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SESSION 3: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: CURRICULUM AND TESTING

The purpose of this session is to impress upon the students that they must begin now to maximize their potential for admission to the appropriate colleges. They should understand they are “in the driver’s seat” and can truly chart their course for the future. By learning more about selecting a college prep course of study and learning about the types of standardized tests they should consider taking, students will be better prepared to apply to college when they reach senior year.

Objectives:

By the end of this session, students:

- understand all components necessary for a college prep curriculum
- have made a tentative course plan for high school
- understand how testing impacts admission, which tests to take, and when

Activities and Handouts:

Recap Activity: Have students share some of the information that they discovered while researching a college through their “Doing Your Research” Activity.

Activity #1: What classes will you take to prepare for college?

Handouts: Your High School Classes Will Open the Doors to College; What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Activity #2: Standardized Tests: What are they?

Handout: Standardized Test Information Sheet

Activity #3: Practicing the SAT and ACT

Handout: Practice SAT and ACT Questions and explanation of answers



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ACTIVITY # 1: CURRICULUM PLANNING

Opening Discussion:

Preparing for college entrance and success begins with extremely careful planning of high school course work. Every student needs to focus the bulk of energy during the high school years on classes that are truly “college-preparatory.” While it is certainly important to “enrich” a four-year schedule with classes in the fine and practical arts, colleges will look for the “meat and potatoes” classes in English, mathematics, world languages, laboratory sciences, and history/social sciences.

Activity/Handout:

Your High School Classes will Open the Doors to College What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Instructions:

1. Distribute handout: “Your High School Classes Will Open the Doors to College,” and activity sheet: “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?”
2. After allowing students time to read and consider the handout. Ask them to individually complete the activity sheet.
3. Divide students into small groups to compare responses.
4. Allow small groups to report to the larger group about the ways they are and aren’t on track for college. What deficiencies have been identified? What do individual students need to do to catch up?
5. Answer any questions that this activity may have brought forward.



YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES WILL OPEN THE DOORS TO COLLEGE

Because you are planning to go to college, it's important that you take the right classes in high school. Beginning in ninth grade, the majority of your classes should be ones that prepare you for admission to and, perhaps even more importantly, success in college. Most admission officers tell you that the first thing they look at is your choice of classes, even before they look at grades. When it comes time to apply to college you want to make sure that you meet the admission criteria of ALL colleges in which you are interested. Always remember that it is much better to be “overprepared” than “underprepared.”

Here's what you need by the end of your senior year in order to meet the admission expectations at a majority of colleges:

- Four full years of English classes. This includes courses in which you study writing and courses in which you read literature. Colleges know that you need to be able to write well in nearly every career. You need to be able to read and analyze, and you need to develop strong communication skills!
- Four full years of math classes. Students who take math in each year of high school are far more successful in college than students taking only three years. Math is the tool that you will use for many other classes, especially those in science. Your math classes should include at least four of the following six classes, taken in this order:
 - Pre-algebra
 - Algebra
 - Precalculus
 - Geometry
 - Algebra II and/or trigonometry
 - Calculus

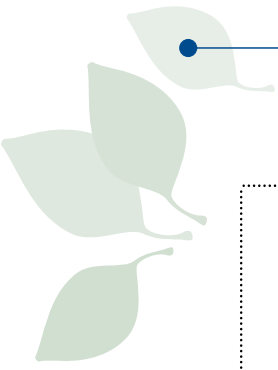
Never “skip” a year of math in high school, because you will lose your momentum. If you do not take math in your senior year, you will find that the math classes required in college will be very difficult!

- Three–four years of laboratory science classes. You will have the strongest background if you have taken at least one year each of:
 - Biology
 - Chemistry
 - Physics
- Two years minimum of social sciences. Most college freshmen studied World History and American History in high school. Other social science options include:
 - Government
 - Sociology
 - Geography
 - Psychology
- Two–four years of world language. More and more colleges are requiring a minimum of two years of language study while in high school, as an admission criterion. Because many colleges require students to study a second language, it is important that you expose yourself to the study of languages while in high school.

