

The New Trier News

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MLK Day instigates student self-reflection

NT admin reports 67% attendance rate on the day

by Nora Crumley

Martin Luther King Day 2016 marked New Trier's first all school seminar regarding race. This controversial day, which included award winning speakers and teacher driven seminars, acted as a starting point for the conversation about race.

"It [MLK Day] was to get the ball rolling about these race issues," junior Isabelle Sennett said.

The day started with high-profile speakers at both campuses. Ilyasah Shabazz, the daughter of Malcolm X and author of "Growing Up X," spoke at the freshman campus.

Shabazz spoke of her famous father and how students can create change.

"Her main point was that we, as students, can absorb what is happening around us and use that to form our own opinions and help fight racism," said freshman Kathryn Beenman.

Isabelle Wilkerson, a Pulitzer prize winning journalist, spoke at the Winnetka campus about her book "The Warmth of Other Suns." The book follows three African



Winnetka campus keynote speaker Isabel Wilkerson speaking on the Great Migration's impact | Trevia

Americans between 1915-1970 and their journey North to escape the Jim Crow South.

"A lot of times people look at this book as a piece of history until they turn on the news," Wilkerson said in an interview after her speech. "There is a direct link between what happened a generation or two before us and what is happening now because these issues have never been addressed."

Wilkerson hopes that delving into the history of racial relations is the key to moving forward. "Everything we are looking at is a screen shot in the middle of a long-

running movie. We didn't see the beginning; we are just seeing that one moment, and then we make assumptions based on that moment. That is where we are politically and psychologically in our country."

Empathy is also essential, according to Wilkerson. "What we are missing now is empathy. Empathy is looking at the situation from that person's perspective, as seeing their situation as they are in it, not as you are in it. We should be asking why do human beings do what they do when they are in certain circumstances."

Junior Kasia Kolanko expressed how difficult it is to imagine someone

else's experience. "We will never have to experience the talk that black parents have to give to their children about how they will be treated."

Wilkerson's goal, showing the similarities rather than the differences regarding race, was a major theme throughout the seminar.

Junior Neil Madlener mirrored this message, "I learned that diversity is essential for humanity's progress. Racism is detrimental to society."

Many other students echoed Madlener's views "It definitely changed me," Kolanko said.

Not all students took this first step in the discussion about race.

Attendance for Monday's seminar was 67%, according to a letter from the school that went out to parents. On a typical day, around 93-96% of students attend school.

Though an internet blog reported that students "boycotted" the day, other factors were likely the source of low attendance, including babysitting for younger siblings that had the day off, being away on a family trip, or senioritis.

Some students still expressed misgivings about the intent and purpose of the day.

"I think there was a lot of controversy going into this day so people started with a bad mentality," said junior Taylor Connelly.

"I think I learned more about how people reacted then about the actually purpose of the day itself," Sennett said.

"It's a long process it can't be fixed in a day," said Connelly, "They should of integrated it into our every day instead of having a forced day."

Sennett agreed that this was only a step in a long process, "You can't just pop the bubble you have to chip at it."

Wilkerson would agree that this is only the beginning, "We are in the adolescence of race in our county. We are still adjusting to what happens when roles change in a long-running play."

Redesigned SAT is prospective ACT replacement

New SAT set to release this coming March

by Maya Kowitz

Illinois has decided to swap out its widely known college entrance exam given free to juniors in high school--the ACT--with its competitor, the SAT.

According to testing coordinator, Peg Stevens, Illinois wants to make sure that every junior in the state can take a test for free: "That's why we do a district ACT for all juniors, and that's why the district pays for one free official college entrance exam per year. The goal of the state is for it to be the same concept, but it might be the SAT this time," said Stevens.

It's a continuous debate for juniors in high school regarding which college admission exam is suitable for them, with the ACT being the popular pick for juniors in the midwest.

Junior Joe Akason has already taken the ACT but says he's curious about the possible changes he heard the SAT has in store.

"For the SAT currently, students are penalized for guessing. I think that's what makes the ACT more popular because the idea of not being able to guess, especially in a time crunch, discourages students."

Stevens contends that there are going to be many changes to the SAT, in an effort to make it more favorable and have more qualities like those of the ACT: "Basically this new SAT

is going to be more in line with an ACT, so that it becomes more in line with students, basically making the SAT into an ACT."

