

Peabody Public Schools  
Superintendent Joseph Mastrocola

# THE REFRIGERATOR SHEET

**Fall 2014**

To Peabody Staff, Parents and Guardians:

As the 2014-15 school year begins, the Department of Education recently released extensive data associated with our performance last year in each school and the entire district.

Basically, this information is a summary of each student's performance on last spring's MCAS tests, along with Peabody's profiles, especially comparing our schools in the district to each other and our district to districts across Massachusetts.

It is very important that we interpret this information in a manner that breaks down data for unbiased interpretation, given several key realities.

These realities are, in no certain order, a reality that both the federal and state governments have been shifting the MCAS focus for many years running, especially in English Language Arts and Mathematics with the new Common Core Standards. That each grade in any school system has a certain set of strengths and weaknesses in test taking for all students. That we, in Peabody, like many Massachusetts communities, are confronted with a growing trend in student and family transience in and out of both the city and the school system. That we, like many Massachusetts communities, are now confronted with an extensive immigration movement of children out of Central America that will challenge us on many fronts. Finally, that the four levels of MCAS results --- Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, Warning/Failure - are interpreted with the understanding that our staff and students have worked tirelessly to achieve the highest results.

Having offered the aforementioned, I am proud to say that our school system once again ranks above the state average in important areas of MCAS performance. That the majority - some 89% of all of our high school students - achieved an Advanced or Proficient score on all ELA MCAS tests. That, while the High School has dropped to a Level III performance on MCAS, specific analysis of that school's data shows many students losing "bonus points" toward a higher level by one or two questions or omitting extended information in writing sections in comparison to 2013 results. Finally, that the number of Warning or Failure scores across the district remain in the single-digit percentile for which we have extensive remediation services.

On a positive note, after much hard work by the teaching staff, and sound instructional leadership by the Principal, and organization by district administrators the West School went from a level three school to a level one. This is an outstanding accomplishment!

I am confident that some of the new initiatives in the district such as articulated curriculum alignments to MCAS, our established rubrics for higher-order thinking skills, our new mathematics initiatives, and our new writing requirements in all major subjects will continue to keep us improving MCAS performance.

In summary, we are in excellent standing compared with state averages, but still have much work to do.

I look forward to leading our administration and staff in this crucial effort, while they lead our students to improved outcomes in each classroom.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Mastrocola  
Superintendent of Schools