



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

June 24, 2021

The Boston School Committee's Exam Schools Admissions Task Force held a remote meeting on June 24, 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; Samuel Acevedo; Acacia Aguirre; Simon Chernow; Matt Cregor; Tanya Freeman-Wisdom; Katherine Grassa; Zena Lum; Samuel Acevedo; Rachel Skerritt; Rosann Tung; and Tamara Waite.

Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Members Absent: None.

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: June 14, 2021 meeting](#)

[Meeting Minutes: June 17, 2021 meeting](#)

[Exam School Task Force Simulations, June 24, 2021](#)

[Determining Eligibility Presentation](#)

June 24, 2021

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: JUNE 14 AND JUNE 17, 2021

Approved – The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the June 14th, 2021 Exam Schools Admissions Task Force meeting with minor modifications from Dr. Tung.

Approved – The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the June 17th, 2021 Exam Schools Admissions Task Force meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Contompasis called the meeting to order. He announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Cabo Verdean, Somali, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, 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, Ms. Aguirre, Mr. Chernow, Mr. Cregor, and Dr. Freeman-Wisdom arrived after roll call.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Contompasis reminded the members that the Task Force would be meeting on Monday, June 28 and Tuesday, June 29. He said there was data pending related to seat assignments that would not be presented this evening, therefore the members would not be taking any action on seat assignment at the meeting. The second action item was the eligibility criteria, and Mr. Contompasis said that he would present a summary of these criterias and the Task Force could possibly reach consensus or vote on it.

Ms. Sullivan thanked the members of the Task Force for their commitment and said she was optimistic that they would be able to present a recommendation to the School Committee that would help the Boston Public Schools as well as the City of Boston move forward.

Ms. Hogan presented outstanding data requests which were simulations that incorporated the high poverty indicator. The first simulation was 20% citywide, 80% distribution by tier, and the second was 100% distributed by tiers. These were presented by economic status, race, and zip code.

Ms. Aguirre inquired how the points would affect students in the METCO program, as suburban schools would not qualify as high poverty schools, and the students would not get the points regardless of the family situation. Ms. Sullivan said that the extra points for high poverty level were based on schools and rationale was that the METCO students would have access to resources due to the schools they were attending.

June 24, 2021

Ms. Grassa noted that due to the change in 6th grade, some students could attend an economically disadvantaged elementary school, and go to an economically advantaged middle school, or vice versa. Ms. Skerritt added that it would be more likely that their education would be shaped by their 5th grade experience and not 6th grade. Ms. Sullivan said based on these observations, they should be looking at the 5th grade school a student attended, not 6th grade.

Ms. Sullivan moved the discussion to eligibility, specifically for the school year (SY 2023-2024). She summarized that they had talked about using assessment as a threshold to get into the pool, which would be either demonstrating grade level performance on 5th grade MCAS, or 5th grade MAP score, or 6th grade MAP score. Once in the pool, they would use 5th grade English Language Arts (ELA) and math grades, and 6th grade ELA, math, science, and social studies.

After repeating her opposition to using a test, Dr. Tung proposed another option which was to use a composite score that included both Grade Point Average (GPA) and assessment with the high poverty indicator. She said they would then distribute the seats proportionally to whatever geographic or socioeconomic grouping they decide on and it would be for 100% of students and not just 80% of students. She also said that she reached out to Dr. Lorrie Shepard, who presented to the Task Force at a previous meeting, who recommended that the cut score should be something like state and national average, and low enough to be inclusive.

Mr. Contompasis wondered how the Task Force would deal with all the concerns that had been raised which made them decide on a threshold instead of a weighted exam.

Ms. Sullivan said that her concern with using an assessment as a threshold was that they would be making the assessment even more high-stakes than the pre-Covid admissions policy, as this would be the only way to get into the pool, and added that she was willing to have a conversation about a composite score.

