



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

**May 14, 2021**

The Boston School Committee's Exam Schools Admissions Task Force held a remote meeting on May 14, 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](mailto: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; Samuel Acevedo; Acacia Aguirre; Katherine Grassa; Zena Lum; Zoe Nagasawa; Rachel Skerritt; Rosann Tung; and Tamara Waite.

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Members Absent: Simon Chernow; and Tanya Freeman-Wisdom.

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: May 7, 2021 meeting](#)

[Presentation: Exam School Admission Update, May 14, 2021](#)

### **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. Chernow and Dr. Freeman-Wisdom were absent. Mr. Acevedo and Ms. Aguirre arrived after roll call.

## **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: MAY 7, 2021**

***Approved*** – The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the May 7, 2021 Exam Schools Admissions Task Force meeting.

## **PRESENTATION**

Monica Roberts, Chief of Student, Family and Community Advancement, reviewed additional data requested by the Task Force from the exam schools admissions results for School Year 2021-2022.

Ms. Roberts started by showing the historical application pool and invitations by school type for both 7th and 9th grade for a four-year period. She pointed out that of the applicant pool this school year, 81% of the applicants were Boston Public School (BPS) students. For the invitations to an exam school seat, there was a slight increase of BPS students both in 7th and 9th grade.

Ms. Roberts then looked at the invitations by exam school and sending schools for the last two years. The percentage of BPS students invited increased by 15% for Boston Latin Academy (BLA) remained the same for Boston Latin School (BLS), and increased 12% for the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science for 7th grade. For 9th grade, the percentage of BPS students invited for BLA increased by 12%, BLS 23% increase, and 17% for the O'Bryant.

Next, Ms. Roberts looked at the invitations by school and race in 7th grade and 9th grade. She noted that, for BLA, there was an increase in the Black student population, and a slight increase in Latinx students, a decrease in the white student population, and slight decrease in the Asian students. For BLS, there was a significant increase in the Black student population, and a slight increase for the Latinx population. There was a decline in the white student population and a slight decrease in the Asian student population. For the O'Bryant, there was an increase in invitations for white students, a slight increase for Black students, and a slight decrease for the Latinx students and Asian student population.

For 9th grade, the greatest increase in terms of the student population were among the Latinx students that went from 35% to 43% for BLA, while the percentage of Black and white students stayed about the same. The invitations to the Asian student population decreased. For BLS, the greatest increase was in the Latinx student population that went from 17% to 34%. There was a slight increase for the Black student population, slight decline of the white student population, and a decline in the Asian student population.

For the O'Bryant, there was an increase in the Latinx student population from 35% to 46%, a decline in the Black student population from 35% to 29%, as well as a decline in the Asian student population, from 18% to 12%. There was a slight increase in the white population by 1%.

Ms. Skerritt mentioned that the numbers they were looking at were invitee data, which could be different from the enrollment data and that they would not know the true composition of the enrolled class until September even though these numbers were very predictive.

Ms. Roberts presented the invitations for the 20% and 80% Rounds. For 7th grade, in the 20% pool, 73% of invitees were BPS students and for the 80% pool, 74% were BPS students. For the 9th grade 20% pool, 81% were BPS students and for the 80% pool, 76% were BPS students.

For the data by race for the 7th grade 20% pool, 46% of seats went to white students, followed by 18% to Latinx students, 15% to Asian students, and 14% to Black students. For the 80% pool, 27% of the seats went to white students, followed by 25% to Black students, 24% to Latinx students, and 18% to Asian students.

For the 9th grade 20% pool, 46% of invitations went to Latinx students, 33% to Black students, 18% to Asian students, and 3% to white students. For the 80% pool, 43% of the invitations went to Latinx students, 26% to Black students, 17% to white students, and 11% of the invitees to Asian students.

Ms. Roberts continued showing the data for the 7th grade invitations distributed in 20% and 80% by zip code. She noted that the highest number of seats in the 20% pool was West Roxbury and for the 80% pool it was Dorchester (zip code 02124). For the 20% pool in 9th grade, Mattapan had the highest number of seats, for the 80% pool it was Dorchester (zip code 02124).

Ms. Skerritt pointed out that if there were columns that said 0%, it could still have students but it reflected as a zero as there was a small number.

Ms. Roberts continued with a slide of invitations by zip code. She said that last year for 7th grade, the highest percentage went to West Roxbury with 13% and this year, Dorchester (02124) with 11%. For 9th grade by zip code, she indicated that both last year and this year, the highest percentage of seats went to Dorchester (02124).

Ms. Sullivan was interested in the data for the students in Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) custody and those impacted by housing fragility in previous years.

Ms. Roberts presented invitations by English Learners for the last two years. For 7th grade the highest increase for English Learners were those in English Language Development (ELD) level 4 (level 1 is the lowest English language development level, and 5 being the highest), and for 9th, level 5 had the highest increase.

The data for students with disabilities (SWD) for grade 7 showed that the greatest percentage increase is for inclusion students who are being served in an inclusion setting.

Mr. Contompasis asked about summer sessions for the students and Ms. Roberts explained how the schools were working with the Office of Strategy and Equity to prepare for the summer program. She also confirmed that the exam schools would have the students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) and they were working to be able to provide the services that students required.

Ms. Aguirre asked what kind of support students that are ELD levels 1 and 2 would get in the exam schools. Ms. Roberts said that the Office of English Learners was currently working with the exam schools and Chief of Schools Corey Harris to think about the services that would be needed for the English Learners students that would be entering the exam schools, including looking at staffing and support around curriculum and professional development.

