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Camden expands college access with SAT School Day

Deputy Superintendent celebrates 46 percent increase in SAT participation since 2016

April 10, 2018, Camden, New Jersey — Today Camden City School District Deputy Superintendent Katrina McCombs celebrated a 46 percent increase in SAT participation in the City's high schools, as more than 300 juniors completed the test, a necessary step to applying for and attending the college of their choice. In a District where 1 in 5 students dropped out of high school just five years ago, the SAT School Day program is one of a number of new measures introduced to better prepare high school students for college or meaningful careers. Camden is the first District in the County, and the largest District in South Jersey, to offer the innovative [SAT School Day](#) program to all 11th grade students.

Following today's exam, members of the Class of 2019 have two more opportunities to take the test, free of charge, should they want to improve their score. Free SAT prep from Khan Academy, along with new in-school college readiness supports mean the Class of 2019 have more resources than ever before to secure their place in a college or university of their choice. Camden's five district high schools now offer free in-school PSATs to freshman and sophomore, as well as expanded in-school SAT prep opportunities for students to get ready for the big test. PSAT participation is up by 22 percent, and high schools report a major increase in SAT study prep and excitement about the college application process.

Since State intervention in 2013, Camden's graduation rate has risen 17 points (from 49 to 66 percent), while drop outs have been cut in half. Additionally, completion of the Federal Application for Free Financial Aid (FAFSA) is up by 77 percent amongst high school seniors in Camden. Today more than 250 students are taking advantage of an expanded dual-enrollment program with Camden County College, where students graduate with readily transferrable college credits under their belt. Finally, all seniors in the District now take a mandatory Senior Seminar course, dedicated to teaching college readiness skills (research, time management, essay writing) and helping students complete college and financial aid applications.

These improvements are possible thanks to a renewed focus on college access, more support for high school guidance counselors, and an influx of new initiatives aimed at raising academic standards and keeping students in school, and learning, wherever possible.

"Equity of opportunity is the motivation behind everything we do in Camden schools," said Deputy Superintendent Katrina McCombs. "When we launched SAT School Day last year, we knew that in-school testing would transform the options available to hundreds of our students in a single morning. In the past, the cost of the test was a barrier. The location of the test could be a barrier. And for so many of our students who work or are responsible for younger siblings, the weekend test was simply not an option."



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“We believe that the SAT School Day helps more of our students see themselves as the college-bound scholars we know they are,” concluded Alex Jones, Principal of Camden High School. “As educators, we have no doubt that our students are capable of greatness. It’s our job to help them recognize that greatness in themselves,” he concluded.

“One day, a school day, can make a world of difference for a student. Studies show college access increases when the SAT is administered on a school day—especially among low-income students. Suddenly, students who didn’t see themselves as college going are thinking about their college options and future career choices,” says David Adams, Vice President of the Middle States region for the College Board.

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