MEMORANDUM May 27, 2016

TO: Board Members

FROM: Kenneth Huewitt
Interim Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **PSAT 8/9 & PSAT/NMSQT 2015–2016**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, 713-556-6700

This report analyzes the participation and performance of Houston Independent School District (HISD) students who took the 2015–2016 administration of the Preliminary SAT for students in grades eight and nine (PSAT 8/9) and the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) assessments offered by the College Board. In 2015–2016, the College Board redesigned PSAT/NMSQT and introduced PSAT 8/9 for the first time after ReadiStep was discontinued in 2014. These redesigned assessments differ from previous ones in time, question length, content area tested, score reporting, and college readiness benchmark standards—these differences are outlined in the tables below.

Table 1. Differences between 2014 ReadiStep and 2015 PSAT 8/9

	2014 ReadiStep	2015 PSAT 8/9	
Testing Time	2 hours	2 hours and 25 minutes	
Number of Questions/Tasks	131	120	
Sections	Critical Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW), Math	
Score Reporting	Each section score ranged from 1 to 7 with composite score ranging from 3 to 21	Each section score ranges from 120 to 720 with total score ranging from 240 to 1440	
College Readiness Benchmarks	A 65 percent chance of earning a "B" or better on a college-level course. Critical Reading ≥ 3.8 Writing ≥ 3.7 Mathematics ≥ 3.8 Composite ≥ 11.8	A 75 percent chance of earning a "C" or better on a college-level course. To be considered "on track" to be college-ready, students must meet or exceed the benchmark on both sections.	
		Preliminary Fall 2015 8th grade EBRW ≥ 320 8th grade Math ≥ 420 9th grade EBRW ≥ 340 9th grade Math ≥ 450	Final 2016 8th grade EBRW ≥ 390 8th grade Math ≥ 430 9th grade EBRW ≥ 410 9th grade Math ≥ 450

Table 2. Differences between 2014 PSAT/NMSQT and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT

	2014 PSAT/NMSQT	2015 PSAT/NMSQT
Testing Time	2 hours and 10 minutes	2 hours and 45 minutes
Number of Questions/Tasks	125	139
Sections	Critical Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW), Math
Score Reporting	Each section score ranged from 20 to 80 with composite score ranging from 60 to 240	Each section score ranges from 160 to 760 with total score ranging from 320 to 1520

Table 2 continued. Differences between 2014 PSAT/NMSQT and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT		
	2014 PSAT/NMSQT	**2015 PSAT/NMSQT**
College Readiness Benchmark	A 65 percent chance of earning a "B" or better on a college-level course. 10th grade Composite ≥ 133 11th grade Composite ≥ 142	A 75 percent chance of earning a "C" or better on a college-level course. To be considered "on track" to be college-ready, students must meet the benchmark on both sections. Preliminary Fall 2015 / Final 2016 10th grade EBRW ≥ 360 / 10th grade EBRW ≥ 430 10th grade Math ≥ 470 / 10th grade Math ≥ 480 11th grade EBRW ≥ 390 / 11th grade EBRW ≥ 460 11th grade Math ≥ 500 / 11th grade Math ≥ 510

Key findings include:

- **HISD participation rates on both PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT were high**—higher than in the state of Texas and the nation overall.
  - **PSAT 8/9**: In 2015–2016, 52 percent and 39 percent of 8th graders in Texas and the nation, respectively, took PSAT 8/9 compared to 81 percent of HISD 8th graders. Among 9th graders, the difference was even more stark—81 percent of HISD students took the test compared to 21 percent and nine percent of students in Texas and the country, respectively.
  - **PSAT/NMSQT**: In HISD, 82 percent of sophomores and 79 percent of juniors took PSAT/NMSQT compared to 73 percent of 10th graders and 68 percent of 11th graders in Texas and roughly half of 10th and 11th graders in the country.
- **Mean Math scores were higher than Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) scores on both assessments.**
  - **PSAT 8/9**: Among 8th graders, mean EBRW and Math scores were 391 and 40, respectively. Among 9th graders, mean EBRW and Math scores were 398 and 408, respectively. The range for each section on PSAT 8/9 is from 120 to 720.
  - **PSAT/NMSQT**: Among 10th graders, mean EBRW and Math scores were 426 and 437, respectively. Among 11th graders, mean EBRW and Math scores were 445 and 455, respectively. The range for each section on PSAT 8/9 is from 160 to 760.
- **Students in all grade levels were less likely to meet College Readiness Benchmarks (CRB) in Math than in EBRW**.
  - **PSAT 8/9**: The proportion of 8th and 9th graders combined that met Preliminary Fall 2015 CRB in both subjects was 34 percent. The proportion of 8th and 9th graders combined that met Final 2016 CRB in both subjects was 26 percent.
  - HISD 8th graders are more likely to meet Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks than 8th graders in Texas or the nation.
  - **PSAT/NMSQT**: The proportion of 10th and 11th graders combined that met Preliminary Fall 2015 CRB in both subjects was 30 percent. The proportion of 10th and 11th graders combined that met Final 2016 CRB in both subjects was 25 percent.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE

Secondary Curriculum Office

While we still have room for improvement, specifically in closing achievement gaps, we are pleased to see growth in the number of students taking PSAT and achieving at high levels. Core curriculum and instructional support continues to prioritize the development of the HISD Global Graduate, encouraging literacy development, high levels of rigor, and student inquiry.

Secondary Schools Office 2

- Meet with high school principals and central office to identify students who qualify for free PSAT/NMSQT waivers.
- Work with high school principals to encourage participation for all 11th grade students to take the PSAT/NMSQT.
- Continue to work with high schools and the curriculum department to align curriculum to meet the demands of the new PSAT/NMSQT standards.
- Collaboratively work with the curriculum department to possibly build a HUB prep PSAT and SAT course for grades 9-12 respectfully.

College Readiness Office

We are pleased to see an increase in the numbers of students performing well on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). The College Readiness Department has implemented a number of initiatives to increase awareness of the importance of these exams, and tools to prepare, including:

- The district pays for students to take the PSAT in grades 8 through 10, which allows students and schools to use scores over time to prepare for the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in the 11th grade. The district also pays for all juniors to take the SAT during the school day, and the department works directly with schools to coordinate high participation.
- The launch of a “You Khan Do It” campaign across the high schools to increase awareness of Khan Academy, which is a free online SAT and PSAT preparation course. Students were given scholarship incentives to participate in the course, and schools were provided with training and professional development on how to monitor and increase investment. Khan Academy was promoted specifically because the organization partners with College Board to develop the curriculum; Khan Academy uses students’ previous PSAT scores to develop a personalized preparation schedule and action plan.
- The Best SAT Ever campaign was launched in all high schools, which raised awareness of the importance of college entrance exams, and scholarships were offered as incentives to a participate as well. This initiative entailed a print campaign, workshops, and professional development sessions for staff.
- The district provides students, parents and campuses with access to Naviance, which provides free standardized testing preparation for the PSAT and SAT. This tool is also used to send messages to students about upcoming testing dates, and resources to understand and prepare for the exam.

- The College Readiness Department centrally trains and supports a team of 28 College Success Advisors who work directly with students at all high schools. This team provides personalized support to students on completing college and financial aid applications, and also increases awareness of the importance of the PSAT for qualifying for scholarships. All College Access personnel in the district are provided with training on how to leverage PSAT and SAT Preparation tools.
- The College Readiness Department launched a highly successful National Merit Scholar initiative, which provided a heavily subsidized, high quality, in-person SAT Preparation course for rising juniors who were close to meeting the cutoff score for qualifying for the National Merit, Hispanic and Achievement scholarships. Students also participated in workshops on the importance of preparing for this exam, and how to leverage high scores for scholarship and financial aid opportunities. HISD tripled the number of National Hispanic Scholars from the previous year as a result of this initiative.

Should you have any further questions, please contact Carla Stevens in Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700.

