

Standardized Testing at GDS – What and When

(See reverse side for explanation of the acronyms and abbreviations used in reference to the tests.)

Grades 3-9 Annual Standardized Testing

The ERB's CTP4 test battery is given every May. The test consists of several subtests:

Two reasoning ability tests: Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning

Four verbal achievement tests: Vocabulary (Auditory Comprehension for Grade 3), Reading Comprehension, Writing Mechanics, and Writing Concepts & Skills

One quantitative achievement test: Mathematics (Concepts and Computation)

End-of-course Algebra I test for students in grades 8 and 9 who are completing that course

Student results are reported relative to the performance of a national sample of students at the same grade level across the U.S. ("National Norms") and also relative to the performance of other independent-school students who take the test, giving us a comparison group that is very similar to the profile of our student body ("Independent School Norms").

Grades 5, 8 and 10 Writing Assessment

We administer the ERB's Writing Assessment Program (WRaP) test to our 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-graders each year in winter or early spring. The WRaP provides a direct measure of writing ability by asking each student to produce a writing sample in response to a common prompt. The results let us compare our students' writing performance with that of students in other independent schools.

Upper School College Admissions Testing Program

*(Those tests marked with an asterisk * have the costs and registration process covered by the school.)*

Grade 9

October – PLAN* (the Preliminary ACT) as practice, with preparatory session in September

Grade 10

October – PSAT preview with math and English teachers

PSAT* for practice (Results are normed against college-bound juniors.)

Score report mailed in late December

Grade 11

October – PSAT review with math and English teachers

PSAT* (Results are used by National Merit Scholarship Corporation to determine recognition: "Commended", "Semi-Finalist", "Finalist", "Scholar".)

Score report mailed in late December.

February-March – SAT prep sessions* (4 evenings, each two hours, during 4 weeks prior to SAT)

March – SAT Reasoning Test*

May or June – SAT Subject Tests for some students, depending on college interest and present course enrollment, as counseled by teachers and college advisors.

Grade 12

October – SAT, as needed (Optional review/prep session during Activities Period in September)

November through June – optional SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests as needed for college admissions

The Alphabet Soup of Standardized Testing at GDS

- ERB:** The Educational Records Bureau, publishers of the CTP4 test battery and the WraP test.
- ETS:** The Educational Testing Service, developers and administrators of the CTP4, under contract from ERB. ETS also develops the SAT's and many other standardized tests for the CEEB.
- CEEB:** The College Entrance Examination Board, also known as "The College Board", publishers of the SAT and AP examinations, among others.
- CTP4:** The Comprehensive Testing Program, 4th edition, published by ERB. We give this battery of standardized tests each spring to students in grades 3-9. It assesses both reasoning ability and academic achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Every ten years the test is revised. The 4th edition, released in 2003, added two optional sections of "constructed response" problems. These free-response sections test a student's ability to communicate understanding and reasoning in solving math problems and analyzing reading passages. The tests are designed for students in strong college-preparatory programs. Individual student results are reported using both national and independent-school norm groups for comparison. Unlike the SAT, the CTP4 tests are not highly time-pressured.
- WraP:** The Writing Assessment Program published by ERB. We administer the WraP test to our 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-graders each year in winter or early spring. This test provides a direct measure of writing ability by asking each student to produce a writing sample in response to a common prompt. The results compare our students' writing performance with that of similar students in other independent schools.
- SAT Reasoning Test:** The "New SAT", first offered in March 2005, is a 3-hour 45-minute test of critical thinking skills considered essential to academic success in college. The test is taken by juniors and seniors as an admission requirement for many colleges around the U.S. There are three sections: critical reading, math, and writing (including a 25-minute written draft of an essay). Each of the three sections is scored on a standardized scale of 200 to 800, with the national median being around 500, and 100 being the standard deviation. For GDS seniors, the median of their best reading and math scores combined is typically about 1250; the median writing score is typically around 620.
- SAT Subject Tests:** Formerly called SAT II Achievement Tests, these are one-hour, subject-specific, end-of-course tests. There are over 20 different tests offered in five general subject areas: English, mathematics, science, history and languages. Scoring is similar to the SAT (200-800), though the medians are not all 500. Some colleges require one or more of these as part of the application or for course placement after matriculation. For example, NC State and UNC-CH require all incoming freshmen to take the Math Level 2 test for placement in their first mathematics course in college.
- PSAT:** The Preliminary SAT, taken in mid-October by students in grades 10 and 11. This is a two-hour preparatory version of the SAT, with tests of verbal ability, quantitative ability and writing skills. Standardized scores on each test range from 20 to 80, with 50 as the median. The junior year composite score (Reading Comprehension + Math + Writing Skills) is used by the National Merit Corporation to determine its commendations and scholarship recognitions.
- ACT:** The American College Testing program, the "other" standardized scholastic reasoning and achievement test used in college admissions. In addition to verbal and math sections, it includes an assessment of scientific reasoning skills. Originally developed for use by large public universities in the Midwest, the ACT is now accepted by virtually all colleges that require a standardized test as an alternative to the SAT. Scoring scale is 1 to 36 with a median of about 21.
- PLAN:** The preliminary ACT, which we give to ninth-graders every October for practice; also includes an assessment of academic strengths and weaknesses and an extensive career-interest inventory.
- AP:** The Advanced Placement tests of the College Board. These are end-of-course, three-hour exams of college-level courses taken in high school. Exam scores range from 1 to 5, with 3 and above representing acceptable college-level performance. Many colleges award credit and/or advanced placement for students scoring 3 or better. GDS offers 17 AP courses; mean score 2002-2007: 3.54.