



September 29, 2025

Dear Salem Public Schools Community,

Today, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) publicly released the Spring 2025 MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) and accountability results for all schools and districts in the Commonwealth. In Salem, we are very encouraged by the progress we are making, and while we take a moment to celebrate the improvement, we fully recognize that more work is needed to help every student meet their full potential.

At the Grades 3–8 level, we are encouraged by strong gains across all three tested content areas—ELA, Math, and Science. The most notable progress came in English Language Arts, where the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations rose by 8 percentage points and the student growth percentile climbed by 5. We attribute this improvement to several factors, including the skillful instruction of our educators, a sustained emphasis on writing across disciplines, and our collective commitment to high-quality, standards-aligned learning experiences.

Math and Science also showed forward momentum at the Gr. 3-8 level, with the percentage of students reaching proficiency rising by 2 points in Math and 3 points in Science—demonstrating steady, measurable progress in these critical subject areas. Please see high-level Gr. 3-8 results below:

ELA

Grade	ELA Proficiency Rates (2024)	ELA Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates	Growth (2024)	Growth (2025)	Change in Growth
3-8	24%	32%	8% ▲	51	56	5 ▲

Math

Grade	Math Proficiency Rates (2024)	Math Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates	Growth (2024)	Growth (2025)	Change in Growth
3-8	23%	25%	2% ▲	51	50	1 ▼

Science

Grade	Science Proficiency Rates (2024)	Science Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates
5 & 8	30%	33%	3% ▲

Our middle school students truly shined on this year's MCAS, posting double-digit gains in both ELA achievement and growth. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations jumped from 20% to 33%—a remarkable 13-point increase—while the student growth percentile surged from 47 to 59. Middle school students also made strong gains in both Math and Science this year. Math proficiency rose from 16% to 19%, with the growth percentile nudging up from 49 to 50. Science saw an especially impressive leap, with proficiency increasing from 23% to 29%—a 6-point gain that demonstrates real growth in students' mastery of key concepts. These results serve as evidence that our efforts to provide middle level learners with more meaningful, project-based, deeper learning experiences are taking hold!



ELA

Grade	ELA Proficiency Rates (2024)	ELA Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates	Growth (2024)	Growth (2025)	Change in Growth
6-8	20%	33%	13% ▲	47	59	12 ▲

Math

Grade	Math Proficiency Rates (2024)	Math Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates	Growth (2024)	Growth (2025)	Change in Growth
6-8	16%	19%	3% ▲	49	50	1 ▲

Science

Grade	Science Proficiency Rates (2024)	Science Proficiency Rates (2025)	Change in Proficiency Rates
8	23%	29%	6% ▲

At the high school level (New Liberty Innovation School, Salem High School, and Salem Prep), while proficiency rates in ELA, Math, and Science saw slight declines compared with last year's record increases, our students continued to demonstrate strong academic growth. ELA proficiency decreased from 50% to 43%, Math from 42% to 41%, and Science from 44% to 41%. Despite these changes, growth percentiles tell a more encouraging story: in ELA, the growth percentile rose from 57 to 66, and in Math, it increased from 65 to 67. These results reflect that our high school students are making more progress than high schoolers statewide who started at a similar performance level on their previous MCAS test in 8th grade.

MCAS data provides Salem Public Schools' educators and families with valuable insights into students' progress, helping us identify both areas of strength and areas where additional support may be needed. While MCAS scores are an important measure, they are just one indicator of student and school success. Individual MCAS score reports for all students will be shared with families during October.

In addition, the state released accountability information for individual schools. This system evaluates school and district improvement not only on MCAS achievement and growth—for all students and various subgroups—but also on a broader set of indicators, including chronic absenteeism, progress of multilingual learners toward English proficiency, completion of advanced coursework, graduation rates, dropout rates, and extended high school enrollment. There is much to celebrate as Salem schools made notable progress toward their established targets. Below, we have highlighted a few key points from the accountability data.

- Over half of Salem schools (5 out of 8) made substantial progress toward their targets in 2025 (Bates, Collins, Saltonstall, Witchcraft and Salem High School).
- 6 out of 8 schools improved their percentile rank in two consecutive years (Bates, Bentley, Collins, Saltonstall, Witchcraft and Salem High School).
- All schools but one have a designation of *"Not requiring assistance or intervention"*.
 - Salem High School is listed as *"Requiring assistance or intervention"* due to low participation of English Learners (ELs) or Former English Learners (FELs). Every subgroup must have a 95% participation rate, and ELs/FELs at Salem High School participated at 94%. If one more student in this group had tested, the

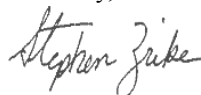
school would have had a designation of “not requiring assistance”.

- In both ELA and Math for Gr. 3-8, students in the high-needs subgroup, students with disabilities, and low-income students had SGPs ranging from the high 40s to the mid-50s. Current English Learners (ELs) had SGPs in the high 40s in both subjects. For grade 10, these same subgroups—students with disabilities, low-income, and high-needs—showed stronger growth in both ELA and math, with SGPs consistently in the mid-to-high 60s. While there are promising results with regard to student growth percentiles, we still continue to see significant disproportionality in achievement for subgroups.
- In Gr. 3-8, students who were formerly classified as English Learners showed exceptional growth, with SGPs in the 60s and 70s for ELA and in the high 50s for math, outperforming all other subgroups.
- In 2025, our achievement gaps with the state in all high school content areas and Grades 3-8 ELA are smaller than they were before the pandemic.
- The Salem Public Schools as a District met or exceeded 66% of the established targets in 2025 which is considered making “*Substantial progress toward targets*”.
- We are encouraged that as a district we met 62% of our improvement targets of the last two years. During this period, Salem has met or exceeded more accountability targets than any Gateway City in the Commonwealth.
- Salem Public Schools’ student progress towards English proficiency (ACCESS) was 5-percentage points higher than 2024 and 4-percentage points higher than the state average.
- Our rates of chronic absenteeism continue to improve such that we had the third lowest rate of absenteeism out of 26 Gateway City school districts.
- 73% of our students passed an advanced course in 11th or 12th grade (3rd among Gateways).

While we are proud of the progress highlighted above, our work to support every student’s success continues. Too many students are still not consistently performing at or above grade level, and we remain committed to creating school environments that foster academic excellence and high expectations for all learners. Every student deserves regular access to challenging, meaningful work aligned to state standards. Across all grade levels, this means engaging in rigorous reading and writing, participating in thoughtful academic discussions, and tackling real-world problems that build critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Families can find more detailed information on Salem’s results on the [DESE website](#). We will also share additional insights about our MCAS and accountability data, along with the steps we are taking to meet students’ diverse needs, at our next School Committee meeting on **Monday, October 6th, at 7 p.m.** We are grateful for your partnership as we continue our mission of elevating learning and ensuring every child in Salem Public Schools has the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,



Stephen Zrike, Ed.D., Superintendent