



2019 ACT & SAT Scores: Schools with High Free & Reduced-Price Meals, California

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Problem

1. Students in low-income schools are not meeting/exceeding the benchmark for SAT Math, Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (ERW), and ACT composite scores of 21 or more.
2. Identify schools with the most participants in the Free or Reduced-Priced Meal (FRPM) program.
3. Compare to twelfth grader's scores on the ACT and SAT.
4. Provide findings to Title I and other program leaders so they can determine funding or grant eligibility.

Grants and funding sources could help improve ACT and SAT scores of students from low-income families and help ensure that all students meet challenging state academic standards.

Background Information

Free and Reduced Price Meals



Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

- provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families
- to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards

Student Eligibility for FRPM



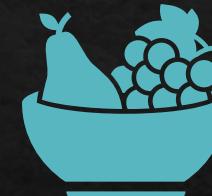
Free Meals

Family income below 130% of
the poverty level



Reduced Price Meals

Family income 130-185% of
poverty level



Direct Certification

Free meals if household
receives federal food security
benefits

2019 California Poverty Level: \$35,600 per year for a family of four

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act 2010

- ❖ The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act 2010 (HHFKA) increased food access for schools in low-income areas.
- ❖ All students in low-income areas are provided free meals.
- ❖ Low-income area schools are certified as eligible if 95% of families receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
- ❖ **NOTE:** The HHFKA limits the usefulness of the data provided by California.

ACT and SAT

Exams Goal: to gauge readiness for college

Number of Students Who Took Exam:

- ◊ ACT: 1.78 million
- ◊ SAT: 2.2 million

Cost for exams:

- ◊ ACT \$50.50 - \$67.00 (with writing)
- ◊ SAT \$47.50 - \$64.50 (with essay)

Critics of standardized tests say the tests create disadvantages for minority and low-income college applicants, as many wealthier students pay for pricey preparation courses that help to increase their scores — and chances of getting into better universities.

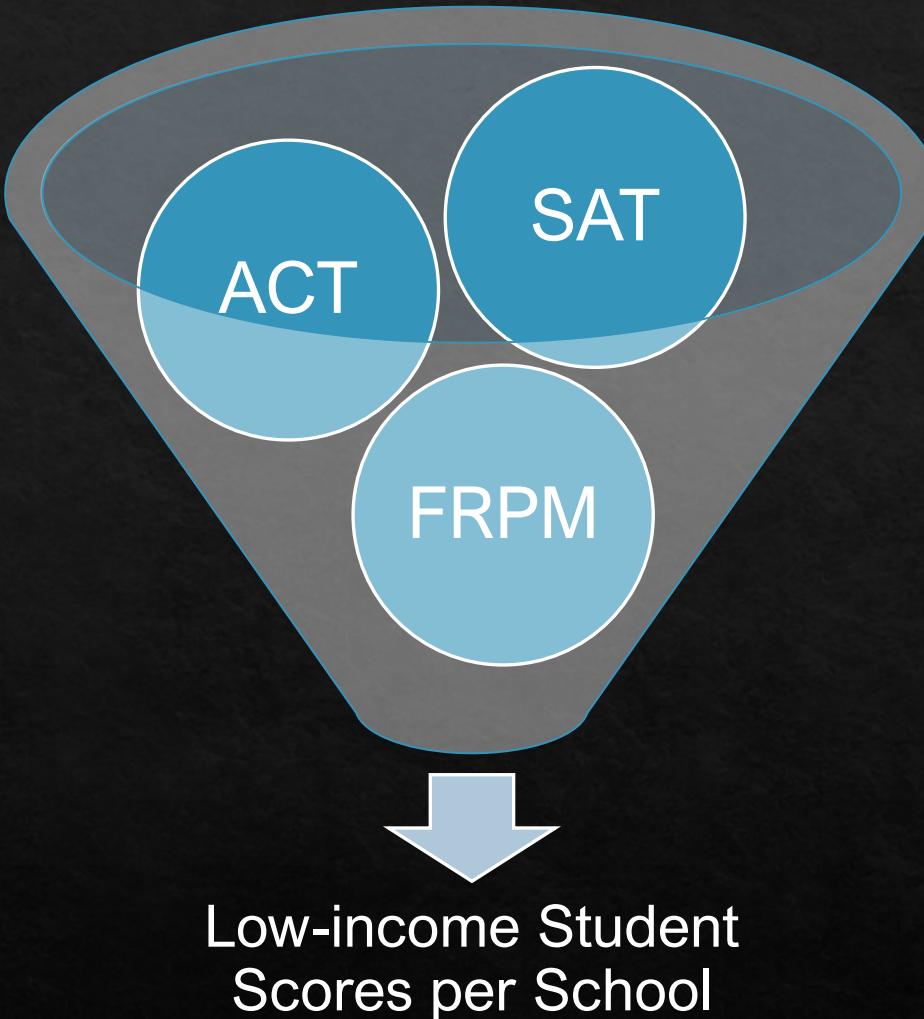
- Cal State says no need for SAT, ACT 2022

