

# **The Thinking & Engagement Assessment**

## **Overview**

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the constraints that it imposed on the running of schools during the 2020-2021 academic year, a group of New York City Independent School Admission Directors enlisted the help of two experts in early childhood development--each with over forty years of experience in working with children as they learn, grow, and transition to Kindergarten. The Admission Directors asked these two psychologists to develop a virtual assessment to serve the needs and interests of Kindergarten applicants, their families, and schools. The goal was twofold: to put minimal pressure on young children and families during this unprecedented time and to provide our Admission Committees with information about children when schools would not be able to meet and observe them in person.

The T&E Assessment, as it is commonly known, enables families to apply to multiple, participating schools but forgo the burden of multiple assessments. Applicants engage in one common assessment, the results of which are shared with schools to which the family has applied and that accept and/or require the T&E Assessment.

Due to the continued uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 community spread among unvaccinated children and adults, many schools have decided to require the T&E Assessment for the 2021-2022 admission season since they will not be able to invite applicants into their school buildings for visits. (See full list of participating schools below.)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What does the T&E assess?**

The T&E Assessment is a non-standardized, non-normed, child-friendly set of activities designed specifically to be administered virtually to four and five year olds applying to Kindergarten. The T&E taps expressive and receptive language, verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills, teachability, problem-solving skills, and developmental areas about which schools need information to determine fit between applicant and program.

### **How does my child take the T&E, and who is assessing them?**

The T&E Assessment is administered using Zoom technology on a desktop or laptop computer, or on a tablet, in the child's home.

During the assessment, the child should be sitting in a chair at a table and wearing comfortable headphones to block out noise and help focus on the assessor and the activities (Amazon sells an assortment of reasonably priced headphones). Children are required to wear headphones throughout the assessment. Laptops and tablets should be set up on a flat surface so the child's hands are free. Please leave up to 45 minutes for the entirety of the assessment though it may take less time.

Upon starting the T&E, the assessor establishes rapport and then guides the child through a variety of developmentally appropriate and fun activities featuring simple animation, bright colors, and upbeat music. The cohort of assessors are a diverse group of early childhood professionals who have been expertly trained to administer the T&E.

During the assessment, one adult (e.g., parent, guardian, caregiver, family member) is required to be present **only** to provide technological support as needed. Since the goal of the T&E is to assess the child's ability to engage with the assessor independently, the child may not receive help from the adult unless there are technological issues. If the adult helps the child

complete any task, the assessment results will be invalidated and a second assessment will not be provided.

Once the adult and child greet the assessor, the child's headphones are on, and technology needs have been met, the adult must sit behind and to the side of the child so that the assessor may see the adult during the entirety of the assessment. The adult must also put on headphones or earbuds that are attached to a separate device and engage in a quiet activity that is unrelated to the child's assessment, so as not to distract the child. By wearing earbuds and focusing on something other than the child, the adult is modeling what the child should be doing and improving the child's comfort level with the assessor. If at any time the assessor needs the adult's attention, he or she will instruct the child to let the adult know.

### **Do children enjoy the T&E Assessment?**

Having completed a full admission season using the T&E, we can say with confidence that the vast majority of children thoroughly enjoyed the process and even asked if they could do it again!

### **Will I receive a report after my child has taken the T&E Assessment?**

No. The results of your child's assessment will be sent only to the participating schools and organizations to which you have requested that reports be forwarded. Since the T&E Assessment is considered by the on-going schools as a **replacement** for the child's onsite school visit, the results are confidential.

### **How much does the T&E Assessment cost and how do I sign up?**

The fee for the T&E Assessment is \$300. The fee will be waived if you meet the following **two** criteria:

1. You are applying for financial assistance.
2. You have a total household income of less than \$150,000.

The T&E Assessment Project is overseen by a Director and an Assistant Coordinator who will be available to answer questions and address any issues. Once you have submitted an application to any of the participating schools, you will receive a link to register your child for the T&E. If you are applying twins, please use a different email to register each child, as our database distinguishes each child by the associated email. **Please remember to only register your child once.** Upon registration, you will receive instructions from the T&E staff regarding scheduling.

**Appointments for the T&E may be made starting Thursday, September 9, 2021 and will be available seven days a week. December 1, 2021 is the last day for scheduling your child's T&E Assessment.** We recommend that you schedule your child's assessment as early in the season as possible. There is no wisdom in waiting!

### **What if I do not have access to a computer or a tablet?**

Upon registering for the T&E, please contact the Project Director to discuss this issue.

### **How do I help my child prepare for the T&E Assessment?**

You can prepare your child for the assessment by helping them become comfortable wearing headphones. We recommend that your child frequently practice wearing headphones while talking to an adult via Facetime, Zoom, Google-meet, or any other virtual platform.

A few days before the scheduled assessment, we recommend that parents explain to their children that they can look forward to meeting a teacher online to do fun and interesting activities. Also explain that while a grown up will be in the room, this is a time when the child is going to work with the teacher, as if they were at school.

## **Is there anything else I should know about the T&E Assessment?**

As part of the registration process for the T&E, parents/guardians are required to sign a consent and release form that requires them and any other supervising adult to refrain from recording the T&E session, helping the child answer questions, and sharing content they may accidentally observe.

## **Participating Schools**

The Allen-Stevenson School

The Birch Wathen Lenox School

The Brearley School

The Browning School

The Buckley School

The Cathedral School of St. John the Divine

The Chapin School

Collegiate School

Convent of the Sacred Heart

The Dalton School

Early Steps--Partnering Organization

The Elisabeth Morrow School

The IDEAL School of Manhattan

The Nightingale-Bamford School

The Spence School

Speyer School

St. Luke's School

St. Bernard's School

Trevor Day School

Trinity School

