



CRASH COURSE IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

DECEMBER 11, 2025



AGENDA



01 *Testing:
One Piece of the Puzzle*

02 *SAT vs. ACT*

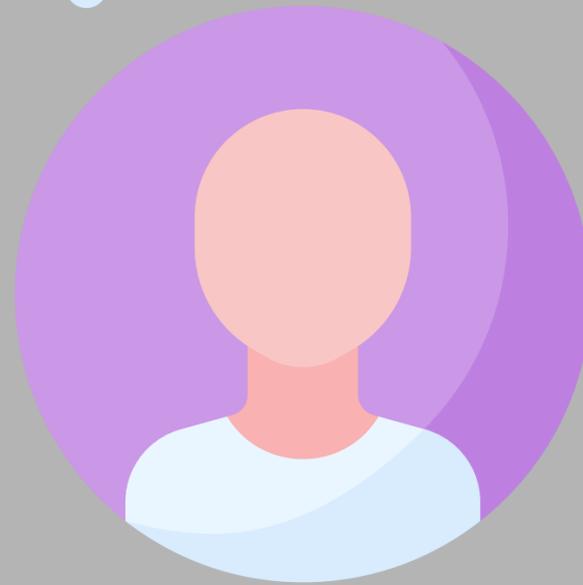
03 *Test Policies at Colleges*

04 *Resources for Students*





STUDENT



FAMILY

SCHOOL

OUR TESTING PHILOSOPHY



at Mahwah High School



- We support an individualized plan for each student.
- While we hope most students take the exam and give it their best effort, there are still many test optional colleges.
- We also want students to remember that their academics and well-being are the priorities.
- Our goal is for our students to be informed and have as many opportunities as possible
- We are School Counselors who are here to educate and advise students and families

FACTORS IN COLLEGE ADMISSION



OPTIONS

Post-Graduation Plans

	2025	2024	2023
Graduates	205	226	198
4 - Yr. Colleges	83%	82%	86%
2 -Yr. Colleges	10%	7%	5%
Career Education /Postgraduate	3%	4%	3%
Other (Employment, Military, etc.)	4%	7%	6%

RECENT COLLEGE ADMISSION TRENDS

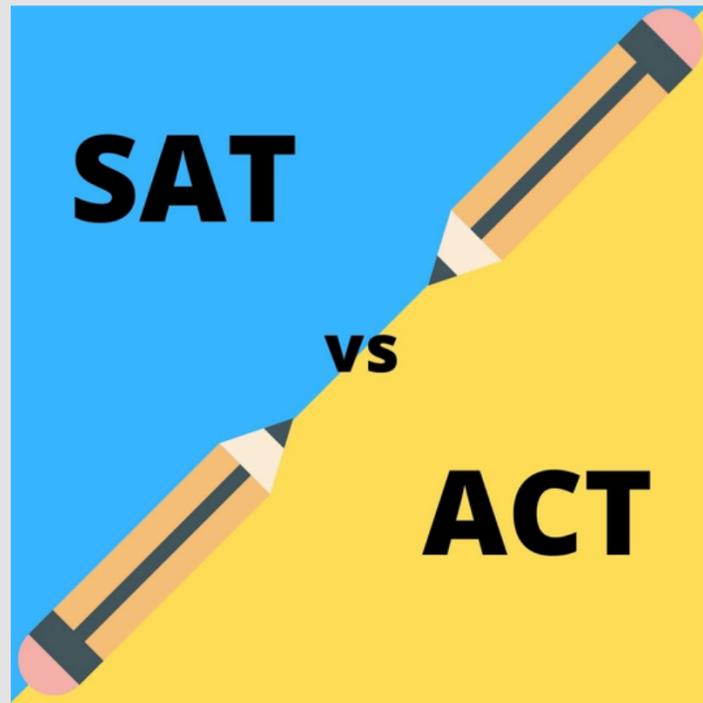


Changes...

- The rise of test-optional colleges since COVID
- The boomerang effect at some top colleges
- Skewed higher test score averages
- SAT went fully digital
- ACT in transition from paper to digital
- ACT makes science optional
- More applications per student

SAT OR ACT

The Differences...



