

**VIRGINIA'S EARLY
PARTICIPATION PSAT
PROGRAM**

**COLLEGE AND
CAREER READINESS PREPARATION**

**PSAT/NMSQT
FOR ALL SOPHOMORES**

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Background

- Students should begin preparing for college and careers while they are in middle school.
- The Academic Career plan that is required for 7th-grade students beginning in 2012-2013 must contain the student's program of study for high school graduation and a postsecondary career pathway based on the student's academic and career interests.
- Beginning in high school, many students in Virginia take the College Board's SAT exam. Most colleges use the test as a common and objective scale for evaluating a student's college readiness.
- The College Board reported that Virginia's 2011 graduates represented the largest and most diverse pool of students in the state's history to participate in the SAT.
 - A total of 53,457, or 67 percent, of 2011 public school graduates in the state took the SAT — a 5 percent increase in participation over the previous year.
 - Four out of every 10 Virginia public school graduates who took the SAT were members of a minority group.
- In order to prepare for the SAT and receive detailed information about college and career readiness skills, many students take the PSAT (Preliminary SAT) during the 10th grade.
 - The PSAT is a standardized test that provides students with firsthand practice for the SAT as well as a chance to enter National Merit Scholarship Qualifying (NMSQ) programs.
 - On average, students who take the PSAT score **146 points** higher on the SAT than those who don't.
 - It also provides important information about a student's career readiness skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, giving an opportunity for interventions early in a student's high school career if weaknesses in these areas are identified.
 - One of the major benefits of the PSAT is the personalized skills feedback that students receive. Because this feedback is **personalized**, students

know exactly the skills they need to improve to be prepared for college or a career.

Using the PSAT to Increase College *and* Career Readiness

- Administering the PSAT to all students in grade 10 will allow Virginia educators time to intervene early with those students who are off-track and to help them better prepare for life and a career post-graduation and **reduce the need for remediation in college.**
- One of the major benefits of the PSAT is the personalized skills feedback that students receive. Because this feedback is personalized, students know exactly the skills they need to improve to be prepared for **college or a career.**
- The program enables schools to use data to identify more students who have the potential to succeed in college-level courses in high school and to be prepared to enter a job and pursue career-oriented postsecondary training.
- It also provides professional development to high school teachers and guidance counselors in using PSAT data to increase students' college and career readiness in mathematics, reading, and writing and their participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
- The PSAT/NMSQT scoring scale and benchmarks indicate whether students are on-track to be ready for college study *or* a career-training program.
- Most industries that have direct, high school-to-career paths have extensive pre-requisite training programs such as those for:
 - Customer service representatives;
 - HVAC installation and repair professionals;
 - Electricians, carpenters, steel workers, etc.; and
 - Military personnel.
- In all of these cases, individuals will need to meet the basic proficiency level of the PSAT benchmark in order to succeed in the pre-work training programs.
- The National Assessment Governing Board (*Academic Preparedness of 12th Graders for College and Careers: NAEP Research*) states, “Preparedness

represents academic knowledge and skill levels in reading and mathematics necessary to be qualified for placement into:

- Job training programs, and
 - Credit-bearing entry-level general education courses that count toward a four-year degree.
- David T. Conley, PhD. (*Pathways to Postsecondary and Career Readiness*) cites the strong overlap between college readiness and career preparedness, defining readiness as:
- Work Ready meets basic expectations regarding workplace behavior and demeanor;
 - Job Ready possesses specific knowledge necessary to begin an entry-level position; and
 - **Career Ready** possesses sufficient foundational knowledge and skill and general learning strategies necessary to begin studies in a career pathway.
- The Educational Policy Improvement Center's (EPIC) research on the content of courses in two-year certificate programs identified the overlap between college readiness and career readiness knowledge and skills. Essentially both require a strong academic foundation. For example:
- Hospitality operations employees are required to monitor revenue; participate in financial activities such as budgeting and allocating funds; and training staff.
 - Construction employees are required to analyze problems and recommend solutions, read specifications, such as blueprints, to determine requirements and plan procedures; and estimate materials or requirements to complete jobs.
 - Environmental technician jobs (such as HVAC installation and repair professionals) require performing statistical analyses; reviewing technical documents; conducting surveys, and providing support in the planning of projects.
- The PSAT/NMSQT identifies how students test in critical **reading skills**, such as determining word meanings; reasoning and inferring; and analyzing information.
- The PSAT/NMSQT measures essential **writing skills**, including word choice and grammar functions; sentence structure; and relationships between sentences and paragraphs.

- ❑ The PSAT/NMSQT reports how students test in essential **mathematical skills**, such as numbers and operations; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; data, statistics, and probability; problem solving; reasoning; and connections.
- ❑ All students participating in the PSAT receive free access to an online planning tool called *QuickStart*, which contains a personality test designed to match a student's personality to potential careers and necessary steps and training for those careers.
- ❑ *QuickStart* also contains *My Road*, which includes detailed descriptions of hundreds of different careers, profiles of individuals who have pursued these careers and detailed guidance on next steps on a path toward these careers.
- ❑ Testing all students will also allow Virginia to use *AP Potential* to find those AP-ready students who might have otherwise been overlooked by teachers and administrators, and also to allow the state to find important gaps in curriculum and instruction that are interfering with student learning and success.

Funding

- ❑ Virginia's Early Participation PSAT program proposes to pay the PSAT test fees for all 10th-grade students in Virginia and assumes a 75% actual participation rate.
 - Fiscal year 2012-2013 GF: \$913,016
 - Fiscal Year 2013-2014 GF: \$913,016

References

Conley, David T. Ph.D.; *Pathways to Postsecondary and Career Readiness*; July 2011
https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/20110718_NZ_Auckland_Christchurch.pdf

Loomis, Susan Cooper *Academic Preparedness of 12th Graders for College and Careers*:
 NAEP Research, November 2, 2011; National Assessment Governing Board;
<http://www.nagb.org/>