

Chagrin Valley Times

The College Review
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Is your junior student ready to write?

I don't know about the rest of you but the thought of summer conjures up thoughts of lazy hazy days. A time for rest and relaxation – Yeah Right!

Summer is the beginning of the college process for the class of 2007. That means using the summer to gain writing skills.

The new SAT writing portion is in place and so is a new optional writing section on the ACT. This has meant more preparation and planning on the part of the student. Summer is that time. The college board the makers of the SAT, recommend students entering 11th grade gain writing and grammar knowledge.

Why? Because, the writing section is actually two parts. Part one the student is given a prompt, maybe something about "heroism" or "school dress codes." The student will need to show their point of view and give examples from previous readings, experienced, or observations. No multiple choices to hide behind here. Did I forget to tell you the essay has to be handwritten? That's right, no spell or grammar check. The second part and actually more difficult portion is the multiple choice grammar section,

several answers are often right. After all, educators wrote the tests.

Why did they have to change the test? The University California was considering a system that would drop the SAT requirement and California's defection would prove to be the beginning of the end for the "Big test." On the other hand, The University of California found the SAT II writing test to be a good criteria in measuring a student's ability. The University felt it was a good indicator of "college success."

"College Success" is the new key term in the college admissions process. With so many applicants they only want students that can be successful in their programs. To determine "college success" they use qualifying points such as GPA, and test scores. Many students may be in the same bracket when it comes to the point system. This is where the college essay makes the difference. When colleges are faced with choosing one student over another, the essay will be the final qualifying factor in "college success" criteria.

College admission is only the beginning. Remember, there is that college tuition bill. An Orange High School graduation program has a picture of two parents sending their student off to college with the parents wearing barrels. Unless you

were preparing for this mode of attire, scholarships could be the answer. How does a student get a scholarship? Nine times out of ten the students must submit an essay.

So, will any essay do?

Remember, your student is in competition with all other applicants. An essay is a qualifying point that will admit your student for college admission and money for tuition. The summer prior to entering 11th grade is the time to assess your student's writing ability. Do they understand the rules of grammar, word choice, use of sentences, organization and development, thesis and purpose, and overall impression? These are the qualifying points and if your student does not have them, it is time to prepare.

How do we prepare? The College Board, the makers of the SAT, says students need to review grammar and develop writing skills. Depending on a student's ability, extra writing classes could be mandatory. The Cleveland Plain Dealer did exit polls after the administration of the new SAT. The students were asked if they felt prepared and what was involved in their preparation. The majority of the students felt the need to do additional class work. Those that had enrolled in supplemental test prep, felt more confident at test time. The numbers came back to show students who had additionally taken a writing class, scored higher on their essay, two-to-one.

Does handwriting matter?

When was the last time your student wrote a handwritten paper? Take a look at their penmanship. Can you read it? The College Board scores

are actually two high school teachers who independently score the essay on a scale from 1-6. The College Board reserves the right to bringing a third scorer if deciphering essay content is problematic. Handwriting could have an effect on overall score.

Students of the class of 2006, who realized their writing skills were lacking, rushed to find additional preparation. Now is the time for the class of 2007. All the experts agree do not wait! Use the summer prior to 11th grade to begin your student's preparation. Just think what you will be doing next summer - but that is another column.

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The College Review is a SAT/ACT preparation company.

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