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## State will pay students' test fee

Goal is for more to attend college

*By Deanna Martin*  
*Associated Press*

INDIANAPOLIS -- The state wants more high school sophomores and juniors to take a preparatory version of the SAT, so it's covering the cost of the test.

The Indiana Department of Education said last week that it would pay the fee for students to take the PSAT. Previously, many parents or students had to pay \$13 for the exam, which helps students prepare for the SAT, a college admissions test.

"By removing preparatory exam fees from the equation, Indiana has eliminated another obstacle to preparing Hoosier students for college success," said Suellen Reed, the state's superintendent for public instruction.

The state has offered free tests to some 11th-graders in the past but did not have enough money to cover all of them or any 10th-graders.

But the Education Department said the state's newly negotiated contract with the College Board, which owns the test, gives Indiana a discounted fee of \$10.40 per test, as well as professional development opportunities for educators.

The lower fee allows the department to offer free tests to all sophomores and juniors without spending more than \$1.8 million -- paid for with savings from Indiana's revamped statewide testing system.

Reed has encouraged students to take rigorous high school classes and the PSAT -- steps she hopes can boost scores.

"Now it's up to our students to take full advantage of these opportunities," she said.

Indiana's overall scores on the SAT declined slightly for the graduating class of 2008. Indiana's combined score of 1,485 in reading, math and writing on a 2,400-point scale trailed the national average of 1,511.

More than 60 percent of Indiana's class of 2008 took the SAT. But less than half of the state's sophomores and juniors took the PSAT last year.

Graduating seniors in 2008 who had taken the PSAT scored an average of 250 points higher on the SAT than those who didn't take the PSAT, the Education Department said.

PSAT results give students personalized feedback about their strong and weak points, said Elizabeth Crouch of Learn More Indiana, a partnership of state agencies working to encourage more students to pursue college educations.

"The sooner they start preparing for college, the better," Crouch said.

This year the PSAT will be given on Oct. 15. The registration deadline for ordering testing materials is Sept. 24, and students can talk to their guidance counselors for more information.

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