KH

Attachment

cc: Superintendent's Direct Reports
Chief School Officers
School Support Officers
Andrew Houlihan
Rick Cruz

RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

PRELIMINARY SAT/NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (PSAT/NMSQT) REPORT: FALL 2015-2016

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Introduction and Purpose

This report analyzes the participation and performance of Houston Independent School District (HISD) students who took the Fall 2015 administration of the Preliminary SAT for students in grades eight and nine (PSAT 8/9) and the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) offered by the College Board. The PSAT 8/9 establishes a baseline measurement of college and career readiness as students enter high school. The PSAT/NMSQT continues to measure the knowledge and skills that research shows are most essential for college and career readiness and success and can qualify eligible students for millions of dollars in scholarships through partnership with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.[1] Approximately 3.8 million students take PSAT/NMSQT every year.[2]

In 2015–2016, the College Board redesigned PSAT/NMSQT and introduced PSAT 8/9 for the first time. The goal of the redesign of the suite of assessments is to reflect that which is taught in the classroom and assess skills that are the most accurate predictors of college and career readiness and success based on established research and evidence.[3] As part of the redesign, the College Board more closely aligned the suite of assessments in content area and scores so that feedback on each assessment could be applied to the next one in the sequence. The specifics of each assessment's redesign are explained in more detail at the beginning of each assessment's results section.

PSAT 8/9 Results

Administration and Scoring

PSAT 8/9 replaces ReadiStep, which was discontinued after 2014. PSAT 8/9 is designed for eighth- and ninth-graders and is the first step in the suite of assessments offered by the College Board. The PSAT 8/9 serves as an early indicator of college readiness and helps students prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT and SAT. PSAT 8/9 differs from ReadiStep in time, question length, content area tested, score reporting, and College Readiness Benchmarks. The main differences between PSAT 8/9 and ReadiStep are outlined below in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Differences between 2014 ReadiStep and 2015 PSAT 8/9

	2014 ReadiStep	2015 PSAT 8/9	
Testing Time	2 hours	2 hours and 25 minutes	
Number of Questions/Tasks	131	120	
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		Preliminary Fall 2015	Final 2016
		8th grade EBRW ≥ 320	8th grade EBRW ≥ 390
		8th grade Math ≥ 420	8th grade Math ≥ 430
		9th grade EBRW ≥ 340	9th grade EBRW ≥ 410
		9th grade Math ≥ 450	9th grade Math ≥ 450

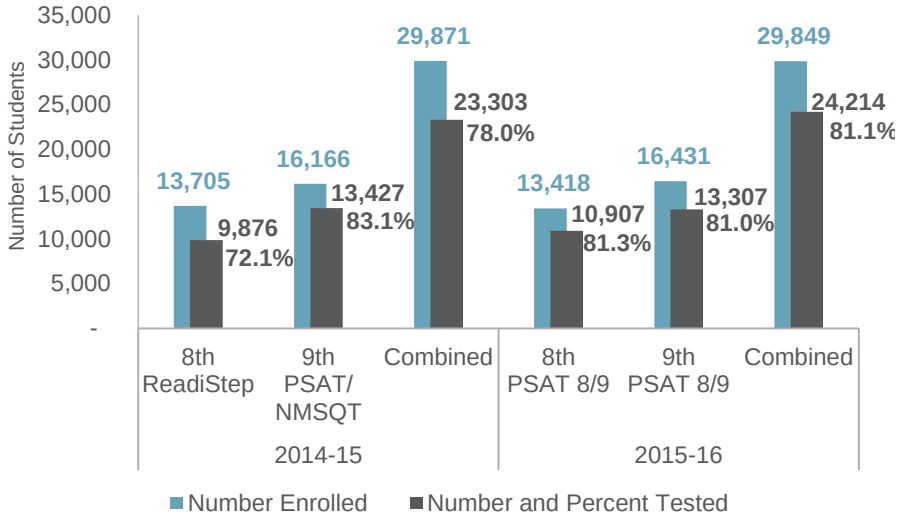
Source: The College Board, Inside the PSAT 8/9 Test retrieved from https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-8-9/inside-the-test/compare-to-readistep.

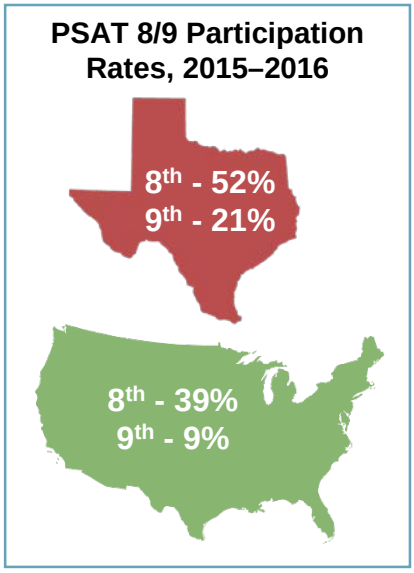
[1] The College Board. (2016). PSAT/NMSQT: Understanding Scores 2015.
[2] The College Board. (2015). 2015 PSAT/NMSQT Quick Reference Guide.
[3] The College Board. (2015). Counselor Resource Guide to the Redesigned Assessments.

How many 8th and 9th graders participated in the first administration of PSAT 8/9?

Figure 1 below shows the number of students enrolled, the number and percent of eighth-graders who took ReadiStep and ninth-graders who took PSAT/NMSQT in 2014–2015 and both 8th and 9th graders who took the new PSAT 8/9 in 2015–2016 by grade level. In 2015–2016, 81 percent of 8th graders took PSAT 8/9—this reflects a nine percentage-point **increase** from the proportion that took ReadiStep the year before. This rate is substantially higher than that of the state and nation overall. For example, in 2015–2016, 52 percent and 39 percent of 8th graders in Texas and the nation, respectively, took PSAT 8/9. Although there was a slight decline in the proportion of ninth graders who took PSAT 8/9 in 2015–2016 compared to those who took PSAT/NMSQT in 2014–2015, a larger proportion of HISD ninth graders took PSAT 8/9 than those in Texas and the country—81 percent of HISD students took the test compared to 21 percent and nine percent of students in Texas and the country, respectively.

Figure 1. Number of students enrolled and number and percent tested by grade level, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016

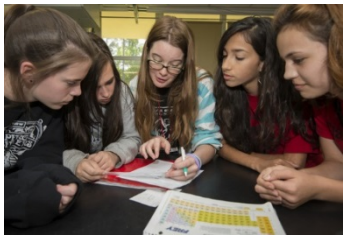




Source: HISD Chancery Extracts on October 20, 2014 and October 19, 2015; HISD PSAT/NMSQT Reports 2014–2015; College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file; College Board SAT Suite of Assessments K-12 online score portal accessed on March 31, 2016.
Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

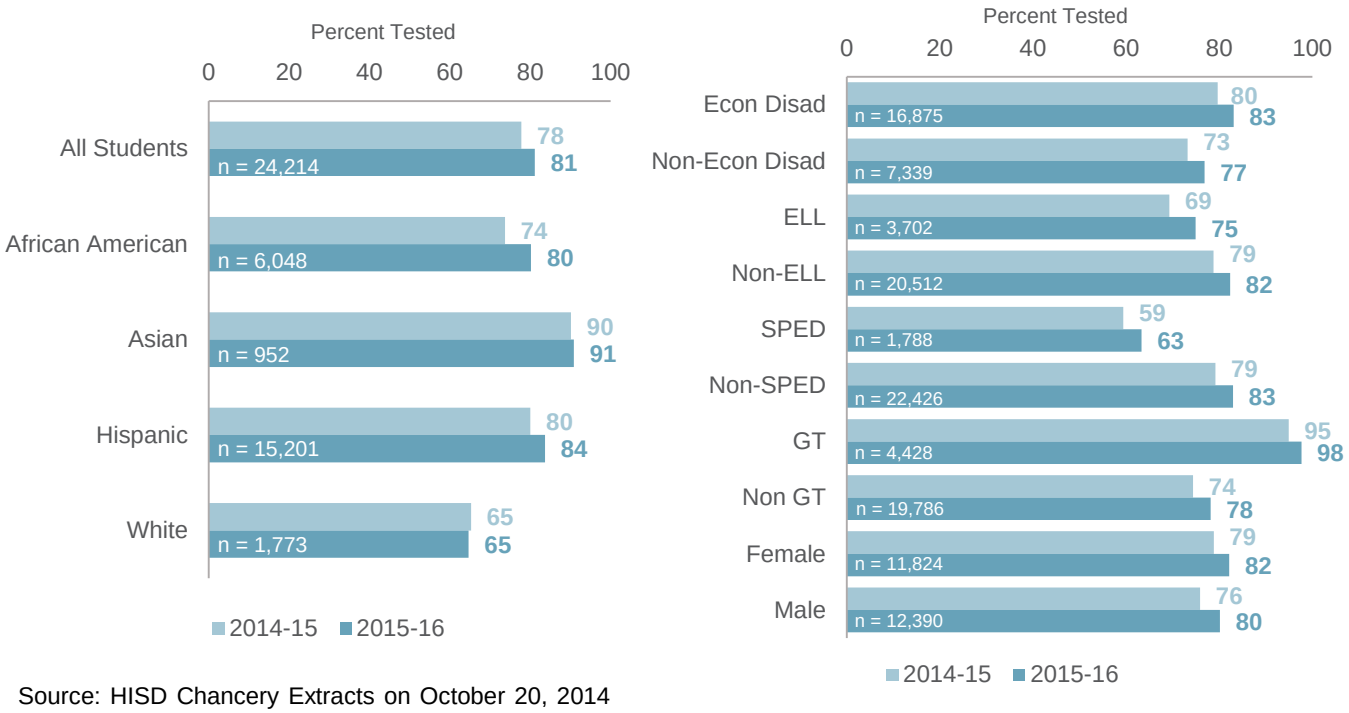
How does participation vary across student groups?

