Introduction and Background
The SAT measures high school students’ readiness for college and includes two subject tests: (1) Math and (2) Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW). In March 2016, a College and Career Readiness (CCR) Benchmark, which indicates a score associated with a 75% chance of earning a C or better in first-semester, credit-bearing college courses, was introduced by the College Board for each subject test. The CCR benchmark scores for Math and EBRW are 530 and 480 respectively. Before the identification of a single Math and EBRW benchmark in 2016, the College Board estimated a single College Readiness benchmark of 1550 for the combined score of the previously administered subject tests.

Prior to 2013, there was a lack of consistent expectation for how BCPS should communicate, market, and educate families on the SAT and provide access to adequate preparation for all eligible students. Thus, BCPS launched SAT Day in April 2013 as one of the systemic research-based methods to increase the access and opportunities for all students. The launch of SAT Day allowed all Grade 11 students to take the SAT free of charge during a regularly scheduled school day, a practice that is supported by a growing body of research that indicates requiring and paying for all high school students to take a college entrance exam increases college going and persistence, particularly among students from historically underrepresented populations (Hurwitz, Smith, Niu, & Howell, 2015; Hyman, 2017). This strategy yielded a significant increase in participation in all student groups from 2012 - 2013 (Figure 1).

Connection to The Compass
In The Compass: Our Pathway to Excellence, the purpose of our strategic plan intentionally establishes expectations for BCPS to increase achievement for all students while preparing a variety of pathways to prepare students for career, college, and service. Raising the bar, closing gaps, and prioritizing equitable access, opportunities, and achievement for all students towards rigorous benchmarks for college and career readiness. The “College and Career Readiness Score on SAT” (CCR) is an achievement marker on the BCPS College and Career Ready Pathway. Thus, when possible, SAT data will include estimates of students achieving the CCR score benchmarks.

Current Work
To interrupt the persistent and pervasive gaps observed in the system data related to SAT, schools have been working individually to implement strategies to support student success in the following ways:

- SAT semester prep classes offered to juniors and seniors
- SAT after-school sessions facilitated by SAT Coordinator and/or ELA and Math teachers
- Practice SAT tests administered in certain schools
- Integrated SAT verbal and mathematics vocabulary and problems into ELA and Math classes
- Khan Academy through College Board student account offered to students

Responding to The Data
As a result of the school practices, student participation and performance has remained consistent over the last 5 years. With recognition that there is still more work to do regarding college entrance assessments, CCR, and specifically to accelerate student outcomes around SAT participation and performance, a conceptual framework for System Improvement Teams (SIT) was implemented by Dr. Williams in September 2020. The 11 SIT teams were created as one method of discussing, analyzing, and changing practices in central offices and schools. The PSAT, SAT, ACT, ACCUPLACER SIT was created with the purpose of unpacking the achievement story related to student preparation, participation, and performance on the assessments, with a specific goal to determine the current and desired state in these areas. Current BCPS data suggest there are no systemic practices for ways all schools prepare students and provide
access to these assessments. This team will develop implications for system, division, office, and school key initiatives and strategies and recommend next steps for growth and improvement. SIT allows for all aspects of our system to come together to collectively problem solve around how to disrupt disparities and accelerate outcomes for our students. The following actions have been taken by the PSAT, SAT, ACT, ACCUPLACER SIT to begin to understand the current BCPS story related to preparation, participation, and performance:

- Examined the current state of student participation and performance through analyzing system data.
- Studied current research regarding how to increase participation and performance.
- Engaged in focus groups with Principals and other school leaders in schools that are currently beating the odds, hear their story, and learn best practices.
- Engaged with system leaders to hear their story of how they are supporting schools in increasing participation and performance.

Preliminary High-Level findings of the PSAT, SAT, ACT, ACCUPLACER SIT group are as follows:

- Variance exists across schools in how students can access preparation opportunities.
- Lack of standardization at the system level regarding those non-negotiable items that all schools must engage in preparing students for various college entrance assessments.
- Variance in how college entrance assessments are communicated and marketed throughout the system.
- Variance in professional learning that occurs for counselors and teachers as it relates to educating students and families on choices for college entrance assessments.

