

YOUR S.t.u.f.f.

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Quote of the week

"Usually I'll get three pairs of the same shoes — one to chill in, one to work out in and one to go out in. After I wear them I scrub them with an old toothbrush and white toothpaste. When I travel, I always pack one suitcase with clothes and one with just sneakers. I keep each pair wrapped in plastic baggies and put tissues inside them so they don't bend."

— Singer Kiley Dean, 21, on her obsession with Nike sneakers. She has about 70 pairs.



Who knew?

Mixing it up

If you're noticing that a lot more of your friends look different from their 'rents, you're not seeing things.

Nearly one in five adopted kids younger than 18 in the United States is not the same race as his or her adoptive parents, according to new information released by the Census Bureau. About seven in 10 are living with white adults. And 13 percent of kids are foreign-born with nearly half born in Asia.



STAFF PHOTO BY TED FITZGERALD

NO MULTIPLE CHOICE: Brighton High School seniors Kristinia McDonald and Jacklyn Marmanillo, from left, and Marmanillo's sister Katherine, a freshman at Brighton High, say minorities often lack support at home and at school for their test-taking efforts.

Minorities often face roadblocks in prepping for SAT

By CARA NISSMAN

Like many high school seniors, Jacklyn Marmanillo is feverishly studying for the SAT next month. But Marmanillo thinks she and some of her peers already are at a disadvantage.

"Minorities can't afford a proper education," said Marmanillo, 17, of Jamaica Plain. "In Boston (and other inner-city) schools, you have to fend for yourself with these tests."

Although minorities improved on the latest Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests, they still lag behind their

Put to the test

white peers when it comes to the national test that weighs heavily in their college fate.

The number of minorities who take the SAT has doubled during the past decade, but only 36 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2003 were minorities, and they scored about 200 points below their white counterparts.

"It's sort of frightening," said Jeff Rubenstein, assistant vice president of research and development at the Princeton Review, which plans to offer a free national hotline the week before the Oct. 11 test (go to www.princetonreview.com for updates). "It's certainly a very serious social policy problem with access to good test preparation."

Teenage minorities agreed a socio-economic imbalance is mostly to blame.

"A lot of minorities can't afford to pay for test preparation classes," said

Kristinia McDonald, 17, of Hyde Park.

Even when there are free SAT seminars, said McDonald, they're first-come, first-served and many teens are left out.

Minorities also may face cultural obstacles at home.

"I think the reason the (lower scores) are happening might be because our families don't speak English at home and don't know the test is important," said Mike Chou, 17, of the South End.

"My parents knew about it because I have cousins and stuff," he said.

In cash-strapped, overcrowded public schools that have few guidance counselors, many students fall through the cracks, McDonald said. A lack of adult encouragement can take a toll on potential testers.

"If teachers said, 'This is your big chance,' everyone would want to take it, but now teachers don't tell

you much, so kids say, 'You know what? I don't care,' and end up giving up," said Marmanillo's sister, Katherine, a freshman at Brighton High who said she hopes the system improves before she has to sharpen her No. 2 pencils.

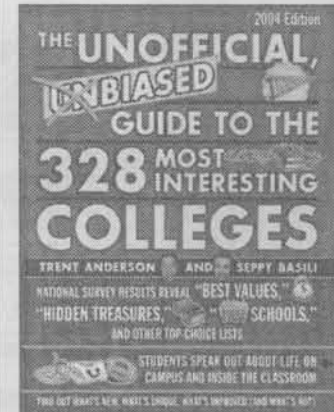
Some say students also interfere with the future of their peers.

"There's a lot of competition," McDonald said. "Some students know what to do, but (most) kids do not help each other."

Still, if she had to choose, McDonald would rather her teachers concentrate on conventional English and math education instead of teaching to the SAT.

"We should learn everything fresh and new," she said. "We shouldn't have to take preparation courses."

What's up? Tell Cara Nissman at cnissman@bostonherald.com.



Find your fit

So what if you're a nerd? If you pick a college packed with pencil pushers, you'll feel at home, right?

"The Unofficial, Unbiased Guide to the 328 Most Interesting Colleges" (Kaplan, \$20) aims to help you find your match, discussing everything from the classroom ambiance to the social life of more than 300 schools nationwide.

Each entry features a few schools with similar traits to broaden your choices. And the quotes from students are irreplaceable: "Typical student (at the University of Chicago): nose in book, glasses, bad breath? No, no. The population is wonderfully diverse," one jokes. Yet "everyone is a dork, so everyone fits . . . and despite the apparent dorkiness of the population, you can have fun here!"



Too far away? No way

Can't afford to take a dozen trips to prospective colleges this fall? Experience campus life the "second-best way" by viewing videos created by Collegiate Choice Inc.

The company has taped the student-guided tours of more than 350 colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, England, Ireland and Scotland. You might not be able to sample a school's cafeteria grub but Collegiate Choice Walking Tours can give you a sense of the campus and answer most commonly asked questions for just \$15 a tour, plus shipping (call 201-871-0098 or go to www.collegiate-choice.com).

— CARA NISSMAN