



**For immediate release**

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**2008 MCAS Results Show Continued Mathematics Gains in All Grades  
*Declining Results in Elementary Reading Prompt Call For Change***

BOSTON – For the second year in a row, Massachusetts students in every grade tested made gains on the 2008 Mathematics MCAS exams, resulting in the best math results in the history of the state's assessment program, according to results released on Tuesday.

English language arts (ELA) results in the elementary grades declined and were flat in middle school, prompting education officials to call for a re-examination of early literacy programs.

"Massachusetts students and teachers, particularly in our high schools, have given us another reason to be proud of them," said Gov. Deval Patrick. "At the same time, we must do more to meet their needs. The Readiness Project will help."

Statewide 80 percent of students in the class of 2010 have passed the English, Math and Science exams required for a high school diploma. In all, 93 percent passed the English exam, 88 percent passed the Math exam, and 83 percent passed the exam in Science and Technology/Engineering (STE).

The class of 2010 – this year's junior class - is the first required to pass the MCAS STE exam in addition to the English and Math exams in order to earn the competency determination necessary to receive a high school diploma. About 7 percent of the class of 2010 passed ELA and Math, but have not yet passed the STE exam.

"Our young people are achieving at high levels, and that is a testament to the hard work, dedication and commitment of our students, teachers and administrators," said Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. "That said, I remain concerned about the performance of students in our lower grades. It is our responsibility as educators to meet the needs of every child, in every grade, from every community, and these scores indicate we are not there yet."

Education Secretary Paul Reville agreed.

"We are making progress, but we still have an achievement gap to close, and flat or declining ELA results in our elementary and middle schools," he said. "We are committed to changing the conditions of public education to encourage further growth

and achievement. This includes linking curricula to the real world, forming partnerships with institutions of higher education and local businesses, and attracting enthusiastic, committed and dedicated educators to the profession. Going forward these must be our goals, because it is what our children deserve."

ELA results showed a decline in the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* and higher in grades 3, 4 and 5, and flat results in grades 6, 7 and 8. At grade 3 the percent of students scoring Proficient or higher declined two- to three- points across all racial/ethnic subgroups; at grade 4, where the decline across racial/ethnic subgroups ranged from 5-7 points.

In contrast, significant gains were made in grade 10 on the ELA exam, highlighted by subgroup performance: The percent of Black students who scored *Proficient* and higher rose 9 percentage points; the percent of Hispanic/Latino students who scored *Proficient* and higher rose 7 percentage points.

Commissioner Chester voiced concern about the overall performance of Limited English Proficient students, who, at 37 percent, had the lowest passing rate on the grade 10 STE exam.

Under the new STE Performance Appeal process approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education last week, students with high performance in the classroom and a 95 percent attendance rate will be eligible to file an appeal in Science after taking the exam once. Appeals will only be granted to students whose classroom work is comparable to that of other students who received a passing grade on the STE exam.

STE results showed significant gains in grade 8, with the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* and higher up 6 points between 2007 and 2008.

According to the results:

- Students in all ethnic groups and subgroups made progress:
  - Black students made 3-9 point gains in the percent scoring *Proficient* and higher on 8 MCAS tests between 2007 and 2008: ELA at grades 6 and 10; Mathematics at grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10; and STE at grade 8
  - Asian students made three- to seven-point gains on 11 MCAS tests: ELA at grades 6, 7, 8, and 10; Mathematics at grades 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10; STE at grade 8
  - Hispanic/Latino students made 4-7 point gains on 7 MCAS tests: ELA at grade 10; Mathematics at grades 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10; and STE at grade 8
  - White students made 3-8 point gains on 5 MCAS tests: ELA at grade 10; Mathematics at grades 6, 8, and 10; and STE at grade 8
  - Students with disabilities made 1-5 point gains in the percent scoring *Proficient* and higher on 9 MCAS tests: ELA at grades 6 and 10; Mathematics at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10; and STE 8
  - Limited English proficient students made 1-4 point gains on 6 MCAS tests: ELA at grades 6, 8 and 10; Mathematics at grades 3, 6, and 10

- Low income students made 1-5 point gains on 10 MCAS tests: ELA at grades 6 and 10; Mathematics at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10; and STE at grade 8
- The following percents of students in the class of 2010 have already earned a passing score of 220 or higher on all three grade 10 tests: 58 percent of Black students, 85 percent of Asians, 54 percent of Hispanics, 87 percent of white students, 47 percent of students with disabilities, 28 percent of limited English proficient students, and 61 percent of low income students.
- Of the 4 percent who failed the grade 10 ELA test, 78 percent earned a scaled score of 216 or 218, just short of the 220 required to pass. Of the 9 percent who failed the grade 10 Mathematics test, 80 percent earned a scaled score of 216 or 218. Of the 13 percent who failed the grade 10 STE test, 68 percent earned a scaled score of 216 or 218.

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam has been given annually as a key part of the state's Education Reform efforts since 1998. District and school results from the 2008 MCAS are still being compiled and will be released publicly later this month.

For more information on the MCAS exam or to view the full report, look online at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/).