Investigative Process

Utilizing data from the state of California:

- 2019 ACT and SAT scores
- Free or Reduced-Price Meals (FRPM)
School-level data, 2018-19 school year

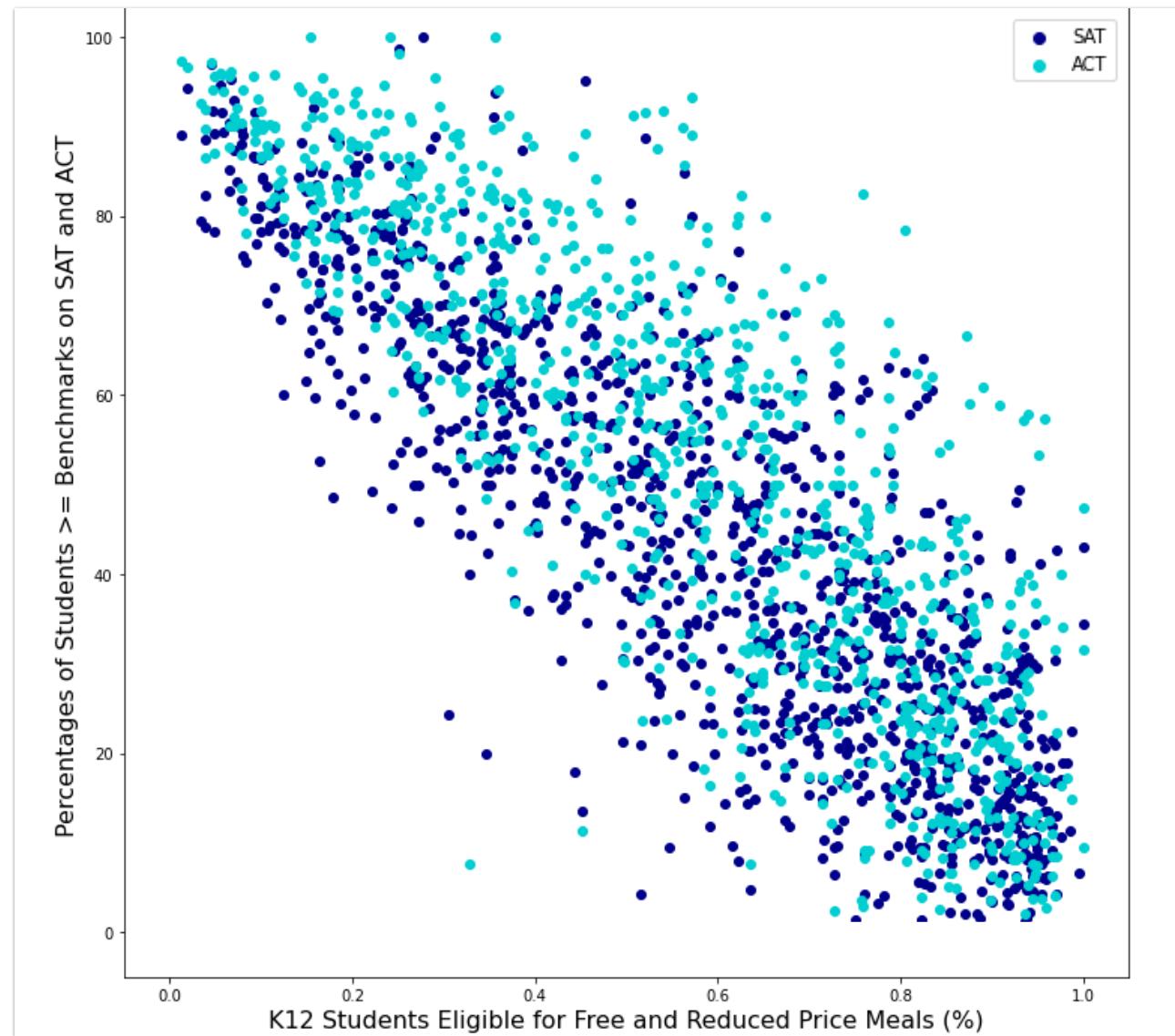
Comparing the FRPM eligible students K-12 data with the ACT and SAT scores based on School Codes.



