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SPS CONTINUES TO LEAD URBAN DISTRICTS, SHOWS STRONG GROWTH IN BASELINE YEAR OF NEXT-GENERATION MCAS

Somerville High School maintains Level 1 designation for fifth consecutive year, posts highest Science/Technology achievement to date

Somerville, MA – Earlier today, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released results of the next-generation MCAS, administered for the first time in grades 3-8 last spring. These spring 2017 results will serve as the baseline for the new assessment and for target-setting for 2018 and beyond, and **should not be compared to previous years' achievement scores**. Student achievement score levels for the next-generation MCAS are different from what the Department now refers to as the legacy MCAS, with next-generation scores falling into one of four new categories that measure where a student falls in terms of grade-level expectations: Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations and Not Meeting Expectations.

The next-generation MCAS is designed **to set higher expectations with more rigorous standards for each category, and to give a clearer indication of a students' readiness for higher-level work at the next grade level**. The new assessment focuses on critical thinking, how students apply knowledge, and a students' ability to make connections between reading and writing. Accountability reporting measures for the next-generation MCAS are also transitioning. Most schools/districts did not receive an accountability level in this baseline year of the next-generation MCAS. Level 4 or 5 schools or districts that are not exiting will maintain their level designation. Schools/districts that had a participation rate of less than 90% on the next-generation MCAS or persistently low graduation rates were placed into Level 3. The only measure that remains somewhat consistent between the legacy and next-generation MCAS is the Student Growth Percentile (SGP). The new assessment provides a Transitional SGP for school and district use, which compares the change in a student's achievement on the MCAS to the change in achievement for students across the state who scored similarly in the past. The transitional SGP has been made available to aid in interpreting student performance on the new MCAS assessment. The accuracy of the measure will improve with the administration of the next MCAS assessment.

According to the [spring 2017 next-generation MCAS baseline year results](#) released by the Department, Somerville continues to maintain excellent overall growth, indicating that Somerville Public Schools (SPS) students are making strong gains compared to other students across the state who scored similarly on previous years' exams. SPS posted Transitional SGPs of 60 (ELA) and 57 (Math) in grades 3-8 and 68 (ELA) and 63.5 (Math) in Grade 10. Many of the grade-level Transitional SGPs in Somerville are above the normal range of 40-60 SGP, including Grade 5 SGPs of 68 in Math and 65 in ELA, and an ELA SGP of 68 in Grade 6.

As measured by the percentage of students with achievement levels of Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, district-wide grade 3-8 results are on par with state-wide performance. Somerville students in grade 5 outperformed the state in both ELA and Math, with a higher percentage of students scoring in the Meets Expectations/Exceeds Expectations categories combined. 51% (ELA) and 52% (Math) of SPS fifth graders landed in the top two categories, compared to 48.5% and 45.9% state-wide in ELA and Math, respectively. District grade 4 Math results also exceeded those of the state with 51% of SPS students either Meeting or Exceeding

Expectations, compared to 48.6% of students state-wide. Nearly half of all grade 3-8 students in the district met the more rigorous Meeting or Exceeding Expectations standards, including 46% in ELA (compared to 49% statewide), 47% in Math (48% state), and 52% in Science (53% state). SPS also outperformed urban districts as a group in ELA and Math at all grade levels. 51% of SPS 5th graders met or exceeded expectations in ELA, as compared to 34% of students across all urban districts. 51% of 4th graders in SPS were Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, compared to an urban district average of 31.6%.

The next-generation MCAS was administered only to students in grades 3-8. Students in grades 10 will continue to be assessed using the legacy MCAS until 2019, when they will begin taking the next-generation MCAS. Somerville High School (SHS) continues on its upward trajectory, maintaining its Level 1 state accountability designation for the 5th consecutive year, indicating continued success in closing achievement gaps and meeting improvement goals. English Language Learners saw a 13-point gain in ELA, from a 65.2 CPI in 2016 to 78.6 in 2017, and an 11-point gain in math (65.8 2017 CPI). SHS also made great strides in narrowing the achievement gap for special education students. The ELA CPI for students with disabilities improved from 87.2 to 94.4, greatly exceeding the 6-year improvement goal of 88.6. In math, this same subgroup saw a gain of 9.6 CPI points this year. The percentage of overall students at SHS scoring Proficient or Advanced increased in every subject compared to last year. 89% of students scored Proficient or Advanced in ELA, up 3 percentage points over last year; 76% scored Proficient or Advanced in Math (including 51% Advanced), up 7 percentage points over last year; and 74% of students scored Proficient or Advanced in Science, up 5 percentage points over last year.

