Paradoxical Purposes: The Use of College Entrance Exams in Secondary and Postsecondary Institutions

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It is a critical time for school testing in the United States, with conflicting views in K-12 education and higher education. An increasing number of postsecondary institutions have abandoned college admissions tests such as the ACT and the SAT, after dozens of research studies have demonstrated that standardized tests have limited predictive validity for first year GPA (e.g., Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Geiser, 2020) and even less for college graduation (e.g., Amo & Lee, 2013; Galla et al., 2019; Rothstein, 2004). Further, the tests have been shown to disadvantage women, students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and low-income students for decades (e.g., Au, 2017; Dixon-Román et al., 2013; Hawkins, 1993; Kinneavy, 1974; Moss, 1988; Rosales, 2018; Schechter, 2018). Paradoxically, more and more states have been adopting these same tests as accountability measures at the high school level. US Department of Education policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, The Race to the Top (RTT) in 2009, and the current Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015, require that all students take accountability tests once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school. Surprisingly, eleven states and DC have all adopted the SAT as their accountability measure for 11th grade students, with more states—such as Indiana and New Mexico—slated to adopt the SAT in future years (College Board, 2020; Indiana Department of Education, 2020; New Mexico Department of Education, 2020). Likewise, the ACT reports that fifteen states require their students to take the ACT at least once (ACT, 2019). This begs the question, "Why are higher education institutions abandoning college entrance exams due to limited predictive validity, fairness, and equity concerns, while public school districts are increasingly implementing these same tests?"

The use of the SAT and ACT as accountability measures has been implemented not only at the school and district levels for comparison of schools, but also at the student level as a high

school graduation requirement. The use of nationally created standardized tests as a graduation requirement in the United States is particularly challenging considering that, unlike other countries, the United States does not have a centralized educational system nor nationalized control of education. The 10th amendment of the Constitution specifically grants educational decisions to individual states, which then set bare minimum graduation requirements for all students. School districts can utilize these minimum requirements or implement more demanding rules.

In this article, we will examine two questions: Which states are currently using the SAT or ACT as their high school accountability measure, and what are the implications of this use on high school students? We will also discuss the history of college admissions tests, including recent shifts from an aptitude test to an accountability test purported to be more closely aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We will use *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014) as a critical lens to examine the conflicting uses of the SAT and ACT—as a menu item for graduation, a school accountability measure, and a college entrance exam.

Literature Review

The History of College Admissions Tests

Testing is an element of American higher education that traces its roots back to the earliest days of universities. Until the introduction of standardized tests in the late 1800s and early 1900s each university created their own tests, administered and scored internally, to make decisions. The emergence of psychological testing as a field of study in the early 1900s introduced the standardized admissions test to American educational system at every level. Almost from their creation, standardized tests have been controversial. Questions about the

usefulness of the scores and biases in test design have plagued these instruments and have never been fully resolved. The early rationale for the use of standardized "intelligence" tests, promulgated by psychometricians who often also held eugenicist beliefs, was that the tests held the power to evaluate prospective students' fitness for advanced study while also being removed from any influence of upbringing or education. These theories were often recanted by the very people who initially proposed them. Lewis Terman, the "intelligence quotient" (IQ) originator, wrote in an unpublished manuscript in 1934:

> *One of the most glorious fallacies in the history of science, namely, that the tests measured native intelligence purely and simply without regard to training or schooling. I hope nobody believes that now. The test scores very definitely are a composite including schooling, family background, familiarity with English and everything else, relevant and irrelevant. The term "native intelligence" is dead. (Lemann, 2000, p. 34; see also Creighton, 2000, p. 134)*

Likewise, Carl Brigham, leader of the commission to create the SAT, later wrote:

> *For purposes of comparing individuals or groups, it is apparent that tests in the vernacular must be used only with individuals having equal opportunity to acquire the vernacular of the test. [...] One of the most pretentious of these comparative studies—the writer's own—was without foundation. (Grove, 2013)*

Despite repudiation by the founding fathers of standardized testing and ongoing questions of the efficacy of the tests, so-called aptitude testing continued to expand, and after the second World War that steady growth exploded.