A small number of colleges require one year of visual or performing art prior to admission. Participation in these classes throughout high school, can help you to develop a “special talent” that will make you a highly qualified applicant.

As a summary, most colleges require students to meet certain college prep curriculum standards. But just meeting the minimum is not necessarily the best way to prepare for college. Strong preparation means going beyond the minimum—allowing you to start your college career in college-level courses, not remedial courses which are designed to help you catch up or review high school material—for NO CREDIT!

SPECIAL NOTE FOR ATHLETES: Work with your counselor and coaches to make sure that your classes meet the standards of the NCAA Clearinghouse. Go to <http://eligibilitycenter.org> for more information.



WHAT CLASSES WILL YOU TAKE TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE:

Subject	Minimum college preparation	State universities and other selective college requirements	Highly selective college recommendations (Honors and AP levels when possible)	My courses to date	I need to take
English (with an emphasis on reading and writing)	4 years	4 years	4 years		
Math	3 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra		
Social Studies	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences		
Science	2 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics	2-3 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics	2-3 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics		
World language	2 years of the same foreign language	2-4 years of the same foreign language	4 years of the same foreign language		

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ACTIVITY # 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

Opening Discussion:

Since standardized testing is required for admission to many colleges and is used to qualify for many scholarships, all students should be sure to take the SAT and/or ACT at least once. Preparation is recommended for both tests and both companies offer free materials to help with that preparation (online information is available through www.actstudent.org and www.collegeboard.org or through bulletins available in the counseling office). The more a student reads and the more s/he is familiar with the test, the better the results will be. Many students will have the ability to take the PLAN and/or PSAT through their schools and should take advantage of that opportunity. The ACT also offers Explore, a college readiness test aimed at eighth and ninth grade students.

Activity/Handout:

Standardized Tests

Instructions:

1. Ask the students to look over the Standardized Tests handout and write down any questions they might have.
2. Once they have each had an opportunity to read and think about the handout, ask them to share their questions.
3. If there is a computer available, show the students the College Board and ACT sites and particularly the site for registering for the SAT and ACT.
4. If you don't have computer access, then try to print out the College Board and ACT "homepages" to show students what they look like.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Their names can sometimes sound like alphabet soup, but the standardized tests you will take in high school are important for college. Some schools require different tests, so you want to make sure to check with each one about their requirements. Here are the four main tests you may have to take if you want to apply to most colleges:

ACT TESTS

EXPLORE

The Explore helps students in eighth and ninth grades to plan their high school careers. The test will help to discover appropriate high school courses, prepare for the ACT or find a career direction.

When do I take the test?

The EXPLORE is taken in eighth and ninth grades.

How do I register?

The EXPLORE is usually administered by your school district. See your school counselor for more information or go to www.actstudent.org/explore.

What is the test's structure?

The EXPLORE consists of four 30-minute sections of English, math, reading, and science.

PLAN

The PLAN is the pre-ACT test taken to help students estimate how well they will do on the ACT and, in some cases, can have bearing on scholarship. It is a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for the remaining years of high school and post-graduation years.

When do I take the test?

The PLAN is taken during the 10th grade.

How do I register?

The PLAN is usually administered by high schools. See your school counselor for more information or go to www.actstudent.org/plan.

What is the test's structure?

PLAN is a four part multiple-choice test structured very similarly to the ACT with sections covering English, mathematics, reading and science.

For more information about Aspire—ACT's new test to be launched in 2016—talk to your high school counselor or visit www.discoveractaspire.org.



ACT

This standardized test is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. It often is used for college admission decisions, and all US colleges and universities accept ACT results. The ACT can also be used to determine NCAA eligibility.

When do I take the test?

The ACT is offered usually six times during a given school year. Students generally take the test first during the spring of their junior year. It is usually best to take it junior year, as you may want to take the test again to get your best score possible.

