



# College and Career Readiness Benchmarks: An Updated Approach

## Summary Notes:

With the launch of the redesigned SAT Suite of assessments in the 2015-16 school year, we decided to re-examine our approach to calculating benchmarks. This document summarizes the defined current approach as well as the rationale for that approach. The document is designed to be used internally for discussion purposes. At the end of the document, we provide key external positioning points.

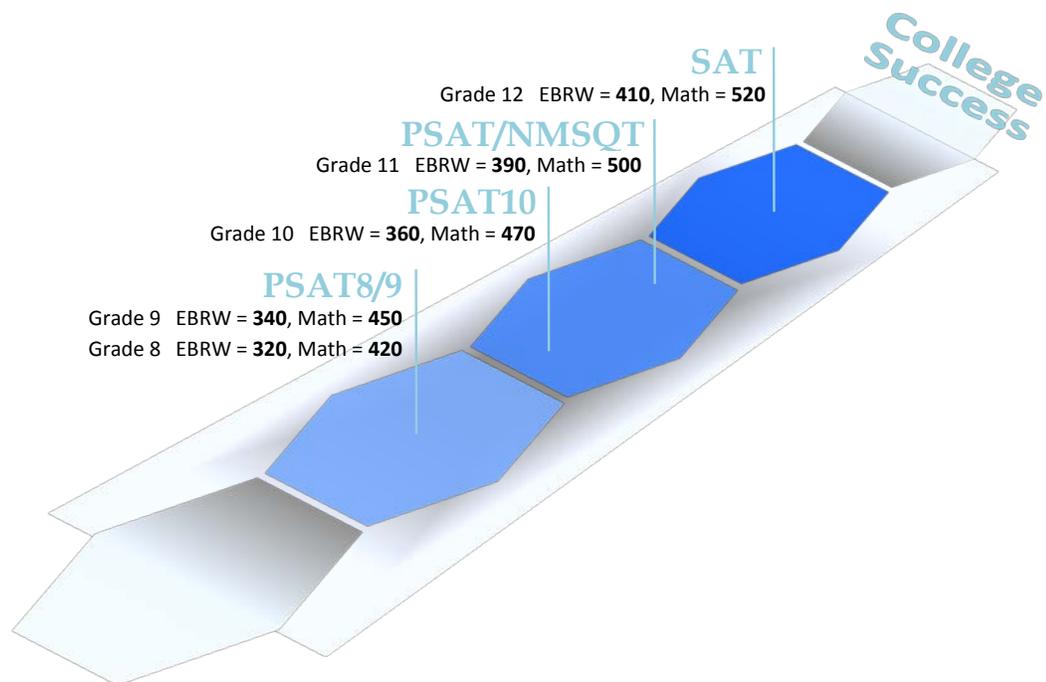
Note that this is not a full documentation of the research methodology or a full listing of detailed decisions around course choices, institution weighting. For those elements, please see related research documents.

## Current Definition of SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks:

- SAT: Score associated with a 65% probability of a FYGPA of B- or better (based on longitudinal student data) over range of institutions
- Benchmarks set for total and section scores
- Earlier Benchmarks have a similar methodology:
  - PSAT/NMSQT is based on a 65% probability of FYGPA of B- or better
  - ReadiStep set as a 50% likelihood of achieving the PN 10<sup>th</sup> grade benchmark
- Current total score benchmarks represented below:

## Updated Approach:

- SAT College Readiness Benchmarks will be defined as attaining a score associated with a **75% likelihood of achieving at least a C** in specifically defined set of first semester, introductory credit-bearing college courses
- **Benchmarks will be set at the Section Level** (i.e., a benchmark for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, and a benchmark for Math). Courses likely to utilize knowledge, skills, and understandings measured on each section will be identified.
- Overall College and Career Readiness will be defined as achieving *both* of the section-level benchmarks.
- Benchmarks will be set on a weighted student database that includes students from both 2-year and 4-year institutions.
- We used existing validity samples to set new benchmarks for Math and Critical Reading & Writing on the existing SAT assessment and concorded to set rSAT Section Benchmark scores
  - We will recalculate these benchmarks when we have first-year college data for the high school graduating class of 2017.
- In addition to the SAT College Readiness Benchmarks, we will set grade-level Benchmarks at each grade (beginning in 8<sup>th</sup> grade) for the PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT. These Benchmarks will represent whether the student is on track to reach the SAT benchmark, assuming they continue to make at least average progress.
- PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 8/9 benchmarks will be set as follows:
  - Look at empirical growth from year to year to **“backcast” the SAT benchmarks** to earlier years (using average rate of progress towards the SAT benchmark)
  - As with the SAT, we will use current data and concordances to have interim benchmarks ready at release; will revisit with new data and our new vertical scales
- Interim benchmarks for the redesigned assessment are represented below:



- Estimated percentages of students meeting the benchmarks at each grade level<sup>1</sup> (based on the 2015 Matched Cohort) are shown in the table below:

Assessment	N	Section	Benchmark	% Meeting
SAT	1,698,521	EBRW	410	83.3
		Math	520	53.5
		Both		52.1
PSAT/NMSQT	1,592,242	EBRW	390	83.2
		Math	500	49.9
		Both		49.0
PSAT10	1,580,161	EBRW	360	83.0
		Math	470	44.9
		Both		44.1
PSAT8/9 (9th)	14,797	EBRW	340	78.8
		Math	450	29.1
		Both		28.5

<sup>1</sup> The percentages meeting the SAT benchmarks are based on the 2015 cohort of SAT takers; the percentages meeting the PSAT benchmarks are based on the 2015 Matched Cohort.

PSAT8/9	227,994	EBRW	320	79.5
(8th)		Math	420	38.9
		Both		37.8

---

### Rationale for the Change:

As we think about the rationale for this move, it's important to put the shift in the broader context of what we are trying to accomplish with the College Board Readiness and Success System. Moving to a model where students can understand if they are ready for certain types of college courses – and what to do if they are not ready – makes a lot of sense when we are challenging all students to own their future.

Below are some simple rationale statements that support that overarching message:

- With the College Readiness Benchmarks, we are looking for a simple way to indicate whether students are ready for college. The most direct way to do that is to give them a sense for whether they have a high likelihood of being successful in a first semester credit-bearing course.
  - We used a "C" grade as our metric as it is almost universally interpreted as "satisfactory" in undergraduate institutions
  - 75% likelihood was chosen to ensure that if we tell someone she is ready, there is a relatively small chance that she is not
- We also want to support all students with the ability to take action. Understanding that they are not meeting the definition of readiness for a specific course – combined with specific recommendations about areas of weaknesses and support through Khan Academy – gives students a very direct way to take action. (Whereas a general sense that they are not ready to get a B- FYGPA provides less clarity about the next action they should take.)
- In defining our updated Benchmarks, we sought to be consistent with other direction and definitions that students are seeing. The consortia generally define college readiness as readiness for entry-level, credit bearing courses, and we thought that – all else being equal – being consistent with those definitions is helpful to students and educators.
  - From PARCC: "The PARCC states determined that performing at the college- and career-ready level means graduating from high school and having at least a 75 percent likelihood of earning a grade of at least "C" in first-year college courses, without the need for remedial coursework."
- With this straightforward definition, we believe that we give policy-makers a much more clear definition as well, which should reduce the likelihood of mis-interpretation and/or mis-use.