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Fwd: With Illinois' help, SAT tops test charts

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Tue, Oct 30, 2018 at 7:50 AM

November board meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Oct 30, 2018 at 2:02 AM

Subject: With Illinois' help, SAT tops test charts

To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>

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To view the web version, [click here](#).**With Illinois' help, SAT tops test charts**

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Thanks, apparently, to [decisions by the Illinois State Board of Education](#), the SAT test provided by The College Board has risen to the status of the most-administered college entrance examination nationwide. It had been in the number two spot - and having to try harder - for the last seven years.

The providers of the ACT test, which had been comfortable in the top spot until now, has [protested ISBE's decisions](#) to turn toward the SAT. But there are indications that Illinois students perform well on the SAT, which is to be paid for by the state and should serve well as an attachment to college application forms.

The College Board's bid of \$59.7 million, for services to be provided over a six-year period, was approved by ISBE in June. [This ISBE chart](#) showing whether a student will (or will not) take the SAT in the spring of 2019 may (or may not) clarify the timing and other aspects of the transition to the SAT testing program.

This year's ISBE budget for assessments is \$48.6 million.

Research by the [web site Wallethub.com](#) ranked Illinois students highest (tied with Missouri and Wisconsin, actually) on SAT scores. But that was before ISBE decided to make SAT the evaluation for all students. (That top status will surely be lost when the data accounts for more than just those who are college-bound.)

Meanwhile, more universities are dropping the tests as a requirement for admission. The FairTest.org site lists more than 1,000 institutions of higher education which have "de-emphasized" standardized tests by "making admissions decisions - without using ACT or SAT scores - for all or many applicants."

Twenty-two Illinois institutions are [currently on that list](#). FairTest (The [National Center for Fair and Open Testing](#)) has urged "test-optional" and "test-flexible" university admission policies since the 1998 publication of its report entitled:

"[Test Scores Do Not Equal Merit](#)."

The organization has not opposed testing *per se*, but at the K-12 level it has consistently challenged the standardized test score as a valid basis for a meaningful judgment of a student, an educator, a school or district or a state education system. FairTest has urged parents to "[opt-out](#)" [their children](#) from such tests.

From the neuroscience perspective, see the [1981 Nobel Lecture of Dr. Roger Sperry](#):

*"The more we learn, the more complex becomes the picture for predictions regarding any one individual and the more it seems to reinforce the conclusion that the kind of unique individuality in our brain networks makes that of fingerprints or facial features appear gross and simple by comparison. The **need for educational tests and policy measures to selectively indentify, accommodate, and maximize the differentially specialized forms of individual intellectual potential** becomes increasingly evident."* [Emphasis by ISNS.]

Two years later, the Reagan Administration published "[A Nation At Risk](#)" - the hyperbolic attack on public education that launched the high-stakes standardized testing and corporate takeover of public education in the U.S.

Last issue's meandering [about thin lips and eye spacing](#) evoked a response from a reader with obvious expertise, a zoologist perhaps, who pointed to three important facts: (1) eyes together signify predation, but (2) eyes apart signify prey. (This [brief video from sciencemag.org](#) provides some insights.)

As you noticed, animals with eyes set widely on the sides of their heads tend to be prey, like sheep and deer; they may have horizontal pupils for a safer, wide-angle view. But predators close to the ground, like alligators and cats, have eyes together, often with vertical-slit pupils to help them judge attacking distances.

What about the third important fact? The perspicacious ISNS reader also saw a political angle to this feature: (3) "Sen. Ted Cruz has thin lips." At a site [relating thin lips to trust concerns](#), George W. Bush - whom I also had used as an example of the close-together eyes problem - *also was featured atop that page*.

WDIAM? (What Does It All Mean?) The thin-lips distrusting site showed Republicans with untrustworthy lips (Bush, Mitch McConnell, Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney) and also fuller-lipped Democrats (Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, Barack Obama). Is that enough evidence? Sure it is. Enough to last until November 6.

Illinois congressional battles make national news. The Sunday [San Luis Obispo \(California\) Tribune](#) ran an Associated Press analysis of four Illinois congressional districts in which Republican incumbents who've previously seemed quite safe are now in tight races against Democratic challengers.

One of them, of course, is the narrow-eyed Rep. Rodney Davis of Taylorville. As my congressman, he has send me three full-color, slick mailings of what are clearly campaign documents - but *the fine print said* "printed and mailed at taxpayer expense." He seems surprised this year to be struggling to survive.

Davis' opponent is [Betsy Dirksen Londrigan](#) of Springfield. She was motivated to oppose Davis because of his support for a massive tax cut for the rich, and because of his

opposition to requiring insurance to cover pre-existing conditions. Davis' previously safe seat in the U.S. House is now (properly) in peril.

The other three GOP incumbents are Reps. Randy Hultgren of Plano and Peter Roskam of Wheaton - both from northern districts that are not as red as they once were - plus Mike Bost of Murphysboro. All three were formerly members of the Illinois House; Roskam is glib, Hultgren seems sincere, Bost is just noisy.

That Bost is in trouble should be surprising. Donald Trump won that district by 15 points. The president also held a rally for Bost on Friday. But Democrat Brendan Kelly is a Navy veteran and is state's attorney for St. Clair County. He should score in the northern end of the district, perhaps enough to offset Bost's showing farther south.

Democrat businessman Sean Casten of Downers Grove criticizes Roskam's opposition to abortion rights, his prominent role in drafting the tax-cut-for-the-rich legislation and his close relationship with Trump. Democrat Lauren Underwood of Naperville focuses strongly on healthcare and pre-conditions coverage in opposing Hultgren.

Democrats need to "flip" 23 House seats, nationwide, to regain control of the chamber and minimize what they see as the damage of policies of the Trump Administration. The four Illinois districts are targets in that effort and, therefore, they have attracted national attention (and political campaign funding).

Snippets:

Didn't Rauner already have enough political trouble? We heard from a legislative hearing that Gov. Bruce Rauner (and Trump) have [kept it quiet for months](#) that a facility in DuPage County is the source of a pollutant thought to be carcinogenic. Staff of Attorney General Lisa Madigan told legislators Friday that Rauner's office had the information for eight months and resisted Madigan's efforts to get it released.

Education issues are prominent in elections nationally. As this report [from National Public Radio](#) suggests, the effects of state and federal policy on public education seems to be figuring prominently in political contests across the country. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is a polarizing figure, of course, and federal funding cuts inflicted on popular programs and federal emphasis on privatizing schemes seem to be motivating opponents.

Illinois kids participate in effort to save the planet. In yet another case of students taking the initiative when adults fail, children have sued the U.S. government over the [need for policy to rescue the environment](#) they'll inherit. Groups backing the suit [are listed](#) in Chicago, Elgin, Wilmette, Evanston, DeKalb and Rockford.

The Wallethub site referred to above rated [Illinois as a pretty middling](#) state as to education, 19th overall, 15th in education "quality" and 40th in "safety." The highest quality overall rankings went to high-taxing eastern states: Massachusetts (of course), New Jersey and Connecticut. Most of the worst states were in the south.

The site also has posted [rankings on "political engagement"](#) (Illinois ranked 18th), and correlated that with: educational attainment (Illinois ranked 14th); GDP per capita (13th); and tax fairness (46th). *46th!* Our system of taxation is that unfair? Sure it has. [Ralph Martire has been explaining that to us](#) for years.

What about Illinois' ranking on "racial progress"? [Needs a lot of work.](#)

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