Figure 2 (p. 3) shows that participation rates **increased** for all racial/ethnic groups, particularly among African-American and Hispanic students from the year before. White students had the lowest participation rate with almost two out of three taking the assessment this year. Students without special needs (non-SPED) and non-English Language Learners (non-ELL) had higher participation rates than their counterparts. Non-economically-disadvantaged students had slightly *lower* participation rates than their economically-disadvantaged peers.



HISD PSAT 8/9 participation rates are higher than those of Texas and the nation.

Figure 2. Percent of students enrolled in 8th and 9th grade combined who took assessments by student group, 2014–2015 (8th ReadiStep & 9th PSAT/NMSQT) and 2015–2016 (8th & 9th PSAT 8/9)

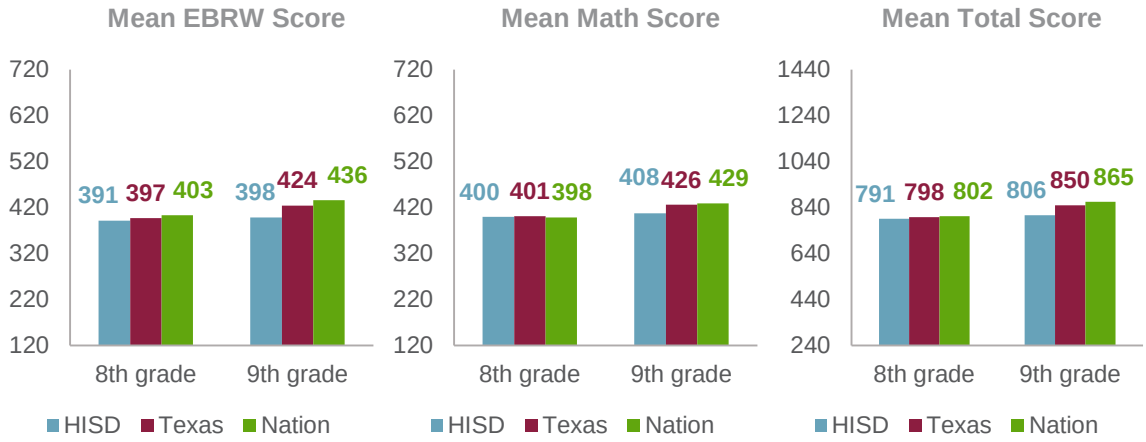


Source: HISD Chancery Extracts on October 20, 2014 and October 19, 2015; College Board Fall 2014 ReadiStep data file; College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file. Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

How did 8th and 9th graders perform on the first administration of PSAT 8/9?

In 2015–2016, 9th graders had slightly higher mean scores than 8th graders and Math scores were higher than Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) scores. While scores among HISD students tended to be lower than those among students in the nation overall, this could be attributed to the fact that (1) HISD 8th graders are twice as likely as the average 8th grader, nationally, and (2) HISD 9th graders are nine times as likely as the average 9th grader, nationally, to take PSAT 8/9.

Figure 3. Mean PSAT 8/9 Scores by grade and HISD, Texas, Nation, 2015–2016

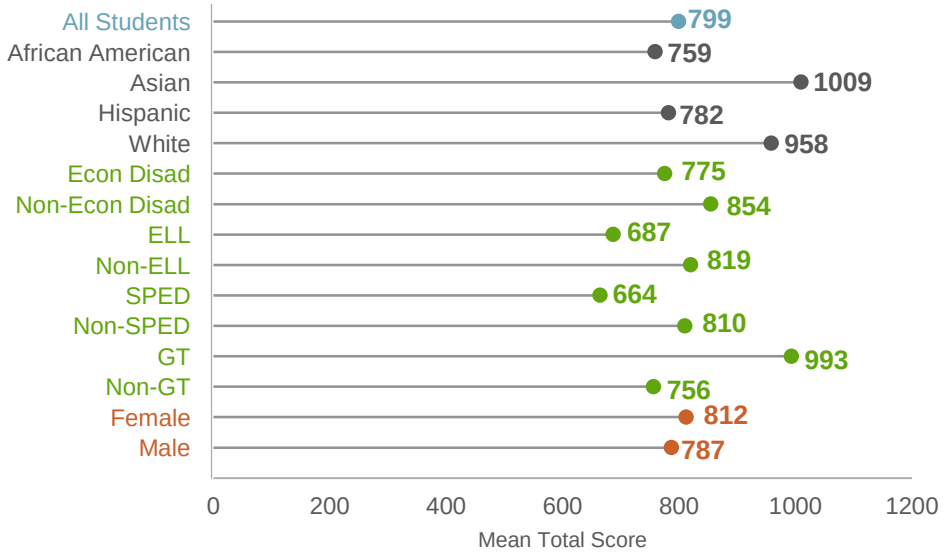


Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file; College Board SAT Suite of Assessments K-12 online score portal, accessed March 31, 2016.

How does performance vary across student groups?

Mean total scores varied by more than 300 points across student groups (**Figure 4)**. Among racial/ethnic groups, the mean total score for Asian-American students was 1009 and 759 for African-American students. Economically-disadvantaged students, English Language Learners (ELL), students with special needs (SPED), and non-Gifted/Talented (GT) students had lower scores than their counterparts. Female students had higher scores than their male peers.

Figure 4. Mean Total PSAT 8/9 Score (EBRW + Math) for students in 8th and 9th grade combined by student group, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file

How does performance vary across campuses?

Figure 5 shows the number of students enrolled, number and percent tested, and mean PSAT 8/9 total score by campus for both 8th and 9th graders combined in 2015–2016. Eight schools had 100 percent participation: Baylor College MS, Briarmeadow, East EC HS, Energized MS, Rusk School, Wharton Dual Language Academy, Wilson Montessori, and Young Scholars Academy. Campuses with the highest mean total scores were DeBakey HS, Carnegie HS, TH Rogers, and High School for Performing and Visual Arts.

Figure 5. Number enrolled, number and percent tested, and Mean Total (EBRW + Math) PSAT 8/9 Score by Campus for 8th and 9th grade combined (where applicable), 2015–2016

Campus	N Enrolled	N Tested	% Tested	Mean Total Score
Attucks MS	160	150	94	686
Austin HS	663	591	89	732
Baylor College MS	209	208	100	927
Beechnut Acad	140	86	61	663
Bellaire HS	1,017	881	87	900
Black MS	318	301	95	807
Briarmeadow	41	41	100	958
Burbank MS	468	425	91	810
Carnegie HS	182	178	98	1134
Challenge EC	111	110	99	985
Chavez HS	1,010	889	88	784
Chrysalis MS	69	68	99	897
Clifton MS	286	270	94	758
Cullen MS	216	176	81	708
Davis HS	556	471	85	760
Deady MS	267	234	88	733
DeBakey HS	249	246	99	1145
Dowling MS	348	269	77	723
East EC HS	120	120	100	972
Eastwood Acad	112	111	99	937
Edison MS	246	229	93	722
Energized MS	130	130	100	776
Energy Inst HS	244	241	99	870
E-STEM Central HS	66	64	97	750
E-STEM Central MS	40	37	93	673
E-STEM West HS	74	68	92	827
E-STEM West MS	103	101	98	785
Fleming MS	171	153	89	727
Fondren MS	272	230	85	720
Fonville MS	308	292	95	694
Furr HS	329	241	73	761
Grady MS	195	181	93	814
Gregory-Lincoln PK-8	91	89	98	696
Hamilton MS	405	392	97	787
Hartman MS	451	424	94	777
Hogg MS	235	202	86	740
Holland MS	238	207	87	717
Hou Acad. Intl.	117	115	98	923
Houston MSTC HS	902	759	84	731
HS Perf. Vis. Arts	186	185	99	1034
Inspired Acad	37	35	95	685
Jackson MS	279	243	87	743
Johnston MS	530	516	97	836
Jones HS	120	116	97	831
Kashmere HS	221	173	78	739
Key MS	225	204	91	709
Lamar HS	991	924	93	882
Lanier MS	444	432	97	980

