

## East Boston High and Northeast Metro Tech buck MCAS Downward Trend



by Joan Reissman

### Sunlight Through the MCAS Clouds

The 2022 MCAS results confirmed what was already well known: pandemic learning loss is broad and deep. Students in every grade scored lower in both English and math than in 2019, the last test before the pandemic. (There was no MCAS in 2020.) From the disrupted hybrid year of 2021 to 2022, the first year fully back in the classroom, there were gains in math but continued losses in English. Net learning loss from pre-pandemic 2019 to post-pandemic 2022 (based on the percent of students meeting or exceeding the state target score) was an average 9.7 points in math and 9.9 points in English Language Arts. Surveying the statewide results, [Commissioner Jeffrey Riley said it could take up to five years](#)

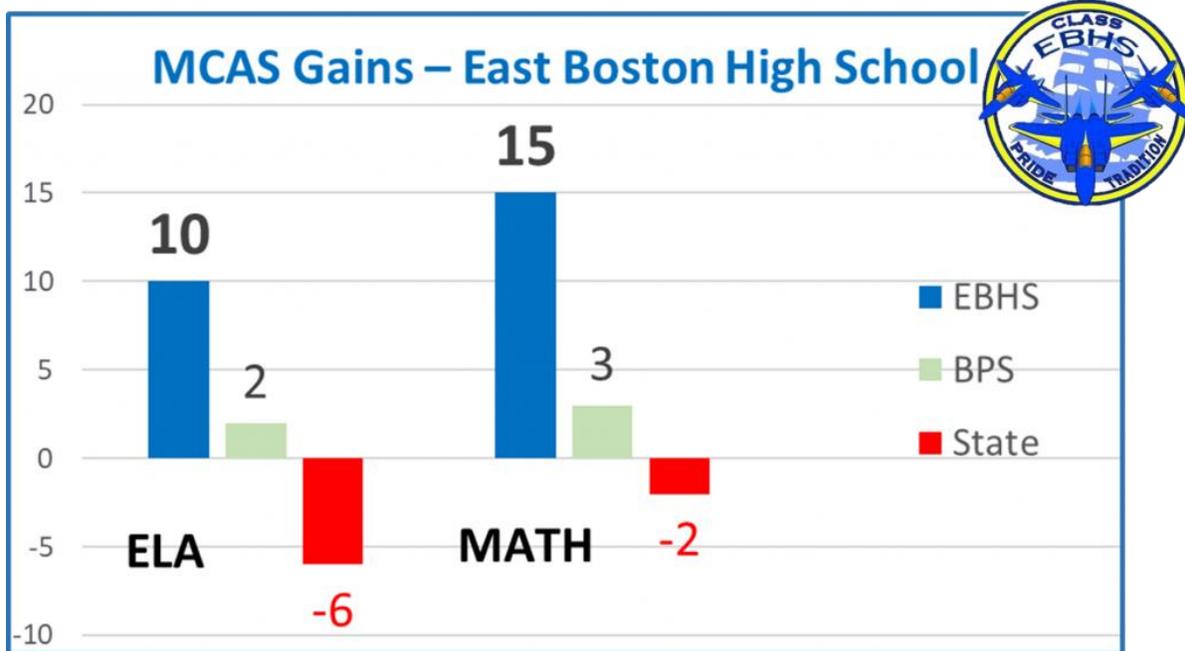
before students fully catch up. [ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/09/29/metro/we-still-have-way-go-new-mcas-scores-show-students-continue-perform-significantly-worse-than-pre-pandemic/> ]

There is much to say about these test results and their meaning for students and teachers. MCAS has been the state’s measurement of student knowledge and skills since 1998. The sheer volume of data is overwhelming. We will have more to say about this year’s results in subsequent posts; but today we want to shine a beam of sunlight through the leaden cloud cover.

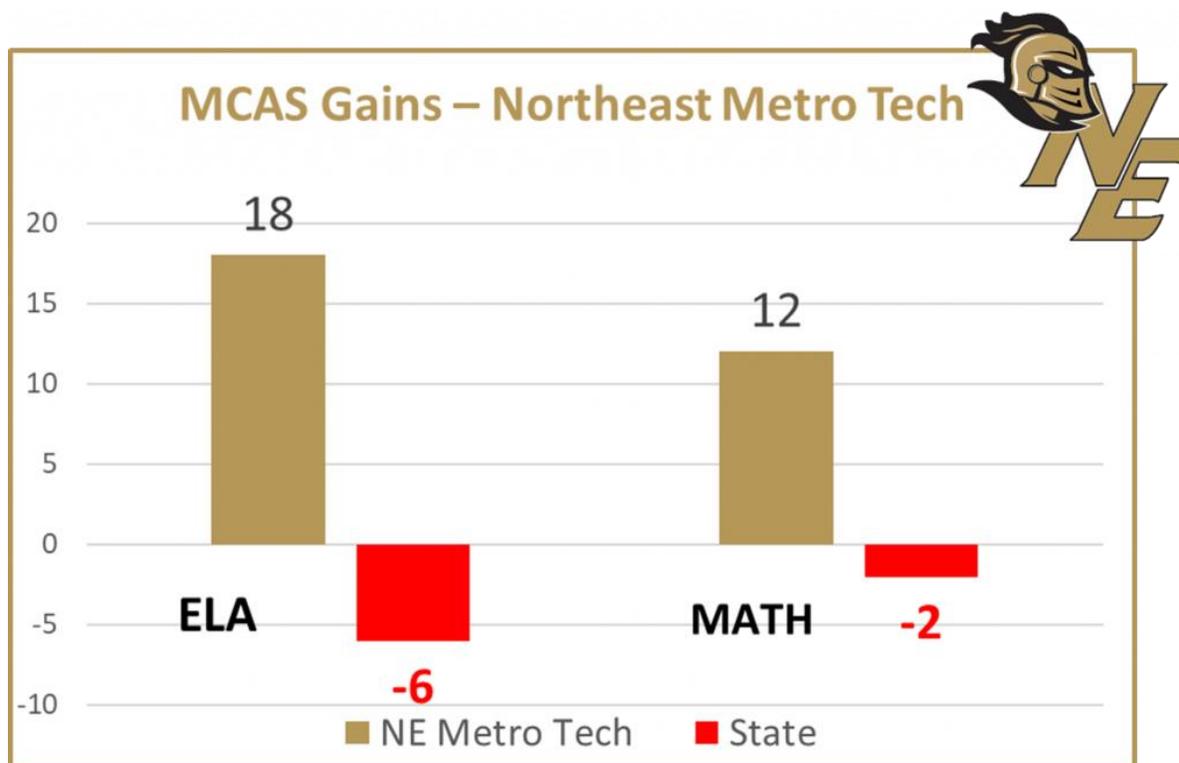
Make that two beams. Two schools that work with JFYNetWorks defied the general downward trend. They are **East Boston High School** and **Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational High School**, also known as Northeast Metro Tech. Both schools posted substantial gains in ELA and in math. (All MCAS citations are based on the percent of students “meeting or exceeding expectations”—the state’s performance target— on the test in question.)

