



# Exam School Admissions Policy Recommendation

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Superintendent Dr. Brenda Cassellius  
Monica Roberts, Chief of Family and Community Advancement  
7-14-21

# Task Force Charge

*Building upon the work initiated by the Superintendent's Exam Schools Admissions Criteria Working Group, the Boston School Committee Exam Schools Admissions Task Force is charged with developing a set of recommendations for the admissions policy for Boston Public Schools exam schools. The desired outcome is to expand the applicant pool and create an admissions process that will support student enrollment at each of the exam schools such that rigor is maintained and the student body better reflects the **racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity** of all students (K-12) in the city of Boston. The Task Force shall consider use of the new NWEA assessment and other factors, and leverage learning from a full review of the implementation of the SY 21-22 admissions criteria, as well as a thorough review of practices in other districts.*

# Task Force Members

- Co-Chair, **Michael Contompasis**, former Boston Latin School Head of School and former BPS Superintendent
- Co-Chair, **Tanisha M. Sullivan**, Esq., President, NAACP Boston Branch and former BPS Chief Equity Officer
- **Pastor Samuel Acevedo**, Co-Chair, Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force
- **Acacia Aguirre**, parent, John D. O'Bryant School of Math and Science
- **Simon Chernow**, student, Boston Latin Academy
- **Matt Cregor**, Esq., Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee, Supreme Judicial Court
- **Dr. Tanya Freeman-Wisdom**, Head of School, John D. O'Bryant School of Math and Science
- **Katherine Grassa**, Principal, Curley K-8 School
- **Zena Lum**, parent, Boston Latin Academy
- **Zoe Nagasawa**, student, Boston Latin School
- **Rachel Skerritt**, Head of School, Boston Latin School
- **Dr. Rosann Tung**, Independent Researcher
- **Tamara Waite**, parent, Philbrick Elementary School

# Rationale for Recommendation

**Several factors were reviewed when making this final recommendation.**

- As we strive to be a more equitable and excellent organization, this policy meets the charge of the School Committee and our Strategic Plan.
- The goal is a simplified process that is easy to understand and ensures more students - especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds - have access to the exam schools.
- The proposed policy increases equitable opportunity while maintaining academic rigor.
- A review of data and simulations showed minor differences between the 20%/80% and 100% proposals.
- This policy addresses the perception that reserving seats for the highest performing students goes against our desire to be an equitable anti-racist district.
- BPS must restore the trust and confidence in our process with our community which supported the 100% approach.

# Superintendent's Proposed Policy

## Step 1: Who Is Eligible

**Purpose:** *Determine Student Preparedness*

**Applicant Pool:** Students need a minimum B GPA to be considered part of the applicant pool. Eligible students will receive a composite score based on assessment (30%) and GPA (70%) with potential additional points.

## Step 2: Who is Invited

**Purpose:** *Ensure Citywide Access*

**Assignment:** 100% of invitations are distributed through straight rank within socioeconomic tiers.

## Step 1: Who Is Eligible

*Purpose:* Determine Student Preparedness

Admissions Cycle	Grades	Assessment	High Poverty Indicators
SY22-23	100% <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B average or higher</li><li>• First two terms of 6th/8th grade: ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies</li></ul>	0% <p>No assessment required due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 points for students living in BHA housing, experiencing homelessness or in DCF care</li></ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10 points for students attending a school where 40% or more of the students enrolled are from economically disadvantaged families</li></ul>
SY23-24 and beyond	70% <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B average or higher</li><li>• Final term of 5th/7th grade: ELA and Math</li><li>• First two terms of 6th/8th grade: ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies</li></ul>	30% <p>Assessment required in ELA and Math</p>	

## Step 2: Who is Invited

*Purpose: Ensure Citywide Access*

**Beginning with the SY22-23 admissions cycle, allocate 100% of invitations using straight rank within 8 socioeconomic tiers. Each tier receives approximately the same number of invitations.**

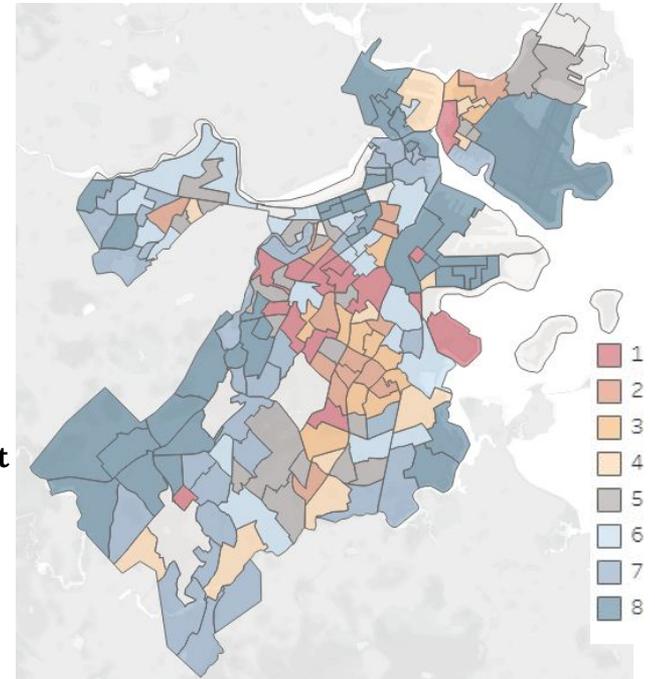
### **What is a tier?**

A tier is a grouping of geographic areas in the city with similar socioeconomic characteristics. This creates a score based on five characteristics: (1) Percent of persons below poverty; (2) Percent of households occupied by the owner; (3) Percent of families headed by a single parent; (4) Percent of households where a language other than English is spoken; and (5) Educational attainment.

### **How does it work?**

Students are assigned to one of eight tiers based on their home address and will only compete with other students in their tier. Each tier will be allocated approximately the same number of seats. Invitations will be distributed in 10 rounds with 10% of available seats in each tier per round. **The tier with the lowest socioeconomic score will go first in each round.**

*Note: Students are assigned additional points based on factors in slide 6 rather than being placed in a separate tier.*



# Additional Implementation Recommendations

A clear plan will be developed to operationalize the policy and the following recommendations. A Superintendent's Circular will formalize the operational logistics related to GPA calculation, test administration and application process:

- **Student Support:** Develop and publish a plan for supporting incoming students and the academic plan for grades 4 to 6.
- **Annual Report:** Publish an annual report to include disaggregated student outcomes and program evaluation.
- **Investments:** Plan for a budget to implement policy.
- **Communications:** Plan for family and community engagement and communications regarding the application and invitation process.
- **Grading:** Develop and publish a coherent district equitable grading policy.
- **Policy Review and Evaluation:** This policy shall be reviewed every five years along with an annual update on outcomes.

# Timeline Moving Forward

- If approved:
  - **Immediately:** Invest in the internal capacity and begin planning for a public outreach campaign and policy implementation
  - **Fall 2021:** Publish final socioeconomic tier data online and launch a communications and outreach campaign to families city-wide
  - **Fall 2021:** Align instructional expectations with an equitable grading policy
  - **Winter 2021:** Application process begins, including registration and application for non-BPS students and identification of qualified BPS students, following the end of the second marking period
  - **Spring 2022:** Send invitations for SY22-23
  - **June 2022:** Present update to School Committee

