

## ILLINOIS MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE ACADEMY

### SECTION J STUDENTS

#### ADMISSIONS

##### I. PURPOSE

One of the purposes of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy is to offer a uniquely challenging and advanced education of secondary and post secondary work for students talented in mathematics and science who reside in the State of Illinois and have completed the academic equivalent of ninth grade. Admission practices of the Academy promote a diverse student population in order to enhance the learning of all students.

##### II. GEOGRAPHIC, GENDER AND ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

In accordance with its statutory mandate, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy shall provide the opportunity for students residing in the State of Illinois to apply for admission to the Academy by distributing materials to all grade appropriate students in the state through their schools, by distributing materials directly to students or their parents or legal guardians upon request, and by distributing materials to students through other channels identified by the Administration.

The Academy shall ensure adequate geographic, gender, and ethnic representation in admission decisions by approximating the diversity of the applicant pool from among qualified applicants. Admission decisions will not be controlled by quotas nor will admission standards be compromised to achieve diversity. Recruitment strategies will include targeted programs for historically underrepresented groups relative to state demographics.

##### III. ELIGIBILITY FOR CONSIDERATION

Illinois residents, who have completed the academic equivalent of nine years of education, excluding preschool and kindergarten, are not enrolled beyond the ninth grade and who have a complete application file are *eligible to be considered* for admissions. Illinois residency must be documented no later than July 1 of the year of admission. (Policy JECAA – Student Residency) Students who have not yet enrolled in the ninth grade must submit documentation of having completed an academic program comparable to ninth grade level work in mathematics, science, and English. This must include a minimum of one year of algebra and one year of high school level science. On-line algebra and science courses can be used to meet the algebra and science requirement.

Select summer courses, high school, virtual high school, or college credits earned at another institution prior to application for admission to IMSA may demonstrate eligibility for admission to IMSA but will not earn graduation credit at IMSA. Current tenth – twelfth grade students are not eligible for admission. An exemption from this restriction will be granted in the special case of an applicant's double promotion from eighth to tenth grade based on home district promotion policies regarding accelerated coursework.

Upon matriculation, students are evaluated at the end of each academic year to determine eligibility for continuation in the IMSA program. (Policy JECF- Re-invitation of Students) This evaluation considers both academic performance and compliance with Academy expectations.

#### IV. SELECTION CRITERIA

The following information must be submitted by each applicant to be considered for admission.

##### A. SAT Reasoning Scores (Range is 200-800 for both Math and Critical Reading)

SAT Reasoning scores are used by the Academy to provide information about what an applicant has learned both in and out of school. Because SAT Reasoning scores are intended to supplement other information about an applicant in assessing readiness for post-secondary level work, and because restricted opportunities for learning will have a negative effect on some applicants' scores, the Academy will consider "opportunity to learn" in interpreting scores, as well as other information about each applicant's motivation, educational resources, and other special circumstances. SAT Reasoning scores will not be interpreted as a precise measure of an applicant's ability, interest or motivation.

SAT-W scores will not be used in the admission decision, until such time as national norms are established and data is gathered on which to base an institutional policy in reference to this subtest.

##### B. Grade Point Average (GPA) (Range is 0.00-4.00)

School transcripts for the 2½ years preceding application must be submitted by all applicants for admission. However, because feeder programs vary, grades will not be interpreted as a precise measure of an applicant's ability, interest or motivation. Grade point averages will be re-computed by Academy staff into a commonly defined GPA, using English, mathematics, and science grades for the previous five semesters. Extra weight to honors or accelerated course work will not be granted because of the district-to-district differences in honors course opportunities.

Applicants coming from schools that provide narrative evaluations of academic work without letter or number grades will be evaluated individually by the Selection Committee.

C. Review Committee Evaluation (RCE) (Range is 20-80). The Review Committee is composed of invited volunteers drawn from throughout the State of Illinois including, but not limited to scientists, entrepreneurs, IMSA mentors, IMSA alumni, math and science teachers, guidance counselors, educators of gifted adolescents, as well as IMSA faculty and staff. Committee members work in three person teams to evaluate applicant files.

The following information is reviewed to determine the applicant's RCE score:

1. Evaluations by eligible science, mathematics, and English teachers, school counselors, and administrators from the student's local school.
2. Awards won or recognitions received for accomplishments in science fairs, mathematics projects, competitions, extracurricular activities, community service projects, and personal interests and hobbies.
3. Applicant responses to essay questions on the application for admission.
4. Demonstrated evidence of strong interest and talent in mathematics and/or science, and a desire to pursue a Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) career.

