



Superintendent's Circular

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EXAM SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: APPLICATION AND ADMISSIONS PROCESS

This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

Boston Public Schools has three exam schools: Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, and the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. All three schools accept new students for grades 7 and 9. John D. O'Bryant School accepts a small number of new students in grade 10. **This circular outlines operational details regarding the application process, GPA calculation, test administration, and invitations.**

ELIGIBILITY

Students currently enrolled in grades 6, 8, or 9 and residing in the City of Boston are eligible to apply to one of our exam schools for the 2025-2026 school year. The application process to the three exam schools includes an admissions test, student GPA, and Boston residency. The GPA will account for 70% and the test score will account for 30% of the application. Students may be eligible for additional points if they meet specific criteria.

Students enrolled in a program for limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) or enrolled in non-credit bearing courses, and students that are not completing grade-level curriculum are not eligible to apply for exam school admissions.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Students seeking admission to an exam school must be enrolled in grades 6, 8, or 9 and live in the City of Boston to be eligible to apply for admission for the 2025-2026 school year. The residence of a minor child is presumed to be the legal, primary residence of the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have physical custody of the child.

Students actively enrolled in a BPS school have previously established residency during their initial registration process, and do not need to resubmit documentation. Non-BPS families are required to verify their residency in the City of Boston with a BPS Welcome Center between October 15, 2024, and November 15, 2024. Families planning to participate in the Fall 2024 test administration, must complete the residency verification process and register for the test by November 8, 2024.

Students who must complete the residency verification process include:

- Students attending a private school
- Students attending a parochial school
- Students attending METCO program schools
- Students attending Commonwealth Charter schools (excludes UP Academy, Boston Green Academy, and other “in-district” BPS charter schools)
- Students attending schools outside the City of Boston
- Students being home-schooled

The residency verification must be completed even if a family has other children enrolled in the Boston Public Schools; the student is receiving special education services from BPS; the parent/guardian is a current City of Boston employee; or if the student was previously enrolled in the BPS.

As part of the verification process, parents are required to provide two approved proofs of residency that list the Boston home address, the child's original birth certificate, the child's immunization record, and the parent's photo identification. In addition, an authorization form for the release of student information will be provided during the appointment. Refer to the [BPS Registration Document Checklist](#) for details.

There are two ways to apply:

1. **In-person:** [Schedule an appointment on this form](#) and visit one of the four [BPS Welcome Centers](#) to work directly with a registration specialist.
2. **By computer:** [Pre-register here](#) and [schedule an appointment on this form](#) to complete the application with a registration specialist. ***A follow-up appointment either in-person or over the phone is required.*** Please select 'Pre-Register for BPS' from the side menu. Click the first option if you have never registered any child for Boston Public Schools. Select the second option if you already have an Aspen account.

A list of required and approved documents for the registration application can be found in the [BPS Registration Document Checklist](#).

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

The Exam Schools policy establishes baseline criteria for eligibility beyond residency. Students must have a grade point average of B or higher to be eligible to apply. The GPA will include prior year marks in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math and the current year marks in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

School leaders are expected to ensure that all marks and course numbers are processed before grade point averages are calculated by the Boston Public Schools. All applicants' course marks must be submitted along with school certification that they represent performance against the Massachusetts curriculum framework grade-level standards by February 7, 2025. Changes in the transcription or computation of grade point averages will not be accepted thereafter.

The table below outlines which subject areas and grading terms are included for the next admission cycle.

Applying for:	SY25-26 Entrance Year
7th Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5th Grade (SY23-24) 4th Quarter <u>OR</u> 3rd Trimester <u>OR</u> 2nd Semester marks in ELA and Math 6th Grade (SY24-25) 1st and 2nd Quarter <u>OR</u> 1st Trimester <u>OR</u> 1st Semester marks in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies
9th Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7th Grade (SY23-24) 4th Quarter <u>OR</u> 3rd Trimester <u>OR</u> 2nd Semester marks in ELA and Math 8th Grade (SY24-25) 1st and 2nd Quarter <u>OR</u> 1st Trimester <u>OR</u> 1st Semester marks in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies
10th Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8th Grade (SY23-24) 4th Quarter <u>OR</u> 3rd Trimester <u>OR</u> 2nd Semester marks in ELA and Math 9th Grade (SY24-25) 1st and 2nd Quarter <u>OR</u> 1st Trimester <u>OR</u> 1st Semester marks in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies

For SY25-26 admissions, both prior year and current year marks will be considered to calculate the GPA. Prior year marks will be weighted 50%, and current year marks will be weighted 50%. For students with previous year international school records, only current-year marks will be considered. Students must have marks in each subject for the GPA to be calculated. Applications with missing course marks, Incomplete (INC), or Pass (P) marks cannot be processed and will be classified as ineligible.

