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NORMING AND THE SELECTIVE ENROLLMENT ENTRANCE EXAM

Chicago, IL – CPS uses norming as a way to compare the test results of different populations, including 8th graders taking the Selective Enrollment Exam who are taking the same test at different times. In CPS’ view, students who test in January, three months later, are assumed to have gained a little bit more knowledge than students who test in October. Although it has only recently disclosed this practice, CPS has in fact been norming the Selective Enrollment Entrance Exam for years.

Norming data shows that the impact of preparation --if it helps a student get several more questions correct -- *swamps* the imperceptible effect of norming. Effective preparation provides a thorough review of the content on the test. Norming is an adjustment made for several months more school time – where that student has studied many things – most of them not captured by his or her performance on the Selective Enrollment Exam. That’s why a better prepared student will be able to bump up his or her scores by a *multiple* of that attained by a norming adjustment for several months more schooling.

CPS does not make its norming data public. However, most tests that are norm adjusted by even as much as six months have little difference in scoring. For example, for 8th graders who took the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) Reading Exam in the fall of 2011, the score that corresponded to the 90th percentile was 688. For those 8th graders who took the same exam six months later, the 90th percentile score was 690, an almost imperceptible increase. Thus, scores for the Miller Analogies Tests that were normed for spring vs. fall – a six month timeframe – were adjusted by 2 points on a 600 plus point scale – a movement of *less than one half of 1%*.

Miller Analogies Test¹, score needed to attain the 90th percentile		
Grade	Fall Score	Spring Score
7	682	684
8	688	690
9	695	697

¹ - MAT Reading Exam, Eighth Edition, Form V

Moreover, this one half of 1% adjustment would be *halved* since October and January Selective Enrollment testing is only 3 months, not 6 months apart – as the fall and spring comparisons are.

Some parents mistakenly confuse CPS' norming with "marking on a curve". However, tests that are "marked on a curve" have received a dramatic adjustment to how they are scored. Norming adjustments are tiny as a rule.

Another interesting effect of norming is that the higher the student's original percentile, the less effect norming will have. The number of questions a high achieving student must answer to attain a top percentile is virtually the same whether the exam is taken early or late.

When listing their desired schools on the Selective Enrollment High School application, students should always list the most competitive school first, regardless of when the test is given. Early testing is no help in this regard. Moreover, early testing is a disadvantage if your child isn't prepared to put his or her best foot forward on test day. Similarly, CPS' norming procedures are minor statistical adjustments that are overshadowed by the effect of proper preparation. Successful Selective Enrollment applicants are those who keep the main goal in mind – achieving the best possible results on test day.

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.