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SELECTIVE ENROLLMENT TEST SCORES STAGE A MODEST RECOVERY

Chicago, IL – In the most recent round of Selective Enrollment High School admissions, average scores rose 8 points as they recovered from the hammering they took the previous year, when CPS replaced the ISAT with the far more rigorous MAP as the 7th grade score component as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Average Admissions Scores (2016-2017)

	2016-2017 average admissions scores	2015-2016 average admissions scores	change in points
Payton	875	879	-4
Northside	871	869	+2
Jones	867	857	+10
Young	855	854	+1
Lane	820	809	+11
Hancock	752	733	+19
Brooks	748	733	+19
Lindblom	726	716	+11
Westinghouse	718	710	+8
South Shore	663	649	+14
King	658	655	+3

Use of a tougher 7th grade test has increased the dispersion between average admissions scores of the most competitive school, Payton (875) and the least competitive school, King (658) to a gaping 217 points. A hole of this magnitude means that students are being admitted to the Selective Enrollment system with dramatically different academic backgrounds.

Scores are still well below the levels of 2014-2015, the last year the ISAT was used. Average scores at the more competitive schools have recovered most of the ground they lost from their “pre-MAP level” to an average of 11 points less, while less competitive schools are still down nearly 40 points from their “pre-MAP level” as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. MAP Impact on Admissions Scores (2016-2017)

	2016-2017 average admissions scores (with MAP)	2014-2015 average admissions scores (pre- MAP)	change in points
Payton	875	888	-13
Northside	871	881	-10
Jones	867	871	-4
Young	855	872	-17
Lane	820	833	-13
Hancock	752	NA	NA
Brooks	748	779	-31
Lindblom	726	765	-39
Westinghouse	718	759	-41
South Shore	663	696	-33
King	658	700	-45

Use of the MAP test has exposed stark differences in the academic levels of students admitted from different Tiers. MAP test scores of Tier 1 students at the more competitive schools continue to lag – creating enormous gaps in the cut-off scores required for admissions. Tier 4 students at the top schools need about 100 more points on average than Tier 1 students to get in. For example, Tier 4 students needed 133 points more than Tier 1 students to be admitted to Lane Tech and 128 points more to get into Northside as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Tier 4 vs. Tier 1 Cut-offs (2016-2017)

	2016-2017 Tier 4 cut- off	2016-2017 Tier 1 cut- off	2016-2017 “gap” between Tier 4 & Tier 1 <u>cut- off</u>
Payton	890	769	121 points
Northside	882	754	128 points
Jones	877	788	89 points
Young	866	777	89 points
Lane	827	694	133 points

Use of the MAP test has also meant that there are fewer students with perfect 900 scores in the admissions process – leading to a slight but persistent decline in Tier 4 scores at the most competitive schools. In addition, scores at the high end are less

bunched so motivated students have greater potential to differentiate themselves with this more rigorous test as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Tier 4 Cut-Offs at Competitive Schools (2016-2017)

	Payton	Northside	Jones	Young	Lane Tech
change	-6 points	-12 points	-6 points	-11 points	-12 points
Tier 4 cut-off (16-17) (with MAP)	890	882	877	866	827
Tier 4 cut-off (14-15) (“pre-MAP)	896	894	883	877	836

In the most recent round of admissions, Jones solidified its number three position, replacing Young. The trend that began two years ago has continued into 2016-2017, with Jones moving from a tie with Young to being ahead by a comfortable lead of 12 points as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Jones Moves to 3rd Place

	Jones	Young	difference in points
2016-2017	867	855	+12 points
2015-2016	857	854	+3 points
2014-2015	872	872	0 points

Hancock, the newest member of the Selective Enrollment family continues to achieve a respectable average admissions score – this year of 752, which put it in 6th place but 68 points behind Lane Tech. To improve on its admissions performance, Hancock needs to do a better job of attracting academically talented middle class students from the neighborhood and beyond.

CPS’ use of the MAP test has several implications for students vying for a spot at a Selective Enrollment school. First and most significantly, while the MAP test is still just one third of the total score – the use of a tougher test has dramatically increased the importance of the 7th grade test in the admissions process. Performance on this test matters more since it better differentiates 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. Students who do well on the MAP test will have a greater chance for success in the admissions process for this reason.

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 clustered together. Students with nearly 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, doing well on the MAP test will require more advanced quantitative skills. While the verbal component is more advanced as well – and uses denser passages and more interpretative questions – students will feel the jump in quantitative knowledge most concretely. The MAP test incorporates more advanced math topics and requires greater knowledge and depth in existing ones than the tests it replaces.

Fourth, students from less rigorous elementary schools may face a greater challenge than before in the admissions process since they will encounter a tougher test but have a weaker academic support system.

According to Matthew Greenberg, partner of educational services firm SelectivePrep, “The MAP test contains more complex math and verbal topics that some students may have not been exposed to, let alone mastered. Students who are well prepared for the 7th grade test will have an edge in the admissions process.” Greenberg continued, “However, use of this Common Core aligned test has exposed dramatic differences in student achievement between Tiers.”

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 both of the standardized tests needed to gain admission to a Selective Enrollment High School and Academic Center. SelectivePrep knows what it takes to train and motivate students who are intent upon gaining admission to one of the eleven 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.

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