

# Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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## December 2013

### 7<sup>th</sup>—SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

### 14<sup>th</sup>— ACT and ACT With Writing

Underclassmen—Review PSAT report with advisor and map out a plan for test preparation

Schedule spring SAT/ACT testing dates

Seniors—File any additional college applications before deadline dates

## January 2014

### 25<sup>th</sup> – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

(register by 12/27 - late registration 1/10/14)

Seniors – apply for a pin and then complete and send the FAFSA any time after Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>  
Apply online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Seniors – Search and apply for scholarships that match your qualifications

## How Parents Can Help in the College Search Process

Deciding which colleges to apply to is a complex process for students. As students begin their college search, parents can provide support and encouragement with these suggestions:

**Get the timing right.** Most ninth and tenth graders are still adjusting to high school and aren't ready to start discussing specific colleges. In the early years of high school, keep the focus of college planning on *college preparation*, not on creating a final college list. Junior year is the right time to start discussing specific colleges with your child and helping her choose where she wants to apply. While you may be anxious to finalize plans, pushing for decisions before your child is ready to make them usually backfires.

**Listen to your child's hopes and dreams for college.** How does your child picture life at college? Listen carefully, and keep the communication lines open, even if your hopes and dreams differ. Remember, students who are happy with their college choice usually end up being successful students.

**Keep an open mind.** You may picture your child at a famous university, or want him to attend a college close to home, but try to be flexible and open-minded if your child wants to consider other options.

**Be just as enthusiastic about your child's "safe bets" as you are about your child's "dream colleges."** You and your child will sleep a lot more soundly in senior year if she has a well-rounded college list that isn't top heavy with reaches. To do this, parents need to avoid inadvertently sending a message to their child that particular schools aren't "good enough." Again, keep an open mind.

**Visit college campuses with your child.**

It is hard for students to imagine what college will be like if they have never seen a dorm or spent time on a college campus. All colleges offer free guided tours of their campuses that can help students and parents get an idea of what life at each college will be like. Begin by visiting local colleges with your child; you can explore campuses further from home as your child clarifies the qualities he wants his college to have.

**Don't overwhelm your child with information.** You may have every page of the *Fiske Guide to Colleges* memorized, or have spent hours in online college discussion forums, but your child doesn't need to know every fact about every college in order to make a wise choice. Research shows that too much information can often make it *harder* to make decisions, not easier – not just for teenagers, but for adults as well. So, in your search for college information, share information selectively based on your child's college search priorities.

**Be patient.** Adults tend to plan and make decisions about the future in a linear fashion because they have a lifetime of decision-making experience. Teens, however, don't have experience with making life-changing decisions, so it almost always takes them longer to get up to speed when it comes to choosing colleges. Decision-making skills also develop at different rates; some students are late bloomers when it comes to making important life decisions, while others seem wise beyond their years. During the college planning process, you may feel frustrated at times at your child's seeming procrastination and circular logic, but try to be patient. Allow time and space for your teen to process information about colleges – and to change his mind! With your support and gentle encouragement and the guidance of your advisor, your child will eventually figure things out.

## Fastest Growing Jobs for Art & Design Majors

**Animator**—typically works as part of a team to develop and produce a film, visual effect or video game.

**Art Director**—dictates the visual style of newspapers, magazines, movie and television productions and other media.

**Fashion Designer**—designs and creates original clothing and accessories.

**Film Director**—creates motion pictures, television shows and video productions from script to finished product.



**Graphic Designer**—uses computer software to create visual concepts, such as images, logos or brochures that deliver a message chosen by their clients.

**Interior Designer**—designs and oversees the construction of interior spaces that are functional, safe and attractive.

**Landscape Architect**—plans and designs land areas for parks, highways, college campuses, airports, and other private, commercial or government properties.

