



Research Brief

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Performance of Students in the Montgomery County Public Schools on the New SAT

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Background

Beginning in March 2005, the College Board commenced administration of the “new” SAT. The new SAT is longer and measures different content and skills than the old SAT (College Board, 2005).

Changes to the SAT content include—

- replacing the verbal subtest with a critical reading subtest,
- adding Algebra 2 content to the math subtest,
- eliminating analogies and quantitative comparisons; and
- adding a new writing subtest with a student-written essay (College Board, 2004).

The College Board reports that SAT scores for the old and new versions of the verbal/critical reading and math subtests are equated (College Board, 2005). Thus, what a student earns on the new test is the same as what he or she would have earned on the old version (Kobrin & Schmidt, 2005; Liu, Feigenbaum, & Dorans, 2005). Still, some district leaders asked for additional verification that the equating processes used by the College Board produce comparable SAT scores for students enrolled in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

The purpose of this research brief is to examine whether MCPS students in the Class of 2006 are performing equally well on the old and new versions of the SAT verbal/critical reading and math subtests.

Methodology

Students enrolled in Grade 12 in October 2005 (MCPS Class of 2006) who took the SAT more than once were assigned to one of three groups of SAT test takers: 183 students who took the old SAT more than once, 2,122 students who did not take the old SAT but took the new SAT more than once, and 1,095 students who took the old SAT once and the new SAT one or more times. For students in the third retest group, SAT scores were reported for the

old SAT (1st SAT) and the first administration of the new SAT (2nd SAT).

SAT subtest scores are reported in increments of 10 on scales that range from 200 to 800. Nationally, students’ combined verbal and math SAT scores improve an average of 25 to 30 points when students take the SAT a second time (College Board, 2004; Nathan & Camara, 1998). Because the new and old SATs are equated, the average changes observed upon retesting should be the same regardless of the version of the SAT taken by the student (Kobrin & Schmidt, 2005). Further, the correlations of scores students received on the old and new versions of the SAT should be similar to the correlations of 0.95 and higher observed nationally (Kobrin & Schmidt, 2005).

Results

The differences in the SAT scores of MCPS students that result when students take the SAT a second time are comparable with the national average of 25 to 30 points for students who took the old SAT twice. Evidence suggests that the new SAT scores are comparable to the old SAT scores for MCPS students because the average improvement upon retesting is about the same regardless of the version of the SAT taken by the student (Table 1).

Table 1
Mean Differences in the Combined Verbal/Critical Reading and Math Scores of the MCPS Class of 2006 (as of October) Who Took the SAT Twice

Student Group	Took		Score Diff. ^a
	Old SAT	New SAT	
Old SAT	1 st	2 nd	+27.5
New SAT		1 st 2 nd	+27.5
Both Versions		1 st 2 nd	+28.1

^a Average improvement in combined verbal/critical reading and math score when student took the SAT the second time.

Students’ scores improved an average of 27.5 points when they took the old version of the SAT a second time (Table 1). The average increases on the verbal

(11.0 points) and math (16.5 points) subtests were equivalent to students answering one or two more items correctly.

Students' scores improved an average of 27.5 points when they took the new version of the SAT a second time (Table 1). The average increases on the critical reading (17.3 points) and math (10.1 points) subtests were equivalent to students answering one or two more items correctly.

Students' scores improved an average of 28.1 points when they took the new version of the SAT after having taken the old SAT once before (Table 1). The average increases on the verbal/critical reading (10.7 points) and math (17.4 points) subtests were equivalent to students answering one or two more items correctly.

The correlations in the performance of MCPS students on the verbal/critical reading ($r=0.89$) and math ($r=0.89$) subtests are slightly lower than the correlations observed for national samples ($r>0.95$). This small difference provides additional evidence that the scores MCPS students earn on the old and new versions of the SAT are equated.

References

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