



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

April 13, 2021

The Boston School Committee's Exam Schools Admissions Task Force held a remote meeting on April 13, 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; Simon Chernow; Matt Cregor; Zena Lum; Zoe Nagasawa; Rachel Skerritt; and Rosann Tung.

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Member Absent: Katherine Grassa; Tanya Freeman-Wisdom; and Tamara Waite.

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

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[Meeting Minutes: March 30, 2021](#)

[Presentation: Other District Admissions Processes](#)

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. Katherine Grassa, Tamara Waite, and Dr. Freeman-Wisdom were absent. All other members were present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: MARCH 30, 2021

Approved – The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the March 30, 2021 Exam Schools Admissions Task Force meeting.

PRESENTATION

Ms. Hogan provided an overview of *Other District Admissions Processes*. Ms. Hogan started by presenting the Chicago Selective High School Admissions process in order to answer some of the questions asked at earlier meetings. She said that the three criterias - GPA, NWEA Map test, and an entrance exam - which are used in Chicago's applications, are weighted equally and the invitations within socioeconomic tiers are distributed to the highest ranking applicants within the tier. She also said that the district website includes a “points calculator” to help applicants understand what score they need to obtain on the entrance exam.

Mr. Acevedo expressed an interest in how the community process took place in Chicago. Ms. Sullivan encouraged the members to research articles on how the different cities dealt with changes of admissions. The Co-Chairs agreed that once the Task Force drafts its recommendation, they would like to have a listening session to receive feedback from the community, and make appropriate revisions before presenting a final recommendation to the School Committee.

Next, Ms. Hogan presented the admissions process used by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina. That district uses socioeconomic status in the lottery process for magnet programs and the information comes from two sources: the Census/American Community Survey and self-reported information. The data from the Census/American Community Survey consists of English language ability, family composition, family income, home ownership, and parental education attainment. The self-reported information includes household income, educational attainment, and the number of minors in the household. The seat allocation is done by a lottery system.

Several members had questions about the difference between the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and the Boston exam schools. Ms. Hogan explained that she didn't know how the magnet schools were regarded but she had been focused on different ways other districts were using socio-economics status in their enrollment processes.

Mr. Chernow asked if the Task Force members had come to a consensus that the Exam Schools needed to maintain a test or grade policy. Ms. Sullivan explained they had not had a conversation as a Task Force with respect to this question. She also said that they had two or more meetings before they should start discussing those issues.

Mr. Contompasis wanted to know if the non-magnet schools also were filled with a lottery process and also what the data showed with regards to the distribution of students in the magnet schools. Ms. Hogan said she did believe there was an overall lottery and that the goal with introducing socio-economic status into their lottery process was to try to diversify the socio-economic status within the schools. She didn't know the impact on all the changes but said that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district had started doing some impact analysis.

Ms. Tung wondered that if a second tier of self-reported information was provided to see how students had overcome barriers, how did this play out in the lottery as it was only based on socioeconomic status and not on grades or tests at all. Ms. Hogan answered that she didn't know how their system was before, or if it was a lottery without any priority.

Mr. Contompasis said the Task Force should start discussion on what they would like to see as a replacement for the interim process. He reminded the members of the schedule for the upcoming meetings, including the April 27th meeting where they would hear a presentation on the Detroit Public Schools. He also said that at a future meeting the Task Force will receive a presentation from NWEA, which will give the members an opportunity to ask questions that revolve around the credibility of that assessment.

Mr. Contompasis also commented that he had been in contact with Chris Osgood, Mayor Janey's Chief of Staff, asking for assistance from the City around census tract data and geocode data. He also mentioned grades and assessment and said that there was some concern regarding grades due to Covid-19 and that Mr. Corey Harris, Chief of Accountability, was attending the meeting in case the members had questions.

Ms. Sullivan asked Mr. Contompasis if he was seeking to understand how the district was ensuring that all students actually had grades that are being reported into the system, in case the Task Force choose to recommend a process that does include grades, they can have an understanding of either the work that needs to be done to ensure that all kids have grades in the system, or to confirm that indeed, the system is working as intended. Mr. Contompasis explained that he was looking for consistency so that they were not using a factor that might not be totally credible. Ms. Sullivan added that they needed to be mindful, as they could only get a snapshot of what was happening within Boston Public Schools, and they didn't have an insight into what's happening at private, parochial, charter, or home schools. Mr. Contompasis concluded by saying that if they choose to use grades, the members needed to be comfortable that these are credible for all of the students that are in the pool. Ms. Sullivan added that she wasn't sure they would be able to get those assurances.

Ms. Lum added that the Opportunity Index Data might be useful as well, and that they could use that information to provide some sort of weighted system with regards to grades, but that that may also take into account socioeconomic status data in a way that's more nuanced than just the zip code.

Mr. Contompasis said he wanted the members to begin to think about everything they heard and read in order to reach some level of consensus around which criterias they want to put into place and if they assign weights to all those criterias. He said they had mentioned grades, assessments, census tract, family income, etc. He also mentioned that they are working at somewhat of a disadvantage as they don't have the results from the interim process.

Ms. Acacia agreed it would be good to reflect on what the members have been learning so far, to be able to analyze as a group, how they want to use the different parameters.

Mr. Contompasis said that if the Task Force can reach consensus as to what factors they would like to consider, they can ask the city to run the data.

Ms. Tung added that while members thought about the list of criterias or factors, they should also think about them as eligibility versus selection criteria, as in many of the examples they've seen there's actually two steps in this process.

Ms. Skerritt added that she was very eager to hear from the district on the process of the temporary policy as she believed it would inform some of their recommendations going forward. Furthermore, she said she would also like to hear updates about what they are seeing with the grades. She said she was concerned that as we still are in a pandemic situation, the members might have criterias that make sense on a long term basis but she would like to discuss what that would mean during a year that was still compromised due to Covid-19.

Ms. Tung wondered if the members could talk to the MCAS test developers for the purpose of eligibility or selection for the exam schools.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Martha Bergamaschi, Back Bay resident, BPS parent, testified regarding the quality of education at all BPS schools and in favor of the MAP test.
- Katie McSweeny, Boston Latin School (BLS) parent, testified with ideas to achieve admissions equity and academic excellence without altering the exam schools.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Contompasis thanked the speakers and the members for the meeting.

ADJOURN

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

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Remote Meeting
Zoom
April 13, 2021

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lena Parvex". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lena" and last name "Parvex" clearly distinguishable.

Lena Parvex
Administrative Assistant