

**Fairfax County School Board
Blue Ribbon Commission on Admissions**



**The Thomas Jefferson High School
for Science and Technology**

May 2004

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* Dr. Feuer participated in the Commission as an individual, not as an official representative of the National Academies. The views and opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Academies, the National Research Council, or any of its constituent boards and committees.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) commend the Fairfax County School Board for establishing this Commission, on which it has been our honor to serve. We extend sincere appreciation to Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) representatives for their organization and support before and throughout the work of the Commission in developing this report.

Although FCPS and TJHSST staff were extremely helpful, they did not influence the deliberations or steer the BRC toward any particular set of findings or conclusions.

The BRC submits these recommendations to the Fairfax County School Board according to the charge described in the School Board resolution that established the Blue Ribbon Commission. We look forward to hearing about ongoing progress as FCPS and TJHSST discuss and implement our recommendations.

Introduction

The mission of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) is to:

- Provide an extensive and challenging curriculum with emphasis on mathematics, science, and technology for students with “high ability, aptitude, and interest . . . in these disciplines;”
- Focus on the “academic and ethical development of the whole person,” as well as “the development of leadership and effective communication skills;”
- Foster among its students “respect for individual and cultural diversity;” and
- Prepare graduates to “become responsible citizens and leaders in the 21st century” with a capacity for productive working relations in the global community of the future.

(See Attachment #1)

The Fairfax County School Board is committed to the principles embodied in the TJHSST mission statement and to the proposition that diversity in the student body is essential to fulfilling that mission. Concerns have been raised by FCPS officials, TJHSST faculty, students, parents, and the general public about trends in the demographic composition of the student body at TJHSST. Responding to these concerns, on December 12, 2003 the Board unanimously passed a resolution to form a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) to review the school’s admissions and recruiting processes and to recommend possible changes. In its charge, the Board specified that it “desires to achieve diversity without diminution of the high standards required for admission to or success at TJHSST.” (See Attachment #2)

The BRC was comprised of educators with expertise in selective admissions at the high school, college and university levels, as well as experts in science and engineering education and education policy. The BRC held an intensive two-day meeting February 27 and 28, 2004 during which it reviewed available information about TJHSST’s current admissions process as well as summary data on recent trends in enrollment. Based on its review and deliberations, the BRC finds:

1. The recruitment and admissions process at TJHSST does not achieve a diverse applicant or enrollment pool.
 - a. At present the school’s enrollment includes only 1% African American students and 2% Hispanic students. Such levels clearly do not foster an environment conducive to developing “respect for individual and cultural diversity,” and limit the school’s ability to prepare graduates “to become responsible citizens and leaders of the 21st century.”
 - b. This strikingly low rate of enrollment among African American and Hispanic students substantially limits the educational experiences of the entire TJHSST community.
2. The TJHSST admissions office is to be commended for attracting some of the most high achieving and capable students in counties from which the school draws its population. However:

- a. the admissions and selection process does not take into full account, and may in fact eliminate from consideration entirely, some students with equal or even higher ability, aptitude, and interest in mathematics, science and technology—regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender; and
 - b. flaws in the process disproportionately reduce the chances of admission for African American and Hispanic students.
3. Although improvements have been made in the extent of outreach and communications during the past five years, the results have been disappointing and there is room for further improvement. It is important that residents throughout all participating counties from which TJHSST hopes to draw students receive an adequate explanation of the selection process and the school program.
 4. The current admissions process is significantly inferior to that of most highly selective high schools and post-secondary institutions that have maintained high academic standards while achieving substantially more inclusive student populations.

Therefore, the BRC's principal finding is that the TJHSST admissions process does not meet the school's stated goals. We offer recommendations to correct this situation, grouped in three areas: a) the selection process, b) public relations and outreach, and c) evaluation and continuous improvement.

I. The Selection Process

In the current selection process used by TJHSST, each applicant's score on the Specialized High School Admissions Test is combined with the applicant's middle school Grade Point Average (GPA) in a formula that results in a statistical composite, or index score. The formula gives the test score a weight of 80% and the GPA a weight of 20%. All candidates are then ranked in order of the index scores and the top 800 students are advanced to semifinalist status. All other candidates are eliminated from further consideration. Additional supporting documents such as teacher recommendations, extracurricular interests and short essays are considered only at the semifinalist level.

