FOR COUNSELORS

SAT Myths vs. Facts

The SAT® is globally recognized by K-12 and higher education to measure the skills and knowledge needed for success in college and career. More students (1.9 million in the class of 2023) take the SAT each year than any other assessment.

MYTH #1: THE SAT IS A BARRIER FOR STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

FACT: SAT SCORES HELP MANY STUDENTS SHOW THEIR STRENGTHS TO COLLEGES.

- In 2023, 1.3 million U.S. high school graduates had SAT scores that either validated or exceeded their high school GPAs.[1] Among these students, approximately 440,000 were African American and Latino, over 350,000 were first-generation, and more than 250,000 came from small rural communities.
- Students can opt into Student Search Service when they take the SAT on the weekend. Students who participate receive 29% more college admissions offers than those who don't;[2] when colleges reach out through Search it improves college outcomes, especially for underserved students.

MYTH #2: THE SAT IS BIASED AGAINST SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

FACT: SAT PERFORMANCE DIFFERENCES ARE NOT A PRODUCT OF TEST BIAS, BUT REFLECT GENUINE SOCIETAL INEQUITIES IN EDUCATION.

- In almost all academic measures, including grades, students from wealthier backgrounds tend to have an advantage long before taking college admissions exams.[3] Differences in family wealth only slightly affect the differences in SAT scores among students.

MYTH #3: EXPENSIVE TEST PREP IS THE ONLY WAY FOR STUDENTS TO RAISE THEIR SCORES.

FACT: COACHING AND HIGH-COST TEST PREP HAS SMALL EFFECTS ON TEST SCORES.

- Expensive test prep usually leads to only small improvements in student test scores.[4] In fact, students could achieve similar gains by retaking the test without any additional preparation. Additionally, research on the paper SAT found that students who practiced for 6 hours using free Official SAT Practice scored 21 points higher on their first SAT compared to those who didn't practice.[5]

[1] College Board, 2023
[2] College Board, 2022; Howell et al., 2021
[3] Reardon & Portilla, 2016.
[4] Becker, 1990; Briggs, 2005; DerSimonian & Laird, 1983; Powers & Rock, 1999.
[5] 2020