



# Perspectives on College Admissions Testing

Shorewood High School  
December 2016

MARGULIES  
©2014 NEWSDAY/AM NEW YORK  
www.jimmy margulies.com



We make the tests scarier than they actually are.

# Which Tests & When?

- PSAT 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- SAT starting in 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- ACT starting in 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- SAT Subject Tests (optional) in grades 10-12



Source: [testnbug.com](https://testnbug.com)

*Note: there are 900+ test-optional & test flexible schools.*

# Who takes the PSAT?

- All Shoreline School District 10<sup>th</sup> graders in order to:
  - practice for the SAT
  - gauge readiness for AP & advanced courses
  - increase awareness of the college process
- 11<sup>th</sup> graders who sign up & are aiming for college.
- 9<sup>th</sup> graders who are highly motivated.

# About the SAT

- Given 7 times/ school year.
- Shorewood is a test site.
- Scores available 3-4 weeks after the test.
- College Board adding a late August test in 2017 & taking away the January test.
- Students like the new SAT.
- Many students regard the Reading section as the most difficult.



Test Date	Registration Deadline
October 1	September 1
November 5	October 7
December 3	November 3
January 21	December 21
March 11	February 10
May 6	April 7
June 3	May 9

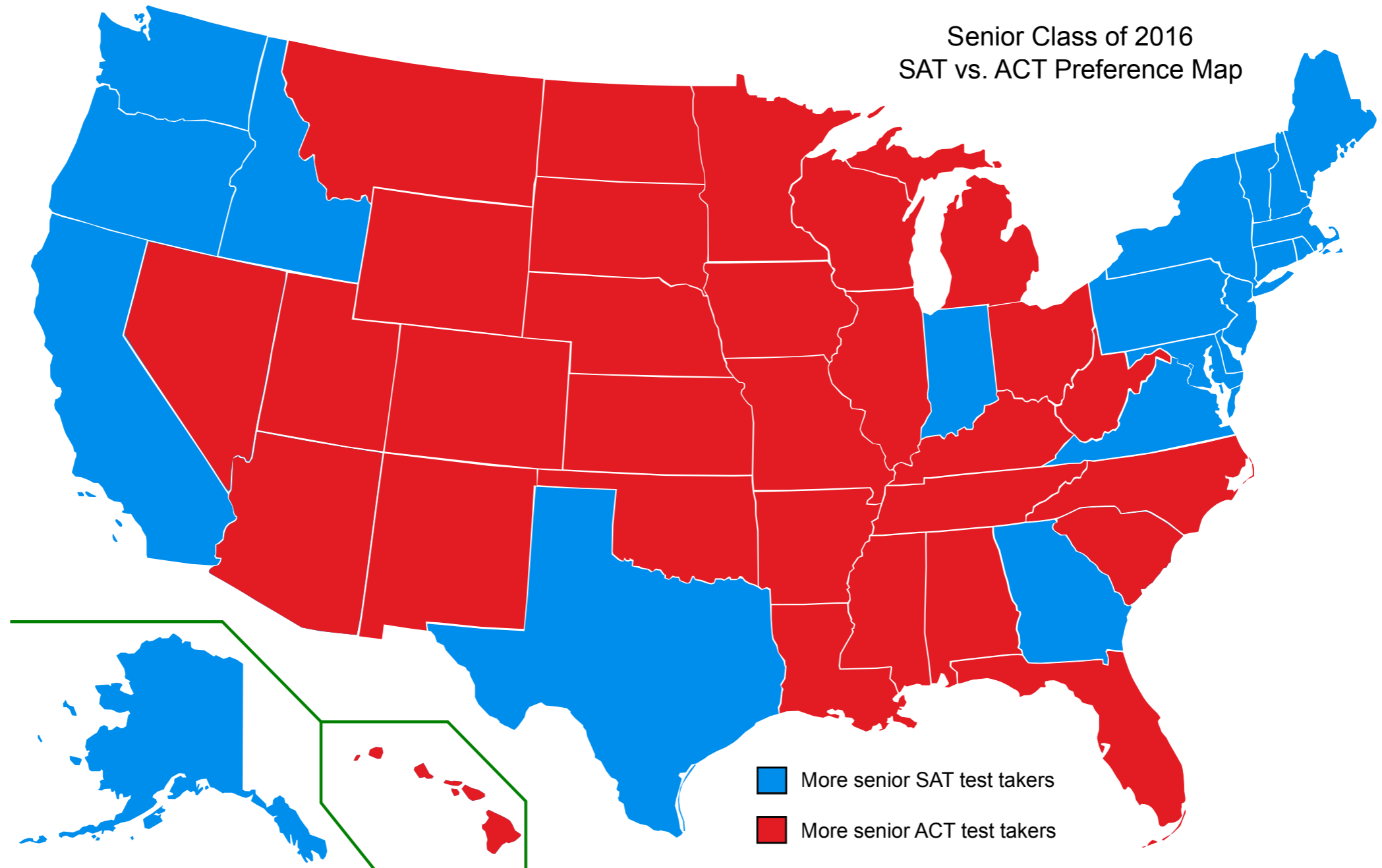
# About the ACT



Test Date	Registration Deadline
September 10	August 5
October 22	September 16
December 10	November 4
February 11	January 13
April 8	March 3
June 10	May 5

- Given 6 times/ school year.
- Shorewood is a site.
- Has a science section, which is actually a reading section with data.
- Less time per question than the SAT.
- Has changed subtly over the years.