“While the new MCAS assessment provides us with a snapshot of valuable information, we know that we have to use multiple measures that will assist us in preparing students for higher-level work, and that includes performance-based and formative assessments, whole school quality measures, and tools we have built such as Student Insights that help us better understand the academic and social emotional needs of our students,” said Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Schools. “We’re pleased that as a district we’ve continued to maintain excellent growth, and the results of this first year of next-generation MCAS indicate that we’ve established a strong baseline for future growth. We also know that we still have work to do in order to fulfill our commitment to helping all students in our district grow and achieve. Our focus will continue to be on providing strong core instruction with focused academic and social emotional supports to ensure EVERY student continues to grow, and by doing so close any performance and opportunity gaps that exist within the district.”

“When we invest in education, we’re investing in the future of our City. Somerville understands how critically important this work is, and how the community as a whole plays a role in creating opportunities that will lead to a lifetime of success for our children,” commented Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone. “Thanks to the hard work of our students, teachers, and staff, and the steadfast support of the Somerville community, our schools are continuing to prove that with targeted and collective efforts, we will fulfill our vision of providing every student that enters our schools with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners, and empower them to enrich their communities.”

In the past several years, Somerville Public Schools and the City of Somerville have focused on laying a strong foundation in the early years through a city-wide Universal Kindergarten Readiness initiative, expanding out-of-school-time opportunities for all students, and developing resources such as the Student Insights data tool that will change the landscape of how educators are able to meet the needs of their students. [Student Insights](#) is an open-source student data system that offers near-real time information that helps educators provide timely, individualized interventions and supports. As a founding member of Harvard’s Education Redesign Lab’s [By All Means](#) initiative, Somerville is targeting these key focus areas in their work to eliminate the link between children’s socioeconomic status and academic success, and the resulting persistent achievement gaps.

“There are many factors that can impact a student’s ability to achieve academic success,” added Laura Pitone, Somerville School Committee Chair. “What a child is learning during the traditional school day is just one piece of a more complex puzzle. I’m confident that our focus on supporting the whole child – socially, emotionally,

physically as well as academically – and increased investment in out of school time initiatives will continue to pay off in higher student achievement as we expand student opportunities to learn, connect, and grow outside of the traditional classroom.”

“We have a strong baseline to work with which demonstrates that the focus on specific instructional strategies has been on target, such as focusing on strong early childhood instruction and ensuring we have rigorous instruction in every classroom,” commented Dr. Almi Abeyta, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. “This next-generation baseline offers us an opportunity to recalibrate to the more rigorous standards that will ensure that our students are not only prepared for higher-level work at the next grade level, but ultimately fully prepared for post-secondary success.”

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Definitions and Resources:

- **Transitional SGP: Student Growth Percentile** is “a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student’s MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar scores in prior years.” (from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s [MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide](#), March 2011). The Transitional SGP is a growth percentile that was created with data from prior years and links assessment results for the PARRC assessment, the legacy MCAS, and the Next Generation MCAS. This measure may shift as the state moves towards using the Next Generation MCAS exclusively at grades 3-8 and grade 10.
- **CPI: Composite Performance Index (Legacy MCAS)** is a “100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alt tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together and the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes a district, school or group’s CPI for that subject and student group. The CPI is a measure of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency (a CPI of 100) in ELA and mathematics. CPIs are generated separately for ELA and mathematics, and at all levels - state, district, school, and student group.” (from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s 2010 [Glossary of Accountability Reporting Terms](#))
- **MCAS Parent Guide** (available in several languages): www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/Back-to-School
- **FAQ About Next-Generation MCAS:** <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/results-faq.html>