

To: Parents of Seventh and Eighth Grade Students:

I am writing to inform you of a standardized testing option in which you may be interested as your child approaches high school.

The Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT) includes sections on: vocabulary knowledge, verbal reasoning, reading comprehension and numerical reasoning (rather than computation). It is an excellent preparation for major tests that students who are college-bound will be taking in high school, such as the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Of special interest is the fact that the SSAT norming population is comparable to that of our district, so that our students who take this test can be compared with other college-bound students, rather than with the general population.

Some families are seriously considering private high school options. Many private schools require the SSAT as part of the admission procedure, so you may want to have your child take the SSAT sometime during seventh grade to see how s/he performs. If you wait until the spring, then they could sign up for the eighth grade test, not the seventh grade one. The test taken in December or January of eighth grade is the one that will be considered for high school admissions. If you are considering private school options, I would suggest you read my document "Private School Suggestions," also included in this mailing.

Some students might benefit from test preparation courses, though these are not necessary or appropriate for all students. While I do not recommend study courses for seventh graders taking the SSAT for the first time, some parents, nevertheless, may want to enroll them in a test preparation course. Two companies I have heard of (but don't know enough about to officially endorse) that offer test preparation and tutoring are: SageEducators.com in Mill Valley at 388-7243 and Compassprep.com in Larkspur at 464-8600. These test companies advertise that they offer full practice tests and then will go over the results with families to explain which areas may need more practice. There are also private tutors. I recommend that students take the test without submitting scores to any school just to familiarize themselves with the test and identify strengths and areas to work on before taking the test that will count. A compromise between a formal course and taking the test "cold" is to buy the SSAT practice book and learn about the test through some practice tests and study strategies. Based on the results of a first testing, parents and students can decide if further test preparation is necessary prior to the fall.

In order for your child to take this test, you must contact the Secondary School Admission Test directly by getting information and registering on-line. Their web site is: <http://www.ssat.org> and it has much useful information for parents.

If your child decides to take the SSAT, I would also greatly appreciate your sharing the results with me. My interest is in gathering data on this test to show that our students can compete favorably with a similar nationwide population, and that our program is adequately supporting and challenging their intellectual growth. I would keep all results confidential, and in addition, would be happy to discuss the results with you.

If you have any questions about whether your child should take the SSAT, about test preparation strategies, or high school options, in general, please call me at 388-7100, ext. 2005, or email me at agold@reedschools.org

Sincerely,

Allan P. Gold, Ph.D.
Reed District Psychologist