

DELIVERING OPPORTUNITIES

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# How the SAT® Is Helping More California Students Get into College

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# Delivering More Opportunities in California

In 2014, the College Board decided to ask some tough questions about the SAT®. For far too long, SAT results showed that most students were not prepared for college-level work or workforce training programs. This made us think about how assessment could do more than report a test score and get more students to take full advantage of all the opportunities they have earned.

That's why the College Board redesigned the SAT to focus on what is being taught in high school classrooms that is essential for college and career readiness. The SAT was transformed from a one-time event for 11th and 12th graders into the carefully sequenced SAT Suite of Assessments, which measures college readiness from 8th through 12th grades.

We then looked at how the SAT Suite of Assessments could go beyond delivering test scores to delivering opportunities that help students clear a path to college. At every step, we solicited feedback from policymakers and our K-12 and higher education partners to figure out how we could help the greatest number of students and parents.

This report details our efforts in California since the first full year of the Suite in 2016-17, with emphasis on the current administration year, 2017-18.

## Major Findings

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### Early exposure to SAT assessments appears to improve student performance.

The complete SAT Suite of Assessments is new, but initial results are promising. They suggest performance improves when students take these assessments as they progress through high school. In California, there is notable progress between 8th and 9th grades, and again between 11th and 12th grades. The relative slowdown between 9th and 10th grades, particularly in math, concerns us and will be studied further.

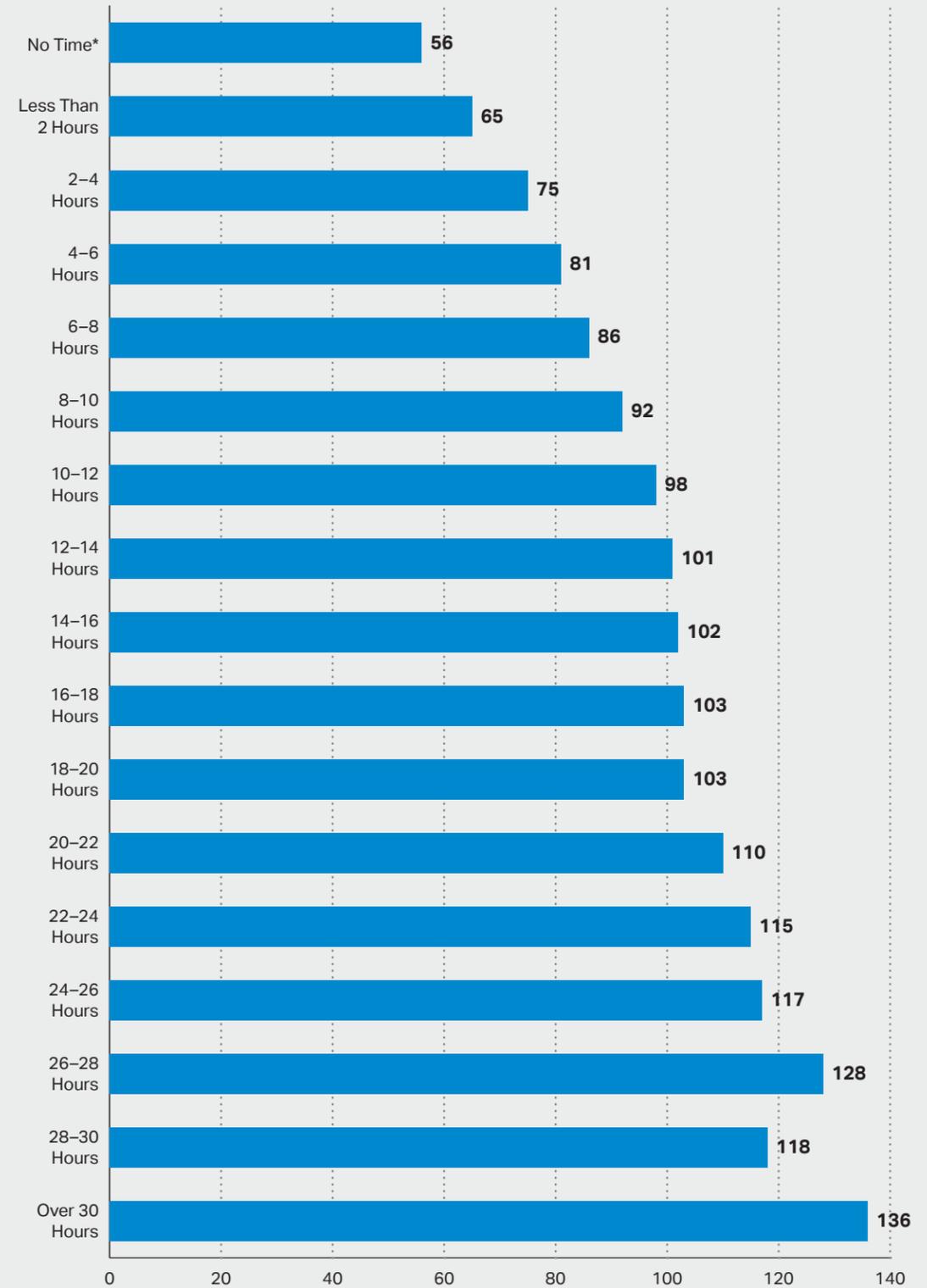
- Of the 29,776 California students who took the PSAT™ 8/9 as 8th graders and again as 9th graders in 2017-18, **8% who were off track in 8th grade got on track when they took the test again in 9th grade.** Nine percent (9%) of those students met the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) benchmark in 9th grade, and 9% met the math benchmark after not meeting those benchmarks the previous year.
- Of the 67,546 California students who took the PSAT 8/9 as 9th graders and took the PSAT/NMSQT® or PSAT™ 10 as 10th graders in 2017-18, **only 5% of those who were off track in 9th grade were on track when they took the test in 10th grade.** Nine percent (9%) of the students met the ERW benchmark in 10th grade and only 4% met the math benchmark after not meeting these benchmarks the previous year.
- Of the 179,218 California students who took the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 as 10th graders and took the PSAT/NMSQT as 11th graders in 2017-18, **6% who were off track in 10th grade were on track in 11th grade.** Seven percent (7%) met the ERW benchmark in 11th grade and only 6% met the math benchmark after not meeting these benchmarks the previous year.
- Of the 176,049 California students in the class of 2018 who took the PSAT/NMSQT as 11th graders and went on to take the SAT, **10% of those who were off track on the PSAT/NMSQT were on track when they took the SAT.** Eight percent (8%) met the ERW benchmark on the SAT and 10% met the math benchmark after not meeting these benchmarks when they took the PSAT/NMSQT.