When and how do I register?

Register online at www.actstudent.org or pick up a registration packet at your high school. Be mindful of the registration deadlines for each test, as they are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. Fee waivers are available for students who qualify for financial assistance, so inquire with your high school counselor.

What is the test's structure?

The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science, as well as an optional writing test.

How is it scored?

Each subject is scored 1-36 for a composite score, the highest being a 36 overall. The writing test is scored 2-6 with two different readers, resulting in a highest potential score of 12.

All pertinent ACT testing date information, fee information, registration information and all other questions can be answered by visiting www.actstudent.org.

College Board/SAT Tests

PSAT

The PSAT (Preliminary SAT) is a two-part, exam that is very similar to the SAT. Not to be taken lightly, the PSAT is generally the first indicator colleges and universities use for scholarship purposes and placement.

When do I take the test?

Most people take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year in high school. In addition, some students choose to take it during their sophomore year, which is strongly encouraged. However, scores on the PSAT during your junior year are used to determine National Merit Scholars who qualify for merit-based scholarships distributed throughout the United States

How do I register?

You must sign up for the PSAT at your high school. The PSAT is administered during October of every school year. There is a fee associated with taking the PSAT, but there are fee waiver opportunities for certain students and some schools pay for their students to take the test.

What is the test's structure?

The PSAT consists of two 25-minute verbal sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing skills section.



SAT

The SAT is one of two standardized tests used by colleges as part of their admission requirements. The SAT I measures verbal, written, and math reasoning skills and is used for admission at most colleges. The SAT is often used to determine eligibility for scholarships and is required by the NCAA for those athletes who hope to compete in college.

The SAT Subject Tests (formerly SAT II) consist of more than 20 subject areas and are achievement tests designed to measure subject-area knowledge. Many colleges use the Subject Tests for admission, for course placement, and to advise students about course selection, but only some require them

When do I take the test?

The SAT and Subject Tests are administered every October, November, December, February, March, May and June of each school year. Most students take the SAT during the second semester of their junior year and/or the first semester of the senior year. The best rule of thumb with the SAT is the earlier and more often the better.

When and how do I register?

A registration packet should be available at your high school, but you may also register online at **www.collegeboard.org**. Keep in mind the registration deadlines for each test, as they are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. While there are costs associated with taking the test, students who require financial assistance may qualify for fee waivers. (<http://collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers>)

What's the test's structure?

The SAT is three hour and 45 minute test with ten sections consisting of critical reading, math, writing, and one experimental section which is masked to look like a regular section. Extended time and other accommodations are available for students who qualify. For more information, see your school counselor.

How is it scored?

Scores on each section range from 200-800 points. The scores from each section are combined, and the highest possible combined score is 2400.

All pertinent SAT testing date information, fee information, registration information and all other questions can be answered by visiting **www.collegeboard.org**.

Other tests

The Test of English As a Second Language (TOEFL) tests your ability to communicate in English and is a test for students for whom English is not a first language. The test measures skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing in English and requires you to combine two or more of these skills to respond to a question. It is usually an internet based exam given in designated test centers by appointment. Paper based tests are only offered in remote areas. For more information, see your school counselor or go to **www.ets.org/toefl**.

SPECIAL NOTE: Not all colleges require standardized testing although they often do require additional essays and or recommendations. For a list of those colleges, go to **www.fairtest.org**.

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ACTIVITY # 3: PRACTICE SAT AND ACT QUESTIONS

Opening Discussion:

Standardized tests aren't fun for anyone. But the name of the game is "practice." With practice you will become more comfortable with the test and score better when it comes time to take the real test.

Activity/Handout:

Sample SAT and ACT Questions

Sample SAT Questions: Explanations

Sample ACT Questions: Explanations

Instructions:

1. Divide the students into groups of three and tell them that they will be receiving three practice SAT/ACT questions.
2. Tell the groups that they have three minutes to find the answer to the questions and will receive 5 points for each right answer.
3. The group with the most points will get to explain how they solved the problems. Let them see how closely their explanation comes to the one provided by the College Board/ACT.

