

Grade Retention in Massachusetts Public Schools 2005-06

In the 2005-06 school year, there were 879,050 total students enrolled in Massachusetts public schools in grades one through twelve. Out of this total, 21,676 students, or 2.5 percent, were repeating the grade they were in the previous school year.

Table 1: State Retention Trends 1994-95 to 2005-06

	School Year										
	1995	1996	1998 ¹	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total Enrollment	757,737	814,599	852,841	867,486	877,768	888,329	883,911	890,862	887,175	882,956	879,050
Number Retained	16,213	16,730	17,929	20,245	22,424	22,562	22,428	23,551	23,098	22,834	21,676
Retention Rate	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.3%	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%

Table 2: Annual Retention Rates by School Type 2003-04 to 2005-06

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Regular/Comprehensive Academic Schools (1710)²	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%
Vocational-Technical Total (39)	2.7%	2.8%	2.2%
City/Town (10)	7.5%	7.4%	5.1%
Regional/County/Independent (29)	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Charter Schools (58)	2.7%	4.1%	3.3%
Schools Located in Cities³ (794)	4.3%	4.4%	4.2%
Schools Located in Towns³ (1013)	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%

The state retention rate masks the disparity in individual school retention rates. Therefore, it was important to include the distribution of school rates in this report. Out of the 1,761⁴ schools that had at least 75 enrolled students in grades one through twelve, approximately 75 percent had a retention rate less than or equal to the state rate.

Table 3: Retention Rates Among Schools

Retention Rate	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
0.0	273	15.5%
0.1 – 2.5	1043	59.2%
2.6 – 5.0	247	14.0%
5.1 – 7.5	103	5.8%
7.6 – 10.0	40	2.3%
10.1 – 15.0	27	1.5%
15.1 – 20.0	16	0.9%
20.1 – 25.0	3	0.2%
25.1 – 30.0	4	0.2%
30.1 – 40.0	4	0.2%
40.1 – 50.0	1	0.2%

¹ Retention data are not available for the 1996-97 school year.

² Represents the number of schools in the category in the 2005-06 school year.

³ As defined by the incorporation status within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

⁴ Because retention rates for schools with low enrollments were overly sensitive to small variations in the number of retained students, the analysis for the distribution of retention rates excludes 46 schools with a grade one through twelve enrollment fewer than 75 students.

Annual Retention Data for Selected Demographics: 2005-06

Table 4: Retention Data by Grade

Grade	Total 1-12 Enrollment	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Percent of all 2005-06 Retentions
1	71,554	2,686	3.8 %	12.4 %
2	71,604	1,280	1.8 %	5.9 %
3	70,934	823	1.2 %	3.8 %
4	71,410	446	0.6 %	2.1 %
5	72,727	394	0.5 %	1.8 %
6	73,520	886	1.2 %	4.1 %
7	74,567	1,031	1.4 %	4.8 %
8	76,223	902	1.2 %	4.2 %
9	82,861	6,529	7.9 %	30.1 %
10	76,688	3,010	3.9 %	13.9 %
11	71,327	2,070	2.9 %	9.5 %
12	65,635	1,619	2.5 %	7.5 %

Table 5: Retention Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Grade

Grade	Race/Ethnicity						
	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	Native American	Native Hawaiian	White
1	2.6%	6.9%	7.8%	4.0%	3.5%	2.7%	2.6%
2	1.2%	4.1%	4.1%	1.9%	2.6%	0.0%	1.1%
3	0.6%	3.4%	3.1%	0.8%	2.0%	0.0%	0.6%
4	0.4%	2.0%	1.4%	0.6%	1.0%	0.0%	0.3%
5	0.4%	1.3%	1.3%	0.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.3%
6	0.5%	4.2%	3.1%	1.0%	3.2%	0.7%	0.6%
7	0.9%	3.6%	3.1%	1.1%	1.6%	4.0%	1.1%
8	0.9%	2.4%	2.4%	1.2%	3.9%	4.9%	0.8%
9	6.2%	15.4%	17.2%	8.8%	12.4%	12.6%	5.0%
10	3.9%	7.7%	8.9%	4.0%	6.3%	9.0%	2.8%
11	2.5%	5.8%	6.5%	4.0%	5.4%	9.0%	0.2%
12	2.6%	7.5%	6.5%	1.7%	1.8%	6.5%	1.4%

Retention Rate Trend Analysis

Table 6: Retention Rates by Grade: 2000-01 to 2005-06

Grade	School Year					
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
1	3.7%	3.8%	4.1%	4.1%	3.8%	3.8%
2	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%	1.7%	1.8%
3	1.6%	1.6%	1.9%	1.6%	1.5%	1.2%
4	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%
5	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%
6	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%
7	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.8%	1.7%	1.4%
8	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%
9	8.4%	8.4%	8.5%	8.0%	8.1%	7.9%
10	4.3%	4.7%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	3.9%
11	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%	2.9%
12	2.1%	1.7%	1.7%	2.1%	2.2%	2.5%

