

February 13, 2020

Dear Boston Public Schools Community,

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) has three high schools serving grades 7-12 that require an exam as one part of the admissions criteria. These “exam schools” are Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, and John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. The exam is available to all Boston residents in grades 6, 8, and 9, including students who are not currently enrolled in a BPS school.

BPS provides the admissions exam to interested students for these three schools in the fall of each year. Historically, BPS has used the Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE). The current contract with Educational Records Bureau (ERB), the organization that administers the ISEE test, expires on June 30, 2020. Due to the contract ending, BPS began the process of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) **last school year**, which is required by law in order to contract with an organization for the admissions exam.

To develop the RFP, we’ve participated in a lengthy process that included input and recommendations from an internal working group and this fall’s community engagement tour with the goal of making sure the RFP results in an exam that tests students on material that is being taught in BPS schools. To put it simply, for the first time, BPS is asking all interested test vendors who submit a proposal to demonstrate their test matches Massachusetts learning standards and that it has been reviewed for, and proven to be, bias-free.

The exam school admissions process will remain unchanged. We will continue to make admissions decisions based on exam scores, grade point average (GPA), and Boston residency.

We know some parents are already thinking about how to help their child prepare for the admissions process and some may have already begun test preparation. The best test prep is daily attendance in school and learning grade-level reading and math. For those who are already participating in test prep programs, we encourage you to speak with the provider to ensure the materials are appropriate for your student’s grade and aligned to Massachusetts learning standards.

**It has been, and continues to be, our goal to increase student representation at our exam schools, particularly for Black and Latinx students who historically have been underrepresented. BPS has taken several steps over the years to address this such as expanding our test prep program, Exam School Initiative (ESI), focusing on serving Black, Latinx, English learner, and economically disadvantaged students. Additionally, this school year, BPS administered the ISEE in school for 6th grade students to make the test more accessible. We will continue to do this next year for both 6th and 8th grade students.**

This new RFP to identify a new exam is another way we believe we can make the admissions process fair for all BPS students. We intend to announce a new admissions exam by this summer. We will continue to provide updates on this process throughout the winter and spring at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/exam](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/exam). If you have any questions, please contact Welcome Services at [examschoolsrfp@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:examschoolsrfp@bostonpublicschools.org).

Thank you for choosing Boston Public Schools and for your support in helping us provide an excellent education for your child and all of our students.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brenda Cassellius  
Superintendent