**Photographer**—uses technical skills and knowledge to capture images of an event or tell a story visually.

## Majors: Art & Design

Do you have a passion for painting, drawing or designing but feel unsure about how you can turn your love of art into a career? Bachelor's programs in fine or visual arts or in design can help you achieve your goal of a fulfilling career. Students interested in the visual arts may choose to pursue their passion either at a specialized art institute or as an art major at a more comprehensive college. Art schools generally award a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree, while liberal arts college grads earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). The art institute is most appropriate for those individuals who truly wish to immerse themselves in art. Most art schools are located in big cities where their students can have easy access to the artistic community. B.F.A. programs train their constituents for art-based careers; students may prepare for a future in fashion, auto or interior design, videogame development, animation or the graphic arts. It's important to consider, however, that studio art classes require hours of hard work and students at art institutes have little time or opportunity to get the breadth of education that is possible at a liberal arts college.

At the art institute, you'll generally start with foundation courses such as basic design and history of art, and will have an opportunity to focus on your area of concentration during the later part of your studies. The emphasis of each art institute differs, even within the same medium such as painting or sculpture. You'll want to check each program's philosophy before committing to attend. Art institutes do not offer the variety of extracurricular clubs, sports and activities that many college students seek and expect. Dorms also tend to be pretty basic so try to come for an extended visit before making a final decision.

If you're interested in focusing on art but still want to have opportunities to explore other interests, consider pursuing an art major at a liberal arts college. Often, it is

your other interests that serve as inspiration for your art work. The exposure to a variety of issues and ideas will help you to grow and mature. Career preparation is not the primary focus of B.A. programs. Over half of your education is in areas other than art, with substantial study in the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. Typical programs for studio art majors include foundation courses in the arts including work in sculpture, painting, drawing, and photography, as well as classes in the history of art and modern art. Since upper level students concentrate in a specific medium, you'll want to check the college catalogue to see the breadth of classes offered in your preferred field. Although students in Bachelor of Arts programs do not get the intensity of experience that B.F.A. graduates have, they do benefit from the more rounded college-life experience available at a comprehensive institution. You might even find yourself developing a passion for another field outside of art.

### Careers for Art & Design Majors

All art majors should seek out internships in galleries or museums, apprenticeships with working artists or employment in architectural or design firms in order to gain real-world experience. Both the B.F.A. and B.A. programs prepare students for graduate programs in the arts. A master's degree is generally required for those hoping for employment in museums and galleries or for teaching at the high school level. Museum curators and directors, and college professors may have Ph.D.s. Art majors may go on to work in a variety of art-related fields. The major provides the initial preparation required for careers in commercial art or other areas such as art therapy, art editor, critic, museum curator, art educator, art restorer, architect or designer. You can learn more about careers in the visual arts by using the Occupational Outlook Handbook at [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).

## Financial Matters: FAFSA Time



The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the primary form used by colleges to determine eligibility for need-based aid. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible after January 1st of the student's senior year, and then yearly while attending college. The FAFSA collects basic information about both the student and his/her parents' income and assets, and uses this information to determine

an *expected family contribution* (EFC). The EFC is the amount that the student and family is expected to contribute towards that individual's college expenses during the next academic year. The difference between the EFC and the *total cost of attendance* at your college of choice is known as *demonstrated need*. Colleges use this information to prepare a customized financial aid package for each admitted student who qualifies for financial aid.

This package may include both grants and loans, as well as self-help such as work-study opportunities. Relatively few colleges guarantee to meet 100% of established need, so financial aid may not cover all of your expenses at a particular college.

Complete the FAFSA online at

[fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov) as soon as possible after January 1st. You'll need your 2013 tax return and other financial records as noted on the site. It is possible to complete the FAFSA even if you do not have your taxes done yet—use an estimate, since filing as early as possible is better than waiting for a completed return. You'll also want to apply for a PIN for both student and parent so you can sign your form electronically. Do this now at [pin.ed.gov](http://pin.ed.gov).