In addition to reviewing historical and present SAT student performance and participation, the SIT group will draft and deliver recommendations for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year that identify specific steps to improve student preparation, participation, and performance on college entrance assessments, including the SAT.
Findings

BCPS Grade 11 SAT Participation

SAT Day was launched in April 2013 and Figure 1 illustrates the immediate, notable impact on SAT participation among BCPS juniors. In the three years prior to the launch of SAT Day, approximately one-in-three BCPS students took the SAT in their junior year. Since SAT Day was introduced, Grade 11 students have maintained a participation rate of approximately 85%. In 2019, among BCPS high schools, SAT Day participation rates ranged from 68.1% to 98.5%, with 13 schools having participation rates greater than 90%.

Figure 1. Ten-Year SAT Participation Rate for BCPS Students in Grade 11

When examining student groups, SAT Day had the greatest impact on African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, and students eligible for English Learner services (Table 1). The launch of SAT Day also greatly reduced student group gaps in participation. The gap between the highest and lowest participating group based on race/ethnicity was 37.2% in the year preceding SAT Day; that figure dropped to 18.5% in 2018–2019.

May 3, 2021
### Table 1. Grade 11 Participation Rate Trends by Student Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group*</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>Two or More Races</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Free and Reduced Meals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SAT Day Participation rates are not reported for American Indian/Native Alaskan or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian due to the small sample size.

Note: Participation rates are included for school year immediately preceding the SAT Day launch, the first SAT Day, and the most recent SAT Day.

The composition of test-takers in Grade 11 has become much more representative of the overall BCPS student population. In the year prior to the launch of SAT Day, African American/Black students, while nearly 40% of the total Grade 11 composition, were only about a quarter of all Grade 11 SAT participants (Figure 2). In addition, Asian and White students were overrepresented among Grade 11 SAT participants.

**Figure 2. Trends in Composition of Grade 11 Enrollment and SAT Completion, by Race/Ethnicity**

**SAT Day Participation rates are not reported for American Indian/Native Alaskan or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian due to the small sample size.**
Figure 3 displays the mean 2018–2019 SAT Day Grade 11 scores by student group. The mean score required to earn the Met CCR-ELA designation for SAT EBRW is 480 (depicted by the black horizontal line). Student groups who met or exceeded the Met CCR-EBRW benchmark for the 2019 SAT Day include All Students, as well as student groups who identify as Asian, Two or More Races, or White. Gaps in student performance exist for our Black/African American (Mean=448) and Hispanic/Latino (Mean=451) students in comparison to Asian (Mean=538) or White (Mean=531) students. English Learners (Mean=371) and Special Education (Mean=375) students have an average mean more than 100 points lower than the All Students mean score, while the gap for students who receive FARM (Mean=449) services is greater than 40 points in comparison to All Students.

Figure 4. 2018–2019 Mean SAT Day Math Score for BCPS Grade 11 Students, by Student Group
Figure 4 displays the mean 2018–2019 SAT Day Grade 11 scores by student group. The mean score required to earn the Met CCR-Math designation for SAT Math is 530 (depicted as the black horizontal line). Students who identify as Asian (Mean=551) were the only student group who had an SAT Day Math mean score which exceeded the SAT Math benchmark of 530 while students who identify as White were the next highest performing student group (Mean=517). Gaps in student performance exist for our Black/African American (Mean=420), Hispanic/Latino (Mean=427) students. English Learners (Mean=372) and Special Education (Mean=363) students have an average mean more than 150 points lower than the “Met CCR-Math” criteria SAT Math mean of 530, while the gap for students who receive FARM (Mean=424) services is greater than 100 points in comparison to the “Met CCR-Math” benchmark.

