COLORADO
Department of Education

Using the PSAT and SAT for Improvement Planning

Background

PSAT and SAT are assessments created by and administered by College Board. In Colorado, 9th and 10th grade students take the PSAT and all 11th grade students take the SAT assessment. These assessments are designed to measure the knowledge, skills, and understanding identified as most important for college and career readiness and success. They are also incorporated into Colorado's School Performance Framework.

This document provides a basic overview of the assessments and how they can be used in the improvement planning process and referenced in the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP).

PSAT and SAT

The PSAT and SAT help identify student's academic strengths and weaknesses, the PSAT help students practice for the SAT, and both tests can identify student's potential for success in advanced course work and readiness for college and career success. Students may also use PSAT scores when applying for student scholarships while SAT scores are often used in applications for postsecondary education. The PSAT is aligned to both Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and the SAT that students will take in 11th grade.

Results - Student level

Information about understanding student level scores are available at the following links:

- PSAT 8/9: Understanding Scores: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/psat-8-9-understanding-scores.pdf
- PSAT 10: Understanding Scores: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/psat-10-understanding-scores.pdf
- SAT: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/understanding-scores/interpreting

Additional Resources

- **CDE overview of SAT and PSAT:** CDE has compiled information about the PSAT and SAT including testing and make-up date windows.
- **Khan Academy:** Students have the option of enrolling in Khan Academy and linking their PSAT and SAT results to this account. Khan Academy provides free online SAT practice test as well as video lessons and study tips. This option has been used by schools as an additional instructional tool to help students better understand key concepts and prepare for the SAT.

Improvement Planning

The PSAT and SAT assessment can be a used in a number of places throughout improvement planning and the UIP. Generally, these scores (mean scale scores or individual student reports) and median growth percentiles can help schools determine overall progress and trends, as well as think about organizing interventions and support. They should be used in concert with other information, assessments, and data to make decisions about instructional focus throughout the school year.

Data Analysis:
Schools may use both student and trend level data to help identify areas of growth and areas of concern. This analysis is most likely done with a combination of CDE provided reports and College Board provided reports. Given that the PSAT and SAT are summative assessments, students may only answer a few questions on each key concept or standard. While it may give information on areas of focus, it should be used in partnership with other data to make decisions about course design or instructional focus. The analysis could be used to determine overall school progress, comparison against other similar schools, and to determine gaps among groups. The following items are potential strategies for comparison:

- **Mean Scale Score and Median Growth Percentile cut points:** The School Performance Framework (SPF) has cut points for each assessment for achievement and growth.
- **Graduation Guidelines levels:** Each district has adopted graduation guidelines that meet a minimum threshold. The SAT is one of the options that can be adopted to demonstrate readiness for postsecondary. The score must be at least 470 for English and 500 for Math and can be higher based on District policy.
- **Number of students above cut points:** The cut points from the SPF can be used to examine the number of students who were at meets or exceeds expectations. This can be used in combination with the mean scale score to help inform selection of strategies. For instance, a low mean scale score could mean that all students are scoring low or that many students are scoring in the middle and one group is scoring very low. These two scenarios may result in very different strategies.

The following table includes samples from two sections of the UIP that utilize one of the types of analysis.

Sample Trend Statements - UIP	Sample Current Performance - UIP
The PSAT ELA scores for our HS have increased slightly over the past three years (431 – 437 – 451) but remain below the 50th percentile score of 461.	Our most recent PSAT scores had a mean scale score of 462, which is at a "Meets" level on the Performance Framework. All of our student groups scored within 2 mean scale score points of this level.
Our students with IEPs have consistently scored below the mean scale scores of our study body as a whole on the SAT. However, our SAT mean scale score for students with IEPs is slightly higher than the statewide mean scale score for students with IEPs.	The SAT for Math mean scale score was 465, which is below level (491) to reach Meets on the Performance Framework and below our district average for high schools.
	75% of our 12th grade students from the previous year met our district SAT score goals for graduation (had at least a score of 470 on the SAT English and 500 on SAT Math)

Major Improvement Strategies:
Major Improvement Strategies focused on the PSAT and SAT range broadly based on the trends and root causes that are identified. The following items are shared as examples and not intended to cover all possible or needed scenarios.

- Determine areas of particular strength or weakness: If a particular standard or group of standards were scored consistently low, it could be further examined to help inform improvement efforts.
    - Example strategy or action step: Revisit scope and sequence for Algebra I and lead staff in review and unpacking of standards.
- *Note of Caution*: Given the complex skills and knowledge that these tests are designed to measure, caution should be taken including a Major Improvement Strategy on test preparation. While this is often an action step that can be helpful in preparing students for the type and format of questions, if significant skill gaps are present, it is recommended to be paired with other instructional strategies or interventions.

Targets:
The same cut points and comparison points that were recommended for data analysis can be used for target setting. Examples of targets using these are included in the table below with associated Performance Challenges.

Sample #1	*Sample #2*
Priority Performance Challenge	Priority Performance Challenge
Achievement levels for high school students in 9th-11th grade is well below the 50th percentile for math	English Language Arts Achievement and Growth in our high school are consistently below the 50th percentile
Target	Target
Increase the Mean Scale Score on the Math SAT from 435 to at least 447 Increase the number of students scoring above 500 from 25% to at least 50%	Increase the PSAT mean scale score in English from 452 to at least 461 (meets expectation).
Interim Measure	Interim Measure
District formative assessment provided in November and March	End of unit tests.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE's Unified Improvement Planning Webpage
- CDE's PSAT webpage
- CDE's SAT webpage