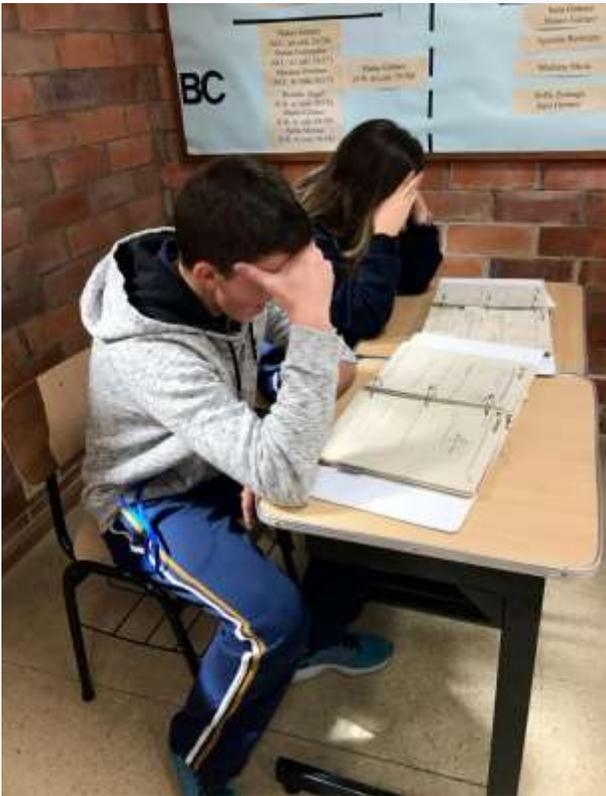




A Message from Josh

So It's March...

The holidays have come and gone and along with them, the first semester is history. Now, students are re-engaged in their second semester studies, finishing winter sports, and already preparing for spring. Traditionally, this is a quiet time of the academic year. Final exams and graduation are many months away and, given recent weather, it appears that spring is too. Does this mean that it is time to relax and go with the flow? No, not by any means. While this time of year may feel like the winter doldrums, there is a lot that needs to happen in your student's planning, organization, and preparation. The time invested now will pay dividends in the months and year to come.



11th grade students studying. —Photo Credit: The Discoverer

Let me begin by addressing high school juniors. Eleventh grade students are unquestionably the busiest of all students during this time of year. And, if your student is not busy right now, he or she should be. Now that the second semester has begun at all schools across the nation, high school juniors should be focused on four critical tasks: maintaining their grades, getting involved, preparing for and taking standardized tests, and creating their initial prospective college lists.

It seems obvious, but I feel that it is important to discuss student academic performance and grade maintenance. It is easy for students to slip into complacency during this time of the year. Unfortunately, damage done to grades as a result of poor homework completion, test preparation, or lack of focus can be very difficult to correct as the school year quickly advances toward Spring. If your student is having difficulty or is only performing in a marginally acceptable manner in any class, now is the time to take action. Do not allow the "I am gonna fix it next week" syndrome to become your family's ethos. Make sure that your student is studying for every class every day and seeking help when he or she does not understand various topics. **(Article Continues on Page 3)**

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Ask 3 Questions to Decide Between AP Exams, SAT Subject Tests

As high school students start preparing their college application portfolios, many are confronted with the decision of whether to take Advanced Placement exams or SAT subject tests.

These two assessments can be easy to confuse, as they are both a means of highlighting the precise knowledge that can boost a student's application. The two types of tests, however, are quite different in a number of key ways. Students should consider several factors, including the following, before deciding which type of exam to take.

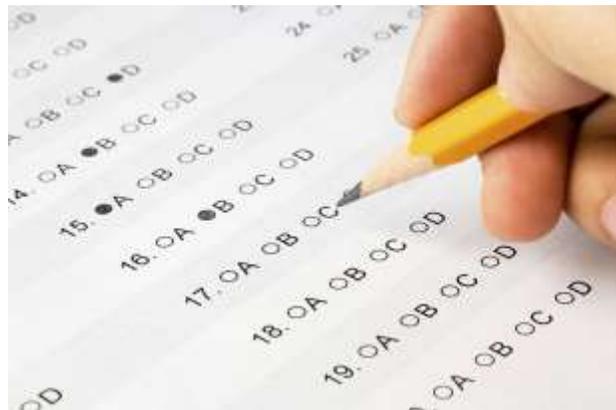
1. Which exam will your prospective colleges accept – or, in some instances, require? While certain colleges and universities require students to submit SAT subject test scores, others do not. However, most schools will review them if you choose to include them in your application. AP exams are not required by colleges and universities, but your scores can influence the admissions process and, in the case of a 3, 4 or 5, potentially earn you college credit. Both SAT subject tests and AP exams can demonstrate that you have challenged yourself academically. If your school schedule only allows for one of these options, and no college on your short list requires SAT subject tests, choose the exam that is emphasized more heavily in your top schools' admissions materials and website.

2. What is your testing goal? If your primary goal is to earn college credit, both AP exams and SAT subject tests can help, though AP exams are a more common means to this end. Many schools will grant you course credit for an AP score of 3 or above, but some selective institutions only award credit for scores of 4, or perhaps even 5, in certain areas.

