

-The odds aren't as bad as you think if you're willing to put your eggs in more than one basket.

Let's break down the numbers. Last school year, about 26,600 prospective high school freshmen made their selections from a menu of 250 programs in about 130 high schools. Among the most competitive: the 11 selective enrollment high schools that base acceptance on test scores.

Chicago offers an array of options from dual-language programs at three high schools to STEM programs to a performing arts school, military academies, and vocational programs such as in culinary arts. These are the "choice" programs.

Students can apply to up to six selective enrollment high schools and 20 choice programs on one application. They rank selective enrollment programs and choice programs separately. Offers can come down from each.

Last year, only about 16% of students got their first choice of a selective enrollment school. But taken together, slightly more than half — 54% — got their top pick of either a selective enrollment or a choice school.

Nearly 30% got one of their top three picks for selective enrollment schools. And 81% got a match among the top three of their selective enrollment or choice programs.

- The process favors students who select more schools.

Last school year, 92% of students received a match of a school on their list.

Research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, which has studied the GoCPS process, shows that students who rank more programs are more likely to receive an offer than students who rank fewer programs. The numbers bear that out: Students who did not receive a match applied to an average of 2.5 schools, compared with an average of 7.1 schools for all applicants.

- There are often multiple ways to apply to one school; insiders encourage families to try them all.

Researchers are forthright about the advantages that some families have in the application process — be it the money to pay for test prep, the car to drive to open houses, or the ability to hire personal navigators.

Grace Lee Sawin, the founder of Chicago School GPS, has for many years run a business that helps pair families with schools. Swain offers students this wisdom: “You’re not applying to a school, you’re applying to a program within a school.”

One example she gives is Amundsen High School, on the city’s North Side. Prospective students can apply for admission to any of three programs: a general education track, a game programming and web design track, and the International Baccalaureate track. Swain says she advises families who want to go to Amundsen to apply to all three — even if the application requires applicants to list and rank each separately.

“There are different ways to get into a school,” Sawin said. “I tell families, once you’re in, you can ask about making a lateral move (to another program) if the choice isn’t right.”

- Don’t forget to follow-up: Many schools require another step besides an application.

IB programs require students to attend an information session for their application to be considered (the district lists them [here](#)).

Other schools require auditions, portfolios, or interviews, depending on the type of program.

“Find out if these are needed,” Allensworth said, “and make sure to complete the requirements or [applicants] will not be considered for enrollment at those schools.” One good resource: [This school guide](#) from CPS lists the requirements for every campus in the city.

Not sure about a program? Many schools will offer open houses and tours for prospective families from now to December. The GoCPS website offers [this running calendar](#) of open houses for prospective families at both elementary and high schools.

Information taken from the Chalkbeat article entitled “Seven things Families should know about High school admissions in Chicago” BY [CASSIE WALKER BURKE](#) - OCTOBER 1, 2019