

The Competency Determination in Massachusetts

Robert Curtin – Chief Officer for Data, Assessment, and Accountability

Presented to the Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

March 4, 2024

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

- Required by federal law to be administered to all students in grades 3-8 and 10
- Required by state law to be administered to all students in 4th, 8th and 10th grade
- Serves as statewide measure of student achievement for all students in grades 3-8 and 10
- Aligned to and designed based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Annual work with over 250 Massachusetts public school teachers to develop and approve test items

Graduation requirements

In order to receive a Massachusetts high school diploma, students must:

1. Meet all local graduation requirements of the district;
2. Earn a Competency Determination (CD) from the state;
3. For students with disabilities, required by federal law to be provided a “a free appropriate public education” (FAPE) by the district

Local graduation requirements

In the absence of the CD, only local graduation requirements would apply

MA School A

- Pass 100 credits (25 credits each year to be promoted to the next grade)
- Pass four years of English
- Pass two years of United States History
- Pass Physical Education

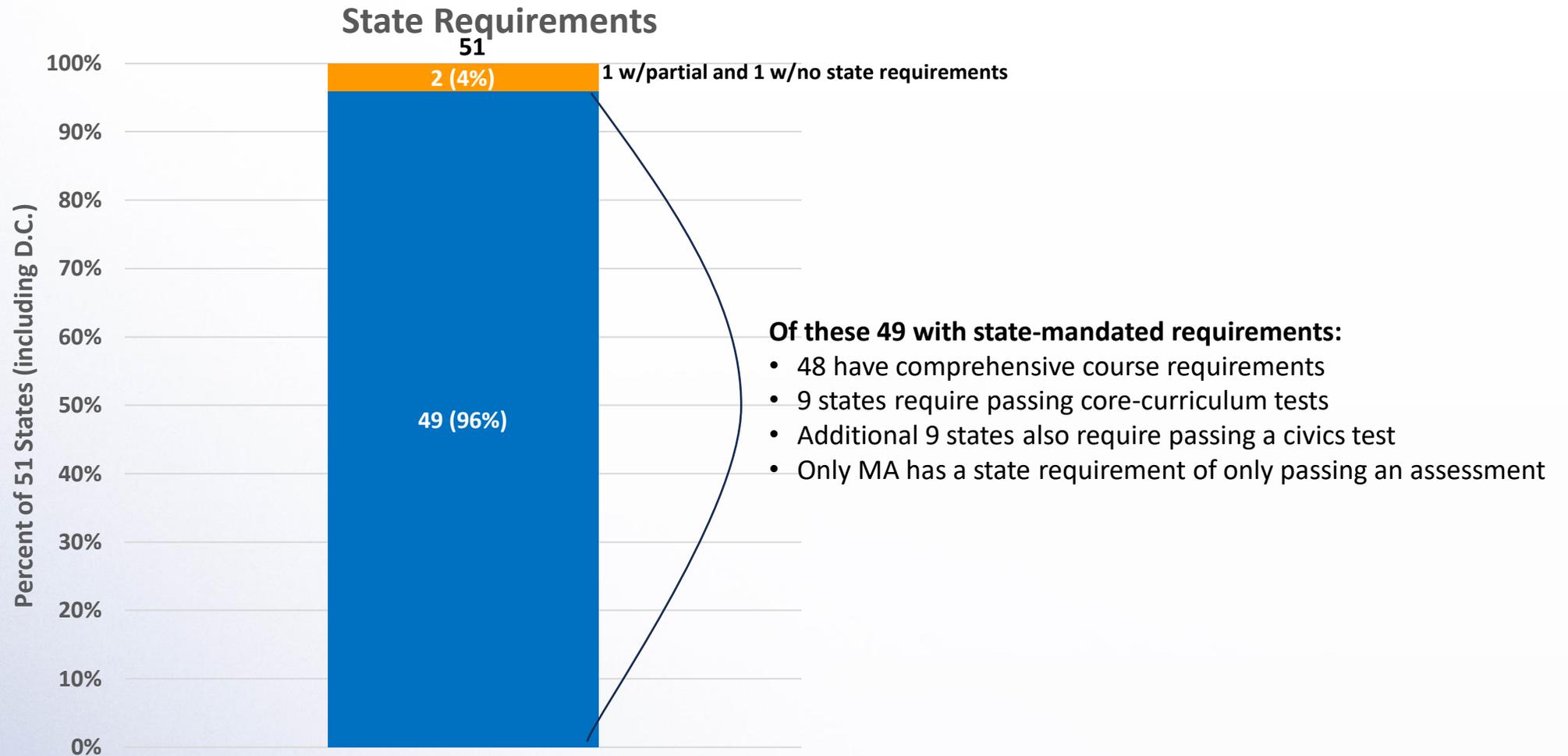
MA School B

- 4 credits English
- 4 credits Mathematics
- 3 credits Science and Technology/Engineering
- 3 credits History/Social Science (including 1 credit World History and 2 credits U.S. History)
- 2 credits Foreign Language (of the same language)
- 1 credit Arts
- 5 credits additional core courses
- Additionally, students must complete a physical education course each year