Not a senior? Families of underclassmen can get an early estimation of their eligibility for need-based aid by completing the FAFSA4caster found at [FAFSA4caster.ed.gov](http://FAFSA4caster.ed.gov). Information about other sources of financial aid for college can be accessed at the Federal Student Aid site at [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov).

## Giving Back

In this time of increasing competition, a stellar transcript and strong test scores are necessary, but not sufficient for admission to selective colleges. Admissions officers are looking beyond academic qualifications to a student's interests, values and character. One way to explore your interests as well as demonstrate concern for others is by doing community service.

Ideally, your service expresses a genuine passion. A student who loves art might do art projects with sick kids in a hospital, or start an art therapy program for nursing home residents.

If you're involved in student government, or in a youth group at your church or temple, take advantage of the opportunity to initiate and complete a project that will demonstrate your leadership. It could be getting your class involved in a project to paint houses for low-income families, or recruiting students to serve as mentors to underprivileged school children.

You don't have to be class president to

take the initiative. One computer whiz solicited used computers from corporations and refurbished them before donating them to foster kids. Another student collected children's books, built bookcases and installed them at a shelter for battered women and their children. Then, the next spring he organized a "read to children" program at the shelter. One student on vacation in Mexico saw children without shoes walking the streets of a small town and started a charity to deliver donated clothing and other goods to them.

These are some of the creative ways students have made a contribution to the community, developed their own skills, increased their self-esteem and ended up with impressive examples of leadership. It starts with identifying a need and knowing your skills, so you can find a way to meet that need.

Think about what you believe in, what you'd like to see changed in the world, and find a way to make an impact. What are you good at? Use your skills to make a difference. If you're a great

cook, volunteer at a soup kitchen. A strong writer could help senior citizens get their life stories on paper.

It's great to start a project but not everyone has to be a leader. Reading to children in a hospital every week for three years demonstrates commitment and compassion. One student who's an avid equestrian volunteers at a therapeutic riding program where she helps people with developmental and physical handicaps enjoy riding horses.

There's not one "best" community service activity. The key is finding something you love doing. When you're involved in an activity that makes you feel alive, you'll be able to communicate that excitement in your college applications.

Pursuing your genuine interests makes it easier to stay involved in those activities year after year. That kind of long-term commitment not only impresses admissions officers, but also helps you to develop a sense of competence and self-esteem. That's a good thing, wherever you go to college.

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## Practice Tests and College Planning

Underclassmen who took the PSAT in October will be receiving their score reports sometime this month. Students tend to focus solely on their score, but a careful review of the entire report can be really helpful in planning your next moves.

Scores for each section are reported on a scale of 20 to 80. An average score for an eleventh grade student will be approximately 48 in critical reading, 49 in math, and 46 in writing. For tenth graders, the average scores are about 43 in reading, 44 in math, and 41 in writing.

*Percentiles* allow you to compare your scores to other college bound students who also took this exam. Scores are also presented as a *range*, since you personally could expect some variation if you were to take similar tests on different days.

The *Review Your Answers* section shows the question number, the correct answer, your answer and the level of difficulty of each question. Since your original test booklet will also be returned to you, you should review each question again and discover why a particular an-

swer was correct or incorrect.

The *Improve Your Skills* section will provide personalized feedback on your academic skills as measured by this exam. Two or three skills are highlighted for improvement for each section, and you'll receive suggestions for improving your performance.

College Board has also provided all PSAT test-takers with free access to My College QuickStart. By entering your e-mail on the PSAT page of [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), you will receive notice as soon as test scores become available, and will be able to view your score report online. A study plan for the SAT that is based on your performance is also available.

If you haven't taken the PLAN (a practice test for the ACT), you might consider taking a mock ACT offered by one of the test prep companies in your area. Comparing your scores on the mock ACT with your performance on the PSAT will help you to determine if the SAT or ACT will provide a better assessment of your strengths. Discuss results with your college advisor as you set up your plan for admissions testing.