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ADMISSIONS SCORES JUMP – AND HIGHER TIER STUDENTS FEEL THE SQUEEZE

Chicago, IL – This year was a brutal season for admissions to a Selective Enrollment High School. The level of competition increased dramatically – for nearly all students. Lane Tech, the largest school in the Selective Enrollment system with about 40% of total seats, saw its average admissions scores increase an eye-popping 30 points. First, more students competed for scarce spots across all Selective Enrollment High Schools. Second, high achieving students who were excluded from other Selective Enrollment High Schools received offers from Lane Tech. Given its size and location, Lane Tech’s increase in average admissions scores means that hundreds of students with solid academic records did not get an offer to any Selective Enrollment High School within reasonable commuting distance.

Figure 1. Lane Tech Admissions Scores (11-12 through 12-13)

	11-12	12-13	year to year change
Rank	855	876	+21
Tier 1 mean	741	774	+33
Tier 2 mean	776	798	+22
Tier 3 mean	800	836	+36
Tier 4 mean	806	850	+44
Composite mean	803	833	+30

The already significant “gaps” between Tier 4 and Tier 1 admitted students at the more competitive schools widened -- nearly across the board – as students in the higher Tiers needed to turn in dramatically better performance to be accepted. For example, the average score of an admitted Tier 4 student at Lane Tech was 850, but for a Tier 1 student it was only 774, leading to a gap of 76 points. For Jones it was 72 points, for Brooks 68 points, and for Northside, 55 points. In fact, five of the Selective Enrollment High Schools had gaps of over 50 points between the average score of admitted Tier 4 and Tier 1 students as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Admissions Score “Gap” between Tier 4 & Tier 1 Admitted Students

	“Gap” between Tier 4 and Tier 1 average admissions scores (2011-2012)	“Gap” between Tier 4 and Tier 1 average admissions scores (2012-2013)
Brooks College Prep	50 points	68 points
Jones College Prep	57 points	72 points
King College Prep	-1 points	4 points
Lane Tech	65 points	76 points
Lindblom Math & Science Academy	36 points	40 points
Northside College Prep	48 points	55 points
Payton College Prep	43 points	30 points
Westinghouse	20 points	20 points
Young	53 points	51points

A sizable number of students at Northside and Payton were accepted with “perfect scores” – 900 points on the 900 point scale. We estimate that approximately 74 students at Northside and 57 students at Payton achieved a perfect score – for an astounding total of 131 students with perfect scores at these two schools.

While last year students in Tier 3 and Tier 4 needed to get perfect or nearly perfect admissions scores to get into the most competitive schools – this year significant numbers of Tier 4 -- and to a lesser extent Tier 3 students -- with nearly perfect scores were denied a spot at the more competitive schools. The average score of an admitted Tier 4 and Tier 3 student at Northside was 897 and 891 respectively and for Payton 897 and 893. This meant that some Tier 4 and Tier 3 students in the top 1-2 % in total points were denied spots at these schools. Additionally, a compression in scores among higher Tier students applying to the more competitive schools has meant that some students with identical scores were admitted and some were not as CPS increasingly looked at “tie breakers” to choose between students with the same point totals.

Contributing to this increase in scores was CPS’ decision last month to reclassify all census tracts used in its socio-economic admissions policy – by applying the latest census data. This updating process threw many more students into higher Tiers – greatly increasing pressure for higher Tier students overall and contributing to stratospheric scores at the more competitive schools.

According to Matthew Greenberg, partner of educational services firm SelectivePrep, “Clearly the demand for spots at high caliber Selective Enrollment High Schools exceeds supply – and a case can easily be made for several hundred additional Selective Enrollment spots. Under the current system, too many bright, hard-working students find themselves without a realistic public school option. In our opinion, CPS can and should do more to nurture its high potential students. This situation is particularly punishing to middle class students who have a limited number of spots allocated to them under the current system and must turn in higher scores to secure these positions. We also find it troubling that in some cases tiny or nonexistent differences in admissions point totals are being used in admissions decisions – and feel that this may not be a well-designed way to select students.”

Mr. Greenberg continued, “Longer term, freezing out promising students from the public school system has the potential to erode Chicago’s tax base as frustrated, education oriented parents seek alternatives elsewhere. It’s just bad for Chicago.”

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 nine 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.