September, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians of Rising 10th and 11th Grade Students:

On October 15, 2014, students in grades 10 and 11 in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and across the United States will take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). While only students in grade 11 are eligible to compete for National Merit Scholarships, taking the test in earlier grades provides excellent practice for taking the PSAT in grade 11 and for taking the SAT college entrance assessment.

The PSAT measures critical reading, writing skills, and math problem-solving skills. It assesses a student’s ability to reason with facts and concepts rather than the ability to recall and recite them. The test includes two 25-minute critical reading sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing section. Students receive three scores: critical reading, mathematics, and writing.

All 10th and 11th grade students at Oakton HS are strongly encouraged to take the PSAT. FCPS has arranged to cover the cost of score reports for all 10th graders.

For 11th graders, students who take the test and choose to pay $17 will receive a PSAT score report in December / January. Students may take the test, but opt out of paying for a score report and thus will not have their test scored.

All 11th grade students who complete the test and pay (10th graders do not pay) for a score report will receive the Score Report Plus, which will provide feedback created for individual students based on their unique patterns of response to the test questions. This will be helpful especially to 10th graders in preparing to take the PSAT again in 11th grade. In addition, PSAT results will help students identify their strengths and will allow them opportunities to make decisions on course enrollment in Honors or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

For questions or concerns regarding the PSAT test, contact Martha Rodeheaver, Assessment Coach, at mrodeheaver@fcps.edu

Students may prepare for the test by visiting www.collegeboard.com, reviewing the PSAT Student Bulletin available at their schools, getting a good night’s sleep prior to the test, and eating breakfast the morning of the test. I encourage you to discuss PSAT testing with your student.

Best wishes to you and your student.

Sincerely,

John Banbury
Oakton High School