



September 16, 2016

Dear Junior Parents:

We are writing to inform you of an important event in your child's academic career: On Wednesday, October 19, all Prairie School sophomores and juniors will take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). The PSAT is a slightly shorter version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which is one of the two college entrance exams students may take late in junior year and early in senior year.

We administer the PSAT to juniors for three reasons:

First, it's a valuable opportunity for a "practice run"—a chance to take a formal, timed test that mimics a college entrance exam without the prospect of score reports to colleges. It also enables us to identify and take steps to help students who struggle with standardized testing before they begin taking the SAT and/or ACT late in junior year.

Second, the PSAT is scored similarly to the SAT, so the results are roughly predictive of students' SAT performance.

Third, juniors who score in the top 3% of testers enter the National Merit Scholarship competition, and may qualify further to compete for a number of college scholarships, including three types of National Merit Scholarships, National Achievement Scholarships for outstanding black students, and National Hispanic Scholarships. These awards are available to students regardless of financial need.

We will soon distribute to the students a PSAT Student Guide that describes the test and includes a practice exam. It is important that students carefully read the Guide and take the practice exam at home under timed conditions to gauge the pace they'll need to maintain during the actual exam. **We highly recommend more comprehensive preparation and suggest the following.**

- Take advantage of FREE test prep services through Khan Academy at [satpractice.org](http://satpractice.org)
- Register now for eight FREE, livestreaming, one-hour lessons through Kaplan at [kaptest.com/psatprelive](http://kaptest.com/psatprelive) (begins Oct. 1).

- Peruse practice tests, tips, and strategies at [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org) and/or purchase books of the same, and self-administer several practice tests under timed conditions.

Students who have College Board-approved accommodations will have those accommodations for the PSAT. If you have questions about this, please contact Upper School Learning Specialist Mari Grobschmidt (752-2659).

We will conduct a pre-administration session to complete necessary paperwork with students on **Thursday, October 13, at 12:35 p.m.** **It's important that your student is present that day.**

#### **IMPORTANT NOTES TO SHARE WITH YOUR STUDENT:**

\* **Sleep and eat!** It's important that you get a good night's sleep for at least two nights preceding the exam and have a healthy breakfast on October 18.

\* **Bring an approved calculator!** Calculators are permitted and highly advantageous on the exam, so it is crucial that you bring them fully charged, have fresh batteries, and be familiar with how to use them. **Carefully check the PSAT Student Guide for approved types of calculators.**

\* **Be on time!** The test will begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. in the Fieldhouse and conclude before lunch. Please arrive no later than 8:20 a.m. **If you arrive after testing has begun, you will not be allowed to test. If you are late or absent, you will not have another chance to take the PSAT at Prairie this year.**

We urge all juniors to approach the PSAT with seriousness of purpose and wish them all the best in their performance on it. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Maggie McDonough and Jim Zielinski  
Co-Directors of College Counseling  
752-2627