



Office of the Superintendent

Mary Skipper, Superintendent
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
2300 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Roxbury, Massachusetts 02119

617-635-9050

superintendent@bostonpublicschools.org
www.bostonpublicschools.org

To: Boston School Committee
From: Mary Skipper, Superintendent
Date: February 5, 2025
Subject: Follow-Up on Exam School Policy Recommendation

On December 18, 2024, my team and I presented a recommendation for a policy change related to exam school admissions. This memo provides additional data related to this recommendation.

Recommendation

As presented in [December 2024](#), we are recommending a change to the admissions policy to consolidate from 8 to 4 socioeconomic tiers. With this revision, each applicant would now be competing for 25% of the total available seats, instead of 12.5%. This change simplifies the policy, mitigates yearly changes due to minor variability in American Community Survey data, and lessens the disparities in access between students in geographically similar areas. The draft motion and updated policy can be found [here](#).

Follow Up Questions

The [linked slide deck](#) provides data in response to questions asked during the December 2024 meeting, including the simulated invitation rate by tier; the five-year invitation trend by race; and the percentage of applicants who do not receive an invitation and enroll in a different BPS school.

Tier Differential for SY25-26 Admissions

In January 2024, the School Committee approved a change to the policy that adjusted the number of points a student receives if they attended a school with more than 40% economically disadvantaged students in the year before application. The additional points are intended to address the difference in composite scores between students who attend schools identified as “high poverty” schools and those that are not identified as “high poverty,” which persists across socioeconomic tiers.

In prior years, students received 10 points. Under the revised policy, students receive a number of points equal to the “tier differential,” as seen in the table below for SY23-24. The “tier differential” is the difference in average composite score between students who receive additional points and those who do not receive additional points in the same tier. In SY24-25, as stated by the policy, applicants for all exam school entry grades received additional points based on the tier differential for grade 7. 7th grade is the primary entry grade for all exam schools, therefore the 7th grade applicant pool was and continues to be larger and more representative than in other grade levels.



Starting this year, as stated by the policy, for admission in SY25-26, the tier differential will be calculated based on multiple years of data (this is seen in the “Combined SY23-24 and SY24-25” column in the table below).

The two tables below show a summary of the tier differential for SY24-25 and SY25-26 for both 8 tiers and 4 tiers. The column titled “SY25-26” shows the averages calculated across the combined applicant pools from SY23-24 and SY24-25. More details on the tier differential calculations used for admission in SY25-26 can be found in the Appendix.

Tier Differentials, 8 Tiers

Tier	Grade 7	
	SY24-25 (data from SY23-24)	SY25-26 (combined data from SY23-24 and SY24-25)
All	8	7
1	8	8
2	10	10
3	9	8
4	5	7
5	4	5
6	8	5
7	4	3
8	2	2

Tier Differentials, 4 Tiers

Tier	Grade 7	
	SY24-25 (data from SY23-24)	SY25-26 (combined data from SY23-24 and SY24-25)
All	8	7
1	10	10
2	7	8
3	7	5
4	4	3

After reviewing the tier differential using data from both the SY23-24 and SY24-25 invitation cycles, we have determined that the tier differential based on the 7th grade applicant pool should continue to be used for all grade levels. This decision is based on the following factors:

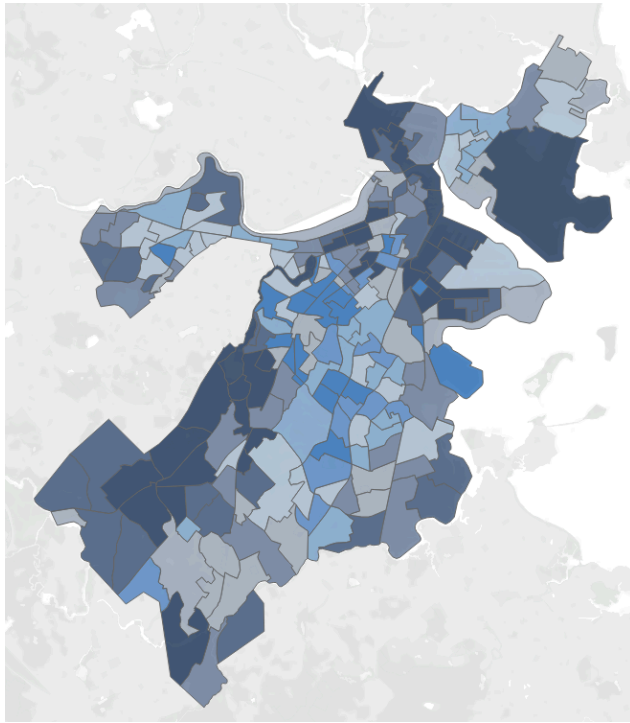
- Larger Sample Size: The combined 7th grade applicant pool (2703 applicants) is larger and more representative than the combined 9th grade pool (1548 applicants).
- Reduced Skew from Smaller Pool: The 9th grade pool is smaller due to many potential applicants having received invitations and admissions into an exam school in their 7th grade year. This smaller pool skews calculations and reduces predictability.