MA School C

- 8 credits of English
- 8 credits of Math
- 6 credits of Spanish
- 6 credits of Science
- 5 credits of Computer Science
- 6 credits of History
- 2 credits of Arts
- 80 hours of after-school club participation
- 40 hours of community service

National Landscape



Historical Timeline of the CD – Milestones

1993	Competency Determination established by the Education Reform Act
1998	First MCAS tests given
Jan 2000	Initial CD standard adopted by the Board (BESE) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students in the class of 2003 were required to score <i>Needs Improvement</i> (220) or higher on the grade 10 ELA and mathematics tests
2001	Grade 10 students take the first test with the CD in effect
2003	First graduating class held to the CD
2006	Revisions to the CD standard adopted Students in the class of 2010 required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pass one of the four high school science and technology/engineering tests• Meet the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) if they score below <i>Proficient</i> (240) on the ELA or math tests
Feb. 2018	BESE adopts interim standard for classes of 2021 and 2022
Spring 2019	First administration of grade 10 next-generation tests in ELA and math

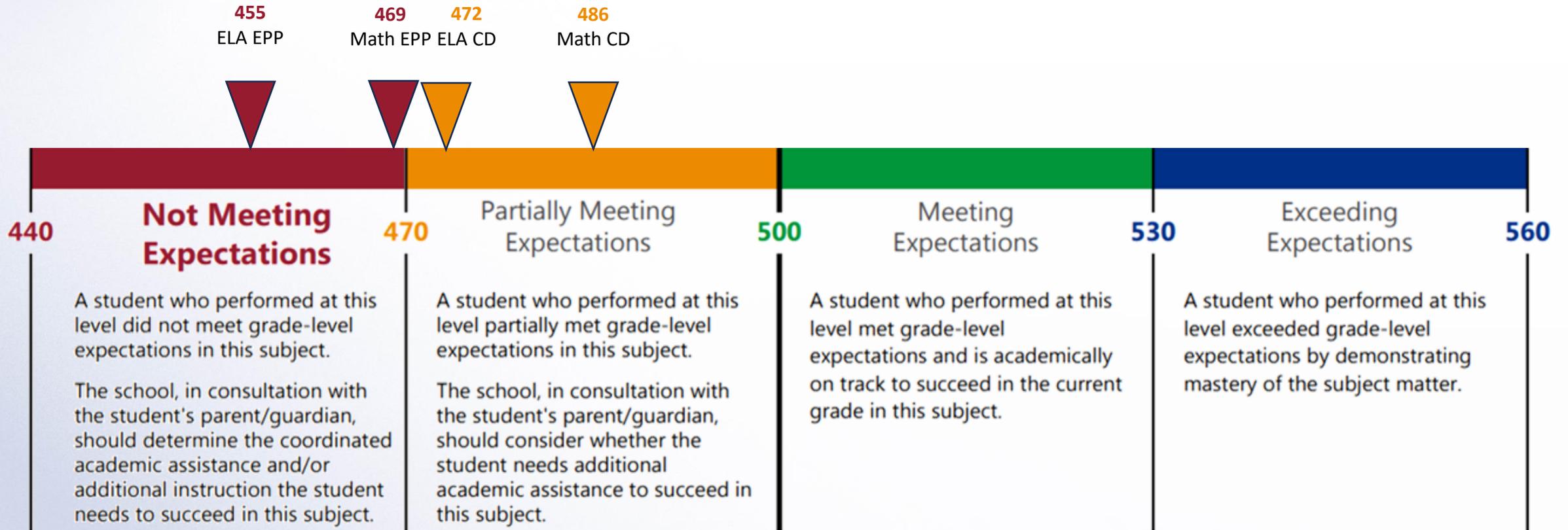
Historical Timeline of the CD – Milestones

Winter 2020	Board extends interim standard to the class of 2023; advisory committee begins meeting
April 2020- April 2021	Board takes a series of votes to allow students in certain classes to earn their CD through a modified process, in recognition of missed MCAS testing opportunities over the course of the pandemic. The modified CD is in effect for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classes of 2020-2022 for ELA and mathematics• Classes of 2020-2023 for STE
Sept 2021	Board extends interim CD standard to the classes of 2024 and 2025
2020-2022	Convening of CD Advisory Committee (to consider how best to align the CD threshold cut scores with the achievement levels and expectations of the next-generation tests)
2022	Regulations revised for Class of 2026 and beyond to align with next generation-tests

How can students earn the Competency Determination (CD) ?