For each applicant, the foregoing information (1-4) is reviewed by Review Committee teams, and each applicant is rated along five dimensions: potential for mathematics reasoning, potential for scientific reasoning, communication skills, interpersonal relations, and skill application. The applicant's ratings in these five dimensions are then used to determine the Review Committee Evaluation (RCE) score. All scores are contextually based, recognizing the differences in opportunities available to students from different districts and regions of the state. The RCE score will reflect their evaluation of applicant engagement in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) and their qualifications for the IMSA environment.

## V. HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENTS

Students who have been home-schooled (taught at home) are eligible to apply and be considered for admission to the Academy. These applicants must submit: SAT Reasoning Scores (A); evidence of their academic preparation and performance (B); evaluations by adult teachers, mentors, counselors or supervisors with whom they have worked, excluding parents, legal guardians and other relatives (C 1); and the other foregoing information (C 2-4).

Home-schooled students whose evidence of academic preparation and performance (B) does not include letter or number grades will be evaluated individually by the Selection Committee.

## VI. STUDENT SELECTION

Students will be selected from among all qualified applicants. Qualified applicants will meet the following criteria:

- History of consistently high academic achievement in MST as indicated by grades and recommendations from teachers and counselors in the student's local school (deviations of this pattern must be due to extraordinary circumstances that are not expected to interfere with future performance)
- Demonstrated interest and talent in mathematics and/or science as indicated by grades, recommendations from teachers and counselors in the student's local school and other information in the student's application
- Expectation for success within the IMSA academic and residential environment as indicated by recommendations from teachers and counselors in the student's local school, optional character recommendation and other information in the student's application
- Demonstrated potential for significant contributions in the fields of math and science.

A Student Selection Committee is appointed each year by the Director of Enrollment Management. The committee is composed of IMSA staff representing the faculty, student services, and admission staff. The committee is chaired by the Director of Enrollment Management. The Chair may invite external experts to serve as advisors. Decisions of the committee are made by consensus based on professional judgement. If consensus is not possible, the decision will be made by the Director of Enrollment Management.

Applicants are ranked numerically in accordance with SAT-Math in descending order from 800, recalculated GPA, RCE, and SAT-V, respectively. The selection process continues until the class and wait list are established.

The qualified applicant pool will be reviewed first in the selection process, with particular attention paid to the applicant's integrity, maturity and genuine interest and talent in math and/or science. To ensure adequate geographic, gender, and ethnic representation, the Selection Committee considers the demographics of the selected class thus far, the demographics of the applicant pool, the demographics of the State of Illinois, and the strengths of the individual applicants. Factors such as demonstration of exceptional talent or potential for exceptional talent in the areas of mathematics and/or science, coursework completed, demonstration of potential for leadership, demonstration of a pattern of ethical decision making, behaviors consistent with research on gifted students in math and science, expectations for success within the IMSA environment, relative academic standing in home school, first language, course availability in home school, potential to contribute to diverse discourse among students and staff and other special circumstances are considered as a single qualitative judgment when selecting from

among the qualified applicants. Relative importance of these factors will be determined by the professional judgment of the Selection Committee members.

Only applicants who are determined to be qualified for admission will be considered by the Selection Committee. Ninth grade applicants will be given priority over eighth grade applicants.

Eighth grade applicants who are offered admission may elect to defer their matriculation until the following academic year. In these instances, admission will be guaranteed to the applicant for the following academic year contingent upon successful completion of the ninth grade academic program and submission of required admissions forms.

Eighth grade applicants who (1) are identified as highly qualified based on the four qualitative criteria listed in Section VI. above and (2) in the judgment of the Selection Committee will be highly competitive in the following year's applicant pool may be extended a deferred offer of admission.

The Selection Committee will develop a wait list. Wait listed applicants are ranked according to their academic profile. These rankings will be a consideration in selecting students from the wait list. Demographics also will be a consideration. Offers will be extended as spaces become available. Applicants on the wait list may or may not be selected for admission, depending upon institutional capacity. IMSA will not offer admission to applicants later than the Monday before registration day.

## VII. APPEALS PROCESS

Students placed on the waitlist or denied admission may appeal the decision. The decision will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee. The composition of the Appeals Committee includes three representatives from the IMSA professional staff who did not participate in the Selection Committee the same year. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Enrollment Management, who serves in a non-voting capacity, and decisions are made by a majority vote of the Appeals Committee. The task of the Appeals Committee is to determine whether the student had been given fair and equal consideration in the selection process and not to determine whether the student was qualified. If it is determined that the Student Selection Committee did not fully or accurately review all relevant information, the decision of the Appeals Committee may be to uphold, reverse or modify the Selection Committee's decision.

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