Campus	N Enrolled	N Tested	% Tested	Mean Total Score
Law Enf. CJHS	103	100	97	860
Lee HS	598	264	44	738
Leland YMCPA	144	138	96	874
Long Acad	371	341	92	734
Madison HS	679	525	77	722
Marshall MS	311	271	87	747
Mid Coll - Fraga	27	21	78	688
Mid Coll - Gulfton	35	22	63	718
Milby HS	371	296	80	736
Mount Carmel Acad.	90	89	99	817
N. Houston ECHS	124	123	99	948
North Forest HS	335	283	84	701
Ortiz MS	353	323	92	757
Pershing MS	505	466	92	827
Pilgrim Academy	88	87	99	754
Pin Oak MS	399	389	97	977
Reagan Ed Ctr	122	118	97	728
Reagan HS	689	668	97	817
Revere MS	408	374	92	781
Rice School	150	145	97	814
Rogers TH MS	144	125	87	1138
Rusk School	54	54	100	774
Scarborough HS	243	215	88	744
Sharpstown HS	542	487	90	709
Sharpstown Intl	340	327	96	870
South EC HS	74	73	99	837
Sterling HS	444	376	85	710
Stevenson MS	462	451	98	797
Sugar Grove MS	281	263	94	698
Thomas MS	157	131	83	709
Tx Conn. Acad.	1,425	6	0	900
Waltrip HS	560	491	88	785
Washington HS	260	213	82	709
Welch MS	290	265	91	727
West Briar MS	339	322	95	865
Westbury HS	740	679	92	719
Westside HS	919	873	95	864
Wharton Dual Lang.	20	20	100	999
Wheatley HS	259	165	64	718
Williams MS	172	100	58	747
Wilson Montessori	28	28	100	885
Woodson School	107	84	79	735
Worthing HS	269	198	74	694
Yates HS	329	214	65	690
Young Scholars	10	10	100	728
YWCPA	197	193	98	846
All Students	**29,849**	**24,214**	**81**	**799**

Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file
Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

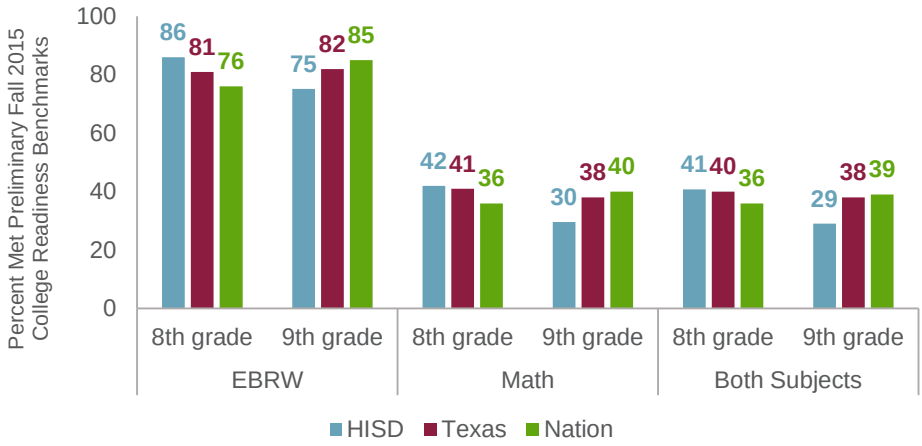
What proportion of students met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks?

The College Board set Preliminary College Readiness Benchmarks to coincide with the Fall 2015 administration of PSAT 8/9. Under Preliminary Fall 2015 standards, the benchmarks for eighth-graders are EBRW ≥ 320 and Math ≥ 420; the benchmarks for ninth-graders are EBRW ≥ 340 and Math ≥ 450.

While the majority of both HISD 8th and 9th grade students met College Readiness Benchmarks in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) section, 8th graders were more likely to do so than 9th graders (**Figure 6**). Substantially smaller proportions of students in both grades met College Readiness Benchmarks in the Math section and, as a result, 41 percent of 8th graders and 29 percent of 9th graders met College Readiness Benchmarks in *both* subjects.

A larger proportion of 8th graders within HISD met College Readiness Benchmarks than those in the state of Texas or the nation overall. Conversely, students enrolled in 9th grade in both Texas and the nation were more likely to meet College Readiness Benchmarks than those in HISD.

Figure 6. Percent of 8th and 9th grade students who met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks by subject, 2015–2016

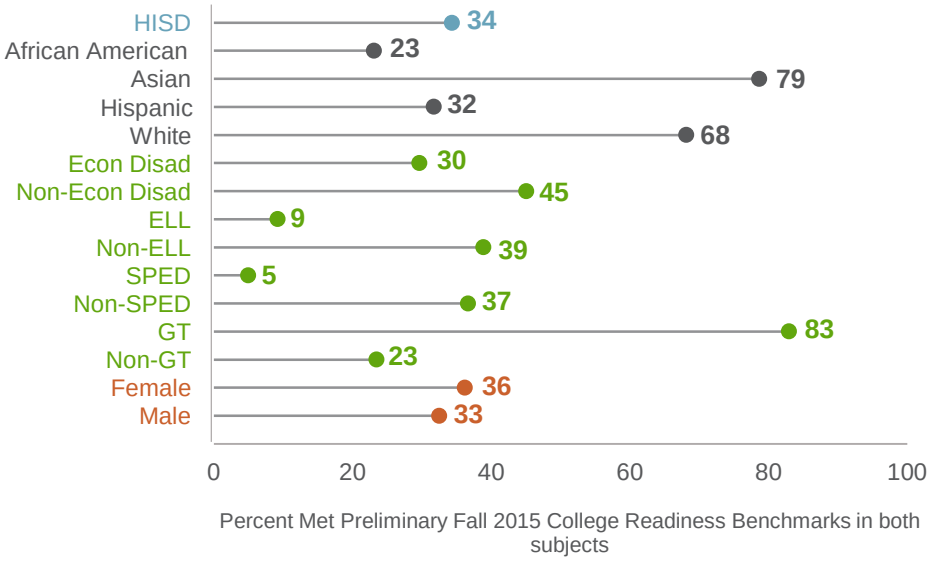


Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file
Note: Benchmark standard indicates students have a 75 percent chance of passing a college-level course with a C or higher. Preliminary Fall 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks (CRB) are: 8th grade EBRW ≥ 320; 8th grade Math ≥ 420; 9th grade EBRW ≥ 340; 9th grade Math ≥ 450.

Disaggregated by student group, approximately 79 percent of Asian-American and 68 percent of White students met College Readiness Benchmarks in both subjects while only 32 and 23 percent of Hispanic and African-American students, respectively, did so (**Figure 7, p. 7**). Thirty percent of economically-disadvantaged students and 45 percent of non-economically-disadvantaged students were currently "on track" to be college ready. Students identified as Gifted/Talented (GT) were the most likely to be "on track" for college readiness (83%) whereas students with disabilities (SPED) were the least likely (5%).

A larger proportion of 8th graders within HISD than in the state of Texas or the nation met Preliminary 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks.

Figure 7. Percent of students in 8th and 9th grade combined who met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks in both subjects by student group, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file

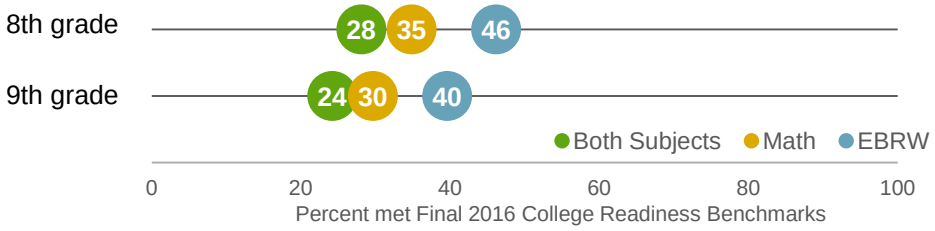
More than one out of three students enrolled in 8th and 9th grade combined are on track to be college-ready in both English and Math.

What proportion of students met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks?

