

5 Takeaways: 2022 Statewide Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Results

What is the MCAS?

The **Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)** is a set of statewide tests that measure student performance against grade-level expectations in English Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Mathematics. Students in grades 3 to 8 take the ELA and Math tests each year, and take science tests in grades 5 and 8. Tenth graders take English, Math and Science assessments, and must score above a certain level on each in order to graduate.

MCAS assessment results show whether each student exceeded, met, partially met, or did not meet grade-level expectations. Unlike many other tests students take in class, MCAS results can be compared across schools, districts, and student populations. MCAS results provide an important glimpse of how well our education system is working for different groups of students, including students of color, students from low-income families, English learners and students with disabilities.

MCAS results for the 2021-22 school year were released in September. As you'll see in this factsheet, the results highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and the urgency of ensuring that all students get the support they need to thrive.

MCAS During the Pandemic

MCAS assessments were suspended in 2020, following the onset of COVID-19. In 2021, students in grades 3-8 took a shortened version of the assessments, while students in grade 10 took the full tests, which did not count for graduation. In 2022, all students took full-length tests, as they had before the pandemic.

What are the statewide takeaways from the 2022 results?

1

Since 2019, 3rd grade ELA results declined substantially. In 2019, 56% of Massachusetts 3rd graders met or exceeded grade-level expectations in ELA; today, that number is 44%. On-grade-level rates for Black students fell from 38% in 2019 to 28% in 2022; for Latinx students, they fell from 38% to 23%. For White students, on-grade-level rates declined as well, from 63% in 2019 to 53% in 2022.

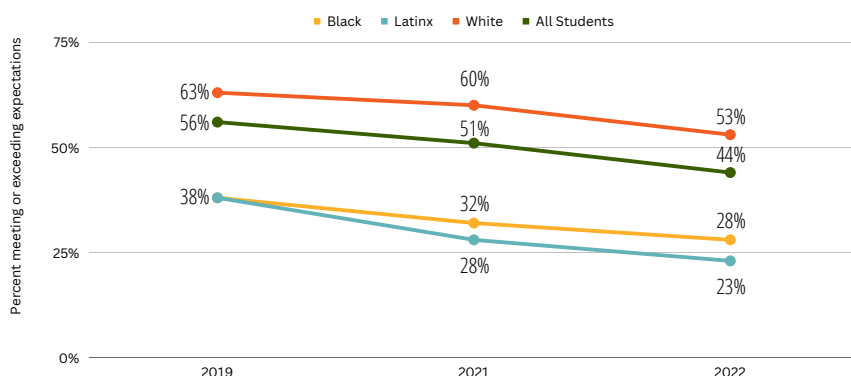
11%

of 3rd grade English Learners are meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA

15%

of 3rd grade students with disabilities are meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA

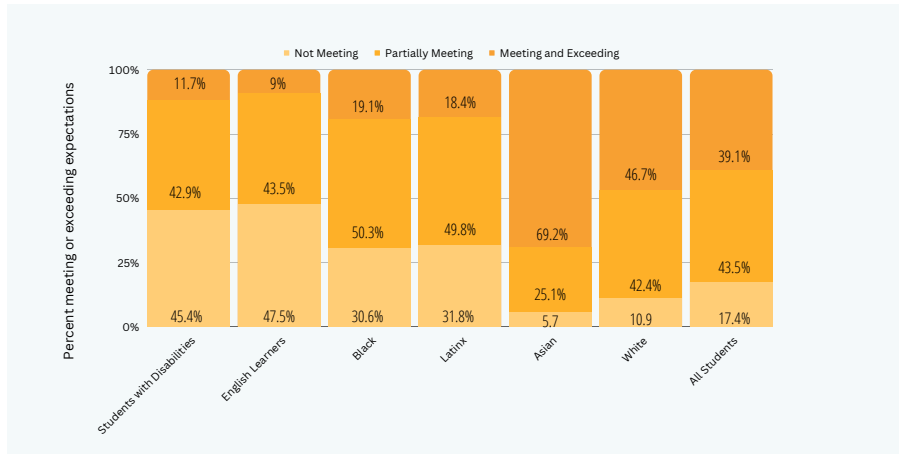
2022 Third Grade ELA Results by Subgroup



2

Math results, which had declined sharply last year, rose somewhat this year in grades 3-8. Overall, the percentage of 3-8th graders meeting grade-level expectations declined from 49% in 2019 to 34% in 2021, and increased to 39% in 2022. But while scores improved for all groups of students, they often improved more slowly for systemically underserved student groups. For example, grade level rates for Latinx 3-8th graders rose from 14 to 18% from 2021 to 2022 (i.e., 4 percentage points), while grade level rates for White students increased from 40 to 47% (i.e., 7 points). Scores for students with disabilities rose by only 2 percentage points, from 10% on grade level in 2021, to 12% in 2022. State and local education leaders must work together to ensure an equitable recovery.

