

CONTROLLED CHOICE STUDENT ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Under Boston's Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan, parents and students are asked to identify five or more preferred schools from a list of eligible schools. Assignments are made based on student preferences, factoring school priorities, school capacities and zone of residence (including buffer zones) unless the school selection is a citywide school.

SCHOOL PRIORITIES POLICY:

Sometimes a school doesn't have room for every student who lists it as a choice. When this happens, the student is assigned based on choice (preferences) and priorities. Priorities are school-based factors that give one child an advantage over another in the assignment process. These priorities are a matter of policy set by the School Committee.

The basic priority categories are:

- *Guarantee Students*
- *Present School Priority*
- *Sibling Priority*
- *ELC/EEC Priority*
- *Walk Zone*
- *No Walk Zone School in Geo code Priority*

Students may have one or more priorities (e.g., a student may have both sibling and walk zone priorities). As a result, it is necessary to prioritize the combinations. A detailed ranking of priorities is available at the end of this section.

Guarantee Students

Guarantee students secure a space in a given grade and program, independent of capacity at the school. Students who did not make any choices but are guaranteed to a school are marked as guarantee students and are automatically assigned to their guarantee school. These guarantee students include mainstreamed SPED students, as well as:

- Students staying in the same program in the same school and progressing to the next level (e.g., general education grade 1 going into grade 2).
- Students that are retained, but remain in the same program in the same school (e.g., general education first grader retained in grade 1).
- Students staying in the same school but moving out of a program that no longer exists.
 - a. This applies to grade 6 AWC students moving into general education in Grade 7.
 - b. This applies to grade 5 AWC students who did not qualify for grade 6 AWC and will be moving into general education in Grade 6.
 - c. This applies to students enrolled in the general education component of the Special Needs Integrated Program if the Special Needs Integrated Program does not exist for next year's grade.

- d. This applies to two-way bilingual and two-way general education students moving into general education if the two-way program does not exist for the next year.
- Students moving between feeder schools and staying in the same program (e.g., grade 5 students at Dever Elementary are guaranteed a grade 6 seat at McCormack Middle, and students who are presently in the AWC program at Quincy Elementary are guaranteed an AWC seat at the Quincy Upper if they qualify for a grade 6 AWC seat).
Feeder pairs include: Beethoven Elementary and Ohrenberger School, Dever Elementary and McCormack Middle, Ellison/Parks EES and Mildred Avenue K-8, Grew Elementary and Rogers Middle, Henderson Elementary and Harbor Middle, Lee Academy and Lee Elementary, Lyon K-8 and Lyon High, Quincy Elementary and Quincy Upper, and TechBoston 6-8 and TechBoston High.
- Students staying in the same school but moving out of a program that no longer exists.
 - a. This applies to grade 6 AWC students moving into general education in grade 7.
 - b. This applies to kindergarten students enrolled in the general education component of Special Needs Integrated Program if the Special Needs Integrated Program does not exist for next year's grade.
- Students who are switching Special Needs (SN) codes to those that are considered general education are considered mainstream and will be guaranteed to their current school. Special Education and Student Services identifies these students; the students then receive general education applications.
- This priority applies to any student that has a FLEP code (Former LEP) and is moving toward general education, or has opted out of LEP at the time of assignment.

Special Considerations/Exceptions:

- Grade 5 Spanish bilingual AWC students at the Hennigan are guaranteed a grade 6 Spanish bilingual AWC seat at the Timilty, if invited.
- East Boston Guarantee:
 - a. East Boston general education students in grades 1-12 are guaranteed a seat in an East Boston school.
 - b. During the first round in which assignments are processed, all East Boston schools are open exclusively to East Boston residents.
 - i. The only exceptions are the non-East Boston students who currently attend an East Boston school and qualify for a guaranteed seat.
 - c. East Boston residents are also only administratively assigned to East Boston schools in general education programs. Currently, this guarantee cannot be applied to all SEI students.

Present School Priority

In general, present school priority designates students that are switching programs within their present school. These students include:

- Students going into AWC for all schools in which the student gets a guarantee (i.e., schools that if they were not going into AWC they would be guaranteed a seat, such as current school, feeder schools, etc.).
- Students voluntarily coming out of specialized programs (e.g., ELL, AWC). In these cases, students get this priority when they enter the school as a choice. These students will receive general education applications. This does not apply to students who are not voluntarily coming out of a specialized program (e.g., when AWC ends in grade 6).

- Students moving from the general education component of a two-way bilingual program to a general education program.
- Students moving from the bilingual education component of a two-way bilingual program to a SEI program.
- Students assigned later in the school year after guarantee students have been assigned to all available seats for the upcoming school.
- Students in dual-language programs at the Sarah Greenwood School, Hernández School, and Hurley School have present school priority for the Margarita Muñiz Academy.