In May 2016, the College Board finalized the College Readiness Benchmarks for the Spring 2016 administrations of assessments and beyond. Under Final 2016 Benchmark standards, the benchmarks for eighth-graders are EBRW ≥ 390 and Math ≥ 430; the benchmarks for ninth-graders are EBRW ≥ 410 and Math ≥ 450. While the College Board is not reporting Fall 2015 results against Spring 2016 benchmarks, they are included below so that comparisons can be made next year.

Figure 8 below shows the proportion of students tested in Fall 2015 that met Final College Readiness Benchmarks. Under Finalized Benchmarks, eighth-graders are more likely to be "on track" to be college ready than their ninth-grade counterparts and students in both grade levels are more likely to be "on track" to be college ready in English/Writing than in Math. Among eighth-graders, 28 percent are "on track" to be college ready in both subjects compared to 24 percent of ninth-graders.

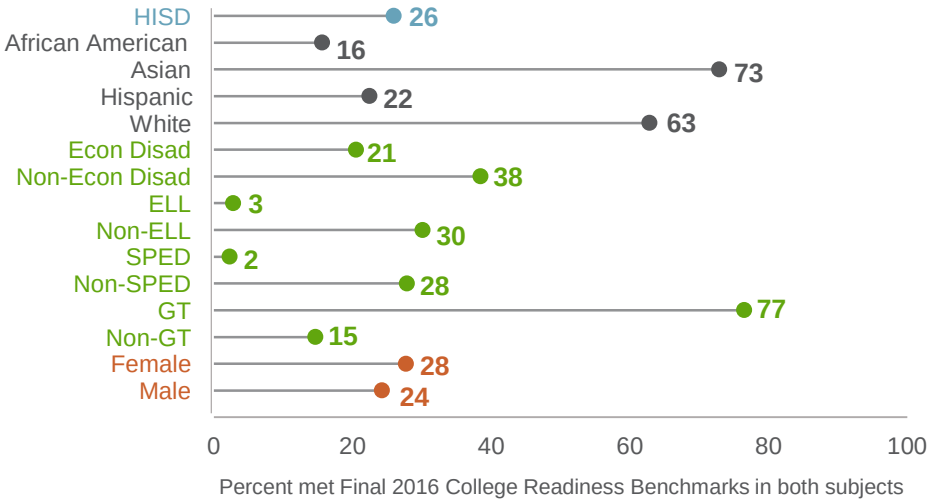
Figure 8. Percent of students who met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks by grade level and subject, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file

Approximately 26 percent of HISD 8th and 9th graders combined are "on track" to be college ready in both subjects under Final Benchmark standards (**Figure 9**). Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the majority of Asian-American and White students are "on track" to be college ready compared to a minority of African-American and Hispanic students. Female students are slightly more likely than their male peers to be on the college ready pathway.

Figure 9. Percent of students in 8th and 9th grade combined who met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks in both subjects by student group, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT 8/9 data file

PSAT/NMSQT Results

Administration and Scoring

PSAT/NMSQT, generally taken by tenth- and eleventh-graders, has been redesigned from previous years in order to more closely reflect what is being taught in the classroom and to be a clearer indicator of college and career readiness. Taking the PSAT/NMSQT as a junior automatically screens students for the National Merit Scholarship Program, an academic competition for recognition and scholarships. Students who meet particular score thresholds and other requirements are eligible to receive a number of scholarships totaling millions of dollars.

The PSAT/NMSQT aims to serve as "check-ins" on student progress and identify areas for development. These assessments help prepare students for the SAT, the final college admissions exam students typically take late in their junior year or early in senior year. As a result of the content and strategy changes in the 2015–2016 PSAT/NMSQT, the exam has changed this year in format, test length, score reporting, and College Readiness Benchmarks. These changes help the PSAT/NMSQT to align with the other assessments (e.g. PSAT 8/9 and the redesigned SAT which was offered for the first time in March 2016). The main differences between 2014 PSAT/NMSQT and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT are outlined in the table below.

Table 2. Differences between 2014 PSAT/NMSQT and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT

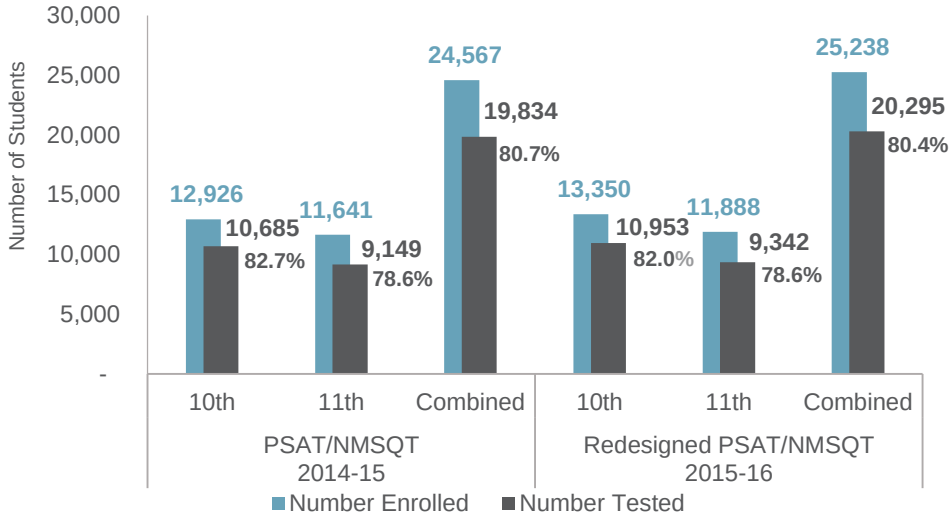
	2014 PSAT/NMSQT	2015 PSAT/NMSQT	
Testing Time	2 hours and 10 minutes	2 hours and 45 minutes	
Number of Questions/Tasks	125	139	
Sections	Critical Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW), Math	
Score Reporting	Each section score ranged from 20 to 80 with composite score ranging from 60 to 240	Each section score ranges from 160 to 760 with total score ranging from 320 to 1520	
College Readiness Benchmark	A 65 percent chance of earning a "B" or better on a college-level course. 10th grade Composite ≥ 133 11th grade Composite ≥ 142	A 75 percent chance of earning a "C" or better on a college-level course. To be considered "on track" to be college-ready, students must meet the benchmark on both sections.	
		Preliminary Fall 2015 10th grade EBRW ≥ 360 10th grade Math ≥ 470 11th grade EBRW ≥ 390 11th grade Math ≥ 500	Final 2016 10th grade EBRW ≥ 430 10th grade Math ≥ 480 11th grade EBRW ≥ 460 11th grade Math ≥ 510

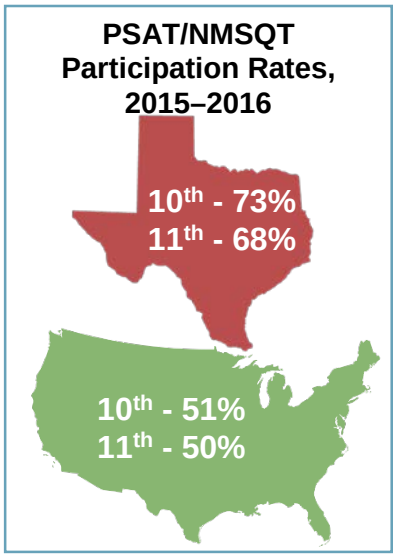
Source: The College Board, Inside the PSAT/NMSQT retrieved from https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/inside-the-test/compare-specifications.

How many 10th and 11th graders participated in PSAT/NMSQT?

Figure 10 (**p. 10**) shows that over 20,000 10th and 11th grade HISD students took PSAT/NMSQT in Fall 2015—this was 82 percent of sophomores and 79 percent of juniors enrolled in the district. This is about the same level of participation as the year before in Fall 2014. While there was no increase in the proportion of HISD students who took the assessment, HISD has higher participation rates than Texas and the nation overall. For example, 73 percent of 10th graders and 68 percent of 11th graders in Texas and roughly half of 10th and 11th graders in the nation took PSAT/NMSQT in 2015–2016.

