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School-Based Instruction and Achievement
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

February 21, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: High School Principals

Through: Mr. Erick J. Lang, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Programs 

From: Carol Blum, Director, High School Instruction and Achievement 

Subject: INFORMATION: Administration of the PSAT to Grade 11 Students

In October 2008, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will pay for the administration of the PSAT to Grades 10 and 11 students. Although MCPS will no longer pay for the PSAT for Grade 9 students, schools are encouraged to offer their Grade 9 students the opportunity to take a practice PSAT. This decision to pay for an administration to Grade 11 students supports our goal of increasing PSAT and SAT participation, as well as SAT performance, with a particular emphasis on underserved populations. Administering the PSAT to Grade 11 students also will reaffirm the importance of rigorous academic preparation for postsecondary opportunities, yield timely data, and prepare students for SAT testing. Only the Grade 11 PSAT offers students the added opportunity to enter and qualify for the National Merit Scholarship programs.

Schools may provide a practice PSAT for Grade 9 students by using the previous year's test booklets. This approach affords schools leeway in offering opportunities for rigorous academic testing practice to Grade 9 students as appropriate to the needs of their students; for example, giving short excerpts of the test during class periods or choosing to administer just one section, such as critical reading or writing and omitting the mathematics portion for students who have not completed algebra. MCPS now has ample data available on incoming Grade 9 students, including Maryland School Assessment and Measures of Academic Progress—Reading scores, that schools can use to determine appropriate course placement and academic support. The review of these and other data in Grade 9 will be considered as schools prepare students for honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Additional information about the Grade 11 PSAT will be included in the May 2008 memorandum regarding test ordering and the administration of both the Grade 10 and Grade 11 PSAT. Information about implementing a practice PSAT for Grade 9 students also will be included.

For additional information, please contact Mrs. Carol H. Blum, director, High School Instruction and Achievement, at 301-517-5007, or via e-mail.

CHB:csj

Copy to:

Executive Staff

Directors of School Performance

Ms. Cullison

Dr. Newman

Approved: _____


Frieda K. Lacey, Deputy Superintendent of Schools