



**Research Report**

**No. 2005-1**

# A Survey to Evaluate the Alignment of the New SAT<sup>®</sup> Writing and Critical Reading Sections to Curricula and Instructional Practices

**Glenn B. Milewski, Daniel Johnsen,  
Nancy Glazer, and Melvin Kubota**

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**College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 2005**

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# Abstract

The current paper presents the results of a large-scale, national, reading and writing curriculum survey and evaluates the alignment of the survey results to the reading and writing skills measured by the new SAT®. It was hypothesized that the skills measured by the writing and critical reading sections of the new SAT would be aligned to the curricula reflected in the survey responses. A strong alignment would provide important validity evidence for the new SAT. A total of 2,351 high school and college teachers in the United States were asked about reading and writing skills, student proficiency in reading and writing, assignments, and background information. The results demonstrate a strong link between the skills measured by the new SAT and high school and college curricula and instructional practice. Limitations and next steps are discussed.

## Introduction

### Objective

In the spring of 2003, a survey of English and language arts teachers was undertaken by the College Board to better understand reading and writing curricula in the United States. The primary objective of the curriculum survey was to collect data from teachers about the frequency with which specific reading and writing skills were covered in the classroom and how important teachers felt that these skills were for students entering their first year of college. It was assumed that survey responses would be reflective of a general college-preparatory curriculum in reading and writing.

Since the purpose of the new SAT, a college admissions test that measures student reasoning based on knowledge and skills developed by the student in school course work, is to reflect current curriculum and institutional practices in high school and college, the current study was conducted to examine the nature and extent of the alignment between the tested skills and curricula. Although the test includes three sections—critical reading, writing, and math—the survey focused entirely on writing and critical reading. (A future survey will evaluate math curricula.) It was hypothesized that the skills measured by the writing and critical reading sections of the new SAT would be aligned to the curricula reflected in the survey responses. It was acknowledged that, since multiple and interrelated skills are often brought to bear when test-takers respond to SAT questions, the match between the surveyed skills and the test content specifications<sup>1</sup> would not necessarily be demonstrated in simple one-to-one correspondences between survey skills and content specifications.

Invitations to participate in the Web-based curriculum survey were sent to approximately 38,000 teachers. Market Data Retrieval (MDR), a company that provides mailing lists for high school and college teachers, supplied the mailing addresses. Because Web participation was low, a paper version of the survey was created and distributed to teachers who participated in essay readings for the College Board's Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) Examinations in English Language and English Literature, and the SAT Subject Test in Writing. A total of 2,351 teachers responded to the curriculum survey.

The current paper presents the results of the curriculum survey and discusses the alignment of the survey results to the skills measured by the new SAT. The paper focuses on the current state of English/language arts curricula and instructional practice rather than trends across surveys. A detailed description of the writing and critical reading sections, along with sample new SAT questions, is provided in addition to the survey results.

### SAT® Critical Reading

Beginning in spring 2005, the verbal section of the SAT Reasoning Test™ will be renamed “critical reading” to reflect the increased emphasis that the new test will place on reading skills. As part of this change in emphasis, analogies, which had heretofore made up approximately 24 percent of the verbal section, will be dropped from the test and will be replaced by questions based on short reading passages. Sentence completion questions will continue to appear on the test, in approximately the same proportion (about 28 percent) as on the current test (24 percent). Appendix A provides sample critical reading questions for each item format.

### Sentence Completions

In sentence completion questions, test-takers are presented with a sentence containing one or two blanks, each blank indicating that a word is missing. Each answer choice includes a word or set of words. Test-takers are asked to select the answer choice that contains the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Sentence completion questions assess test-takers' knowledge of the meanings of words, and their ability to understand how the different parts of a sentence fit logically together. Approximately 28 percent of critical reading questions are of this type (19 questions).

### Passage-Based Reading Questions

Passage-based reading questions comprise approximately 72 percent of the questions in the critical reading section of the new SAT (48 questions). These questions measure

<sup>1</sup> Each SAT meets very precise specifications that function as a blueprint of all the dimensions of the test, including the skills assessed, difficulty level, statistical properties, content, and format. The following sections summarize the *content specifications* for the critical reading and writing sections of the new SAT.

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test-takers' ability to read and to think carefully about what they have read. Questions are based on reading passages that range from 100 to 850 words and that are drawn from a variety of fields. Across the reading passages, there is a balance of content from the humanities, social studies, natural sciences, and literary fiction. As with previous versions of the SAT, each test will include four "long" reading passages (400–850 words), one of which is comprised of a pair of related passages. Beginning in 2005, the SAT will also include questions based upon short passages. These passages will be approximately 100 words long, and each will be followed by two questions based on what is stated or implied in the passage. Each test will also contain a pair of short readings—two paragraphs on the same or a related topic—followed by approximately four questions based on these passages. Most or all of these questions will ask test-takers to understand the relationship between the two passages, or to synthesize ideas presented in the two passages. The questions following the short passages will resemble the current passage-based reading questions, which fall into three general categories: literal comprehension, vocabulary in context, and extended reasoning.

Literal comprehension questions focus on a small but significant portion of a reading passage and ask what is being said in those lines. Approximately 8–12 percent of the passage-based reading questions fall into this category. Vocabulary-in-context questions focus on the way a specific word is used in a reading passage. The five answer choices include possible meanings of the word; test-takers are asked to select the one with the meaning that is closest to the way the word is used in the passage. Approximately 8–12 percent of the passage-based reading questions will be of this type.

Extended reasoning questions comprise the bulk of the passage-based reading questions on any given test. Approximately 75–83 percent of the passage-based reading questions will be of this type. These questions are spread across a number of subcategories: primary purpose, rhetorical strategies, implication and evaluation, tone and attitude, application and analogy, and "other."

- Primary purpose questions ask about the main idea of a passage or about the author's primary purpose in writing the passage. They address the passage as a whole or an entire paragraph, rather than focusing on a smaller part of the passage.
- Rhetorical strategies questions usually focus on a specific part of a passage, often on a particular word, image, phrase, example, or quotation. They usually ask why this particular element is present or what purpose it serves, rather than simply what it means. Rhetorical strategies questions might also focus on a more substantial portion of a passage and ask what purpose it serves in the passage as a whole.

- Implication and evaluation questions go beyond the passage by asking what the information presented in the passage suggests, or what can be inferred about the author's views. This type of question might also ask the test-taker to evaluate ideas or assumptions in a passage, or to evaluate the relationship between a pair of passages.
- Tone and attitude questions ask about the author's tone or attitude in a specific part of a passage or in the passage as a whole. They might also ask about the tone or attitude of a person quoted in a passage, or of a character in a fiction passage.
- Application and analogy questions may address a specific idea or relationship in a passage and ask the test-taker to recognize a parallel idea or relationship in a different context. They may ask the test-taker to recognize an additional example that would support an idea presented in the passage, or they may ask about an analogy that is presented in the passage. Alternatively, these questions may ask how ideas presented in one passage apply to another passage, or how the author of one passage would be likely to react to an idea expressed in a related passage. (It is important to note that, even though analogies have been dropped, the SAT will continue to have passage-based reading questions that measure analogical reasoning.)

Each test will also include a number of "bridging" questions (questions that ask test-takers to make connections between a pair of reading passages). Prior to spring 2005, tests always included one long pair (between 400 and 850 words total), and at least 25 percent of the questions following this pair were bridging. Beginning in spring 2005, each test will include a short pair in addition to the long pair, and at least 50 percent of the total questions based on the two pairs will be bridging. Bridging questions can fall into any of the reasoning subcategories described above.

Finally, there will be a change to the content areas from which reading passages are drawn. In the past, the test included one passage from each of the following areas: natural sciences, social studies, humanities, and narrative. The first three of these will continue to appear on the test. The fourth, narrative, which had encompassed excerpts from fiction as well as nonfiction, will be replaced beginning in spring 2005 by a "literary fiction" category. This change is intended to bring the test closer to the kinds of reading done in high school and in the first year of college.

## **SAT Writing**

The new SAT will contain sections that measure skills and abilities in writing gradually developed over many years through extensive experience with written English. The writing section of the SAT will contain three types of multiple-choice questions—improving

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sentences, identifying sentence errors, and improving paragraphs—as well as one 25-minute essay question. The multiple-choice writing questions on the new SAT will cover grammar, usage, sentence structure, and paragraph organization and coherence but will not test spelling or capitalization. In some questions, punctuation marks such as the comma and semicolon are important in arriving at the correct answer, but these questions primarily test the structure in which the punctuation appears. Appendix A provides sample writing multiple-choice and essay questions.

### **Improving Sentences**

The improving sentences type of question measures the student’s ability to recognize and correct faults in usage and sentence structure as well as to recognize effective sentences that follow the conventions of standard written English. Test-takers are presented with sentences in which some portion or the entire sentence has been underlined. They must then choose which of five lettered choices produces the best sentence. If the given sentence is correct, they select choice (A), which is identical to the underlined portion. This type of question assesses the student’s ability to recognize grammatically incorrect or poorly formed, wordy, ambiguous, or otherwise imprecise phrases and clauses and to identify the revision that best corrects a writing problem. Improving sentences questions focus on issues related to sentence structure, including sentence boundary errors (comma splice, run-on), illogical comparison, lack of logical agreement, parallelism, misplaced and dangling modifiers, and improper coordination and subordination, and sentence predication. Some improving sentences questions cover points of grammar and usage also measured by the identifying sentence errors type of questions. Approximately 51 percent of the writing multiple-choice questions will be of this type (25 questions).

### **Identifying Sentence Errors**

This question type measures the test-taker’s ability to recognize faults in usage and to recognize effective sentences that follow the conventions of standard written English. Test-takers are presented with a sentence with four underlined portions. They must identify which one, if any, of the underlined portions contains an error in usage that can be corrected within the underline so as to make the entire sentence acceptable. If none of the underlined choices are incorrect, they select (E) “no error.” In answering these questions, test-takers are in effect applying their knowledge of grammar and usage to specific instances of language use. Test-takers are not required, as they are with improving sentences questions, to recognize the revisions that would correct the errors. Approximately 37 percent of the writing multiple-choice questions will be of this type (18 questions).

### **Improving Paragraphs**

This question type measures the student’s ability to edit and revise sentences in the context of a paragraph or entire essay, organize and develop paragraphs in a coherent and logical manner, and apply the conventions of standard written English. Test-takers read a draft essay of approximately 200 words that contains a variety of writing issues at the sentence and paragraph level—including coherence, organization, supporting examples, sentence structure, as well as grammar and usage—and answer questions about how to edit and revise portions of it. Each sentence is numbered for easy reference.

Improving paragraphs questions assess the test-taker’s ability to recognize revisions of the kinds of larger writing problems that appear on the paragraph level and therefore cover skills related to editing and revising drafts. These questions guide test-takers through the editing and revision of a brief passage, addressing such matters as revising sentences for clarity and grammatical correctness, organization, consistency in style, and transitions among paragraphs. They can also ask test-takers to analyze the effects achieved by certain phrases or composition strategies. Approximately 12 percent of the writing multiple-choice questions will be of this type (6 questions).

### **The Essay Prompt**

The essay measures the test-taker’s ability to develop a point of view on an issue presented in an excerpt; use reasoning and evidence based on his or her reading, studies, experience, and observations to support that point of view; and to follow the conventions of standard written English. The essay therefore assesses the test-taker’s ability, under timed conditions, to do the kind of writing required in most college courses—writing that emphasizes precise use of language, logical presentation of ideas, development of a point of view, and clarity of expression. In writing their essays in response to the assigned prompts, test-takers have the opportunity to employ the rhetorical approaches or modes of development—narrative, persuasive, argumentative, or expository—that best suit their writing style and purpose.

See Appendix B for a brief description of the Essay Scoring Guide.

## **Method**

The following sections describe the methodology that was used to implement the curriculum survey. Information is presented about the sample that participated in the survey, the content included in the survey, and the procedure that was used to administer the survey.



## Participants

A total of 2,351 teachers responded to the curriculum survey (1,531 women and 787 men; 33 of the participants did not indicate their gender). The participants included 814 (34.6 percent) college English professors, 230 (9.8 percent) college humanities teachers, 393 (16.7 percent) high school chairpersons of English departments, and 914 (38.9 percent) high school English teachers. At both the high school and college level, “English” teachers included those who taught language arts, English, or composition classes. At the college level, “humanities” professors included those who taught history, political science, psychology, or biology classes. While biology professors are not traditionally considered humanities professors, they were included in this group because one or two passages from each critical reading section cover natural science content.

