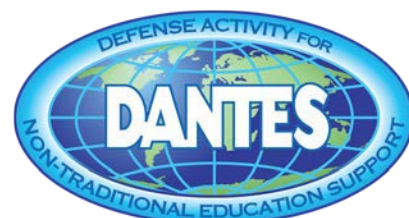


October 2019



DANTES

Prep-a-Thon Success Handbook



**DoD VoEd
PROGRAMS**

Dear Education Officers,



Everyday service members are inspired and motivated to do great things by your Education Offices. The work that you do not only touches the lives of service members and our next generation war-fighters, but also has a long-term impact on separating veterans, retirees, and the society they join. Thank you for empowering our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guard to achieve their dreams!

With great appreciation,

DoD VoEd Family

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide recommendations and guidance to Service Education Centers on hosting test preparation events in support of the DANTES-sponsored credit-by-exam program. A testing Prep-a-Thon is intended to ensure effective study practices by service members in advance of taking relevant credit-by-exam tests.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

PREP-A-THON CONCEPT:

The DANTES Examination program's goal is to promote the accessibility of relevant academic exams for prepared service members. The Prep-a-Thon model supports this goal by ensuring the delivery of effective study practices to service members in advance of relevant credit-by-exam tests. Specifically, the guidance focuses on three main tenets:

- Counseling on degree-applicable exams
- Resources to support preparation (e.g., time to study effectively, base-provided preparation spaces, etc.)
- Delivery of preparation-based courses.

The intent is to make a culture change from test-a-thons (measured by volume) to preparation-focused testing for relevant courses, increase the return on DoD's CLEP and DSST investments (measured by pass rate), and encourage service members to progress in their educational goals.

SECTION 2: PREP-A-THON CYCLE

DANTES reached out to Education Offices who had previously supported successful preparation events. After evaluation, a pattern of success was identified. Successful Prep-a-Thons are comprehensive, creative, and customized. The following recommended cycle was compiled from Education Offices who supported successful preparation events.

Plan

SCHEDULING:

Education Offices seeking to host a DoD VoEd Prep-a-Thon should communicate with DANTES (exams@navy.mil). This is important to ensure exam contracts are fully funded to cover anticipated test volume, and is particularly important for events conducted toward the end of the fiscal year.

The Education Office should work with leadership to recommend potential dates based on local operations tempo. Recommendations could be for prep events to take place before closeout dates for evaluation reports, academic institution cut off dates, or in advance of commissioning program deadlines.



EVENT MILESTONES:

Education Offices are the primary coordinators of preparation events. Education Offices can expect to dedicate one week for the testing and anticipate increased face-to-face counseling during the month prior. The length of the Prep-a-Thon can be fluid to meet base needs, such as three weeks of prep and one week of testing. Education Services Officers (ESOs) should also consider multiple work schedules when coordinating study events (e.g., lunch n' learns, evenings, etc.)

Planning includes establishing a strategy for communications, measuring demand for subject areas, and organizing subject specific courses.

Counseling includes advising service members on exams they should take, preparing and delivering welcome letters, and assisting with registration.

Preparation includes ensuring the required resources and study materials are available, and ensuring service members are prepared to actively study and attend courses in the right subject areas.

Testing includes the NTC hosted testing event.

Closing includes a ceremony where achievement of passing exams is recognized and serves as the conclusion of the event.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The Education Office is an integral part of the communications effort. It is crucial notification is disseminated throughout the installation as early as possible to ensure all interested members have a chance to participate.





IDENTIFYING THE TARGET POPULATION:

The target audience is military members pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree. In keeping with the DoD Total Force Integration initiative, Guard and Reserve members are also encouraged to attend and have equal opportunity for available study classes without prejudice.

Counsel

Education Offices should counsel customers on the benefits of credit-by-exam before using tuition assistance or the GI Bill in the months leading up to the event.

REGISTRATION ROSTERS:

Counselors should work with NTCs to obtain registration roster data and meet with each service member prior to testing if possible. Prior to the Prep-a-Thon start date, registration rosters can also be used to measure demand for subject-specific study sessions. Set a goal to begin

screening registration rosters 30 days out from test event.

WELCOME LETTER

Once the Education Center has identified who will be testing, use the welcome letter template (*Attachment 3*) to provide information on upcoming study sessions, available materials, and test day details. Education Officers can also use the welcome letter after counseling appointments. To ensure ample time to complete pre-exam study requirements, recommend sending the letter at least two weeks prior to any scheduled events.

