

APPENDIX V – 44

V.G.1.g - The ACT Engage Assessment

The UHS Admissions Policy states that students who meet the minimum CogAT composite stanine score of 7 and a calculated gpa of 3.0, but receive less than 50 admission points may take an additional evaluation to qualify for UHS freshman admissions. Prior to 2016-17, short-answer essay questions were used for this purpose. These questions were designed to assess student characteristics such as motivation, persistence and leadership. However, the essays lacked reliability or validity as measures, and, although evaluated externally, the scoring was highly subjective. As a result, the UHS admissions committee conducted several pilot tests using the ACT Engage as a possible replacement. (*Appendix V-47 Annual Report 14-15, Appendix 37, Annual Report 15-16*). The District adopted and utilized the ACT Engage assessment for the SY 16-17 UHS admissions process.

The ACT Engage is a self-report inventory of over 100 items designed to measure students' attitudes towards learning, school and family engagement. It is a nationally normed assessment with studies assessing validity and reliability. ACT regularly re-evaluates its scales and predicted outcomes. Students typically complete the survey on-line within 40 minutes and the test scores are processed quickly.

Ten sub-scales on the ACT assessment measure three domains – motivation/skills, self-regulation, and social engagement. Five sub-scales were selected for UHS admissions because they assessed student characteristics similar to those of the short-answer essay questions. These were academic discipline, commitment to school, and optimism (motivation/ skills); and managing feelings, and thinking before acting (self-regulation). To qualify for admissions, a student had to exhibit 3 out of these 5 factors as “strengths” which are defined in the ACT *Guide to Using Results* as a sub-scale score at or above the 76th percentile.

ACT Results

In 2016-17, 66 students (48 TUSD and 18 nonTUSD) were eligible to take the ACT Engage to qualify for admission to UHS. Table 1 shows the ethnic breakdown of all the students who met the minimum criterion for the test and calculated GPA, but received less than 50 admission points. Twenty-one Hispanic students were eligible. No African-American students needed to take the multiple measure assessment to qualify because students who qualified all met the 50 admission point requirement. Of the 66 students, 15 students declined to take the ACT Engage assessment. As the table shows a total of 30 additional students, including eight Hispanic students, qualified for UHS admissions by meeting the ACT Engage criteria.

In summary, use of the ACT Engage assessment allowed more students to qualify for admission to UHS by measuring attitudes and behaviors that contribute to academic success beyond the performance outcomes of test scores and grades. The assessment has the advantage over the essay questions of tested validity and reliability, and it is more easily administered and scored.

Table 1. ACT Engage by Ethnicity – All students

ACT Engage- All Students				
2016-17				
Ethnicity	Eligible to take the ACT Engage	Took the ACT Engage	Qualified with the ACT Engage	% qualified
White	37	28	17	61%
African American	0	-	-	-
Hispanic	21	16	8	50%
Native American	1	1	1	100%
Asian/Pacific	5	5	2	40%
Multi-racial	2	2	2	100%
Total	66	52	30	58%

Table 2 separates the results of the ACT Engage assessment by school status – students enrolled in TUSD schools and those who are not (non-TUSD).

Table 2. ACT Engage by Ethnicity and School Status

2016-17						
Ethnicity	Eligible to take the ACT Engage		Took the ACT Engage		Qualified with the ACT Engage	
	TUSD	Non TUSD	TUSD	Non TUSD	TUSD	Non TUSD
White	24	13	18	10	10	7
African American	0	0	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	20	1	16	0	8	--
Native American	1	0	1	--	1	--
Asian/Pacific	2	3	2	3	0	2
Multi-racial	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	48	18	38	14	20	10