Survey respondents provided background information about their teaching experience and education. One hundred and fifty-six (6.6 percent) of the participants reported that they had been teaching for fewer than five years; 366 (15.6 percent) for five to 10 years; 287 (12.2 percent) for 11 to 15 years; 323 (13.7 percent) for 16 to 20 years; and 1,174 (49.9 percent) for more than 20 years; 45 (1.9 percent) participants did not indicate how long they had been teaching. Three hundred (12.8 percent) participants reported earning a bachelor’s degree; 1,325 (56.4 percent) participants reported earning a master’s degree; and 678 (28.8 percent) reported earning a doctorate; 47 (2.0 percent) participants did not indicate their highest academic degree. When compared to statistics reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2003), the high school teachers in the current sample had more education and more experience than a national sample of high school teachers (see p. 81 of the NCES report).

Table 1 combines all of the teachers into two separate groups (high school and college) and summarizes information about school type, location, and total enrollment. Survey respondents also provided background information about their school. When compared to statistics reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2003), the current sample overrepresented teachers from public high schools (see p. 97 of the NCES report) and underrepresented high school teachers from large high schools (enrolling 1,000 or more students) (see p. 101 of the NCES report). The *2005 College Handbook* (College Board, 2004) showed that the current sample overrepresented college professors from public institutions and underrepresented college professors from suburban campuses. Despite the over- and underrepresentation, the current sample can still be considered representative of high school and college faculty.

High school teachers provided additional sociodemographic information about their schools. Table 2

**Table 1**

Background Information for Survey Respondents		
<i>Background information</i>	<i>High School Teachers</i>	<i>College Professors</i>
<b>School</b>		
Public	85.5%	48.6%
Private	12.9%	47.9%
Other/no response	1.6%	3.5%
<b>Geographic area</b>		
Urban	18.9%	34.4%
Suburban	43.5%	32.8%
Rural	36.6%	29.9%
No response	0.9%	3.0%
<b>Total enrollment: twelfth-grade students</b>		
Fewer than 100	19.1%	—
100 to 200	26.2%	—
201 to 400	27.5%	—
401 to 750	16.7%	—
751 to 1,000	4.1%	—
More than 1,000	5.6%	—
No response	0.7%	—
<b>Total enrollment: undergraduates</b>		
Fewer than 1,000	—	12.4%
1,000 to 2,500	—	25.4%
2,501 to 5,000	—	23.1%
5,001 to 10,000	—	14.2%
10,001 to 20,000	—	13.0%
More than 20,000	—	8.9%
No response	—	3.1%

presents high school teacher ratings of class characteristics such as (a) percent that attend college, (b) percent that speak English as a second language, (c) percent that belong to an ethnic minority group, and (d) percent that qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch program. Table 2 shows that the high school teachers in the sample came from a diverse group of schools.

College English professors were asked to only report the percentage of students in their class who speak English as a second language since the sociodemographic information described above was either inapplicable or could not be collected. Six hundred and fourteen college professors (75.4 percent) indicated that the percentage of students in their class who have English as a second language ranged from zero to 10; 115 (14.1 percent) reported percentages from 11 to 25; 26 (1.5 percent) reported percentages from 26 to 50; 12 (1.4 percent) reported percentages from 51 to 75; and 11 (1.4 percent) reported percentages from 76 to 100. Thirty-six college English professors (4.4 percent) did not respond to this question.

**Table 2**

High School Teacher Survey Respondent Ratings of Class Characteristics

Rating	Attend college		English as a second language		Belong to an ethnic minority group		Qualify for free or reduced-price lunch	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
0–10%	21	1.6	1,034	79.1	723	55.3	419	32.1
11–25%	117	9.0	157	12.0	249	19.1	308	23.6
26–50%	297	22.7	65	5.0	158	12.1	299	22.9
51–75%	388	29.7	18	1.4	81	6.2	149	11.4
76–100%	449	34.4	15	1.1	80	6.1	73	5.6
No response	35	2.7	18	1.5	16	1.2	59	4.5

## Materials

The curriculum survey was organized into five parts. When responding to the curriculum survey, high school teachers were instructed to focus on the classes that they taught to college-bound juniors and/or seniors and college teachers were instructed to focus on the classes that they taught to first-year undergraduates.

Part I asked which reading and writing skills teachers focused on in the classroom. Seventy-three reading and writing skills were presented in this section as closed-ended questions. For each question, teachers were asked to respond to two categories of ordered responses: (a) the frequency with which the skill was covered in the classroom, and (b) the importance of the skill for students entering their first year of college. The scale for coverage, in ascending order from one to three, was: not covered, some coverage, and substantial coverage. The scale for importance, in ascending order from one to three, was: not important, somewhat important, and very important. There were 26 reading skills and 47 writing skills in this section. Reading skills were grouped within the following subheadings: working with fundamental aspects of text, using overall text to establish meaning, using a text to analyze the ideas presented, working with individual words, and working with words and related graphics. Writing skills were grouped within the following subheadings: writing process (i.e., purposes of writing, writing an essay, etc.) as well as grammar and usage, and sentence structure. The list of reading and writing skills was designed to include a broad range of skills of the sort likely to be emphasized in the classroom.

The reading skills listed on the survey were developed by consulting the state standards for Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Lists of skills and competencies from the Standards for Success Project, the NCTE/International Reading Association, and the University of California Academic Senate Statement of Competencies were also consulted. The skills that showed up most consistently or that were, in some cases, shared by all were included on the survey. Skills that were obviously

inappropriate to the SAT (those related to speaking and listening skills, for example) were excluded. The resulting reading skills list was reviewed and revised by researchers at both the College Board and Educational Testing Service, and by the chair of the College Board SAT Reading Development Committee.

The list of writing skills on the survey, based on earlier writing curriculum surveys conducted by the College Board and Educational Testing Service in 1976 and 1991, was revised and updated after consultation with writing teachers, including members of the former College Board SAT Writing Subject Test Development Committee and the College Board SAT Writing Development Committee. The resulting writing skills list was also reviewed and revised by researchers at the College Board and Educational Testing Service.

The 1976 survey was based on responses to questionnaires sent out in the fall of 1973 to English departments at 196 four-year and 111 two-year colleges throughout the United States, as part of general Educational Testing Service test development activities, in an attempt to find out about English instruction in their schools and about the kinds of tests they would find most useful (Donlon, 1984, pp. 70–71). The 1991 survey was based on a revision of the 1976 survey after consultation with Educational Testing Service research staff as well as members of the College Board SAT Writing Subject Test Development Committee (then called the SAT II: Writing Subject Test Development Committee). Most of the changes had to do with the inclusion of questions related to the writing process (prewriting, writing, revising, and editing), a process that was not widely known in 1976.

Part II of the survey addressed how teachers rated their students' reading and writing proficiency. Eight areas of reading and seven areas of writing were presented in this part of the survey. To indicate how well they thought their students performed in each of these areas, teachers were asked to select from the following descriptors: below average, satisfactory, above satisfactory, or advanced. College professors indicated their students' proficiency upon entrance to college and high school teachers indicated

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their students' proficiency by the end of twelfth grade. Although the questions in Part II did not elicit information related directly to the main purpose of the survey, they did help to gather teachers' self-report data about how well students were prepared to succeed in college.

Part III covered the types of reading and writing tasks that teachers assigned their students. Teachers were asked whether or not they assigned specific types of reading and writing assignments, how many hours they expected their students to spend on these assignments, and how frequently they assigned different types of tasks. This section also included questions about the format of the tests and quizzes that teachers assigned their students.

Part IV measured background information about the teachers' high school or college. The questions were tailored to each group of surveyed teachers—college English professors, college humanities teachers, high school chairpersons of English departments, and high school English teachers—so that only information relevant to each group was collected. Information about their school, including its size, location, and type (i.e., public, private, etc.) was collected. This part also included questions about the students who attended the school (e.g., percentage who have English as a second language). For high school teachers only, an open-ended question was included about whether the addition of a writing test to the SAT will affect the emphasis on writing in secondary school curricula and instructional practices. Teachers were asked to elaborate on why they thought the addition of writing would or would not affect secondary schools.

Part V collected personal information about the teachers. The questions contained within parts IV and V were tailored to each group of surveyed teachers so that only information relevant to each group was collected. Questions about gender, teaching experience, and academic background were included in this part of the survey.

## Procedure

Invitations to participate in the curriculum survey were sent via a personal letter and follow-up postcard from College Board President, Gaston Caperton. The letter directed participants to a Web site ([www.globalsurvey.net](http://www.globalsurvey.net)) where they entered a personal password (provided in the letter) and completed the survey online.

Invitations were sent to 13,779 college English professors (1,862 freshman English professors and 11,917 composition professors), 5,000 college humanities professors, 5,000 high school English department chairpersons, and 15,069 high school English teachers. The response rate by group was approximately 3.9 percent, 4.6 percent, 7.9 percent, and 3.8 percent, respectively. Data collection took place on the Web from January to May of 2003.

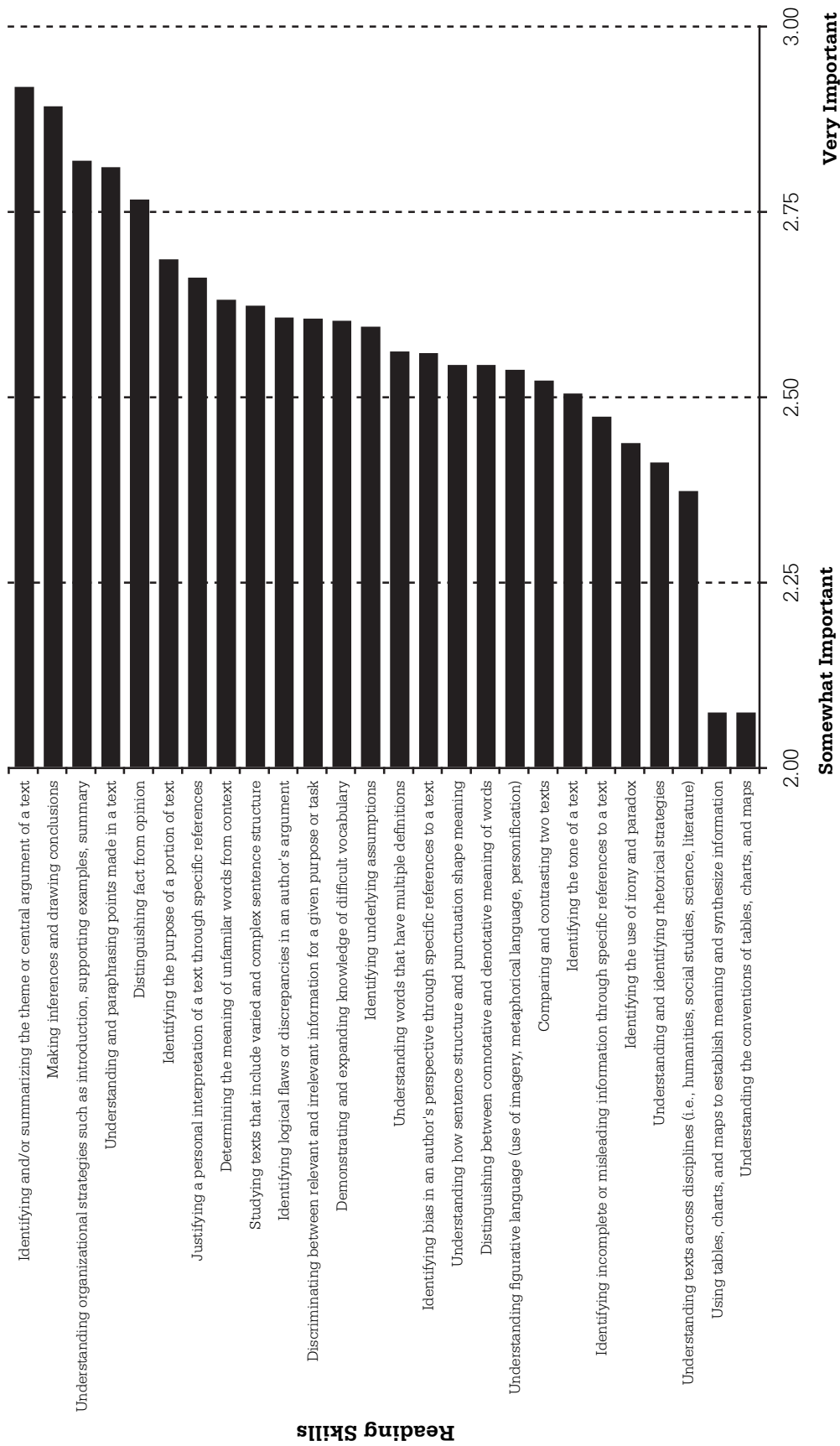
To improve the response rate, paper versions of the curriculum survey were distributed to college English professors and high school English teachers at essay scoring sessions for the AP Examinations in English Language and English Literature, and the SAT Subject Test in Writing. At these sessions, teachers come together to score open-ended responses to essay and short-answer questions from exams administered by the College Entrance Examination Board. Data collection for paper-based surveys took place in June of 2003 and yielded 275 additional responses from college English professors and 347 additional responses from high school English teachers. Responses to the paper-based surveys represented 26.5 percent of the total sample of participants. Ratings from teachers who completed the Web-based survey were very similar to ratings from teachers who completed the paper-based survey.