The July 2021 update to the [Exam School Admission Policy](#) stipulates that the district “develop and publish a coherent district equitable grading policy using an A-F scale wherein an A+ is treated like an A.” To address this requirement, the 12-point grade scale will be rescaled from 0-12 to 0-11, where 0 points represent an F and 11 points represent both A+ and A. This will result in the following crosswalk from letter marks to point values used in the GPA calculation.

Letter Mark	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
Point Value	11	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Students with grade 5 transcripts from Boston Public Schools receive marks on multiple standards for each subject area using a 1-4 grading scale. The marks in Reading, Writing, and Math will be converted to a 12-point scale for the purpose of calculating an “overall” mark in the subject area (ELA and Math). If the “overall” mark in either subject is above 11, the number will be rounded down to 11 to align with the 1–11 point scale.

Standard-Base Marks	4	3	2	1
Point Value	12	9	6	3

** Students participating in advanced courses (honors, AWC, AP, etc.) do not receive additional points.*

For more information regarding the conversion of marks and calculating composite scores, please review the [fact sheet](#). All non-BPS schools are responsible for determining their own practices for grade conversions.

TEST ADMINISTRATION

For SY25-26 admissions, completion of the NWEA MAP Growth assessment will be required for admissions. Students will have two opportunities to take the assessment, with the first in the spring of 2024. For students who would like to improve their score, or those who do not take the test in the spring, there will be a second opportunity in the fall of 2024. Students are not required to take the MAP assessment two times, but in the case where there are two complete testing events (twice in Reading, twice in Math), BPS will use the highest Math Score and the highest Reading score, from either test event, for the invitation process.

For 6th and 8th grade students currently attending a BPS school, the test will be offered during the school day at their school. No registration or action is necessary. However, for students in grade 9 at a BPS school; and students in grade 8 already attending a BPS *exam* school, the test will be offered on the weekend. Registration is required and is detailed below.

For students not currently attending a BPS school, the test will also be offered on the weekend. Registration for the weekend test is required and can be completed online or via a paper form. Both will be posted on the exam schools BPS website.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

In addition to GPA and test scores, students may be eligible to receive additional points towards their application. Students living in housing owned by the Boston Housing Authority, are in the care of the Department of Children and Families, or are experiencing homelessness at any time during the time period in which BPS collects grades (March 2024-February 2025) will receive an additional fifteen (15) points.

Students attending a school in the spring of grade 5 (if applying for 7th grade at an exam school), grade 7 (if applying for 9th grade at an exam school), or grade 8 (if applying for 10th grade at the O'Bryant) where 40% or more of the students enrolled come from economically disadvantaged families over a 5-year average will receive between two (2) and ten (10) additional points, depending on the student's socioeconomic tier. (See below for more information about the socioeconomic tiers).

The district will determine the [list of schools](#) eligible for these additional points, as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

To learn more about how the additional points are calculated, you can view the [Superintendent's memorandum](#).

In the situation where a student has attended more than one school in the spring of the 2023-2024 school year, the school that submits the student's final marking period course marks will be used to determine eligibility for the additional points.

In the situation where the student is a new resident of the City of Boston, the school that submits course marks for the first marking period of the 2024-2025 school year will be used to determine eligibility for the additional points.

Additional points are not additive, so students receiving fifteen points will not receive any additional points, even if they also attend a school where 40% or more of the students enrolled come from economically disadvantaged families.

COMPOSITE SCORE CALCULATION

Admissions to exam schools will use a composite score calculation that combines GPA, test scores, and additional points (if eligible) into one number. The GPA and test score component will be on a 0-100 scale. Students receiving additional points (as described below) may receive a maximum score of 110 or 115.

For SY25-26 admissions and beyond, grades will make up 70% of the composite score, and the test score will make up 30% of the composite score. The GPA will be divided by 11 (based on the 11-point scale explained above) and multiplied by 70. Similarly, the test score will be scaled to a possible total of 30. The GPA component and the test score component will be added together.

Any additional points that the student receives will be added to the total score. For more detail on how BPS calculates students' composite scores, please review the [Composite Score Calculation Fact Sheet](#).

TIERS

Applicants will be placed into one of eight socioeconomic status (SES) tiers based on their home address. Families can visit bostonpublicschools.org/exam and use the interactive SES Tier map to learn what SES tier their child will be considered within. The socioeconomic status tiers are based on a socioeconomic score for each census tract in the city and are updated each year as annual data becomes available, typically in late winter of each year. The socioeconomic score is a composite of five measures from the American Community Survey and indicates economic need relative to the other census tracts in the city.

