

# Reading More, Achieving the Core: Tools to Improve Student Performance on Explore, PLAN, & ACT



# *Big Picture*

English

40  
Questions

30  
minutes

Math

30  
Questions

30  
minutes

Reading

30  
Questions

30minutes

Science

28  
Questions

30  
minutes



# *Big Picture*

English

50  
Questions

30  
minutes

Math

40  
Questions

40  
minutes

Reading

25  
Questions

20  
minutes

Science

30  
Questions

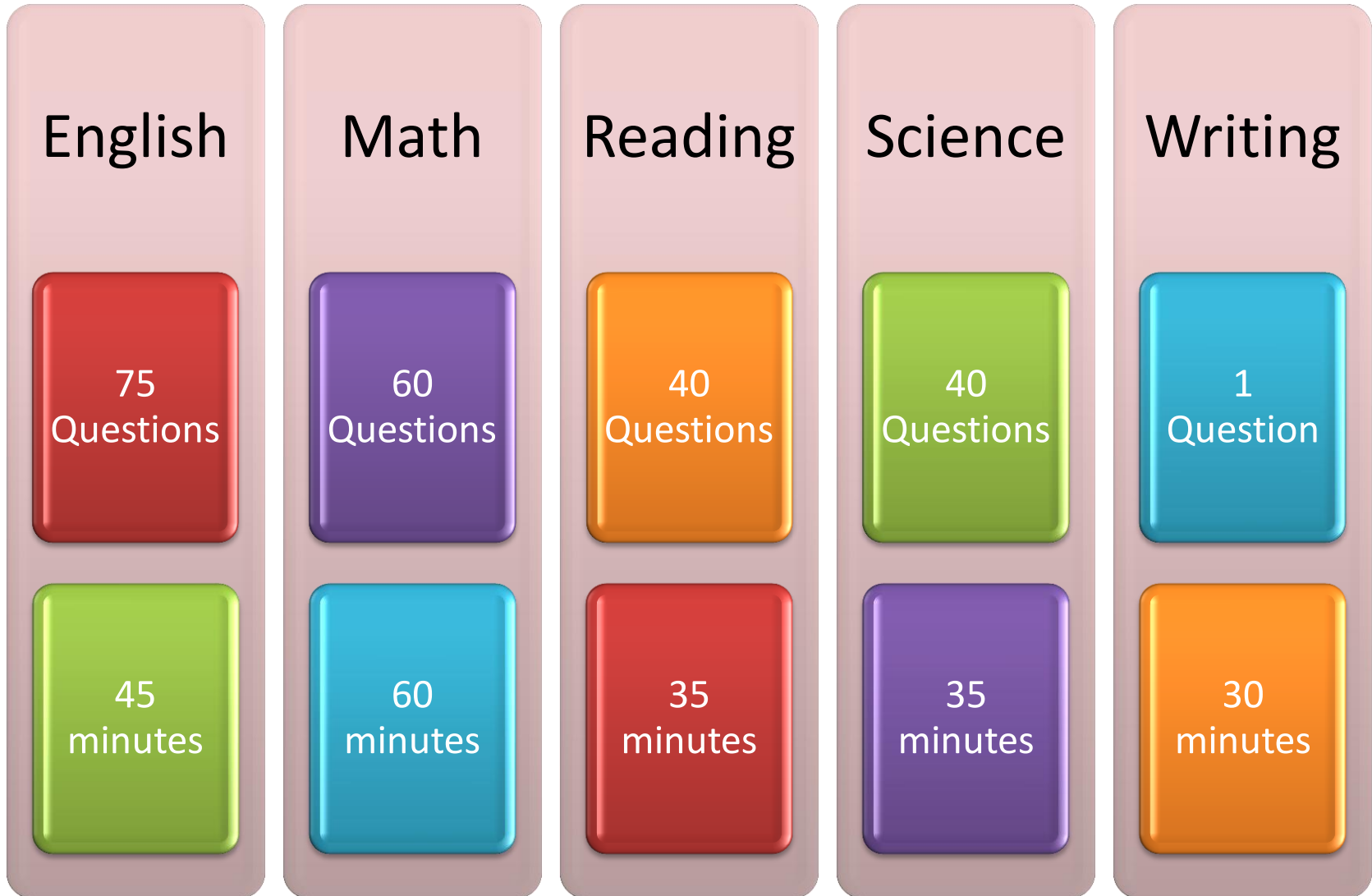
25  
minutes

Writing

1  
Question

30  
minutes

# *Big Picture*



# Why EXPLORE, PLAN, & ACT matter

These tests are aligned with CCSS—which draws *heavily* from ACT's College Readiness Standards & research.



