

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

“Some students get nervous when they know they have a big test coming up, so the more exposure they have to the material, the more comfortable they feel — thus helping alleviate test anxiety and building confidence. Providing opportunities for test prep helps students become more familiar with what to expect on the actual test day.

This year, students had the opportunity to prepare for the SAT by attending a webinar-style workshop provided by Enhanced Prep, which offers students test-taking tips and a review of subjects that will be covered during the SAT.

Students learned test-taking strategies that can improve their test scores, such as managing how much time to spend answering each question and understanding how the test is scored, which can help them focus on which and how many questions they need to answer during the test. This workshop can also help students who have not yet met the state testing requirements (SBA) by giving them the extra refresher they need. Also, despite being a virtual resource, our SAT Prep workshop always has someone available to speak with students and answer any questions they may have.

This workshop would not be possible on the scale that it’s happening without the help of community partners. A true example of collaboration, Graduate Tacoma has offered financial support while Enhanced Prep is providing the tutorial services. Tacoma Public Schools and others host the workshop sessions, while organizations like TRiO coordinate them at the schools and help promote them to students.

It would be great to be able to offer these workshops on an annual or semi-annual basis for all TPS students in the future. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often don’t have access to resources, such as tutors or lessons, so this refresher workshop can help level the playing field in a way.”



Riabelle Vivas is the Educational Planner and Advisor of the TRiO program at Tacoma Community College.

HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE ENTRY EXAMS

For the past four years, the work of our Networks and schools in building a college-bound culture has been further reinforced by TPS’ commitment to removing barriers to SAT participation. Unlike most districts, TPS absorbs the financial, scheduling, and travel burdens to taking the SAT by offering it free during the school day for all students.

This policy change has directly led to a dramatic increase in SAT participation for Tacoma students. For the second year in a row, nearly 99 percent of seniors are taking the test before October of their graduating year. The average student graduating in 2019 has taken the test 1.7 times, and an increasing number are taking their first test in their junior year.

It is difficult to derive trends on this indicator as the College Board has made significant updates to the exam at the same time this policy change occurred. However, we have seen excellent gains in participation and scores for students living in poverty, including composite scores almost 100 points higher than in 2016. Meanwhile, gaps have narrowed for almost all racial groups in reading, but persist in writing and math.

Despite these gains, there is more work yet to do. This year’s average composite score fell to 983, a decline from last year’s average of 1036. The aim must continue to be on higher achievement for all students. However, it’s important to note these composite scores reflect all seniors — not just those planning to pursue college, as is the case in many other districts.

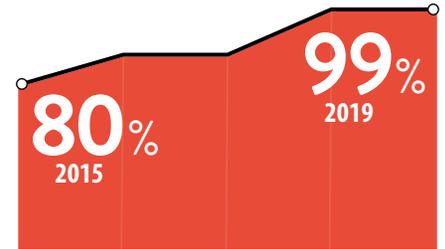
In response to this gap and the subsequent outpouring of interest by school counselors, the College Success Foundation and Graduate Tacoma’s College Support Network are helping bring free prep courses directly to high schools this spring. Learn more about this effort from Riabelle Vivas, featured on the left.



DIG DEEPER:
Visit GraduateTacoma.org/Data
to dig deeper into the data!

DATA TRENDS

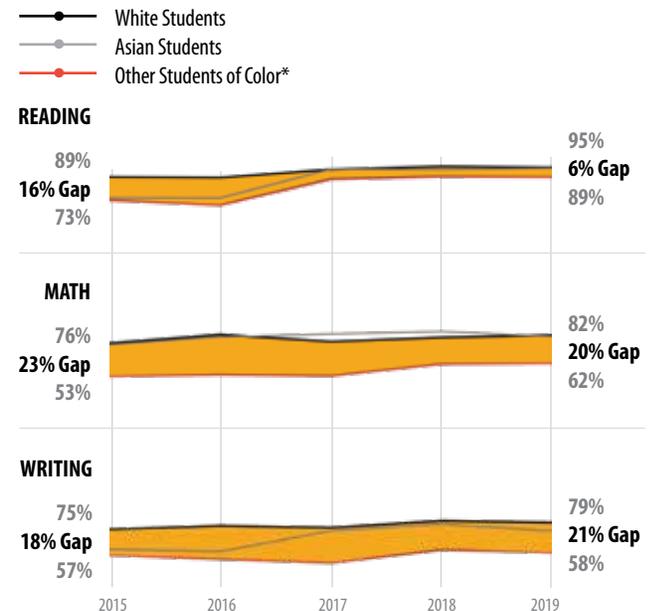
BASELINE TO CURRENT
Students Taking the SAT



AIMING HIGHER GOAL: Increase the percentage of high school seniors who take the SAT. Increase the average score on the SAT.

SAT OPPORTUNITY GAPS

Between Students Meeting Subject Standard



* “Other Students of Color” includes Black, Latinx, Native American, Multi-racial and Pacific Islander students, all of whom have experienced persistent opportunity gaps.

Data Source: College Board via TPS