Mr. Cregor said he would be interested in the composite score model but with more weight on the grades than on the one-time test. Ms. Skerritt said she thought that a composite score with multiple indicators would work for the high poverty index as opposed to a singular mechanism, but she also said she had concerns about multiple test types.

Mr. Contompasis showed the slide for eligibility criteria as they had discussed in earlier meetings, and the proposed process. The proposal was that a student had to meet a threshold for eligibility in the assessment plus earn a GPA of B or higher. For SY 2022-23, the grades taken into account would be first two terms of 6th grade in ELA, math, science and social studies; and for school year 2023-24 and beyond would be final term of 5th grade in ELA and first two terms of 6th grade in ELA, math, science and social studies. He said his recommendation for SY22-23, was to not have an assessment due to Covid-19.

The members discussed how they would use GPA if the test was the only eligibility criteria to get into the pool and lottery the selection within the pool.

Ms. Sullivan asked the members how they felt about using the assessment as a threshold versus using it as part of a composite score. Mr. Acevedo, Mr. Cregor, Mr. Chernow, Ms. Aguirre, Ms.

June 24, 2021

Skerritt, and Ms. Grassa said they were all open to the idea of using the assessment in a composite score.

Ms. Sullivan said that if they used composite scores for eligibility, they should discuss if the mechanism should be a qualified lottery, straight rank, or a hybrid model.

Ms. Aguirre said she thought they should discuss what percentage of the test and GPA to consider before discussing how they would allocate seats.

Ms. Sullivan asked the members to suggest the percentage of weight they proposed for each component. Mr. Cregor suggested using 70% grades and 30% assessment. Dr. Tung suggested 80% grades and 20% assessment. Ms. Skerritt suggested 50% for each. Ms. Aguirre suggested 60% grades and 40% assessment. Ms. Sullivan said they would ask Ms. Hogan to run these simulations with the 10% high poverty indicator.

Ms. Sullivan asked the members to start discussing the mechanism for seat allocation which were straight rank, lottery or hybrid.

Ms. Nagasawa asked how the mechanism would work for the 10% boost for high poverty schools in the lottery for all the students once they were in the pool. Ms. Sullivan said it wouldn't be a benefit in the mechanism for those students but it would help them qualify for the pool. She also said that in order to achieve socioeconomic and geographic diversity and meet their charge, they would not be able to use 100% qualified lottery, but they would have to do the lottery within socioeconomic tiers, or geographic strands.

After a short discussion between the members on the percentage of the simulations they would ask for, Ms. Sullivan said they would ask for the following simulations on mechanism for seat allocation:

1. 100 % straight rank in tiers
2. 20% citywide rank and 80% tiers ranked
3. 20% citywide rank, 40% tiers ranked, and 40% tiers lottery

Dr. Tung said that her conclusion was that the zip code policy gave greater neighborhood diversity than the tiers and she would prefer zip code and not tiers.

Ms. Sullivan clarified that the interim policy produced the most significant diversity that they had seen across all indicators: neighborhood, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, learning type, and English language learners. She said they were still waiting for the data from the census tract but they also had to be aware of finding a solution to all the issues and concerns that had been raised.

Mr. Cregor added that it wasn't in their charge to racially balance the exam schools' enrollment, as that would be determined unconstitutional by the court. He said their charge was to create an admissions policy which would result in the student body of the schools better reflecting the city.

**Exam Schools Admissions Task Force Remote Meeting
Zoom**

June 24, 2021

For him that meant an effort to eliminate barriers to equal educational opportunity so that exam school students experience the educational benefits of diversity

Mr. Contompasis reminded the members that their expectation was that over time there should be a larger number of students that would benefit from an exam school experience. He also said they had built into the process steps to review and improve what they were accomplishing.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- José Valenzuela, Roslindale resident, Boston Latin Academy (BLA) teacher and Boston Latin School (BLS) alum, testified in support of the work of the Task Force.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Co-chairs thanked the members and the public.

ADJOURN

At approximately 7:50 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Administrative Assistant