# Nationwide, more students take the ACT



Source: Erik Jacobsen, [erikthered.com](http://erikthered.com), modified from public domain data.

# THE SAT VS THE ACT

- Fewer Geometry Questions
- More Time per Question
- No-calculator Math Section

## KEY Differences

- Lots of Geometry
- Faster Paced
- Tough Science Section



Overall Time

### TIMING & SCORING

Overall Time



Reading

65m

Writing

35m

Math  
(No Calculator)

25m

Math  
(Calculator)

55m

200 - 800  
points

200 - 800  
points

1-36

35m

Reading

1-36

45m

English

1-36

60m

Math

1-36

35m

Science

Total Points

400 - 1600

1 - 36

Total Points

Time per Question



Reading



Writing



Math

Time per Question



Reading



English



Math

# SAT or ACT?

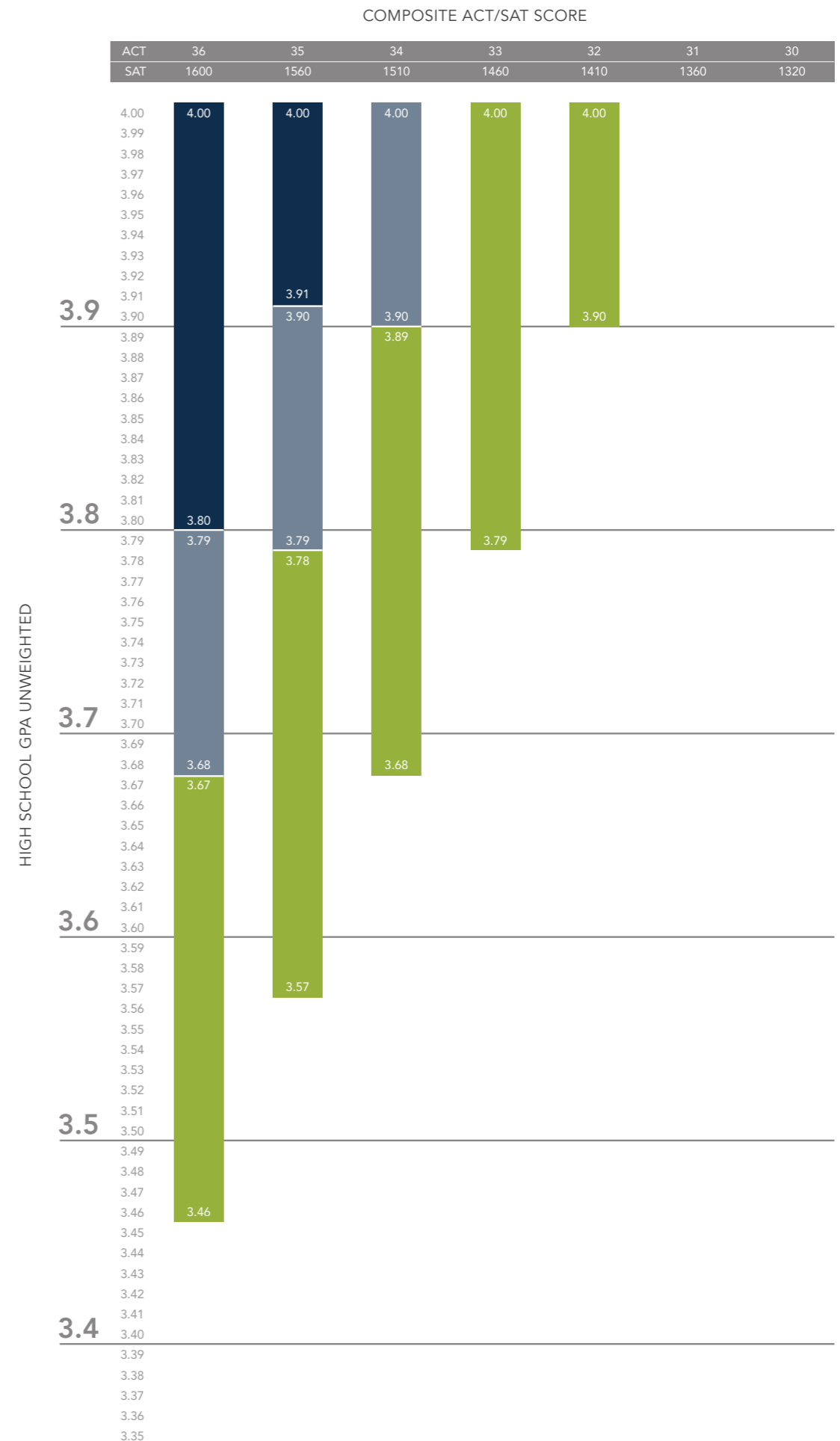
- I recommend that students take both.
- Difficult to predict which will go better, but students who do well on the ACT often have very good reading/processing speed.