SAT:

Format - Digital Only

Adaptive

2 Sections, Each with 2 Stages

- Reading and Writing Stage 1 (32 min, 27 questions)
- Reading and Writing Stage 2 (32 min, 27 questions)
- Break (10 min)
- Math Stage 1 (35 min, 22 questions)
- Math Stage 2 (35 min, 22 questions)

Scoring - 400-1600 total (200-800 per section)

Length - 2 Hr. 24 mins

Official Practice - PSAT (offered at MHS)

ACT:

Format - Digital and Paper/Pencil options

Static

3 Required Tests, 2 Optional Tests

- English (35 min, 50 questions)
- Math (50 min, 45 questions)
- Break (15 min)
- Reading (40 min, 36 questions)
- Optional Science (40 min, 40 questions)
- Optional Essay (40 min, 1 prompt)

Scoring - 1-36

Length - 2 Hr. 20 mins (3 hrs with Science,

Official Practice - PreACT (not offered at MHS)

WHEN SHOULD WE TAKE THESE TESTS?



It's all about timing...

- 9th Grade - focus is on transition and building confidence
- 10th and 11th Grade - PSAT
- 11th Grade - Take a practice in each to determine your best option
- 11th/12th - plan your best course of action

TEST POLICIES AT COLLEGES



The Different Types...



- Test Optional
 - approx. 80% of all colleges (2,000+)
 - www.fairtest.org
- Test Required
 - 21 private including some top/Ivy League
 - 42 public including military academies and some states like Georgia
- Test Blind
 - UC schools and others



HOW DO WE DECIDE IF WE SHOULD SUBMIT SCORES?

- Give it your best attempt
- Do your research - Common Data Sets, College Websites

Common Data Set

C. FIRST-TIME, FIRST-YEAR ADMISSION

C7 Relative importance of each of the following academic and nonacademic factors in your first-time, first-year, degree-seeking general (not including programs with specific criteria) admissions decisions.

Academic	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Rigor of secondary school record	X			
Class rank	X			
Academic GPA	X			
Standardized test scores			X	
Application Essay		X		
Recommendation(s)		X		
Nonacademic	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Interview				X
Extracurricular activities		X		
Talent/ability		X		
Character/personal qualities	X			
First generation			X	
Alumni/ae relation				X
Geographical residence			X	
State residency	X			
Religious affiliation/commitment				X
Volunteer work			X	
Work experience			X	
Level of applicant's interest				X

Please provide additional information if the importance of any specific academic or nonacademic factors differ by academic program.

Common Data Set

Relative importance of each of the following academic and nonacademic factors in your first-time, first-year, degree-seeking general (not including programs with specific criteria) admissions decisions.

Academic	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Rigor of secondary school	X			
Class rank			X	
Academic GPA	X			
Standardized test scores				X
Application Essay	X			
Recommendation(s)	X			
Nonacademic	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Interview				X
Extracurricular activities		X		
Talent/ability		X		
Character/personal qualities			X	
First generation			X	
Alumni/ae relation		X		
Geographical residence			X	
State residency			X	
Religious affiliation/commitment				X
Volunteer work		X		
Work experience		X		
Level of applicant's interest		X		

Common Data Set

	Percent	Number
Submitting SAT Scores	67%	689
Submitting ACT Scores	22%	229

For each assessment listed below, report the score that represents the 25th percentile (the score that 25 percent of the first-time, first-year population scored at or below) and the 75th percentile score (the score that 25 percent scored at or above).

Assessment	25th Percentile Score	50th Percentile Score	75th Percentile Score
SAT Composite (400 - 1600)	1170	1270	1360
SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (200 - 800)	580	640	680
SAT Math (200 - 800)	580	630	690
ACT Composite (0 - 36)	25	29	32
ACT Math (0 - 36)	24	27	29
ACT English (0 - 36)	25	28	34
ACT Reading (0 - 36)	25	31	34
ACT Science (0 - 36)	24	28	31
ACT Writing (0 - 36)			

Percent of first-time, first-year students with scores in each range:

Meet the Class of 2029

College #1



College #2

Middle 50% SAT Score

Exam	University Park	Commonwealth Campuses
SAT Scores	1330-1480	1130-1350

Scores computed based on a 1600-point scale.