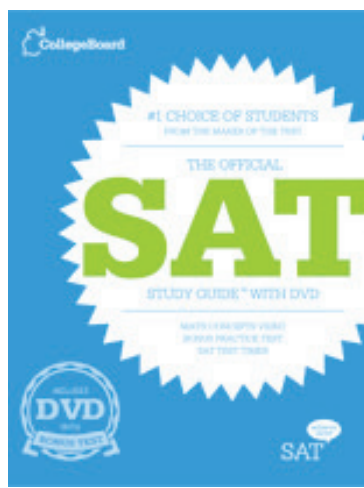
These differences that Stevens speaks of include an overall change in multiple sections of the test. In the old SAT, there were three sections, math, critical reading, and writing, and that's how they would get those scores ranging from 600-2400.

This scoring is "intimidating" according to junior Marissa Greif, who feels when compared to the simple composite 1-36 scale for the ACT, it makes the SAT seem less appealing: "Students don't want to be scared or intimidated when going into a college admission test."

Stevens defends that the new SAT has changes that will make it more appealing to juniors, including the same time given to students for taking the test, but less questions, going from a current 171 question test with a required essay, to a 154 questioned test with an optional essay.

Stevens said that the first administration of the new SAT will be in March of 2016: "There will be no penalty for guessing, and the required sections for the test are math and evidence-based reading and writing."

The testing coordinator continued with a comparison of the two rival tests: "The ACT consists of four tests, 215 questions and given 2 hours and 15 minutes plus an additional 40 minute optional essay, whereas with the new SAT, it's three tests, 154 questions and given 3 hours plus a 50 minute optional



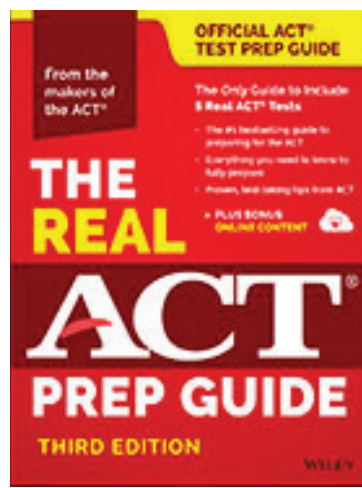
essay."

With the ACT being such a popular test for students in the Midwest, post-high school counselor Michael O'Connor believes that there won't be a significant shift for students choosing to take the new SAT.

O'Connor furthered his statement saying: "The ACT is a known test, so with this new SAT they've talked about new tests and new questions, but until there's a way to prep for it and a few years worth of data, there's no guarantee as to how many students will abandon their preference of the ACT."

Junior Francis Fay supports O'Connor's claim: "I don't want to take the SAT because I don't know much about it. I'm interested in learning about the SAT, I feel as though the ACT is the norm and it will take students a while to become accustomed to these changes."

Many students aren't even informed about the changes of the



SAT. Junior Nora Day explained her absence of knowledge on the SAT, in an area where the ACT is such a favorable test, "At first I wasn't sure because I feel like the ACT is what everyone takes, but now that I've heard about the possible changes, I want to take the SAT. The new SAT sounds interesting, because it's different from what people have done every year."

Similar to Day, many students including junior RJ Meyer agree that though they feel the new SAT seems to be heading in the right direction of attracting more students from the Midwest, it's difficult to simply switch because many are already invested in the "ACT process," says Meyer.

"I feel like many juniors would agree that they don't plan on taking the SAT because many of us have already been tutoring and worrying about the ACT, it's not worth the extra angst by taking both," said Meyer adding, "We're all just stressed."

As a post-high school counselor, O'Connor sees the stress that juniors like Meyer feel throughout the year.

"I think the SAT is just another thing people need to prep for unless they want to dedicate preparing for it. They may say 'why don't I just do the same prep as my older brother or older sister, and stick to the ACT'."

While this transition from ACT to SAT is in the works, it's not done yet because according The Chicago Tribune, "A protest has been sparked from ACT, which could potentially derail a three-year, \$14.3 million contract to the non-profit College Board that provides the SAT."

The Tribune reports that in the summer of 2015, a new law took effect that required a college entrance exam to be included in the state testing cycle.

By that time, the ACT contract with the state had ended and a competitive process for a new contract came into effect. "The state is broke, and they're looking for the best deal and the highest test scores," said Stevens referring to why Illinois may be switching to the SAT as the "better deal."

It's still a question as to whether this new SAT will even come into play, but it looks like we'll know for sure in March of 2016.

Until then, juniors feel as though they are still going to commit to the ACT and make no promises on whether they feel like they would even attempt to take the new SAT, saying its "additional work," according to Greif.