

**PSTO General Meeting**  
**Monday, October 22, 2007**  
**6:30 p.m.**  
**Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Passing the**  
**Graduation Exam and Improving Your ACT and SAT Scores**

**Graduation Exams:**

The Alabama Graduation Exams are separated into five categories:

Social Studies  
Mathematics  
Language  
Reading  
Biology (Science)

The Social Studies test is the one that is most often failed. The test is mostly memorization. Passing the test requires strong reading skills. Instructions can be confusing so students must read carefully. Much of the information is covered in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. There is a section covering Alabama History. A Social Studies review is located in the front of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies textbooks.

Students are given **an unlimited amount of time during one school day** to complete each test.

**Tip:**

- It is recommended that parents of elementary students save their Social Studies and Biology notes for review.
- If your student did not attend elementary school in Alabama, review Alabama History closely.
- *Schoolhouse Rock* video is a good resource.
- General test-taking tips apply, such as getting plenty of rest, limiting work and activities during testing week, and eating a good breakfast.

**To ensure success with the Graduation Exams:**

- Parents should monitor their student's academic progress by confirming homework completion, encouraging good note-taking in class, and communicating with faculty.

Monitoring your student's academic progress is made easier through **STI** Education Data Management Solutions. This is an excellent resource for keeping up-to-date on grades, homework, and attendance. **The cost of STI is \$15 per school year. Payment should be sent to the office. Checks should be made payable to SVHS.**

**For STI access:**

[www.shadesvalley.com](http://www.shadesvalley.com)

Click on blue **STI Home** box in middle of page

On United States map, click on **Alabama**

From drop-down box, click on **Jefferson County Schools**

Click **submit**

From drop-down box, click on **Shades Valley High School**

Click **submit**

Enter **Identification Number**

Enter **PIN**

Click **Login**

- Unnecessary absences should be avoided. A good attendance standard should be established in elementary school. It is impossible to replace missed classroom instruction.

**All SVHS/JCIB/SVTA students have access to [www.usatestprep.com](http://www.usatestprep.com). This website provides diagnostic exams, study guides, crossword puzzles, and other resources to assist in preparation for the Graduation Exams. If desired, the website will also email test scores to teachers.**

**For access:**

[www.usatestprep.com](http://www.usatestprep.com)

Click on **member login** at the top right corner

Enter user id: **shadesvalleyal**

Enter password: **newton45**

Click on **I agree**

Click on **subject tabs** for specific information

Please contact the Counselor's office at 205 379-5350 or the Community School at 205 379-5373 if your child needs individual tutoring. School organizations offer free tutoring to students before and after school. The Community School is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of SVHS and can provide a list of available tutors for hire.

**Preparing for College:**

Ensure that your student is taking the courses needed for college acceptance.

**Completing course selection forms each year is very important.**

Encourage him/her to take challenging courses, including Honors and Advanced Placement.

PSAT – Pre-SAT assessment taken in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. **This year's PSAT was taken on October 17.** Scores from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade determine selection for Jefferson County Super Scholars (top 100 PSAT scores in Jefferson County). Scores from 11<sup>th</sup> grade determine National Merit Scholars.

PLAN – Pre-ACT assessment taken in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Cost is \$12. Recommended for all students planning to attend college. **The test will be given in November. Send payment to the office. Checks should be made payable to SVHS.**

**These tests are indicators of how well your student will perform on the ACT/SAT. Please encourage your student to be prepared and do their best.**

#### **ACT/SAT:**

- It is recommended that students complete Algebra II and Chemistry **before** taking the ACT.
- The first test is usually taken in April of the Junior year. (The test can be taken in December of the Junior year if Algebra II and Chemistry have been completed.)

#### **Should my student take the ACT or SAT?**

The ACT is primarily used by colleges and universities in the southeast. It is recommended that students take both tests to confirm which is better suited for their academic strengths and weaknesses. The SAT is considered to be a more analytical test.

#### **Scholarships:**

- Your student should take the tests in October in order for scores to be available for the general scholarship deadline of December 1. (Note: The deadline at UAB is November 1.)