

Guide to Applying to Independent Schools and Boston's Public Exam Schools



Compiled by
The Steppingstone Foundation



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The Public Exam School Option

Public exam schools are tuition-free, college preparatory schools that begin in seventh grade and continue through high school. Boston’s public exam schools are Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, and the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. These schools are selective, meaning that a student must apply and be accepted in order to attend. Acceptance to public exam schools is based largely on the following two equally weighted factors:

1. Performance on the Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE)
2. Math and English grades from 5th and 6th grade (*if applying for 7th grade entrance*) or 7th and 8th grade (*if applying for 9th grade entrance*).

See the charts below for more information about each of the three Exam Schools:

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| <p>Boston Latin Academy 205 Townsend Street Dorchester, MA 02121</p> <p>Principal: Chimdi Uchendu Phone: 617-635-9957 Fax: 617-635-6696 Website: http://latinacademy.org/ Grades: 7-12 School Hours: 7:20 a.m.-1:40 p.m. Early Dismissal: 10:45 a.m.</p> | <p>Boston Latin School 78 Avenue Louis Pasteur Boston, MA 02115</p> <p>Principal: Rachel Skerritt Phone: 617-635-8895 Fax: 617-635-7883 Website: http://www.bls.org Grades: 7-12 School Hours: 7:45 a.m.-2:15 p.m. Early Dismissal: 10:45 a.m.</p> | <p>O’Bryant School of Math & Science 55 Malcolm X Boulevard Roxbury, MA 02120</p> <p>Principal: Tanya Freeman-Wisdom Phone: 617-635-9932 Fax: 617-635-7769 Website: http://www.obryant.us/ Grades: 7-12 School Hours: 7:25 a.m.-1:49 p.m. Early Dismissal: 11:45 a.m.</p> |
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For more information and the paperwork necessary to apply, you should contact your student’s principal or guidance counselor in September of your student’s sixth or eighth grade year.

Note: Only full-time residents of Boston may apply to and attend public exam schools. Students who do not attend Boston Public Schools, including those who attend charter schools, must provide proof of residency at a Welcome Center.

For more information about proving residency, registering for the ISEE and the application process for Exam Schools, please refer to the following website:

<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/exam> or call BPS Enrollment Planning and Support at 617-635-9512.

Steps in Applying to the Boston Public Exam Schools

- September
- Receive ISEE registration materials from your child's school or register online at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/exam>
 - Complete and return ISEE registration to your child's school by the deadline.
 - Begin researching the three exam schools. You will be asked to rank them in terms of your preference later in the process.
- October
- You should receive a letter informing you of your ISEE registration number and test site. Keep this in a safe place; you will need it in order to gain entry to the test.
 - Non-BPS students must provide proof of Boston residency **in person** at a BPS Welcome Center.
- November
- First Saturday in November: Take the ISEE.
- December
- Continue researching the three exam schools – you may call the schools directly to arrange a visit between November and January.
- January
- Receive GPA form from your child's middle school.
 - Complete front of GPA form (with your rankings) and return to your child's school.
- March
- Receive exam school invitation letters.
 - Return completed invitation letter, accepting or declining invitation, to the BPS address.

Preparation Courses and Materials for the Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE)

ERB Testing Preparation Resources
www.erblearn.org/services/isee-overview/family-resources

The EXCEL Program
Website: www.exceltest.com
Phone: (510) 490-7000

KAPLAN Educational Centers
Website: www.kaptest.com

The Independent School Option

Independent schools are private schools that charge tuition and selectively admit students. There are many different schools to choose from, each with its very own, unique educational mission. The following are some of the factors that you should take into consideration when researching and applying to independent schools:

- Grade range (K-12, K-5, 6-12, 9-12 etc.)
- Single sex or coeducational
- Boarding or day school programs

There are many steps in the independent school admissions process. If English is not your first language, you may want to consider having a family member or friend help you with translation.

WHY AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?

Independent schools are seeking capable students who traditionally have been underrepresented in their student body and who are excited to take advantage of the resources and opportunities that their schools can provide. What makes an independent school education stand out? There are many qualities, such as:

- Smaller class sizes
- Strong teacher-student relationships
- Clear school communication
- A variety of extracurricular activities
- Unique educational opportunities
- Well-funded and often cutting-edge resources

The learning environment can vary from school to school: there are single-sex schools, middle schools that graduate students in 8th or 9th grade, schools located in the suburbs, and boarding schools.

HOW CAN I AFFORD TO PAY THE TUITION AT AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?

In order to provide the best resources and support to their students, all independent schools charge a yearly tuition. Initially, many families worry about handling the cost of tuition. This concern is valid because the cost for a student to attend an independent school ranges from \$20,000 - \$50,000 each year (and expenses may increase from year to year). Although independent schools do not expect you to pay the full cost of tuition, all families offered admission to an independent school will be asked to pay something. The exact amount you will be asked to pay depends on your family's finances. **You must complete a need-based financial aid application by the school's deadline in order to be considered for financial aid.**

Steps in Applying to Independent Schools

- September
- Research independent schools at your local library or online at the following website: www.aisne.org (Association of Independent Schools in New England)
 - Create a list of 3-6 schools you would like to pursue for your child. Call each of the schools directly to request information and applications. If a school is hosting an Open House, mark your calendar with the date and try to attend.
- October
- Call each school on your list to arrange a campus visit. School visits may include some combination of the following:
 - Group information sessions
 - Individual interviews
 - Campus tours
 - Candidate assessments (writing sample, subject text, etc.)
 - Classroom visits
 - Register for the ISEE exam. Do not hesitate to contact schools to find out the requirements and to request a fee waiver for a test.
- November
- First Saturday in November: Take the ISEE.
 - Complete written applications for each school. Be sure to complete a draft of the application before writing on the original form. Be sure to make copies of each application piece before mailing it to the school by the deadline.
 - Give your student's teachers the necessary recommendation forms well in advance of the application deadline.
 - Contact the school if you are concerned about application fees. You may qualify for a fee waiver.
- December
- Complete a Financial Aid application through School and Student Services (SSS) at www.ssbynais.org/parents. Some schools may use additional financial aid applications such as TADS <http://www.tads.com/> or FACTS <https://online.factsmgmt.com/>
- January
- Contact the schools you are applying to if you are concerned about the Financial Aid application fee, as you may qualify for a fee waiver.
 - File your taxes as soon as possible in the new calendar year and either upload them to PFS or mail them into SSS so they are part of the financial aid application
- March
- Most schools will make admissions decisions in mid-March. Candidates will be notified by mail. If you have any questions about an admission decision, call the admission office at the school to which you are applying.
- April
- It is important that you notify all schools of your enrollment decision as soon as possible. If you decide to enroll at a school, they will need to begin planning for you. If you are waitlisted, inform the school if you would like to remain on the waitlist or if you would like to be removed.