## Results

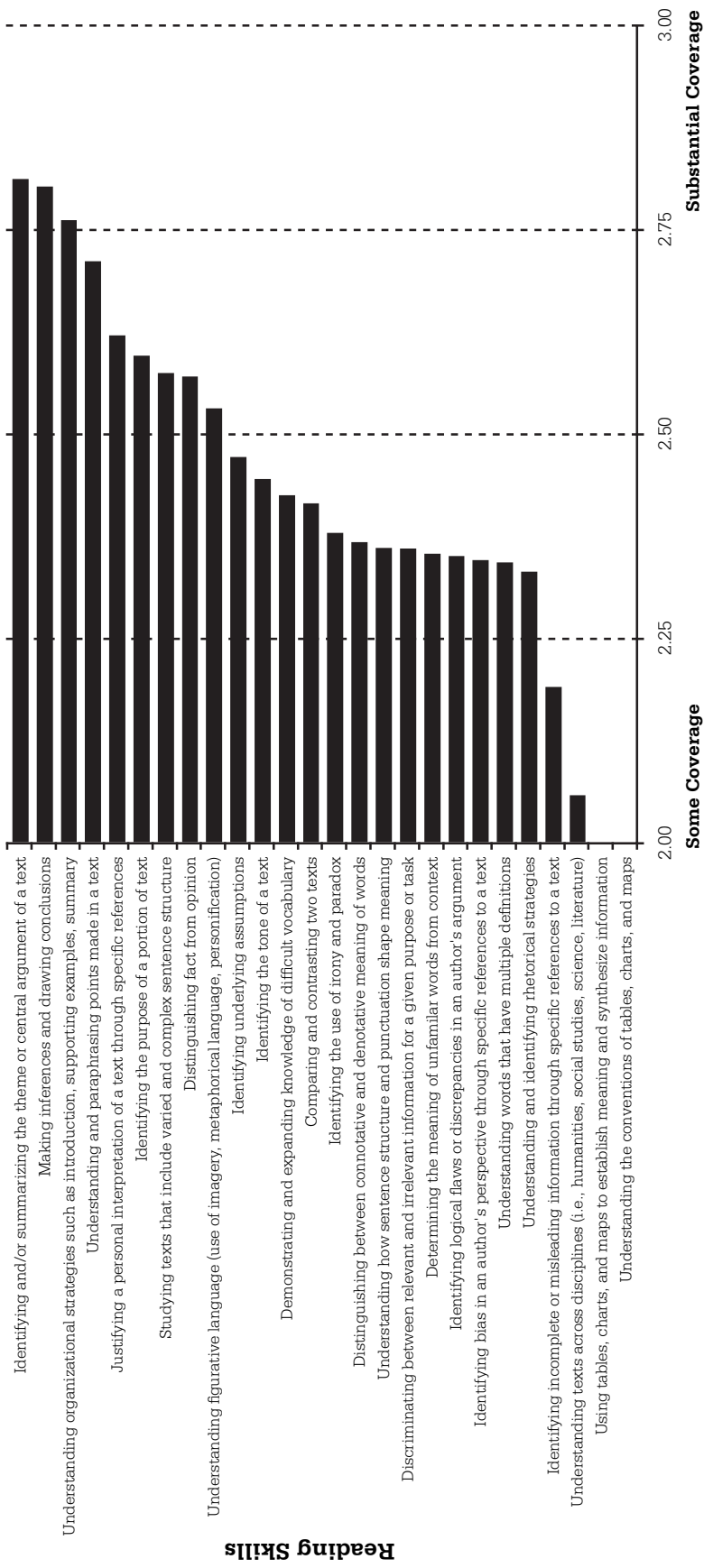
### Part I: Focus on Reading and Writing Skills

A comparison of the importance and coverage ratings for the reading and writing questions contained within Part I of the survey revealed that there was a remarkable degree of consistency across teacher groups. The pattern of how skills were ranked in importance and coverage was approximately the same across all groups. The only difference between groups was that average importance and coverage ratings from college humanities professors were slightly lower than ratings from the other teacher groups. Because the pattern of responses was so similar across groups, responses from all teachers were analyzed together.

The results indicated that teachers gave high ratings of importance to 24 out of the 26 reading skills included on the survey. The two exceptions were: (1) *understanding the conventions of tables, charts, and maps*, and (2) *using tables, charts, and maps to establish meaning and synthesize information* (see Figure 1). The average importance rating was 2.07 on both of these skills. The remaining 24 skills had average importance ratings that ranged from 2.4 to 3.0. The grand mean for importance ratings (obtained by adding all of the responses for the 26 reading skills and dividing by the number of responses) was 2.57 and the pooled standard deviation (based on the total sum of squares) was 0.58. The grand mean for importance ratings was approximately equal to the midpoint between the ordered responses for “somewhat important” (value of 2) and “very important” (value of 3).



**Figure 1.** Average importance ratings on reading skills.



**Figure 2.** Average coverage ratings on reading skills.

**Table 3**

Differences in Rankings for Reading Skills that Have Discrepant Importance and Coverage Ratings

Discrepant Reading Skills	Difference in Rank
Skills ranked higher in importance than coverage	
Determining the meaning of unfamiliar words from context	10
Identifying logical flaws or discrepancies in an author's argument	9
Understanding words that have multiple definitions	7
Identifying bias in an author's perspective through specific references to a text	5
Skills ranked lower in importance than coverage	
Identifying the tone of a text	9
Understanding figurative language (use of imagery, metaphorical language, personification, etc.)	9
Identifying the use of irony and paradox	8
Comparing and contrasting two texts	6

The results of coverage ratings on reading skills tended to parallel those for importance ratings (see Figure 2). The grand mean and pooled standard deviation were similar ( $M = 2.40$  and  $SD = 0.67$ ) and the rank order of reading skills by average coverage ratings was approximately the same as the rank order of reading skills by average importance ratings. There were a few exceptions, however, as represented in Table 3. A few skills were ranked higher in importance than coverage, and a few skills were ranked higher in coverage than importance. Ignoring the exceptions, the rankings of skills by importance and coverage were virtually the same. Both of the reading skills that had low importance ratings: (1) *understanding the conventions of tables, charts, and maps to establish meaning and synthesize information*, and (2) *using tables, charts, and maps to establish meaning and synthesize information*, were also given low coverage ratings of 1.59 and 1.6, respectively.

Average importance ratings and average coverage ratings for the writing process skills included on the curriculum survey are shown in Figures 3 and 4, respectively. The results indicated that most of these skills were given high ratings of importance and coverage. The grand means for importance and coverage ratings of writing process skills were 2.66 ( $SD = 0.56$ ) and 2.59 ( $SD = 0.62$ ), respectively. The six writing genres included in the survey yielded the following importance ranking, in descending order from first to sixth:

- (1) writing persuasive and/or argumentative essays;
- (2) writing analyses and evaluations of texts;

- (3) writing expository essays;
- (4) writing research papers;
- (5) writing personal narratives; and
- (6) creative writing.

Coverage rankings of the six writing genres replicated the results for importance rankings, with one exception: expository writing was covered more frequently than analyses and evaluations of texts. Two genres of writing—*creative writing* and *writing personal narratives*—had, on average, lower importance/coverage ratings than the other four genres (importance ratings were 1.9 and 2.2, respectively; coverage ratings were 1.8 and 2.2, respectively).

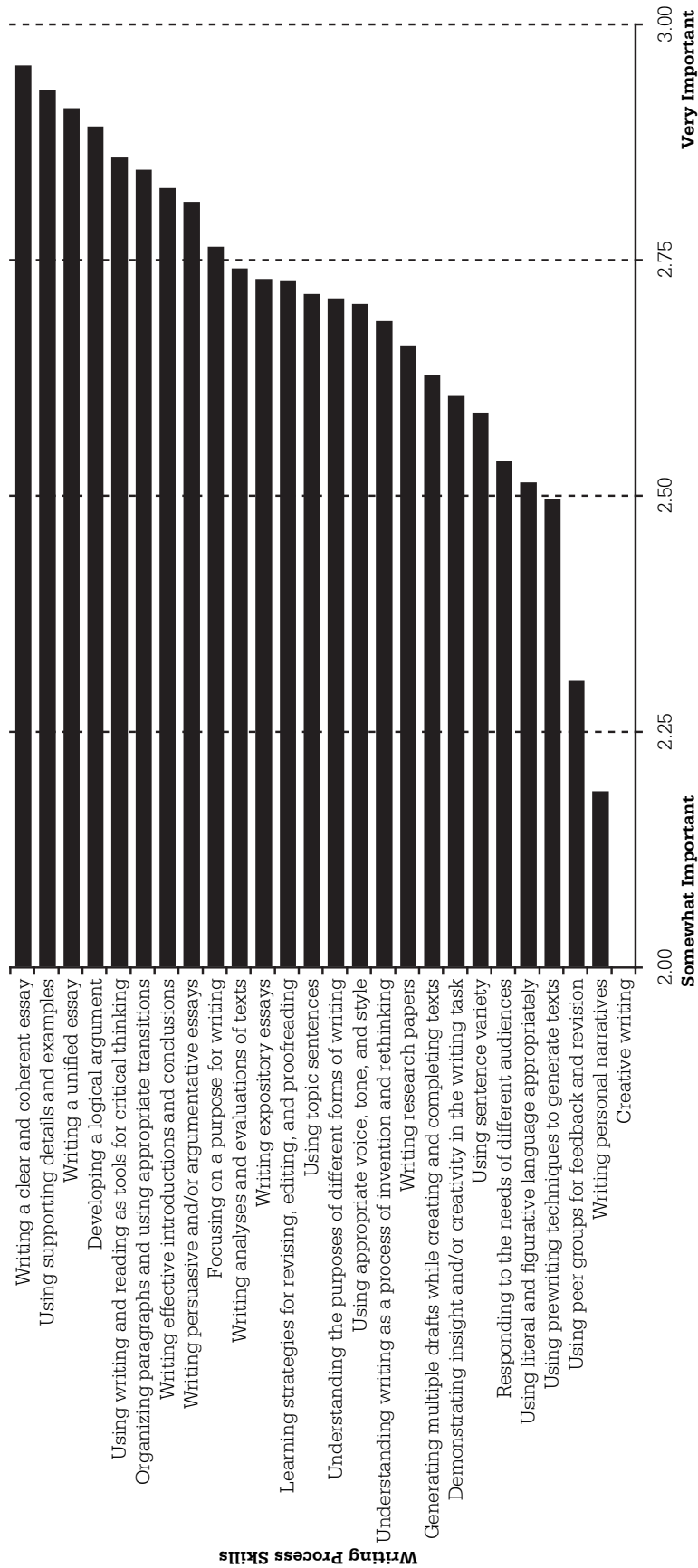
Average importance ratings and average coverage ratings for the grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills included on the curriculum survey are shown in Figures 5 and 6, respectively. The results show that virtually all of the grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills were given high importance ratings and that there were few differences in average importance ratings between the different skills. The results also showed that the pattern of how skills were ranked in average importance ratings was very similar to the pattern of how skills were ranked in average coverage ratings but that grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills were given less coverage in the classroom. In fact, the difference between the grand means for importance and coverage ratings was 0.28; the grand mean for importance was 2.64 ( $SD = 0.54$ ) and the grand mean for coverage was 2.36 ( $SD = 0.66$ ).