Best Practice: During the busy pre-event cycle, group counseling seminars, spread out throughout the month, can be a good alternative to one-on-one counseling sessions. These sessions will help contain counseling within the Prep-a-Thon event and provide a set time for service members to attend a counseling session.

Prepare

Recommend the Education Office provide a Study Skills and/or Test Taking Skills course. Volunteers from the base or school community can also be requested to assist in test preparation in popular subject areas and coordinate study groups. Base Academic Institutions (AIs) may also wish to assist by providing introduction courses or overviews of exam topics.

DANTES can also assist education centers by providing information on effective study materials. DANTES can also provide the vendors' Prep-a-Thon promotional items and customizable promotional posters (theme, location, dates, etc.).

CLASSROOMS:

Having classrooms and breakout areas to accommodate a learning environment are critical in meeting the training objectives of the Prep-a-Thon. Coordinate with the base Library for study spaces and Wi-Fi needed for online access to preparatory materials.

MATERIALS:

It is important for service members to be directed to the correct study materials. Members searching for CLEP or DSST prep through Google, Quizlet, FreeCLEPprep.com, etc., may be studying outdated and incorrect material. For CLEP exams, official practice questions are available for download from the College Board website. DANTES-funded candidates who register for a CLEP exam will receive the official exam study guide at no cost.

In addition, Modern States Education Alliance offers free college level online courses through its 'Freshman Year for Free' initiative. These video courses are officially endorsed by the College Board, are built to align with CLEP exams, and offer a full overview of what will be covered in the exam. The courses are supported by supplementary texts and practice questions.

DSST practice exams provide test candidates with the chance to take a test drive of exam questions on the internet platform where the actual exam is administered. There is also a free practice test for each exam offered on the DSST website.





Test

Close

TEST DAY:

During the testing, NTCs may ask counselors to help with signing members in, establishing a waiting area, and developing a ticketing system. Recommend use of a sign in sheet to confirm spelling of students' names and participation in the Prep-a-Thon.

TICKER BOARD:

During the final week of the event, a ticker board may be utilized to encourage participation and healthy competition between units.

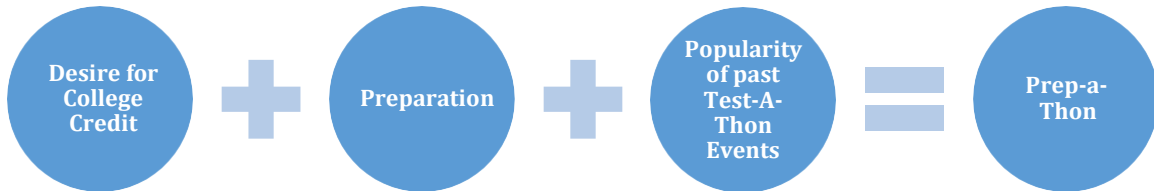
Bases can decide areas to emphasize, but a standard update could include base pass rate, tuition assistance costs avoided, and highest pass rates of popular exams.

CLOSING CEREMONY/CERTIFICATE:

As a capstone for the event, a closing ceremony could be held. Ceremonies are a great way to acknowledge the effort of members pursuing voluntary education as well as serving as a promotional tool to get service members excited about education. Local leadership can determine how formal the ceremony will be, but if a closing ceremony is decided, a certificate of achievement template is provided (*Attachment 4*).

Prep-a-Thon 101

use in conjunction with Event Execution Checklist



Credit-by-Exam	Focus on Preparation	Popularity of Events	Prep-a-Thon
College credit for knowledge acquired outside the traditional classroom: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offsets Tuition Assistance expenses• Positive Return on Investment	Preparation is key to success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Past pass rates indicate potential for improvement• FY18: CLEP (56%) DSST (62%)	Past Test-a-Thons were popular with Education Offices and National Test Centers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Previously focused on test volume• Desire to bring back events but focus on test relevancy preparation	Events promoting counseling, preparation, and testing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold events focused on preparedness supported by Education Counselors