Middle 50% ACT Score

ACT Exam	University Park	Commonwealth Campuses
Composite ACT	30-34	25-31

Penn State does not require or accept scores from the optional Science portion of the Enhanced ACT exam.

HOW CAN MY CHILD GET HELP?



Test Prep Opportunities

- MHS FREE SAT Courses
 - starting Jan. 5th!
- Revolution Prep FREE PRACTICE EXAMS
 - ACT - Feb. 28th
 - SAT - April 11th
- Revolution Prep / Mahwah HS Partnership
 - Small Group Courses
- Monitor our Newsletters!



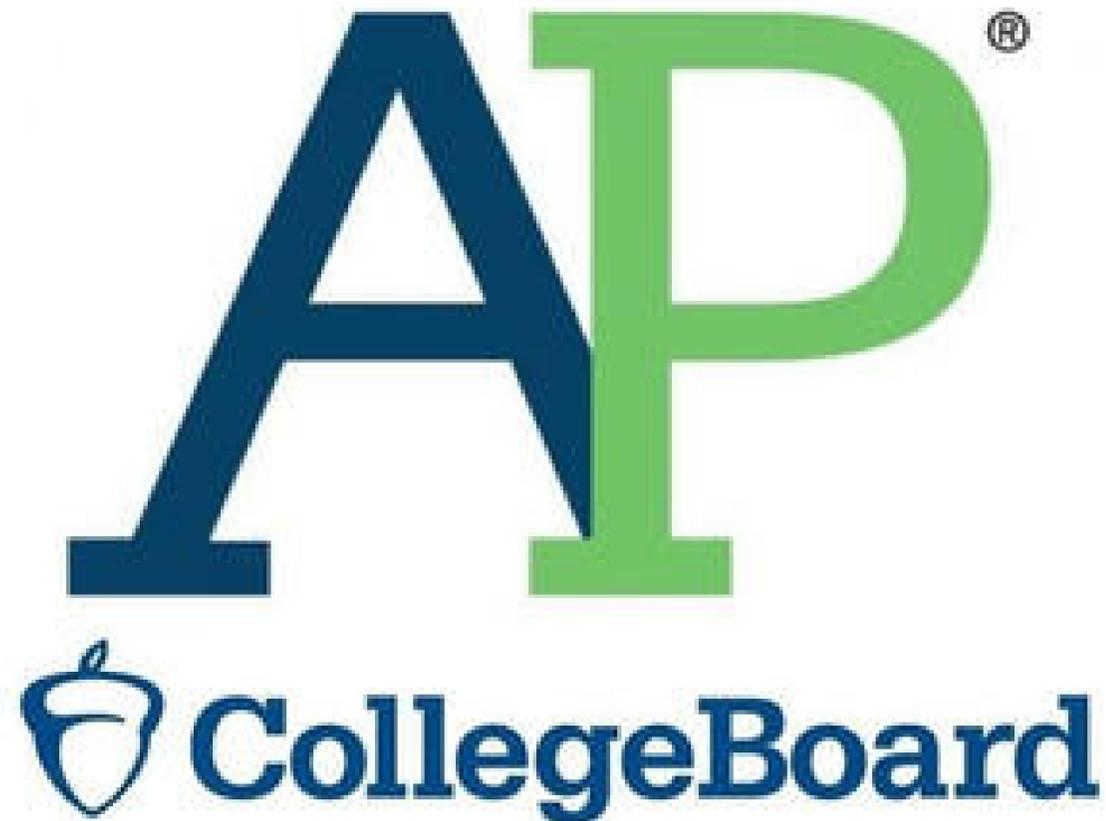
REVOLUTION PREP

AP EXAMS

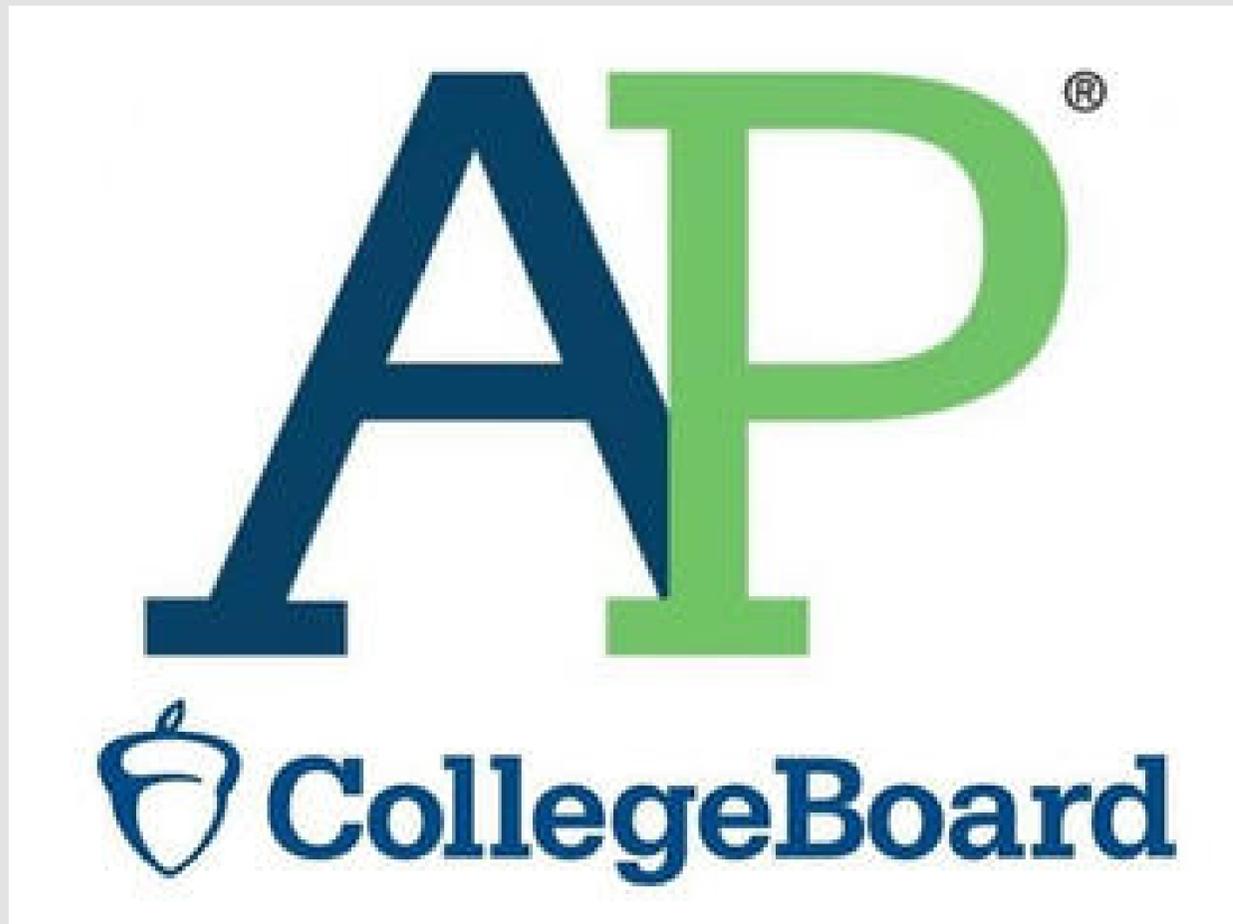


Another way to demonstrate knowledge...

- MHS offers 25 different Advanced Placement courses
- mostly available in 11th and 12th grade
- AP Exams scored on a scale of 1-5



AP EXAMS



AP Course	Avg. Score
Art History	3.0
Biology	3.5
Calculus AB	3.4
Calculus BC	4.8
Chemistry	3.7
Computer Science A	4.0
Computer Science Principles	3.0
English Language	4.3
English Literature	4.3
European History	4.4
French Language	3.0
Macroeconomics	3.7
Microeconomics	3.7
Music Theory	3.6
Physics C – E & M	3.1
Physics C- Mechanics	3.2
Psychology	3.8
Spanish	4.2
Statistics	3.8
Studio Art-2D	3.8
Studio Art-3D	3.5
US Govt. & Politics	4.9
US History	4.1

KEEPING A HEALTHY PERSPECTIVE



Balance...



- Testing is just one piece of the puzzle
- For college, academics are most important
- For life, balance and maintaining confidence are most important for our students



**THANK YOU
FOR ATTENDING!**