## Part II: Student Proficiency in Reading and Writing

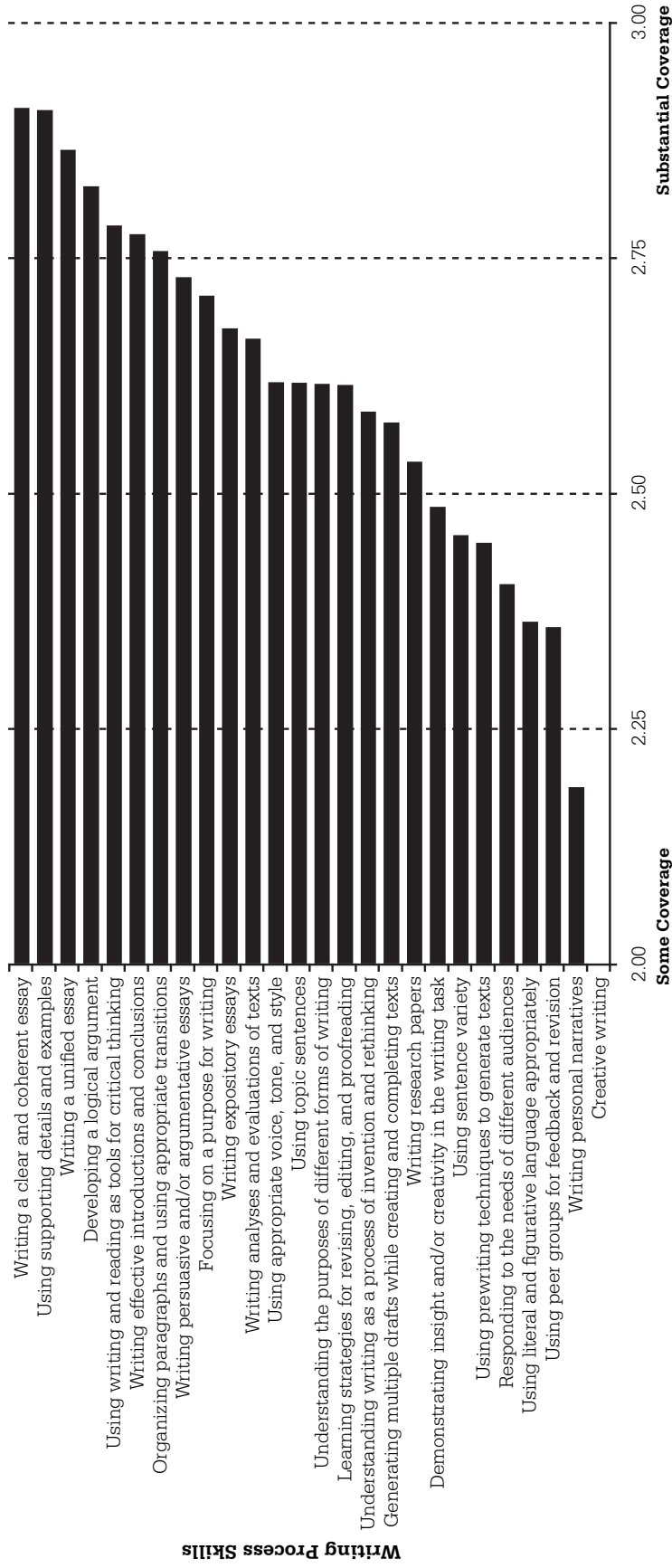
A clear trend was indicated by the results of teacher ratings of student proficiency in various areas of reading and writing. College professors rated their students' proficiency in reading and writing, on average, much lower than high school teachers did (see Table 4). Mean differences in proficiency ratings between high school teachers and college professors ranged from 0.6 to 1.1 for reading and from 0.8 to 1.1 for writing. Values of mean differences were roughly equivalent to one standard deviation unit in proficiency ratings.

## Part III: Tests, Quizzes, and Assignments

Types of reading and writing tests and quizzes assigned by different teacher groups are presented in Figure 7. The results of Figure 7 revealed a lack of consistency between responses from high school and college teachers because the pattern of differences between the teachers' average responses changed for only some formats of tests and quizzes. For example, while the percentage of teachers who administer multiple-

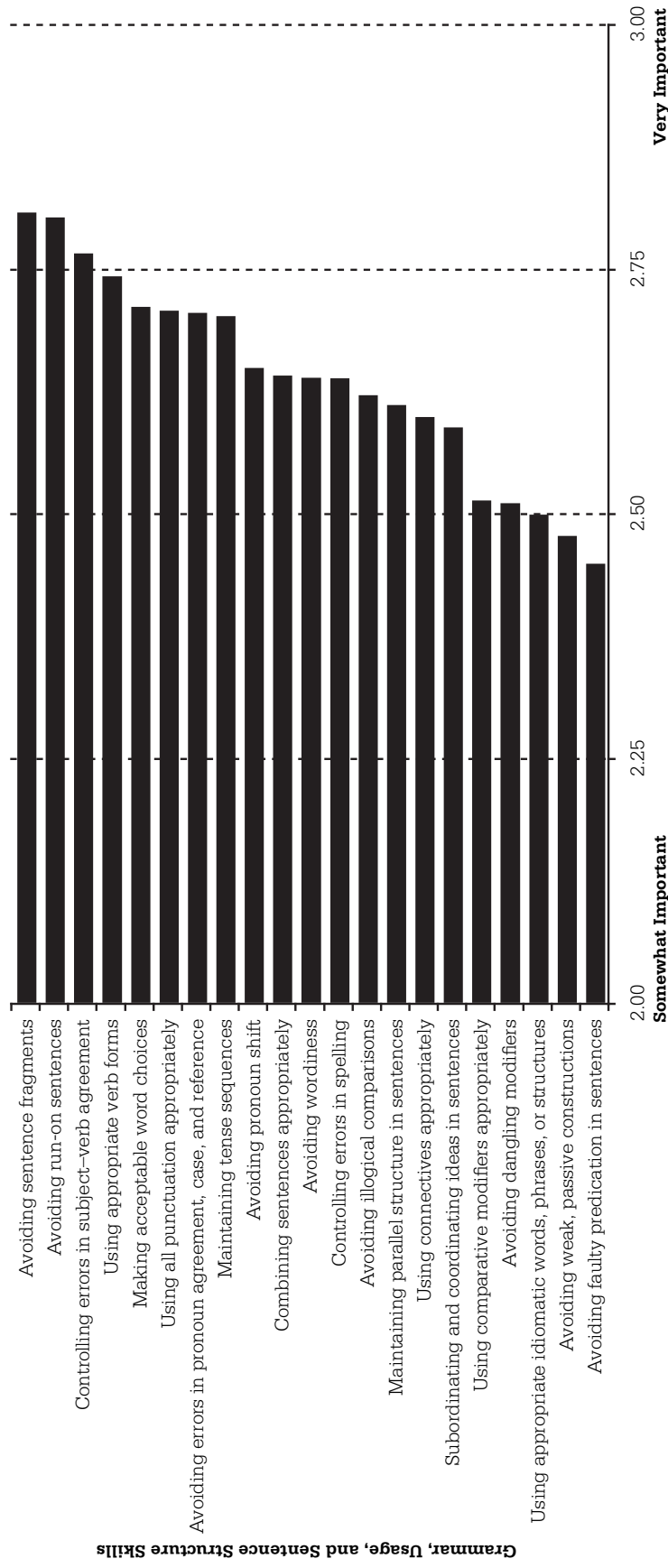


**Figure 3.** Average importance ratings on writing process skills.

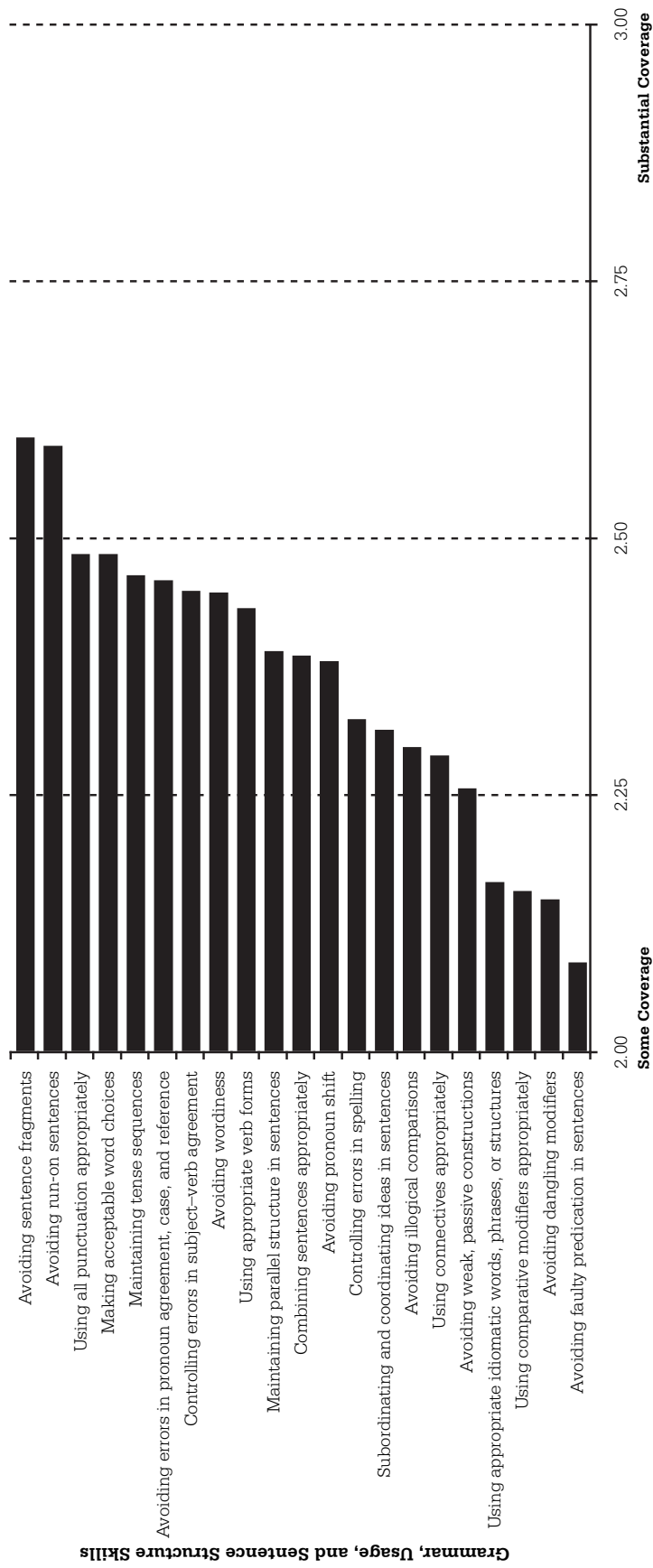


**Figure 4.** Average coverage ratings on writing process skills.





**Figure 5.** Average importance ratings on grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills.



**Figure 6.** Average coverage ratings on grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills.

choice tests varied widely (from 72 percent among high school English department chairpersons to 22 percent among college English professors), most teachers (between 60 to 87 percent) administered short-answer tests and almost all teachers (between 85 to 97 percent) administered essay tests.

The percentage of teachers who assign specific types of reading and writing tasks is presented in Table 5. Reading and writing tasks are sorted by weighted averages of these percentages, with largest values first as suggested by Wainer (1997). The computation of the weighted averages took into

account the sizes of the teacher groups. Unusually high and unusually low data values are highlighted in Table 5 and labeled with a “+” or “-” symbol; such values were determined by “subtract[ing] out row and column effects and look[ing] at what sticks out” (Wainer, 1997, p. 101). Table 5 shows that, with the exception of poetry and newspapers, most types of readings were frequently assigned by each group of teachers. However, neither group frequently assigned newspapers. High school teachers reported assigning poetry more often than the college professors who were surveyed. Table 5 also shows that writing assignments involving responses to text, analyses of texts, expository essays, argumentative essays, and research papers were assigned on a regular basis. Other types of writing were assigned less frequently. Tasks like writing personal narratives, poetry, fiction, and dialogue seemed to be somewhat popular among high school teachers, however.

**Table 4**

Teacher Ratings of Student Proficiency in Reading and Writing

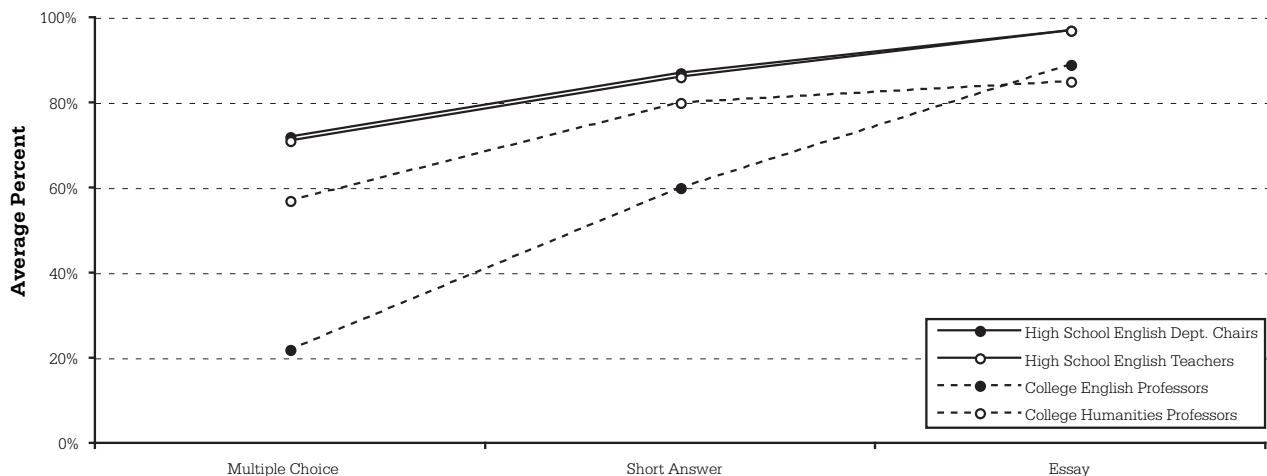
Skills	High School Teachers		College Professors	
	M	SD	M	SD
<b>Reading</b>				
Comprehending what is read	2.9	0.8	1.9	0.7
Following the logic of a written argument	2.6	0.8	1.7	0.7
Analyzing information that is read	2.7	0.9	1.7	0.7
Synthesizing information from what is read	2.6	0.9	1.6	0.7
Comparing and contrasting readings on a shared issue or theme	2.7	0.9	1.9	0.7
Understanding graphs and figures presented in text	2.5	0.8	1.9	0.7
Understanding how the different parts of a sentence fit logically together	2.4	0.8	1.7	0.7
Understanding vocabulary in context	2.7	0.8	1.9	0.7
<b>Writing</b>				
Expressing ideas logically in a written essay	2.8	0.8	1.8	0.7
Using examples to support written ideas	2.9	0.9	1.8	0.7
Writing clearly and precisely	2.6	0.8	1.6	0.7
Following conventions of grammar and usage	2.5	0.9	1.7	0.7
Facility in use of language	2.5	0.8	1.6	0.7
Using a variety of sentence structures	2.5	0.9	1.6	0.7
Using appropriate vocabulary in written text	2.6	0.8	1.8	0.7

