

OFFICIAL SAT PRACTICE STRATEGIES:

Tips for Success from Fresno and Long Beach Unified School Districts

The College Board and Khan Academy® have teamed up to revolutionize the way millions of students get 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. Of those 28 districts, California's Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) received the "MVP" award for highest overall percentage of students (93%) linking College Board and Khan Academy accounts. Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) received the "Growth" award for highest overall percent increase (36%) in account linking.

Fresno and Long Beach by the Numbers

Fresno

- Over 4,400 juniors linked accounts.
- Juniors completed over 590,000 practice problems.
- Juniors logged 17,000 hours of practice.

Long Beach

- Over 3,300 juniors linked accounts.
- Juniors completed over 840,000 practice problems.
- Juniors logged 23,000 hours of practice.

What Made Long Beach and Fresno Unified School District Winning Districts?

District leaders identified teams across the two districts that could take ownership over the work. Strategies included sharing best practices and materials, using incentives to engage students and schools, and promoting the tool with parents.

1. Identify School Leaders




Both districts identified a team to build and own their initiative.

- Long Beach chose AP® coordinators, a small group reporting to the superintendent.
- Fresno chose head counselors, who trained school counselors, AP coordinators, and administrators.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Identify Leaders.**
Districts gave ownership to school-based teams to drive implementation.
- Communication Network.**
Build a communication network within the district to share best practices.
- Use Incentives.**
Districts and schools provide participation and motivation incentives.
- Encourage Practice.**
Schools create opportunities and structure for students to practice inside and outside of school.
- Engage Parents.**
Districts and schools communicated with parents to support student practice at home.

STRATEGIES BY AUDIENCE:

-  Teachers
-  School Leaders
-  District Leaders

2. Communicate Best Practices and Build Community Spirit

Districts shared information and resources across teams, departments, and schools:

- Fresno used Skype training sessions so leaders could learn anywhere.
- Fresno personalized College Board and Khan Academy resources to make district-specific user and troubleshooting guides and distributed these materials to streamline the account-linking process.
- Long Beach AP coordinators held monthly meetings to discuss challenges and progress.

3. Implement Incentives

- **Long Beach USD** set an overall district goal to have 70% of students linked. They offered a monetary incentive to each school for each student who linked.
- **Robert A. Millikan High School** (LBUSD), a uniform school, awarded students a free dress day after seeing how many used Official SAT Practice.
- **McLane and Fresno High Schools** (FUSD) offered front-of-the-line lunch tickets for each student who linked and off-campus passes for juniors and seniors.

4. Encourage Practice Inside and Outside of School

Both districts' schools leveraged core classes, advisory, Saturday School, and "0" period to see students get connected. They also engaged parents.

- **Sunnyside High School** (FUSD) checked out tablets to students without technology at home.
- **Woodrow Wilson High School** (LBUSD), rather than mandating practice, challenged departments to use the tool in a meaningful way. The English Department did all grammar lessons on Official SAT Practice.
- **Woodrow Wilson High School** (LBUSD) counselors discussed college and Official SAT Practice with students.

5. Engage parents in at-home practice

- District and school representatives used websites, emails, phone calls, and letters to advise parents.
- Parents received [overview videos](#) and videos about [how to get linked](#).
- Long Beach sent next-step letters to parents of students who were on the cusp of eligibility into the California State University system. The letters promoted how Official SAT Practice can help the students raise scores and become CSU-eligible.

For more information about Official SAT Practice for educators go to satpractice.org/k12.

“Practicing on Official SAT Practice is not just a separate SAT thing, but a more natural part of the learning process.”

DEBORAH HENELL,
COLLEGE LIAISON, DESIGN SCIENCE
HIGH SCHOOL, FRESNO

“Some of our high schools approach 4,000 plus students, so to take this on districtwide takes much organization and commitment. Getting someone to spearhead the effort is valuable.”

CHRIS LUND, ASSISTANT
SUPERINTENDENT, LBUSD

“My recommendation to central office leaders is to get feedback from the end user to personalize user guides, FAQs, and best practices to improve academic skills for SAT and overall student achievement.”

KATIE RUSSELL, INSTRUCTIONAL
SUPERINTENDENT, FUSD

“Students really liked the targeted practice. They were able to focus on skills they needed to work on rather than going into the exam blindly.”

ERIN HILL, AP COORDINATOR,
ROBERT A. MILLIKAN HIGH SCHOOL,
LBUSD