The Use of Tests in Selective School Admissions

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Competing Considerations

- To participate in academically challenging contexts, students must have prerequisite knowledge and skills. *(rigor)*

- Standardized tests correlate with family income and have greater disparate impact than selecting on grades alone. *(diversity)*

- In college admissions, grades are better predictors than tests because grades are cumulative and grades reflect effort as well as academic skills.
Lessons from SAT/ACT College Admissions

- HSGPA & SAT measure academic preparedness & predict student success. (freshman gpa & graduation)
- SAT added to HSGPA improves prediction of college GPA by 15%.
- Test scores reflect unequal HS opportunities. (+test wiseness, test prep, stereotype threat)
- Given modest predictive correlations, tests should never be used as if they are perfect measures of merit.
Hypothetical Example of Perfect Merit Measure

Figure 1. A perfect positive linear relationship, $r = 1$. 
Total SAT used to predict College GPA

Scatter Plot of First Year GPA vs. SAT Score
Total SAT used to predict College GPA
Total SAT used to predict College GPA
Two points regarding NWEA MAP tests

- Use of Differential Item Functioning (DIF) and Item Bias statistics do not make a test bias free. Because total test score is used as the target, DIF can only identify items that exaggerate group differences.

- NWEA MAP uses all multiple-choice or selected-response items. Therefore, it cannot measure aspects of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks such as modeling and argumentation.