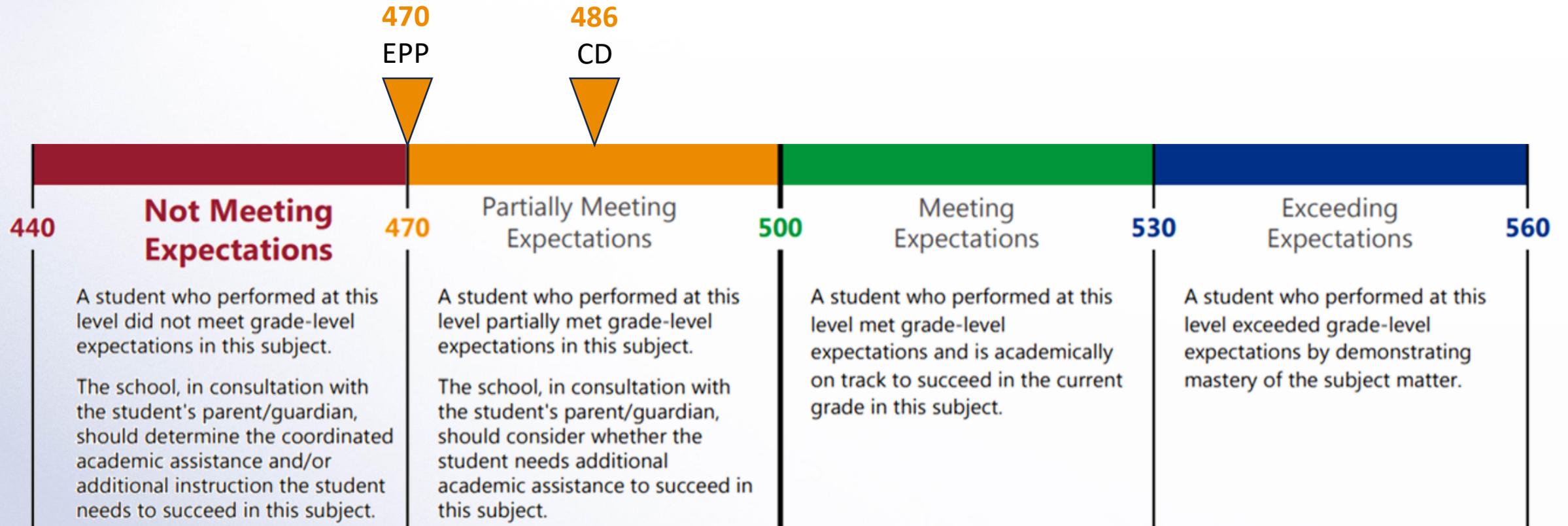
1. Earn a qualifying score at the CD level on their first attempt of the regular administration of the MCAS in ELA, Mathematics, and Science
2. Earn a qualifying score at the Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) level on their first attempt and complete a locally administered EPP (no additional MCAS testing required)
3. Earn a qualifying score at the EPP level on one of four additional retest opportunities
4. Granted a cohort, transcript or portfolio appeal in one or more subjects
5. Granted an approved transcript review for 12th graders moving into MA after the final retest opportunity
6. Granted an approved transcript review for student in military families moving into MA

Competency Determination Requirements for Classes of 2024 and 2025



For STE: Earn a score of 220 or higher on a legacy STE test, or the interim passing standard for next-generation Biology (467) or Introductory Physics (470)

Competency Determination Requirements for Classes of 2026-2030



Science: Only one level – students must earn a score of 470 or higher on one of the MCAS Science tests

Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)

- Students scoring at or above the EPP level but below the CD level are required to complete a locally-administered EPP
- Students are no longer required to take the MCAS
- Components of the EPP
 - A review of the student's strengths and weaknesses, based on MCAS and other assessment results, coursework, grades, and teacher input
 - The courses the student will be required to take and successfully complete in grades 11 and 12
 - A description of the assessments the school will administer on a regular basis to determine whether the student is moving toward proficiency

CD appeal types

Cohort Appeals (all students)

- Based on a comparison of the grade point average (GPA) and MCAS scores of a student for whom the appeal is filed and those of at least six (6) other students in the school