Figure 10. Number of students enrolled and number and percent tested by grade level, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016



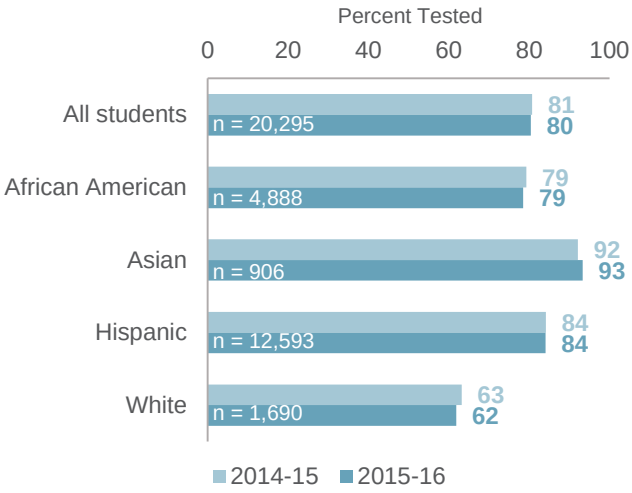


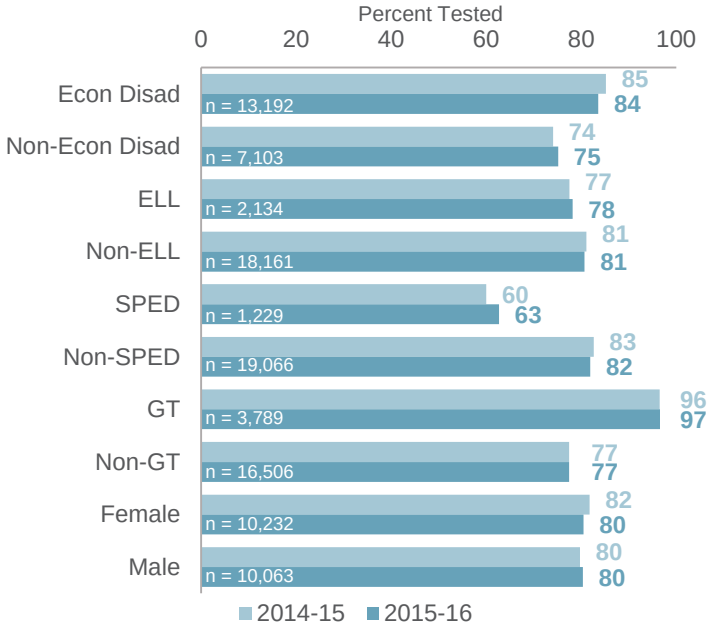
Source: HISD Chancery Extracts on October 20, 2014 and October 19, 2015; College Board Fall 2014 and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file; College Board SAT Suite of Assessments K-12 online score portal, accessed March 31, 2016. Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

How does participation vary across student groups?

Figure 11 shows participation rates vary across racial/ethnic groups by more than thirty percentage points. In 2015–2016, approximately 93 percent of Asian-American students took the PSAT/NMSQT compared to 62 percent of White students. Non-economically-disadvantaged students were less likely to take the assessment compared to their more economically-disadvantaged peers. No substantial participation rate differences occurred relative to last year.

Figure 11. Percent of students enrolled in 10th and 11th grade combined who took PSAT/NMSQT by student group, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016



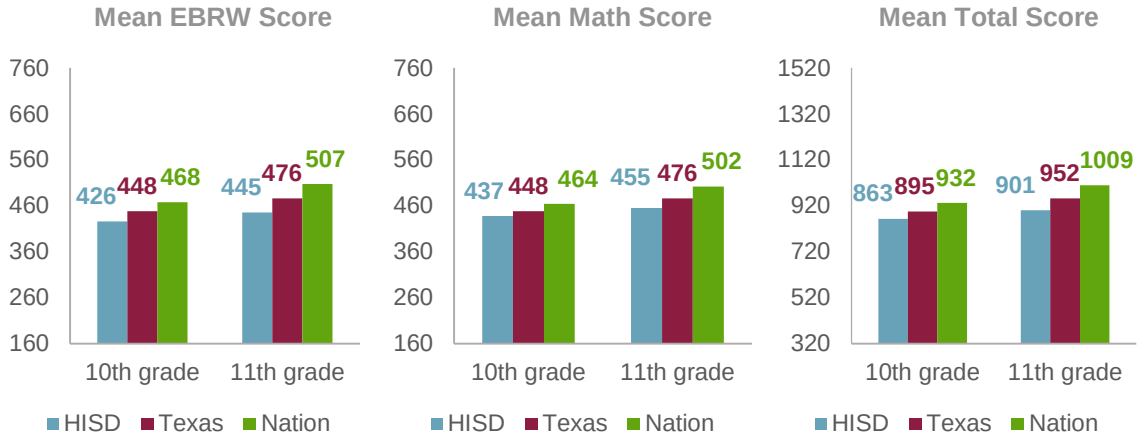


Source: HISD Chancery Extracts on October 20, 2014 and October 19, 2015; College Board Fall 2014 and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file. Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

How did 10th and 11th graders perform on PSAT/NMSQT?

Figure 12 shows that in 2015–2016, HISD juniors had higher mean scores on the PSAT/NMSQT than sophomores and scores on the Math section were higher than those on the EBRW section among both grade levels. Similar to PSAT 8/9, mean scores for Texas and the Nation are higher than those for the district—however, district participation rates are substantially higher than those of Texas and the nation.

Figure 12. Mean PSAT/NMSQT Scores for HISD, Texas, and Nation by grade level, 2015–2016

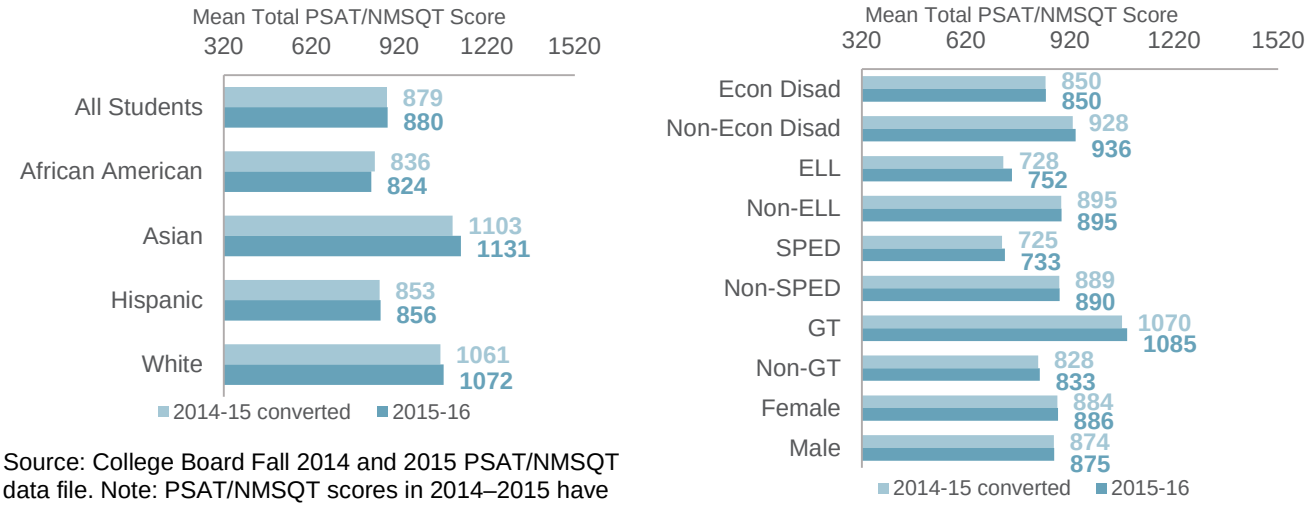


Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file; College Board SAT Suite of Assessments K-12 online score portal, accessed March 31, 2016.

How does performance vary across student groups?

In 2015–2016, mean total scores varied across racial/ethnic groups by more than 300 points (**Figure 13**). For example, the mean score for Asian-American students was 1131 while the mean score for African-American students was 824. Furthermore, non-economically-disadvantaged students had higher scores than their economically-disadvantaged peers. Female students had slightly higher mean total scores than their male counterparts. Mean scores in 2015–2016 were not substantially different than the year before.

Figure 13. Mean Total PSAT/NMSQT score (EBRW + Math) for students in 10th and 11th grade combined by student group, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2014 and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file. Note: PSAT/NMSQT scores in 2014–2015 have been converted to the 2015–2016 scale using concordance tables provided by the College Board. See Methodology section for more information.

How does performance vary across campuses?

Figure 14 shows the number of sophomores and juniors combined enrolled, number and percent tested, and mean total scores by campus. The mean total PSAT/NMSQT score for 10th and 11th graders combined in the district was 880 in 2015–2016. Campuses with 100 percent participation include Challenge EC, DeBakey HS, Eastwood Academy, and South EC. High school campuses with mean scores above 1000 include: Bellaire HS, Carnegie HS, Challenge EC HS, DeBakey HS, Eastwood Academy, High School for Performing and Visual Arts, and Texas Connections Academy of Houston (TCAH).

