

## Standardized Testing

*All students take standardized tests during high school. Some of these tests are used to determine if the student is ready to graduate, while others are used to help them select and apply to colleges. Some standardized tests are administered by the school during school hours at specific times of year; in other cases students must register, pay for, and take the test outside of school. Students and parents need to pay attention to the type and timing of various tests that are required to graduate and to apply to colleges. **It is important to make a plan in consultation with your school counselor about which tests to take and when to take them.***

### High School Assessments (HSAs)

The Maryland HSAs are tests that measure school and individual student progress toward Maryland's High School Core Learning Goals. Passing the HSAs is a state graduation requirement beginning with the graduating class of 2009. The HSAs are tests in four core subjects: English, Government, Algebra/data analysis, and Biology. Students take each test at the end of the year in which they complete the course. For example, some students may take the Algebra test in 7<sup>th</sup> grade while others may not take it until 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The tests are given in the spring and contain multiple-choice questions requiring written responses. If a student completed an HSA subject course in a school that is not a Maryland public school, the HSA requirement may be waived. These students should consult their school counselor for clarification.

### SAT Reasoning Test

The SAT Reasoning Test is a measure of a student's thinking skills and is the most common test required for college admission. The SAT includes a Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing section, with each section scored on a scale of 200—800. Students register for the test on the College Board website ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). The SAT last 3 hours and 45 minutes. If the exam is taken more than once, a new scoring choice policy gives the student the option to choose which scores are sent to colleges – in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. More information is available on the College Board website.

### ACT

The ACT is a curriculum-based, alternative college admissions examination produced by ACT, Inc. The ACT is divided into four subject tests: English, Reading, Mathematics, Science, with an optional Writing Section. Subject test scores range from 1 to 36. The ACT lasts 2 hours and 55 minutes, plus an additional 30 minutes with the Writing option. Students will decide whether to take the Writing option based on the requirements of the colleges they are considering. If the exam is taken more than once, ACT reports to colleges only the results for the test date of the student's choice.

### General Information about College Admission Testing

MCPS and Triumph College Admissions offer free online Prep for the SAT and ACT. This program is accessible from any computer, 24 hours/7 days a week. More information is available at:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/hsi/testprep.shtm>.

It is recommended that college-bound students check the requirements of individual colleges to determine the necessary tests for admission. The vast majority of colleges treats the SAT and ACT the same. Some students may perform better on the ACT than the SAT. Students should consult with their school counselor about which of the admissions tests to take. The following websites may be helpful in learning the differences between the two tests:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/04/education/edlife/guidance.html>

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1502432/the\\_sat\\_vs\\_act\\_differences\\_between.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1502432/the_sat_vs_act_differences_between.html)

<http://greatcollegeadvice.com/sat-act-what-is-the-real-difference/>

### **SAT Subject Tests (SAT II)**

The SAT Subject Tests are designed to measure a student's knowledge and skills in particular subject areas. Unlike the AP exams, the SAT Subject Tests are independent of any particular textbook or method of instruction. Many of the most selective colleges use the Subject Tests for admission, for course placement, and to advise students about course selection. Some colleges specify the Subject Tests they require for admission or placement; others allow applicants to choose which tests to take. A number of colleges accept the ACT in lieu of the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. *It is recommended that college-bound students check the requirements of individual colleges to determine the necessary tests for admission.* Students should consult with their school counselor and teachers when deciding which tests to take, when to take them, and whether a student's course schedule (especially for junior year) should be structured in such a fashion as to prepare for SAT subject tests. Registration can be done by going to the College Board website. Additional information is available in the CIC.

### **Advance Placement (AP) Exams**

The AP program offers high school students the opportunity to take college level courses during high school that conform to a nationally standardized measure of achievement in the particular course. AP exams are scored on a numeric 1-5 scale with 5 as the highest level of proficiency. Scores are used by some colleges to grant college credits or exempt students from introductory coursework, although each college's policy is different. Students are allowed to take an AP exam without having taken the AP course; no high school credit is given, but college credit may be given if the AP score is high enough. AP exams are given in May, with registration in early March (there is a fee). *The school strongly encourages students taking AP courses to take the AP exams.* Registration information, sample AP tests and review booklets are available in the CIC.

### **TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)**

The TOEFL is an Internet-based Test (iBT) required by almost all U.S. colleges and universities for students whose principal language is not English. This test is made up of three multiple-choice sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. The test takes approximately four hours to administer. The TOEFL should be taken in addition to the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT. Registration forms are found online on the website [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl) in the TOEFL Bulletin available in the College/Career Information Center.

### **PSAT**

The PSAT is an exam that measures academic abilities important in college work. It is administered only once during the school year, usually in October. This test is a practice for students preparing for their first SAT. Scores are used to help predict how well one may do on the SAT. Only students who take the PSAT in their Junior year will be considered for the National Merit Scholarship Program, the National Achievement Scholarship Program, or the National Hispanic Scholar Awards Program. Scores are received at Whitman from the College Board in mid-December and will be mailed home. While Sophomores students take the PSAT at no cost through a partnership between MCPS and Montgomery College, Juniors must pay a registration fee. Freshmen take a self-scored PSAT. The test score is not part of the permanent record for Sophomores or Freshmen.

### **TESTING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

Students with a documented disability may be eligible for accommodations on the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, AP, PSAT and ACT. Please refer to the websites for these tests for specific guidelines. To receive accommodations for testing, students must submit a written request for eligibility form and be approved before testing. Please see a school counselor for additional information. It is the student's responsibility to meet with his/her counselor in early September to discuss testing arrangements. Documentation for eligibility for accommodations on Standardized Testing has to be done months in advance. The testing process for this documentation may take months to schedule, whether done through the school system or privately. Please contact the Special Learning Needs Committee of the PTSA for more information.