

## OFFICIAL SAT PRACTICE STRATEGIES:

# Tips for Success from Chicago Public Schools

The College Board and Khan Academy® teamed up to revolutionize the way millions of students are getting ready for the SAT®. To help more students get free, world-class test practice and equip them with their own personalized study plan, the College Board, Khan Academy, and the Council of Great City Schools launched the [Official SAT Practice All In Challenge](#) for large urban districts in the fall of 2016.

Over a six-month period, the 28 participating districts encouraged 279,000 students to use Official SAT Practice. Of those students, 168,000 created new accounts. Students also used the tool: 61,000 practiced for at least 10 hours. One of the districts, Chicago Public Schools, received the “Problems Completed: Proof of Practice” award when its students completed the most Official SAT Practice problems—an average of 29—per week.

## CPS by the Numbers

- Over 24,000 students linked their College Board and Khan Academy accounts.
- Juniors completed 1.4 million practice problems and 32,000 hours of practice.
- 6,634 students practiced for 20 hours or more!

## What Made CPS a Winning District?

Dedicated district leaders provided training, support, and follow-through to each campus, while still allowing on-the-ground flexibility. Educators at all levels implemented four key strategies:

### 1. Goal Setting

Chicago Public Schools set districtwide goals for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors to guide priorities and motivate schools. As their Official SAT practice program kicked off, teachers and leaders at some schools developed their own goals to proactively measure progress.




At Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy:

- They set a schoolwide goal for an average SAT score of 1200.
- Teachers set goals around how much class time they’d spend using Official SAT Practice and how much students’ scores would improve.
- Students set goals around the number of hours that they’d use Official SAT Practice and their individual SAT score growth goals.
- They organized 5 practice tests to monitor progress toward their goals.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Goal Setting**  
District set overall goals; schools could tailor their approach to success.
- Professional Development**  
District oversaw robust training at all levels within the district and schools.
- Communications**  
District provided timely status updates and support from all levels of the district to all campuses.
- Student Engagement**  
School-based incentives encouraged and awarded student practice.
- Implementation Approach**  
Schools implemented practice in instructional classes, as well as advisory periods and after school.

## STRATEGIES BY AUDIENCE

-  Teachers
-  School leaders
-  District leaders

## 2. Robust Professional Development and Districtwide Communications

To train and support teachers and leaders systemwide, Chicago Public School teams at all levels utilized preexisting PD and communication routines.

- The Department of Student Assessment provided multiple training sessions across the city for regional offices that oversee groups of schools and all school administrators and teaching staff. Trainings covered foundational information about Official SAT Practice and strategies to support students in school.
- College Board staff trained additional groups of school administrators and teaching staff.
- Department of Student Assessment closely monitored and sent regular updates on progress in linking accounts and how much students were practicing. They provided follow-up support and helped celebrate achievements.

## 3. Incentives/Student Engagement

A combination of incentives increased students' ongoing use of Official SAT Practice at the school level.

At Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy, they awarded student practice and growth with:

- Tickets to Broadway shows in Chicago.
- An SAT Honors Assembly for students and parents to recognize those who gained 100 points or more, those who had the highest overall scores, and those who practiced the most. Assistant Principal Melissa Resh challenged students to beat her SAT score, promising to shave her head if she lost (and she did have to shave her head!).

DeVry University Advantage Academy (DUAA) held a “prep rally” nine weeks before the spring SAT to get students excited about college, focused on their goals, and informed about what to expect.

## 4. A Flexible Implementation Structure

While Chicago Public Schools provided support, school-based staff could decide how to implement Official SAT Practice on campus. Schools with the deepest usage, such as Brooks and DUAA, incorporated practice into:

- English, STEM, and history classes, as well as advisory periods, and periodically offered additional time during the school day.
- After-school sessions were offered 2 days per week for 1 hour. Teachers monitored student progress on Khan Academy and provided instructional support.
- Teachers also assigned Official SAT Practice as homework.

“We are excited that this content was built for learning—by the test provider who creates the actual assessment—and is free for all of our kids.”

**PETER LEONARD**, DIRECTOR  
OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT,  
CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Having that ongoing PD and support was powerful for us as educators.... And from there, we were able to easily decide what structures we needed to put in place.”

**SHANNAE JACKSON**, PRINCIPAL,  
GWENDOLYN BROOKS COLLEGE  
PREPARATORY ACADEMY

“Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and in years past we had to create differentiated materials on our own. Now, we have it basically on a website.... And you don't have to worry about, “Well, is this SAT-like?” Because that has already been aligned, and you know you're getting it from a source that has done, basically, the ‘dirty work’ for you.”

**MATT MISKOWICZ**, TEACHER,  
KENWOOD ACADEMY

For more information about Official SAT Practice for educators go to [satpractice.org/k12](https://satpractice.org/k12).