



Watertown High School

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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Enclosed you will find your child's MCAS scores from last spring. The MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) is a series of standardized tests designed to measure important skills and knowledge in selected academic subjects: English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. The MCAS has two purposes: the first is to measure individual student performance and make sure that every child has adequate knowledge and skills by the time they graduate from high school; the second is to assess and publicly release school and district performance ratings, holding school systems accountable for student achievement.

Watertown High School students take MCAS tests in English and math in the tenth grade. They also take science MCAS tests in either the ninth or tenth grade, depending upon their course placement and readiness for assessment. Massachusetts requires that all students earn passing scores on each of these tests in order to receive their high school diploma. Students who receive failing marks on any test have several chances to retake exams before graduation. Students who receive a "needs improvement" mark in English or math are put on an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) that outlines the coursework a student requires to demonstrate sufficient skills before graduation.

I am pleased to report that Watertown High School again met all of our Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals this year. In English Language Arts, 85% of our students scored in the Proficient or Advanced categories, and in Mathematics, 79% of our students scored in the Proficient or Advanced categories. In tenth grade science (primarily biology), 69% of our students scored in the Proficient or Advanced categories, but those numbers do not include students who already passed MCAS science exams in the ninth grade. Again, we tested a smaller number of students in ninth grade science (primarily introductory physics), and of those 42 students, 91% scored in the Proficient or Advanced categories.

We will continue to examine our curriculum, teaching practices, and student services to determine how we can best educate your children and inspire them toward greatness. MCAS scores are not the sole measure of a student's or a school's achievement level. Yet they are helpful indicators for schools and families alike, highlighting points of strength and need.

There is a lot of information on your test results, including your child's performance level (advanced, proficient, needs improvement, or warning), his or her scaled scores (200 – 280), and a comparison of your child's scores with the average scores of other students in the school, district, and state. This year's scores are also accompanied by a growth score, which represents the state's best early efforts to identify how much student scores have improved over time. If you have questions about your child's MCAS results, please do not hesitate to call your child's guidance counselor. You also can go online to the district web site and click on "District Assessment" on the right-hand column for information around your child's scores. Thank you for your continued support as we work together to ensure that all our children are successful in school.

Warmly,

Steve Watson