**Free, personalized Official SAT Practice helps all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, and parental education levels.**

Since the College Board began promoting access to free, high-quality, personalized Official SAT Practice through Khan Academy® in June 2015, students from every socioeconomic group have used those resources and have practiced at nearly equal rates. Not surprisingly, more practice is associated with greater score gains, and those increases are similar across race, ethnicity, and parental education levels. Another encouraging sign: The lowest-scoring students show the greatest improvement after using Official SAT Practice.

The bar graph at right shows the association between time spent on Official SAT Practice and score gains from the PSAT/NMSQT to the SAT for California students in 2017-18. California students who spent just 6 hours on Official SAT Practice gained, on average, about 81–86 points. California students who spent 20 hours on Official SAT Practice gained, on average, about 103–110 points. The positive relationship between time spent on Official SAT Practice and score gains from PSAT/NMSQT to the SAT also holds for California students across race and ethnic groups.

**California Score Gains by Practice Time**

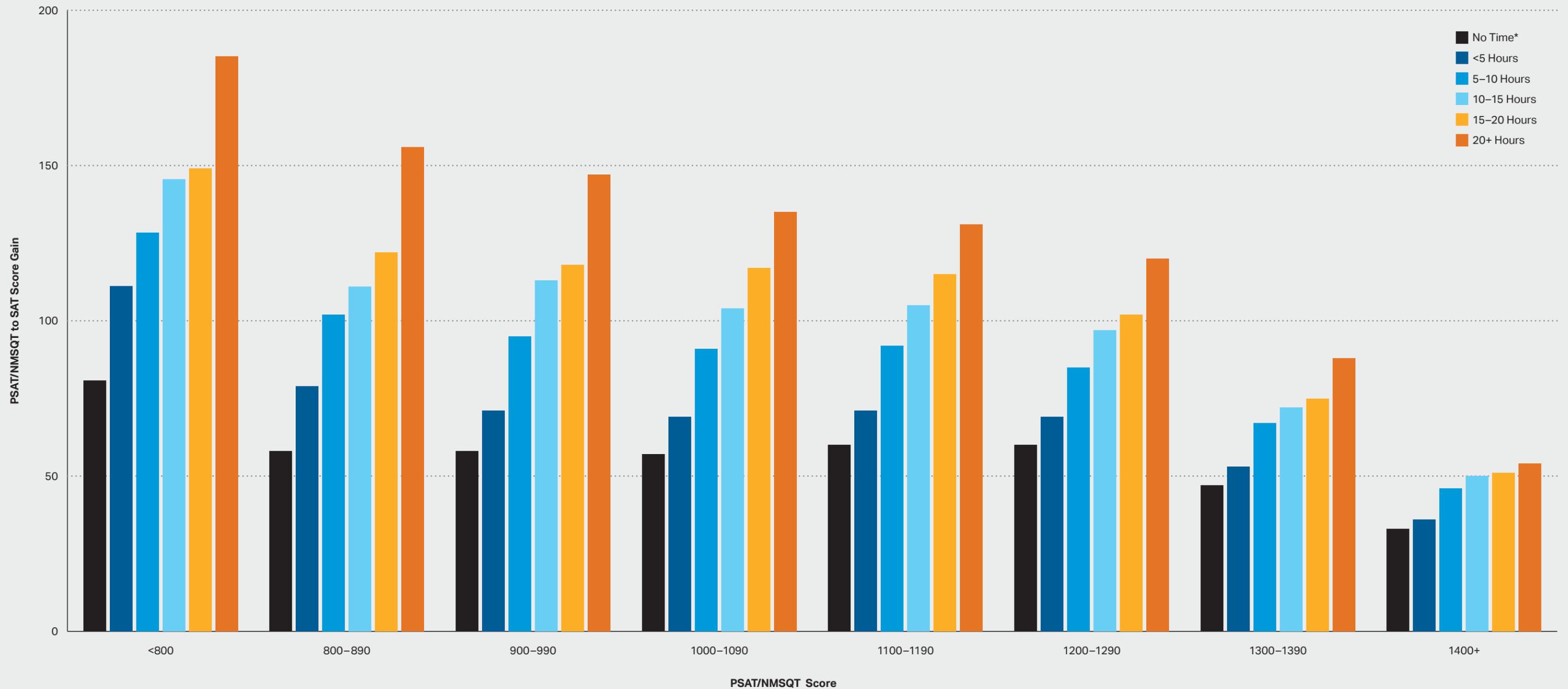


\*Student linked account to Official SAT Practice but never practiced

## Score Gains from PSAT/NMSQT to SAT

The next chart, based on a national sample of over 1.08 million students from the high school class of 2017, shows positive associations between time spent on Official SAT Practice and score gains across the range of PSAT/NMSQT scores. The biggest gains are by students with *lower* PSAT/NMSQT scores. This is encouraging, since they have the most progress to make.

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### Retaking the SAT increases college enrollment, especially for low-income students.

Recent research indicates that retaking the SAT can lead to an increase in scores. It also shows that students who retake the test are more likely to enroll in college. This boost is especially strong for low-income students.

### Free score reports increase college access and completion for low-income students.

In the fall of 2007, the College Board gave low-income students a fee waiver for four additional free SAT score reports they could use before high school graduation. This increased the number of free score reports available to them from four to eight to reduce the small, but sometimes daunting, financial barrier faced by these students. This change resulted in a 10-percentage-point jump nationally in the number of low-income SAT test takers who sent 8 or more score reports to colleges and scholarship organizations.

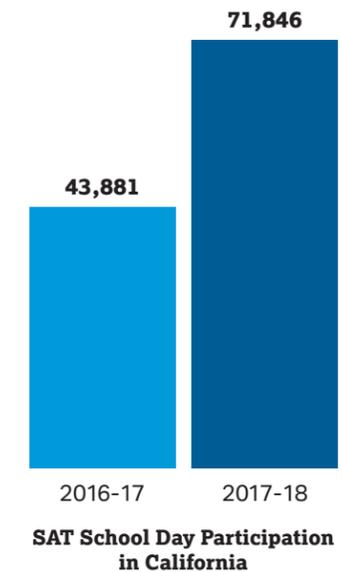
Among those who used the additional score reports, on-time college enrollment following high school graduation and 6-year bachelor's completion rates increased by 2 percentage points. Because of this positive result, the College Board announced in the spring of 2018 that there is no limit on the number of score reports income-eligible students can send to colleges. The College Board's next challenge is to increase the number of students who take advantage of this opportunity.

