

# Local SAT scores over average consistently above

By GAIL SMILA  
Students at Bryan High School and A&M Consolidated High School students have consistently scored above average on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). However, it may not be much to boast about.

The SAT and the American College Test (ACT) are given to high school seniors planning to attend a college or university.

Whether a student takes the SAT or the ACT depends on the requirements of the college he plans to attend.

Texas A&M University accepts the SAT, and though local high school seniors are not required to take the test, they are told it is a prerequisite for admission to Texas A&M.

Admission to Texas A&M demands an applicant must have graduated from an accredited high school, have satisfactorily completed certain subjects, and made an acceptable score on the SAT.

The subject requirements for admission to the University are designed to insure adequate preparation for various curricula offered by Texas A&M.

The subject requirements include: four hours of English, three hours of social sciences, and three hours of mathematics, including algebra and geometry, two hours of science, including chemistry and biology. Four hours of electives are also required.

The SAT measures basic English comprehension and mathematical ability. Generally, applicants scoring 800 points or better on the SAT are admitted to Texas A&M.

Dr. C. B. Jones, director of research and evaluation at the Educational Services Center, said the SAT is a gauge of how well a student has done in his high school career and a predictor of his success at college.

"STUDENTS ARE not necessarily encouraged to take the SAT, but we do make them aware of the fact that if they plan to attend a university, they should take it," Jones said.

The national average for 1977-78 college-bound students was 429 points for verbal skills and 470 points for mathematics skills.

However, average scores for the high schools in the Bryan-College Station area ranked higher than the national average in both verbal and mathematics skills.

At Bryan High School, 210 of 510 seniors took the SAT last year. Their average score was 433 points for verbal skills and 468 points for mathematics skills.

Similarly, 112 of approximately 180 seniors at Consolidated High School scored an average of 451

points for verbal skills and 512 points for mathematics skills on last year's SAT.

There have been various explanations about the cause of a decline in national scores last several years.

THE LAUNCHING of the Sputnik in the late 1950s sparked an increased emphasis on science and mathematics. English, while not neglected, at the same time was not stressed.

In the 1960s, "schools were thrust towards integration of people with different value systems, and test scores began to decline," Jones said.

He added that schools began to concentrate more on racial stability and less on teaching.

Joe Wiese, Consolidated High School counselor, said curriculum variation could be a factor in the declining national scores. He said high school course options in high schools have been widely expanded in the past while the SAT has changed very little. Thus students are exposed to a greater variety of subjects but have less time for learning basic English and arithmetic skills.

Also, greater emphasis on personal and social goals may be a link to declining national scores. Developing creativity and the attempts to make learning a "fun" experience has created less competition, subsequently causing a decrease in achievement, Wiese said.

As with the declining national scores, there have been a variety of explanations for the cause of higher SAT scores in the Bryan-College

Station area.

Wiese feels the difference is due partly to locale. Because the schools are located in an "academically oriented community", most of the students have been reared in an "environment geared towards achievement," Wiese said.

"This has been a university community since 1876," Jones said, and added that he believes the community is "education conscious."

JONES ALSO SAID he believes the community is economically stabilized by a low unemployment ratio and the large amount of money Texas A&M receives and injects into the local economic system.

He also said that the low crime rate in Bryan and College Station may be reflected in the higher average scores.

"Sometimes the greatest influence on learning is what a kid brings from home; his outside influences," Jones said.

Although local SAT scores in the two high schools are above the national average, Jones said he feels the scores, both locally and nationally, are "not indicative of what people know."

"I think students coming out of schools now know more about everything than any generation in the past. They are better educated, but test scores have declined. It doesn't seem to make much sense," Jones said.

"ON ANY SCORE or exam, exactly 50 percent of the people are below the average and 50 percent are above it. If we (Bryan High

School) are in the 55 percentile, let's say, that means we are above the national average on all scores. But even locally, 50 percent of the students in BHS or CHS taking the SAT are below the average and 50 percent are above it," Jones said.

Jones said it is hard to compare SAT scores if the data used is dissimilar. Scores should be compared only if schools have the same "ethnic and economic breakdown and the same number of students."

A comparison of Bryan and A&M Consolidated high schools shows, in fact, the schools are not comparable.

Bryan High had a student enrollment of approximately 1,850 last year, while Consolidated had about 940 students.

Also, Bryan High had a minority population of roughly 40 percent compared with a minority population of less than 10 percent at Consolidated.

AT BRYAN HIGH SCHOOL, 210 out of 510 seniors took the SAT last year. However, almost two

thirds of Consolidated High School seniors took the SAT in the same time period.

"If you want to prove that areas with poor people, minorities, and high crime rates do worse in schools than areas of middle class, employed people, you can do it with a standardized test," Jones said.

Jones said that although he doesn't know whether it would be more advantageous to change curriculum or the scholastic aptitude test, he does think that "norms established several years ago by testing companies may be a little outdated."

Wiese agreed that the tests may be outdated but added that if changes are going to be made, "we won't see them for the next two or three years."

"I do believe a school ought to teach students what they need to get along in life with, and it differs from place to place," Jones said.

"If you want to measure what a kid knows, you need to have a test

that measures the knowledge they've been trained in. If you have a test that measures one thing and a kid is in school learning other things, it's kind of like running the 100-yard dash and then testing the kid as to whether or not he can read," Jones said.

WHILE SOME people think the SAT should be replaced by a test that measures a greater variety of skills, others, such as Consolidated

principal Rodney LeBoeuf, believes a stricter teaching environment should be maintained.


LeBoeuf said he would like to see "less freedom" in the classrooms and more emphasis on "traditional teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic."

Jones said that students need to take their education seriously, regardless whether the school curriculum or SAT is changed.

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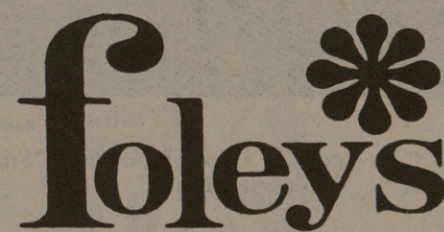
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