# What are the ACT benchmark scores? What do they mean?

ACT Subject-Area Test	ACT Explore Benchmark Grade 8	ACT Explore Benchmark Grade 9	ACT Plan Benchmark	The ACT Test Benchmark
English	13	14	15	18
Reading	15	16	17	21
Mathematics	17	18	19	22
Science	20	20	21	24

**EXPLORE 25**  
**PLAN 32**  
**ACT 36**

**Percentage of the Common Core State Standards  
Addressed by the ACT Standards**

Common Core State Standards	ACT College Readiness Standards			
	EXPLORE (Grades 8–9)	PLAN (Grade 10)	ACT (Grades 11–12)	ACT Course Standards
Reading Anchor Standards	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reading Standards for Literature	45%	56%	67%	100%
Reading Standards for Informational Text	80%	70%	60%	100%
Reading Standards for History/Social Studies	70%	50%	30%	100%
Reading Standards for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects	100%	100%	100%	100%
Writing Anchor Standards	10%	10%	50%	100%
Writing Standards	10%	10%	50%	100%
Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects	10%	11%	11%	100%
Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards				100%
Speaking and Listening Standards				100%
Language Anchor Standards	100%	100%	100%	100%
Language Standards	100%	100%	100%	100%
Language Progressive Skills	100%	100%	100%	100%
Standards for Mathematical Content, Grade 8	100%	N/A	N/A	100%
Standards for Mathematical Content, Grades 9–12	100%	100%	100%	100%
Standards for Mathematical Practice	88%	88%	88%	100%

# Reading Passages for the EPAS (ACT's Educational Planning & Assessment System)

Literary  
Narratives

- Essays, ss, novels

Informational  
Passages

Uncomplicated

Challenging

Complex



# Reading Passages on the EPAS



**Prose**



**Social Science**



**Humanities**



**Natural Science**

## CCSS Anchors: Reading

### *Key Ideas and Details*

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3** Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

**ACT's College/Career  
readiness Standards**

**MID: Main ideas and  
author's approach**

**SUP: Supporting Details**

**REL: comparative,  
cause/effect  
relationships**

**GEN: Generalizations and  
conclusions**

## CCSS Anchors: Reading

### *Craft and Structure*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text

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## CCSS Anchors: Reading

### *Integration of Knowledge & Ideas*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

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# *General strategies for improving student performance on the EPAS.*



# Sample 1

A digital clock reads 6:06. Consider all the times on the clock where the hour digit is the same as the minute digit. Another such time is 8:08 or 9:09. What is the smallest time period between any two such doubles? (a) 61 minutes (b) 60 minutes (c) 58 minutes (d) 50 minutes **(e) 49 minutes**



## Sample 2

Unbricking a kiln after a firing is like a person uncovering a buried treasure.

- a. NO CHANGE
- b. someone
- c. a potter
- d. OMIT the underlined portion



# Sample 3

Even the most discerning palate might have difficulty determining the distinctions between the four wines on this tray.

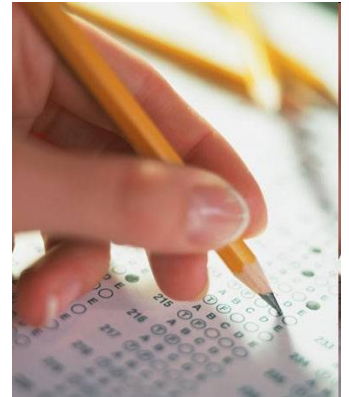
- a. NO CHANGE.
- b. between the four wines'
- c. among the four wines
- d. among the four wine's



# Sample 4

The perimeter of a 7-sided figure is 15. If the length of each side of the figure is increased by 2 units, what is the perimeter of the new figure?

- a. 17
- b. 22
- c. 24
- d. 29**
- e. 30



# Sample 5

Initial Speed (mi/hr)	Initial speed (ft/sec)	Method 1			Method 2
		R (ft)	B (ft)	D (ft)	D (ft)
20	29	22	20	42	58
30	59	33	80	124	118
50	88	55	180	246	176
80	118	66	320	408	236

Compared to  $R$  at an initial speed of 20 mi/hr,  $R$  at an initial speed of 80 mi/hr is

- A.  $\frac{1}{4}$  as great
- B. 2 times as great
- C. 3 times as great**
- D. 4 times as great

