



From Access to Achievement: How Amarillo ISD Supports Every Student with the SAT Suite

Learning is a lifelong journey, and in Amarillo Independent School District (ISD), we believe graduation day is a continuation of the learning students experienced in the classroom and their evolution toward a successful future. This understanding makes our job as educators critical to preparing our students for whatever path they choose—college, career, or military. To ensure readiness, we embrace a commitment to equal access to whatever tools and opportunities can lead to postsecondary success. Given this focus, the SAT® Suite of Assessments plays a critical and foundational role toward access and opportunity for all.

IDENTIFYING THE OPPORTUNITY

Amarillo ISD, located in the Texas Panhandle, prides itself on providing a highly personalized education experience to more than 29,000 PK–12 students. Through 5 high schools—4 traditional and 1 alternative—we educate 8,000+ learners. Profound challenges face many of our students: 5% are homeless (the 6th-highest rate in the state), 71% are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and 54% are considered “at risk.” Yet, we consistently achieve some of the highest success indicators in the state of Texas. We have a graduation rate of 95% or greater and an 87% college, career, and military readiness (CCMR) rate.

But our mission “to graduate every student prepared for life and success beyond high school” requires us to acknowledge these barriers and find solutions to ensure all students, regardless of background, have integrated support and equal access to college preparation tools and advanced learning opportunities.

TURNING OPPORTUNITY INTO ACTION

By offering the SAT at no cost during the school day, we’ve helped to eliminate logistical and financial challenges many of our students face. Each assessment, starting with PSAT™ 8/9, followed by PSAT™ 10, PSAT/NMSQT®, and finishing with the SAT, helps us monitor each student’s academic growth, identify areas needing support, and offer students guidance on career options based on their performance strengths.

Here in Amarillo, college and career readiness starts in middle school. By administering the PSAT 8/9 to all eighth graders, we’re building a college-going culture. All eighth graders also complete a college and career course, integrated with BigFuture®, where students begin to understand how their interests and academic strengths intersect with careers.

The PSAT 8/9 also serves as an early diagnostic tool, helping to identify students’ strengths and areas for growth as early as eighth grade. This proactive approach allows our teachers to tailor instruction to meet students’ needs, offering targeted support in key areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics.

In addition, the PSAT assessments allow us to leverage AP Potential™, where we identify students likely to do well in Advanced Placement® courses, especially those who may not typically surface as advanced learning candidates.

DISTRICT

Amarillo Independent School District

LOCATION

Amarillo, TX

DEMOGRAPHICS (2024-25)

29,626

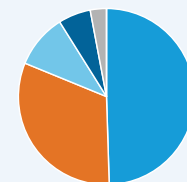
Total district enrollment

8,237

Grade 9-12 enrollment

71%

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-eligible



50% ■ Hispanic
32% ■ White
10% ■ Black
6% ■ Asian
3% ■ Two or more

SAT SUITE PROGRAM (2024-25)

1,886

PSAT 8/9 Test Takers

3,654

PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT
Test Takers

1,785

SAT School Day Test Takers

1,021

Students with AP Potential Data

“This data allows us to actively encourage and recruit students into challenging, college-level classes, which also serves as a CCMR indicator,” explains Tracey Morman, director of counseling/college and career readiness.

“By offering SAT School Day, our district ensures that all students, regardless of their background or financial situation, have access to a critical college admissions tool in a familiar, supportive environment.”

Tracey Morman

Director of Counseling/Career Readiness, Amarillo ISD

EVALUATING THE OUTCOMES

The data from the SAT Suite, including Skills Insights™ and AP Potential, is a game changer for our district. The Reading and Writing and Math benchmark data inform our work with state-level assessments and, by analyzing trends and performance, we can better align our curriculum to state standards. The data also allow us to make highly focused instructional adjustments at school, classroom, and individual student levels.

Perhaps our most powerful result has been the increase in AP participation. Using AP Potential data to influence our course offerings and encourage more students to take an AP course, we’ve increased our AP enrollment by 68% and, over the past five years, we’ve seen the number of AP Exams taken increase by more than 500.

In the lifelong journey of learning, think of the SAT Suite as a rich, reliable road map toward a shared destination of success.

PRACTICAL POINTERS

To get “buy-in,” we must help our school community understand how these assessments support each member of the community. **Ensure each of these stakeholders really understands the Why:**

- **For Students:** Help them realize that these tests are more than a score. The assessments serve as a tool for college and career readiness and access.
- **For Parents:** Be sure they understand that assessments open doors to scholarships and college-credit-earning opportunities through AP courses, resulting in reduced college costs.
- **For Teachers:** Encourage teachers to look beyond a single score. Help them use the data as a transformational tool, leading to informed interventions and enrichment.

EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES



Nichole Bennett
Associate Principal
Caprock High School

“Teachers are incorporating SAT resources and practice tools, including Khan Academy®, into their instruction. These resources provide students with targeted practice to help improve their scores and academic confidence.”



Andrea Pfeifer
Principal
Amarillo High School

“We look at data from the PSAT assessments, starting with the PSAT 8/9, when working with students on skills they need to improve. Our counselors also use AP Potential data when working individually with students on their course selections for the following year. This is directly connected to their diploma endorsement and their eventual college/career pathway.”

Explore more success spotlights at:
cb.org/spotlight