



The PSAT & National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Statistics

Many of your students will be taking the PSAT this month. Most of them take it to practice for the SAT, but some will take it and qualify for funding through the National Merit Scholarship. If you are not completely clear on how students qualify and are selected, keep reading.

In a student's junior year in high school their PSAT results are considered for qualification. The sum of the three scores (math, critical reading, writing) is known as the Selection Index and is used, along with four general criteria for eligibility such as U.S. citizenship, for both preliminary and primary selection in the National Merit Scholarship Programs.

The minimum Selection Index for recognition as a Semifinalist is determined by selection units and is set by the NMSC in each state at whatever score yields about the 99th percentile, and is used instead of a national minimum to ensure an even geographical distribution of Semifinalists.

Students not recognized as Semifinalists whose Selection Index is above a different limit are recognized as Commended Students and receive Letters of Commendation. This minimum is determined nationally and is set at whichever score yields the 96th percentile.

After being confirmed as a Semifinalist, students must complete an application to become a Finalist. Other factors besides the PSAT Selection Index score are taken into account, such as the student's GPA & Extracurricular activities.

The Advantage to One-on-One Tutoring

There's nothing like individual attention. Hillsborough High School will have one-on-one tutoring opportunities through the Honor Societies. Students will have the advantage of being tutored by their peers, in addition to getting tips and strategies about how to be successful in IB classes.

Finally, something to share with your students...an opportunity to win one of five one-hour phone college admissions consultations with expert author Rob Franek, seen on *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*, and *The Early Show*. For details go to <http://www.princetonreview.com/robfranek.aspx>. Contest end on November 1, 2011.

Local and National College Admission News

- What Does Your High School Transcript Say About You? – According to Ann McDermott, the Director of Admissions at the College of the Holy Cross, the transcript “gives admissions officers an understanding of your student’s academic experience to date, as well as their potential to succeed in college.”

- The Most “Social” Colleges for Applicants - These schools make the college search *a lot* easier. As [IN](#)'s [student contributor](#) recently wrote, [schools share information via social media](#) that they do not provide in mailings or even on campus tours. This info may include upcoming events, admissions statistics, or even application tips
- College Application Red Flags - You want your students [applications](#) to stand out, but not for the wrong reasons. Unigo's [Expert Network](#) of college counselors and admissions officers recently listed several no-no's that will cast doubt on a college application.

☑ **SAT Scores Hit All-Time Low**

SAT reading scores for the high school class of 2011 were the lowest on record, and combined reading and math scores fell to their lowest point since 1995, dropping 18 points in 5 years. The College Board, which released the scores, said the results reflect the record size and diversity of the pool of test-takers. As more students aim for college and take the exam, it tends to drag down average scores. Go to <http://tweentribune.com/teachers/sat-scores-hit-all-time-low> to read the entire article.

☑ **Fun Fact – About the SAT**

Most of the questions on the SAT, except for the essay and the grid-in math responses, are [multiple choice](#); all multiple-choice questions have five answer choices, one of which is correct. The questions of each section of the same type are generally ordered by difficulty. However, an important exception exists: Questions that follow the long and short reading passages are organized chronologically, rather than by difficulty. Ten of the questions in one of the math sub-sections are not multiple choice. They instead require the test taker to bubble in a number in a four-column grid.