



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXAM SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS TASK FORCE

March 30, 2021

The Boston School Committee's Exam Schools Admissions Task Force held a remote meeting on March 30, 2021 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/esataskforce>, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Members Present: Co-Chair Michael Contompasis; Co-Chair Tanisha Sullivan; Acacia Aguirre; Matt Cregor; Tanya Freeman-Wisdom; Katherine Grassa; Zena Lum; Zoe Nagasawa; Rachel Skerritt; Rosann Tung and Tamara Waite.

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Member Absent: Samuel Acevedo.

BPS Staff Present: Monica Roberts, Chief of Student, Family and Community Advancement; and Monica Hogan, Senior Executive Director of the Office of Data and Accountability.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[Meeting Minutes: March 23, 2021](#)

[Presentation: Bridging Collectives: A Summit on Selectivity, Integration, and Equity at Elite Public High Schools](#)

[Presentation: The Chicago Model for Selective High School Enrollment](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Contompasis called the meeting to order. He announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Somali, Arabic, and American Sign Language (ASL); the interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions in their native language on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel.

Ms. Parvex called the roll. Mr. Acevedo was absent. Dr. Freeman-Wisdom joined the meeting at a later time. All other members were present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: MARCH 23, 2021

Approved – The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the March 23, 2021 Exam Schools Admissions Task Force meeting.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Cregor welcomed the two speakers for the evening; Michelle P. Burris, Senior Policy Associate, and Richard D. Kahlenberg, Senior Fellow, both from The Century Foundation.

Ms. Burris presented a report entitled, *Bridging Collectives: A Summit on Selectivity, Integration, and Equity at Elite Public High Schools*. Recently, The Century foundation co-hosted a Youth Summit with Hunter College High School, New York. This was a summit with students and youth activists nationwide with the purpose of learning what schools across the country are doing to reform their admissions structure, focusing particularly on the role of youth and how they can form a coalition with the Biden administration. The main take away from the summit was that student voices matter and must be amplified at the grassroots, state, and federal levels, the importance of integration activists not working in silos, and that researchers are paying attention to student activists.

Richard D. Kahlenberg presented a report entitled, *The Chicago Model for Selective High School Enrollment*. He gave an overview of his work in Chicago, and later Charlotte, trying to diversify their selective schools. He explained that when the Chicago school system was moving from a desegregation status to a unitary status, the district wanted the racial and economic diversity in the selective schools to remain as diverse as it was, and he helped them devise a system that would be legal, diverse, and of high quality.

Mr. Kahlenberg explained that they used socioeconomic metrics in the admission process and gave an overview of how Chicago was divided in socioeconomic tiers by Census Tract, and how 70% of the seats would be allocated equally between the four socioeconomic tiers. The socioeconomic tiers consider Census Tract data looking at 6 factors: 1) parental income, 2) parental education, 3) homeownership rates, 4) proportion of single-parent households 5) proportion non-English speaking and 6) home school performance.

Mr. Kahlenberg said the Chicago plan could be adapted to different circumstances and gave the example of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina which uses three socioeconomic tiers for their admissions process. They rely on the Census data but also supplement with self-reported individual family data on parental income and education.

Mr. Kahlenberg said that based on a Brookings 2019 Study of Exam Schools, Chicago was the district with the smallest gap when it came to racial representation compared to the general public school population. The Hispanic representation was the only area that remains a wider gap. The gap for economic representation was also the smallest in Chicago.

Finally, he shared the data of the Whitney Young High School in Chicago, a school that he thought was the most comparable to Boston's most selective high schools from an academic reputation. The data from this school showed a very diverse population from a racial, ethnic, and economic point of view.

Ms. Sullivan opened up for questions. Ms. Lum asked if the Whitney Young enrollment statistic was the current enrollment and if there was data to reflect that the changes that have been made impacted the distribution. Mr. Kahlenberg answered the numbers were from 2019 and that the representation has been consistent for several years.

Ms. Aguirre inquired about the six parameters and their weight in the metrics. Mr. Kahlenberg explained that Chicago weighed the six factors equally, while Charlotte weighed the parental education more heavily. He also said he thinks that the Chicago model seems to work well producing racially, ethnically, and economically diverse schools with high academic standards.

Mr. Cregor asked Mr. Kahlenberg to elaborate more on the choice to take individual families' income and level of education attainment into consideration in Charlotte. Mr. Kahlenberg said that there are advantages and disadvantages to both models. The advantages to considering individual level information about families is that if they are trying to identify talent and obstacles to overcome, then the research shows that neighborhood matters, but family matters as well. Chicago resisted this model as they were concerned with reliability.

Mr. Contompassis asked whether Chicago had a schools choice plan and if there was a limit of schools a student could apply to, and how this impacted the students emotionally. He also wanted to know if Chicago had done work around identifying families to make them aware of the opportunities available to them. Mr. Kahlenberg said students could apply to more than one school but wasn't aware of a limit. He also said he wasn't aware of any research regarding how this impacted the students. He did not know if the Chicago district had a program in place to reach out to families.

Ms. Nagasawa wondered how the census tract data and the individually reported data was combined or weighted. Mr. Kahlenberg said Charlotte used both with equal weight. He concluded that the key was to consider different factors and not be locked into what other communities were doing. He also thought it was important to run simulations and see how weighting different factors would affect diversity. He did think there was a strong case from an academic research standpoint for weighing family data and neighborhood data equally if the data was reliable.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Julie Canfield, Roslindale resident, Boston Latin School(BLS) parent, testified with proposals to make the exam schools admissions more equitable.
- Edith Bazile, Dorchester resident, community advocate, testified in support of changing the admission policy.
- Harneen Chernow, Jamaica Plain resident, Boston Latin Academy (BLA) parent, testified in support of changing the admission policy.
- Yufang Rong, West Roxbury resident, BLS parent, testified in favor of the MAP test and creating more selective schools.
- Eric Shi, West Roxbury resident, Ohrenberger parent, testified against changes in the admission policy.
- Lei Ci, West Roxbury resident, BPS school parent, testified against changes in the admission policy.
- Vijay Hegde, Jamaica Plain resident, BPS parent, testified against changes in the admission policy.
- Emma Yang, Dorchester resident, parent, testified regarding questions about the admissions process this year.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Sullivan thanked the speakers and asked the members to give final comments.

Ms. Nagasawa, referring to Mr. Contompasis' previous question, mentioned a professor from Loyola University who has done research on Chicago students and the emotional impact that the exam school process has on them. She also proposed to organize a student listening session for students to give their opinions on exam schools admissions policies. Members agreed it should be citywide and open for all students, not only BPS students.

Mr. Contompasis invited once more members of the public to send in their written comments to the Task Force. He also encouraged Task Force members to read the articles that have been shared by Ms. Parvex

Ms. Sullivan concluded the meeting by reminding the public that the temporary policy for exam schools admissions does not have a quota with respect to zip codes and that there is no cap on the number of children who are offered seats based on the zip code. She said that there are two assignment mechanisms used, one being the GPA rank, and the second having a neighborhood factor to it, but without a cap on the number of seats allocated in total.

ADJOURN

At approximately 6:40 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Administrative Assistant