Primary Findings

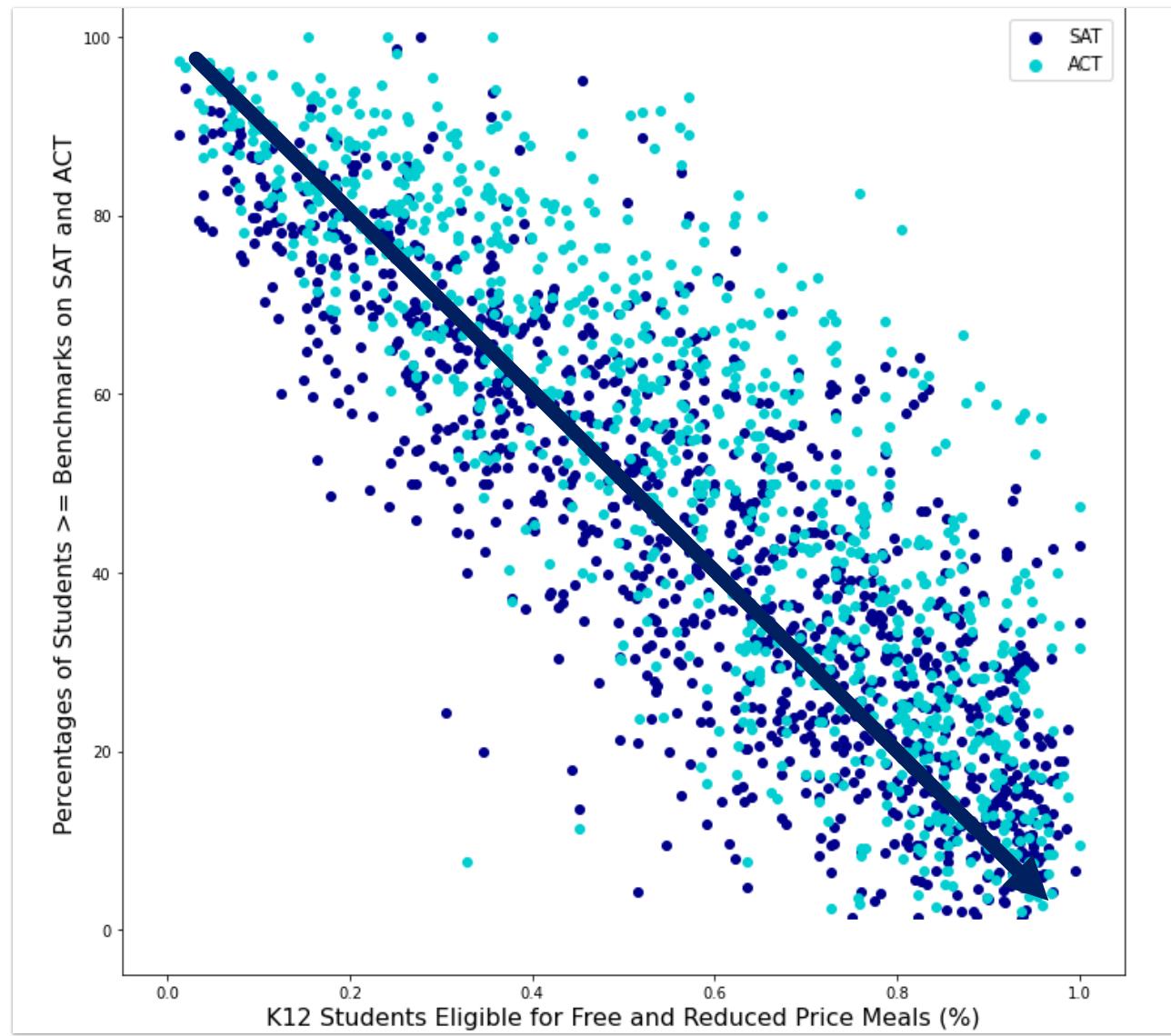
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Relationship: K12 Students Eligible for FRPM vs.
SAT Met Benchmark and ACT Composite Score ≥ 21