Though universities have existed since the 1600s, the SAT was introduced in 1926 and the ACT not until 1959. While these exams have become a perceived fixture and requirement of evaluating college readiness, this popular opinion is not supported by history. The SAT remained largely a tool mostly used by northeast liberal arts colleges until after World War II. Even though the number of test takers spiked and the number of universities requiring the test spiked following the war, the majority of colleges did not require these tests even in the 60s. The SAT

was only required at 422 colleges in 1960 (Henchinger & Henchinger, 1960). The University of Georgia System adopted the SAT in 1957 (Fincher, 1974) and the University of California wasn't convinced to do so until the College Board's "Operation Golden Bear" lobbying effort bore fruit in 1968 (Lemann, 2000, p. 172). University of Texas adopted the SAT in the mid 1950 as "a bureaucratic cudgel to maintain Jim Crow" (Price, 2019, para. 4). The University of California (UCs) and the University of Texas have both in the past 30 years had admissions policies that provided pathways for students with certain GPAs to gain admissions regardless of their SAT/ACT scores. The UCs particularly have published multiple reports questioning the predictive power of admissions testing and its utility in the admissions process (Perry et al., 2002). As early as the 1960s, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) concluded that the study "did not indicate any additional predictive power associated with the SAT I" (Perry et al., 2002). More recently, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, UC President declared that the current test-optional admissions process will change to test-blind admissions, saying that UC "will not consider test scores for admissions selection at all" (Gordon, 2020).

The ACT administered its first exam in 1958 but was a largely niche product, mostly used by Midwest public schools, until the 1990s. In the early 1960s, only 359 colleges accepted the ACT for admissions (Nufer, 2009) and no college in Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, New York, or New Jersey did (American College Testing, 1960); today, all colleges in those states that accept tests accept both the SAT and the ACT for admission and treat those two tests equally.

Despite persistent questions of the validity, utility, and fairness of standardized testing, the use of the test continued to expand and in the 1970s annual SAT test takers topped 1 million (NCES, 1995). The growth of testing also corresponded with public perception of public education as drops in test scores began to be viewed as indicative of failures in public education

(Shepard, 2002). The spike in low-income and underrepresented students taking the SAT was later cited by a College Board blue ribbon panel as the cause of the decreased SAT scores but this was largely ignored as testing had become linked to intelligence and academic ability in public view.

In addition to questions of efficacy and validity, racial and demographic questions begin to plague standardized testing in general and the SAT in particular. Early SAT norming groups were almost exclusively white wealthy students and only in 1978 did the College Board set up a fairness-review process that subjected every potential SAT question to examination for bias (Mathews, 2003). Despite this review process, questions have persisted regarding the role of the SAT (and ACT) in creating or exacerbating disparate results by class, race, and gender.

Further complicating the history of the use and validity of standardized testing is the frequency with which the tests are altered. The current version of the SAT is at least the fifteenth major revision of the exam (Jacobsen, 2019), yet with each revision the test is reported to have largely identical validity. The first SAT, which tested Latin and Greek while concurrently being touted as an exam divorced from what was learned in school, is a very different instrument from the SAT of today, which does not directly test even English vocabulary out of context of a reading passage.

More recently, persistent questions of insufficient and unfair security practices, cheating, and poor test design have contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with admission testing and led to more than 1050 universities making the SAT and ACT an optional part of the admissions process (e.g., Bidgood, 2015; Clark, 2019; Jaschik, 2018, 2019; Stecklow et al., 2016; Webley, 2013).

Aptitude versus Achievement: A Switch to an Accountability Measure

After nearly a century of use for college admission, placement, and scholarships, the use of the SAT and ACT for a purpose that it was not designed, state accountability measures at the high school level, is rapidly gaining in popularity. According to Standard 12.2 in *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (2014)*, "In educational settings, when a test is designed or used to serve multiple purposes, evidence of validity, reliability/precision, and fairness should be provided for each intended use" (p. 195). The conflicting uses of the exams are problematic, especially with regards to validity and fairness; the use of the tests for college admission focuses on one subset of students, while the use of the tests as a high school graduation tool shifts the focus to a different set of students—those who already might have significant barriers in their educational journey.