**Table 5**

Percent of Teachers Who Assign Specific Types of Reading and Writing Assignments

Assignments	Weighted Average	High School English Dept. Chairs	High School English Teachers	College English Professors	College Humanities Professors
<b>Reading assignments</b>					
Nonfiction	86	87	84	89	81
Textbooks	84	85	83	83	94
Fiction	82	99+	97+	71-	33-
Poetry	75	97+	94+	59-	15-
Periodicals	61	55	54	69	74
Newspapers	37	36	33	41	38
<b>Writing assignments</b>					
Responses to text	89	95	93	86	76
Analyses of texts	89	91	92	88	76
Expository essays	89	97	94	87	59-
Argumentative essays	87	91	87	92	59-
Research papers	84	89	82	86	81
Personal narratives	67	80+	78+	60-	26-
Journal entries	61	70	68	54	38-
Poetry	46	69+	69+	20-	7-
Fiction	39	57+	54+	23-	9-
Dialogue	30	38+	41+	18-	12-
Business writing	21	24	25	19	10-

**Note:** A “+” refers to an unusually high data value and a “-” refers to an unusually low data value.



**Figure 7.** Test formats used in the classroom.

The curriculum survey also addressed how many hours students are expected to spend each week on reading and writing tasks. On reading tasks, 74.7 percent of high school teachers and 72.5 percent of college professors expected their students to spend between three and six hours each week. On writing tasks, 82.7 percent of high school teachers and 72.3 percent of college professors expected their students to spend between one and four hours each week. These results suggest that teachers

expect their students to spend more time each week on reading tasks.

The curriculum survey also explored how frequently reading and writing tasks were assigned by high school teachers and college professors (see Table 6). The results indicated that high school teachers assigned reading and writing assignments slightly more often than college professors did, except that both groups assigned out-of-class writing assignments with about the same frequency. Across both groups, reading assignments tended to be given more frequently than writing assignments.

**Table 6**

Frequency of Reading and Writing Assignments

Frequency	High School Teachers	College Professors
<b>Reading assignments</b>		
Never	0.1%	0.5%
Less than once a week	0.7%	1.8%
Once a week	4.1%	14.4%
More than once a week	35.4%	42.9%
Daily	58.7%	36.6%
No response	1.1%	3.8%
<b>In-class writing assignments</b>		
Never	0.4%	8.3%
Less than once a week	16.8%	39.1%
Once a week	31.9%	25.0%
More than once a week	37.9%	17.1%
Daily	11.6%	6.8%
No response	1.5%	3.8%
<b>Out-of-class writing assignments</b>		
Never	0.8%	0.5%
Less than once a week	26.2%	23.2%
Once a week	34.4%	32.0%
More than once a week	33.8%	32.9%
Daily	3.6%	7.9%
No response	1.2%	3.6%

## Part IV: Open-Ended Question

The curriculum survey asked high school teachers an open-ended question about whether the addition of the writing test to the SAT would affect the emphasis on writing in secondary school curricula and instructional practices. A total of 1,107 (about 85 percent of the high school teachers who participated in the survey) responded to this question. Several major themes emerged from their responses. The following numbers show how the responses fit each of these themes: 471 respondents (42.5 percent) indicated that the addition of writing to the SAT would affect curricula and instructional practices; 315 respondents (28.5 percent) indicated that writing was already emphasized in their school's curricula; 124 respondents (11.2 percent) indicated that writing would not influence curricula, but did not provide a reason; 47 respondents (4.2 percent) said that writing would not influence curricula because most of their students take the ACT, and 100 respondents (9.0 percent) reported that they did not know whether the addition of writing to the SAT would affect curricula and instructional practices. Fifty participants (4.5 percent) provided a response that did not exactly address the survey question.

A few of the teachers' comments seemed to exemplify the themes listed above. For example, one of the teachers

who indicated that the addition of the writing test to the SAT would affect curricula and instructional practices answered, “Yes. Now it matters. Teachers can’t get away with not teaching writing.” Similarly, another teacher wrote, “Finally, writing will receive the emphasis that math and science have received for decades. Principals and teachers who want their students to perform well on the SAT will stress writing across the curriculum. The happy result will be more literate students who are better prepared to succeed in college.”

Not all of those who indicated that the new SAT writing section would impact curriculum give positive comments, however. One teacher wrote, “It will encourage new, formulaic, and ultimately inferior styles of writing. Having high standards for student writing is not the same as standardizing that writing—nor should it be.”

In most cases, those teachers whose response fit with the theme that the new SAT writing test would *not* impact curriculum did not elaborate on the motivation behind their response. Many teachers simply responded, “No.” Some teachers described the reality that they are overworked. One teacher, for example, wrote: “We don’t have time to assign any more than we already do.”

One of the teachers who indicated that writing was already emphasized in their school’s curriculum answered, “No. State standards, graduation tests, [and] No Child Left Behind legislation already drives curriculum to include more writing!” Another teacher wrote, “Our English department already employs an intensive writing focus—if there is an enhancement it will be slight.” Another teacher’s comment seemed to exemplify this theme, “The emphasis is quite strong now and will remain so.”

The responses to this question suggested that the addition of writing to the SAT would affect the curriculum at those schools that do not already have a strong focus on writing. The results also seemed to show that state standards and high school exit exams have already begun to influence the focus on writing in secondary school curricula. Survey respondents from Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia indicated that their state standards have increased the focus on writing in their curricula.

## Discussion

The curriculum survey measured perceptions of high school and college teachers about how frequently they covered certain reading and writing skills in the classroom and how important they felt these skills were for students entering their first year of college. The survey revealed the following findings:

- teachers rate 24 out of the 26 reading skills included on the survey high in importance and classroom coverage;
- teachers rate practically all of the 14 grammar and usage skills included on the survey high in importance, but survey results indicate that classroom work does not focus heavily on these skills;
- persuasive writing is rated most important and assigned most often in the classroom;
- college teachers rate their students’ reading and writing proficiency substantially lower than do high school teachers; and
- many more high school teachers than college professors (especially college English professors) administer multiple-choice tests, but most teachers administer short-answer tests and almost all teachers administer essay tests.

The following sections discuss some of the specific results of the survey as well as the alignment of the survey results to the content and skills measured by the new SAT.

## Alignment of the New SAT to Curricula and Instructional Practices

### Critical Reading

Table 7 maps the alignment between the SAT critical reading content specifications and the curriculum survey skills. Check marks indicate the survey skills that test questions associated with each content specification are likely to measure.

It should immediately be noted that there is rarely a simple one-to-one correspondence between survey skills and content specifications. Reading is a complex process, one in which multiple and interrelated skills are often brought to bear. SAT critical reading questions, in seeking to measure higher-order reading skills, tend to require multiple reading skills. Therefore, when creating Table 7, the authors of the current report made broad judgments about which content categories, if any, are likely to contain questions that would measure each skill.

When the **importance** ranking of skills is compared with the content specifications for the critical reading section of the SAT, a correspondence can be observed. In total, 19 of the 26 reading skills surveyed are covered by the test. Four of the five most important skills (having a mean importance of 2.75 or above) are covered: (1) *Identifying and/or summarizing the theme or central argument*, (2) *making inferences and drawing conclusions*, (3) *understanding organizational strategies*, and (4) *understanding and paraphrasing points made in a text*. Of the 21 skills having an importance mean lower than 2.75, 15 are covered by the test.

When the **coverage** rating of skills is compared with the content specifications for the critical reading section

**Table 7**

## Alignment Between Reading Skills and SAT Critical Reading Questions

Reading skill	Passage-based reading							
	Sentence completion	Literal comprehension	Vocabulary in context	Primary purpose	Rhetorical strategy	Implication and evaluation	Tone and attitude	Application and analogy
Identifying and/or summarizing the theme or central argument of a text				√				
Making inferences and drawing conclusions				√	√	√	√	√
Understanding organizational strategies					√			
Understanding and paraphrasing points made in text		√						
Justifying a personal interpretation of a text through specific references								
Identifying the purpose of a portion of text				√	√			
Studying texts that include varied and complex sentence structure	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Distinguishing fact from opinion								
Understanding figurative language					√			√
Identifying underlying assumptions						√		
Identifying the tone of a text							√	
Demonstrating and expanding knowledge of difficult vocabulary	√		√					
Comparing and contrasting two texts				√	√	√	√	√
Identifying the use of irony and paradox					√		√	
Distinguishing between connotative and denotative meaning of words					√		√	
Understanding how sentence structure and punctuation shape meaning	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Discriminating between relevant and irrelevant information	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Determining the meaning of unfamiliar words from context	√		√					
Identifying logical flaws or discrepancies in an author's argument								
Identifying bias in an author's perspective through specific references								
Understanding words that have multiple definitions	√		√					
Understanding and identifying rhetorical strategies					√			
Identifying incomplete or misleading information through specific references								
Understanding texts across disciplines	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Using tables, charts, and maps to establish meaning and synthesize information								
Understanding the conventions of tables, charts, and maps								

**Note:** A check mark indicates that a problem tested by the SAT is aligned to a skill included in the survey.

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of the SAT, a correspondence can again be observed. All three of the skills with a mean coverage rating of 2.75 or above are covered: (1) *identifying and/or summarizing the theme or central argument*, (2) *making inferences and drawing conclusions*, and (3) *understanding organizational strategies*. Of the 23 skills having coverage ratings below 2.75, 16 are covered by the test.

Several other things should be noted about the alignments sketched out in Table 9. Some skills have a very straightforward one-to-one connection with test specifications. That is to say, some skills align neatly with a single item type, one that is intended to directly measure the skill in question. For example, teachers rated *identifying and/or summarizing the theme or central argument of a text* as an important and well-covered skill, and this skill quite clearly maps on to the “primary purpose” reasoning questions. Similarly, *understanding words that have multiple definitions* directly maps onto the “vocabulary in context” question type.

Some skills are measured by more than one item type. For example, teachers rated *making inferences and drawing conclusions* as an important skill. Several different kinds of SAT questions require this skill, including, quite obviously, those classified as “implication and evaluation.” But “primary purpose” questions also require this skill, since candidates must sift through different ideas presented in a passage and draw an inference about which is the main one. Similarly, “tone and attitude” questions virtually always require the test-taker to make inferences.

On a related point, it is worth noting that some skills on the curriculum survey are measured by the test as a whole. For example, the skill labeled *understanding how sentence structure and punctuation shape meaning* is required by virtually all SAT critical reading tasks; any question that requires reading, whether sentence completion or passage-based reading, necessarily requires this skill. Similarly, *understanding texts across disciplines* is measured by the test as a whole, since each test includes at least one humanities, science, social studies, and literature passage, as well as sentence completions drawn from content across the curriculum. And *discriminating between relevant and irrelevant information for a given purpose or task* is a skill required by virtually every question on the test.

Finally, five skills receiving high coverage and importance ratings are not generally tested on the SAT critical reading section at all. The reasons for this vary according to the skill, though in almost all cases they can be traced, in one way or another, to the exigencies of multiple-choice testing. These skills include: (1) *justifying a personal interpretation of a text through specific references*, (2) *identifying bias in an author’s perspective*, (3) *identifying incomplete or misleading information*, (4) *identifying logical flaws or discrepancies in an author’s argument*, and (5) *distinguishing fact from opinion*. It should be noted, however, that some of these skills, though not directly

measured by test questions, are important general reading skills that may prove useful in reading some of the passages on the test.

The discussion thus far has focused on how well the test covers each of the curriculum survey skills. But it is also important to view the skills from the standpoint of the test. That is, does each of the content specifications call for skills that are covered in the classroom and deemed important by survey respondents?