Figure 14. Number enrolled, number and percent tested, and mean Total PSAT/NMSQT (EBRW + Math) score for students in 10th and 11th grade combined, 2015–2016

Campus Name	N Enrolled	N Tested	% Tested	Mean Total Score
Austin HS	898	792	88	808
Beechnut Acad	67	44	66	776
Bellaire HS	1,784	1,494	84	1021
Carnegie HS	291	288	99	1250
Challenge EC	243	242	100	1025
Chavez HS	1,490	1,272	85	849
Davis HS	807	715	89	822
DeBakey HS	407	407	100	1254
East EC HS	222	220	99	988
Eastwood Acad	218	217	100	1018
Energy Inst HS	320	318	99	935
E-STEM Central HS	36	35	97	798
E-STEM West HS	191	189	99	832
Furr HS	504	417	83	803
Hou Acad. Intl.	213	209	98	960
Houston MSTC HS	1,284	1,109	86	791
HS Perf. Vis. Arts	383	378	99	1132
Jones HS	131	121	92	852
Jordan HS	329	307	93	811
Kashmere HS	265	1	0	*
Lamar HS	1,716	1,527	89	930
Law Enf. CJHS	174	170	98	907
Lee HS	734	516	70	795
Leland YMCPA	66	65	98	932
Long Acad	121	118	98	850
Madison HS	789	637	81	790
Mid Coll - Fraga	76	62	82	791
Mid Coll - Gulfton	97	45	46	735
Milby HS	707	615	87	799
Mount Carmel Acad.	172	168	98	920
N. Houston ECHS	237	235	99	967
North Forest HS	469	389	83	734
Reach HS	155	37	24	686
Reagan HS	1,090	1,044	96	881
Scarborough HS	395	355	90	793
Sharpstown HS	716	648	91	781
Sharpstown Intl	267	258	97	890
South EC HS	90	90	100	887
Sterling HS	508	409	81	767
Tx Conn. Acad.	1,656	107	6	1067
Waltrip HS	817	722	88	852
Washington HS	358	283	79	783
Westbury HS	966	851	88	786
Westside HS	1,439	1,302	90	947
Wheatley HS	366	251	69	760
Worthing HS	304	225	74	723
Yates HS	389	298	77	761
YWCPA	95	93	98	944
All Students	**25,238**	**20,295**	**80**	**880**

Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file
Note: Number tested only includes students with a valid score and those found in Chancery Extract.

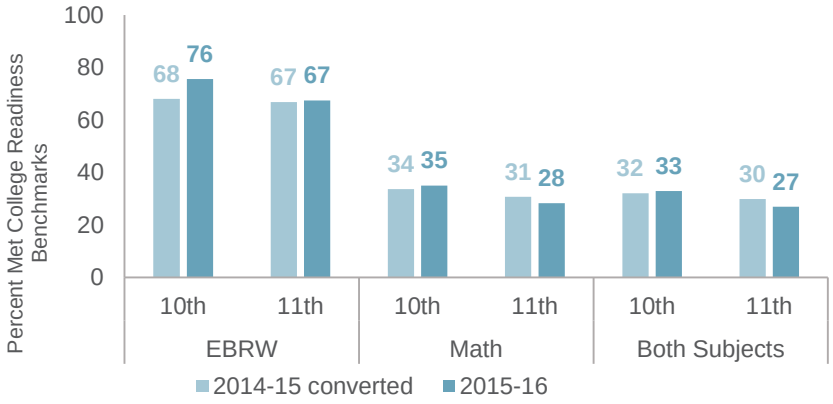
What proportion of students met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks?

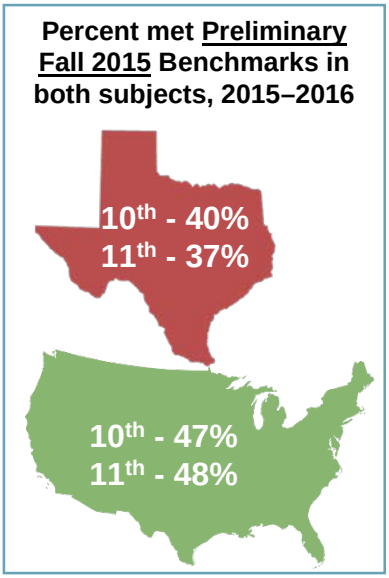
As a result of the redesign of PSAT/NMSQT, the College Board set new but Preliminary College Readiness Benchmarks to coincide with the Fall 2015 administration of PSAT/NMSQT. Under Preliminary Fall 2015 standards, the benchmarks for tenth-graders are EBRW ≥ 360 and Math ≥ 470; the benchmarks for eleventh-graders are EBRW ≥ 390 and Math ≥ 500.

Under these Preliminary benchmarks, more than three out of four sophomores met the EBRW benchmark while two out of three juniors did so (**Figure 15, p. 13**). Students in both grade levels were significantly less likely to meet benchmarks in Math (35 percent of 10th graders and 28 percent of 11th graders). As a result of lower Math performance, only a minority of students were "on track" to be college ready in both subjects—33 percent of sophomores and 27 percent of juniors. The proportion of students who met benchmarks in both subjects **increased** slightly among 10th graders but **decreased** among juniors from the previous year.

A smaller proportion of HISD students met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks in both subjects than students in Texas and the nation overall. About 40 percent of sophomores and juniors in Texas met both benchmarks and almost half of sophomores and juniors in the nation did.

Figure 15. Percent of students who met Preliminary Fall 2015 College Readiness Benchmarks by grade level and subject, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016





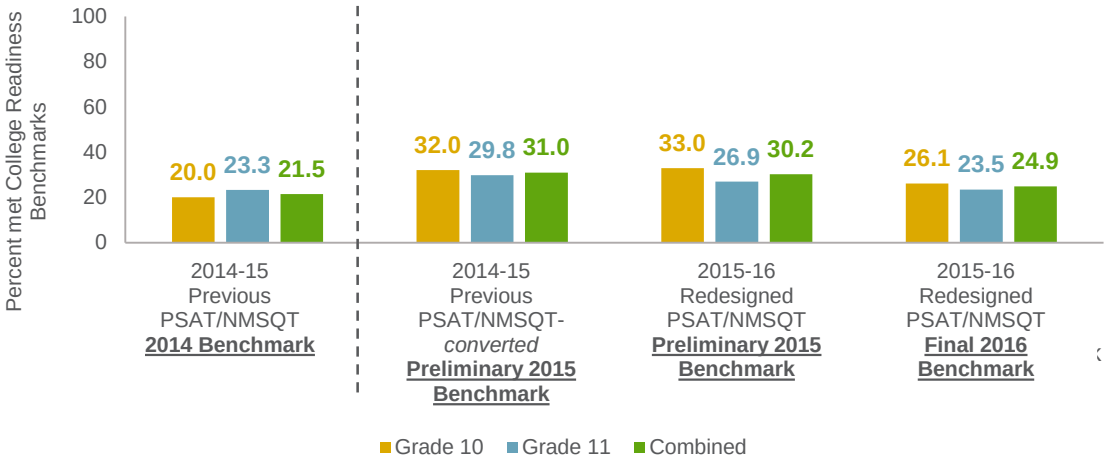
Source: College Board Fall 2014 and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file; College Board SAT Suite of Assessments K-12 online score portal, March 31, 2016.

How does performance compare against different benchmarks?

The proportion of students who meet College Readiness Benchmarks varies depending on the administration year and the benchmark standards used. For example, prior to the 2015 PSAT/NMSQT administration, College Readiness Benchmarks were based on composite scores (Critical Reading, Writing, and Math combined). For the 2015 administration, there are College Readiness Benchmarks for each section and students are considered to be "on track" to be college ready if they meet the benchmarks on *both* sections.

Figure 16 below shows the proportion of students who met College Readiness Benchmarks for (1) the 2014–2015 administration according to 2014 benchmarks; (2) the 2014–2015 administration converted to the 2015 scale (using concordance tables provided by the College Board) under Preliminary 2015 benchmarks; (3) the 2015–2016 administration under Preliminary 2015 benchmarks; and (4) the 2015–2016 administration under Final 2016 benchmarks. Making comparisons between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 should be interpreted with caution given the extent of the PSAT/NMSQT redesign in 2015–2016.