With the introduction of the Redesigned SAT in March 2016, the College Board claimed that the test was aligned to high school coursework. In fact, in the *Test Specifications for the Redesigned SAT* (2015), the College Board noted that the new test must reflect "the kinds of meaningful, engaging, and rigorous work that students might undertake in the best high school courses being taught today, thereby creating a robust and durable bond between assessment and instruction" (p. 3). As the test's former name denoted, the Scholastic Aptitude Test had been an *aptitude test* and the Redesigned SAT was now being marketed as an *achievement test*. According to Anastasi (1984), "Achievement tests measured the effects of learning, whereas intelligence and aptitude tests measured so-called innate capacity, or potentiality, independently of learning" (p. 129). As an aptitude test, the purpose of the assessment was to test a student's innate abilities, much like an intelligence test. On a test like this, it would not be unusual for students to see problems unlike anything they had seen in their mathematics courses. The

Redesigned SAT was purportedly designed to be more closely aligned to the content and style of typical problems found in high school mathematics courses, allowing the company to market the test as a tool to assess whether a student has the requisite skills required in college-level courses. The purposes of aptitude and achievement tests are quite distinctive; one might suggest that an aptitude test focuses on the top quarter of the bell curve, while an achievement test focuses on the lowest quarter. Similarly, using college entrance exams for admission to college while also using these same tests for accountability purposes place an emphasis on two different groups of students.

The shift to viewing the SAT as an achievement test has benefited the College Board as the number of students taking the SAT has gone from 1.18 million in 2015, the last year without any students taking the previous SAT, to 2.22 million taking the SAT in 2020. In three short years, the College Board has increased the number of tests by over one million students, even as headlines repeatedly show colleges dropping this same test as an admission requirement. The change in the exam has seemingly encouraged school districts around the country to adopt the SAT as an accountability measure.

As for the ACT, slight changes were made in September 2016. For instance, College and Career Readiness standards were included on the score reports, and developers say the test has "significant overlap" with the Common Core (Madda, 2016, para. 18). However, the ACT has not capitalized on these changes in the same way as the College Board, and the number of test-takers has steadily declined since 2016, as shown in Table 1. The ACT reports that 18 states gave the ACT to 100% of their high school graduates in 2016 (ACT, 2016), but Colorado, Illinois, and Michigan have all switched to the SAT since that time.

Table 1

Number of students taking the ACT and SAT, in millions, 2015-2019

Year	Number of students who took the ACT at least once (in millions)	Number of students who took the SAT at least once (in millions)
2013	1.80	1.66
2014	1.85	1.67
2015	1.92	1.18
2016	2.09	1.36
2017	2.03	1.72
2018	1.91	2.14
2019	1.78	2.22

A partnership between the college admission testing companies and state governments appears promising for both sides. If the SAT and ACT are indeed aligned to school curriculum, students do not have to take accountability tests like end-of-course assessments (EOCs), states can monitor how individual schools and school districts are performing, and schools can use state funds to pay for the exam for all students. In addition, with SAT School Day and ACT District Testing, students take the test in the comfort of their own school during a school day, instead of showing up at a testing center on a Saturday morning. It would seem to be a win-win-win for states, schools, and students. There is even research that suggests that district and state testing has benefits in addressing equity (Hyman, 2017). However, are there downfalls?

Alignment Studies and their Findings

As the college admission exams become states' accountability measures, it is increasingly critical that we examine the alignment of these exams to state standards, specifically, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) used in most states. Achieve, Inc. (2008), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving assessments and strengthening accountability states:

> *Using the ACT or SAT as the primary measure of mathematics and ELA achievement for accountability is ill-advised for both alignment considerations and technical reasons. […] College admissions tests were not designed to measure the full range of mathematics and ELA content that is reflected in state content standards." (pp. 5-6)*