One can see that the skills associated with each content specification were indeed considered important by survey respondents: each specification calls for questions demanding at least some skills ranked above 2.5 in the survey. For example, the “primary purpose” specification explicitly demands that each test includes questions that test the top-rated skill (*identifying and/or summarizing the theme or central argument of a text*); the “implication and evaluation” specification calls for questions measuring the second-ranked skill (*making inferences and drawing conclusions*); the “rhetorical strategies” specification calls for questions measuring the third-ranked skill (*understanding organizational strategies*); and the “literal comprehension” specification calls for questions measuring the fourth-ranked skill (*understanding and paraphrasing points made in a text*). Because coverage ratings essentially mirror importance ratings, especially at the very top of the scale, it follows that the test specifications call for the most widely covered skills.

While the passage-based reading questions most clearly call for highly rated skills, it is important to note that the sentence completion item type also requires three highly rated skills: (1) *understanding how sentence structure and punctuation shape meaning*, (2) *demonstrating and expanding knowledge of difficult vocabulary*, and (3) *determining the meaning of unfamiliar words through context*, among others. These three skills were all rated above 2.5 in importance. All were rated slightly lower in terms of coverage.

Finally, it is worth noting that the content specifications do not call for any questions measuring skills that are not considered at least “somewhat important” or that do not receive at least “some coverage.” Indeed, the two skills that had the lowest importance and coverage rankings by survey respondents: (1) *understanding the conventions of tables, charts, and maps*, and (2) *using tables, charts, and maps to establish meaning and synthesize information*, are not called for by the content specifications and are not tested on the SAT critical reading section.

## Writing

When the rank ordering of writing process skills covered in the classroom is compared with the list of writing process skills assessed in the SAT writing section, there is a noticeable correspondence (see Table 8). In fact,

**Table 8**

## Alignment Between Writing Process Skills and SAT Writing Questions

<i>Writing process skill</i>	<i>Persuasive writing prompt</i>	<i>Improving paragraphs</i>
Creative writing		
Writing personal narratives	√	
Using peer groups for feedback and revision		
Using literal and figurative language appropriately	√	√
Responding to the needs of different audiences		
Using prewriting techniques to generate texts		
Using sentence variety	√	√
Demonstrating insight and/or creativity in the writing task	√	
Writing research papers		
Generating multiple drafts while creating and completing texts		
Understanding writing as a process of invention and rethinking		
Learning strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading		
Understanding the purposes of different forms of writing		
Using topic sentences	√	√
Using appropriate voice, tone, and style	√	√
Writing analyses and evaluations of texts		
Writing expository essays		
Focusing on a purpose for writing	√	
Writing persuasive and/or argumentative essays	√	
Organizing paragraphs and using appropriate transitions	√	√
Writing effective introductions and conclusions	√	√
Using writing and reading as tools for critical thinking	√	
Developing a logical argument	√	
Writing a unified essay	√	√
Using supporting details and examples	√	
Writing a clear and coherent essay	√	√

**Note:** A check mark indicates that a problem tested by the SAT is aligned to a skill included in the survey.

the skills covered in the classroom appear to be closely aligned with the content specifications of the new SAT writing section.

With the inclusion of the essay in the writing section, 15 of the 26 skills surveyed are measured, either directly or indirectly, by the essay prompt (see Table 8). All seven of the most heavily covered classroom skills (mean coverage of 2.75 or above) are assessed directly in the essay section of the test: (1) *writing a clear and coherent essay*, (2) *using supporting details and examples*, (3) *writing a unified essay*, (4) *developing a logical argument*, (5) *using writing and reading as tools for critical thinking*, (6) *writing effective introductions and conclusions*, and (7) *organizing paragraphs and using appropriate transitions*.

Of the 19 surveyed skills receiving less heavy classroom coverage (mean coverage of 2.73 or below), 11 are also assessed by the essay prompt: (1) *writing persuasive and/or argumentative essays*, (2) *focusing on a purpose for writing*, (3) *writing expository essays*, (4) *writing analyses and evaluations of texts*, (5) *using appropriate voice, tone, and style*, (6) *using topic sentences*, (7) *understanding writing as a process of invention and rethinking*, (8) *demonstrating insight and/or creativity in the writing task*, (9) *using sentence variety*, (10) *using literal and figurative language appropriately*, and (11) *writing personal narratives*.

Four of the skills listed above—writing analyses and evaluations of texts; writing expository essays; understanding writing as a process of invention and rethinking; and writing personal narratives—are not directly required by the essay task. The prompts, however, are designed to give test-takers the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise, using any mode of writing and/or any form of background knowledge. Moreover, developing a point of view on an issue encompasses a variety of rhetorical strategies, including those used in writing a persuasive or argumentative essay, and entails some invention and rethinking. The essay gives test-takers the chance to demonstrate each of the four “indirectly tested” skills.

While the majority of the writing process skills surveyed are measured in the response to the essay prompt, it should also be noted that one of the multiple-choice question types—improving paragraphs—requires knowledge of writing process skills. The following nine skills, most receiving coverage ratings above the grand mean of 2.59, are measured in questions assessing a test-taker’s ability to identify revisions necessary in the context of a paragraph or an entire essay: (1) *writing a clear and coherent essay*, (2) *using supporting details and examples*, (3) *writing a unified essay*, (4) *writing effective introductions and conclusions*, (5) *organizing paragraphs and using appropriate transitions*, (6) *using appropriate voice, tone, and style*, (7) *using topic sentences*, (8) *using sentence variety*, and (9) *using literal and figurative language appropriately*.

Eight surveyed skills are not covered by these essay or improving paragraphs questions. These eight skills tended not to be covered extensively in the classroom either; six fall below the grand mean of 2.59. While these are clearly important skills for a writer to master, even in the



classroom such activities require a single extended period of time (e.g., *using prewriting techniques to generate texts*), more than one period of time (e.g., *generating multiple drafts while creating and completing texts*), additional resources (e.g., *writing research papers*), or a group (e.g., *using peer groups for feedback and revision*). They are not unimportant but are simply beyond the scope of either the essay or multiple-choice questions of the test. The single exception, *creative writing*, could plausibly be measured by the essay or improving paragraphs, but receives only minimal coverage in the classroom.

As the survey results demonstrate, the coverage ratings for the writing process skills described above closely replicate the importance ratings for the same set of skills. The nine skills receiving the most coverage by classroom teachers are also considered most important by classroom teachers (mean importance of 2.76 or above) and are ranked the same (with one insignificant reversal) in both categories. The same pattern can be observed for skills rated below the level of “very important.” Overall, the writing process skills surveyed are closely matched in importance and coverage, with a few insignificant reversals in the rank ordering. Moreover, as in the coverage category described above, the majority of the skills considered important are measured by the essay task. As in the coverage category, nine skills are also measured by the improving paragraphs question type.

Perhaps the strongest corroboration of the alignment between the surveyed skills and the skills measured by the

essay is displayed in Table 9. Table 9 shows the skills that students must demonstrate mastery of at each score point in the scoring guide. The results show that the scoring guide addresses 15 of the writing process skills (and all of the grammar and usage skills) considered most important and therefore most frequently covered by the classroom teachers.

Almost all of the grammar and usage skills surveyed were covered by classroom teachers. On the whole, though, grammar and usage were not covered as extensively as writing process skills. None, in fact, received an average that was in the “substantial coverage” range, and only two skills had a coverage rating higher than 2.50. Of the 21 grammar and usage skills covered in the classroom, 19 are aligned with the test’s content specifications and tested in one or more of the three types of multiple-choice questions.

Seventeen of these skills correspond directly to problems tested by the improving sentences type of question, an item type that assesses a student’s ability to recognize and correct errors in usage and sentence structure and to recognize effective sentences that follow the conventions of standard written English. Eleven of these skills are also measured by identifying sentence errors, the second multiple-choice question type. Two skills not measured by improving sentences questions: (1) *maintaining tense sequences* and (2) *using appropriate verb forms*, are assessed by identifying sentence errors questions (see Table 10).

The third type of multiple-choice question, improving paragraphs, assesses some grammar and usage skills,

**Table 9**

Elements of an Essay with the Highest Score and Corresponding Writing Process Skills with Teacher Ratings of Importance

<i>Scoring guide criteria</i>	<i>Corresponding writing process skill</i>	<i>Importance rating</i>
Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position	• Developing a logical argument	2.9
	• Using writing and reading as tools for critical thinking	2.9
	• Writing a persuasive and/or argumentative essay	2.8
	• Focusing on a purpose for writing	2.8
	• Understanding writing as a process of invention and rethinking	2.7
	• Writing expository essays	2.7
	• Demonstrating insight and/or creativity in the writing task	2.6
	• Writing personal narratives	2.2
Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas	• Writing a clear and coherent essay	3.0
	• Writing a unified essay	2.9
	• Writing effective introductions and conclusions	2.8
	• Focusing on a purpose for writing	2.8
	• Using topic sentences	2.7
Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary	• Writing effective introductions and conclusions	2.8
	• Using appropriate voice, tone, and style	2.7
	• Using literal and figurative language appropriately	2.5
Demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure	• Using sentence variety	2.6
Is free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics	All grammar and usage skills mechanics	2.5–2.8

**Table 10**

Alignment Between Grammar, Usage, and Sentence Structure Skills and Problems Tested by SAT Writing Questions

<i>Grammar, usage, and sentence structure skills</i>	<i>Improving sentences</i>	<i>Identifying sentence errors</i>	<i>Improving paragraphs</i>
Avoiding faulty predication in sentences	√		
Avoiding dangling modifiers	√		
Using comparative modifiers appropriately	√	√	
Using appropriate idiomatic words, phrases, or structures	√	√	√
Avoiding weak, passive constructions	√		
Using connectives appropriately	√	√	
Avoiding illogical comparisons	√	√	
Subordinating and coordinating ideas in sentences	√	√	√
Controlling errors in spelling			
Avoiding pronoun shift	√		
Combining sentences appropriately	√		√
Maintaining parallel structure in sentences	√	√	
Using appropriate verb forms		√	
Avoiding wordiness	√		
Controlling errors in subject-verb agreement	√	√	
Avoiding errors in pronoun agreement, case, and reference	√	√	
Maintaining tense sequences		√	
Making acceptable word choices	√	√	√
Using all punctuation appropriately			
Avoiding run-on sentences	√		
Avoiding sentence fragments	√		√

including one surveyed skill—*combining sentences appropriately*—that is not measured by either of the other two multiple-choice item types (see Table 10). However, this type of question, which tests a student’s ability to edit and revise sentences in the context of a paragraph or entire essay; organize and develop paragraphs in a coherent, logical manner; and apply the conventions of standard written English, is more closely aligned to the writing process skills described above.

Two skills covered by classroom teachers: (1) *using all punctuation appropriately* and (2) *controlling errors in spelling*, are not aligned to any multiple-choice content specifications. They are not, however, unimportant in the context of the writing section. Knowledge of correct use of punctuation marks, such as the comma and semicolon, is frequently required to arrive at the correct answer, even in questions that primarily test the structure in which the punctuation appears. Moreover, mastery of both skills is measured in the essay and evaluated via the essay scoring guide.

Three of the essay scoring guide categories presented in Appendix B—“skillful use of language/use of a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary”; “meaningful variety in sentence structure”; and “few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics”—demonstrate an alignment between all grammar and usage skills covered, including the two skills not directly

aligned to multiple-choice questions, and the essay. In fact, since the method of scoring (i.e., holistic scoring) requires that all features of the written response be taken into account to arrive at a score, evaluation of a student’s essay may include all of the grammar and usage skills surveyed.

The survey results demonstrate that almost all of the grammar and usage skills surveyed were both covered by classroom teachers and considered highly important, a finding displayed in the narrow range of means in both categories. Results show that most skills are considered important in the classroom but indicate little differentiation in teacher ratings of importance among the skills.

The two skills receiving the most classroom coverage—*avoiding sentence fragments* and *avoiding run-on sentences*—are also considered most important. Likewise, the skill receiving the least classroom coverage—*avoiding faulty predication in sentences*—is considered least important. None of the other 18 surveyed grammar and usage skills are ranked the same for coverage and importance, but the lack of numerical differentiation in the ratings makes this result difficult to interpret. As is true for the usage and grammar skills covered in the classroom, the skills considered important by teachers are universally reflected in the content specifications of the multiple-choice questions and the essay.

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Although “faulty predication,” the illogical relationship between the subject and predicate, is regarded as a serious error whenever the term is included in the list of writing problems to avoid, the “avoiding faulty predication” skill received the lowest importance rating in the survey. We speculate that the term may not be as familiar as the other writing skills on the survey. We further speculate that the skill may not be taught or addressed in the same manner in a writing course as most of the other writing skills since it entails dealing with logic and the meaning of words.

