

The New SAT Brings Changes for Students

AMY WEN &
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NCSSM juniors got a whiff of what it feels like to prepare for college applications, beginning with the required New SAT.

Students took the New SAT on March 12 and May 7. Overwhelmingly, the most definitive opinion of students is that the new SAT is excessively long. "I think that it was way too lengthy and by the end of the test you begin to lack in skills because you become so bored," explained Courtney Brown. This certainly is a possible explanation for the anomaly in the imbalance in scores.

Another topic students stressed was the monotony of the test. "It seemed like the same sections were repeating over and over and over," said Sara Wise. In addition to the seven sections found on the old SAT, there were three new sections: one 10-minute and one 25-minute multiple choice writing section, as well as a 25-minute essay.

Although the Critical

Reading and Writing sections are separate, there are six or seven "Verbal" sections, depending on whether or not the unscored section is verbal or math. A couple of students found that frustrating, because they were not interested in relentlessly reading sentences and passages on random topics. However, they had to face three consecutive verbal sections at some point during the test. "It seems as if the United States is trying to downplay the importance of mathematics and perhaps make the SAT harder for mathematically inclined people," said Haolan Cai.

The major remarks about the writing section dealt with inadequate time constraints and the subjective grading. Many did not even finish their essays. "I will never understand how a 25 minute essay can be a proper reflection of one's actual writing ability under normal circumstances," said James Winder. However, there are patterns to the grading that can help achieve a higher score. A comparison of essay scores and their respec-

tive length was done by Les Perelman, one of the directors of undergraduate writing at MIT, using essays released by the College Board, and it yielded surprising results. The length of an essay and

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its score were almost perfectly correlated. This provides evidence to the argument of many English teachers that the essay section is promoting formulaic, superficial writing.

Many students expressed relief that the writing section was the first thing on the test, the general concern being that test-takers would be too mentally drained by the end of the test to think and write coherently. "I would have been too dead to write a word if I had to wait until the end," noted Sara Wise.

Since two of the new sections deal exclusively with grammar, there are further

concerns pertaining to the ability of students with poor grammar skills to perform well on the test. "The new writing sections have made the test even harder for the majority of African-American students. The students at NCSSM are an exception to the rule, because we are continually exposed to correct grammar, however, most African-American students attend predominantly black schools where grammar is not stressed nearly enough," said Erica Perry. This is not to say that the SAT is fundamentally biased against any particular ethnic groups. "I am in no way saying that the SAT should change so that black students can do better, but I do see a need for more preparation in African American communities," Erica said.

With the addition of Algebra II topics, many students felt the math sections of the SAT were harder in comparison to the old SAT. "A lot of [math problems] were centered around picky formulas from back in geometry," said Dan Duncan. "I was running out of time on some of the

math sections, which have gotten noticeably harder. There were new concepts from Algebra 2 and some Geometry that I did not remember seeing on the old SAT," said Ramsey Cardwell.

Several students offered their advice for those taking the test in June or early next year. "It's been a while since I have taken Geometry and Algebra II, so I probably need to brush up on those two before I take the test again," said Theresa Crowgey. Some students found practice the most effective way to prepare, getting them used to the types of questions, the format of the test, and the length of the exam.

There were also recommendations on topics not related to the content of the SAT. "I would suggest taking a snack, waking up in time for breakfast, and having a watch to keep track of the time," said Casey Farren. Other students simply suggest avoiding the headaches and stress caused by this new SAT format. "My recommendation is take the ACT," said Genevieve Pike.

Colours: the People, the Music, the Ministry

JASMINE LAGRONE

Colours Gospel Choir is an NCSSM organization devoted to spreading the message of Jesus Christ through song. Colours always manages to leave an impression on the hearts and minds of NCSSMers and community members. Directed by Mr. Leon Goldston, Colours has united a broad spectrum of races through music and fellowship for over a decade.

Q: Why did you join Colours?

Bomi Oladosu: "I joined Colours because I thought that this year I should do something different and be more involved with worshipping God and telling others about it through song."

Q: What makes Colours unique?

Amber Smith: "We get together and sing and have fun. We're there together all the time. Mr. Leon makes it really unique in a good way. I've never had a director like him before. He's so full of energy."

Q: What keeps you coming back to Colours performances?

Nia Bridges: "I love the energy. When they're on stage, they're in the zone and you know that they love what they're doing. You get uplifted no matter how you're feeling."



Colours Gospel Choir sings at the Commencement Concert.

Q: What's your general impression of the choir?

Cortney Dahlgren: "I think they're really good. I saw them at NC Gospel Fest, and I thought they were the best group there by far. They were able to project and were completely together. The movements were also really cool."

Q: The fact that Colours is a Gospel choir may push non-Christians away. What does Colours have to offer the NCSSM community at large?

Christine Smith: "I think Colours offers a way for people who aren't Christian to experience something new and just wonderful. I think it's worthwhile and I'm glad I joined."

Carlos Fuentes: "Colours is a musical organization, and is

where musical talent can get together and work together for something they all believe strongly in. They provide the NCSSM community with musical entertainment and an opportunity to listen to a style of music otherwise unknown here."

Q: Please describe how hand gestures have added to Colours performances this year.

Kimberly Applewhite: "I think the sign language in 'Thank You' was a nice touch. It reminded everyone, I think, that there isn't a real reason why you can't thank the Lord for all that He's done. We could spend our whole lives trying to pay Him back, so it's good to be grateful for everything. Even in a different lan-

guage, there are still ways to show gratitude to Him."

Q: Please tell me something interesting about Colours or how it's added to your life.

Dana Squire: "We had a visitor come last year who gave us his testimony and prayed. There was something about his prayer that really got my spirit going. It got me spiritually excited for the very first time in my life. It was my first time experiencing the Holy Ghost."

Q: How have you seen Colours' influence in the community?

Isaac Owolabi: "The Bible says in Acts 1:8 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses...' This very same power was manifested on March 5th when Colours hosted the Gospel event. Every member of the choir was stressed, tired, and had a sore throat, but God's ways are not man's ways and he decided to use us anyway so that He would receive honor. The notes and beats all worked together in heavenly harmony. The audience responded and many surrendered their lives to Christ that night."

2004-2005 Colours Gospel Choir Members

Steve Brown
Isaac Owolabi
Gavrielle Washington
Quanetta Brown
Mesha Batts
Jessica Lynch
Brittany Dancy
Sonja Mitchell
Yolanda Fair
Kari Sides
Jane Lee
Richard Pridgen
Linsley Furstenberg
Ervin Griffin
Erica Perry
Jasmine Lagrone
Amber Smith
Julia Lockamy
Sam Carey
Folabomi Oladosu
Lauren Owen
Derek Paylor
Christine Smith
Dana Squire
Leah Pittman
Kimberly Applewhite
Melanie Pringle
Kamrul Rokon
Johnny Ashe