Source: Applerouth Tutoring



# Take Both, Then

1. Compare experiences.
2. Compare percentiles.
3. Compare results with score ranges of desired colleges ([CollegeData.com](http://CollegeData.com)).
4. Compare results with pertinent merit aid rubrics/ WUE guidelines.



Score	Percentile
<b>1500</b>	99+
<b>1450</b>	99+
<b>1400</b>	99
<b>1350</b>	97
<b>1300</b>	95
<b>1250</b>	92
<b>1200</b>	88
<b>1150</b>	82
<b>1100</b>	75
<b>1050</b>	66
<b>1000</b>	55
<b>950</b>	45
<b>900</b>	33
<b>850</b>	24

Be sure you  
understand the  
percentiles!

Quiz:

Guess the percentiles on  
11<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT scores.

Total possible score is 1520.

# SAT Subject Tests

## What

20 tests in five subject areas:  
English, history, languages,  
math, science.

1 hour long; take up to 3 on the  
same day

Scored on 200-800 scale

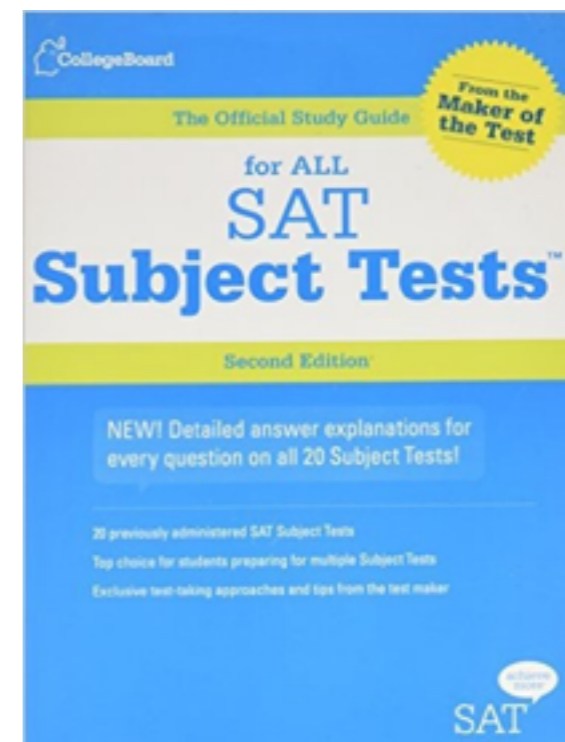
Generally given on SAT dates,  
but not all tests on all dates.

## Why

A few highly selective colleges  
require them.

Could be an asset.

Take at the end of  
corresponding class.



# What about AP scores?

- Not required for admission.
- Used primarily for placement & possible credit.
- If they are good, esp. 4's & 5's, do include them on applications.
  - official reports
  - academic resume
  - self-report in Common App
  - “more about me” or honors & awards section



# To Prep or Not to Prep?



- Depends on student
  - goals
  - performance on tests
  - overload factor
- Practice & preparation do help... some.
- Khan Academy, free on [CollegeBoard.org](https://collegeboard.org), is excellent for PSAT/ SAT.
- There are other free or low-cost options, like [March2Success.com](https://march2success.com).
- PTSA-sponsored prep class.

# Things to Know

- Some colleges *superscore*, using the highest section scores from different sittings.
- Schools vary in how they regard test scores: very important, important, considered, not considered. Check on [CollegeData.com](https://CollegeData.com), Admissions tab.
- Even though the College Board or ACT will let you choose which test sitting to send—called *Score Choice*—some colleges want to see all of your scores.



Testing is not absolutely necessary to get into a 4-year college.

*Though you will have to adjust your choices.*

# My Perspective

- Testing early reduces net stress.
  - Time to test again if needed.
  - Scores inform college lists.
  - Helps if no testing senior year.
- Formal test prep may or may not be worth it.
  - Familiarity *is* worth it.
- Realize that the testing industry has made a fortune on people's fears.





Copyright by Signe Wilkinson



Take the long view:  
No one factor will make or break your college chances.  
Scores are not a predictor of success.