The difference between the importance and coverage ratings of grammar and usage skills was one of the most striking findings of the survey results. (Results indicated that grammar and usage skills are widely considered important but not substantially covered in the classroom.) While this finding seems unrelated to both the rank ordering of skills in the survey and the content specifications of the test, it is worth discussing. A recent position paper issued by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2004) may help to explain this difference. The NCTE paper *Some Questions and Answers About Grammar* observes first that “four of the twelve standards [included in the NCTE/International Reading Association (IRA) Standards for the English Language Arts (Small, 1996)] call on the students’ understanding of language and sentence structure.” It advises teachers against teaching grammar as an exercise in the memorization of terms and rules, however, suggesting instead that grammar, including “traditional drill and practice,” is best “anchored in the context of writing assignments or the study of literary models.” Thus, while grammar and usage are apparently not “substantially covered,” teacher ratings of their importance may indicate that grammar is taught not in isolation but in the larger context of the writing process. The new SAT writing section reflects this approach to how and why grammar is taught in the classroom. Designed to measure competence in writing developed gradually over many years through extensive experience with written English, the SAT writing section presents an essay question and multiple-choice question types that measure grammar and usage at the sentence, paragraph, and essay level.

## **Student Proficiency in Reading and Writing**

One of the most striking results of the survey was the sharp difference between high school teacher and college professor ratings of student proficiency on reading and writing skills. Across all of the reading and writing skills included on the survey, college professors rated their students’ proficiency much lower than high school teachers did.

Members of the College Board’s writing test development committee for the new SAT offered several

reasons for these large differences. One member of the writing test development committee suggested that the survey directions might have influenced the observed differences in teacher ratings of student proficiency. The directions designed for high school teachers asked the teachers to indicate how proficient students were by the end of the twelfth grade, while the directions for college professors asked the professors to indicate how proficient students were upon entrance to college. A writing test development committee member said that “it is very easy to give low ratings to students that you have not taught.” This suggests that the directions for the survey of college professors might have made it more acceptable to assign low proficiency ratings.

On a related note, another member of the writing test development committee suggested that “satisfactory” proficiency might have a different meaning for high school teachers and college professors. Average performance might be satisfactory in college whereas below average performance might be satisfactory in high school.

Members of the College Board’s reading test development committee for the new SAT also offered reasons for differences in proficiency ratings. One member of the reading test development committee speculated that the difference might be attributed to the fact that high school teachers see growth over four years, and therefore have a tendency to focus on what has been accomplished, while college instructors see incoming freshmen and note the ways in which they fail to meet college expectations. Another member of the reading test development committee thought that differences in the complexity of texts encountered in high school and college could have influenced differences in proficiency ratings. Students’ reading skills would naturally be better when students are engaging easier texts, and would be expected to falter with the more difficult work encountered in college. Also, members of the reading test development committee agreed that college involves very different criteria about what “good” reading and writing require.

Conley’s (2003, November) discussion of the poor college success rate of some high school students may help to interpret the differences in proficiency ratings. Conley suggests that there is a weak alignment between high school and college curricula. As a result, incoming first-year college students might not be prepared for what they need to know to be successful in college. This issue might account for the high proficiency ratings assigned by high school teachers and the low proficiency ratings assigned by college professors.

## **Test Format**

The results of the curriculum survey suggest that the format of the SAT is aligned with the format of tests and quizzes administered by teachers. The survey indicates

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that high school teachers and college professors do administer multiple-choice tests (the former more than the latter) and that almost all teachers administer essay tests. The format of the SAT, which will include both multiple-choice questions and an essay prompt, should be familiar, then, to test-takers. It is worth noting, however, that the multiple-choice questions used in the classroom may differ substantially in style and content from those used on the SAT (the SAT seeks to measure reasoning skills, and classroom assessments tend to measure specific content knowledge). The survey only confirms that teachers use the multiple-choice format; it provides no specific information about the nature of these questions.

## Types of Writing Assignments

Of the 11 types of writing assignments surveyed, five are assigned relatively frequently by both high school and college English teachers: (1) *responses to text*, (2) *analyses of texts*, (3) *expository essays*, (4) *argumentative essays*, and (5) *research papers*.

With the exception of research papers, which require source material and an extended period of time, both beyond the scope of the timed testing situation, the other four types of assignments align with the new SAT essay. Closest in style and purpose to *argumentative essays*, the SAT essay prompts require test-takers to develop a point of view on an issue and are designed to stimulate critical reflection. Moreover, student essays can also be described as *responses to text*, since each prompt consists of either a pair of quotations or a short paragraph of text. Test-takers are not specifically required to produce *analyses of texts* or *expository essays*, but the essay prompts allow test-takers to demonstrate their proficiency in writing using any rhetorical mode and/or background knowledge.

Another type of assignment—*personal narratives*—is given frequently by high school teachers and with moderate frequency by college professors. Like *expository essays*, *personal narratives* constitute a valid rhetorical approach to the new SAT essay prompts and therefore demonstrate alignment with the SAT writing section.

Of the remaining assignment types, two: (1) *dialogue* and (2) *business writing*, are infrequently assigned by high school teachers and college professors alike and are similarly not represented in the content specifications of the writing section. A third—*journal entries*—cannot be appropriately assessed in the context of a timed testing situation. *Poetry* and *fiction*, infrequently assigned by college professors, are nonetheless assigned with moderate frequency by high school English teachers. Such a discrepancy may reflect differences in the survey respondents as well as differences in the purposes and curricula of high school English classes and college composition classes.

It should first be noted that all of the college English professors invited to participate in the survey are described as teaching either Freshman English or Composition. While the curricula of some Freshman English classes may include poetry and/or fiction, more typically these classes, in an effort to prepare students to write successfully in other classes and departments, focus on “writing across the curriculum.” At the college level, poetry and fiction are usually taught in separate classes dedicated to these subjects. Conversely, high school English teachers usually cover the full range of subjects, composition as well as poetry and fiction.

The writing section of the test, although clearly representative of several kinds of writing assigned frequently by both high school and college English teachers, does not assess poetry or fiction. An emphasis on “writing across the curriculum,” an approach strongly endorsed in the report of the National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges (College Board, 2003, p. 28), is, however, reflected in the essay: the prompts are designed to be relevant to a wide range of fields and interests rather than narrowly related to specific topics or disciplines.

While curricular changes resulting from the inclusion of a writing section may be incremental in those schools and states already focused on writing, the new section will reinforce a “writing agenda” such as that described by the National Commission on Writing in its report, *The Neglected “R”: The Need for a Writing Revolution*. Noting that “writing, always time-consuming for student and teacher, is today hard-pressed in the American classroom,” the Commission recommended placing it “squarely in the center of the school agenda” (College Board, 2003, p. 3).

## Limitations and Next Steps

Several issues limit the interpretations of the curriculum survey results. First, there was a low response rate to the survey. Only 1,729 (about 4 percent) of the 38,848 teachers who were invited actually participated in the Web-based survey. The low response rate limits the generalizability of the survey results and suggests that volunteer bias might be at play. Distributing paper-based surveys to teachers who attended readings for AP Exams in English Language and English Literature, and the SAT Subject Test in Writing yielded additional responses (275 college English professors and 347 high school English teachers). This approach, however, introduced other potential sources of bias since teachers who attend the readings might not be representative of high school teachers in the same way as the 38,848 original invitees were.

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Second, importance and coverage ratings on reading and writing skills were based on scales that had only three ordered responses. The choice of these scales was based, in part, on a desire to condense response alternatives into the most meaningful choices so that teachers could respond to the task efficiently. These scales were also consistent with scales that had been used in previous reading and writing curriculum surveys that were conducted in 1976 and 1991. (Previous surveys also included “irrelevant” as an additional response choice, but this response was not included among the three ordered responses.)

The disadvantage of using scales that have three ordered responses is that they limit the amount of variation in the observed responses. In the current study, this issue was further complicated by the skills included in the survey. It would be uncommon for any teacher to indicate that a reading or writing skill was “not important” or “not covered.” The consequence of this is that most of the ratings were high. Across all reading and writing questions, the percent of teachers who selected “not important” ranged from 0.3 to 11.9 percent (with one outlier of 30.2 percent) and the percent who selected “not covered” ranged from 0.6 to 18.9 percent (with three outliers of 35.6 percent, 45.4 percent, and 47.8 percent). There was enough variability in those who selected the other ordered responses to yield meaningful results, however.

The next steps for research include: (a) periodically replicating the curriculum survey, (b) performing alignments of the SAT to state standards and college entry frameworks in reading and writing, and (c) continuing to seek guidance from test development committees. The purpose of this future work is to ensure that the SAT remains aligned to what students need to know to be successful in high school and college.

Periodic curriculum surveys will function as a good tool for capturing up-to-date information from a large group of high school and college faculty on curricula and instructional practices. It might be a good idea to include additional ordered responses for importance and coverage ratings in future versions of the curriculum survey. If there is a desire to evaluate trends from previous surveys to the current survey to future surveys, conversions can be applied to create a common scale.

Future efforts should also attempt to improve the response rate to the survey. One idea for improving the response rate is to send invitations to participate in the Web-based survey to members of organizations such as the Modern Language Association of American (MLA), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The response rate might improve because members of these organizations might be more interested in responding to questions about curricula and instructional practices.

Reading and writing test development committee meetings will provide a venue for a more in-depth

discussion of these issues. These discussions will inform future modifications to the SAT that will help keep the test aligned to curricula and instructional practices as the focus in the classroom changes over time.

Finally, it is also important to understand the alignment of the SAT to state standards and college entry frameworks. Many states have developed standards to delineate what students are expected to know by the time they graduate high school. It is probably true that the SAT is a good measure of at least some of these standards. The question is, which state standards are measured by the SAT? The answer to this question will inform how much of the SAT measures what states think is important for their students to know. It is important to note that the College Board has developed its own set of standards to which the SAT is aligned. Future work will focus on the link between the College Board's standards and all state standards, which will permit an indirect alignment of the SAT to state standards.

## Conclusions

The current paper presents the results of a large-scale, national, reading and writing curriculum survey that 2,351 high school teachers and college professors responded to and evaluates the alignment of the survey results to the reading and writing skills measured by the new SAT. The main finding is that the results demonstrate a strong link between the skills measured by the new SAT and high school and college curricula and instructional practice.

As the National Commission on Writing concludes in *The Neglected “R”*, “developing critical thinkers and writers should be understood as one of the central works of education” (The College Board, 2003, p. 32). Survey respondents would seem to agree. Responses of high school and college English teachers alike demonstrate that most of the surveyed writing skills, both writing process and grammar and usage, are considered very important and are substantially covered in the classroom. The new writing section of the SAT reflects these same emphases. Two new multiple-choice item types—identifying sentence errors and improving sentences—are closely aligned to the grammar and usage skills considered most important by classroom teachers. The third new multiple-choice item type—improving paragraphs—is aligned to both grammar and usage skills and writing process skills. Moreover, the new essay section of the test measures all of the skills—both writing process and grammar and usage—considered most important by teachers and given the greatest coverage in the classroom.

The teachers' responses to the reading skills suggest similar findings. Most of the surveyed skills are considered

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important and are substantially covered in the classroom, the exception being those related to the reading of charts and graphs, and the critical reading section of the SAT reflects this emphasis. Moreover, the responses to the survey suggest that the upcoming changes to the SAT may more closely align the test with curricula and instructional practices. The elimination of analogies will permit the inclusion of eight more passage-based reading questions, an approximately 20 percent increase. Each of these questions will, like the current passage-based questions, require a complex mix of reading skills of the sort rated highly on the survey. In addition, the inclusion of the new short reading passages will allow for a broader range of content and narrative modes to be included on each test. And finally, the inclusion of a fiction passage will allow a heavier emphasis to be placed on skills commonly associated with the reading of literary texts—notably, those requiring an understanding of tone, figurative language, and irony.

The survey results for both reading and writing suggest, then, that the new SAT will be closely aligned with curricula and instructional practices as reflected in the survey.

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# Appendix A: Sample SAT Items

## Critical Reading

### Sentence Completion

Each sentence below has one or two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five words or sets of words labeled A through E. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

1. Hoping to ----- the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be ----- to both labor and management.
- (A) enforce . . useful  
(B) end . . divisive  
(C) overcome . . unattractive  
(D) extend . . satisfactory  
(E) resolve . . acceptable

### Paragraph Reading

The passages below are followed by questions based on their content; questions following a pair of related passages may also be based on the relationship between the paired passages. Answer the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passages and in any introductory material that may be provided.

Questions 2–3 are based on the following passage.

I remember myself as a young man: studded, slouched, eager above all to be perceived as different—in the crowd but not of it, a young writer  
*Line* not about to waste his time on the lower part of the  
5 mountain. But I am now that thing I so confidently scorned then, a book reviewer. When people ask me what I do, I usually say I’m an essayist or a critic. More honorable terms both, and they mostly fit. They almost conceal the fact that the greater part  
10 of what I do is read and write about books.

