



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jackie Piques, Chief Communications and Development Officer,  
[jpiques@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:jpiques@k12.somerville.ma.us)

### MCAS Scores for Somerville Public Schools Remain Relatively Stable from 2023

**Somerville, MA** – Following the release of [statewide MCAS scores](#) this week, the Somerville Public Schools (SPS) has seen relatively stable MCAS scores compared to the previous school year. Overall, the district saw improvements in 5th grade and 8th grade science compared to last year, a particular highlight for SPS given recent investments in science and computer science curriculum and enrichment. We also saw an increase in the percentage of 8th grade students meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA and Math compared to last year. In both Math and ELA, percentages were similar to 2023, and ELA scores for grades 3 - 8 combined are on par with the state average.

“While we did not see an increase in students meeting or exceeding expectations that we had hoped to see, we continue to see moderate growth across grade levels and subject areas in average student growth percentiles. We have made significant adjustments in many areas in just the last year that we fully expect will have positive, long-term impacts on student growth. This applies not only to performance on assessments, but also academic achievement overall,” Dr. Carmona noted. “Our long-held approach in SPS is to support the whole child, providing critical wraparound supports to help all students grow and succeed. This year, we are strengthening not only our core curriculum with new math and literacy programs, but we are also investing in additional Social-Emotional curriculum and in Common Planning Time for educators and staff to share best practice and ensure data-driven collaboration in teaching and learning districtwide. We believe that these short-term investments will lead to sustainable long-term results. To quote Education Secretary Tutwiler, ‘Change in education is a process, not an event. The road back from the pandemic is not short.’”

SPS is looking toward strategic investments the district has made over the last 12 months - and more planned investments this school year - to bolster both curriculum for students and professional development for educators and staff.

Key investments in SPS for School Year 2024-25 include:

- **Launching new math and literacy curricula with aligned professional development for teachers.**
  - In K-5 mathematics, we are implementing a new curriculum, *Illustrative Mathematics*, a problem-based curriculum built around focus, coherence, and deeper learning through discourse. The curriculum is in place across the district in grades 3-8, while some schools are “early adopters” in grades K-2. Next year all schools K-5 will implement, creating full curricular alignment K-8.
  - This year we adopted a new ELA curriculum, Fishtank ELA, for 6th-8th grade students. Fishtank is a rigorous curriculum that engages students in reading high quality, high interest, grade level texts organized around year-long essential questions. It emphasizes



close reading and text analysis as well as frequent writing about text.

- **Common Planning Time.** Common Planning Time provides educators with a consistent, structured time for planning and educator collaboration across all grades, departments, and schools during contractual hours (early release Wednesdays). Through CPT, educators have dedicated time each week for improving lesson quality, instructional effectiveness, co-teaching practices, sharing best practices, cross-departmental collaboration, and student achievement.
- **Strategic Plan.** In Fall 2024, SPS will publish its 3-5 year Strategic Plan that includes both areas of strength and areas for targeted growth, with key indicators for success. Among the goals for the plan are implementing high-quality, evidenced-based, and culturally responsive PK-12 curriculum, promoting instructional rigor through educator development, and implementing best practices for targeted supports to meet the academic and social emotional needs of students.
- **K-5 Literacy Needs Assessment and 3-5 year Literacy Plan.** Last year we partnered with Hill for literacy to conduct a review of our K-5 literacy programs, using the results to craft a multi-year plan to address areas of growth. This year, one major action step will be the selection of a research and evidence based K-5 reading and writing curriculum. Grades 3-5 will launch this new curriculum in 2025-2026, and K-2 will follow on 2026-2027.
- **Continued implementation of i-Ready online assessment and instruction.** SPS launched i-Ready in School Year 2023-24, and has already utilized the system to guide instruction. This fall the district will launch the **personalized instruction** component of i-Ready in grades 6-8, which will provide personalized lessons for middle grades students in math and ELA. Surrounding districts have already seen positive results through the use of i-Ready in public schools.

“While the MCAS offers a useful data point for understanding overall achievement in literacy, math, science, we believe other assessments, such as i-Ready, DIBELS, and unit tests, provide more meaningful insights for addressing the needs of current students,” Dr. Carmona said. “I welcome families to contact the district with any questions about these assessments and their role in our teaching strategies and professional development.”

In its simultaneous release of the 2024 Massachusetts Accountability System, DESE identified three schools in the district as “Requiring Assistance or Intervention.” DESE’s Center for School and District Partnership (CSDP) will work with SPS this school year to implement systems and practices that advance equity and result in positive outcomes and learning experiences for all students. Support from CSDP may include financial resources, professional development, and additional targeted assistance. The high school grade range met their accountability targets for the ELA achievement and growth and progress towards attaining English language proficiency indicators, and exceeded their targets for the advanced coursework completion and dropout rate indicators. Overall, the 3-8 grade ranges met targets for the progress towards attaining English language proficiency and chronic absenteeism indicators.