The BRC finds that the focus on a single test score in the process inhibits the school's capacity to achieve its mission and to fulfill the School Board's commitment to diversity. Although it is clear that many qualified students advance to the next round in the selection process, it is likely that the system introduces two types of error: some students in the pool of 800 may not embody the characteristics that reflect the school mission statement and that TJHSST values most highly, while some of the excluded students may indeed have the characteristics that TJHSST is seeking. There is abundant evidence showing that such qualities as intellectual curiosity, motivation for the sheer joy of learning, and the passion for scientific pursuits are not easily captured by standardized tests and grade point averages. These qualities are not well reflected in the selection index formula currently used at TJHSST.

Similarly, a concern for one's classmates, the understanding of the importance of collaborative effort, and an appreciation of cultural differences are important qualities that are not measured by the test or captured in middle school grade transcripts. Also not included in the selection index are leadership skills, an ability to communicate well with peers, or an appreciation of the ethical consequences of one's actions, all of which are described in TJHSST's statement of core beliefs as being important.

The BRC therefore recommends that the selection process become more comprehensive and that the information currently considered only at the semifinalist stage be considered for all applicants. This includes the review of the full application packet containing test scores, middle school grades, teacher recommendations, a data sheet listing activities and awards, short essays written at the time of the exam, and all relevant information on a student's background and interests. Obviously this will result in a need for more people to be involved from the earliest stage of the process. The BRC believes, however, that it is the only way to create an incoming class at TJHSST that more accurately reflects the school's mission and core beliefs. Such a comprehensive review process would also more closely mirror the admissions systems at many of the highly selective secondary and post-secondary institutions in the country.

The BRC makes the following specific recommendations:

1. Use students' test scores and GPA as two separate elements (among many others) in the admissions process, rather than combining them to create a selection index.
2. Distribute the test preparation booklet free of charge to middle schools in all constituent counties and make it available for downloading and printing from the TJHSST website.
3. Clarify in all admissions literature—whenever the application fee is mentioned—that application fee waivers will be considered.
4. Redesign the teacher recommendation form so that the free-text space is a half-page long.
5. Review the check-box scale of “demonstrated behaviors” listed on the teacher recommendation form to make sure it elicits the information most desired by the selection committee based on the school's mission and belief statements.
6. Ensure that the initial consideration of applications is made by a small group of highly skilled people who are trained in all components of the comprehensive application review process.
 - NOTE: Clearly the staffing for the initial stage would need to increase, though for a fairly short period of time. Through its consideration of all documents in the applications, and bearing in mind at all times that TJHSST

is able to offer admission to perhaps only 15% of its applicants, the committee in this initial review process would eliminate roughly half, or more than half, of the applicants from further consideration. It would seem desirable for the semifinalist pool to reach roughly 1000 at a minimum and 1400 or 1500 at a maximum, with the number fluctuating from year to year depending on the strength of the pool. At no point should there be a goal as fixed as the current 800 cut-off. It is also important that any readers or subcommittees not be given an exact number of students they may advance, but rather a rough target. It is conceivable that assignment of applicants into groups for a reader or subcommittee could result in groups of varying strength. The ultimate goal is to move forward the strongest applicants within the *entire* applicant pool, and not equal numbers from each subgroup of files.

7. Increase training time for persons charged with reading applications and selecting the class.
 - NOTE: Currently there is a half-day meeting for training persons who review a subset of semifinalist applications. Given how critical it is that everyone use the same criteria to evaluate candidates (which does not, of course, mean they will necessarily arrive at the same conclusions), adequate training is essential. The training should include “reading to consensus” exercises in which all members read the same applications and compare their evaluations. The committee might also want to consider assigning numerical values to parts of the application rather than just an overall recommendation to accept, wait list or deny. For instance, a “degree-of-support” rating for each teacher recommendation on a 1-5 or 1-9 scale, and possibly a personal or motivation rating of some sort as well may be developed. This would provide quantitative, retrievable data that could help provide focus to the selection process and would also facilitate the calibration of readers. Such an evaluative procedure is used in the admissions process by many selective colleges and universities.