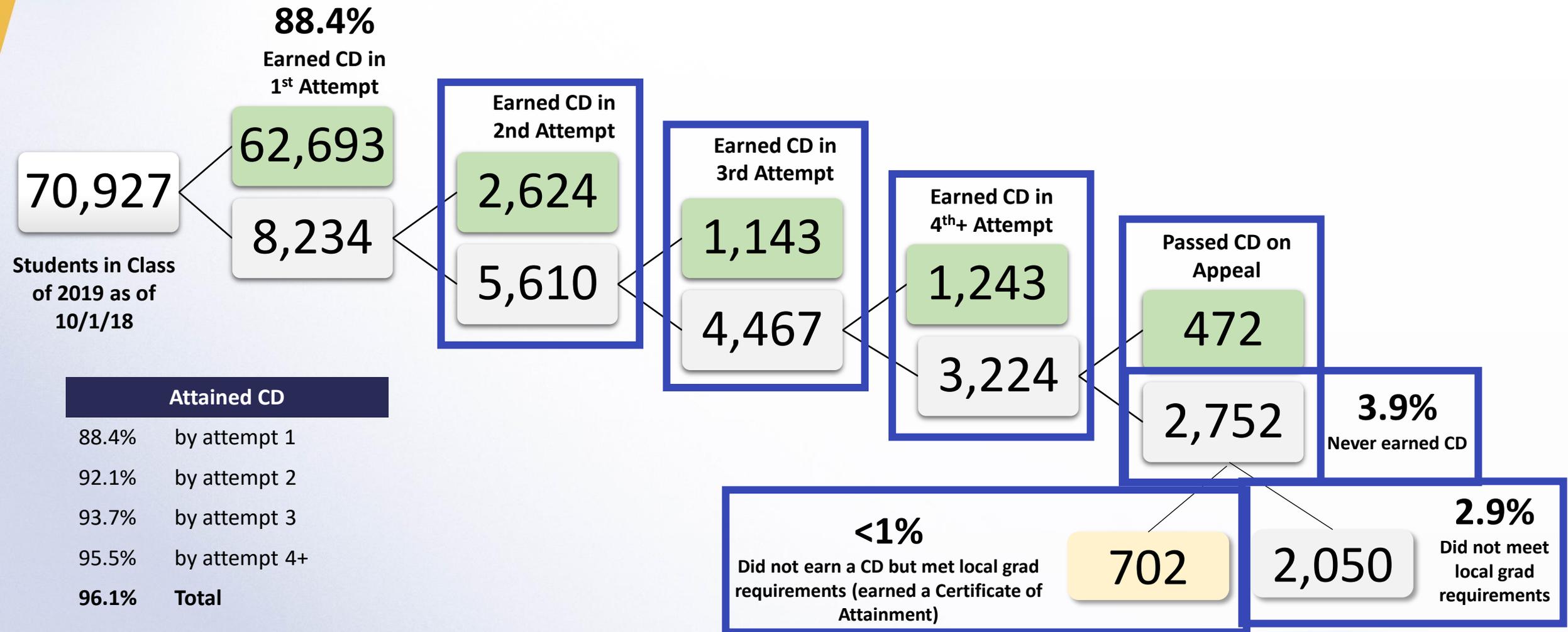
Portfolio Appeals (all students)

- Specific student work samples collected during one or more years in high school that attempt to demonstrate that the appellant meets a comparable level of performance to a student who has earned a qualifying score on a high school MCAS test in the subject of the appeal

Transcript Appeals (late arrival to MA or military families)

- Academic evidence are submitted to the Department to demonstrate that the student has the equivalent knowledge and skills to a student who has earned the MCAS score required to earn a CD.

Class of 2019: CD Attainment for All Students



Class of 2019 Certificate of Attainment Earners

Student group	Total #	COA Earners #	COA Earners %
All students	70,927	702	1.0%
African-American/Black	6,498	130	2.0%
Asian	4,733	14	0.3%
Hispanic/Latino	12,087	323	2.7%
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	2,005	18	0.9%
Native American	148	1	0.0%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	72	2	2.8%
White	45,384	214	0.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	21,635	538	2.5%
English Learner	3,642	281	7.7%
Students with Disabilities	11,454	402	3.5%

Class of 2019 Certificate of Attainment Earners

- 702 students that met local graduation requirements, but did not graduate because they had not met CD requirements
- Less than 1% of enrolled 12th graders that could have graduated in 2019
- 114 students (16.2%) had an appeal submitted on their behalf by a school district
- 184 students took the MCAS-Alt in one or more subjects because of a significant cognitive disability
 - 26% of Certificate of Attainment earners
 - 1.6% of all students with disabilities
 - The MCAS-Alt measures performance significantly below grade level and students can submit a competency portfolio to earn the CD