Figure 5 displays the percentage of students in Grade 11 who met the CCR-EBRW benchmark based on the 2019 SAT Day subject test scores. The percentage of students who met CCR-EBRW is determined by dividing the total number of students who scored at or above a mean score of 480 with the total number of test takers for that group. Pervasive gaps exist in the percentage of students who met CCR-EBRW for students who identify as Black/African American (34.8%) or Hispanic/Latino (36.8%) compared to students who identify as Asian (67.0%) or White (68.0%). Students who receive English Learner (≤5%) or Special Education services (6.0%) earned the Met CCR-EBRW met at a rate more than 45 percentage points less than the percentage of All Students (51.5%), while students who receive FARM (34.4%) services met a rate 15 percent lower than All Students (51.5%).
Figure 6 displays the percentage of students in Grade 11 who met the CCR benchmark for SAT Math based on their 2018–2019 SAT Day scores. The percentage of students who met CCR Math is determined by dividing the total number of students who scored at or above a mean score of 530 with the total number of test takers for that group. Pervasive gaps exist for the percentage of students who met CCR-Math for students who identify as Black/African American (12.9%) or Hispanic/Latino (16.4%) students compared to students who identify as Asian (55.9%) or White (46.7%) Students who receive English Learner (≤5%) or Special Education (≤5%) services earned the Met CCR-Math designation at a rate more than 25 percentage points less than the percentage of All Students (30.4%) earning the designation, while students who receive FARM (14.4%) services earned the designation at a rate more than 15 percentage points less than the All Students group (30.4%).

**Implications**

The launch of SAT Day in the 2012–2013 school year positively impacted participation rates of all BCPS students, but particularly those historically less likely to take a college entrance exam. Nationwide, SAT School Days are increasing. In 2011, just two years before BCPS launched SAT Day, only 118 schools across the nation participated in an SAT Day; in 2019, that number climbed to 8,270. Along with BCPS, 200 districts, 10 states, and the District of Columbia currently offer an SAT Day.

Consistent with national trends, the implementation of a universal SAT Day in BCPS resulted in a larger more diverse population of test-takers. The SAT is a measure of college readiness and increasing access to this assessment means students who may have previously not considered attending college are now taking the test. An immediate result of increasing the number and diversity of test-takers is a broader distribution of scores that evidence lower performance, on average. As stated previously, increasing SAT participation positively impacts college going and persistence among historically underrepresented populations. BCPS’ SAT Day participation...
Data clearly demonstrate an increase in equitable access among student groups. Thus, school system leadership continues to explore additional recommendations to improve student achievement through the work of our System Improvement Team (SIT) in alignment with our strategic plan, *The Compass*. Additionally, we will continue to use our internal structures, such as the Instructional Core Team (ICT) and the Academic Team meetings (ATM), to identify additional next steps, recommendations, and improvement plans related to SAT, and build upon existing gains in student SAT participation through further data exploration and implementing practices to support students beyond SAT Day.

**Preparation, Participation, and Intervention**

SAT Day is not an event that occurs in isolation, but a measure of progress in the continuous process of preparing BCPS students for College and Careers. Thus, it is important to examine practices prior to, during, and following SAT Day. Strategies to increase SAT participation must also include indirect methods to improve performance and encourage college and career readiness such as increasing student enrollment in rigorous courses, providing support for students who are accelerated into more rigorous courses, and increasing student and caregiver awareness of college accessibility. Implementing such practices in the months and years preceding SAT Day may positively impact students’ performance.

SAT Day provides insight into students’ college and career readiness a little over a year before high school graduation. Differentiated interventions and supports may be employed based on SAT Day performance. For example, SAT Day may allow a high scoring student from a historically underserved group to move onto a college-going trajectory through either (1) uncovering a level of achievement/aptitude that would have remained hidden had they not taken the exam or (2) using their first test-taking experience to seek remediation and improve their scores. Thus, educators are encouraged to utilize SAT Day data to inform practices associated with improving college and career readiness outcomes for all students.

**Next Steps**

Students in Grade 11 were provided with the opportunity to participate in SAT Day on March 24, 2021. There were 3,360 students who pre-registered to take the SAT on March 24 and 2,796 students were tested. BCPS will receive a data file with scores for these students shortly and will share the results at an upcoming Board of Education meeting.