Supported by DANTES

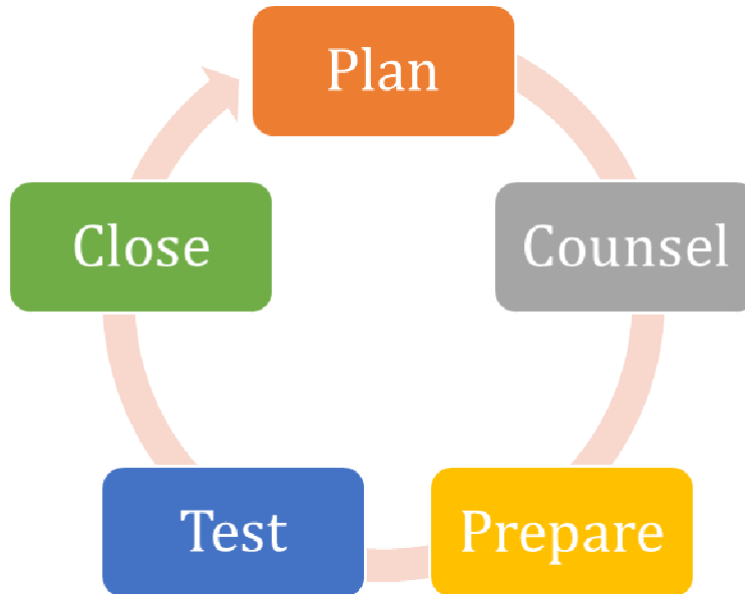
- Contracts & Funding
- Analytics, Reporting & Feedback
- Downloadable Handbook and support materials

Executed by Education Office

- Events generating excitement and interest in Vol Ed
- Reinforces preparation as key to success



Event Execution Checklist



Plan

The Planning stage consists of establishing a strategy for communications, measuring demand for subject areas, organizing subject specific courses.

Accomplish four months before Prep-a-Thon

	Notify DANTES to forecast funding of anticipated test volume (exams@navy.mil)
	Measure preparation demand for specific subject areas (e.g., Ethics in America, etc.)
	Develop an event communication plan and set a calendar goal for registration requests [<i>suggestion</i> : registration begins 60 days prior to test date]

Accomplish at least 60 days before Prep-a-Thon

	Coordinate with the base Library on Wi-Fi access and availability of online preparatory materials
	Determine classroom locations for studying and preparation based courses
	Invite leadership to greet service members during the testing event and/or attend a closing ceremony

Accomplish 30 days before Prep-a-Thon

	Confirm availability of education center counselors to ensure proper manning
	Finalize study skills courses, volunteer instructor'(s) schedules, and specialized study areas
	Confirm classroom availability. Contact building/facility manager to ensure building and room will be open prior to start of scheduled study sessions.
	Confirm venue for closing ceremony
	Find closing ceremony MC (if formalized event)

Counsel

The Counseling stage consists of advising service members on exams they should take, preparing and delivering welcome letters, and assisting with registration.

Accomplish 45 days before and up until a Prep-a-thon

	Counsel Education Office customers on the benefits of credit-by-exam during Tuition Assistance/GI Bill/testing appointments
	Advise Service Members which exams meets their academic goals
	Send Prep-a-Thon Welcome Letters to counseled students (template provided)
	Counsel members on which study sessions and preparation courses to attend

Prepare

The Preparation stage consists of ensuring the required resources and study materials are available, and ensuring service members are prepared to actively study and attend courses in the right subject areas.

	Begin Date	End Date	Comments
TEST DATES	15-JUL-2020	19-JUL-2020	1 Week of Testing
PREP EVENT	17-JUN-2020	14-JUL-2020	3 Weeks of Prep
STUDY COURSES			
Study Skills	19 Jun 2020 26 Jun 2020 03 Jul 2020	19 Jun 2020 26 Jun 2020 03 Jul 2020	0900 Education Center 1430 Education Center 0900 Education Center
Principles of Supervision	24 Jun 2020	24 Jun 2020	Lunch & Learn
Analyzing & Interpreting Literature	24 Jun 2020 08 Jul 2020	24 Jun 2020 08 Jul 2020	1800 Base Library 0800 Base Library
Ethics in America	20 Jun 2020	20 Jun 2020	Lunch & Learn
College Comp. Modular	02 Jul 2020	02 Jul 2020	1300 Bldg. 5782
EVENT LOCATION	Bldg.: 2435	Room: 1206	NTC: Coastline CC

Accomplish day before Prep-a-Thon/first study session

	Meet with facilitator(s) and course-specific volunteer instructors.
	Ensure all classroom equipment is in working order.
	If applicable, make sure break area is stocked (vending machines, coffee, etc.)

Accomplish during week/s of Prep-a-Thon

	Maintain sign-in rosters at Prep-a-Thon events (study skills, prep classes, library etc.)
	Send letters to latecomers to preparation events.

