Selective High Schools and Opportunity Classes

SPECIAL TEST PROVISIONS

Cynthia Wearne
Senior Education Officer, Selective High School and Opportunity Class Placement Unit, NSW Department of Education and Training

CHERI Conference
“Students with additional learning needs: Theory, practice and interventions – what works?”
7 and 8 September, 2006
Aims of Selective Schools

Selective schools cater for the academically talented student by providing intellectual stimulation through an educationally enriched environment.
Benefits of Selective Schooling

- Educationally enriched environment and intellectual stimulation through:
  - grouping talented students together
  - employing specialised teaching methods
  - concentrating resources

In selective high schools:
- High retention rates
- High UAI's
Application forms

Opportunity Classes for Years 5 & 6

Selective High Schools for Years 7 – 12
Application Forms

Parent Section

- Parents complete application forms
- Application forms provide opportunity for parents to provide information such as:
  - evidence of academic merit
  - information concerning disability/ Special Test Provisions/ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background/ Language Background other than English
  - any factors which may affect the student’s school or test marks
Application Forms

School Section

Principals provide information such as:

- Marks out of 100 in English and mathematics
- Disability/ATSI/LBOTE if relevant to academic performance
- Ability to cope in a boarder situation
Special Test Provisions
Granting STPs

- In general the kinds of requests that can be granted include:
  - permission to eat, take medicine or use a puffer during the test
  - that seating be arranged near the front or to a specific side of the presiding officer to cater for a student’s hearing impairment
  - that the presiding officer wear a radio transmitter to cater for a student’s profound deafness
Granting STPs

- wheelchair access to the seat and devices to angle the papers for greater ease of writing
- provision of large-print papers and double desks to accommodate them
- transcription of a student’s answers from the question booklet onto an answer be provided.
In addition parents sometimes request that the presiding officer be made aware of a child’s physical disability in case the student requires medical assistance. Such conditions include:

- asthma
- diabetes
- epilepsy
- cerebral palsy
Granting STPs

- Students for whom taking the test with a large group is unsuitable eg student’s with some forms of Tourette’s Syndrome
  - Separate room
  - Separate supervision
Denying STPs

- The kinds of requests not usually granted include:
  - extra time to complete the test
  - that a reader or writer be provided
  - permission for a computer to be used
  - permission for a dictionary to be used (for students of a language background other than English)
Alternatives

The selective schools entry process does not depend on test marks alone.

Students may also be considered on:
- moderated school assessment scores (SAS) or
- any other evidence of academic merit.
Notifying STPs

- The Unit evaluates the feasibility of the request and contacts the parents or school to discuss special provisions if necessary.

- The Unit then writes to:
  - the applicant
  - the student’s current government primary school principal
  - the presiding officer.
Illness/Misadventure
Illness/Misadventure Process

- Claims must be in before the selection committees meet.
- Usually targets the test:
  - either the student has missed the test
  - or something has prevented the student from doing his/her best in the test.
Illness/Misadventure Process

- Applicants lodge claims based on a variety of conditions that may have affected the student’s test or school performance.
Illness/Misadventure Process

- Parents complete the form without input from the primary school and return it to the Unit.
- The selection committees determine the outcome of the I/M claim.
When Students Miss the Test

- They are considered on moderated school assessment scores (SAS).
- If moderated SAS are not available:
  - any other quantifiable evidence of academic merit can be considered
  - an individual IQ test result may be used.
Where Students Take the Test
(but can't do their best)

- If there are moderated school assessment scores the selection committee determines a score based only on SAS.
Where Students Take the Test

(but can’t do their best)

- If the score based only on SAS is higher than the profile score, the marks are adjusted to that higher score.
- If the score based only on SAS is lower than the profile score, the marks are not adjusted.
Selection Committees
Composition of Selection Committees

Selection committees includes:

- School Education Area Director
- Principal of the selective school
- Parent representative for selective high school entry
- District Guidance Officer for OC entry
- A Unit representative.
Function of Selection Committees

- Selection committees make all placement decisions for selective school entry.
- They determine:
  - First round offers
  - Reserve list
  - Unsuccessful list.
Function of Selection Committees

- They consider individually:
  - LBOTE
  - ATSI
  - Interstate/overseas
  - Illness/misadventure
  - Disabilities
  - Age
  - Other information
Appeals
Appeals

- Appeals against the selection committee’s decision can be made after the outcome is known.
- Appeal forms are completed by the parents and the student’s school.
Appeals

- When appeals are received by the Unit, they are investigated and an analysis is written for the appeals panel.
Appeals Panels

The panel includes:

- The Director of Educational Measurement and School Accountability or nominee
- A selective high school principal
- A principal of a school with opportunity classes
- A parent or community representative or a District Guidance Officer
Basis of Appeals

- Appeals can be made on the basis of:
  - Factors which may have prevented the student from gaining higher test marks
  - Factors which may have prevented the student from gaining higher SAS
  - Other factors.
Basis of Appeals

- Appeals are commonly made on grounds such as:
  - Test centre problems
  - Test anxiety
  - Domestic upheaval
  - School bias
  - Student’s disability
  - The fact that students ranked lower by the school have been successful.
Contact Details

Cynthia Wearne
Senior Education Officer

Selective High School and
Opportunity Class Placement Unit
PH: 9707 6262
FAX: 9707 6265