motivating for a student to keep on task if s/he knows that it counts for college.

Starting in the freshman year, students should take advantage of family trips to stop by and visit colleges, even taking the college tours if time permits. Students won't be ready to think about selecting specific colleges, but college visits help students build a framework for what type of school appeals to their personality. These visits should be low-key

and not focused on whether the student is actually interested in the particular school. The point is to use any travel opportunities to explore different types of colleges.

Freshman and sophomores with aspirations for top colleges should take the various SAT II subject tests as soon as they finish each specific subject (more details on page 3). Even if a student has no idea where they want to go, it is better to take the tests while the material is fresh.

Juniors should plan on taking the PSAT in October and then begin to take the SAT and ACT during the Spring, Summer and Fall (of their Senior year). For those applying to top schools SAT II's should be on a priority list as well.

Juniors need to take every opportunity to explore colleges and should develop their preliminary list of colleges by the end of their junior year. This allows for their senior year to be focused on the mechanics of applying and choosing a college.