# Sample 6

The main idea of the first paragraph is that  
the Little Ice Age

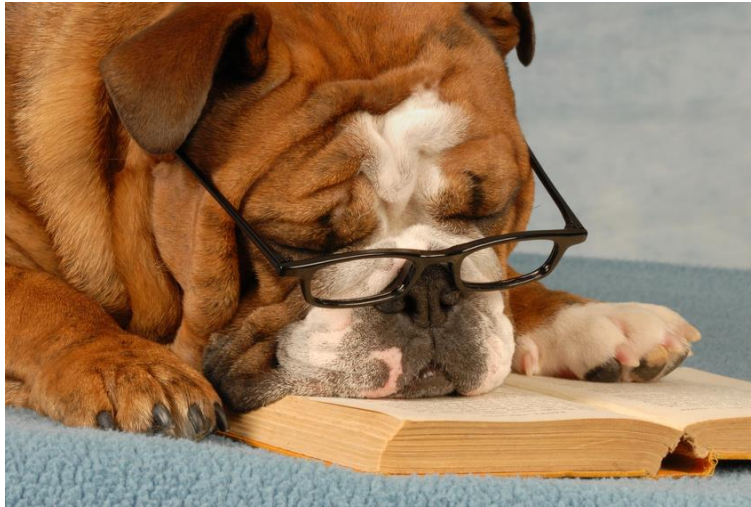
- a. was a period defined by prolonged global cooling.
- b. occurred during the era of Cro-Magnon mammoth hunters.
- c. was marked by frequent and short-term climate shifts.
- d. resulted from interactions between the atmosphere and the ocean.

# Sample 6

The main idea of the first paragraph is that  
the Little Ice Age

- a. was a period defined by prolonged global cooling.
- b. occurred during the era of Cro-Magnon mammoth hunters.
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- d. resulted from interactions between the atmosphere and the ocean.

# Use EPAS texts to reach students no matter the subject



- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.2](#) Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

# Across the Disciplines:

## Topics from recent EPAS

- Sally Ride
- Candy bars
- River eels' life cycles
- Amazon Workshop School for Stringed Instruments
- Louis Armstrong
- Acupuncture
- Longitude
- Sewing
- Brain function
- Eleanor Roosevelt
- Small comet
- Family heirlooms
- Pottery making
- Benjamin Banneker
- Kayaks

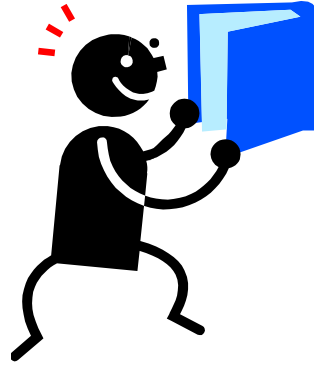


# Across the Disciplines:

## Prose excerpts from recent EPAS

- *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck
- “From Aboard the Night Train,”  
Kimberly Blaeser
- *The Accidental Tourist* by Anne  
Tyler
- “Finding Philosophy” by Colin  
McGinn
- “The Threshold” by Cristina Peri  
Rossi
- “Only the Little Bone” by David  
Huddle
- “American History” by Judith  
Ortiz-Cofer
- “The Interior Life” by Annie Dillard





Sample passages can be used across the disciplines to improve reading skills.

All have accompanying questions that teachers can use.

**These are great bell-ringer exercises that take about ten minutes.**



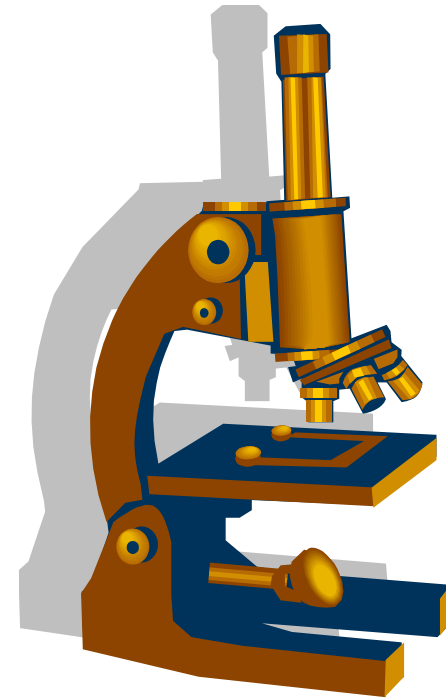
# Across the Disciplines: Science

- Earth & Space
  - Earthquakes
  - Plates, tectonics
  - Weather & climate
  - Stars, galaxies
  - fossils



# Across the Disciplines: Science

- Life Sciences/Biology
  - Animal behavior
  - Cell structures
  - Life Cycles
  - Taxonomy
  - Populations
  - Plant development
- Physical Sciences
  - Atomic structure
  - Heat, sound, light
  - Gravity, force, motion