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Five Schools with the Highest FRPM Eligibility and Lowest Number of Students to Exceed Exam Benchmarks

School Name	Students Enrolled at School	Number Eligible FRPM	ACT: Number of Test Takers	ACT: Number of Student Scores >= 21	ACT: Percentage of Student Scores >= 21	SAT: Number of Test Takers	SAT: Number of Student Meet Benchmark	SAT: Percent of Student Meet Benchmark
Mira Monte High	2468	2280	13	0	0	174	29	16.67
Katella High	2718	2199	18	7	38.89	199	42	21.11
Eisenhower Senior High	2360	2173	63	15	23.81	124	35	28.23
Palmdale High	2523	2049	24	6	25	108	17	15.74
South High	2161	2031	31	9	29.03	152	37	24.34

ACT and SAT Fee Waivers



Fee Waiver Eligibility

Everyone has the potential to learn. A student's family income should not determine his or her educational or career opportunities. During the 2021–2022 school year, ACT will again offer the ACT® test fee waiver program to eligible students.

ACT encourages schools/agencies to emphasize to students the **importance of sitting for the test, since funds are limited**. When students do not follow through to test, they not only miss a valuable opportunity, but could prevent other students from testing.

Eligibility Requirements

Each student who receives an ACT Fee Waiver must meet **ALL** eligibility requirements:

1. Be currently enrolled in high school in the 11th or 12th grade.
2. Be testing in the United States, US territories, or Puerto Rico.
3. Meet one or more of the indicators of economic need listed below:
 - Enrolled in a federal free or reduced-price lunch program at school, based on US Department of Agriculture (USDA) income levels (see table)

Who can qualify for a fee waiver and how the process works

The College Board fee-waiver service assists eligible students who plan to take the:

- SAT
- PSAT/NMSQT
- AP Exams



A student must be either **enrolled in**, or **eligible to participate in**, the National School Lunch Program (NLSP) to receive a fee waiver. Schools participating in new federal programs such as Community Eligibility may not be able to use the NLSP criterion to identify and verify individual student fee-waiver eligibility. However, several other criteria or indicators can still be used to confirm eligibility for fee-waiver benefits. Please see the test-specific guidelines for more information.

Even with fee waivers, students may not be able to afford the preparatory practice tests which continues to put their peers at an advantage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Provide Funding for Schools with High Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility

- ❖ In conclusion, there is a correlation between students who are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals and those students who score low on the ACT or SAT. Additionally, many eligible students do not even take the ACT or SAT.
- ❖ I recommend that the ACT and SAT exam provide free access to the tests for all students in FRPM eligible schools and for all students who are eligible for FRPM in any school. Make the free assessments as accessible as possible for students eligible for FRPM so that it is easy to take the assessments.
- ❖ Additionally, I recommend that the State of California, the Federal Government, and other funding providers continue to provide financial assistance to the schools and districts with the most participants in the Free or Reduced-Priced Meal (FRPM) program. This would include funding to provide study resources and practice test opportunities.

Further Considerations

- ❖ Propose a 3-year study to research and model a handful of schools that have been given funding for exam preparation with waived fees to if the outcome provides increased test scores.
- ❖ Based on surprising differences from most schools, there were three schools that had high FRPM and higher test scores.

Sources

- ❖ Income Eligibility Guidelines can be found from the Food and Nutrition Service Agency of the United States of America.
- ❖ Free or Reduced-Price Meal School-level Data and Data Dictionary can be found on the California Department of Education website.
- ❖ U.S. Department of Education Title I, Part A website:
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>
- ❖ National Center for Education Statistics:
<https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/understanding-school-lunch-eligibility-in-the-common-core-of-data>
- ❖ No Kid Hungry: Center for Best Practices: <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/>

Questions

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