**ADVISORY LESSON: *“SAT OR ACT: WHICH TEST IS RIGHT FOR YOU?”***

**CHOOSING AND SCHEDULING THE RIGHT COLLEGE TEST**

1. Begin a discussion with the students about the misnomers that they have heard about the SAT and ACT. Make sure that you dispel any of the following rumors should you hear them:
   1. Standardized tests are IQ tests.
      1. No, they are not.
      2. Although they require intelligence, vocabulary, and strategy, they do not test a student’s IQ.
   2. Taking both tests will double your chances of doing well.
      1. No, it will not.
      2. Doing your best on one test will provide you just as great a chance of getting into your school of interest as taking both and performing lukewarmly.
      3. In fact, focusing on one test usually allows you to retain your sanity while increasing your performance.
   3. The ACT is an easier test than the SAT.
      1. The two tests are different; one is not easier than the other.
      2. A student’s learning style will often show influence them to perform better on one test than the other.
      3. The SAT is a test of students’ critical thinking abilities while the ACT is a test of students’ application of learned curriculum.
   4. The SAT is more coachable then the ACT.
      1. While different, both do have strategies for taking them that will increase a student’s score.
      2. Students should familiarize themselves with the structure of each test and choose the one that they find more comfortable and that shows the students’ strengths.
   5. “Good” colleges require the SAT.
      1. There are not colleges that require one test over another.
      2. With that said, colleges might require a combination of tests, such as “the ACT with Writing OR the SAT and two SAT subject tests.”
   6. You should take the SAT or ACT as often as you can.
      1. While practice is certainly a positive strategy for scoring well on either test, taking them as often as possible can be both costly and stressful.
      2. Students should take and re-take the tests as long as they feel that they still have strategies that they haven’t used that will result in improvement.
   7. If you take the ACT, you don’t need SAT subject tests.
      1. This is not always true, so students should consult the admissions requirements for the colleges in which they are interested. While this is true for Yale, it is not the case for Harvard.
      2. SAT subject tests might be a nice addition to an ACT to show strengths in areas that are not tested on the ACT, such as Chinese, Spanish, U.S. History or Chemistry.
2. Help students to decide which test might be the best for them. Provide students with the “Getting to know the BEST college test for you!” quiz.
3. Have the students score the quiz to determine the best test for them.
4. Once students have assessed themselves to determine the most appropriate test for their learning styles, then they should move on to the handout entitled, “What is YOUR goal?” Discuss setting a goal for testing and have the students write a goal for their preferred test at the bottom of the handout.
5. Begin the discussion about when students should schedule themselves for testing. Distribute the handout, “Should I take the SAT or ACT? And when?” Have the students evaluate the pros and cons of the various test-taking options listed in the first chart. Then have the students look at the test dates, deadlines, and fees.
6. Point out to students that they would want to access the websites below the testing schedules to establish their own accounts to have the ability to register for either test.
7. Give students a few additional pieces of information that they might want to write down.
   1. Scores for the SAT and ACT typically are posted online first; those are available about 20 days after testing.
   2. Students should beware registering for the successive test date until after they have received their scores, as oftentimes this will cause them to miss the registration deadline for the next test administration.
   3. If they decide to re-test during senior year, students should watch college application deadlines. Applications can be submitted with preliminary scores and updated scores (if higher) can always be sent after they are received by the student.
   4. The most popular SAT test for juniors is in March; the most popular ACT test for juniors is in June.