**Table 7:
Retention Rates by Race/Ethnicity⁵: 2002-03 to 2005-06**

Race/Ethnicity	School Year			
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Asian	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	1.9%
Black	5.6%	5.8%	5.9%	5.6%
Hispanic	5.8%	5.9%	6.0%	5.7%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	-	-	-	2.3%
Native American	3.3%	3.6%	3.3%	3.7%
Native Hawaiian	-	-	-	4.4%
White	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%

Table 8: Retention Rates by Gender: 2000-01 to 2005-06

	School Year					
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Female	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%
Male	3.0%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%	3.0%	2.9%

⁵In compliance with the federal Office of Management and Budget standards for classifications of federal data on race and ethnicity, the Department's race/ethnicity reporting codes changed to reflect seven race/ethnicity categories instead of five in the 2005-06 school year. The revised codes enable agencies to select one or more races when reporting student information. Additionally, Native Hawaiian was added as a racial category in the 2005-06 school year.

Table 9: Retention Rates by Special Populations 2003-04 to 2005-06

		School Year		
		2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Low-Income	Non-Low-Income	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%
	Low-Income	5.0%	5.2%	4.8%
Limited English Proficient	Non-Limited English Proficient	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%
	Limited English Proficient	5.7%	6.3%	5.7%
Special Education	General Education	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%
	Special Education	5.1%	5.2%	4.7%

Retention and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

Competency Determination

Beginning with the class of 2003, the Department required students to meet or exceed the “Needs Improvement” threshold of the both the English Language Arts (ELA) and Math sections of the grade ten MCAS to receive a Competency Determination (CD) in order to graduate from high school with a diploma. Students who did not pass the grade ten MCAS had the opportunity to pass the MCAS through re-test opportunities before their scheduled graduation date.

Across all grade levels, a higher percentage of students retained in the 2005-06 school year had earned a CD by the end of the 2005-06 school year (the year the students are repeating a grade) compared to the end of the 2004-05 school year.

Table 10: Retained Students and CD Attainment Rates

Grade	With a CD	
	2004-05	2005-06
10	43.2%	56.4%
11	68.3%	72.4%
12	64.7%	68.3%

Reading/ELA

Across all grade levels, excluding grade ten⁶ that the Reading/ELA exams were administered in both 2005 and 2006, (three, four and seven)⁷:

- 37.5 percent received a higher performance level in 2006 than 2005
- 8.1 percent received a lower performance level in 2006 than 2005
- 54.4 percent received the same performance level in both the 2005 and 2006 school years

Table 11: Grade 3 Reading⁸
(N=582)

		2005-06		
		Above Proficient/ Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Proficient	6.5%	1.9%	0.2%
	Needs Improvement	13.6%	30.4%	3.8%
	Warning	4.6%	27.0%	12.0%

Table 12: Grade 4 ELA
(N = 266)

		2005-06			
		Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Advanced	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Proficient	0.0%	1.9%	1.1%	0.0%
	Needs Improvement	0.4%	11.7%	24.4%	3.0%
	Warning	0.0%	1.5%	31.2%	24.8%

Table 13: Grade 7 ELA
(N = 735)

		2005-06			
		Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Advanced	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Proficient	0.5%	8.8%	2.6%	0.5%
	Needs Improvement	0.1%	15.8%	32.1%	8.3%
	Warning	0.0%	1.8%	10.5%	18.8%

⁶ The Department does not require retained grade ten students to take the regular administration of the MCAS for the year they are retained. Therefore, grade ten MCAS results are not included in this report.

⁷ In both subject areas for a retained student's MCAS performance level to be compared in both years, the student's grade for the October 1st reporting period must be the same as the grade that the student was assessed in both 2005 and 2006 school years. Students without MCAS performance levels results could be due to a number of factors including: the student was promoted to a higher grade after the October 1st 2006 reporting period, the student transferred to an out of state or private school, or the student did not take the exam.

⁸ When comparing grade three proficiency levels to the 2004-05 school year students who scored *Above Proficient* in 2005-06 are considered as scoring Proficient because the 2004-05 scaled scores are not comparable to the 2005-06 scores and therefore can not be converted to the correct proficiency level.

Math

Across all grade levels, excluding grade ten that the Math exams were administered in both 2005 and 2006, (four, six and eight):

- 25.5 percent received a higher performance level in 2006 than 2005
- 3.9 percent received a lower performance level in 2006 than 2005
- 70.6 percent received the same performance level in both the 2005 and 2006 school years

Table 14: Grade 4 Math
(N=266)

		2005-06			
		Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Advanced	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%
	Needs Improvement	1.2%	9.4%	22.9%	2.3%
	Warning	0.0%	1.9%	35.0%	25.9%

Table 15: Grade 6 Math
(N = 650)

		2005-06			
		Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Advanced	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Proficient	0.6%	1.4%	0.5%	0.0%
	Needs Improvement	0.3%	4.8%	11.0%	3.5%
	Warning	0.0%	1.4%	13.9%	62.5%

Table 16: Grade 8 Math
(N = 588)

		2005-06			
		Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Warning
2004-05	Advanced	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Proficient	0.9%	2.7%	0.2%	0.0%
	Needs Improvement	0.0%	3.9%	8.7%	3.7%
	Warning	0.0%	1.0%	14.6%	64.3%