Sibling Priority

A child will be given sibling priority if:

- A student is applying to a school where his/her sibling is already assigned, or enrolled and will attend that school in the new school year;

OR

- A student is applying to one school in a feeder pair, if his/her sibling is assigned to the other school in the feeder pair. Feeder pairs include: Beethoven Elementary and Ohrenberger School, Dever Elementary and McCormack Middle, Ellison/Parks EES and Mildred Avenue K-8, Grew Elementary and Rogers Middle, Henderson Elementary and Harbor Middle, Lee Academy and Lee Elementary, Lyon K-8 and Lyon High, Quincy Elementary and Quincy Upper, and TechBoston 6-8 and TechBoston High.

Siblings (except for multiples such as twins or triplets) cannot be guaranteed sibling assignments to the same school.

Special Considerations:

- Multiples (twins, triplets, etc.) are always assigned to the same school if the parents desire and the children require the same program type. If multiples apply together and the first is assigned to a school that has only one seat, the second is assigned there regardless of capacity (i.e., it is acceptable for the school to go over capacity to accommodate the other(s)).
- Sibling priority is applied to a student whose sibling attends the Horace Mann and who wishes to attend the Jackson-Mann.
- Sibling priority is given to a student whose sibling is in a substantially separate class outside of the home zone to that school, if requested. Transportation is provided IF it is on an existing route and no additional costs are incurred.

For more information on who qualifies as a sibling, please see the “Siblings” section of the “Registration” chapter.

EEC/ELC Priority

Students leaving grade 1 from the Early Learning Centers (ELCs) and the Early Education Centers (EECs) are assigned to grade 2 seats before any students seeking transfer or any students new to the system are assigned. See “Detailed Rankings of Priorities” at the end of this section for details.

Roslindale K-8 Pathway Priority

The Irving Middle School provides priority admission for 5th graders attending one of the six Roslindale elementary schools. This means students leaving grade 5 from the Bates Elementary, Conley Elementary, Haley Elementary, Mozart Elementary, Philbrick Elementary, or Sumner Elementary are assigned to grade 6 seats at the Irving before any students seeking transfer or any students new to the system are assigned. This priority does not automatically grant Roslindale students seats at the Irving, nor does it require these students to attend the Irving. Additionally, this priority does not include students requiring a substantially separate program.

Walk Zone Priority

The “walk zone” forms a circle around the school that is measured by a mapping system, and walk zone priority is given to students who live within the geo codes touched by that circle.

- The city is broken down into 867 “geo codes,” which are small geographic zones -- similar to the areas defined by the 4 digits that follow a zip code. Geo codes make certain operational processes within the district easier, such as determining which schools a student is eligible to attend.
- Walk zone for the purposes of assignment does NOT refer to transportation eligibility determination. While similar in nature, inclusion in an assignment walk zone does not affect or determine whether a student will receive transportation.
- Walk zone priority is extended to students who live in geo codes within the following radii:
 - 1 mile of an elementary school or EEC/ELC/EES. There is an expanded walk zone for Kilmer K-8 and Roosevelt K-8 due to their 2-campus designs (*School Committee, November 17, 2004*);
 - 1.5 miles of a middle school. Except for Lila Fredrick and Mildred Avenue Middle Schools, where the walk zone is a 1 mile radius (*School Committee, November 6, 2002*);
 - 2 miles of a high school.

50% of the seats in each program are available for students within a school’s walk zone.

- For entrance grades, the 50% set aside is determined by dividing in half the capacity for a given program before any students are assigned.
- For non-entrance grades and for rounds other than Round 1, the remaining walker/non-walker seats are determined by calculating the mix of walker and non-walker students in that grade and program and determining the remaining seats based on the original capacity split.
- An exception is Orchard Gardens, where 75% of the seats are available for walk zone priority students (*School Committee, November 6, 2002*).
- Madison Park Technical Vocational School and special admission schools do not utilize a walk zone priority.

This priority is extended to students who live within a school’s walk zone yet reside across the zone boundaries; this includes students whose geo code is located only partially within the walk zone (*School Committee, November 10, 2004*).

After the 50% allocated walk zone seats are assigned, students who do not reside in the walk zone will have equal priority with walk zone applicants for assignment to the remaining seats. (See “Detailed Rankings of Priorities” list at the end of this section under “Regardless of Walk Zone.”)

If there are not enough walk zone students to fill the 50% allocation, the walk zone seats are not held for future rounds, but rather are assigned to the remaining applicants. Likewise, if every applicant lives within the walk zone then no seats will be held for future rounds, but rather assigned to the current applicants.

In future rounds, for any school that has not yet reached the 50% allocation for walk zone applicants, students who live within the walk zone will be given priority for any vacant seat over those who do not. As in the previous round, once the 50% target has been reached, no student will have a priority over any other based solely on where he/she lives.

