



October 1, 2015

Summary of 2015 MCAS Results for Cambridge Public Schools

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results have now been released for districts that, like ours, chose to continue MCAS in 2015 rather than switching to PARCC. This summary shares some highlights of these results with you, and reflects in particular on the growth of our district over the past five years. The past year, 2014-15, marked the third year of our new upper schools and reconfigured elementary schools. In reflecting on the changes in our MCAS performance over this time period, we would also like to share our current thinking about why we have seen gains or lack of progress where we have, and our current plans for making improvement where we see it is needed most. As is always the case, MCAS paints a rich, complex, and limited picture of our district.

Please note that the results available to us at this time are MCAS results only. Accountability determinations for our schools and district, including their levels, will be available later this fall. The state must wait for access to PARCC results as well as MCAS results in order to calculate these determinations. It is also important to note that the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is expected to make a decision in November about whether MCAS or PARCC will be the assessment given by all school districts going forward.

The district: Over the past five years, CPS as a district has achieved gains in proficiency on English language arts, math, and science MCAS.

Grades 3-10, Percent Proficient/Advanced 2011-15

- + 5 points in English language arts, to 71%
- + 7 points in math, to 63%
- + 11 points in science, to 55%

The district's one-year gains in proficiency, between 2014 and 2015, were also notable, with a 2 point increase in both English language arts and math, and a 4 point increase in science.

Elementary schools: Our greatest gains over the past five years occurred in our elementary schools.

Grades 3-5, Percent Proficient/Advanced 2011-15

- + 9 points in English language arts, to 66%
- + 10 points in math, to 63%
- + 13 points in science, to 51%

All student groups demonstrated gains in proficiency in all three subject areas. The greatest gains in percent Proficient and Advanced over the past five years occurred for the student groups included in the table below.

Student Group	English Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Science Proficiency
Black/African American	+14	+13	+15
Hispanic	+4	+16	+19
English language learners	+19	+16	+15
Students w/ disabilities	+7	+10	+5

All grades 3-5 gained in proficiency over the past five years, in all three subject areas. The greatest gains in English language arts occurred at grades 3 and 4, with the percent Proficient and Advanced in grade 4 rising 16 points since 2011 and 6 points since 2014. In math, all grades 3-5 saw an increase in proficiency, with the percent Proficient and Advanced rising by 15 points in grade 3, 9 points in grade 4, and 8 points in grade 5. Grade 4 also achieved the greatest one-year gain in math, with an increase in the percent Proficient and Advanced of 4 points since 2014.

While there is certainly more work to be done to support consistent gains for all our elementary students, we are generally pleased with the progress of the grades 3-5 program over the past five years. This progress indicates we are on the right track and that our students are benefitting from the JK-5 focus of our elementary schools that we established through the Innovation Agenda. The curriculum alignment work we have engaged in, and our implementation of a more rigorous math program, Math in Focus, have both played an important role in increased learning. In addition, Response to Intervention and the targeted assessment work our teachers are doing with students is paying dividends, as teachers' capacity to understand, respond to, and monitor individual students' learning needs is growing. This year, we are specifically targeting our work in elementary schools toward one of the most critical benchmarks for students in their education: reading proficiency by grade 3.

Upper schools: The performance of students in grades 6-8 was less consistent than that of elementary students, with fewer gains overall during the last five years.

Grades 6-8, Percent Proficient/Advanced 2011-15
-1 point in English language arts, to 70%
+ 3 points in math, to 53%
+ 3 points in science, to 41%

There was also variability in gains by student groups, both by group and by subject. While a majority of student groups achieved proficiency gains in math and science, approximately half demonstrated gains in English language arts. Students with disabilities and English language learners both achieved proficiency gains in multiple subjects. However, the proficiency rate for Black/African American students declined in both English language arts and math over the past five years, by 7 and 3 points respectively. Fewer than one third of grades 6-8 Black/African American students, students with disabilities, and English language learners were proficient in math in 2015—a finding we will respond to by developing an upper school math action plan for immediate implementation.

In English language arts, it was grade 6 that demonstrated the greatest gains in proficiency, achieving a 6 point gain over the past five years, and a 4 point gain over the past year. The English language arts performance of grades 7 and 8 was uneven, however, largely mirroring the lack of gains exhibited by the state for these grades over the past five years. In math, on the other hand, the

percentage of students Proficient and Advanced increased at every grade level over the past five years: 3 points at grade 6, 4 points at grade 7, and 4 points at grade 8. It was grade 8 that demonstrated the greatest one-year gains in proficiency, with the percent Proficient and Advanced rising by 9 points since 2014.

While the grades 6-8 program has demonstrated some gains over the past five years, we recognize the work still required if we are to support all our students, and all our upper schools, in realizing the promise of the Innovation Agenda. We must see overall achievement levels rise, and see the accelerated learning occur that individual student groups require if we are to close our opportunity and achievement gaps in the upper schools.

Seeing the results of powerful data use by teachers in the elementary schools, we have invested in a formative assessment system for our upper schools that is already in place. With this system, SchoolCity, our upper school teachers can regularly assess individual students' learning, administering unit assessments that are fully aligned with standards and performance-based. Teachers and coaches will then work together to develop targeted instructional plans. We are developing SchoolCity assessments for use in math and science this year; we will target English language arts next year. This targeted data work, in addition to the additional support of math interventionists and the development of the math action plan, will contribute significantly to upper school results.

In addition, our upper school teachers will continue their work developing a rigorous grades 6-8 curriculum for Cambridge students from scratch, and all our upper school educators will continue to develop the skills and capacities they need to meet the needs of each student. While Putnam Avenue faculty is taking Research for Better Teaching's *Skillful Teacher* course, the Vassal lane faculty is focused on community building and continued work with Restorative Practices. While the Cambridge Street faculty is addressing cultural proficiency, the Rindge Avenue faculty is targeting students' grit and school culture. While we focus on establishing consistent quality and opportunity across the upper schools, our schools will develop successful innovative practices that they can share as a network.

High school: Students in grade 10 also demonstrated significant and consistent gains over the past five years, in all subject areas.

Grade 10, Percent Proficient/Advanced 2011-15

- + 7 points in English language arts, to 88%
- + 7 points in math, to 84%
- + 12 points in science, to 72%

All student groups demonstrated gains in proficiency in all subject areas over this period, with the exception of Asian students in English language arts. The greatest gains in percent Proficient and Advanced occurred for the student groups included in the table below.

Student Group	English Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Science Proficiency
Black/African American	+11	+6	+13
English language learners	+13	+23	+3
Students w/ disabilities	+13	+9	+9

Grade 10 students also achieved substantial one-year gains in the percent Proficient and Advanced in math and science, 4 and 3 points respectively, as well as a remarkable gain of 16 points in the percent Advanced in English language arts.

We hope this snapshot of CPS MCAS performance over the past five years has proven informative, and left you with a better sense about the progress of and issues facing our district. If you would like additional information on MCAS, please talk with your school principal or see any of the links below. Information about the district's accountability status will be shared when it becomes available, and presented to the School Committee in a November or December meeting.

For more information on MCAS results, go to:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>