

Use of Socioeconomic/Tier Criteria in Other District Admissions

Chicago Selective High School Admissions

An Overview of the SEHS Admission System in CPS

Students are admitted to a SEHS based on a combination of their application score, their neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) classification, and the seats available at the SEHSs where they apply.

- **Application scores are comprised of:**
 - Seventh-grade GPA in math, English, science, and social studies;
 - Seventh-grade standardized test scores;
 - A selective enrollment admissions exam.
- **Each applicant is also assigned a SES “tier”:**
 - Each census tract in Chicago receives an SES index score based on indicators from the American Community Survey and neighborhood elementary school performance.
 - The census tracts are then equally divided into four tiers so that each tier contains approximately one-quarter of Chicago’s school-aged children. Tier 1 represents the lowest-SES quartile; tier 4, the highest-SES quartile.
- **Applicants can apply to and rank up to six SEHSs.**
- **How SEHS seats are allocated:**
 - At each SEHS, 30% of seats are allocated to top-scoring applicants, regardless of their SES tier.
 - Remaining seats are divided equally among the four SES tiers; 17.5% of seats are allocated to each SES tier.
 - Prior to 2010, the admission system allocated seats using student race/ethnicity instead of neighborhood SES.

For more details, see <https://go.cps.edu/explore/program-types>

More detail on the SES “tier”:

Each census tract in the city was assigned to one of four tiers using an index combining five variables: median family income; a measure of adult educational attainment; home ownership rates; and the prevalence of single-parent households and non-native English speakers. Schools first filled 40% of their slots with the applicants having the highest composite scores. The remaining 60% of slots were then filled by dividing the slots equally across the four tiers and filling the slots with the highest-scoring remaining students living in census tracts belonging to each tier. The system was modified in 2012: the number of tier-reserved slots was increased from 60% to 70% and a sixth variable (test scores in the local elementary school) was added to the index.

Source:

<https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/Selective%20Enrollment%20HS%20Snaps-hot-Feb%202018-Consortium.pdf>

San Francisco Selective High School Admissions

Three qualification methods:

- Band 1 (~70% of assignment offers)
 - grades in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science from the entire 7th grade and the 1st semester of 8th grade.
 - scores from the English Language Arts and Math portions of the 7th grade SBAC test or Lowell Admission test.
- Band 2 (~15%):
 - *To be considered for Band 2, students must have*
 - a minimum GPA of 3.00 (derived from English, Math, Social Studies, and Science from the entire 7th grade and the 1st semester of 8th grade) and a minimum 60% average on the 7th grade SBAC test or the Lowell Admission test.
 - grades in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science from the entire 7th grade and the 1st semester of 8th grade.
 - score from the Band 2 evaluation done by school-based committees.
- Band 3 (~15%):
 - *To be considered for Band 3, students must have a minimum of 64 points derived from*
 - grades in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science from the entire 7th grade and the 1st semester of 8th grade.
 - scores from the English Language Arts and Math portions of the 7th grade CAASPP/SBAC test or Lowell Admission test in January 2020.
 - and be attending a Band 3 identified school. Band 3 schools will be identified as under-represented using data from the last three years of student population, number of applicants and number of admissions.
 - Assignment offers are based on principal recommendation.

Detroit Selective High School Admissions

Admission to examination high schools requires two main components: The examination and an application.

Examination: All applicants must take an exam that covers Math, ELA and Science. For details, please visit the Taking the Exam page.

Application: Every applicant must complete an application online that requires the following to be submitted:

- Student-Authored Essay
- Cumulative Grade Point Average or multiple year-end report cards that may be used to calculate a cumulative GPA. (DPSCD students who have a cumulative GPA on file will not need to upload this information.)
- References who may be contacted on behalf of the applicant
- If applicable, student's IEP or NPSP

Bonus points are awarded to:

- Current Detroit Public Schools Community District students
- Students who live within 1 mile of the Marygrove campus will receive 10 additional points, while those who live within 2 miles will receive an additional 5 points on their application.

Legal and Liability Considerations

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

Main points:

- 1.** Boston can review admissions proposals for impact on racial diversity
- 2.** Boston must start by assessing “race-neutral” and “generalized race-conscious” approaches that do not treat individual students differently based on race.
- 3.** If none of those policies achieve diversity, Boston can consider race as an individual factor so long as the policy is narrowly tailored.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

Boston has been sued twice for its use of race in exam school admissions:

- *McLaughlin* (1996): Boston's set aside plan, developed under desegregation and reserving 35% of seats for underrepresented students, was not narrowly tailored to achieve diversity. (Why? No end-date to the policy, and Boston had not considered race-neutral alternatives)
- *Wessman* (1998): Boston's next plan, filling half of each exam school's seats with the highest scoring applicants and then distributing the rest based on the racial diversity of the remaining qualified applicants, was also found unconstitutional. (Why? Federal appeals court said there was no interest in diversity - US Supreme Court has changed the law on this.)

What does "narrowly tailored" mean?

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

Schools have a constitutional, compelling interest in achieving racial diversity and avoiding racial isolation. BUT:

If race is used as a factor in individual student admissions decisions, even in affirmative action cases, courts will apply the highest level of scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause, “strict scrutiny,” to determine if the admissions policy is “narrowly tailored” to achieve the schools’ interest in diversity.

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

How do you know if a policy is narrowly tailored?

1. District considered race-neutral alternatives (and found none worked to achieve diversity)
2. Policy provides for “flexible and individualized review of students,” meaning race is not the sole factor for admission
3. Policy minimizes any undue burden on other students
4. Policy is limited in time and subject to periodic review

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Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

UT Austin: what a narrowly tailored admissions policy looks like.

- Top 10% of students in state's public schools automatically get a seat at UT Austin, the state's flagship school
- For remaining seats, UT Austin uses holistic admissions criteria (essays, letters of recommendation, test scores, etc.)
- UT Austin does consider race along with a host of other demographic information, but as a “factor of a factor of a factor,” and only since determining that the “Top 10% Plan” alone would not improve racial diversity
- The admissions policy is subject to continual review

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

Can schools value racial diversity without receiving strict scrutiny?

Justice Kennedy concurrence in *Parents Involved* (2007):

- Schools are not prohibited from examining racial makeup
- Schools can adopt “race-neutral” measures to improve diversity (e.g., socioeconomic status, parental income), and
- Schools can adopt generalized, race-conscious policies so long as policies do not treat individual students differently based on their race. This is “unlikely” to demand strict scrutiny.

Legal and Liability Considerations re Criteria

Race Neutral (Examples)

- Socioeconomic status
- Parental education
- Single-/dual parent household
- Neighborhood socioeconomic status or housing composition (e.g., single family homes or subsidized public housing)

Generalized Race Conscious (Examples)

- Prioritize admission from certain schools based on racial composition, or,
- Prioritize admission from certain neighborhoods based on racial composition...

So long as all students from those neighborhoods/schools were treated the same, regardless of their race.

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