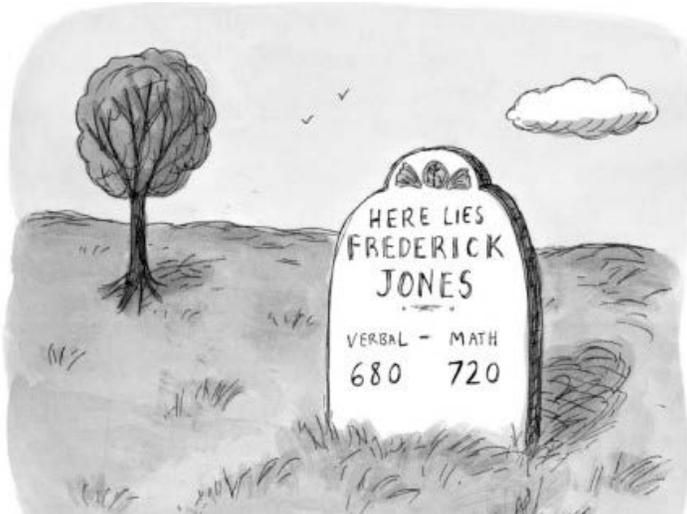
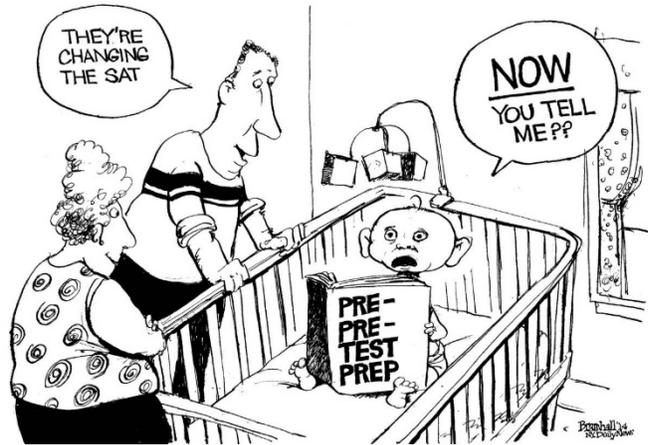


**When does the course meet?**

As a ½-credit course, it meets 5 days a week during one quarter for Math and one quarter for Reading/Language.

**Why do students take the course?**

Because those who take it see their scores in reading increase by roughly 80 points above their sophomore PSAT's and their writing scores increase over 100 points on average. This increases scholarship opportunities and broadens the range of colleges willing to accept them. Students who come in with the lowest scores have the most upward potential—bright students who simply have no clue how to tackle the test strategically, to manage time, or to guess intelligently. We'll learn all of these things.



**What's average?**

Nationally, about 490 to 500 is average. In Pennsylvania, the average is about 490 in Reading and 480 in Writing. The Tyrone averages exceed these in Writing in the low 490's and in the recent past have improved to match the state average in Reading. The majority of Tyrone students who take our review classes end up scoring above the national and state averages.



## What approaches will account for my child's SAT improvement in the course?

1. **Daily vocabulary-building.** Expect independent, out-of-class vocabulary study every night. Ungraded daily vocabulary quizzes will help your kids assess whether they are studying enough. If they do not know at least 8 out of 10 words each day when we practice-quiz them, they definitely will not do well on the 50-point graded tests, which arrive every five days. Students cannot wait until the graded test to decide to cram.

**Here is my promise to struggling students: no student will score lower in the course than the average of his vocabulary quizzes...a solid vocabulary is where it all begins.**

2. **Test-taking strategy... become as clever as the test-maker.** We will practice proven reading and writing strategies like “never read the directions...know them” and “answer double-passage reading items one passage at a time.”
3. **Timed and un-timed practice** using hundreds-upon-hundreds of pages of real SAT exams. Though much of this practice is non-graded, we will score practice tests and convert those scores to an 800-scale so students can see their measured improvement. At the end of each section, we will have a graded SAT test worth 600 points.

### Is this the best way to prepare for the SAT?

Definitely not. Being a voracious reader for years is the best way to prepare. If your kids have never read voraciously [and have no idea what *voracious* means], they will have to settle for the band-aid approaches of this course, where their improvement may be due partly to increased verbal skill and partly to increased test-wisness.

### Why do Tyrone students score so much better on the Keystones than on the SAT?

1. Only a fraction of Tyrone students who take the SAT take this course. The more students who take the course, the better
2. To do well on the PSSA and the Keystones, a student must be the tortoise; to do well on the SAT, he must be the hare. We teach our kids to be slow, careful readers and writers because this approach will benefit them most in real life and in college. This slow and steady approach to reading and writing preps them well for the Keystones, which are untimed tests. The SAT is a timed test. An SAT course is a great place to

learn to read against a clock. In our regular courses, we refuse to turn our kids into fast, careless readers for the sake of a test score: We abide by the central tenets of Dr. Michael Schmoker's *How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, which argues:

"Students need to...read slowly, turn to one another to talk about it, and then write about it." *Schmoker, 2011*

3. By design and philosophy, the literary focus of the SAT differs dramatically from the literary focus of our English classes. The SAT contains extremely abstruse, dry reading passages on topics like advanced particle physics, macroeconomics, 17<sup>th</sup>-century British literature, and the development of Swahili as a language. We willfully choose not to disengage students in our English classes with such literary insomnia cures. To do so would be like serving kale at a third-grade birthday party. Instead we engage students with short, humorous works like "The Weak Shall Inherit the Gym", a scathing attack on political correctness by Rick Reilly, who bemoans the outlawing of dodge-ball in American schools; the science fiction classic *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, who predicts a future in which drug use and technology supplant traditional American values like sacrifice, family, and love; and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, who chronicles the anguish and loss of identity endured by a high school rape victim. In an age when learning is expected to be entertaining as well as educational, we strike a balance between the scholarly and the accessible, the idea-rich and the entertainment-rich, the unfamiliar and the familiar. The SAT test strives for no such balance, and to tip our

reading selections in the direction of SAT literary fare does a monumental injustice to the cause of reading. Enough with kale.

### **What scores are good enough to get me where I'm going?**

Many of our students choose to go to two-year schools that do not even require SATs. Most of our 4-year students choose Penn State or state-owned universities, where they can enter as provisional students with low scores as low as 300s. University Park's Main Campus is more selective in the 550-600s. The Scholars Program at Penn State says they do not consider scores, but somehow most entrants score 650-700, while Ivy League schools want to plus-700. Grades are equally important for entry to college—and the college Board's own statistical studies indicate that high school grades [not SAT scores] are the best indicators of future college success! The SAT has actually been proven to be a relatively weak predictor, yet the focus on SAT scores continues because it is a cash cow for the testing industry.

As the National Center for Fair and Open Testing concludes, "Many colleges and universities around the country, in dropping their test score requirements, have recently confirmed what the research has shown all along: the SAT has little value in predicting future college performance."

### **What's a perfect score?**

As of March 2016, a 1600! That's 800 Math + 800 Reading/Writing & Language. And you don't have to get every question correct to get a perfect score! Missing a few questions can still get you there, but only one out of 10,000 students ever achieves the honor. No one expects perfection...just improvement.