

2006 PSAT/NMSQT® Program Fact Sheet

Overview

- The PSAT/NMSQT® assesses **critical reading** (passage-based reading, sentence completions), **mathematics** (number and operation; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; data analysis, statistics, probability), and **writing skills** (sentence error identification, sentence and paragraph improvements) that are important for success in college.
- The PSAT/NMSQT is used by National Merit Scholarship Corporation as an initial screen of entrants in its annual academic competitions for recognition and college scholarships. Typically, entrants are in their third year of high school.
- More than 3.1 million students worldwide took the test in 2005; 47 percent of test-takers were in eleventh grade; 53 percent were in tenth grade or younger.
- In 2005, 134 districts and seven states took part in the Early Participation Program—a program based on the concept of inclusive student testing—to assist more than 650,000 tenth-graders in preparing for success in high school and college with the PSAT/NMSQT.
- The PSAT/NMSQT focuses on the critical thinking skills students develop through years of study in a wide range of courses, as well as through experiences outside the classroom. The test assesses the ability to reason with facts and concepts rather than the ability to recall them.
- The PSAT/NMSQT program promotes earlier and more expansive inclusion of students to increase college-going aspirations while there is still time for students to plan and prepare.

Ensuring Test Fairness, Validity, and Reliability

- Concern for fairness is an integral part of PSAT/NMSQT development. All test questions are pretested within the SAT®. Comprehensive reviews and analyses ensure that test questions are fair for different groups of students.
- Scores are equated to adjust for possible differences in difficulty between test forms, or test years, making it possible to compare the scores of students who have taken different editions of the test.
- The PSAT/NMSQT is a reliable assessment. Research shows that if a student were to take different forms of the test under identical conditions, the student would earn scores within four points of one another.

Benefits for Students

- The PSAT/NMSQT is a student's first official step on the road to college. It encourages students to start planning for life after high school by either jump-starting their college search process or, for some, introducing them to the concept of attending college.
- The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report gives students personalized feedback on their test performance, including suggestions on how to improve specific academic skills.
- With the PSAT/NMSQT, high school students receive a free personalized College Planning Package that includes an online SAT study plan and MyRoad™, a Web-based college and career planning tool.
- On average, students who take the PSAT/NMSQT earn higher scores on the SAT than those who do not. One reason: The tests have the same formats, directions, sample questions, and question types.
- By taking the test, eleventh-graders may be eligible to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation's scholarship competitions, as well as programs that give special recognition to high-achieving Hispanic and African American students.
- Student Search Service® gives PSAT/NMSQT test-takers the option to receive free admissions and financial aid information from colleges, universities, and scholarship programs. Student information is strictly monitored and secure.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test
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Benefits for Schools and Districts

Multiple reports to help schools learn from their students' performances:

- For tenth- and eleventh-grade students, School Summary Reports show the number of test-takers and the mean test scores, with standard deviations, for the local group, the state, and the nation. They also provide group distributions for math, critical reading, and writing skills scores; ethnic background; college major interest; and more.
- The online AP Potential™ tool uses correlations between PSAT/NMSQT scores and Advanced Placement Program® Exam results to identify students who may be successful in specific AP® Program courses. This free tool is designed to supplement, not replace, a school's current identification processes, and to increase inclusion in AP courses.
- The Summary of Answers and Skills (SOAS) report provides schools with an analysis of aggregate test question information and skills feedback, providing educators the opportunity to identify specific skill areas where their students are having difficulty. The SOAS report is provided free to all schools that test at least 25 students in one grade level.
- The Electronic File of Student Data includes each student's scores, percentiles, answers to each test question, skills that need improvement, college major interest, and more. These data can help identify common strengths and weaknesses in student performance at the classroom level. (Optional report: \$50)
- *ScoreWrite™: A Guide to Preparing for the SAT Essay*, delivered free to all participating PSAT/NMSQT schools, is a publication to help teachers prepare students for the essay on the SAT. This manual provides everything schools need to run a practice essay writing session, including an essay prompt similar to those that will appear on the SAT. *ScoreWrite* also trains teachers how to score essays holistically using the SAT Scoring Guide.

PSAT/NMSQT School Coordinator Site

- Online school registration for the PSAT/NMSQT with immediate order confirmation
- Ability to check order status and easily update orders
- Fee Remittance Report and Fee-Waiver Roster generation
- Tracking information for shipments of free preparation materials, test books, and Score Reports
- E-mail notifications to confirm receipt of returned answer sheets
- E-mail communications from the College Board to assist with test administration and program management

New Resources for Students and Schools

Beginning in 2006, high school students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will receive an online personalized College Planning Package that complements their paper Score Report. It includes:

- **Interactive, supplemental score report** that links to the questions and answer explanations to help students learn from their results.
- **State percentiles.** Students can see how their performance compares with others in their state or region in each test section: critical reading, math, and writing skills.
- **Personalized SAT study plan.** In addition to providing their SAT score projections, higher-level math practice, and sample student essays, students can link to a personalized SAT study plan that is based upon their performance on the PSAT/NMSQT.
- **Personalized lists of colleges and majors** that link to detailed information about high school/college course requirements, descriptions of colleges and universities, and more.
- **Personalized college and career planning with MyRoad™.** Students can use this online tool to find the colleges, majors, and careers that are right for them. They can learn about their personality type and receive major and career suggestions with the ORA Personality Profiler®.

All schools that administer the 2006 PSAT/NMSQT will receive an educator access code for MyRoad. MyRoad lesson plans, presentations, and tutorials, as well as other free PSAT/NMSQT resources for schools, are available at www.collegeboard.com/counselors/psat.