



September 19, 2019

Dear Junior Parents:

We are writing to inform you of an important event in your child's academic career: On **Wednesday, October 16**, all Prairie School 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 in preparation for college applications.

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 later 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.

In late September your student will receive a PSAT Student Guide from his/her advisor. The Guide includes important information about the test as well as 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.

- Free test prep services through Khan Academy at khanacademy.org/sat
- Practice tests, tips, and strategies at collegeboard.org and in print.

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 **Wednesday, October 9, at 1:20. Please ensure that your student is present that day.**

IMPORTANT NOTES TO SHARE WITH YOUR STUDENT:

* **Sleep and eat:** A good night's sleep for at least three nights preceding the exam and a healthy breakfast on October 16 are important for sustained mental focus and function.

* **Bring an approved calculator:** Calculators are permitted and advantageous on the exam. We recommend that your student bring a fully charged calculator and fresh batteries. 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. Students should arrive by 8:15 a.m. **Students who arrive after testing has begun will not be allowed to test. Late or absent students will not have another chance to take the PSAT this year.**

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

Sincerely,

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