East Boston High School is an open enrollment school in the Boston Public Schools with a very diverse student body. 75% of Eastie’s students do not have English as their first language, 82% are low income, and 93% are classified as high needs. (The state’s percentages are 24% first language not English, 44% low-income, and 56% high needs.) With 985 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> graders, plus 107 7<sup>th</sup> graders, East Boston is the city’s largest open enrollment school. JFY has been working in East Boston High since 2015. On the 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS, the school made substantial gains in both subjects, far exceeding both the state and the Boston school district.

**Eastie gained 10 points in ELA and 15 points in math** from ’21 to ’22, while the state declined 6 points and 2 points. The Boston Public Schools, including the three high-scoring exam schools, gained 2 points in ELA and 3 points in math. The Boston Public Schools are 48% first language not English, 71% low income, and 81.5% high needs.



Northeast Metro Tech is a regional vocational school that serves 11 communities north of Boston including Chelsea, Malden and Revere. The school has more than 1300 students. JFY began working in the school in 2018. **Northeast Metro gained 18 points in English and 12 points in math**, while the state declined 6 points and 2 points.



It goes without saying that the credit for these schools' success goes to the hard work of the teachers and students, and the support of their administrators. It is our good fortune to work with these talented, committed professionals whose skillful use of our tools and techniques, supplementing their established practices, produces results that demonstrate how learning losses can be replaced by learning gains.

Our goal is to build the foundational academic skills of reading, writing and math so that students can succeed in their immediate academic and eventual career pursuits. High school is the critical period for career development. For most students, it is the last complement of free public education, the critical last chance to complete a foundation for lifelong learning and career development.

**MCAS is not a goal; it is a milepost measuring distance traveled and distance ahead.** MCAS is derived directly and specifically from the state curriculum standards. A student's performance on MCAS tells her how far she has come and how far she has still to go on her journey toward high school completion, college readiness, career readiness, life readiness. Meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS demonstrates that the student is on pace with the march of grade-level standards.

At JFYNetWorks, we analyze the content of MCAS tests so that teachers can focus on the necessary standards. In preparation for the 2022 tests we identified 24 math standards that had been tested in 2019 and 2021. After the 2022 administration we identified standards that had been assessed in all three years of 10th grade Next-Gen MCAS. We also compared tested domains to identify trends. We noted a 19% shift in ELA domains from fiction toward non-fiction. This kind of information helps teachers create focused individualized instruction to build the skills needed to meet changing state standards. Building skills is how we help students arrive at the MCAS milepost primed and ready.

<sup>1</sup> <https://jfynet.org/6946/general/mcas-mavens-math-hints-first-the-24-critical-standards/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://jfynet.org/8702/authored-by-joan-reissman/fall-is-coming-can-mcas-be-far-behind-practice/>

Our tool box for teachers contains online curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts standards to supplement their curriculum and add MCAS focus. Our academic support is a form of tutoring. It provides differentiation through targeted instruction. This year, more than 275,000 students in Massachusetts scored below Meeting or Exceeding Expectations. Live one-on-one tutoring at that scale would be impossible even with expanded federal funding. JFY's online curriculum is supervised by the teacher. It can

be accessed by the student at school or at home, and the teacher can check on activity and progress at any time. Because it utilizes the existing infrastructure of teachers and schools, it can be provided at any scale. The essence of tutoring is individualized instruction with supervision. Integrated into the regular class or offered in extra sessions, JFY academic support gives teachers the capacity to provide tutoring for every student.

**Teachers' time is the most valuable commodity in education.** JFY learning specialists conserve that precious commodity by doing the legwork of creating custom curriculum alignments, enrolling classes, compiling interim reports and adjusting curriculum to changing requirements and needs. **A beam of JFY sunshine is only a text, call or email away.**

<https://jfynet.org/contact-us/>

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Other posts authored by Joan can be [found here](#).

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