

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Using a Composite Score for Middle School Admissions**

### ***The state legislature passed a law about using the Common Core exams for placement decisions; what does that mean for families?***

The law states that placement decisions cannot use the state exams in grades 3-8 as the sole, primary, or major factor in a placement decision. This means that students must be evaluated using multiple measures.

### ***Does this mean that the state exams don't matter for the admissions process anymore?***

No, it means that they cannot be used as a primary factor in admissions; however, state exams will still be used by a variety of programs as one of multiple measures in determining which students are admitted.

### ***How are students assessed?***

A composite score will be used. This score takes multiple measures and combines them into one score for placement purposes. Different districts and schools are adopting the composite score admissions method, but they may weigh the measures differently. An example of a composite score may be 22.5% NYS English Language Arts examination, 22.5% NYS Mathematics examination, 45% report card grades, and 10% attendance combined into one composite score for each applicant. The applicant with the highest composite score would be matched to his or her most highly ranked program.

### ***What are the possible measures used to create a composite score?***

The measures available to create a composite score for any given program are:

- Grades from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade report card
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade state exams
- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Academic & Personal Behaviors as assessed by the elementary school

### ***What happens if I am missing information?***

Depending upon the information missing, other measures can be used to replace the information missing. However, the state exams cannot be used as a primary factor so missing information cannot be used to place a primary emphasis on the state exams. If you have concerns about missing information, please contact your elementary school.

***Why would the composite score be different from one school or district to another?***

Districts and screened schools have the ability to customize the composite score based on the vision and goals for the programs in the district or at an individual school. Families should ask schools directly about their admissions method for more specific information on the weighting for a program.

***Is the composite score the same thing as screening? What is screening?***

The composite score is not the same as a screened program. Screened programs are more individualized. They take multiple measures, evaluate students, and determine who they are interested in admitting by ranking those students. For screened programs, all of the evaluation is conducted at the school and only the rankings are submitted to the Office of Student Enrollment for the matching process. For programs using the composite score, the Office of Student Enrollment will create the composite score based on the objective academic performance of each candidate and match students based on their ranked preference. Screened programs also may require an additional evaluation, such as an interview or portfolio. Composite score programs do not have an additional evaluation.

***Why do some schools use the composite score and some schools screen?***

The middle school admissions process varies by district consistent with existing community practice. Some districts have had a history of screening while others have had a history of placing students based on test score. Having both admissions methods allows the Office of Student Enrollment to maintain practices that are familiar to families in their local communities.

***How do I determine which schools are screening and which schools are using the composite score?***

The composite score is a new admissions method; the majority of schools using it are listed in the accompanying table. Individual screened schools may also adopt this method for September 2015 admissions. Families should reach out to any screened program in their district that interests them for more specific information on how students are evaluated.

***How does this change the admissions process for Mark Twain and the other District 21 talent testing schools?***

The admissions process for these schools has not changed. Students will be admitted based on their scores on the talent tests conducted at Mark Twain. These schools have never used the state tests as a factor in admissions.

***How does this change the admissions process for Unscreened or Limited Unscreened schools?***

The admissions process for these schools is unchanged. Test scores (and other academic information) have never been used for placement in either program type.