

[MCAS scores moving target across Franklin County, North Quabbin districts](#)

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The MCAS scores for 2024 have been released, showing that approximately 30.1% of Franklin County and North Quabbin students met or exceeded expectations, 48.5% partially met expectations and 21.5% did not meet expectations in the math and English exams given to sophomores.

From a broad perspective, the average scores on the MCAS, which stands for Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region have held fairly steady over the last several years. By comparison, state averages show that 48% of students met or exceeded expectations, 39% partially met expectations and 13% did not meet expectations.

In the region, Frontier Regional School led the pack, with 56% and 52% of its 10th graders meeting or exceeding expectations in English and math, respectively. Pioneer Valley Regional School's 10th graders also scored well, with 75% and 50% meeting or exceeding expectations in English and math, respectively. Pioneer, however, only had 16 students in its 10th grade for 2024's exams, compared to Frontier's 100.

Ralph C. Mahar Regional School and Greenfield High School 10th graders saw the lowest scores in the region. At Mahar, 27% and 33% of students did not meet expectations in English and math, respectively, and in Greenfield, 18% and 24% did not meet expectations in English and math, respectively.

Greenfield

The Greenfield School Department's MCAS scores have remained relatively stagnant since they first dropped at the start of the pandemic.

In 2019, 13% of Greenfield 10th grade students taking the MCAS did not meet expectations in both English and math. These numbers more than doubled by 2021, when 27% and 28% of 10th grade students did not meet expectations in English and math, respectively.

In an interview Thursday, Superintendent Karin Patenaude said test results are not the school's primary metric for studying its students' success. She noted that in the city's 2024 Accountability Report, released by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the district reached 53% of its improvement targets.

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Stephen Sullivan cited DESE's 2024 Accountability Report — which takes into account data on attendance, graduation rates,

achievement and advanced coursework — shows that two of Greenfield’s public schools require assistance or intervention, a reduction from four schools the previous year. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Stephen Sullivan said this is a difference that the district is “particularly proud of.”

“We take a bit more of a comprehensive look of the results that are coming out, not just the MCAS scores,” Sullivan said. “Even one of the schools there [that still requires assistance or intervention], Greenfield High School, made progress.”

The other district school in need of assistance or intervention is Federal Street School, according to the 2024 Accountability Report.

Patenaude said although the district does not “teach to the test,” it has implemented “high-quality instructional materials” such as “illustrative math,” and a Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum, which she predicts will help improve test scores.

Both Patenaude and Sullivan mentioned that chronic absenteeism, or students missing 10% of the school days, contributed to lower MCAS scores. During the 2023-2024 school year, Sullivan said roughly 26% of non-high school students and 34% of high school students were chronically absent.

“We’ve made significant progress in the last year in our attendance rate,” Patenaude said. “We are obviously not at the numbers we want to be yet, but we have put in place weekly attendance meetings, we have a director of behavior services that works with our nurse leader, that works with our building principals to address if there’s a need for a home visit, we have a second-chance bus if they’ve missed their bus. ... We have a lot of systems and protocols in place that have improved in the last year, year and a half.”

Pioneer

At Pioneer, Superintendent Patricia Kinsella highlighted the “real bright spots” the district has seen in the last several years. Alongside the high scores from the small 10th grade class, students at Northfield and Bernardston elementary schools also scored well, with significant jumps in math scores.

“When we look at the increase in some of our younger grades, like four and five, for instance ... that’s what we want to see,” Kinsella said, highlighting that English scores rose at the elementary schools, while the state average declined. “We’re very pleased with that.”

In 2023, 27% of fourth graders met or exceeded expectations in math, while this year, 56% of students met or exceeded state expectations, approximately 10% higher than the state average.

A similar jump also happened in the fifth grade, with a 6% increase in students meeting or exceeding expectations in English and a 24% increase in math.

As students of all ages continue to try to bounce back from pandemic-related learning loss, Kinsella said progress is being made, although there are so many factors that go into getting children back on track.

“It’s slow, and everything depends on individual kids,” Kinsella said. “Overall, we’re seeing progress.”