Although the College Board's researchers have published state-specific studies suggesting that the SAT is aligned to state standards, several states have contracted independent research teams to investigate the use of the SAT and ACT as accountability measures. In January of 2018, the Florida Department of Education published the results of their study on SAT and ACT alignment to Florida Algebra 1 and English 10 standards (Roeber et al., 2018). This 175-page document was compiled by nationally known alignment experts, including Norman Webb. The researchers found that the SAT and ACT were not fully aligned to Algebra 1 and English 10 standards. For Algebra 1, one SAT test form needed four more items added, while another SAT test form needed seven additional items. The ACT forms would need 7-8 items added. Likewise, for English 10, one SAT form needed five items revised or replaced, while the second SAT form needed seven items. The ACT forms needed major adjustments with over 10 items revised or fully replaced. The researchers expressed reluctance in using the either test as an accountability measure, since it would take additional time and money to augment the exam to meet federal ESSA requirements. At this time, 100% of Florida students take the SAT through SAT School Day, but they also administer end-of-course assessments (EOCs) for Algebra 1 and English 10. Despite the lack of complete standards alignment, Florida allows an SAT score of 420 on the mathematics section to substitute for a failing grade on the EOC for Algebra 1.

Similarly, Delaware and Maine contracted an external, independent alignment study in December 2016 comparing the SAT to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Nemeth et al., 2016). In the report, the researchers note that the College Board assigned post hoc CCSS standards to the tests reviewed, and that "SAT items were written to SAT content specifications and not CCSS" (p. 43). This is an important note, as the researchers go on to state that the standards were over-identified by the College Board, sometimes with 15 CCSS grade-level

standards identified for a single item. The researchers state, “Overall, the SAT is reasonably aligned to the high school reading and writing portions of the CCSS, but less so for the math portions” (p. 45), indicating concerns about de-emphasizing Geometry topics and including a large number of items using middle school CCSS. They also raised concerns about not using psychometric factor loadings when determining sub-scores, which could cause educators to over-interpret specific strengths and weaknesses of their students. Even after these concerns were raised and researchers found the tests to not be aligned, Delaware and Maine now administer the SAT to 100% of their junior class.

Proficiency Tests Around the World: The United States is the Exception and not the Rule

High school proficiency exams, like A-level exams in Great Britain to the Abitur in Germany, are required around the world for students to enter postsecondary institutions or the workforce. *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014) outline three “main purposes” of educational testing: to inform teaching and learning, to make inferences about student outcomes, and to certify students’ acquisition of skills to make decisions about placement in instructional programs or graduation (p. 184). On an international scale, Wößmann (2002) concluded after thoroughly analyzing TIMSS data, “Student performance in math and science is substantially higher in school systems with central exams than without central exams, and this is true for students from all performance quartiles and family backgrounds” (p. 36). Despite this, the United States is the exception and not the rule when it comes to consistency and fairness in schools. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) agenda had many laudable features; its original purpose was to improve equitable outcomes by holding schools accountable, ensuring more qualified teachers, and providing more educational choices for families (e.g., Au, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Horn, 2018; Reardon et al., 2010). The equitable intentions behind

NCLB and later policies have fallen flat—even damaging our most vulnerable population. Horn (2018) refers to this as a NCLB "paradox" (p. 383), and Au (2017) states that "a decade and a half of federally mandated high-stakes testing has not created educational equality or closed any test-based achievement gaps" (p. 37). Linda Darling-Hammond (2007) says:

> *Unlike most countries that fund schools centrally and equally, the wealthiest US public schools spend at least 10 times more than the poorest schools—ranging from over $30,000 per pupil to only $3000; and these disparities contribute to a wider achievement gap than in virtually any other industrialized country. Within states, the spending ratio between high and low spending schools is typically at least 2 or 3 to 1. (p. 247)*

Au (2017) argues that urban classrooms feel the effects of testing "more sharply and disproportionately than other classrooms" as instruction shifts from student-centered to teacher-centered approaches, non-tested subjects like physical education and the arts are cut, and students and teachers are pressured for top scores without the same resources as more affluent communities (pp. 36-37). Horn (2018) accuses the "all stick and no carrot" approach to accountability testing, with incentives to improve schools intricately tied to harsh sanctions such as reconstitution (p. 386).

Therefore, it is critical that guidelines are developed for the use of the SAT and ACT as accountability measures. *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014) state in Standard 12.8, "When test results contribute substantially to decisions about student promotion or graduation, evidence should be provided that students have had an opportunity to learn the content and skills measured by the tests" (p. 197). If these tests do not accurately measure student's knowledge attained during their high school coursework, they should not be used for this purpose. In addition, Standard 12.7 states, "In educational settings, test users should take steps to prevent test preparation activities and distribution of materials to students that may adversely affect the validity of test score inferences" (p. 197). With SAT and ACT preparation

manuals and courses on every corner, it is difficult to justify using this test as an accountability measure.

