

December 2, 2013

2014: THE TRANSITION TO COMMON CORE

Chicago, IL – With its adoption by over 40 states, the Common Core has become a de facto national assessment standard. In 2014, *all* Chicago students, both public and private, will take a Common Core compliant assessment. That means that both mandated public school spring assessments, the ISAT (given in early March) and the MAP/NWEA (given in late April) will be Common Core compliant. In addition the major assessment tests administered in the private school system (Terra Nova, Stanford, and Iowa) will also be Common Core compliant. Even though Common Core compliance has not been made mandatory for private schools, its predominance in the public sector has led to its adoption by the major test publishers that serve the private school community.

SelectivePrep has identified four major impacts of the 2014 transition to Common Core compliance.

Impact #1: Much Tougher Math

The implementation of the Common Core standard will have its greatest impact in math. The new assessment will require that students demonstrate a deeper knowledge of topics they have already been exposed to and it will incorporate more multi-step problems. In addition, students will also have to be more adept at interpreting information and integrating skills from different math subjects to solve a single problem. More advanced topics, particularly in algebra and geometry, will be introduced at an earlier grade level.

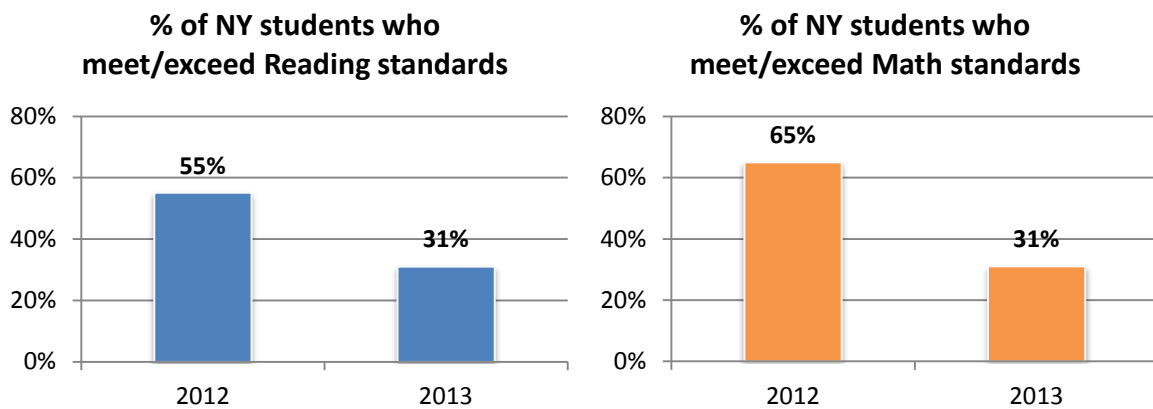
The impact of a more rigorous math assessment will be felt particularly keenly among public school students. The ISAT math standard has consistently ranked near the bottom of all 50 states in difficulty. Therefore, Chicago public school students will face a dramatic step-up in math rigor this spring – and their parents may be shocked by their child's test results. Chicago private school students will face much tougher math assessments as well. Even some students who are enrolled in more advanced math classes, in either a public or private school, may be surprised by the increased level of depth in topics they have not seen recently.

Impact #2: Denser Texts & More Interpretative Questions

There will also be an impact on the verbal area. More complex texts will replace the simplistic ones used in prior years. While there will still be detail questions, the new tests will place a greater emphasis on interpretative questions (e.g., author's intent, mood/tone, inference, etc.).

Impact #3: A Steep Drop in Scores

A few states have already incorporated the Common Core standard into their assessments. These early adopters have experienced a sharp drop in the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards. In New York, which adopted the Common Core last year, the percentage of students in grades 3 through 8 who met or exceeded standards in reading fell from 55% in 2012 to 31% in 2013. In math, the percentage of students who met or exceeded standards fell even more sharply, from 65% in 2012 to 31% in 2013.



Given the sharp drop in the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards among these early adopters, SelectivePrep expects a similar steep decline, of anywhere from 25 to 35 percentage points, in the percentage of Illinois students who meet or exceed standards in 2014.

While the number of students meeting or exceeding standards will fall sharply across Chicago, the impact will be unevenly distributed. A tougher test will better differentiate students who are masters of a content area from those who have a passing acquaintance with it. Therefore, a dramatic impact will be felt among neighborhood schools, particularly those with a less rigorous math curriculum.

Impact #4: MAP Likely to Replace the ISAT in the Admissions Formula

Private school students will still be taking their standardized test on the same schedule as in the past. Catholic school students will take the Terra Nova in the beginning of March. Students in the Lutheran or Montessori school systems will take their test in early to mid-February. The reading and math percentiles from these tests will still be used as the 7th grade test score component, one third of the total, in the Selective Enrollment admissions formula.

Public school students will *still* take the ISAT test in early March. However, it is likely that the percentiles from the 2014 MAP test, not the ISAT, will be used in the Selective Enrollment admissions formula. This is because in 2014 the State of Illinois will *not* be releasing percentile scores for the ISAT – just the three digit scaled score and basic information about whether a student met or exceeded standards. According to assessment officials, since so many of this Spring’s ISAT items are experimental, providing percentiles, at least this first time around, would not be inappropriate.

Percentiles from the 7th grade standardized test are used for *all* CPS’ advanced magnet high school admissions processes – not only Selective Enrollment but also International Baccalaureate (IB) and other advanced magnet programs. It is therefore a critical requirement in the admissions process.

With its October 2013 adoption of MAP test scores for promotion purposes, CPS has implicitly endorsed the MAP test in making major academic performance decisions. Moreover, since the MAP test is the *only* mandated public school assessment that will provide percentiles in 2014, SelectivePrep believes the MAP test is the only one that *can* be used in Selective Enrollment and IB admissions.

The SelectivePrep Response

SelectivePrep has made changes to both its math and verbal program content to ensure that students are well prepared for Common Core compliant tests. SelectivePrep’s math content has always been rigorous. We have upgraded our program material with even more advanced math content to make sure that all of our students are well prepared. Our reading comprehension texts have never been simplistic, but we have added more passages to provide students with additional practice.

SelectivePrep has also expanded its course offers to better meet 7th grade students’ needs. Since in 2014 private school and public school students will be taking their tests on different schedules, we recommend that Catholic school students take our

program that starts in mid-January. We have established a later starting schedule (with an early March class start) and recommend that public school students take this later session since it will end closer to the MAP test. (Note that SelectivePrep will be working with parents of public school students who have already registered to move their registrations, if desired, to this later schedule).

CPS has *still* not made an official pronouncement regarding its 2014 testing policy, despite the impact of any change on tens of thousands of students with academic aspirations. But with high stakes testing just around the corner, SelectivePrep thinks it's prudent to act now – with the best information possible. One thing is clear -- the 2014 assessments will be tougher than ever, making thorough preparation for these tests more critical than ever in achieving a top score – and gaining admissions to a competitive Selective Enrollment school.

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.