

# 5 Takeaways: 2023 Statewide Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Results

## What is the MCAS?

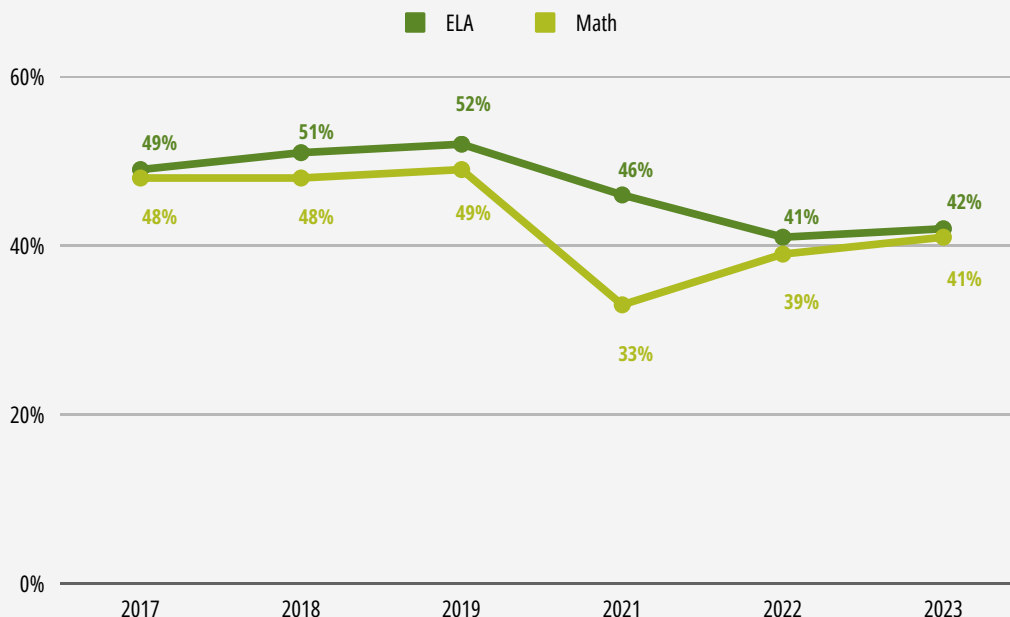
**The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)** is a set of statewide tests that measure student performance against grade-level expectations in English Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Mathematics. Students in grades 3 to 8 take the ELA and Math tests each year and take science tests in grades 5 and 8. Tenth graders take English, Math, and Science assessments and must score above a certain level on each in order to graduate. The results provide an important glimpse of how well our education system is working for different groups of students, including students of color, students from low-income families, English learners, and students with disabilities.

## What are the statewide takeaways from the 2023 results?



**While statewide scores have generally increased, they are still well below pre-pandemic levels.** If Massachusetts continues at the rate of improvement seen from last year to this year — about one percentage point, on average — it will take at least eight years for students to recover to their pre-pandemic levels in all grade levels and subjects.

**FIGURE 1: Percentage of 3rd-8th Grade Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations**



# 2

On average, 3rd-8th grade ELA scores rose for the second year. While scores are recovering, they are often improving more slowly for systemically underserved student groups, resulting in growing equity gaps. For example, in 2022, the gap between the percentage of Black students meeting and exceeding grade level expectations and their White counterparts was 22 percentage points; this year, the gap increased to 24 percentage points.

## Equity Spotlight

English Learners and Latina/o/x students are furthest from their pre-pandemic levels in 3rd-8th grade ELA. The percentage of EL 3rd-8th graders meeting and exceeding expectations in ELA has fallen 9 percentage points since 2019; for Latina/o/x students, it's dropped 11 points.

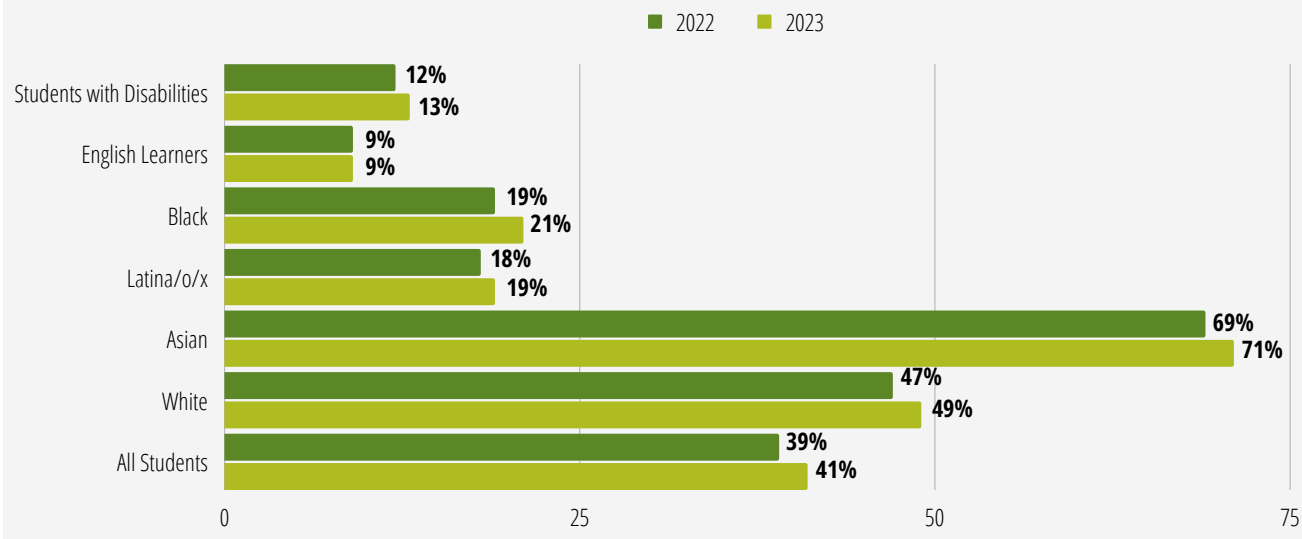
Figure 2: 3rd-8th Grade Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in ELA

