

## **GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING**

This Information is designed to guide students and parents in their academic preparation for college and in meeting admissions standards on PSAT's, SAT's and ACT's. First listed are the general guidelines for academic preparation. Following that are the recommendations for who should take what tests when. Please raise specific questions with a guidance counselor or administrator at Southern. It is very important that each student's plan is tailored to his/her goals, abilities and interests.

### **Academic Presentation**

No amount of coaching, cramming or special workshops can prepare a student for good SAT scores or collegiate success like solid, rigorous course work beginning at the middle school level. Verbal ability is strengthened by reading, reading, and more reading. Mathematically, students should be engaged in a sequence of courses that will take them (minimally) through Algebra II.

### **Testing**

All pupils considering college as an option after graduation should take the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test (PSAT). It is given **only in October** each year. Students should utilize results from this test as a benchmark of their academic preparation and progress. An analysis of a weak score will enable students to identify areas on which to concentrate. A high score might provide greater motivation and incentive for students to more aggressively pursue their post-secondary studies. The scores are designed to be indicators for individual planning.

We strongly suggest that students planning to take the SAT take the PSAT's. The PSAT's are offered to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. We suggest that students be enrolled in or have completed Geometry prior to taking the PSAT. (Only the PSAT taken in the junior year qualifies the student for the National Merit Scholarship Program).

The SAT is administered at Southern in November, December, January and May, and is available at other testing sites in October, April and June. Again, students are tested in the areas of verbal and math skills. Pupils may take the SAT several times, and, although colleges will look at the best scores, it must be noted that **all scores are reported to colleges**.

If a student plans to apply to one of the National Service Academies, a highly competitive college, i.e., Ivy League: Duke, Stanford, etc., and/or early decision; as a junior they should take the SAT I in January followed by another SAT I in May, and/or SAT II's in June. Other juniors should plan to take the SAT in May at the latest. New Jersey State Scholarships are based on scores from the students' junior year. Juniors in AP or accelerated classes, i.e. chemistry, biology, physics, United States history and intend to apply to highly competitive colleges, should consider taking the SAT II in May or June in the accelerated subject area they are completing.

Special SAT test preparation programs are available for all students through a class in the Adult School.

A few other notes:

- Calculators are permitted and their use is encouraged.
- If your scores are high, take the test a second time anyway. Scholarship requirements are often based on SAT scores and those extra points could make a difference financially.
- Talk to counselors and teachers about scores, choices and methods of preparation!

Many students should consider taking the ACT in addition to the SAT. The ACT serves the same purpose as the SAT and is universally accepted by colleges in the admissions process. The ACT is given six times a year. The ACT is administered in December at Southern Regional High School.

Brochures about all college admissions tests are available in the guidance office and information can be found on the following web sites: PSAT, SAT, AP: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)