



Superintendent's Circular

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Version 01

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING STUDENT DATA

This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

OVERVIEW

Boston Public Schools recognizes and values the planning, research, and evaluation work done by our partner organizations, policymakers, and the greater education community to improve education. The Office of Data and Accountability has established the following guidelines regarding the processing of data requests to improve the quality, timeliness, security, and appropriateness of requests and request handling. Additionally, as the Office of Data and Accountability is charged with protecting student privacy and confidentiality, all student data requests will be evaluated against federal, state, and local data regulations to ensure student confidentiality.

The following data sources are considered directory information. By federal, state, and local laws, they can be given to external parties without explicit consent from parents/guardians. All other student data are not considered directory and should not be shared with members of the public without express consent from parents/guardians or unless disclosure is expressly permitted by an exemption under federal or state law. *Schools should not share any non-directory student data with external parties,*

members of the public, or media outlets. Common examples of non-directory information that should not be shared include, but are not limited to, date of birth, BPSID, and school name. All requests for non-directory student information should be directed to the Office of Data and Accountability.

Directory Information:

1. Student's name
2. Age
3. Grade Level
4. Dates of enrollment

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURE FOR ACCESSING STUDENT DATA

Publicly Available Data

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) make a number of datasets and reports publicly available online. Before submitting a data request, please review Appendix I to see if your data request is included in publicly available data. Additionally, BPS departments regularly make presentations to the Boston School Committee. See Appendix I for links to materials from School Committee meetings. Appendix I includes the following types of data available for public use.

- General data profile of BPS
- Student Attendance and Discipline
- Standardized test results
- School Climate
- Student Enrollment and Demographics
- High School and Postsecondary

For school personnel, there are additional reports available in Aspen and Panorama.

Legal Guidelines on Requesting Student Data

If your data needs are not met by publicly available reports provided by BPS and MA DESE (see Appendix I), you may be able to request certain additional data. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)), the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ([MA DESE](#)), and the Boston Public Schools establish regulations that maintain family and student data privacy rights. These regulations restrict BPS and schools governed by BPS from providing personally identifiable information without family or student consent¹. Additionally, any individual or organization intending to use BPS student data for research and/or evaluation purposes must submit a research proposal to the district before any research activities, including administrative data sharing, may take place. Receipt of grant funds does not guarantee approval to conduct research by the BPS Office of Data and Accountability. Guidelines for conducting research in BPS and the research application can be found on the [BPS website](#).

For data requests that include either identifiable or de-identified

¹ [Exceptions](#) may apply to the general data request requirements. Three common exceptions include:

1. District sponsored-studies to improve instruction (Studies);
2. Evaluations or audits of federally-mandated programs (Audit); or
3. Provisions of data to appropriate school and central office staff (School Official)

student-level data, a written and signed agreement will be required, depending on the scope of the request. The Office of Data Accountability will communicate with all requesters to execute the appropriate agreements prior to sharing data.

For requests for individual student records, please see the BPS Superintendent's Circular LGL-7: Privacy of Student Information and Student Record Procedures: How to Respond to Student Record Requests in Compliance with FERPA and State Law.

In order to determine the next steps for your data needs:

WHAT CATEGORY OF DATA IS REQUESTED?

Level of Data	Data Request Requirements
Aggregate Data	De-identified aggregate level data is generally available to requesters without explicit parent/guardian consent. Aggregate groups that contain fewer than 10 students will be suppressed to protect privacy. To gain access to this data please see the section below on the process to request data .
Student-Level Administrative Data	De-identified student-level administrative data requires a current signed non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with the Office of Data and Accountability.
Student-Level Roster Data	Identifiable student-level roster data requires current family consent as well as a current signed NDA with the Office of Data and Accountability.

WHO IS REQUESTING DATA?

Requester	Notes
BPS Officials and School Personnel	School leaders have access to identifiable and individual student data only for the students in their school for the academic year that they are enrolled in the school. Teachers have access to identifiable and individual student data only for the students they are teaching in that academic year.
Researcher	All research requests must go through the research proposal process.
BPS School-Community Partners	BPS deeply values and recognizes school-community partnerships as a key strategy in our collective efforts to ensure all our students achieve success in college, career, and life. Data can be an important tool for partners to effectively collaborate with schools to strengthen services for students. For partners to collect or access any data about students, school-community partners must be fully registered on PartnerBPS. A complete registration on PartnerBPS includes registration of all programs the Partner runs in BPS and all partnerships they have with BPS schools. More information on the PartnerBPS registration process can be found here . Partners must also have active parental consent to obtain individual and identifiable data on students unless the request falls under the FERPA exceptions. Furthermore, partners must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement with the district before receiving any data. If a school-community partner has any agreement with schools including memoranda of understanding,

	contracts for services, and/or school-based partnership agreements, this must also be provided when submitting a data request. Typical school-community partner data requests include student demographics, quarterly attendance, and course grades for consented enrolled students.
Media	All media requests must go through the BPS Communications Office.
Agencies outside of BPS	Agencies may receive aggregate level de-identified data. Any aggregate group of fewer than 10 students may be suppressed to protect student privacy.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING DATA