While AP exams are related to specific classes, SAT subject tests do not assess your mastery of a set curriculum. Instead, they test your general knowledge of a given topic. If you wish to demonstrate your expertise and initiative in an academic subject that your

school does not offer, SAT subject tests can be a great way to do so.

3. How successful were you in any corresponding courses? The knowledge required to do well on AP exams and SAT subject tests is largely derived from related high school courses, so be sure to weigh your previous performance in the subject. Though students generally do not take AP exams without first taking the corresponding AP course, this is not always the case – if you



have extensive knowledge of a subject, but your school does not offer an AP class in that area, consider the option of preparing on your own and taking the exam.

If you are less confident in your abilities, or you are on a shorter time frame, the general scope of SAT subject tests can make them seem easier for some students. You can also often take an SAT subject test more than once, since most are offered multiple times throughout the year. AP exams, on the other hand, are not.

You may be tempted to take as many exams as you can, but the best advice is to take on an appropriate level of challenge. Focus on putting your best foot forward in the areas in which you feel you have the most strength – without spreading yourself too thin.

Holmes, B. (2016, January 18). Ask 3 Questions to Decide Between AP Exams, SAT Subject Tests. Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/college-admissions-playbook/2016/01/18/ask-3-questions-to-decide-between-ap-exams-sat-subject-tests>

A Message from Josh continued from page 1

Next, right now is the time for your student to begin seeking part-time work, internship, and volunteer experiences. Colleges, more than ever, are looking for students who are going to be active members of their communities. Students who fail to demonstrate consistent involvement during their high school years will be at a distinct disadvantage compared to those who are involved. In the last several years, I have reviewed hundreds of student college and scholarship applications that have been less than encouraging because of the gaps they have had in their involvement. Need help finding ideas? Give me a call. I am happy to help students identify different opportunities.

Most importantly, high school juniors, as well as some sophomores, should be actively preparing for and taking standardized tests. During March or April, students across the country will be taking either the SAT or ACT administered by their high schools. I have observed that many families do not recognize that their students' high school offering is only one of many test administrations their students should take. I recommend that students take the SAT or ACT at least twice; though, three or more times is preferred. As such, students will need to take more than the annual high school offered test. High school juniors should plan for, in addition to the March or April test, another test in May or June as well as one of the summer offerings. For those who are unaware, the ACT will be offered for the first time ever in July and the SAT will be administered in August for the second year in a row. These summer test offerings are advantageous. Students who achieve their score goals during the summer months can avoid having to take Fall tests. And, if you think your student is busy now, just wait until next Fall...

Preparing for tests is crucial. Whether your student needs to improve his or her reading, writing, math, or science scores, preparation should begin immediately. My most successful students, those who have improved their scores by the highest numbers, have historically been those who started early. I have already begun SAT and ACT preparation with several high school sophomores and juniors. Preparation cannot happen overnight or the week preceding a test administration. Often, skills need remediation, review, or instruction. Moreover, practice makes perfect. Strategies that I help my students learn take many weeks of practice to perfect.

Another consideration is which test is best for your student, the SAT or ACT. Just because your student's high school offers the SAT does not mean that it is the only test that your son or daughter can take. I help my students identify which of the two tests is statistically best based on their scores, and we prepare for that test. Need help deciding which test is best? Please give me a call.

Beyond the SAT and ACT, there are Advanced Placement (AP) exams and SAT subject tests to consider. Most students do not need to worry about the subject tests (only a handful of very competitive schools require them), but a much larger student population will need to be ready for the AP exams. Good scores (3 or higher) in many instances will help students avoid taking introductory classes at the college level. Has your student told you that he or she is not taking an AP exam even though he or she is currently taking an AP class? If so, please require your student to take the test.

Finally, all high school juniors should begin crafting a prospective college list. At this point in the year, your student's college list should consist of 20-25 possible schools. Choose a few different schools to visit during Spring break. Too many students and their families make the mistake of waiting until Summer or Fall (gasp!) to visit college campuses. In my opinion, Summer and Fall are too late. Your student needs to begin identifying what he or she likes in terms of campus size, vibe, location, program offering, and various other criteria. Much like a well-written research paper, the prospective college list benefits from solid research and exploration. I have already begun helping a number of high school juniors locate potential colleges, orient themselves to the application process, and establish contact with admissions faculty. Your student should begin doing the same. The good news is that I am happy to help you. Feel free to contact me for advice or to schedule a meeting to begin the college search and application process.

For students in other grades, there is also plenty that can be done. Similar to their eleventh-grade peers, all students should be focused on grade maintenance and academic performance. Seniors should be scheduling visits at the colleges to which they have been accepted and taking advantage of "accepted student days." These opportunities will allow for more critical review of each school and facilitate final decision-making. Remember, enrollment deposits are due by May 1, 2018. Of course, just like I recommend that high school juniors get involved, students of all grade levels should be actively participating in extra-curricular, athletic, or community activities.

Looking Ahead

- Presentations on College Admissions and Applications
- Summer Tutoring

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do." (Pele)



Brain Power Recipe

Apple Sandwiches with Almond Butter and Granola

Ingredients:

- 1 Apple, cored and sliced into 1/2" rings
- Almond Butter
- Granola

Instructions:

1. Smooth almond butter onto one apple ring
2. Add granola to almond butter
3. Place second apple ring on top.
4. ***Enjoy!***

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