Test

The Testing stage consists of the NTC-hosted testing event.

Accomplish during testing event

	Disseminate ticker board updates to base population daily
	Use sign in sheets to confirm students' name spelling and participation in Prep-a-Thon

Close

The closing stage includes a ceremony where achievement of passing exams is recognized and serves as the conclusion of the event. This portion is optional.

Accomplish before closing ceremony

	Advertise the closing ceremony.
	Create certificates of achievement for awardees.
	Confirm attendance of leadership, or designated officiant, for the closing ceremony
	Notify ceremony time, location with NTC staff, Base Academic Institutions, Event Facilitators, and Volunteers instructors
	If applicable, order a Closing Ceremony Cake

Accomplish after testing event

	Send feedback & lessons learned to Service HQs POC's and DANTES (exams@navy.mil)
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Attachment 3

WELCOME LETTER TEMPLATE

14 Jun 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR PVT. JOHNNY LEADER

FROM: Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune
Jacksonville, NC

SUBJECT: Your exam registration and course times

1. Thank you for your interest in Vol Ed! We invite you to take an exam fitting the XXX requirement of your degree goals. ... [test event details].
2. Registration instructions
4. Study materials
5. Below are scheduled study sessions with location and times:
 - Analyzing and Interpreting Literature – Base Library Thursday, 4 October 1800
 - Analyzing and Interpreting Literature – Base Library Thursday, 12 October 1100
 - College Algebra – Base Academic Institution Room 135 – Monday 6 Oct 1500
 - Test taking Skills – Education Center 5 October 1100
 - Test Taking Skills- Education Center 10 October 1000
 - Test Taking Skills- Education Center 15 October
6. As a reminder, coordinate with your supervisor on all study sessions and test times.
7. Questions concerning course attendance may be directed to this office by calling [Insert your #].

//Signed//

Gunnery O. Training, GySgt, USMC
Education Services Officer

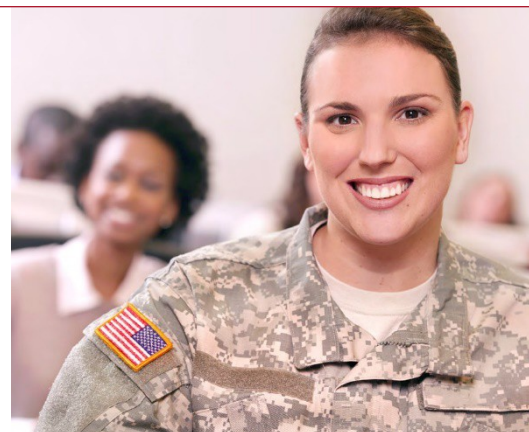
Attachment 4

Concept Certificate

Certificates available for the following categories:

- Individual with highest score
- Individual with most passing exams
- Unit with most passing exams
- Group with most passing exams





PREP-A-THON AT THE STUTTGART ED CENTER

3-14 February 2020

Open to Active Duty, National Guard, and Reservists

GET CLOSER TO YOUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS –CLEP and DSST exams offer you the opportunity to earn college credit for what you already know. The exams cover disciplines such as Business, History, Humanities, Mathematics, Science, and more! Because the exams are funded by DANTES, you could **save time and money!**

Get Prepared for test you need to complete your degree!

Get **Instant score results!**

Speak with our on-site advisors to help you decide which exams best fit your needs.

Sign up now at [www.\[ed center URL\]](#).

Testing Schedule

Mondays-Thursdays, 0800-1800

Fridays 0800-1500

Walk-ins welcome, no appointment needed.

Visit Us

UMUC National Test Center

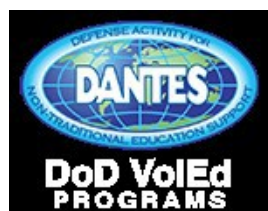
Stuttgart Education Center

Building 2915, Roomxx

DSN 314-431-2303/2305

CIV +49-(0) 7031-15-2303/2305

ntcstuttgart-europe@umuc.edu



Helpful Information

Pricing

- Free for first-time, DANTES-funded active, guard, and reserve service members
- \$87 for civilians per test plus sitting fee (pay via credit or debit card at registration)

Study Tips

The Stuttgart NTC is offering CLEP/DSST study sessions 15 Jan - 2 Feb. Contact the UMUC office in the education center for details.