*The same process applies whenever a seat becomes available at a school with a wait list. This policy presents some challenges with regard to transparency of wait lists. When parents inquire where their child is on a particular wait list, they will have to understand that **students may be assigned from the wait list out of order if the school has not yet reached the 50% walk zone target and there are non-walk zone students higher than walk zone students on the wait list** (siblings may also affect wait list placement).*

The following citywide schools do not have walk zone priority:

1. Hernández School, grades K-8
2. Timilty Middle School, grades 6-8
3. Examination schools (Latin School, Latin Academy, O’Bryant), grades 7-12
4. Pilot High Schools with a separate admission process
5. In-district charter schools (Boston Green Academy, Dudley Street Neighborhood School, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, UP Academy)
6. Madison Park Technical Vocational School

Special considerations:

- Geo codes that only have a K-8 as a walk zone middle school are given walk zone priority to the closest non K-8 middle school.
- Geo codes with no K1 in their walk zone receive walk zone priority to the closest school with a K1 program (*School Committee, November 17, 2004*).
- The Hurley Elementary School is a walk zone school for students who live in postal zones 02115 and 02215 (*School Committee, November 6, 2002*).
- Geo codes in East Boston automatically receive walk zone priority to the closest school in East Boston.
- Geo codes in West Roxbury with no walk zone middle school receive priority to the Irving.
- Geo codes in Allston with no walk zone middle school receive priority to the Edison.
- Two Readville geo codes with no walk zone middle school receive priority to the Rogers.

Detailed Ranking of Priorities

1. Guarantee Students
2. Present School, Sibling, Walk Zone
3. Present School, Sibling
4. Present School, Walk Zone
5. Present School, Regardless of Walk Zone
6. EEC/ELC, Sibling, Walk Zone
7. Roslindale, Sibling, Walk Zone
8. Sibling, Walk Zone
9. EEC/ELC, Sibling
10. Roslindale, Sibling
11. Sibling
12. EEC/ELC, Walk Zone
13. Roslindale, Walk Zone
14. Walk Zone
15. EEC/ELC
16. Roslindale
17. No Walk Zone in Geo Code
18. No Priority

ALGORITHM POLICY:

The algorithm is the computer program that implements assignment policy. The definition of an algorithm is a “set of ordered steps for solving a problem, such as a mathematical formula or the instructions in a program.”¹ In this case, the “problem” is to assign students to schools while:

1. Respecting each student’s preferences;
2. Maintaining each student’s priorities; and
3. Making sure that each school is filled to its proper capacity.

The algorithm BPS adopted for use beginning in SY 2006-2007 is called the *Gale-Shapley Deferred Acceptance Algorithm*. This algorithm was selected because it allows parents to indicate their true preferences without potentially being penalized by selecting a highly chosen school as their first choice. Regardless of what others do, this algorithm allows parents to rank schools in their true order of preference, without risk that they will lose their priority at schools they prefer less and therefore receive a lower-ranked school choice than they might otherwise get.

The School Committee adopted this policy on July 20, 2005.

¹ *Computer Desktop Encyclopedia*, Computer Language Company Inc., 1988-2004.

ALGORITHM PROCEDURE:

This algorithm has three steps:

1. Assign a random number to each applicant
2. Order the applicants in each school they listed as a choice by priority category and then by random number
3. Iterate (search) to put each student into his/her top-most possible choice

Random Numbers

Every year, the random (lottery) number is a six-digit number generated at random by the computer, and is assigned to all current BPS students and those new students submitting an application. This number determines the order in which applications are ranked within a priority designation.

Current BPS students who are not in transition grades are assigned a random number for the purpose of transfers only –in case they file a transfer application.

A random number is different from the six-digit student number issued to each entering student, which is retained for the duration of BPS enrollment. Random numbers change with each new assignment year while student numbers remain the same.

Ordering

The second step of the program orders students by priority category in each school that they listed as a choice (e.g., all “sibling walks” are listed whether they chose the school as their first, second or subsequent choice) and then by random number within a priority category (e.g., all sibling walkers are ranked together by random number). This allows all students that listed a school to be considered by the computer program for that school without discarding ANY student preferences or school priorities.

Iteration

The final step of the program determines the assignment. Using an iterative method – searching back and forth – the program assigns each student into his/her top-most possible choice without sacrificing any priorities the applicant may have.

Accounting for ranked priorities, students will receive their highest choice among their school choices for which there is an available seat. No student receives an assignment to a school before another student that has priorities and/or a better random number.

This assignment procedure allows parents to rank schools in their true order of preference, regardless of what other parents may do, without the risk of being assigned to a lower-ranked school than they might otherwise receive.