



CN 5339  
Princeton, NJ 08543  
www.admission.org  
609.683.5558

## **MEASURING WHAT MATTERS IN ADMISSION AND BEYOND**

*Independent School Admission Leaders Gather to Develop an  
Assessment Tool to Measure Applicants' Non-Cognitive Attributes*

**PRINCETON, NJ, October 8, 2014**—Thirty-three admission directors and educators from 32 private/independent schools convened in Princeton, NJ last week to participate in the SSATB Non-Cognitive Summit, a ground-breaking discussion about the potential use of non-cognitive assessment in the middle and upper school admission process. Heather Hoerle, Executive Director of the Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB) and the driving force behind the summit, welcomed participants: “The conversations we are about to engage in go right to the heart of what all independent schools strive to do. The work of independent schools in developing students’ character is what unites as a community. This is hallowed work.”

Summit attendees participated in an interactive exercise designed to surface those attributes that matter most when thinking about a holistic review of applicants to independent schools. Attendees worked individually and in small groups to ponder the difference between the attributes students need to succeed in a rigorous academic environment and those attributes that will ensure each student contributes positively to the school community/ethos – and to consider how to measure both of these types of traits.

Dr. Jinghua Liu, SSATB’s Chief Testing and Research Officer, kicked off the summit by introducing Dr. Pat Kyllonen, Senior Director of the Center for Academic and Workforce Readiness and Success, Educational Testing Service (ETS). Dr. Kyllonen emphasized that the time is ripe for this work: “The cognitive skills that historically have been measured are not enough.” Kyllonen noted a number of education sectors/organizations engaged in this work and discussed the research base at the heart of non-cognitive assessment, including the innovative item types that have been developed, such as single- and multiple-response situational judgment tests and forced choice items.

The SSATB Non-Cognitive Summit marks the culmination of the work of SSATB’s Think Tank on the Future of Assessment. This group of four, experienced independent school practitioners (Choate Rosemary Hall’s Ray Diffley, New Canaan Country School’s Nancy Hayes, The Westminster School’s Marjorie Mitchell, and 21<sup>st</sup> century education guru and former head of school Jonathan Martin) spent 18 months exploring and studying the non-cognitive landscape – meeting with nationally-known researchers, as well members of the independent school community, and producing two special reports about their findings, which can be found at <http://www.admission.org/who-we-are/thinktank>. The Think

Tank completed its work with a report to the SSATB Board of Directors on September 17. Among its list of endorsements, the Think Tank recommended that SSATB move forward in developing a non-cognitive assessment tool to be used by schools, in conjunction with the SSAT, which will offer insights into an applicant's character attributes.

Each attendee committed his/her school to serving as a pilot site for both alpha testing of items and beta testing of forms over the coming year. SSATB is indebted to the pilot schools group: Gretchen Cole, Aspen Country Day School (CO); Jill Lee, Castilleja School (CA); Charlotte Brownlee, Cate School (CA); Dianne Dunning-Gill, Chaminade College Preparatory School (MO); Ray Diffley, Choate Rosemary Hall (CT); Molly Hall Dorais, Colorado Rocky Mountain School (CO); Nicholas Kent, Concordia International School Shanghai (China); Stephen Dunn, The Ethel Walker School (CT); Elizabeth King, The Galloway School (GA); Kirby Williams, Greenwich Country Day School (CT); Ian Gracey, Groton School (MA); Pua Fernandez and Gwen Oshiro, Kamehameha Schools (HI); Tearon Joseph, Lakeside School (WA); Tom Sheppard, The Lawrenceville School (NJ); Angela Elledge, Marist School (GA); Scott Siegfried and Ella Browning, Mid-Pacific Institute (HI); Doug Price, Middlesex School (MA); Nancy Hayes, New Canaan Country School (CT); Willard Taylor, Newark Academy (NJ); Jay Lasley, Norfolk Academy (VA); Mike Cobb, The Oakridge School (TX); Bill Leahy, Phillips Academy (MA); Michael Gary, Phillips Exeter Academy (NH); Jenna King, Riverdale Country School (NY); Peter Gilbert, Salisbury School (CT); Peter Frew, The Taft School (CT); Blossom Pidduck, The Thacher School (CA); Adrienne Clifton, Trinity Midland School (TX); Garth Chalmers, University of Toronto Schools (ON); Marjorie Mitchell, The Westminster Schools (GA); Meghan Kiley, The Wheeler School (RI); and John Kerney, The Winchendon School (MA).

### **About SSATB**

SSATB's mission is to provide unparalleled leadership and service in meeting the admission assessment and enrollment needs of schools, students, and families. The organization provides admission testing for candidates applying to independent schools and support services to independent school admission offices. For more information, please visit [www.admission.org](http://www.admission.org) or [ssat.org](http://ssat.org).

### **Media Contact – SSATB**

Trish Frazzetto, Director of  
Marketing & Communications  
609-436-6143  
[tfrazzetto@ssat.org](mailto:tfrazzetto@ssat.org)