- Percentage of persons below poverty
- Percent of households not occupied by the owner
- Percent of families headed by a single parent
- Percent of households where limited English is spoken
- Educational attainment

The tiers are proportionally sized based on the number of school-aged children in grades 5-8 living in each census tract. Each tier will have approximately the same number of seats available. Within each tier, students will be ranked from the highest to the lowest based on their composite score. If students have the same composite score, a random number will be used to determine their rank order. The student with the higher random number will be ranked higher than the other(s).

INVITATIONS

Invitations will be awarded through ten (10) invitation cycles, with 10% of seats available to each tier distributed in each cycle. Tier 1, which is the tier with the lowest SES score will go first in each cycle, and Tier 8, which is the tier with the highest SES score will go last in each cycle.

Students will be invited to their highest-ranked exam school with an available seat. If all the seats at a student's first-choice school are already allocated, the student will receive an invitation to their second-choice school. If all those seats are already allocated, the student will receive an invitation to their third-choice school until all seats are filled.

SCHOOL CHOICE

Students must rank at least one exam school to be considered for an invitation. However, a student may list up to three exam schools and rank those choices by preference. Students will not be considered for a school they did not list. For example, if a student only ranks Boston Latin School and O'Bryant, they will only be considered for invitations to those two schools. If a student does not submit choice rankings for any exam schools, they will not be considered for any exam school for an invitation.

BPS grade 6 and 8 students (during the fall of 2024) will receive a continuous choice form in January 2025, through email and their BPS school, where they will be asked to submit their school preferences for the 2025-2026 school year. The continuous choice form for BPS students is due by February 7, 2025.

BPS grade 9 students, and BPS grade 8 students already enrolled in an exam school (during the fall of 2024), will be required to visit a BPS Welcome Center to submit ranked school choices through

a transfer request in January 2025. This group of students will **not** receive a continuous choice form automatically through their BPS school.

Non-BPS students will rank schools during the residency verification process, which ends on the third Friday of November or November 15, 2024.

All submitted applications with ranked schools will be processed at the same time.

WAITLISTS

Boston Public Schools will create waitlists for the three exam schools for all entry grade levels.

Students invited to an exam school for SY 2025-2026 will have eight days from the first day of school to accept or decline their invitation with the BPS Office of Welcome Services. We encourage all families to respond to the invitation by the end of May to ensure all students are assigned in a timely manner.

Students who met the minimum eligibility criteria but did not receive an invitation to their top-ranked exam school will be eligible to be placed on a waitlist for any exam school to which they did not get invited. For all three exam schools, admissions will only be open for students entering grade 7 and grade 9, as well as grade 10 only for the O'Bryant school, and waitlists will only be created for those grades.

Students must have ranked the exam school in order to be considered for an invitation and be eligible to be placed on the waitlist. Students who receive an exam school invitation to their first-choice school will not be eligible to be placed on any waitlist. Please note that BPS builds in some expected attrition into the number of students invited to each exam school every year by

assigning more students than seats. As a result, students may not be called from the waitlist until that expected attrition is accounted for.

Waitlists will be capped at 100 students for each school and grade. The ordering of the waitlist will function as a continuation of the exam school invitation policy. Students will be ordered by their composite score and random number within their SES Tier. For students with the same composite score, the random number will be used as the tiebreaker.

During the invitation process, students are invited to exam schools through 10 invitation cycles, with approximately the same number of seats being given out to students from each SES Tier in each cycle. Once all the invitations have been distributed for a given school and grade, we will continue to follow the same process for the purpose of adding students to the waitlist.

The exam school waitlists will be handled separately from the waitlist process for open-enrollment BPS schools. In other words, a student can be on an exam school waitlist as well as other BPS schools. Accepting a seat off a waitlist at a different school will not affect a student's place on the exam school waitlist.

BPS will contact families via phone and email as seats become available at the three exam schools. Families will have up to 24 hours to accept or decline the exam school waitlist. Please ensure your contact information is up to date by visiting a BPS Welcome Center. No exceptions to the 24-hour acceptance deadline will be made.

The SY25-26 waitlists will remain in effect until November 30, 2025. After that date, the waitlists will expire. Waitlists do not roll over to future years.

TRANSFERS

Transfers between the three exam schools are no longer permitted. Students are not allowed to change their invitation to a different exam school, or transfer between the exam schools after matriculation. If a student is interested in moving to a different exam school for grades 9 or 10, they must reapply through the formal application process.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DATES AND DEADLINES:

October 15 - November 8, 2024	Priority residency verification period for non-BPS families & registration period for the MAP Growth weekend test
November 11- November 15, 2024	Final week of residency verification for non-BPS families registered for the MAP Growth weekend test administration
December 2-13	In-school test administration period
December 7, 2024	Weekend test administration of MAP Growth
January 2 - February 7, 2025	Marks submitted and certified by sending school
March 2025	Application status update sent to all applicants
April or May 2025	Admission decision notifications sent to all applicants

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