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Lamorinda Schools

Shopping For SAT Test Help

By Cathy Tyson

It's that time of year, when high school juniors start to feel the pressure of the looming SAT Reasoning Test. While no one looks forward to this marathon four-hour exam, nearly every college and university in the country requires it for admission. It's possible to pay your \$43.00 registration fee and just show up with your sharpened #2 pencil in hand, but many students choose to take advantage of some kind of test preparation prior to taking the exam. Go to www.collegeboard.com for specific test registration information.

In a nutshell, the registration deadline is generally a month before the test date. Tests for this school year will be offered on 10/6, 11/3, 12/1, 1/26, 3/1, 5/3 and 6/7. There is no penalty for taking it more than one, so it's quite common for students to take it in March, check their results, and perhaps take it again in June.

Two SAT Subject tests are required for UC system and a variety of other universities. Subject Tests are offered on all of the dates above, except for 3/1. According to College Board, "students take the Subject Tests to demonstrate to colleges their mastery of specific subjects like English, history, mathematics, science and language." If your son or daughter is planning on taking both the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests, it's not too early to get started.

To help out confused parents and their equally confused students, here are some of the local test prep options worth con-

sidering.

The Moraga Library is partnering with Kaplan Test Prep to offer a series of free workshops to help students prepare for the SAT. Students who attend the full-length practice test on November 10 or Test Secrets Seminar on November 14 are eligible for Kaplan class discounts and for free SAT prep online. Call 1-800-KAPTEST to register.

Free classes by the People's Test Preparation Service are open to all high school students, classes are held at UC Berkeley, the downtown Berkeley YMCA and at other east bay locations. Call (510) 642-4951 for more information.

College Board, the maker of the exam, offers study guides for tenacious students who are self-motivated. "The Official SAT Online Course" for \$69.95 has 18 critical reading, writing and math lessons, along with six practice tests. For \$19.95 "The Official SAT Study Guide" has 900 pages chock-full of sample exams, math, critical reading and writing sections, and practice essay questions. While \$20 is a bargain, not very many teenagers have the diligence to go this route. But for busy students who play a sport, and are involved in lots of extracurricular activities, this could be an option.

Private tutoring is another alternative. Nancy Molay of TestPrep has specialized for five years in tutoring students one-on-one in her Happy Valley home. She just recently stopped working in the Career Center at Acalanes High School; this posi-

	# Of Sessions	Students Per Class	Location	Cost	Point Guarantee	Different others?
Ivy West 1-800-Ivy-West	15-15 hour sessions	1	Your home	\$2700 Sign up before end of Sept \$2160	No. 200 point average gain	They customize according to student need
Kaplan Classroom 1-800-Kap-Test www.kaptest.com	12 sessions, 8 instruction 4 exam	5-20 depending	Campolindo Berkeley Kaplan Center, Jewish Comm. Center	\$999 financial aid available	No, but they have a satisfaction guarantee, can retake class gratis	Their teachers scored in the 90% or better on SAT
Lafayette Academy 925-284-1644 Laf. 925-376-0747 Mor.	9-3hr. classes, 3-4 hour practice exams and 3 hours of free tutoring	Max of 11 Classes divided by ability level	Lafayette Moraga Danville	\$999	No, but if you're not happy - get money back, can retake gratis	Ability level grouping, and have private tutoring as part of their prep package
Live Oak 925-944-9455 www.liveoaklearningcenter.com	8-2x/week for 4 weeks	Around 10	Acalanes Saint Mary's	\$595	No, satisfaction guarantee, can retake gratis	Small classes, professional teachers, very personal approach
Princeton Review 1-800-2-Review www.PrincetonReview.com	12 total - 8 instruction, 4 practice exams	Maximum of 12	Orinda, Walnut Creek Berkeley	\$999	No, but you can retake class for free or if scores don't improve at all - get money back	Class size, great average score improvement
Revolution Prep 1-877-Rev-Prep www.revolutionprep.com	6 weeks - 6 classes and 5 practice exams	Average 15	Miramonte, Acalanes	\$499 financial aid available	Yes, if score doesn't improve by 200 pts, retake for free	1 of 108 test prep firms chosen by Calif. to help with high school exit exam
Ames Seminars 925-937-2280 or 1-800-799-0700 www.amesseminars.com	12-2.25 hour classes plus read- ing, writing and math refresher classes available	15	Lafayette	\$855	No, but they will help students, "to the end of time," says Bill Ames	Quality of teachers, truly care about the students, small local business
Huntington Learning Center 925-377-0737 www.huntingtonlearning.com	# of sessions de- pends on colleges student prefers usually 10-16 2 hr sessions	1	Moraga Rheem Shop- ping Center	\$195 for diagnos- tic SAT and confer- ence with parents. \$75/each hour	No	Individually tailored to student's needs, very flexible scheduling of appointments

