



Office of the Superintendent

Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
2300 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Roxbury, Massachusetts 02119 617-635-9050

superintendent@bostonpublicschools.org
www.bostonpublicschools.org

TO: Chairperson and Members, Boston School Committee
FROM: Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent
DATE: October 6, 2021
RE: AWC Policy Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022

Throughout School Year 2021-2022, the district is focused on implementing a plan for equitable recovery from learning interruptions resulting from school closures during School Year 2019-2020 and SY2020-2021. Our strategy has focused on a strong, standards-aligned instructional plan that addresses students’ unfinished learning and fostering students’ sense of belonging through culturally-responsive socio-emotional practice. At the same time, we have been assessing the COVID-19 pandemic’s continued impacts on our students, and we recognize the need to temporarily alter some of our policies in order to provide our students with the best possible chance of academic success during this challenging and unprecedented time. At the same time, the district convened the Advanced Work Class (AWC) Working Group to develop a longer-term policy for ensuring that all students have equitable access to rigorous and advanced learning opportunities. The Working Group has shared high-level recommendations, which the district will utilize to formulate an updated policy and programming model that will be presented later this school year in collaboration with the Academic Team as they align the overall approach to grades 4 - 6 instruction, AWC, Excellence for All and Exam School Initiative strategies.

Therefore, while that work is underway, I am recommending that we extend the temporary flexibility of the policy governing Advanced Work Class (AWC) for School Year 2021-2022, and I am recommending that the School Committee grant me the temporary authority to determine the appropriate standards for these policies for the remainder of the school year.

AWC Policy

AWC Eligibility and Programming	<p>Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility for AWC is determined by the student’s scores on the TerraNova (3rd edition) test, which is offered in the fall to all 3rd grade students. It is also offered on select weekend test dates
---------------------------------	--



	during the fall for students in grades 4 and 5 without previous TerraNova scores.
SY 2020-2021 Changes (for admission in SY21-22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not administer the TerraNova assessment. • Fill the 4th grade AWC seats with students in the 5 schools (i.e., Condon, Jackson-Mann, Murphy, Ohrenberger, and Quincy). • No new students admitted in AWC grade 5 and 6 classes as very few seats open in these grades. • Launched a working group to look at long term recommendations in light of dwindling demand and enrollment, and prior district determination that AWC is an inequitable program model.
Proposal for SY 2021-2022 (for admission in SY22-23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not administer the TerraNova assessment. • Allow the schools with AWC programs who made modifications in SY20-21 to continue those modifications for SY 21-22 • Bring forward an updated AWC policy for School Committee vote, utilizing the AWC Working Group recommendations to shape the policy.

Recommendation:

Based on the information presented in this summary, I am recommending the granting a continuation of temporary flexibility of this policy for the 2021-2022 school year. This flexibility will enable the district to focus on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and will allow us time to consider recommendations from the AWC Working Group to develop a longer-term policy for ensuring that all students have equitable access to rigorous and advanced learning opportunities.