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## **Sixth-graders excel at test normally administered to high school students**

### **PSAT assesses reading, math and writing**

By [Joe Burris](#), The Baltimore Sun

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Jeremy Dy was among a small group of Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School students who took the PSAT/NMSQT, a national standardized test considered a precursor to college entrance exams, during the past school year. He and his peers excelled at the test, which is good, because they might be retaking it a few times.

While most students take the test during 10th and 11th grade, some CSP students were tested as sixth-graders. Their efforts illustrate how students at the Hanover charter school are excelling at national levels, particularly in math.

"We have pretty good teachers all around, so I guess we were just prepared," said Jeremy, 12, of Linthicum. "My teacher said that my class really wouldn't have a problem with it."

Administered by the College Board, a New York-based nonprofit association that offers standardized tests to measure students' aptitude, the PSAT/NMSQT has three components: critical reading, mathematics and problem solving, and writing.

CSP officials said that Jeremy's score on the critical reading portion was greater than 98 percent of the nation's high school sophomores. His score on the math portion was greater than 99 percent of the nation's sophomores and his score on the writing skills portion was greater than 79 percent of all high school sophomores.

"I found the math section easy, but the grammar section, I had no idea," said Jeremy. "It was hard and easy, I guess."

Excelling at the PSAT culminated a year in which Jeremy also placed fourth at the International Math Competition EMC2, sponsored by Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. The CSP Math Team was the only team from Maryland to participate in the event.

CSP Principal Fatih Kandil said that the rising seventh-graders will take the SAT this year. He said that the school will continue to allow sixth-graders to take the PSAT based on the school's pre-assessment results. He said that after students are accepted into the school in January, they are given a pre-assessment test that CSP teachers have designed.

"Based on those test results, we get an idea of where those students are academically, and then we do another one in August at the start of school," Kandil said. "After that, for a two-week period, we do nothing but teach them some generic concepts to observe the skill set our students have in terms of reading, math and other subject areas.

"We are trying to find out during that pre-assessment how much we can stretch," said Kandil. "We want to make sure that we don't burn out the students, but in the meantime we want to make sure that we challenge to the highest level so that the student will realize how much he or she can accomplish."

Jeremy's father, Norman M. Dy, said that the school called him requesting permission to have Jeremy take the PSAT/NMSQT, and he agreed. "Believe it or not, it's the kind of thing that would interest my son," he said. "I took the PSAT at the normal time. I had no idea why they would do it this early. I didn't figure it would do any harm, so why not?"

Dy said his son likely would have done better on the writing skills portion if he had been taught some of the concepts that the test covered.

"He'll do it again," said Dy. "It would be really rough on him, I think, if he did worse. But that's a chance I'm willing to take."

The PSAT/NMSQT is also administered to high school students who want to qualify for National Merit Scholarships. Kandil said that it's never too early for parents of sixth- and seventh-graders to consider paying for college as well.

"We have very high expectations for college acceptances," Kandil said. "Along the way when the colleges receive such level of test scores, such level of heavy-duty transcripts, we believe that they are going to offer them very good scholarship opportunities, let alone the acceptances. That's what we're shooting for."

[joseph.burris@baltsun.com](mailto:joseph.burris@baltsun.com)

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