

September 2014

Admission to independent schools, pre-kindergarten through graduate school, is both a rational and emotional process of decision-making, preparation for the next phase of life; it is also a reckoning of sorts about one's skills, capacities, and dreams. Riverdale has always prided itself on its thoughtful process of admission for all grades. We seek to find students who will best fit Riverdale's strengths and expectations and who will bring their individual talent and character to enrich Riverdale's community and programs.

The key to a good admission process in any school is to carefully look at the different elements of the application to gain an effective holistic view of the student. No one piece of data tells the whole story, but all data is useful. No one piece of data determines admission, but all are relevant. To this end, the more personal, academic, standardized, and anecdotal data we have, the better. At Riverdale, we "craft" our classes. We look to admit a group of young people who will bring different perspectives to their own work and achievement that will complement and build upon the work and achievement of their peers. Our work on character skills development and figuring out how to grow capacities such as optimism, self-control, and grit has become a way of helping to broaden our understanding of what it means to be a successful applicant beyond the usual quantitative and verbal abilities. It is also a way of identifying students who have the agency to make an education at Riverdale their very own.

Recently, there has been much discussion about the admissions process in New York independent schools, especially with regard to standardized assessment for Kindergarten applicants. The Independent Schools Admissions Association of Greater New York (ISAAGNY) proposed significant changes to the process, and many schools are changing their admission protocols.

At Riverdale, we are changing our admission processes for our youngest applicants in order to offer the most complete admission process for prospective students and families. We are no longer requiring the ERB's Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) test for admission to Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Grade 1. Instead, Kindergarten and Grade 1 applicants will take ERB's Admission Assessment for Beginning Learners (AABL) assessment, which takes approximately one hour and costs about \$65 (fee waivers will be offered to qualifying families). Riverdale will continue to require the ECAA for admission to Grades 2 through 4, and the ISEE or SSAT for Grades 5 through 12. As a part of the interview process for Lower School applicants, we have also adopted some elements of the ISAAGNY admission toolkit, including the KRT (Kindergarten Readiness Test). We are confident that these assessments will assist us in gathering information in the areas we value in making high-stakes admission decisions. While there is no minimum score required for entry, outlying low scores on these tests tend to be predictive of future difficulties at Riverdale, especially given the high level of reading, writing, and mathematical skill we expect from our students.

If you have any questions or concerns as you go through the admission process, feel free to address them to the Admission Offices or me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.A.A. Randolph', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dominic A.A. Randolph
Head of School