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### Offering the SAT during the school day can encourage more students to enroll in college.

Schools, districts, and states now offer the SAT on a school day, giving all students greater access to both the test and the opportunities it connects them to. A growing body of research suggests that offering the SAT to all students during the school day is a cost-effective way to encourage more students to enroll in college. In California in 2017-18, SAT School Day participation grew to more than 71,846, compared to 43,881 the year before, and 357 California schools administered the SAT on a school day.



### The SAT Suite of Assessments gives students more chances to find and apply for scholarships.

The College Board is expanding the number of scholarship programs that use the SAT Suite of Assessments to identify potential candidates. In 2017-18, over \$15M in annual awards was available through 7 scholarship partners, with nearly \$1.8M awarded to students in California. However, only 1.1% of the applicants were California students, and only 1% of the total number of scholarships awarded went to California students. This suggests that schools, the College Board, and its scholarship partners need to do a better job of encouraging students, parents, counselors, and administrators in California to identify potential scholarships so more students apply for them.

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## Roadmap to Careers helps students connect their interests to their coursework and their college choices.

Roadmap to Careers offers students online guidance on career options and helps them find colleges that match up with their interests.

### IN 2017-18, 55,864 CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS USED ROADMAP TO CAREERS.

- 81%** Of these students, 81% got a recommended high school course plan to help prepare them for the college majors and careers they were interested in.
- 10k** Over 10,000 students identified colleges that offer majors aligned to their interests by using another College Board tool, BigFuture™.
- 8 of 10** It's also encouraging that 8 of 10 maps of student interests involve STEM careers, with the most popular being in medicine and science.

## Identifying students with AP potential can increase AP enrollment and expand their access to college credit.

Approximately 69% of the California students identified through PSAT-related assessments as having Advanced Placement® (AP®) potential (that is, likely to be successful in a particular AP course) took that course in 2017-18. Of these California students, 81% scored a 3 or above on an AP Exam. We are continuing to work with California educators to identify even more students with AP potential so they can take advantage of this opportunity.



## What This Good News Means for California

We are extremely encouraged by the early results of our efforts to deliver more opportunities through the SAT Suite. Some results surprised us, others disappointed us, and a few demand that we do more research. But what we know already has important implications for our ongoing efforts to help prepare all students for college and workforce training programs in California.

- College readiness can be improved for students in all groups. We know readiness increases as a result of instruction, and it also can be improved by practice, both in and out of the classroom.
- Access to school-day testing can expand access to college for all California students. We saw more than a 50% increase in the number of students and schools participating in SAT School Day in 2017-18 compared to 2016-17. Expanding SAT School Day will give even more California students access to college.
- Offering additional free SAT score reports is associated with increases in college applications and enrollment.
- Encouraging California students to retake the SAT can increase the chances they will enroll in college. This is especially true for low-income students.
- Increasing access to scholarship opportunities can remove financial barriers to college for more California students.
- Practice through the College Board's partnership with Khan Academy helps all students improve their scores when they retake the test, and it appears to have the greatest benefit for those who start with the lowest scores.
- Lower-scoring students who retake the SAT show big increases in college enrollment rates.

### What's Next?

The College Board will continue to work with educators and higher education officials in California to better understand how student actions and strategies—testing behaviors, quality and frequency of practice, career planning, use of fee waivers, and applying for scholarships—can affect their performance and readiness so we can all help more California students clear their paths to college.

For more information about the impact of opportunities delivered through the SAT Suite of Assessments, please see the full report at: [research.collegeboard.org/pdf/college-board-delivering-opportunities-sat-suite-results-2016-17.pdf](https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/college-board-delivering-opportunities-sat-suite-results-2016-17.pdf).

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# About College Board

College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement® Program. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools.

For further information, visit [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org).