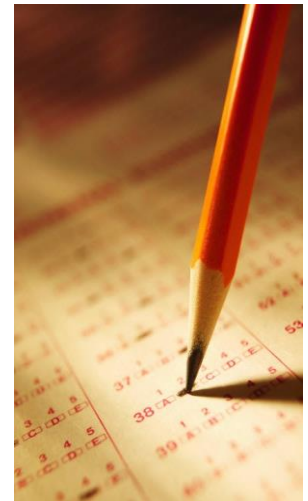
**The ACT for all juniors  
is**

**March 4, 2014.**

**EXPLORE is October 2013 for all  
sophomores.**

**Position your students to be ready  
for this opportunity.**

**Access and assess your school's  
2013 data.**



# *Questions & Evaluations*



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**www.facebook.com/aplustestprep**  
**www.twitter.com/aplustestprep**  
**Aplustestprep.wordpress.com**  
**919-475-3503**

**If this session was helpful, let us know!**





## UNC Heels for Success

**says, “Sheba is fantastic! She is an engaging speaker and provides a thorough preparation for students. We have asked Sheba to help with our ACT/SAT prep sessions for several years now, and there’s no one else we’d rather have!”**

**~~~Jazmin Garcia, Asst. Director  
UNC-Chapel Hill**



**one of my co-workers just gave you the greatest compliment. His daughter has taken a 17-week SAT session but **she said she learned more in your 8 hours than in the 17 weeks session!!!!** Keep up the work!**

~Vincent Ragland, Executive Director  
Reclaiming Our Youth Leadership Program





I had 2150 total; I scored 710 in Critical Reading (96% national percentile), and 780 in Writing (99% national percentile). I also got an 11 for my essay!

Thank you for being such a fabulous SAT Prep teacher - I learned so much from your class!~~Phillipa

sawebster@nc.rr.com 4/4/11  
to sheba



Sheba,

Thank you! Thank you!

Taylor just received his SAT results from March testing. Overall he increased 320 points!

Reading 380 to 560 (+180)

Math 520 to 620 (+100)

Writing 380 to 420 (+40)

I know your Prep Course gave him the skills and confidence he needed to improve his scores, not only in the reading section but the other sections as well. He was very proud, and so am I and his Dad. He now feels his college opportunities have increased greatly.





Ashleigh Gay ashgay94@gmail.com

May 3

to me

Hello Ms. Sheba. Long time no talk. I just wanted to let you know that i did improve on my SAT. My score went from a 1210 to a 1340. Thank you for all your help. I also wanted to let you know that i got accepted and will be attending Western Carolina University. I am very excited. Just wanted to let you know and thank you for your help.



SAT prep not only helped me with the knowledge I needed for the test, but it also gave me the confidence I needed going into the test. Being able to walk into the test with that kind of confidence helped raise my score over 100 points, which most books say can't happen. The SAT is not only a test of knowledge but also a test of your self-confidence and test taking skills. This SAT prep gave me all of these.

-Aaron Squires



"I love how enthusiastic you all were about teaching us; it made me excited to be a part of it. It also gave me lots of confidence about taking the SAT. Thanks!"

"I liked the way the instructors connected with the students and the effectiveness of the strategies."

"The teacher has a great understanding of the SAT and is able to relate very well to the students."

"Each part of the class is gone over in specific details."



Every spring, SAS Work/Life Center offers a Saturday morning SAT Strategy Session and practice exam as a kick-off to our annual College Series which assists SAS families with the admissions process. This year, I invited Sheba Lowe, CEO& Instructor with A+ Test Prep, to conduct both the Strategy Session and the practice exam for our high school students. I have been organizing this for over a decade and--without a doubt--Ms. Lowe's presentation skills, content, and enthusiastic engagement with our students and parents was beyond compare. The hour-long Strategy Session designed to help students learn about the SAT test design and tips for improving performance on certain question types was meaty and insightful as evidenced by the excellent marks Ms. Lowe received from both students and parents on the evaluation. The SMART Response technology that A+ Test Prep utilizes to target specific areas and questions that students need help with provided immediate and useful feedback. One parent commented afterwards, *"Our girls really loved last week's SAT session! The presenter was quite entertaining and they really liked the new, interactive way of doing the SAT practice test."* Remarkable praise from teens who had to get up early on a Saturday morning for this opportunity!

Page Cvelich, M.Ed.  
Teen/College Resource Consultant  
SAS Work/Life Center