



BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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29 January 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Every year in late fall or early winter, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) publishes the state mandated test results from the previous spring and publicizes schools' and districts' accountability ratings. This year's information includes: MCAS results for 10th graders (English Language Arts and Math) and 5th, 8th and 9th graders (Science); and MCAS 2.0 exam results for grades 3-8 in ELA and Math.

Bedford has much to be proud of regarding its 2017 MCAS scores. Once again, Bedford High School ranks at the high end of the state's 358 public and charter high schools—in the 84th percentile—with 99% of its students scoring Advanced or Proficient in English Language Arts, 91% scoring Proficient or Advanced in Math, and 80% scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science. Please note that in Science, our accountability rating is based upon the previous year's science scores. The ninth graders who took the 2017 MCAS science test (Physics) actually achieved a 91% combined Proficient and Advanced score. Meanwhile, our 5th and 8th grade MCAS science scores experienced a dip this year, but for good reason. Bedford has been ahead of the curve regarding the outstanding new science standards, having begun their adoption in 2014. Unfortunately, the 2017 MCAS science test was based entirely upon the 2006 standards. Where the standards overlapped, our students performed quite well. (The 2018 MCAS science test will combine both sets of standards, and in 2019, only the new standards will be assessed.)

Like all students across the state, our 3rd - 8th grade students took the MCAS 2.0 exam in math and English Language Arts (ELA). Because MCAS 2.0 is an entirely new type of test, to which districts have not yet thoroughly aligned their curricula, this year's assessment served as a baseline test, and no accountability levels have been determined based on the results. Rather, annual progress targets will be set by DESE as the test evolves, renewing and revising the accountability system. Lane and JGMS, then, like all other grade 3-8 Massachusetts schools, do not have a level determination for 2017. Educators and administrators have analyzed the test results and put in place next steps, including professional development, especially in literacy, to address concerns we have about student performance, mostly in terms of complex problem solving including written responses connected to multiple texts.

On MCAS 2.0, in grades 3, 4 and 5, at least 65% of our students met or exceeded expectations in ELA, and student growth for most subgroups was above the 50th percentile, considered strong. In grades 3-5 math, at least 69% of students met or exceeded expectations, and student growth percentiles were also near or above the 50th percentile for most groups. At the John Glenn Middle School, ELA performance was more varied, with the following percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations: 72% in grade 6; 59% in grade 7; 61% in grade 8. In math, the following percentages of students met or exceeded expectations: 68% in grade 6; 64% in grade 7; 58% in grade 8.

Accountability ratings, which use MCAS scores over time, follow a complex formula that combines level of achievement with growth and rate of achievement gap closing for identified subgroups. Schools are rated 1-5, with 1 being the highest. In 2017 BHS slipped to level 2 accountability rating for the first time because, while the high school exceeded targets in ELA, we fell slightly short of those targets in math and science. While Lane and JGMS do not have a designated level for 2017, the BHS level designation is 2. If a district has one or more schools rated at a level 2, the whole district is so rated. Accordingly, Bedford was assigned a level 2 accountability rating. Educators and administrators at the high school have analyzed these results carefully and implemented structural and instructional changes to support the students needing to pass one or more of these tests required for graduation.

Please feel free to contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jon Sills