

Free test-preparation program for revamped SAT goes online

June 2 2015, by Lisa Leff



Larkmead School. Credit: CC-BY-SA-2.5,2.0,1.0

The nonprofit organization behind the SAT college entrance exam has teamed up with a Silicon Valley pioneer in online education to make test preparation materials available for free starting Tuesday, a move aimed at making the college admissions race less stressful and more fair.

The College Board gave unprecedented access to the revamped SAT it plans to introduce next spring to Khan Academy, which has developed diagnostic quizzes and interactive practice tests that will be accessible to anyone with Internet access. Khan Academy, based in Mountain View, is known for its free web-based library of instructional videos and

academic exercises.

College Board President David Coleman said the partnership aims to level the [college admissions](#) playing field by putting high-quality training within easy reach of students without the funds for commercial test-prep services or the family support often needed to stick with a self-paced practice book.

"We can ensure that now and forever, these tools shall be freely available for all," Coleman said.

Students, parents and teachers who visit www.khanacademy.org/sat will find quizzes based on the math and reading sections of the new SAT scheduled to make its debut in March, as well as full-length practice tests written by the College Board.

Questions they answer incorrectly will show the specific skills on which they need to improve, offer step-by-step explanations for deriving the correct answer and recommend personalized practice tutorials from the Khan Academy library.

Nicole Hurd, founder of a nonprofit called College Advising Corps that places trained advisers in underserved high schools, was given a preview of the materials and called them a "real paradigm shift."

"I think they are really trying to change this from test preparation to an educational opportunity," Hurd said. "If a young person takes the SAT math section, and they don't do well, instead of saying, 'Well, you don't do well,' it will push them back into the Khan curriculum so they can get the math skills they need so they are SAT-ready."

The redesigned SAT will be graded on a 1,600-point scale last used in 2004, and will make the now-required essay section optional. Test-takers

no longer will lose points for wrong answers, a feature meant to discourage guessing but that produced agonized complaints that the exam was more an exercise in strategy than a measure of college-readiness.

The questions were written with an eye toward adhering more closely to what students are learning in high school and evaluating the practical knowledge they will need for life beyond [college](#), Coleman said. For example, \$10 vocabulary words like "querulous" have been replaced with more commonly used terms such as "synthesis," he said.

"Everything we are doing is to make it easier for students to navigate this territory we know has typically been filled with anxiety," Coleman said.

The College Board is partnering with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to promote the new program in communities where students may not have home computers.

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