

STANDARDIZED TESTING

“Examinations are harmless when the examinee is indifferent to their result, but as soon as they matter, they begin to distort his attitude to education and to conceal its purpose.”

~Sir Richard Livingstone

In the 1990's, Arizona homeschoolers fought hard to win the right to be free from mandatory testing. Arizona homeschooled students are no longer required to take any standardized tests including the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test. It is up to the individual parent/family whether or not they want to do standardized testing.

Periodic standardized testing can be useful because it allows you to track your child's progress and gives you a reliable measure of your child's academic performance compared to other students across the nation. Common tests include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Metropolitan Achievement Test, and Stanford Achievement Test. Virtual Knowledge, Inc., is a company that developed and markets the Sylvan Children's Skill Test, a CD-ROM-based exam that allows parents to measure their children's academic skills at home. However, testing in the home environment where parents are well aware of how their children are doing may be unnecessary.

Standardized tests become more important for college-bound high school students. Students who take the Advanced Placement (AP) test can earn college credit while in high school. The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) enables students to test out of undergraduate courses. The PSAT/NMSQT is the practice test for the SAT and it doubles as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The ACT is an achievement test, measuring what a student has learned in school. The SAT is more of an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities. Most colleges accept SAT scores for admissions and to award scholarships. Many colleges will accept the ACT in lieu of the SAT.

High schoolers can get ready for test-taking by utilizing one of the many test preparation books or classes that are available. For information about college entrance exams, test prep, or to take a free practice test, go to: www.princetonreview.com. See also: www.collegeboard.com (AP, PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, CLEP) and www.act.org (ACT).

If you would like your child to take a standardized test, ask your local support group if they offer testing. If they do not, there are several homeschool testing services available:

- Bayside School Services – www.baysideschoolservices.com
- Bob Jones University Press – www.bjup.com/services/testing
- Covenant Home School Resource Center – www.homeschoolresourcecenter.org
- Educational Testing Center – www.etestingcenter.com
- Family Learning Organization – www.familylearning.org/testing.html
- Hewitt Homeschool Resources – <http://hewitthomeschooling.com/test/tmain.asp>
- Seton Testing Service – www.setonhome.org/testing/default.php

NOTE: The Maricopa County School Superintendent's office has made the AIMS test available for homeschoolers, but that doesn't mean homeschoolers should take it. AIMS is a standards-based test designed to measure student performance relative to state learning standards only. It does not show their progress in comparison to students across the nation. Colleges want to see SAT and ACT scores – not AIMS test scores. Besides, an ASU study of 43 employers in Arizona found the content of the AIMS test to be irrelevant to the majority of respondents' businesses or industries. The AIMS test is given to homeschoolers at a cost to the taxpayers, and entangling private home education with government money is never a good idea. If homeschool parents voluntarily submit to this offer, it may re-open the debate over mandatory testing once again.