To receive data according to the guidelines listed above, requests must be submitted through the Office of Data and Accountability's [Data Request Form](#).

In preparation for completing the form, please have the following information available:

- **Purpose/Use:** how will the requested data be used?
- **Intended Audience:** with whom will you share the data/analysis? Note: depending on the nature of the data request, some data may not be appropriate for sharing with the public.
- **Summary of data request:** please describe in detail what data is being requested, including school years, student population, student attributes, and data scope.

Please note that if you are requesting data for a specific group of

students, BPS student ID numbers or state-assigned student ID numbers must be provided. Requests without ID numbers will not be fulfilled.

After submitting the form, requesters will receive an automatic confirmation email. If analysts have any clarifying questions, they will reach out to the requester within 3-5 business days. While ODA endeavors to fulfill all non-research requests within 15 business days, high volume and more complex requests may dictate a longer turnaround time. As such, we will attempt to fulfill partner data requests with an already executed NDA within 15 business days; and, we will attempt to fulfill research requests with a fully executed NDA within 25 business days. Please plan accordingly when submitting a data request. The Office of Data and Accountability reserves the right to deny certain data requests.

- ▶ **All requests from the media must go through the BPS Communications Office.** Communications can be reached at 617-635-9265 or communications@bostonpublicschools.org.
- ▶ **All public records requests should be submitted through the City of Boston's online [Public Records Center](#).**

FEES FOR DATA REQUESTS

Some data requests may incur a fee, dependent on size, the time required, and the scope of the request. Upon receipt of a data request, the Office of Data and Accountability will communicate with the requester and provide a fee estimate, if applicable.

For additional information about this circular, contact:

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Mary Skipper, Superintendent

APPENDIX I: PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA

Overview of Boston Public Schools

- [BPS At a Glance](#)
- [Facts and Figures](#)
- [Boston District Profile \(MA DESE\)](#)
- [BPS School Profiles \(MA DESE\)](#)
- [Data and Reports produced by the Office of Data and Accountability](#)
- [School Committee Meetings Materials](#)

Standardized test results

- [MCAS results](#) by school and district, with options to disaggregate by subgroup and grade level
- [PARCC results](#) by school and district, with options to disaggregate by subgroup
- [NAEP results](#)
- [ACCESS results](#)

Student Enrollment and Indicators

- [Attrition](#)
- [Enrollment by Grade](#) - Number of students by grade
- [Enrollment by Kindergarten](#) - Enrollment by Kindergarten
- [Enrollment by Race/Gender](#) - Percent of public school students by race and gender.
- [Enrollment by Selected Population](#) - Number and percent of public school students in subgroups: First Language Not English (FLNE), English Language Learners (ELL), Students with Disabilities, High Needs, and Low Income.
- Enrollment for Students with Disabilities and CVTE
- [Mobility Rate Report](#) - Students transferring into or out of public schools, districts, or the state.

- [Student Attendance Report](#)
- [Student Retention Report](#)
- [Student Discipline](#) - Student Discipline data is reported from the Student Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR)
- [Student Discipline Days Missed Report](#) - Student Discipline Days Missed Report

School Climate

- Reports can be found on the [BPS website](#).

High School and Postsecondary Data

- [Advanced Placement Participation](#) - Number of students who took one or more Advanced Placement exams for each subject.
- [Advanced Placement Performance](#) - Number of students who received each possible score on the Advanced Placement exam for each subject.
- [Dropout Report](#) - This report provides the percentage of Massachusetts public high school graduates who drop out of high school.
- [Graduates Attending Higher Ed.](#) - Graduates Attending Higher Ed.
- [Graduation Rates](#) - Percent of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma within 4 or 5 years by student group.
- [MassCore](#) - The Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is intended to help our state's high school graduates arrive at college or the workplace well prepared and reduce the number of students taking remedial courses in college.
- [Plans of High School Grads](#)
- [SAT Performance](#)