Findings

Table 2 shows current ESSA requirements for each state and includes information on ACT and SAT contracts. Information in the table was compiled using the Education Commission of the States assessment contract data from April 2018, state Department of Education websites (retrieved in 2020), Education Week 2017-2019 testing data (Gewertz, 2017), and a FutureEd report (Olson, 2019). Statewide testing requirements frequently change, and many testing decisions are left to individual school districts. Personal email communication with Department of Education employees provided further clarification and updated information for specific states, as needed.

Table 2

ESSA Requirements and ACT and SAT State Partnerships

	Percent of class of 2019 who took SAT	**Percent of class of 2019 who took ACT**	**ESSA requirements include SAT/ACT**	**Math and English Language Arts Assessments**	**Additional notes**
Alabama	7	100	Yes	ACT, pre-ACT, ACT WorkKeys	Students must take the ACT Aspire in 10th and ACT in 11th grade to show growth but the state has a request for bid (RFB) as of November 2019 for future ESSA requirements.
Alaska	41	38	No	Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS)	
Arizona	31	73	No	AZMerit EOCs	
Arkansas	6	100	Yes	ACT	The ACT is one of many menu items with score requirements. For the state-funded ACT, students would need 22+ on Reading, 22+ on Math, 23+ on Science, or 18+ on English. Meeting any of these benchmark scores allows students to show they have met “College and Career Readiness” requirements. Students may also receive an industry credential or enroll in the military.
California	63	23	No	Smarter Balanced	
Colorado	100	27	Yes	PSAT, SAT	The SAT is one of many menu items with score requirements. For the state-funded SAT, students would need 500+ on Math, 470+ EBRW. However, some school districts may require higher scores. Colorado switched from an ACT requirement to the SAT in 2017.

Connecticut	100	22	Yes	SAT	Local school districts have a great deal of flexibility in requirements. The SAT is referred to as the "mastery examination." For most districts, students should take the SAT, but if a district lists a score, there should be a menu of additional items that could be used to meet this requirement.
Delaware	100	13	Yes	PSAT, SAT	The SAT is not listed on students' graduation requirements. However, all 11th grade students are required to take the SAT or the DCAS-Alt1for accountability purposes.
District of Columbia	94	32	Yes	PARCC, SAT	Students may take a free SAT test in their junior year.
Florida	100	54	Yes	Florida Standards Assessments (FSA)	The SAT can be used to replace minimum scores required on Algebra 1 and English 10 End of Course (EOC) assessments. If the state-funded SAT is used to replace FSA scores, students need 430+ EBRW and 420+ Math.
Georgia	71	49	No	Georgia Milestones EOCs	
Hawaii	54	80	Yes	Smarter Balanced, ACT	The ACT is offered to all students for free, but only 80% of the class of 2019 took the test.
Idaho	100	31	Yes	Smarter Balanced, SAT or ACT	Students take the ISAT, which is authored by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Students also must take a college entrance exam, but no specific score is needed. ESSA requirements and the SAT were discussed in a June 2020 work session but no decisions have been announced.
Illinois	100	35	Yes	PSAT, SAT	Students must take the SAT, but no specific score is needed. Illinois switched from an ACT requirement to the SAT in 2016.
Indiana	66	29	Yes	SAT (for class of 2023)	The state-funded SAT will be a possible menu item, starting with the class of 2023. Students would need to meet the College Board's "College and Career Readiness" benchmarks (currently 530+ on Math, 480+ EBRW) or meet the state's "Postsecondary-Ready Competencies" with another menu-item measure.
Iowa	3	66	No	Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP)	
Kansas	4	72	No	Kansas Assessment Program (KAP)	
Kentucky	4	99	Yes	Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP), ACT	If students do not meet college readiness benchmarks of ACT English 18+, ACT Mathematics 19+, and ACT Reading 20+, they could be required to take an additional course or another intervention.
Louisiana	5	100	Yes	Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) EOCs, ACT	Students have two diploma pathways: TOPS University Diploma and Jump Start TOPS Tech (Career) Diploma. Students must meet "approaching basic" or higher on all six LEAP assessments (English I & II, Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, and US History).
Maine	99	6	Yes	SAT	Local school districts set their own graduation requirements, which could include minimum scores on the SAT. However, if minimum scores are required, multiple pathways to graduation must be provided.
Maryland	82	28	No	Maryland Comprehensive	Minimum scores are required on the MCAP. If students do not pass, they may use alternate assessments such as