Figure 16. Percent of students enrolled in grades 10 and 11 who met College Readiness Benchmarks by grade level and year, 2014–2015 and 2015–2016



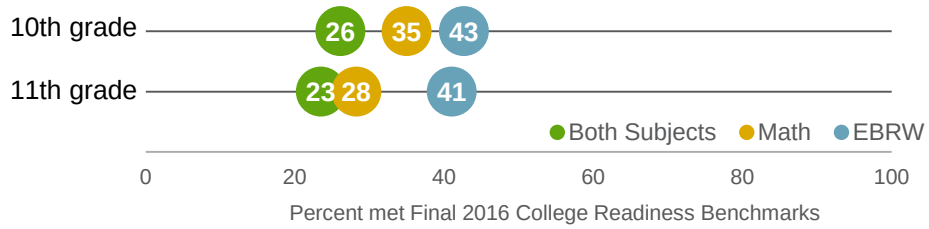
Source: College Board Fall 2014 and 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file

What proportion of students met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks?

In May 2016, the College Board finalized the College Readiness Benchmarks for the Spring 2016 administrations of assessments and beyond. Under Final 2016 Benchmark standards, the benchmarks for sophomores are EBRW ≥ 430 and Math ≥ 480; the benchmarks for juniors are EBRW ≥ 460 and Math ≥ 510. While the College Board is not reporting Fall 2015 results against Spring 2016 benchmarks, they are included below so that comparisons can be made next year.

Figure 17 shows the proportion of students tested in Fall 2015 that met Final College Readiness Benchmarks. Under Finalized Benchmarks, sophomores are slightly more likely to be "on track" to be college ready than juniors and students in both grade levels are more likely to be "on track" to be college ready in English/Writing than in Math. Among sophomores, 26 percent are "on track" to be college ready in both subjects compared to 23 percent of juniors.

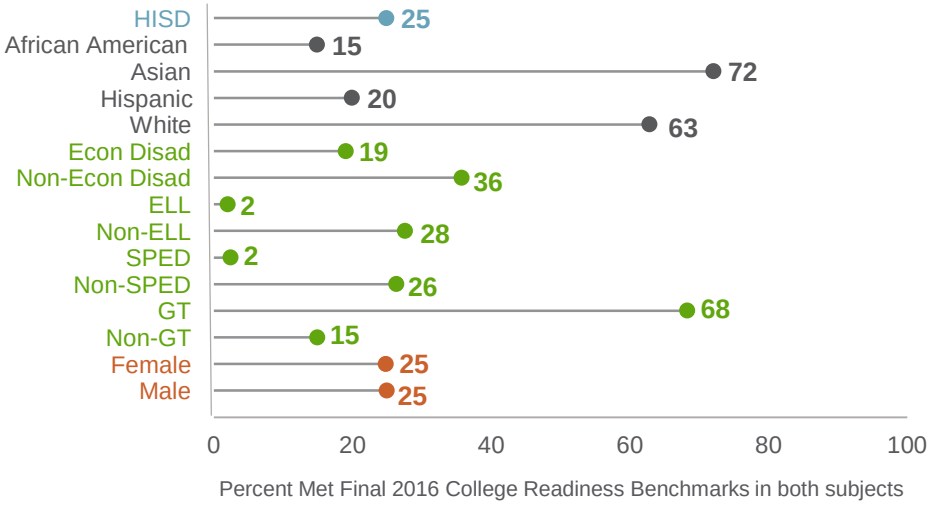
Figure 17. Percent of students who met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks by grade level and subject, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file

Approximately 25 percent of HISD 10th and 11th graders combined are "on track" to be college ready in both subjects under Final Benchmark standards (**Figure 18**). Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the majority of Asian-American and White students are "on track" to be college ready compared to a minority of African-American and Hispanic students. Female students are just as likely as their male peers to be on the college ready pathway.

Figure 18. Percent of students in 10th and 11th grade combined who met Final 2016 College Readiness Benchmarks in both subjects by student group, 2015–2016



Source: College Board Fall 2015 PSAT/NMSQT data file

Conclusion

In 2014, Houston ISD launched its Global Graduate Initiative. The district's and initiative's goal is to ensure that each HISD student graduates ready for the world. The profile of an HISD Global Graduate is one of a leader, a skilled communicator, adaptable and productive, a critical thinker, a responsible decision maker, and a college-ready learner. While this is a new initiative, the goal of preparing students to be college and career ready upon graduation is not a new one for the district. That's why HISD has consistently focused on offering students access to college readiness and entrance exams such as the PSAT—an integral step to succeeding on the SAT, one of the most widely accepted assessment by colleges and universities, and to being eligible to millions of dollars in scholarships. With the redesign of the PSAT/NMSQT and the new PSAT 8/9, students should be even more prepared for the redesigned SAT which debuted in March 2016.

An analysis of participation and performance on PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT in 2015–2016 revealed similar findings on each assessment. For example, participation rates on both PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT were high—higher than in the state of Texas and the nation overall. This high participation rate could explain why mean subject and total scores for the district were lower than those for Texas and the nation. However, HISD 8th graders are more likely to meet College Readiness Benchmarks than 8th graders in Texas or the country. This was not the case for HISD freshmen, sophomores, or juniors. Mean Math scores were higher than EBRW scores but not high enough—students in all grade levels were less likely to meet College Readiness Benchmarks in Math than in EBRW. Performance differences existed across student groups in both assessments, but there were no major differences compared to previous year's converted PSAT/NMSQT performance.

Appendix – Methods

The College Board provided a complete PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT file for the district in March 2016. This student-level data file was matched with an extract of students found in Chancery on October 19, 2015—the date closest to when students took the assessments. Only students found in this extract were included in the analysis. All demographic (e.g. race/ethnicity, grade level, gender) and program data (e.g. campus, economic status, ELL status, SPED status, GT status) analyzed in this report are taken from Chancery—not the student self-reported data provided by the College Board. For this reason, data presented in this report may not match that which is provided in the K-12 online score portal provided by the College Board. After identifying data was matched from Chancery and students without valid composite scores were excluded, analysis was conducted only on students enrolled in grades eight and nine (for PSAT 8/9) and ten and eleven (for PSAT/NMSQT)—students enrolled in other grade levels were excluded from analysis. Kashmere High School did not administer PSAT/NMSQT in Fall 2015 so data are missing, except for one student, for this campus for the 2015–2016 academic year.

Because PSAT 8/9 is an entirely new assessment and the PSAT/NMSQT has been completely redesigned, performance comparisons between this year and previous years may be difficult or should be interpreted with caution. For example, ReadiStep and PSAT 8/9 are two different assessments and scored on completely different scales, therefore, comparisons between performance in 2015–2016 and previous years cannot be made. In order to make comparisons, between PSAT/NMSQT in 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, the author took the complete PSAT/NMSQT student-level data file from Fall 2014 and matched it with an extract of students found in Chancery on October 20, 2014—the date closest to when students took the assessment. Only students found in this extract were included in the analysis. All demographic (e.g. race/ethnicity, grade level, gender) and program data (e.g. campus, economic status, ELL status, SPED status, GT status) analyzed in this report is taken from Chancery—not the student self-reported data provided by the College Board. For this reason, data presented in this report may not match that which is provided in the PSAT/NMSQT report published by HISD's Research and Accountability Department on March 6, 2015. After identifying data was matched from Chancery and students without valid composite scores were excluded, analysis was conducted only on students enrolled in grades ten and eleven—students enrolled in other grade levels were excluded from analysis.

The scores from this group of students were then recoded to the 2015–2016 scale using the preliminary concordance tables provided by the College Board. In some cases, the result of the total to total Concordance (Critical Reading + Math Total to Evidence-Based Reading and Writing + Math) will be different from the sums of the concorded section scores (Critical Reading and Writing to Evidence-Based Reading and Writing; or Math to Math). This difference is expected and part of any concordance of scores where multiple concordance tables are required. The reason for this difference is that students' rank-orders are different on different sections of the test. For example a student can have an 1100 total by having a 500 Critical Reading and a 600 Math, or a 600 Critical Reading and a 500 Math. So two students may have different concorded total scores if you sum their concorded section scores even though their total score is the same. Using the concordance table for the total score is the most direct way to identify the pre-2015 PSAT/NMSQT total score that corresponds to the redesigned PSAT total score. If you want to estimate a new SAT or PSAT total score based on a score from pre-redesigned assessment, the Total to Total concordance table is the best tool since it is less prone to errors that can occur from summing the individual concordances. However, in some cases the author did use individual subject concordances and those should be interpreted with caution.