Subgroup	2019	2021	2022	2023
All Students	52%	46%	41%	42%
Students with Disabilities	16%	16%	11%	12%
English Learners	15%	8%	6%	6%
Black	33%	28%	26%	26%
Latina/o/x	33%	26%	22%	22%
Asian	72%	66%	63%	64%
White	59%	54%	48%	50%

# 3

On average, the percentage of students meeting and exceeding grade level expectations in 3rd-8th grade math has increased. While scores improved for nearly all student groups, the gains are uneven, with scores improving more slowly for systemically underserved student groups. For example, the percentage of 3rd-8th grade English Learners meeting and exceeding grade level expectations in math remained stagnant at 9% from 2022 to 2023, while grade level rates increased 2 percentage points for White students.

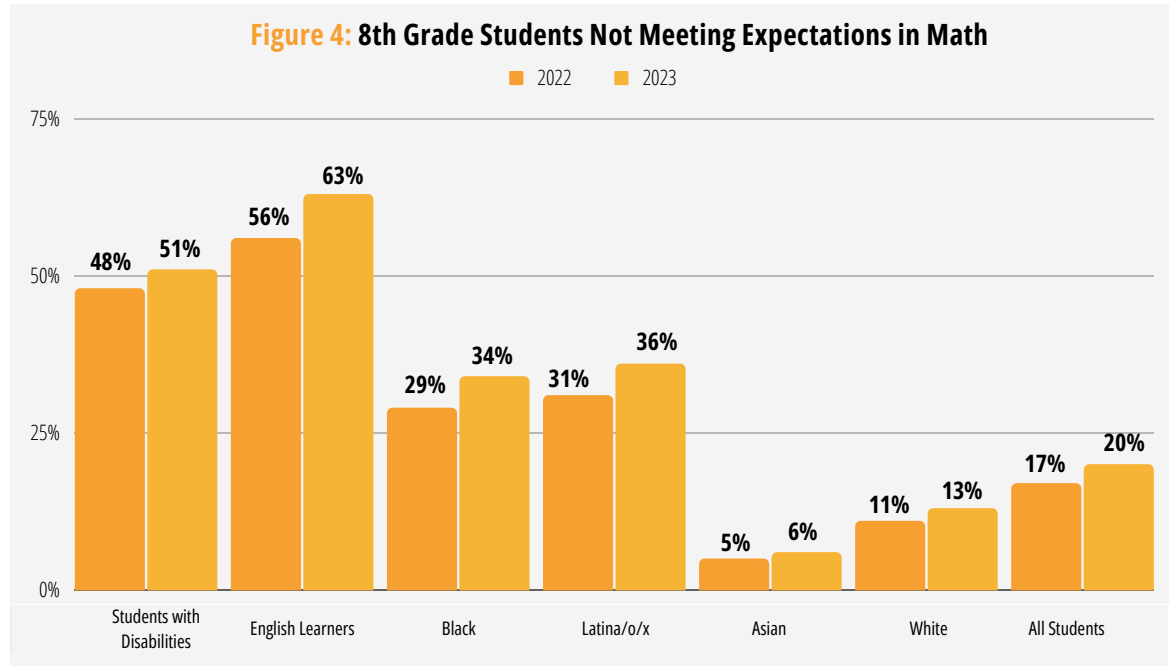
Figure 3: 3rd-8th Grade Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Math



# 4

**8th-grade math scores appear to be recovering. However, the percentage of students not meeting expectations has increased for the second year – with larger increases for systemically underserved students.** For example, in 2023, about 1 in every 3 Black 8th graders are not meeting grade level expectations (a rise of 5 percentage points since 2022) compared to just over 1 in every 10 of their White peers (an increase of 2 percentage points).

**+** Eighth grade is critical because students' mastery of mathematical concepts and skills will determine which high school math courses will be available to them. Therefore, it is essential to set students up for college and beyond.



# 5

**10th-grade MCAS scores tell us how students nearing graduation are doing academically, and this year's results are concerning.** On average, statewide scores for 10th-grade ELA and math have remained level with 2022 results. However, in both subjects, substantial disparities in outcomes persist. For example, 66% of 10th graders who are not low-income are meeting grade-level expectations in math, compared to only 27% of their low-income peers.

**Figure 4: 10th Grade Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in ELA and Math, by Subgroup**

Student Group	ELA	Math
Students With Disabilities	22%	16%
English Learners	4%	5%
Black	42%	27%
Latina/o/x	36%	25%
Asian	79%	80%
White	67%	60%
All Students	58%	50%

**What these scores mean**

These results **do not reflect students' ability to learn**; they reflect the opportunities, learning experiences, and supports they receive.

Moreover, this is not about blame – we know how hard educators have worked these past few years. What these results do indicate, however, is that **there is still much work to do to support all students, especially systemically underserved student groups.**