tion gave her unique insight into teenagers. She currently tutors freshman and junior students in writing at the school. "I work seven days a week (tutoring), so I can be incredibly flexible. I recommend that juniors who have completed algebra 2/trig start prep now and avoid spring stress," says Molay. She suggests 9 - 90 minutes sessions to prepare for the exam and charges considerably less than either Ivy West or Kaplan's private tutoring. Call for information, 925-708-4501. In addition, Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte parent club websites all have test prep tutors listed in their classified sections.

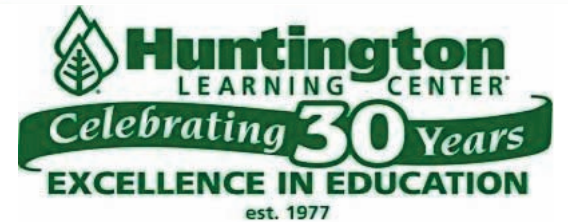
For students that do well in a classroom situation, there is no shortage of test preparation companies in the area that would be more than happy to

help your student and take your money. See chart below for specifics. At this point in the school year many companies still haven't finalized their spring schedules, but because that is the busiest time of the year, they expect to have many classes available. Prices range from \$499 for Revolution Prep to \$999 for both Kaplan and Princeton Review. Kaplan also offers private tutoring as noted above and an on-line course. Revolution Prep has a Hybrid version that includes four hours of private tutoring in addition to their classroom course. Call or check respective websites for information.

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Parents and Educators Reflect on Ethics

By Sophie Braccini



Panelists Paul Mack and Ian Farr with moderator Gwenly Carrel Photo by Sophie Braccini

The Campolindo High School Parents' Club couldn't have planned a more timely and pertinent Parent Education Night: "Academic Stress, Cheating and Ethical Behavior." Recent newspaper articles have been highlighting what the Educational Testing Service (ETS) has been studying for years: The as many as 80% of high school children participate in some form of cheating, and the growing acceptance of this behavior by the public.

To address parent concerns, Campolindo assembled a panel of educators, teachers and teen behavior specialists.

School psychologist Bonnie Willax started the presentation by discussing the reasons that lead students to cheat. Some of the most motivated students do it, she says, "These students are choosing extremely rigorous curriculum, adding as

many AP classes as possible, yet still knowing this might not be enough to get into Stanford, Berkeley or MIT and they panic." Willax believes that the student that cheats is not the average student who want to avoid an F, but the over-achiever that cannot afford anything below an A.

The teachers on the panel stressed the necessity for students to talk to them when problems arise. They too see extreme stress as a factor leading students to compromise their integrity, and they would rather students come to them and negotiate a later date to turn an assignment than receive unoriginal work. "We can almost always see when the voice of the student changes and when the piece they turn has been re-written by a parent or taken from the Internet," commented English teacher Dan Doyle.

Associate Principal Paul

Mack explained, "When cheating occurs, the school enforces a very precise policy with gradual consequences." All stressed that when a student is caught, learning can take place and re-occurrences seldom happen. "It is important that parents speak in the same voice as the faculty," stressed counselors Jeannie Ballard and Ian Farr, "consequences for cheating in college can be way more dramatic, with students expelled from a whole university system. If parents try to fight the school's decision, or contradict the teacher, the message sent to the child is wrong and confusing."

As the end of the evening, the most lingering concern of parents started to surface: how the way colleges structure their admission process induces the competition frenzy that can lead to valuing results at all costs over character building. Campo college advisor Gwenly Carrel told the audience that a glimmer of change was on the horizon. She invited parents to come back to Campolindo on September 20th to hear Dr. Robert Massa, vice president of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, talk about ways to find the colleges where the best learning happens - which are not necessarily the most selective ones - and strategies for gaining admission.

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