Ms Roberts presented the slides related to the sending schools. First, she showed the sending schools receiving fewer 7th grade invitations in SY21-22 by decline and increase of seats.

Ms. Skerritt noted that they should denote schools for whom it was their first year with a 6th grade, such as the Harvard-Kent School.

Next, Ms. Roberts presented slides related to ranking data, showing how students and families chose to rank schools. The first slide was the percentage of first choice rankings by zip code and the second slide by first choice rankings by race for 7th and 9th grade.

Mr. Acevedo noted that many Black and Latinx students ranked BLA and O'Bryant first at a high rate in 7th grade and said equity also meant making sure that Black and Latino families have increased opportunities to choose their preference. He also wondered that if they were given the preference would they necessarily see more Black and Latino families in BLS.

Ms. Sullivan said, referring back to the Working Group's recommendations about having support available for all students leading into the next school year, that the Task Force should be intentional about identifying unique supports that may be needed, acknowledging that there would be greater socio-economic diversity within the schools.

Ms. Sullivan asked to review the outstanding data requests from the Task Force. The list was as follows:

- invitations by socio-economic status (SES) by distribution and zip code;
- English Learners data by home language over the last three years;
- invitations by feeder school and race by exam school;
- invitations over the last three years by neighborhood, including by school type;
- acceptance, over the last three years by zip code, including school type;
- zip codes where higher grades are concentrated or more common, and if so, the breakout within 20% and 80% distribution;
- Opportunity Index (OI) for sending schools, connected to the exam schools the students ranked (last year and this school year);
- Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) disaggregated proficiency rates for sending schools;
- additional information on the weights within the Opportunity Index;

- configuration of schools of the economically disadvantaged students;
- request to better understand what the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) collects on data for private schools, particularly in terms of achievement;
- tiering map of the city of Boston to superimpose BPS schools on top of the tiers;
- understand what prompted the changes in Chicago's tiering model;
- BPS schools that did not have any invitations to exam schools and how many applications they had;
- will there be substantially separate classrooms in the exam schools;
- will students with ELD levels 1 and 2 be in a separate classroom or be incorporated into the school;
- where were EL's and SWD's invited by exam school;
- what schools (by exam school) did homeless/DCF students get invited to;
- for zip code slides provide excel sheets with tables for zip code slides;
- comparison invitations to final simulations used for the working group's decision making process;
- Census tracts and American Community Survey - determine if there is one map to make it easier to see public housing in the census tracts and the data that comes from those tracts.

Dr. Tung thanked both Ms. Roberts and Ms. Hogan for the data analysis they presented as it helped the Task Force to see how the temporary policy worked, something she thought they needed in order to engage in the discussion about the future recommendations.

Ms. Skerritt said she was concerned about the time devoted to gathering data and discussing as it was important to propose new models, and suggested that they remove requests that seemed unuseful.

Mr. Acevedo added that they had so much data and so little time to convert it to a policy and at some point the Task Force had to stop raking in data and start determining directions.

Mr. Contompasis said that they should be moving forward with the data that had been requested and that he didn't think they had the luxury of really continuing to request information, unless it has to do with a provision, or a recommendation that that needed additional data. He suggested that beginning with the next meeting, the Task Force devotes its time to interpreting what they heard, what they've seen, and what the data has shown them, to come up with some draft ideas.

Ms. Skerritt also added that they had also received an incredible amount of information from public comment on the temporary admissions policy as it impacted the families who were most directly affected by the policy. She said it was important to consider these families' individual experiences from their respective neighborhoods, school types, and preparation and journeys as equally as the members might have their own set of beliefs about exam school assessments, meritocracies, rigor, etc. She also said she thought that they had heard that the families in the city are looking for something that they can understand from year to year, that doesn't require a dissertation to try to imagine how their child is going to get accepted to school. She concluded by

saying she thought they needed to start putting pen to paper to propose some models and talk about it, or else they would run out of time.

Dr. Tung said she would like to have a working definition of rigor before starting the discussions. Ms. Skerritt said she thought that they were working out of the assumption that the three exam schools were rigorous. She also said that the measure for the schools are all the same factors that the Boston Public Schools use to determine whether a school is high performing such as student outcomes, post secondary results, MCAS scores, access to rigorous coursework, how many students complete a diploma with MassCore, how many students complete college in six years, retention rate and graduation rates, - an extensive set of high school indicators that all schools are using to evaluate rigor.

Ms. Lum added there was one quantitative and qualitative measure of rigor they needed to consider for their policy recommendations; one based on achievement and the other based on potential. She thought that they needed to figure out a way to measure potential in order to create the socio-economic and other diversity they're aiming to achieve.

Mr. Cregor added that the maintenance of rigor, ultimately, is the task of the school leaders at the exam schools, and not the charge of the Task Force. Ms. Grassa said that they should check with the district's definition of rigor and use that as a starting point.

Mr. Acevedo added that they should also be cautious as some people use the word rigor as a veiled way of excluding certain students in the name of rigor with racist preconceived notions.

#### GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Alvin Li, West Roxbury resident, Joyce Kilmer Upper School student, testified about this year's temporary admissions policy and the impact on his peers.
- Yufang Rong, West Roxbury resident, Boston Latin School (BLS) parent, testified on the importance of understanding a policy before the implementation.

#### CLOSING COMMENTS

There was no new business and the Co-Chairs thanked the members for their time.

#### ADJOURN

At approximately 7:10 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



**Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Remote Meeting**  
**Zoom**  
**May 14, 2021**

Lena Parvex  
Administrative Assistant