8. Maintain the procedures in the current admissions process for evaluation of the semifinalist group, but expand the size of the committee to include a wider range of people; and group the results into three categories--admit, deny and reconsider. This will allow further discussion by the full committee prior to a final vote.
 - NOTE: The goal of this process is to arrive at the final group of 400+ admitted students. In resolving the “reconsiders”, additional consideration of the diversity of the students already selected could be brought to bear, defining diversity broadly in terms such as gender, race and ethnicity, educational background, academic interests, unusual personal strengths, etc. In addition, the BRC encourages TJHSST to consider initially offering admission to a slightly smaller group than the current 450 and providing a cutoff date for accepting the offer to attend TJHSST. Due to the proposed changes in the admissions process and possible resulting changes in the cohort of admitted students, the yield on those admitted students may be a bit less

predictable than it has been in the past. The wait list, consisting of some number of the last students to be eliminated from the list of “reconsiderers,” would enable admissions staff to fill any slots remaining in the class. The wait list would then be terminated.

9. Create an independent Selection Advisory Committee, comprised of deans of admissions from highly selective universities as well as leaders of selective high schools with an academic focus similar to that of TJHSST. Such a committee would review the selection process on an ongoing basis and provide advice for improving the process over time.

II. Public Relations and Outreach

TJHSST’s admissions process is not clearly communicated or promoted to all students and parents within Fairfax County and other constituent counties. Although a large number of students apply to TJHSST each year, there are indications that awareness of the school’s academic program and the admissions process is concentrated in more affluent communities. To provide a more diverse applicant pool, information on the opportunities that TJHSST provides and the pathways to gaining enrollment must be more widely and effectively disseminated. Recommendations in this area are grouped in four categories: a) communication, b) partnerships, c) programming, and d) mentoring parents.

A. Communication

The BRC finds that the depth and breadth of communication about TJHSST and the admissions process is not adequate across the participating school divisions.

1. The Diversity Committee of the TJHSST Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) has engaged in outreach efforts in recent years, holding informational receptions and test preparation sessions for underrepresented minority students. The BRC recommends expanding on these efforts by organizing and staffing a special recruitment team as soon as possible.
 - **NOTE:** Currently the official responsibility for conveying information about TJHSST to surrounding communities is left to the one person also responsible for the admissions process. This results in insufficient staff for conducting information sessions, updating publications, and generally providing information about TJHSST to students and families as well as to math and science teachers at the middle school and even elementary school levels.
 - a. Focus special recruitment efforts on the elementary and middle schools most underrepresented at TJHSST. This should include discussion of the math and science preparation recommended for a student to be a realistic applicant to TJHSST.
 - b. Include minority representatives in all areas of the recruitment process. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some parents of children in

underrepresented minority groups are reluctant to have their children apply to and enroll at TJHSST due to perceptions of an unwelcoming atmosphere for students in these groups. The extremely low number of such students at THSST is part of this perception. The TJHSST recruitment team could include current minority students and faculty at the school, TJHSST graduates attending area universities, and alumni leaders who are involved in the scientific community.

2. Update the school's recruiting materials. The school's website, informational brochures and video need to be more inclusive and attractive to be effective recruiting tools for a wide range of potential applicants.
3. Translate into Spanish all recruiting publications and websites and explore the usefulness of other language translations. Currently, although many parents in underrepresented groups are non-native English speakers, information about TJHSST is available only in English.
4. Send applications to all seventh graders scoring at or above 90% on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. This will ensure that all high-scoring students have information on TJHSST and the application process.
5. Modify the calendar for primary recruitment events in order to provide additional time for families less familiar with TJHSST to learn about the school and its admissions process.
 - NOTE: Currently the October Open House is held two weeks prior to the application deadline, thus serving essentially as an Open House only for students who already think they will apply. In addition to this fall Open House the school should hold another in the spring for students at the end of seventh grade. Furthermore, current visits to middle schools are made in October, also too close to the application deadline. Evening information programs for parents and students should be held in the spring as well, particularly in communities with larger minority populations.

B. Partnerships

The BRC finds that there are few partnerships with key community organizations that can assist with outreach efforts throughout the communities of participating school divisions.

1. Develop an Advisory Committee for TJHSST composed largely of leaders in business and higher education drawn from minority populations to advise recruitment and admissions personnel on outreach efforts. TJHSST currently has only limited lines of communication with the African American and Hispanic communities in Northern Virginia.