For study tools and practice tests, visit

- clep.collegeboard.org
- getcollegecredit.com

www.dantes.doded.mil/prepathon

Attachment 6

Sample Press Release for Base Daily/Events Email or Newspaper

Ramstein and Landstuhl hosts upcoming Prep-a-Thon

By Staff Sgt. Jane Doright

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany - Ramstein and Landstuhl will host their first Prep-a-Thon of 20XX during the month of July 20XX, at Ramstein Air Base and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

The Prep-a-Thon is a multiple-week test prep marathon for individuals needing to fulfill requirements for their associates or undergraduate degree. (The Prep-a-Thon is a Voluntary Education event offered to service members to help ensure effective study practices in advance of taking career and education relevant credit-by-exam tests.) CLEP & DSST test are an option for testing out of the required class, saving time and money.

Prep-a-Thons focus on three areas: counseling on degree-applicable exams, resources to support preparation, and delivery of event-specific specialized courses.

In addition, academic advisors from on-base school and volunteer instructors will be hosting study sessions prior to the event. Contact the education office or event facilitator to reserve a seat in the study sessions however, walk-ins will not be turned away.

While appointments are not necessary during the test week, individuals still need to register for the desired CLEPs they wish to take. To register, visit <http://clep.collegeboard.org/register/exam>. Participants need to print off their completed registration voucher and bring it, along with a U.S. military ID card, to the testing center during that week.

During the 2019 Prep-a-Thons, the education office tested over 1400 individuals, contributing to 650 Airmen earning their CCAF degrees.

Walk-ins will be accepted July 13 to 16, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and July 17 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Ramstein UMUC National Test Center is located in building XXXX, room XXX and the Landstuhl UMUC NTC is located in building XXXX, room XXX.

KEY MESSAGES:

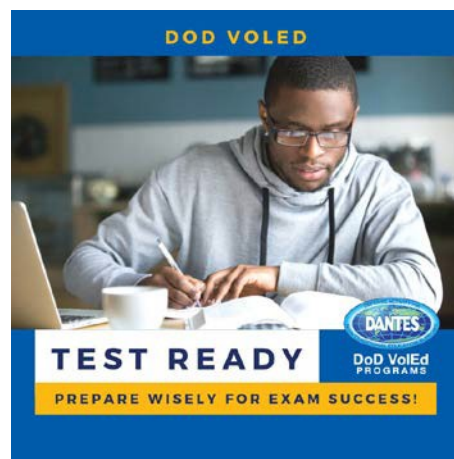
- The Prep-a-Thon is a Voluntary Education event offered to service members to help ensure effective study practices in advance of taking career and education relevant credit-by-exam tests.
- DANTES Examination Program goal is to promote the accessibility of relevant academic exams for prepared service members.
- The Prep-a-Thon concept will help to ensure effective study practices for service members by focusing on three areas: counseling on degree-applicable exams, resources to support preparation, and delivery of test preparation courses.
- Prep-a-Thons will help increase preparation-focused testing and encourage service members to skillfully progress in their educational goals.

Sample Social Media Posts

**Preparations is key! Build confidence.
Improve your scores. Get the credit you
deserve. Sign up for the #Prep-a-Thon!**



**Use your knowledge wisely. Think
smart. Prepare. Study. Practice.
Score higher!**



**Increase your test-taking abilities and ace
your exam. Prepare wisely for exam suc-
cess. Register for the #Prep-a-Thon today!**



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q- Are there any exceptions to funding eligibility for the Prep-a-Thon event?

A- No, the rules of test eligibility are the same. Personnel NOT funded by DANTES include:

- Inactive Guard, Inactive Reserve, and Coast Guard Auxiliary
- Military Retirees
- Separated/Discharged Veterans
- DoD Acquisition Workforce Personnel
- Spouses, Dependents, and Civil Service
- Employees of active duty Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force*
- Spouses, Dependents, and Civil Service employees of National Guard and Reserve components
- Employees of the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve

Note: The Air Force funds testing of Civil Service Employees through their Civilian Tuition Assistance program.

Note: DANTES funds the test fee and test administration fee for Service members' first attempt for each CLEP and DSST exam when taken at on-base NTCs. Service members who need to retest may do so, but these retests are not funded by DANTES.

Q- Will study materials be free to Service Members?

A- Yes. In addition to the study materials listed in section two, when members register as military for a CLEP test, an e-Guide with practice questions will be added to their shopping cart for free. For DSST tests, members can go to the Prometric website to download an App for practice tests on their phone.