NOTE: Depending upon the academic level of the students, the counselor may want to find more difficult questions by going to the College Board website and looking at "Practice Questions" in the section called "Prepare for the SAT." The website also posts a "Question of the Day" every day which is good practice for those students who have access to a computer. Practice ACT questions are located at www.actstudent.org.

Wrap-Up Discussion:

Remind students that practice is the best way to do their best on any test. If desired, bring sample questions to each subsequent session for this group. With the close of the topic of testing, remind the students that tests are only a small part of the college application and that in the following sessions they will learn about other important aspects of the application process, like the importance of extracurricular activities.



SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS:

Sentence Completion:

The sentence below has two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five sets of words labeled A through E. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Hoping to ----- the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be ----- to both labor and management.

- (A) enforce . . useful
- (B) end . . divisive
- (C) overcome . . unattractive
- (D) extend . . satisfactory
- (E) resolve . . acceptable

Math Question #1:

A special lottery is to be held to select the student who will live in the only deluxe room in a dormitory. There are 100 seniors, 150 juniors, and 200 sophomores who applied. Each senior's name is placed in the lottery 3 times; each junior's name, 2 times; and each sophomore's name, 1 time. What is the probability that a senior's name will be chosen?

- (A) $\frac{1}{8}$
- (B) $\frac{2}{9}$
- (C) $\frac{2}{7}$
- (D) $\frac{3}{8}$
- (E) $\frac{1}{2}$

Math Question #2:

$$7-4x = 5$$

$$8x-3 = 1$$

What value of x satisfies both of the equations above?

SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS EXPLANATIONS

Explanation of Sentence Completion:

One way to answer a sentence completion question with two words missing is to focus first on just one of the two blanks. If one of the words in an answer choice is logically wrong, then you can eliminate the entire choice from consideration.

- Look at the first blank in the example above. Would it make sense to say that “negotiators” who have “proposed a compromise” were hoping to enforce or extend the “dispute”? No, so neither (A) nor (D) can be the correct answer.
- Now you can focus on the second blank. Would the “negotiators” have proposed a compromise that they believed would be divisive or unattractive to “both labor and management”? No, so (B) and (C) can be eliminated, and only choice (E) remains.
- Always check your answer by reading the entire sentence with your choice filled in. Does it make sense to say “Hoping to resolve the dispute, the negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be acceptable to both labor and management”? Yes.

Correct answer: (E)

Explanation of Math Question #1:

To determine the probability that a senior’s name will be chosen, you must determine the total number of seniors’ names that are in the lottery and divide this number by the total number of names in the lottery. Since each senior’s name is placed in the lottery 3 times, there are $3 \cdot 100 = 300$ seniors’ names. Likewise, there are $2 \cdot 150 = 300$ juniors’ names and $1 \cdot 200 = 200$ sophomores’ names in the lottery. The probability that a senior’s name will be chosen is

$$\frac{300}{300 + 300 + 200} = \frac{300}{800} = \frac{3}{8}$$

Answer to Math Question #2:

OR

Correct Answer:

$\frac{1}{2}$ or .5

			/	2
○	○	○	○	○
1	●	○	○	○
2	○	○	○	○
3	○	○	○	○
4	○	○	○	○
5	○	○	○	○
6	○	○	○	○
7	○	○	○	○
8	○	○	○	○
9	○	○	○	○

.	5		
●	○	○	○
○	○	○	○
1	○	○	○
2	○	○	○
3	○	○	○
4	○	○	○
5	○	○	○
6	○	○	○
7	○	○	○
8	○	○	○
9	○	○	○

SAMPLE ACT QUESTIONS

Passage I:

Measles is an extremely contagious viral infection spread by the respiratory route. Figure 1 shows the course of measles from time of exposure to recovery from the infection.

