

# The Character Skills Snapshot



## **2018 Interim Guidelines for the Use of The Enrollment Management Association's Character Skills Snapshot**

### Introduction

The purpose of these Interim Guidelines for the use of the Character Skills Snapshot is to provide enrollment professionals with information needed to support the appropriate use and interpretation of the Snapshot report as well as ensure consistent use among schools for this new tool. The Character Skills Snapshot, herein referred to as the Snapshot, is the latest tool designed by The Enrollment Management Association to assist enrollment professionals in the independent schools' admissions process. The Snapshot was developed using a rigorous scientific approach and pilot tested with over 11,000 students enrolled in independent schools across the United States, China, and Canada. Forty-six independent schools were involved in the development of the Snapshot.

The Snapshot is designed to measure seven essential character skills deemed relevant to independent school admissions, skills which schools seek to nurture in their students: resilience, open-mindedness, teamwork, social awareness, self-control, intellectual engagement, and initiative. The Snapshot is administered online and is untimed so students can take it from their own home or some other place of their choosing. During the field trial, most students needed 20 to 30 minutes to complete the Snapshot.

The Snapshot measures skills in two different ways. The first presents students with three statements and asks them to select the statement that is most like them and the statement that is least like them. There are 19 sets of statements. The second presents students with a number of scenarios and four different responses per scenario. Students are asked to rate the appropriateness of each response on a four-point scale from not appropriate to very appropriate. There are 10 scenarios total.

Students can only take the Snapshot once per admission cycle. The results for the current admissions cycle will be valid through July 31, 2019.

### The Snapshot

The Snapshot reports provide additional information about an applicant to support the professional judgment of experienced enrollment management professionals. Snapshot reports are meant to be used in conjunction with, not instead of, other measures such as scores from the SSAT, letters of recommendation, and information obtained in personal interviews.

The information presented in Snapshot reports provides students with an opportunity to show the extent of their character development beyond what might be revealed in other sources of information, including interviews and letters of recommendation. Results from the Snapshot, when combined with other information collected for admissions purposes, can provide supplemental information that could be used to differentiate candidates who have similar academic profiles.

### Future Uses of the Snapshot

Other possible uses of the Snapshot could be to assist in decisions made to form classrooms that are compatible from a behavioral perspective, establish compatible pairings of student and counselor, or assign students with compatible housemates. Snapshot reports should be used for these purposes with caution until evidence has been collected that demonstrates the validity of Snapshot results used in this manner. Enrollment professionals are encouraged to collect their own information to evaluate whether they think the addition of the Snapshot helps them make better decisions.

Research studies to collect evidence that will demonstrate the validity of the interpretation and use of the Snapshot for a variety of purposes are either ongoing or being planned. Until the results of these studies are available, information derived from the Snapshot must be interpreted with caution. Once the validity studies are completed, this set of Interim Guidelines will be replaced with a permanent set of guidelines that will provide more definitive information about appropriate use and interpretation of the results from the Snapshot.

### Snapshot Reports

Similar to SSAT score reporting, the Snapshot report will be sent to member schools only if a parent explicitly chooses to send the report to a school. The reports will appear on the Member Access Portal (MAP) just as SSAT reports do. Parents and students will have the opportunity to view Snapshot reports before requesting that results be sent to schools.

Each skill presented in a Snapshot report is described using one of three categories -- emerging, developing, and demonstrating. The emerging category indicates that the student's result fell into the lowest 25% of scores in the comparison sample; the developing category indicates that the student's result fell into the middle 50% of scores in the comparison sample; and the demonstrating category indicates that the

student's result fell into the highest 25% of scores in the comparison sample. It is important to note that students with skills in the emerging category still present these skills, but maybe to a lesser degree than their peers. Similarly, students with skills in the demonstrating category still have room to develop these skills.

### Snapshot Validity

Through multiple field trials, EMA Testing and Research staff have concluded that the Snapshot is a reliable assessment with construct validity. The focus of these studies was to determine if the Snapshot is measuring the intended character skills.

The Enrollment Management Association is currently conducting predictive validity research for the Snapshot. The focus of these studies is to collect data to further support the valid use and interpretation of the results of the Snapshot for admissions purposes. Data will be collected from September 2018 through June 2019 on students who completed the Snapshot as part of its first operational year (September 2017 through July 2018). The results of these studies should be available by Fall 2019. Future validity studies to evaluate the usefulness of Snapshot results for purposes other than admissions are currently being planned, and their results will be reported as they become available.

### Recommended Uses

At this point, results from the Character Skills Snapshot are recommended for use in admissions decisions only. It is possible that the Snapshot can be used for other purposes, such as to evaluate the compatibility of the placement of a student in a classroom, but additional studies are needed to support such uses. When used for these other purposes, enrollment professionals are advised to interpret scores on the Snapshot with caution until evidence of the validity of the interpretations for alternative purposes has been collected, evaluated, and disseminated.

### Multiple Criteria

No single piece of information should be used as the sole indicator to characterize an individual's knowledge, skills, or abilities. Results from the Character Skills Snapshot are intended for use with other information that is gathered for admissions decisions. The Snapshot results are intended to be used in conjunction with, not instead of, evidence such as SSAT scores, letters of recommendation, and personal interviews. This information is intended to support professional judgment about admissions decisions.

### Test Takers who are Non-Native Speakers of English

Validity studies that are currently being conducted include test takers who are non-native speakers of English. Until the results of these studies are available, Snapshot results for these individuals should be interpreted with care.

### Test Takers with Disabilities

Validity studies are currently being planned to include test takers with disabilities. Until the results of these studies are available, Snapshot results for these individuals should be interpreted with care.

*Schools will be asked to sign off to acknowledge they have read the Interim Guidelines prior to being able to download Snapshot reports. Please make sure everyone on the admissions staff has reviewed this document.*