2. Host at TJHSST a number of mathematics, science and technology events that are currently held in individual schools and establish a presence at such school-based events elsewhere whenever possible. Numerous student events in mathematics, science and technology—such as science fairs and competitions—take place in Northern Virginia each year. TJHSST’s hosting of, and attendance at, such events, particularly those involving middle school students, will increase awareness of the programs at TJHSST and create opportunities to communicate with students with an established interest in these fields.
3. Increase the role that elementary and middle school mathematics and science teachers play in the recruitment process. These teachers are in the best position to identify students with unusual talent and interest in these subject areas and to encourage their potential. To increase communication and improve relations with these key individuals and to support the important work that they do, TJHSST should:
 - a. Work with colleges and universities in the area that have education schools to create professional development programs for elementary and middle school mathematics, science and technology teachers. These could be summer programs held on the college campuses.
 - b. Provide elementary and middle school teachers of mathematics, science and technology with TJHSST recruitment materials.
 - c. Solicit nominations of highly talented at-risk students from upper-elementary and middle school mathematics, science and technology teachers as possible applicants to TJHSST and/or as potential participants in the programs listed under Programming below.
 - d. Establish an end-of-year ceremony at TJHSST to give awards to selected elementary and middle school mathematics, science and technology teachers and to express gratitude for their involvement with TJHSST.
4. Provide TJHSST publications to relevant education/community gatherings and information centers in the area, such as Parks and Recreation departments, real estate offices, health fairs, and Chamber of Commerce and realtor associations.

C. Programming

Many highly respected secondary institutions specializing in mathematics and science offer outreach programs for selected upper-elementary and middle school students from underrepresented minority groups. These programs are intended to raise interest in mathematics and science among at-risk and minority populations; to assist participants in qualifying for and applying to these selective institutions; and, for those already admitted and planning to enroll, to help students adjust to an environment that may be very different from the one they experienced in their prior school.

1. Develop such programs at TJHSST, focusing particularly on students from middle schools that are underrepresented at TJHSST and that have sizeable minority populations.
 - NOTE: The BRC was encouraged by information about the Young Scholars and Quest programs and similar initiatives already underway in Fairfax County Public Schools. We recommend continued investment in those initiatives.

2. Develop and implement more assertive programs.
 - NOTE: Two initiatives funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation might serve as models. These programs from the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools in Mathematics, Science and Technology, of which TJHSST is a member, have been undertaken by other selective mathematics, science and technology high schools. In the first program students are involved for 18 months (over the course of their seventh and eighth grade summers and the academic year between them) in mathematics, science and technology coursework as well as courses on test taking skills and the application process. A second program brings middle school students to a college campus for two weeks in a residential mathematics, science and technology program. (See details in Attachment #3.)

D. Mentoring Parents

The BRC recommends the development of a mentoring program for parents of minority students.

- NOTE: It is important to note that the African American and Hispanic students that TJHSST has enrolled in the past have been very successful. The BRC is not suggesting that students need additional support programs to thrive at TJHSST. However, without the participation and “buy in” of parents within the African American and Hispanic communities, additional multicultural recruitment will be ineffective. A number of things can and should be done to draw more parents into the process and to reassure them that their children are not only welcome at TJHSST but in fact have a great deal to gain from, and offer to, the school. TJHSST should consider the following suggestions:

1. Provide day and evening information sessions (including a Saturday) about TJHSST for parents of students who attend middle schools with large minority populations, possibly held at places of worship and community centers.

2. Host additional meetings and workshops (including a Saturday) for parents of interested students conducted by TJHSST guidance counselors and other professionals. Such workshops could identify challenges and provide guidelines for parents to help their children through the application process or the transition to TJHSST if they enroll. These sessions could also help parents understand the extensive time commitment required to be successful at TJHSST and the impact on a student’s ability to handle additional responsibilities at home.

3. Establish a parent network within the minority community at TJHSST so that prospective parents have other African American or Hispanic parents to talk to about the school, the application process, etc.

III. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The BRC recommends an overhaul of the marketing, recruitment and selection processes for TJHSST, as previously outlined. To guide these systemic changes and gauge progress toward the division's and school's goals, we urge FCPS to invest in a comprehensive and ongoing evaluation strategy designed to bring empirical evidence to bear on choices made by the school and division leadership. Such a strategy is necessary to foster an environment conducive to continuous improvement in TJHSST's student profile and educational experience. Evaluation should cover three main sets of questions outlined below. Preferably this evaluation would be conducted by an independent body, e.g., external consultants or a policy research organization.