				Assessment Program (MCAP)	the SAT, ACT, IB, AP, etc., or complete the project-based Bridge Plan.
Massachusetts	81	21	No	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)	Minimum scores are required on the MCAS. If students do not pass, they are required to take an additional course or complete the appeals process.
Michigan	100	19	Yes	PSAT, SAT, ACT WorkKeys	Students are required to take the SAT through the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The MME has three components: The SAT with essay, ACT WorkKeys for job skills, and M-STEP for science and social studies. Michigan switched from an ACT requirement to the SAT in 2016.
Minnesota	4	95	No	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)	Students must take a college entrance exam, but whether this is the ACT or the SAT is up to the school district.
Mississippi	3	100	Yes	Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) EOCs, ACT	Students have four diploma options: Traditional Diploma, Traditional Diploma + Career and Technical Education (CTE) Endorsement, Traditional Diploma + Academic Endorsement, Traditional Diploma + Distinguished Academic Endorsement. The CTE Endorsement requires a silver level on ACT WorkKeys, the Academic Endorsement requires a 17+ on English ACT and 19+ on Math ACT, and the Distinguished Academic Endorsement requires 18+ on English ACT and 22+ on Math ACT.
Missouri	4	82	No	Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) EOCs, ACT	In 2016, 100% of students took the ACT. In 2019, this is down to 82%. The state stopped funding the ACT in 2017, but many school districts still partner with the ACT for fee waivers and district testing.
Montana	9	100	Yes	ACT	The ACT replaced Smarter Balanced in 2016. All juniors take the ACT but no minimum scores are required.
Nebraska	3	100	Yes	ACT	The ACT replaced NeSA assessments as the accountability measure in 2017. Specific scores on the ACT are not required for graduation.
Nevada	20	100	Yes	ACT	The ACT is used as Nevada's College and Career Readiness assessment, but specific scores are not required for graduation.
New Hampshire	95	14	Yes	SAT	The SAT replaced Smarter Balanced in 2016.
New Jersey	82	25	No	New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA)	The SAT and ACT is one of many menu items with score requirements that can be used to replace NJSLA. For the SAT, students would need 440+ on Math, 450+ EBRW. For the ACT, students would need 16+ on each section.
New Mexico	18	63	Yes	SAT (for class of 2023)	The state-funded SAT will be a possible menu item, starting with the class of 2023. There will be a required score for the SAT; however, this score was to be based on the 2020 scores.
New York	79	22	No	Regents Examinations	
North Carolina	51	100	Yes	North Carolina End-of-Course Tests, ACT	Students are required to take the North Carolina End-of-Course tests (English II, Math I, Math III, and Biology) and the ACT.
North Dakota	2	96	Yes	North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA), ACT	Students must take the ACT, but no specific scores are required for graduation. A composite ACT score of 24+ is a requirement for a state scholarship program.
Ohio	19	100	Yes	Ohio's State Tests EOCs, ACT or SAT	Students need two diploma seals. The SAT and the state-funded ACT are possible menu items to receive a "College Ready" Diploma Seal. For the state-funded ACT, students would need 1*+ on English, 22+ on Reading, and 22+ on Math. For the SAT, students would need to meet the College Board's "College and Career

