Readiness & Early Learning

Children’s first few years are characterized by enormous cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Quality early learning experiences create a strong foundation for future success and are linked to improved academic performance. Critical factors include ensuring access to high-quality early education and care, assessing school readiness, and providing full-day kindergarten to ensure all children are on track to be proficient readers by third grade.

Children aged 0-5 eligible for a subsidy and enrolled in high-quality early education programs (up 2.4% from 2014)

65% of students entering kindergarten are ready for school.

61% of students scoring proficient or advanced on the 4th grade English language arts MCAS.

Students transitioning into or out of a school during the school year (up 1.2% from 2014)

9 of 10 students attending high school are enrolled in the 9th grade.

Students scoring proficient or advanced on the 4th grade math MCAS (up 0.2% from 2013)

61% of students scoring proficient or advanced in the 9th grade math MCAS.

Performance & Engagement

Massachusetts has earned a reputation as a national leader in education by setting high expectations and promoting rigorous content standards and aligned assessments. Equally important is an emerging commitment to support strategies that allow all students to focus on learning challenging content. This means creating inclusive school and classroom settings that promote academic achievement, while attending to the needs of the Commonwealth’s most at-risk populations.

Prepared & Effective Educators

To accomplish its goals for education, the Commonwealth needs a well-prepared and effective educator workforce. This includes strong preparation and appropriate credentials for school leaders and teachers, including those educating our youngest learners and special needs students. Educators must demonstrate significant content knowledge and engage in evaluation processes that allow for continuous improvement in their craft.

Effective educators with a bachelor’s degree or higher (up 0.1% from 2015)

30% of teachers graduating from a Massachusetts preparation program are employed in schools for at least 70% of the year.

60% of teachers holding professional license or special education endorsement (down 0.4% from 2013)

89% of teachers evaluated as proficient or exemplary.

Students enrolled in developmental (remedial) coursework in college (up 0.6% from 2014)

42% of students completing all 9th grade courses (down 0.4% from 2015)

Students passing all 9th grade courses (down 0.1% from 2015)

Preparation & Transitions

A high school diploma must constitute a range of learning experiences that ensure college and career readiness. Critical steps include completion of ninth grade coursework and mastery of a rigorous program of study. Steps must also be taken to prevent students from dropping out, as well as to reengage and recover youth disconnected from school and/or employment to ensure future learning and success.

Prepared & Effective Educators

Achieving our goals for education requires a strong, effective, and diverse educator workforce. This includes strong preparation and appropriate credentials for school leaders and teachers, particularly those educating our youngest learners and special needs students. Educators must demonstrate significant content knowledge and engage in evaluation processes that allow for continuous improvement in their craft.

Students completing 9th grade coursework (down 0.1% from 2014, high needs students down 0.1% from 2014, all students up 1.1% from 2013)

Youth aged 16-24 neither in school nor employed (up 0.6% from 2015 2015 fall to year average)

Students earning a bachelor’s degree or higher (down 1% from 2014, high needs students down 0.1% from 2014, all students up 1.2% from 2014)

Massachusetts adults with a certificate, diploma, or associate’s degree (up 0.2% from 2014)

60% of age 16-24 youth neither in school nor employed (up 0.6% from 2015 2015 fall to year average)

Progress & Attainment

Today’s knowledge economy has set an expectation for students to complete a postsecondary degree or credential. However, a substantial number of high school graduates remain unprepared for college coursework and place into developmental (remedial) courses at college entry. Ensuring completion of academic programs at two- and four-year institutions, while preparing students with marketable skills—especially in the STEM and health fields—is important to sustaining our economic productivity.

Youth aged 16-24 neither in school nor employed (up 0.6% from 2015 2015 fall to year average)

30% of students completing all 9th grade courses (down 0.4% from 2015)

Students attending full-day kindergarten (up 1.2% from 2015)

59% of Massachusetts adults with a certificate, diploma, or associate’s degree (up 0.2% from 2014)

Youth aged 16-24 neither in school nor employed (up 0.6% from 2015 2015 fall to year average)

Students enrolled in full-day kindergarten (up 1.2% from 2014)

61% of students scoring proficient or advanced on the 4th grade English language arts MCAS.

93% of students scoring proficient or advanced in the 9th grade math MCAS.

Students scoring proficient or advanced on the 9th grade English language arts MCAS (up 0.2% from 2013)

61% of students scoring proficient or advanced in the 9th grade math MCAS.
The Condition of Education in the Commonwealth project provides an annual, evidence-based review of public education in Massachusetts. This report is designed to draw on the Advisory Committee’s expertise to update and refine our data report to capture the full range of outcomes. This work requires careful reflection and candid conversation on current progress and the goals the Condition of Education project ultimately hopes to achieve. Moving forward, the Rennie Center will continue to make the Advisory Committee’s expertise available to update and release our data report to capture the full range of learning experiences that define a successful education.

Advisory Committee Members

The Rennie Center would like to thank the members of the Condition of Education in the Commonwealth Advisory Committee for their support and guidance in the development of this data report. The Advisory Committee plays a critical role in helping the Rennie Center locate, identify important transitions in student learning (and represent data points), as well as investigate policy solutions that may lead to improved educational outcomes. This work requires careful reflection and candid conversations on current progress and the goals the Condition of Education project ultimately hopes to achieve. Moving forward, the Rennie Center will continue to make the Advisory Committee’s expertise available to update and release our data report to capture the full range of learning experiences that define a successful education.

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The Condition of Education in the Commonwealth project provides an annual, evidence-based review of student progress and proficiency throughout the education pipeline from birth into adulthood. Serving as a bellwether for Massachusetts education reform, the project examines learning outcomes and investigates policy solutions to support continuous improvement in education practice. Massachusetts has a well-earned reputation as a national leader in student achievement based on a substantial commitment to its public education system dating back to the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993. However, efforts to address continuing challenges ranging from a lack of school readiness to a lingering proficiency gap to the need to ensure all students are college and career ready has led to increasingly sophisticated, but, at times, disjointed approaches to reform. While each new initiative bears promise, long-term success for all students requires the development and constant maintenance of a more comprehensive vision. Effective reform requires from understanding our current status as a state, monitoring changes over time, and acting on new information describing both our strengths and difficulties. The Condition of Education project seeks whether our entire education system is properly structured to ensure all students succeed.

The 2017 Condition of Education in the Commonwealth includes the 2017 Action Guide, providing actionable choices for policymakers to consider how best to improve public education in Massachusetts, and the 2017 Data Report, the 2017 Action Guide focuses on the need for a more cohesive, integrated approach to effective student-centered learning. The 2017 Data Report identifies and measures state-level indicators linked to outcomes to inform decision-making among Massachusetts education leaders. These indicators focus on critical stages in learning and development from school readiness and early learning to the emergence of a strong and productive workforce. Important indicators in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are identified and measured state-level indicators linked to outcomes to inform decision-making among Massachusetts education leaders. These indicators focus on critical stages in learning and development from school readiness and early learning to the emergence of a strong and productive workforce. Important indicators in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are highlighted at each stage and specific attention is lavished on the need for prepared and effective educators to support student progress throughout our entire education system. Indicators are selected because of their evidentiary base and alignment with Massachusetts reform agenda and updated at least every three years. This report provides a critical overview of our public education system, while presenting data and information to encourage more nuanced discussions of potential strategies for improving student learning outcomes.

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