Mahar

MCAS scores among 10th graders at Mahar have declined, with Superintendent Elizabeth Zielinski explaining that high school sophomores are still reeling from their most formative academic years being severely effected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

She said the school administration is carefully examining the data to make appropriate adjustments to address students’ learning needs. Thirty percent of students met English expectations, whereas 14% of students did so in math and 11% did so in science. Thirty-three percent of students failed to meet expectations in math. Those figures are 23% for science and 27% in English. Zero students exceeded expectations in any of the subjects in the 2024 MCAS, even though 5% did so in English in 2023 and 1% did so in science.

Zielinski said Fisher Hill Elementary School students performed exceptionally well, going up 11 points in their performance index.

“That is a direct relation to the hard work that the teachers and educational support staff have been putting in,” she said, adding that pandemic-relief dollars have been put to good use. “They’re moving in the right direction.”

Zielinski noted Petersham Center School also performed well. She mentioned previous growth had resulted in the school being named a “School of Distinction.”

Mohawk Trail, Hawlemont

Sarah Jetzon, director of curriculum and instruction for the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts, said the district is still trying to catch up from lost classroom instruction time during the pandemic, particularly at the middle school, as students lost valuable instruction in elementary English and math that sets a foundation for future learning.

“I think when you look at our scores in comparison to the rest of the state, we’re in the middle,” Jetzon said. “But we measure our students by more than just test scores.”

The percentage of 10th grade students failing to meet expectations in math grew from 3% in 2023 to 19% in 2024. In English, more 10th graders are only partially meeting expectations, a figure that grew from 46% in 2023 to 55% in 2024.

While older grades are struggling to catch up, at the younger levels, Jetzon said the districts are seeing students make moderate progress toward goals. She believes once the districts see a class go

through in-person instruction for all 12 years, the districts will see a full recovery and improvement in MCAS scores.

Jetzon noted Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School and Sanderson Academy saw the most progress in the districts from last year, with the most progress being seen in English. In fact, she added, the fourth and sixth grade students surpassed the state average of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

Jetzon said she hopes to see Mohawk Trail students catch up with Hawlemont in the next few years. Hawlemont invested in a new math program a few years ago and is now seeing promising results, and Mohawk Trail recently began using that same program. Additionally, Hawlemont just started a new literacy program that she believes will make students even stronger readers and writers.

Mentioning other metrics of success, Jetzon also pointed to DESE's 2024 Accountability Report, in which Hawlemont Regional and Rowe Elementary schools were recognized for demonstrating progress toward accountability targets, with an emphasis on the performance of all students in the school and the school's lowest-performing group. Hawlemont reached 95% of its accountability goals and Rowe reached 82%.

Gill-Montague

This year, Gill-Montague saw an improvement in its MCAS scores in all subjects for students in 10th grade, but elementary school students in grades three through eight struggled in all subjects compared to state averages.

The MCAS data from this year shows 48% of students met expectations compared to 38% in 2023 for English, with this being the highest percentage of students meeting expectations in English since 2019. In 10th grade math, the percentage of students meeting expectations rebounded after declining since 2019, with 45% of students meeting expectations this year compared to 33% in 2023. The science scores also increased, with 28% of students meeting expectations in 2024, up from 17% in 2023.

However, scores this year for grades three through eight in English saw 20% of students meeting expectations and 2% exceeding expectations, compared to the state averages of 32% and 7%, respectively. Math scores for these grades also came in lower than the state average, with 24% of students meeting expectations and 1% exceeding expectations compared to the state averages of 32% and 8%, respectively.

The Gill-Montague [School Committee](#) recently heard the 2024-2025 school plans from the elementary schools. The plans included supporting students ahead of the spring 2025 MCAS exams, and continuing to host curriculum nights for English, math and science.

Franklin Tech

At Franklin County Technical School, 47% of 10th graders met expectations for the English portion of the exam, compared to 39% in 2023. In math, 38% of students met expectations this year, compared to 27% in 2023.

Principal Brian Spadafino said that overall, the district is excited about the growth students have shown in English and math. Spadafino attributes some of the increased success in English scores to a renewed emphasis on writing both in vocational and non-vocational settings.

“We’re trying to incorporate more writing into shops and into all of our academics,” he said, “so hopefully those results are indicative of the work that the teachers and students are doing.”

When asked about the ability of students to receive a traditional academic experience at a vocational school and the impact on MCAS, Spadafino said the goal has been to “intermingle” these areas to ensure student success in and out of the classroom.

“We want our students to be well-rounded,” Spadafino said. “We want them to have a quality academic education, vocational education, and be able to choose the pathway that’s best for them.”

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