A. The supply side: Understanding TJHSST's market

Key questions to be addressed through appropriate surveys and data analyses include:

1. Why do students apply to TJHSST?
2. Why do applicants who are accepted choose not to enroll?
3. Why do students who could be accepted choose not to apply?
4. How much do parents influence application decisions?
5. What are the other main influences on application decisions, e.g., peer pressure, school reputation, effectiveness of guidance at feeder schools, etc.?
6. How do various people who have an influence on students (guidance counselors, religious and community leaders, et al.) view the school?
7. What do the students enrolled at TJHSST think about the school environment?
8. What do data suggest about the relative imbalance between minority and majority participation in mathematics, science and technology nationally and at TJHSST?
9. Can less affluent parents afford the commute and other costs associated with getting their children to the school if they are admitted?

B. The demand side: Understanding the selection process

Key questions here focus primarily on the use of the current admissions test, but would relate to any rigorous testing program. Questions include:

1. What skills are measured by the test? Are these the skills necessary for success at TJHSST?
2. Does the test provide useful (valid) information on the potential success of applicants?

3. What are appropriate measures of student success (e.g., freshman GPA, class rank after four years, college acceptance, etc)?
4. What tests are used by other selective high schools and how have they been validated?
5. What is known about the essay questions in terms of content, scoring, standardization and objectivity?
6. What is the relationship between use of the test and the size of the pool that advances to semifinalist status?
7. What would be the effects of other strategies (e.g., allowing a percentage of applicants to be admitted through a lottery)?

C. Estimating the effects of a TJHSST education: Understanding the long run

Key questions to be addressed include:

1. What colleges do TJHSST graduates attend?
2. What are their major areas of study in college?
3. Are TJHSST graduates well-prepared for college and beyond?
4. Are there important differences in post-graduation experiences of TJHSST alumni between cohorts that were more and less diverse?
5. How do the postsecondary experiences of TJHSST alumni compare with those of students who have graduated from traditional or less selective high schools?
6. How does this information affect strategies for diversity?
7. What are the long-term effects of diversity on student learning?

Conclusion

The Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) was charged with reviewing the admissions process of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) and recommending possible changes to it. The ultimate goal for the school is to promote excellence in mathematics, science and technology while increasing the diversity of the student body based on its mission and belief statements. The BRC believes that greater diversity can be achieved without diminution of the high standards required for admission to, and success at, TJHSST. Experience at many of our own institutions and our knowledge of trends in admissions nationwide at both the high school and university levels suggest that such balance between diversity and excellence is both possible and desirable.

The comprehensive admissions process we are recommending has been shown at highly selective secondary and post-secondary institutions to be a significant factor in the creation of a talented, interesting and highly diverse student body. Such a process should address the problem of disproportionately low numbers of African American and Hispanic students attending TJHSST; it should be designed to enhance the educational opportunities of all students at TJHSST; and it should enable increased participation by students whose strong interest and talents in mathematics, science and technology may

not have been recognized by an admissions process that relied too heavily on scores from one standardized test.

Implementation of the Public Relations and Outreach recommendations should broaden TJHSST's applicant base and establish the school as an institution that genuinely values diversity among its students. In combination with a more comprehensive admissions process, this strategy should result in a student body whose members better reflect the wide variety of factors outlined in the resolution passed by the Fairfax County School Board. The student body should also become more representative of the racial, cultural and economic diversity of the Northern Virginia counties from which TJHSST draws its students.

The Evaluation and Continuous Improvement recommendations should ensure that relevant and accurate information guides the admissions and recruitment process. The BRC recommends that an advisory committee made up of admissions deans from selective colleges and universities be formed to assist in the implementation of the suggested changes as well as in data gathering and analysis.

It goes without saying that there are budgetary implications to many of the recommendations. It seems inconceivable that without additional resources dedicated to recruitment and admission at TJHSST anything substantial will change. We urge the Fairfax County School Board to begin immediately to explore mechanisms for substantially increasing long-term funding to the school for the purpose of supporting these initiatives.

May 2004

THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mission Statement

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) provides an innovative, specialized learning environment for selected students with high ability, aptitude, and interest in mathematics, science, and technology who seek an extensive, challenging curriculum with emphasis in these disciplines. In support of this commitment, the TJHSST community of learners, explorers, and mentors focuses on the academic and ethical development of the whole student, preparing graduates to become responsible citizens and leaders in the 21st century.

