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Texas offers free SAT/ACT tests to high school juniors

AUSTIN – High school juniors who are enrolled in a Texas public school district or charter school have a one-time opportunity to take one free college admissions test this year.

Thanks to funding from the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency has contracted with ACT and The College Board, which oversees the SAT testing program, to make free tests available this spring and early summer. This is part of a larger effort to increase college preparation efforts in the state.

The first part of the initiative begins immediately with the college admissions testing.

High school juniors may register for either the May 1 or June 5 administration of the SAT or the April 10 or June 12 ACT, and the state will pay the cost of their regular registration fee.

The registration period has already closed for the April ACT test. However, if a student has already registered for that exam or any of the other designated tests offered in May or June and has already paid for it, the vendor will reimburse the registration fee.

The registration deadline for the May 1 SAT is today, while the deadline for the June 5 test is May 5. The deadline for the June 12 ACT is May 7.

Officials with the SAT and ACT testing programs are contacting students, parents and counselors directly to provide information about how to access this program.

“This program provides a great opportunity for our high school juniors. It saves their families money and erases one of the financial hurdles that could keep some students from pursuing their college dreams,” said Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

The standard fee to register for the ACT plus its writing exam is \$47. The standard fee for the SAT is \$45.

Registration information for the SAT is available at www.sat.collegeboard.com. Information about the ACT is available at <http://www.act.org/aap/texas/>.

Among the Class of 2009, 112,485 Texas public school students took the SAT and about 74,000 public school students took the ACT.

In addition to the state-funded admissions testing, Texas’s new college preparation program allows a school district to work with the vendors to offer an eighth-grade test this year and eighth and 10th grade tests next year. These norm-referenced exams can be used to diagnose the academic strengths and weaknesses of students as they prepare for college. Each vendor will also provide professional development to districts in the use of this data to improve instruction and raise student achievement.

The ACT's eighth grade test is called EXPLORE and covers English, reading, mathematics and science. ACT's 10th-grade test called PLAN covers the same core subjects, which are also the subjects tested on its college admissions exam.

The SAT's eighth grade test, called ReadStep, covers reading, mathematics and writing. SAT's 10th grade test is called the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). This test measures reading, mathematics and writing skills.

Students who take these exams tend to score substantially higher when they take the college admissions exams.