

Counselor Corner

SAT Advice from an expert: Keep calm and bubble on

WESTPHALIA, MI - It's sharpened pencil and bubble sheet season across Michigan, as high school juniors gear up to take a redesigned SAT Tuesday.

The College Board, writers of the SAT, are rolling out a redesigned test this spring that officials say is more in line with the lessons students get in the classroom. About 114,000 Michigan juniors will be taking the SAT on Tuesday, said Andrew Middlestead, director of the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Standards and Assessment.

Like parents across the state, Debbie Prince wants her son to do well on the new SAT. Her son Bobby Prince's chances at getting into his preferred college ride in part on the results of the new SAT, she said.

But Prince said she's worried juniors taking the test this year may be at a disadvantage compared to future classes, in part because of the short turnaround time once the SAT was approved by the Legislature last year.

"Anytime you're a rookie, you don't know what to expect," she said. Bobby Prince is more laid back than his mother, she said, having taken an SAT prep class at Pewamo-Westphalia High School last fall. He's also already taken the ACT and Prince acknowledges her son can always take either test again to get a better score.

Those are just some of the reasons juniors and their parents shouldn't be overly worried about Tuesday's test, said Jim Cotter, director of Michigan State University's admissions office.

"I'm convinced this new product is a better product and a better measure of a student's academic standing," he said.

More than 25% of students who took the test earlier this year said the new SAT was a better measurement than they had thought it would be. And more than half said it was a good measurement overall, Cotter added.

Unlike previous iterations, the new SAT has fewer archaic vocabulary words and phrases to trip up test takers, said Larry Berger, the author of the SAT guide book, "Up your Score: The Underground Guide".

"The new SAT is much more conceptual in nature," he said. "It tests whether kids can understand complex texts and solve conceptual math problems in a way much more closely resembles the work they will be expected to do in college."

Word problems will be numerous. But that shouldn't worry the students who've read more complex texts in classes in the run-up to the test, Berger said.

Colleges across the country, including MSU, will get information on the results of the new test in the coming weeks, Cotter said. Admissions officials also won't be comparing this group's scores with previous SAT test-takers because of the redesign, he added.

MSU will recognize the best results from either the SAT or ACT, in line with other institutions, Cotter said. It costs \$43 to register to take the SAT after the official testing period, though a fee waiver is available.

"My first message to parents and students is to remember standardized test scores are only part of the equation for admissions," Cotter said. "The most important thing is what a student does during high school."

After-school activities, personal statements, letters of recommendation and GPA, are all factors admissions officials at MSU consider, Cotter said.

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Inside this issue:

Front Story (Cont.)	2
College Planning	2
College Roadmap	3
Reminders and Dates	4



SAT Advice from an expert: Keep calm and bubble on (Cont.)

The College Board teamed up with Khan Academy to make SAT practice materials available online. More than a quarter of all Michigan students who took the PSAT last fall accessed personalized practice through Khan Academy, said Zach Goldberg, spokesman for the College Board. Schools across the region also offered test prep classes for juniors in the fall.

This year marks the first time the SAT is part of the Michigan Merit Examination after the state announced its transition from the ACT last year. MME scores are used in part to evaluate academic performance in Michigan schools.

Pewamo-Westphalia hosted a meeting with parents earlier this year to help them understand the new scoring of the test and identify where students should focus prior to the real test, said Lauren Iszler, assistant principal.

It eased Debbie Prince's mind to know where her son needed to work before test day. A restful night of sleep, a complete breakfast, and a sense of confidence are also likely to help, she said.

"Our advice (to Bobby Prince) has always been to take your time, think it through before you turn your test in and believe in yourself."



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College Planning

St Mary's College Planning Guide

Go to our webpage to see the updated college planning guide for 2016-2017 by clicking on the link:

<http://www.stmarysprep.com/pdfs/CollegePlanningGuide.pdf>

Free Practice ACT/SAT

Princeton Review will be hosting free practice ACT and SAT tests in your area:

ACT—May 6th @ 9:00am

Ann Arbor, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Grosse Pointe, East Lansing, Grand Rapids, Novi, and Rochester

SAT—May 13th @ 9:00am

Ann Arbor, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Grosse Pointe, East Lansing, Grand Rapids, Novi, and Rochester

Call 800-2Review (800-273-8439) or go to PrincetonReview.com to make a reservation

Your Child's Roadmap to College

The following is a guide provided by The Princeton Review.

Getting into college, one step at a time.

The road to college should be exciting, not stressful. Here's how you can take it one step at a time, cut down on stress, and help your child build an application that stands out.

Freshman and Sophomore years:

Starting high school is a big deal. Don't worry about standardized tests like the ACT or SAT just yet—there will be plenty of time for those later. Instead, encourage your child to focus on:

Adjusting to their new school environment and getting off to a good start with their grades and study habits. Our online tutors are available 24/7 to help your child get into the swing of things.

Joining a few clubs or activities that they'll want to stick with throughout high school. Remember, it should be quality over quantity!

Sophomore year only: Sophomores can take the PSAT in October if they want, but it only counts as practice. They shouldn't stress out about it even a little bit.

Between Sophomore and Junior year:

The summer between Sophomore and Junior year is the ideal time for students to prep for the ACT or SAT. Why?

Your child probably has more **free time**. They can focus on their prep without being overwhelmed by school work at the same time.

You can get the ACT and SAT out of the way early. Once your child has the score they want, you don't have to think about it ever again!

Junior year:

Junior year is key for college-bound students. Here's what they should focus on:

Keep up with grades and activities. Colleges pay close attention to what students are doing this year—it's crucial that your child keeps up with their homework and exams (including AP exams). Our online tutors are available 24/7 to help answer questions and boost their GPA. Check out our video on how to connect with an online tutor.

Take the PSAT. This test doesn't count for admission, but it can help your child earn a scholarship. Either way, they shouldn't worry about it too much.

Prep for and take the ACT and/or SAT. Aim to be finished with these tests during junior year, but your child will have a chance to test again during the fall of senior year.

Start researching colleges and going on visits. Plan some day trips for the summer so your child can find schools where they'll thrive. See our video on what to do on your visit.

Senior year:

The end is finally in sight! There are only a few more steps to take before those acceptance letters start to roll in. Here's what needs to be done:

Don't let your child fall victim to senioritis. These are the last grades colleges will see, and they'll be looking even after your child has been accepted. If your child is struggling with senior classes, our tutors are ready to help at any time, day or night.

Take the ACT or SAT one last time, if necessary.

Work on college essays and ask teachers for letters of recommendation. Encourage your child to ask early and send a thank you note to those who write letters. Check out our video about how to ace your college essay.

Submit completed college apps.

Enjoy senior year! This is an exciting time for your child. Make sure they make the most of it.

Reminders

Dates to Remember

April 27 Junior/Senior Prom

May 6 SAT Test Date

April 7 Registration deadline for May SAT
<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>

May 7 Graduation

May 5 Registration deadline for June ACT
<http://www.actstudent.org/regist/>



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