In fulfillment of this mission, we share the following beliefs:

Beliefs (Core beliefs that articulate what the school stands for. Shared vision, shared values applicable to all parts of our school.)

Real-world problem solving

Students should have the opportunity to apply their talents, resources, and knowledge to solve real-world problems using appropriate information, insight, critical thinking, and deep understanding.

Ethical problem solving

Ethical problem solving requires that students consider social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental consequences of their decisions.

Personal ethics

A positive school climate fosters the development of personal and collaborative excellence, a respect for individual and cultural diversity, and a strong moral and ethical base for self and society.

Interdisciplinary and integrated learning

Students learn best in an environment that combines a number of disciplines and an appreciation of how they form and function as a whole.

Enthusiasm and life-long learning

Through meaningful, experiential problem-solving activities, students gain an enthusiasm for learning that leads to life-long education exploration.

Use of technology

The creative and appropriate use of technology, applied across disciplines, can help students solve real-world problems.

Leadership/Teamwork/Communications

Student learning is enhanced by collaborative experiences that emphasize the development of leadership and effective communications skills.

Self-assessment and evaluation

Unexpected results or solutions that do not work as planned can be excellent learning opportunities when students are encouraged to self assess, evaluate, and revise.

Outreach

TJ is dedicated to developing, evaluating, and sharing innovative ideas in teaching methods, curriculum, and school organization with the greater community.

**RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR
THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL
FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

WHEREAS, the Fairfax County School Board is committed to educating all students to meet high academic standards and preparing them to be responsible citizens in the 21st century, as reflected in its mission statement; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) is to provide increased educational opportunities for students who have demonstrated high achievement and aptitude in math, science, and technology; and

WHEREAS, the School Board recognizes the importance of a diverse students body in training future leaders in math, science, and technology; and

WHEREAS, the School Board intends that diverse be broadly defined to include a wide variety of factors, such as high individual achievement, race, ethnicity, gender, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) background, geography, poverty, prior school and cultural experiences, and other unique skills and experiences; and

WHEREAS, the School Board desires to achieve such diversity without diminution of the high standards required for admission to or success at TJHSST; and

WHEREAS, the School Board wishes to refine the TJHSST admissions policy and procedures consistent with this resolution;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Division Superintendent appoint a blue ribbon commission, consisting of admissions officers and other experts in admissions policies for educationally selective institutions and programs which will develop and recommend to the Division Superintendent and the School Board specific admissions criteria to promote excellence in math, science and technology, while increasing the diversity of the TJHSST student body; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that concurrently with the work of the blue ribbon commission, staff should conduct a study regarding the impact of shifting from a “top 800” TJHSST applicant pool to a “minimum cut score” applicant pool.

<p>The motion that the Board adopt a resolution regarding a review of the admissions policy for Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) passed 11-0.</p>
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Examples of two outreach programs from other selective high schools for math and science

An eighteen-month program for middle school students

- Summer Component
 - Initially enrolls minority students in the summer prior to the seventh grade. Math, science or technology teachers and/or principals and guidance counselors identify high potential and at-risk students from underrepresented middle schools with high minority populations.
 - Curriculum focuses on math, science and technology plus history and literature. Curriculum for rising eighth grade students also includes entrance exam preparation and test-taking strategies from summer until the fall high school entrance exam date.
 - Provides additional enrichment activities such as field trips.
 - Provides transportation to and from school and for all field trips.
- School Year Component
 - Provides preparation for math and science competitions as well as essay writing.
 - Focuses on integration of technology as a tool in learning (e.g., PowerPoint presentations).
- Parent Involvement Component
 - High school hosts initial parent orientation sessions.
 - Contracts are developed to be signed by students and parents.
 - A minimum of three parent/teacher conferences are held during the school year.

Two-week summer university program

- Provides a two week residential program on a college or university campus for rising 6th, 7th and 8th grade students, in cooperation with other states that have selective math/science high schools.
 - A small number of students from each state participate, drawn from selected middle schools with high numbers of minority students and/or low enrollment in selective math and science secondary institutions.
 - Students live on the campus of a historically black college or university or at an institution with a highly diverse student population.
- Curriculum includes such things as Lego Robotics, biological science, trips to Ivy League institution, and trips to other partner colleges and universities.