

Simplifying the SAT

Students who aspire to a tennis scholarship at a college in the USA are required to submit a SAT score as part of their application.

The SAT (Student Achievement/Aptitude Test) is a standardized test, in English and math, mandatory for all applicants, not just those on athletic scholarships. It is administered at centres around the world, in English only, on six dates throughout the year, October to June, on Saturdays, with occasional religious accommodation on Sundays.

SAT is a household word in the USA, but much less-known in Canada. SAT exists to find some common ground among the huge numbers of secondary school students from around the world, who apply to college in the USA. Canada, like the USA, does not administer provincial/state/national standardized exit exams; schools set their own exams. Colleges and universities have to devise ways to compare student achievement from thousands of schools in dozens of countries. The SAT fulfills this role. Though not perfect and frequently culturally biased in favour of American students (that is, the questions refer to the American way of life) it has become, over the decades, a reliable predictor of student success at the college level.

Parents and grandparents who attended school in other countries, where standardized "exit" exams are the norm - names like the Matriculation Exam, the "A" levels, the Highers, the Baccalaureat, the Abitur come to mind - know the feeling of preparing for an exam to be written on the same day, at the same time, by thousands of students, then scored by unknown markers. Students in Ontario however, have no experience of this. EQAO testing, done in grades 3, 6 and 9, is largely "snapshot", to give educators an overview of student performance. It does not determine the future of students.

It's never too early for students and their families to begin to prepare for the SAT,

even if students are not entirely sure if they plan on studying in the USA. NOTE - some colleges no longer require the SAT; however it would be foolish to attempt to select in advance, one of those colleges and then to have to change your mind.

Parents should have a look at the College Board website collegeboard.com to begin to learn about the SAT process. www.collegeboard.com

In the next article, I will outline the format of the test.

SAT practice classes are held most Saturdays at Cedar Springs throughout the school year. Start time is 10 or 11 a.m., depending on tournaments, training schedules etc. Check with ACE weekly. There is no charge .

For more information e-mail the SAT tutor:

helendonohoe@sympatico.ca