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TOUGHER 7TH GRADE TEST MAY LOWER ADMISSIONS SCORES

Chicago, IL – Admissions to Selective Enrollment schools are based on a 900 point scale – 300 points for 7th grade grades, 300 points for 7th grade test scores and 300 points for the Selective Enrollment Exam taken in 8th grade. In the spring of 2014, CPS announced that it was requiring all students applying to a Selective Enrollment school to take the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test – instead of the ISAT, Terra Nova, Iowa or Stanford in 7th grade. Over the summer, CPS released an analysis of Selective Enrollment admissions scores that shows that if the MAP test had been used in last year’s admissions cycle instead of the ISAT, composite Selective Enrollment admissions scores would have dropped across the board – from 22 to 89 points lower per school.

Figure 1. Actual vs. MAP Selective Enrollment Scores (2014-2015)

	Actual 2014-2015 composite mean with ISAT	score change	Projected 2014-2015 composite mean with MAP
Payton	888	-22	866
Northside	881	-22	859
Young	872	-31	841
Jones	871	-32	839
Lane Tech	833	-43	790
Brooks	779	-52	727
Lindblom	765	-52	713
Westinghouse	759	-58	701
King	702	-82	620
South Shore	696	-89	607

Scores at the least competitive Selective Enrollment schools would fall the most—dropping 89 and 82 points and South Shore at King respectively. This is in comparison to a point drop of 22 points at both Payton and Northside. It is likely that students at the less competitive schools faced a greater overall challenge from the tougher MAP test so their scores were impacted more.

Lower admissions scores may lead some to believe that Selective Enrollment admissions just got easier. Unfortunately, that is not the case here – since the data from the same student population was used to calculate these numbers. It is likely however that composite admissions scores from this coming year will fall as the MAP test is added to the admissions formula – though probably not as significantly as these projections. The MAP test was not used for admissions previously. Now that it is a high stakes test it will be receiving more attention from all of the various stakeholders. This focus will help offset the potential score drop.

As shown in Figure 1., use of the MAP test will not cause any change in the relative competitiveness of Selective Enrollment schools, so parents and students should continue to rank their school choices on the testing form from most to least competitive – using the same order as previously.

However, there are other impacts. First and most significantly, while the MAP test is still just one third of the total score – its importance in the admissions process has increased dramatically. Performance on this test matters more since it differentiates more between students. In the past, the primary differentiator in the admissions process was the Selective Enrollment Exam since so many students had straight A's and near perfect ISAT scores. Now the 7th grade test joins the 8th grade test as a differentiator, and may even surpass it due to its difficulty. Students who do well on the MAP test will have a greater chance for success in the admissions process for this reason. That means preparation for the 7th grade test will be more important to student success in the overall Selective Enrollment admissions process than it has in the past.

Second, the MAP test is a tougher test and as such it better measures student performance than the ISAT. With the ISAT, top students never got really tough questions so they could not demonstrate a greater level of knowledge. This is one factor that has caused Selective Enrollment admissions scores at the top schools to be very closely bunched together. Students with identical point totals were accepted or rejected based on fractions of a point or sub-scores from the Selective Enrollment Exam. A tougher exam will lead to a greater dispersion in points, so more students at the most competitive schools will be chosen based on real differences in academic performance.

Third, students from less rigorous schools may face a greater disadvantage than before in the admissions process since they will encounter a more challenging test but have a weaker academic support system.

According to Matthew Greenberg, Partner of SelectivePrep, “Clearly the 7th grade test has become much more important. Despite rumors to the contrary, students can prepare for the MAP test by becoming masters of Common Core content. Because the MAP is administered on a computer and uses a different measurement methodology, some have maintained that students cannot prepare for it. How it is given and how it measures student performance should be separated from the content that is on the test. Focus on knowing the material and you will know what buttons to push on the computer on test day. Students who are well prepared for the MAP test will have an edge in the admissions process.”

About SelectivePrep

SelectivePrep was founded by test prep veterans with over 25 years of test preparation experience – and extensive backgrounds in both classroom teaching and curriculum development. SelectivePrep offers the *only* classroom program that prepares students for all of the standardized tests needed to gain admission to a Selective Enrollment High School or Academic Center. SelectivePrep knows what it takes to train and motivate students who are intent upon gaining admission to one of the ten Chicago Selective Enrollment High Schools or one of seven Academic Centers. SelectivePrep’s programs provide a thorough and rigorous review of test content, so students can approach these competitive admissions processes with confidence.

For additional information and registration go to www.selectiveprep.com or call (312) 409-8411.