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**TOUGH 7TH GRADE TEST CAUSES SELECTIVE ENROLLMENT
ADMISSIONS SCORES TO PLUNGE**

Chicago, IL – In the most recent round of admissions, average scores fell across the board as CPS used the more rigorous Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test as the 7th grade standardized test. This is the first time CPS has used a Common Core aligned test in the Selective Enrollment admissions process. The MAP accounted for 300 points of CPS’ 900 point admissions scale. Average scores at the more competitive schools fell relatively modestly – about 10-20 points, while less competitive schools saw dramatic drops of about 50 points. Without cut-off scores, admissions scores at some less competitive schools would have fallen even further – nearly 80 points.

Scores of Tier 1 students at the more competitive schools were also hit hard – opening up wide gaps in the points required for admissions for students from different Tiers. For example, on average Tier 4 students needed nearly 100 points more than Tier 1 students to be admitted to Lane Tech – and had a cut-off score 120 points higher. On average Tier 4 students needed about 80 points more to get into Jones – and had a cut-off score about 100 points higher -- as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Average Admissions Scores (2015-2016)

	2015-2016 average admissions scores	2014-2015 average admissions scores	change in points	2015-2016 “gap” between Tier 4 & Tier 1 <u>mean</u>	2015-2016 “gap” between Tier 4 & Tier 1 <u>cut- off</u>
Payton	879	888	-9	54 points	107 points
Northside	869	881	-11	73 points	133 points
Jones	857	871	-15	78 points	115 points
Young	854	872	-17	56 points	92 points
Lane	809	833	-24	92 points	124 points
Hancock	733	NA	NA	11 points	-13 points
Brooks	722	779	-57	43 points	53 points
Lindblom	716	765	-50	27 points	23 points
Westinghouse	710	759	-49	8 points	-20 points
King	655	702	-45	4 points	-1 point
South Shore	649	696	-47	-3 points	-3 points

Despite the overall drop in scores, students from Tier 4 neighborhoods still needed to score in the top several percentiles on the 7th grade test to get into the most competitive schools. Scores for Tier 4 students fell only 4 and 6 points at Payton and Northside respectively as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Tier 4 Scores at Competitive Schools (2015-2016)

	Payton	Northside	Jones	Young	Lane Tech
Change in Tier 4 scores (15-16)	-4 points	-6 points	-9 points	-13 points	-22 points
Tier 4 average (15-16)	893	889	878	868	826

A new school, Hancock, joined the Selective Enrollment High School “family” this past year and despite being an unknown quantity debuted with a respectable average score of 733 which put it in the middle of the pack.

Use of a tougher 7th grade test has increased the dispersion between average admissions scores of the most competitive school, Payton (879) and the least competitive school, South Shore (649) to a gaping 230 points. A hole of this magnitude means that students are being admitted to the Selective Enrollment system with dramatically different academic backgrounds.

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, 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.

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. While initially it may be a bitter pill to swallow, use of a tougher test is beneficial to students since it provides them with an opportunity to stand out in the admissions process. Previously, scores for the most competitive schools were so bunched together that students were chosen – or not chosen -- on small differences between their academic performance. Students who are well prepared for the 7th grade 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 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.

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