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**INCREASING INTEREST IN ACADEMIC CENTERS MAKES SCORES JUMP
AND SQUEEZES HIGHER TIER STUDENTS**

Chicago, IL – In the latest round of Academic Center admissions, composite scores rose at all of the competitive Academic Centers and huge gaps between the scores of admitted Tier 4 and Tier 1 students persisted and widened at the top schools. Kenwood and Taft composite scores shot up the most -- rising 38 and 26 points respectively. This was for two reasons. First, greater numbers of qualified students applied to Academic Centers. Second, an increasing number of students targeting Whitney Young or Lane Tech found themselves with an offer for Kenwood or Taft instead. Scores at Lane Tech moved up significantly and Whitney Young scores, already at stratospheric levels, edged up as well, shutting out many high scoring students.

Figure 1. Academic Center Admissions Scores (2013-2014)

	2013-2014 composite mean¹	yr.-to- yr. change	2012-2013 composite mean	2013-2014 “gap” between Tier 4 and Tier 1 students
Harlan	615	-1	616	-15
Kenwood	747	+38	709	16
Lane Tech	817	+10	807	97
Lindblom	734	+13	721	23
Morgan Park	684	-19	703	14
Taft	787	+26	761	114
Young	850	+3	847	65

¹In calculating the composite score, we assumed the same ratio of seats between the different admissions categories in 2013-2014 as the previous year.

The already significant “gaps” between Tier 4 and Tier 1 admitted students at the more competitive schools grew – nearly across the board – as students in higher Tiers needed to turn in dramatically better performance to be accepted. For example, the average score of an admitted Tier 4 student at Whitney Young was 865 points, but for a Tier 1 student it was only 800, leading to a gap of 65 points. For Lane Tech it was 97 points, and for Taft, 114 points. These gaps mean that dramatically different academic

credentials for students from different Tiers are being required for admissions at the top Academic Centers.

For example, suppose a Tier 4 student applying to Lane Tech came into the 6th grade testing process with a perfect 600 points from 5th grade (e.g., all A’s in 5th grade core subjects and a 99% percentile on both Reading and Math on the 5th grade Standardized Test) – then he or she would *still* need to reach the 97th percentile on the Academic Center Admissions Test to reach the *minimum* Tier 4 score.

Meanwhile, a Tier 1 student who similarly entered the 6th grade testing process with a perfect 600 points would only need to reach the 21st percentile on the Academic Center Admissions Test to be admitted to Lane Tech. In fact, scores for admitted Lane Tech Tier 1 students *fell* 24 points as students with reduced academic credentials were accepted to meet the Tier 1 “quota”.

This year’s increase in scores at Lane Tech puts it closer to the most competitive Academic Center, Whitney Young. For most admissions categories, mean scores at Whitney Young were only 25 points higher than those needed for admissions to Lane Tech. The small spread of only 9 points between Tier 4 minimum and maximum scores at *both* Lane Tech and Whitney Young -- and the high overall scores needed by Tier 4 students to get into either of these schools means that some outstanding students – students with a *perfect* 5th grade report card *and* test scores in the *top* 3% -- were *not* accepted by either school. Lane Tech Academic Center admissions scores are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Lane Tech Academic Center Admissions Scores (2013-2014)

	Lane Tech mean admissions score, 2013-2014	Lane Tech mean admissions score, 2012-2013	year-to-year change	spread within each Tier	difference between Young and Lane Tech 2013-2014 mean scores
Rank	856	844	+12	35	28
Tier 1	743	767	-24	97	57
Tier 2	796	766	+29	61	35
Tier 3	825	809	+15	33	25
Tier 4	840	821	+12	9	25

While most Academic Centers are thriving, two schools, Harlan and Morgan Park, struggle to attract sufficient numbers of academically talented students. The sagging performance of these two schools is triggering an enormous difference in

admissions scores among the Academic Centers – and puts into question the potential of these schools as viable “Academic Centers” – e.g., schools that offer high caliber programs to high caliber students. One issue is that Lindblom’s connection to a Selective Enrollment High School offers an attractive path forward that these schools have not yet been able to match. There was a 235 point gap between the average score of an admitted Young student (850) and an admitted Harlan student (615). This is an even larger gap in admissions scores than is seen among Selective Enrollment High Schools. There the gap between the average admissions scores of the most competitive school, Payton (881 points), and the least competitive school, King (701 points), was *only* 180 points.

On the other hand, the uptick in scores at Kenwood and Taft provides these schools with an opportunity. This cadre of high achieving Academic Center students can strengthen their associated high schools – should they feel an attractive high school option is offered and elect to remain for six years.

According to Matthew Greenberg, partner of educational services firm SelectivePrep, “The jump in Academic Center admissions scores comes as parents recognize the potential of these schools to offer a challenging middle school experience as well as a guaranteed spot in a top high school. Lane Tech, in only its 3rd year, is closing in on Whitney Young. North side parents see Lane Tech as a viable and convenient alternative. Greenberg continued, “Unfortunately, the Tier system is generating huge disparities in the academic performance required for admission to the top Academic Centers. Longer term, these gaps could discourage middle class Chicago residents if they feel that they are not getting a reasonable shot at admissions.”

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.

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