2. It can be inferred that the “part of the mountain” (lines 4–5) that the narrator originally intended to spend his time on was that of
- (A) dogged pursuit of celebrity  
(B) encyclopedic accumulation of knowledge  
(C) rarefied literary endeavor  
(D) abstract philosophical discourse  
(E) revolutionary political ideals

3. The narrator’s tone in the passage is predominantly
- (A) irate  
(B) confident  
(C) solicitous  
(D) wistful  
(E) sympathetic

### Paired Paragraph

Questions 4–7 are based on the following passages.

#### Passage 1

Any wildlife biologist can tell you how many deer a given area can support—how much browse there is for the deer to eat before they begin to suppress the reproduction of trees, before they begin to starve in  
*Line* the winter. Any biologist can calculate how many  
5 wolves a given area can support too, in part by counting the number of deer. And so on, up and down the food chain. It’s not an exact science, but it comes pretty close—at least compared to figuring  
10 out the carrying capacity of Earth for human beings, which is an art so dark that anyone with any sense stays away from it.

#### Passage 2

Estimates of the number of humans that Earth can sustain have ranged in recent decades from fewer than  
15 a billion to more than a trillion. Such elasticity is probably unavoidable, since “carrying capacity” is essentially a subjective term. It makes little sense to talk about carrying capacity in relationship to humans, who are capable of adapting and altering  
20 both their culture and their physical environment, and can thus defy any formula that might settle the matter. The number of people that Earth can support depends on how we on Earth want to live, on what we want to consume, and on what we regard as a crowd.

4. Both passages support which of the following conclusions about Earth's carrying capacity for humans?
- (A) It is routinely underestimated by biologists.
  - (B) It cannot be easily determined, given numerous variables and unknowns.
  - (C) It has only recently become the subject of considerable scientific debate.
  - (D) It is a valuable concept despite its apparent shortcomings.
  - (E) It has increased as a result of recent technological innovations.
5. The author of Passage 1 refers to "Any wildlife biologist" in line 1 and "Any biologist" in line 5 to emphasize the point that
- (A) a particular type of calculation can be made with great confidence
  - (B) scientific findings often meet with resistance from the general public
  - (C) certain beliefs are rarely questioned by scientists
  - (D) most biologists are concerned with issues related to wildlife mortality
  - (E) all biologists must be skilled at applying mathematical formulas
6. Both authors would agree that the "Estimates" (Passage 2, line 13) are
- (A) overly generous
  - (B) largely undocumented
  - (C) often misunderstood
  - (D) politically motivated
  - (E) essentially unreliable
7. Which of the following best describes the relationship between the two passages?
- (A) Passage 1 offers a hypothesis that is explicitly refuted in Passage 2.
  - (B) Passage 1 describes a popular misconception that is exemplified by Passage 2.
  - (C) Passage 2 presents an argument that elaborates on a point made in Passage 1.
  - (D) Passage 2 defends a position that is attacked in Passage 1.
  - (E) Passage 2 provides an anecdote that confirms the theory advanced in Passage 1.

## Passage-Based Reading

Questions 8–12 are based on the following passage.

*This excerpt from a novel focuses on Miles Roby, a young man living in a small town in Maine.*

The house he grew up in on Long Street had been on the market for more than a year, and Miles was parked across the street, trying to imagine what sort of person would purchase it in its present condition. The side porch, dangerous  
 Line 5 with rot even when he was a boy, had been removed but not replaced; visible evidence of where it had been wrenched away remained in four ugly, unpainted scars. Anybody who left the house by the back door, the only one Miles had ever used, would now be greeted by a six-  
 10 foot drop into a patch of poisonous-looking weeds and rusted hubcaps. The rest of the structure was gray with age and neglect, its front porch sloping crazily in several different directions, as if the house had been built on a fissure. Even the FOR SALE sign on the terrace tilted.

15 Several different families had rented the house over the past several years, none of them, apparently, interested in preventing or even forestalling its decline. Of course, to be fair, Miles had to admit that the decline had begun under the Robys' own stewardship. On what had once been a tidy,  
 20 well-kept street, theirs and the Minty place next door were the first houses to prefigure the deterioration of the whole neighborhood. Miles's father, Max, though a sometime house painter, had been disinclined to paint any house he himself happened to be living in. Summers he was busy  
 25 working on the coast, and by October he would pronounce himself "all painted out," though he sometimes could be induced to work for a week or so if the landlord—with whom they had a reduced-rent arrangement contingent upon Max's keeping the house painted and in good repair  
 30 —complained or threatened eviction. Resentful of such a strict literal interpretation of their agreement, Max retaliated by painting the house half a dozen different, largely incompatible colors from the numerous leftover, half-empty cans he'd appropriated from his various summer  
 35 jobs. The Roby cellar was always full of stacked gallon cans, their lids slightly askew, the damp, rotting shelves full of open mason jars of turpentine, the fumes from which permeated the upstairs throughout the winter. Miles was in fourth grade when one of his friends asked what it was like  
 40 to live in the joke house, a remark he passed along not to his father, who was responsible for its harlequin appearance, but to his mother, who first flushed crimson, then looked as if she might burst into tears, then ran into her bedroom, slammed the door and did. Later, red-eyed, she  
 45 explained to Miles that what was on the inside of a house (love, she seemed to have in mind) was more important than what was on the outside (paint, preferably in one hue), but after Miles went to bed he heard his parents arguing, and after that night Max never painted the house again.  
 50 Now its motley color scheme had weathered into uniform gray.



8. In the opening paragraph, the description of the house primarily emphasizes the
- (A) damage done to it by Miles’s family
  - (B) sadness Miles feels about its appearance
  - (C) unusual paint job done by its current tenants
  - (D) inadequacy of the many attempts to repair it
  - (E) extent of its deterioration over the years
9. In line 18, “fair” most nearly means
- (A) allowable
  - (B) adequate
  - (C) just
  - (D) likely
  - (E) pleasant
10. The narrator’s characterization of the “interpretation” in line 31 primarily serves to
- (A) criticize the landlord’s treatment of the Roby family
  - (B) mock Max’s inability to understand the terms of a rental agreement
  - (C) comment on the irony of a painter not liking to paint
  - (D) poke fun at Max’s unwillingness to maintain the house
  - (E) suggest that the home maintenance arrangement was unfair to both parties
11. Which best describes Max’s response to the landlord in lines 32–35 (“painting ... jobs”)?
- (A) Obeying an order while betraying his principles
  - (B) Making a sacrifice while gaining an advantage
  - (C) Meeting an obligation while denying personal responsibility
  - (D) Fulfilling a requirement while defying an expectation
  - (E) Providing a service while developing his skills
12. The last sentence of the passage primarily serves to
- (A) indicate the passage of time
  - (B) describe a lesson learned
  - (C) sentimentalize the past
  - (D) characterize a way of life
  - (E) draw a conclusion about an event

## Writing

### Improving Sentences

The following sentences test correctness and effectiveness of expression. Part of each sentence or the entire sentence is underlined; beneath each sentence are five ways of phrasing the underlined material. Choice A repeats the original phrasing; the other four choices are different. If you think the original phrasing produces a better sentence than any of the alternatives, select choice A; if not, select one of the other choices.

In making your selection, follow the requirements of standard written English; that is, pay attention to grammar, choice of words, sentence construction, and punctuation. Your selection should result in the most effective sentence—clear and precise, without awkwardness or ambiguity.

13. Laura Ingalls Wilder published her first book and she was sixty-five years old then.
- (A) and she was sixty-five years old then
  - (B) when she was sixty-five
  - (C) at age sixty-five years old
  - (D) upon the reaching of sixty-five years
  - (E) at the time when she was sixty-five

### Identifying Sentence Errors

The following sentences test your ability to recognize grammar and usage errors. Each sentence contains either a single error or no error at all. No sentence contains more than one error. The error, if there is one, is underlined and lettered. If the sentence contains an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct. If the sentence is correct, select choice E. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

14. The other delegates and him immediately accepted the resolution drafted by neutral states. No error
- A
  - B
  - C
  - D
  - E

## Improving Paragraphs

The following passage is an early draft of an essay. Some parts of the passage need to be rewritten. Read the passage and select the best answers for the questions that follow. Some questions are about particular sentences or parts of sentences and ask you to improve sentence structure or word choice. Other questions ask you to consider organization and development. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

**Questions 15–17 are based on the following passage.**

(1) Many times art history courses focus on the great “masters,” ignoring those women who should have achieved fame. (2) Often women artists like Mary Cassatt have worked in the shadows of their male contemporaries. (3) They have rarely received much attention during their lifetimes. (4) My art teacher has tried to make up for it by teaching us about women artists and their work. (5) Recently she came to class very excited; she had just read about a little-known artist named Annie Johnson, a high school teacher who had lived all of her life in New Haven, Connecticut. (6) Johnson never sold a painting, and her obituary in 1937 did not even mention her many paintings. (7) Thanks to Bruce Blanchard, a Connecticut businessman who bought some of her watercolors at an estate sale. (8) Johnson is finally starting to get the attention that she deserved more than one hundred years ago. (9) Blanchard now owns a private collection of hundreds of Johnson’s works—watercolors, charcoal sketches, and pen-and-ink drawings. (10) There are portraits and there are landscapes. (11) The thing that makes her work stand out are the portraits. (12) My teacher described them as “unsentimental.” (13) They do not idealize characters. (14) Characters are presented almost photographically. (15) Many of the people in the pictures had an isolated, haunted look. (16) My teacher said that isolation symbolizes Johnson’s life as an artist.

15. In context, which is the best revision to the underlined portion of sentence 3 (reproduced below)?

They have rarely received much attention during their lifetimes.

- (A) In fact, they had
- (B) Too bad these artists have
- (C) As a result, these women have
- (D) In spite of this, women artists
- (E) Often it is the case that the former have

16. In context, which of the following revisions to sentence 7 is most needed?

- (A) Delete “Thanks to”.
- (B) Move “Thanks to Bruce Blanchard” to the end of sentence 7.
- (C) Delete “who”.
- (D) Change “her” to “Johnson’s”.
- (E) Change the period to a comma and combine sentence 7 with sentence 8.

17. In context, which of the following is the best version of sentence 10 (reproduced below)?

*There are portraits and there are landscapes.*

- (A) (As it is now)
- (B) You can see both portraits and landscapes.
- (C) Therefore, both portraits and landscapes are among her works.
- (D) Johnson painted both portraits and landscapes.
- (E) Among them Johnson has portraits and landscapes.

## Essay Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and assignment below.

A sense of happiness and fulfillment, not personal gain, is the best motivation and reward for one’s achievements. Expecting a reward of wealth or recognition for achieving a goal can lead to disappointment and frustration. If we want to be happy in what we do in life, we should not seek achievement for the sake of winning wealth and fame. The personal satisfaction of a job well done is its own reward.

**Assignment:** Are people motivated to achieve by personal satisfaction rather than by money or fame? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

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## Key

### Critical Reading Questions

1.  A  B  C  D  E
2.  A  B  C  D  E
3.  A  B  C  D  E
4.  A  B  C  D  E
5.  A  B  C  D  E
6.  A  B  C  D  E
7.  A  B  C  D  E
8.  A  B  C  D  E
9.  A  B  C  D  E
10.  A  B  C  D  E
11.  A  B  C  D  E
12.  A  B  C  D  E

### Writing Questions

13.  A  B  C  D  E
14.  A  B  C  D  E
15.  A  B  C  D  E
16.  A  B  C  D  E
17.  A  B  C  D  E

## Appendix B: Essay Scoring Guide

<p><b>Score of 6</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>outstanding</i>, demonstrating <i>clear and consistent mastery</i>, although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples to support its position</li> <li>Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas</li> <li>Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary</li> <li>Demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure</li> <li>Is free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score of 5</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>effective</i>, demonstrating <i>reasonably consistent mastery</i>, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position</li> <li>Is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas</li> <li>Exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>Demonstrates variety in sentence structure</li> <li>Is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score of 4</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>competent</i>, demonstrating <i>adequate mastery</i>, although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position</li> <li>Is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas</li> <li>Exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>Demonstrates some variety in sentence structure</li> <li>Has some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Score of 3</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>inadequate</i>, but demonstrates <i>developing mastery</i>, and is marked by one or more of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position</li> <li>Is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas</li> <li>Displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice</li> <li>Lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure</li> <li>Contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score of 2</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>seriously limited</i>, demonstrating <i>little mastery</i>, and is flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited, demonstrating weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position</li> <li>Is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas</li> <li>Displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice</li> <li>Demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure</li> <li>Contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score of 1</b></p> <p>An essay in this category is <i>fundamentally lacking</i>, demonstrating <i>very little or no mastery</i>, and is severely flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position</li> <li>Is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay</li> <li>Displays fundamental errors in vocabulary</li> <li>Demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure</li> <li>Contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning</li> </ul>

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of zero.