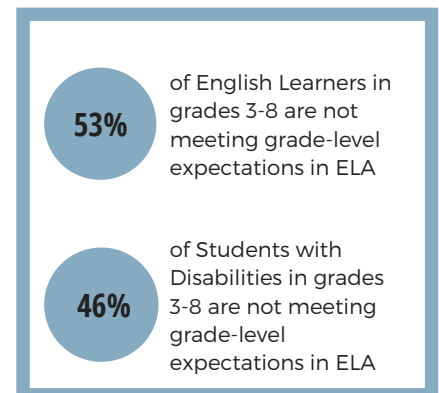
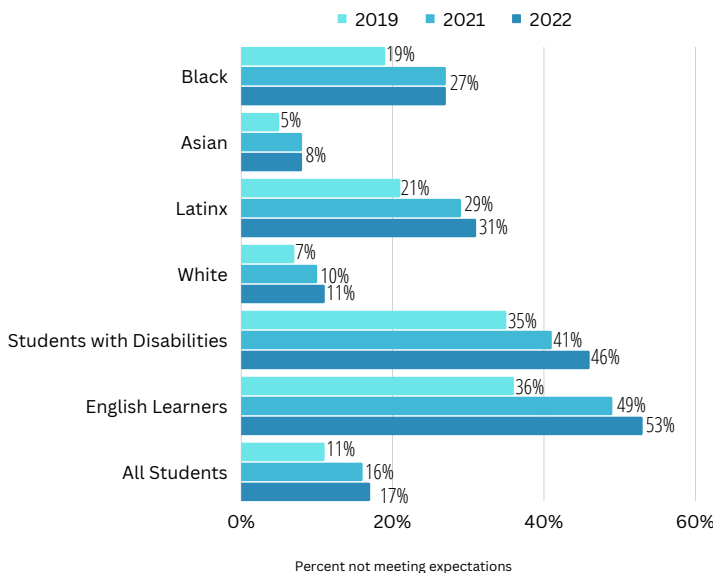
2022 3rd-8th Grade Math Results by Subgroup



3

In addition to fewer students meeting/exceeding grade-level expectations, MCAS results also show worrisome increases in the percentage of students scoring at the lowest -- Not Meeting Expectations -- level, especially among underserved student populations. For example, in 2019, 36% of English Learner 3rd-8th graders were not meeting grade-level expectations in ELA compared to 53% in 2022 (i.e., a 17 percentage point increase). This trend is also reflected in 3-8 grade math scores. The percentage of Black 3rd-8th graders not meeting expectations increased from 22% in 2019 to 31% in 2022 (i.e., 9 percentage points), while the percentage for White students increased from 8% to 11% (i.e., 3 percentage points).

Percentage of Grade 3-8 Students Not Meeting Expectations in ELA (2019-22)



4

10th-grade MCAS scores tell us how students nearing graduation are doing academically, and especially after the pandemic, the results are concerning. Just 58% and 50% of 10th graders met grade-level expectations in ELA and math, respectively. Moreover, in both subjects, substantial disparities in outcomes persist. In math, for example, only 26% of Black and Latinx students -- and just 5% of English learners -- scored at the "met or exceeded" levels, compared to 59% of their White peers.

Did you know?

Research has shown that 10th grade MCAS scores predict longer-term educational attainment and earnings. Students who do not meet grade-level expectations are more likely to struggle in postsecondary education.

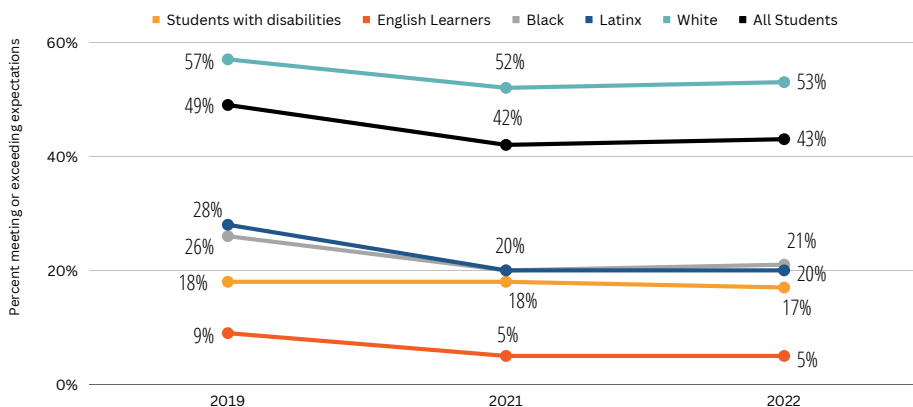
10th Grade Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Math

Student Group	2019	2021	2022
Students with Disabilities	18%	14%	15%
English Learners	9%	4%	5%
Black	35%	27%	26%
Latinx	33%	26%	26%
White	67%	60%	59%
All Students	59%	52%	50%

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Today, 43% of Massachusetts 5th graders met or exceeded grade-level expectations in science; that number has dropped 6 percentage points since 2019. On-grade-level rates for Black students fell from 26% in 2019 to 21% in 2022; for Latinx students, they fell from 28% to 20%. For White students, on-grade-level rates declined as well, from 57% in 2019 to 53% in 2022.

2022 Fifth Grade Science Results by Subgroup



What these scores mean:

These results do not reflect students' ability to learn – instead, they reflect the opportunities, learning experiences and supports that students receive. What's more, this is not about blame – we know just how hard educators have been working these past few years. What these results do indicate, however, is that **there is still much work to do**, to support all students, but especially systemically underserved student groups.