After recovery from measles, the infected individual develops immunity or resistance to reinfection. Figure 1 shows the development of immunity indicated by the antibody level.

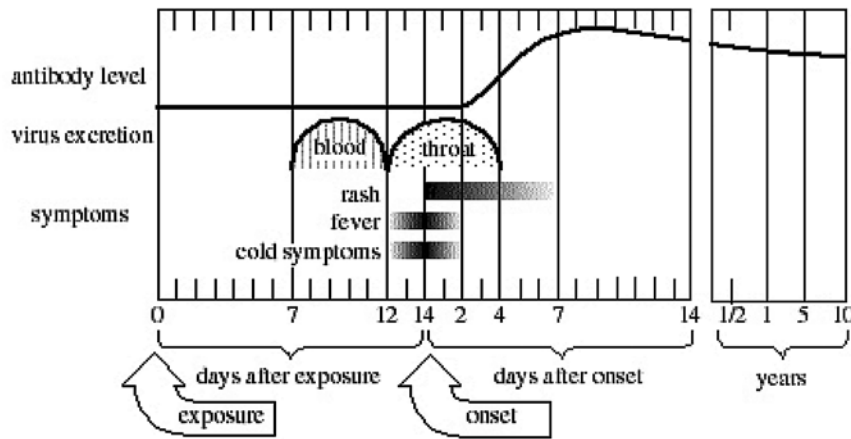


Figure 1

Figure 1 adapted from D. M. McLean, *Virology in Health Care*. ©1980 by Williams and Wilkins.

Based on the information presented in the passage and in Figure 1, would it be possible to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus six months after exposure?

- Yes; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be elevated 6 months after exposure.
- Yes; the virus would still be present in the respiratory tract to protect against reinfection.
- No; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be undetectable 6 months after exposure.
- No; the virus would no longer be present in the blood to protect against reinfection.

SAMPLE ACT QUESTIONS: EXPLANATIONS

The best answer is A.

Figure 1 depicts the progression of the measles from time of exposure until 10 years after exposure. Figure 1 also indicates the antibody level in the body.

- A. Yes; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be elevated six months after exposure.
Correct. Figure 1 indicates that six months after exposure, the antibody level is elevated. Since this level is not elevated prior to infection, it would be possible to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus six months after exposure by measuring the antibody level and determining that it was elevated.
- B. Yes; the virus would still be present in the respiratory tract to protect against reinfection.
Incorrect. Figure 1 indicates that the virus excretion is present in the throat two to three weeks after exposure. However, the virus excretion is not present in the throat after six months.
- C. No; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be undetectable six months after exposure.
Incorrect. Figure 1 indicates that the antibody level remains elevated for at least 10 years. Thus, the protective antibodies against measles would be detectable six months after exposure, making C incorrect.
- D. No; the virus would no longer be present in the blood to protect against reinfection.
Incorrect. Even if the virus was no longer present in the blood, other factors could be measured to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus six months after exposure. For example, the antibody level remains elevated for at least 10 years.



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WRAP-UP

Keep in Mind:

There is no day better than today to start preparing for college. As early as ninth grade, students should begin college prep programs, choosing classes that make them stand out during the application process and prepare them for college level courses. Additionally, students need to prepare for and take the SAT or ACT, as these tests are mandatory to gain entry to most colleges.

Homework:

1. Inform students that they have already begun the first stage of their homework with their “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare You for College?” handouts.
2. Instruct students to plan what they think their schedules should look like next year based on the classes that they still need/would like to take. Although the assignment only calls for a plan for one year, students may plan until the end of high school.
3. Additionally, students are to incorporate into their schedules standardized testing. Which test(s) should they be focusing on next year (PLAN, PSAT, ACT, SAT) and when should they take it?
4. While students should refer back to the handouts that they received during this session to assist with completion of this assignment, encourage students to talk with their own school counselors (when possible) to assess and plan their options for the next school year.