Using the 7th grade applicant pool, therefore, results in more consistency in the tier differential from year to year, resulting in more predictability for students and families.

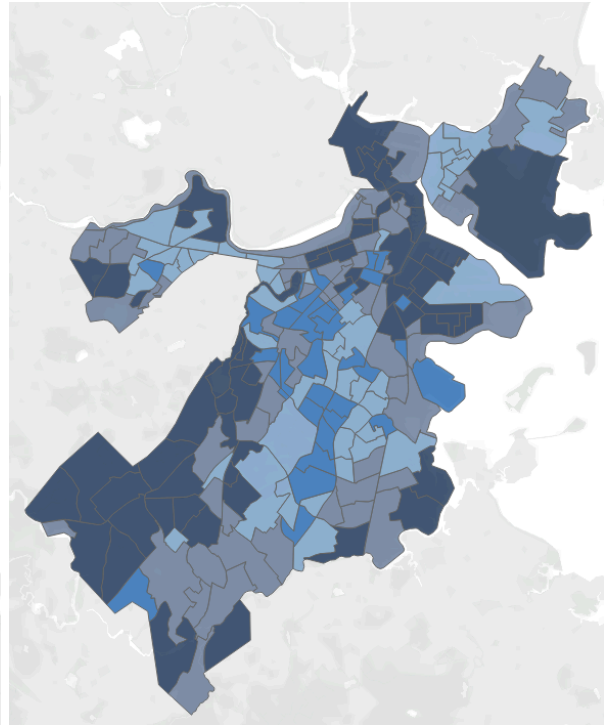
Tier Map

Below are images of the two different tier maps, using 4 and 8 tiers. Each color corresponds to a different tier, with a legend below the map.

Map with 8 tiers



Map with 4 tiers



Appendix

Grade 7: SY23-24 and SY24-25 Combined						
Tier	Number of Applicants who do not receive points	Number of Applicants who receive points	Average composite score: applicants who do not receive points	Average composite score: applicants who receive points	Differential	Number of points
All	711	1992	90.47	83.46	7.01	7
1	13	227	88.46	80.69	7.76	8
2	25	247	92.27	80.82	11.45	10
3	31	203	87.30	79.15	8.15	8
4	42	243	88.23	81.28	6.95	7
5	41	249	86.29	81.74	4.55	5
6	94	285	89.32	84.45	4.87	5
7	150	311	90.48	87.50	2.98	3
8	315	227	91.90	90.38	1.52	2

Grade 7: SY23-24 and SY24-25 Combined						
Tier	Number of Applicants who do not receive points	Number of Applicants who receive points	Average composite score: applicants who do not receive points	Average composite score: applicants who receive points	Differential	Number of points
All	711	1992	90.47	83.46	7.01	7
1	38	474	90.97	80.76	10.21	10
2	73	446	87.84	80.31	7.52	8
3	135	534	88.40	83.19	5.21	5
4	465	538	91.44	88.71	2.73	3

Grade 9: SY23-24 and SY24-25 Combined						
Tier	Number of Applicants who do not receive points	Number of Applicants who receive points	Average composite score: applicants who do not receive points	Average composite score: applicants who receive points	Differential	Number of points
All	398	1150	87.06	78.29	8.77	9
1	14	159	84.41	76.23	8.18	8
2	11	162	86.18	76.84	9.35	9
3	24	151	84.63	77.25	7.38	7
4	25	200	85.12	78.47	6.65	7
5	31	156	84.46	77.91	6.56	7
6	55	145	85.01	79.77	5.24	5
7	91	126	86.82	80.62	6.19	6
8	147	51	89.57	82.88	6.68	7

Grade 9: SY23-24 and SY24-25 Combined						
Tier	Number of Applicants who do not receive points	Number of Applicants who receive points	Average composite score: applicants who do not receive points	Average composite score: applicants who receive points	Differential	Number of points
All	398	1150	87.06	78.29	8.77	9
1	25	321	85.19	76.54	8.65	9
2	49	351	84.88	77.95	6.93	7
3	86	301	84.81	78.81	6.01	6
4	238	177	88.51	81.28	7.24	7