					Readiness" benchmarks (currently 530+ on Math, 480+ EBRW).
Oklahoma	22	100	Yes	SAT or ACT	Students must take a college entrance exam and the state pays for it, but whether this is the ACT or the SAT is up to the school district. As of 2019, 100% of students took the ACT.
Oregon	51	42	No	Smarter Balanced, PSAT	
Pennsylvania	70	17	No	Keystone EOCs	
Rhode Island	100	12	Yes	PSAT, SAT	Students must complete a performance assessment, which could include a senior project, portfolio, or exhibition. The "Commissioner's [Diploma] Seal" can be earned if students score 480+ on EBRW and 530+ on Math on the state-funded SAT.
South Carolina	68	78		SCReady EOCs, Ready to Work, ACT, ACT WorkKeys	Students must take a college entrance exam, but whether this is the ACT or the SAT is up to the school district.
South Dakota	3	75	No	Smarter Balanced	
Tennessee	7	100	Yes	TNReady EOCs, ACT or SAT	Students must take a college entrance exam; most districts prefer the state-funded ACT. The state pays for juniors and seniors to take the ACT, with a senior retake initiative called "Second ACT."
Texas	68	39	No	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)	Minimum scores are required on STAAR end-of-course assessments if a student is enrolled in the course. If students do not meet those scores, they may replace the scores with alternative assessments. For the SAT, students would need to be 360+ for Math and 360+ EBRW. For the ACT, students would need 15+ for Math, 13+ for Reading, and 10+ for English.
Utah	4	100	Yes	Utah Aspire Plus, ACT	The Utah Aspire Plus is a blend of Utah-developed items and items from ACT Aspire and is administered to all 9th and 10th grade students. Juniors take the ACT. Although no minimum score is required for graduation, a student is deemed "proficient" for ESSA standards with a combined ACT score of 18+.
Vermont	66	20	No	Smarter Balanced	
Virginia	68	21	No	Standards of Learning (SOL) EOCs	
Washington	70	24	No	Smarter Balanced	Before 2020, students needed to meet minimum scores on Smarter Balanced. However, now students may use other options such as ACT, SAT, AP, IB, Military ASVAB, or industry recognized credentials for "Graduation Pathways" requirement.
West Virginia	99	49	Yes	SAT	Students are required to take the SAT as of 2019. If students do not meet the College Board's "College and Career Readiness" benchmarks (currently 530+ on Math, 480+ EBRW), they will be enrolled into a remediation course in their senior year or may choose to take a more challenging course.
Wisconsin	3	100	Yes	ACT	All students must take the ACT but no specific scores are required for graduation.
Wyoming	3	100	Yes	Wyoming Test of Proficiency and Progress (WY-TOPP), ACT	All students must take the ACT and six WY-TOPP end-of-course assessments. Students must receive a "remediation-free" score on the ACT or the SAT.

Discussion

In this article, we sought to answer two questions: Which states are currently using the SAT or ACT as their high school accountability measure, and what are the implications of the SAT's and ACT's current use? As we have shown, college entrance exams have been criticized since their inception, with countless colleges and universities abandoning testing requirements for admissions due to discriminatory outcomes and poor predictive validity for college success. Paradoxically, states and individual school districts have been implementing these same tests for accountability purposes at the high school level. On its face, using the SAT and ACT for accountability purposes looks like a quick fix to the many requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These tests have been easier to implement with initiatives like SAT School Day and ACT District Testing and purportedly aligned to state standards. However, are the requirements of ESSA doing more harm than good with their "all stick and no carrot approach?" (Horn, 2018, p. 386). These tests can create additional educational barriers for our most vulnerable students, including mandatory course remediation and/or additional tests to replace scores. Low scores on these exams could create harsh sanctions for schools, such as spending less time on non-tested subjects, devaluing student-centered learning, and pressuring already stressed teachers for improved scores. Several studies have shown that the SAT and ACT do not appropriately align to state standards, yet there seems to be an impetus for their use as an accountability measure. Is this new purpose valid?

Lastly, with the freedoms granted to states and even individual school districts, there is no consistency in the use of these exams. Some states might require specific scores from a menu of assessment items, while other states might require that students continue to take end-of-course assessments and college entrance exams. Graduation requirements and ESSA accountability

measures can be surprisingly hard to find on state department of education pages—there were far too many missing links and outdated information. The Education Commission for the States compiles assessment vendor information, but it is completed only every 2-3 years. There should be a continuously updated database of state accountability measures and alignment studies so state policymakers are not reinventing the wheel when choosing between vendors. If it is in the states' best interests to use longstanding national exams like the SAT and ACT, these tests should accurately measure what is learned in today's classrooms and should provide equitable outcomes for our most vulnerable students, as the No Child Left Behind agenda originally intended.

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