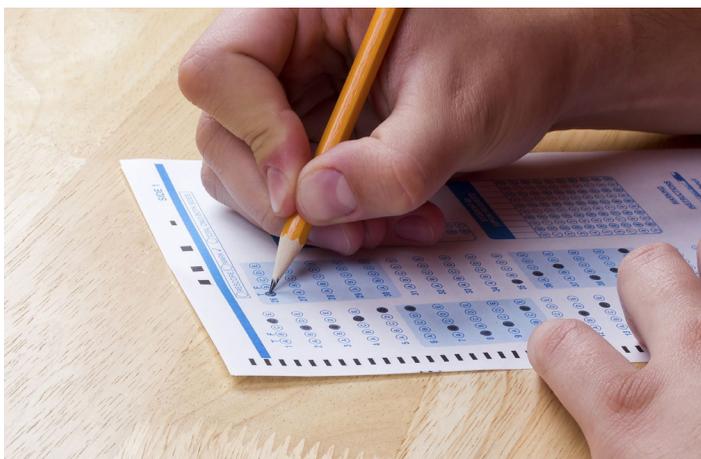




November 2017

Standardized Test Scores Are Up...Way Up!

We received *great* news from our much-anticipated TerraNova 3 standardized test scores for our kindergarten through tenth grade students. Overall, PACS students scored 97% above the ACSI average for all schools nationwide – 97%! More specifically, of the 121 subtests, our students scored higher than average on 117 of them, and they were significantly above the average on 81% percent of them (75% or higher on 98 of the 121 subsets). Our *most significant gains* were achieved in *lower school mathematics* where three years ago we were only 46% above average (13 of the 28) subtests compared to 86% on this latest battery (24 of 28 subtests were above average). I believe these significant gains in our lower school students' performance are based on a few key factors: a major change in curriculum three years ago; faculty who willingly



embraced the decision to implement a unilateral versus phased curriculum implementation; increased frequency and standardization among teachers in their assessment plan supportive parents who worked with their teachers and students to help overcome prerequisite skill gaps when we implemented the new curriculum;

“At Prince our smaller, intimate class sizes help cultivate interpersonal relationships between teachers and students promoting a more collaborative, learner centered approach.”

accountability and a knowledgeable, performance driven leadership approach from Lower School Principal, Becky Callaway; and of course, the efforts of our wonderful students!

Likewise, a review of the most recent ACT and SAT scores of our high school students against ten surrounding public school counties revealed our three-year average continues to surpass all of them. What makes this achievement even more significant is our composite test score reflects ALL our high school students versus just the public-school students who elected to take the ACT or SAT (large numbers of public-school students do not take the College Board or American College Testing standardized tests). This week we conducted another round of intensive ACT preparation for students in the junior class. As most high school parents know, the three primary elements college admissions counselors evaluate in prospective students are grade point average, course rigor (number of AP and dual enrollment courses taken), and standardized test scores.

At Prince, we are keenly aware of the value of standardized testing, and we use it but in moderation. Conversely, the average American public-school student

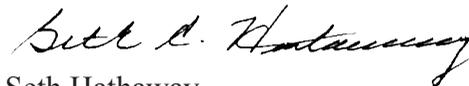
takes eight standardized tests per year, and some take multiple days to administer (Breiner, 2015). This loss of instructional time does not include the time required for students to practice filling out demographic data sheets critical in federal and state reporting for compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (R2T), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Georgia Milestones (formerly CRCT), etcetera, nor the school “pep-rallies” held to get teachers and students excited about standardized testing (Strauss, 2015). We routinely hear concerns from new families coming to PACS from public schools relative to the frequency and emphasis placed on standardized testing, which also introduces more stress and fatigue into the learning environment. Public schools and large standardized testing companies cost American taxpayers between \$20 to \$50 *billion* per year nationwide (Breiner, 2015); it is BIG business that has created a codependent relationship that sustains education’s bureaucratic structures that often place more emphasis on teaching than learning as time and resources are dedicated to “teaching to the test” (Christensen, 2017).

Large public-school class sizes also often necessitate a more traditional, authoritative teacher to student relationship that limits teachers to one or two dominant teaching pedagogies for all students in order to help maintain control in the classroom (Christensen, 2017). At Prince our smaller, intimate class sizes help cultivate interpersonal relationships between teachers and students promoting a more collaborative, learner centered approach. In addition, as a private, PreK-12 school, we have the ability to make changes, rapidly if we so chose, to meet our students’ needs in the classroom unhampered by the monolithic structures inherent in public schools with cumbersome committees for curriculum, textbooks choices (another BIG financial business), contracts, district level decisions, etcetera.

Prince has assembled an excellent scholastic leadership team that carefully considers the impact one decision has on our lower, middle, and high school student populations. I am thankful for Dean Eley, his leadership of our school’s scholastic programs, and his practice of continuing to visit other quality schools in

the greater Atlanta area to identify best practices as we continuously seek self-improvement. A review of our school’s Curriculum and Profile Sheet with its standardized test score comparison and list of competitive colleges and universities our students have gained admission to demonstrates our commitment to scholastic excellence is a reflection of our desire to honor our Lord. Moving forward, we must continue to place a strong emphasis on cultivating and refining the higher order thinking skills within the scholastic taxonomy pyramid, especially in the upper grades, as we strive to prepare our 21st century learners for the demands of tomorrow’s undergraduate environment. Thank you for your continued partnership in Christian education and helping to prepare tomorrow’s leaders for Christ.

Warm regards and in His service,



Seth Hathaway
Head of School

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Strauss, V. (2015). Confirmed: Standardized testing has taken over our schools. But who’s to blame? *Washington Post*.

Other Head of School Letters to Parents

[Families: Better Connected but More Alone](#)

[Strategic Planning: Building Upon our Mission and Vision](#)

[It’s Not What You Know It’s Who You Know](#)

[Embracing Change While Remaining Christ Centered](#)