

**Top 10  
Accomplishments,  
2015-2020**



**HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
A PATHWAY FOR EVERY STUDENT

**Our HPS team is proud of our accomplishments, although we recognize there is more work to do to ensure an excellent education for every student and a top-quality work environment for every employee. We thank our students, families, partners, community leaders and friends for their partnership and support!**

- 1. Redesigning the High School Experience, which has contributed to a 10-point increase in the graduation rate to 72% and a reduction in drop-out rate to 4.9%.** (This means 78 more students have graduated between 2015-2018 than otherwise would have graduated.) Graduation rates for students who are English Learners and Latinx students have especially improved. We have merged all high school campuses into one “Holyoke High School” to promote equitable access to the full high school experience. Students receive an in-depth, well-rounded, MassCore-aligned education that is designed to prepare them for college, career, and community leadership. They are provided with access to a wide array of college, career, and community-based learning opportunities in the area of their emerging interests. At our North campus, students select one of three linked-learning academies (Engineering & Life Science, Media & Performing Arts, Community & Global Studies). At our Dean campus, students select one of nine career and vocational technical education programs, such as advanced manufacturing or health assisting. And, Opportunity Academy is designed for students who need an alternative path. Across all campuses, 45% of our students are enrolled in advanced coursework, including early college and dual enrollment (220 students annually), advanced placement courses and off-campus internships (on track for 50 students this year).
- 2. Strengthening the Middle School Experience, as evidenced by a 6-point increase in students being interested in their classes and a 6-point increase in students feeling they belong.** We are moving towards a model of distinct elementary and middle schools, which will allow us to provide a more customized, age-appropriate educational experience for students and alleviate crowding in some schools. We introduced Summit Learning (a personalized learning model) at Peck in 2016, founded Holyoke STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Academy in 2017, and recruited an operating partner to launch Veritas Prep Holyoke, which will be a grades 5-8 school with rigorous curriculum and personalized supports, in 2017. We have also expanded enrichment programming; we offer nine intramural sports, including wrestling and dance; the arts, including dance, improv, visual arts, digital arts; outdoor adventures and STEM education. These opportunities are designed to strengthen our students’ academic and social-emotional skills and engage them more deeply in school. We are still pursuing the construction of one or two new middle school buildings.
- 3. Expanding pathways for all students.** In addition to the high school academies and new middle school options, we have also grown the dual language (English/Spanish) program from 40 students in kindergarten only in 2014 to 422 students (10x increase) in grades PreK-5 across two schools, on track to serve more than 500 students next year (~10% of our district enrollment). In addition, we have nearly doubled our number of Pre-K seats to 522 students, focusing on expanding access to 4-year-old students and full-day programs. We are especially proud that our full-day Pre-K students are nearly twice as prepared for kindergarten as compared to peers and that two of our partner-led classrooms received the highest quality rating by the MA Dept. of Early Education and Care in 2018. We are also proud that more of our students on IEPs (individual education plans) are included in general education settings (7-point increase since SY14-15) because the law and research shows that having students in the “least restrictive environment” leads to stronger academic outcomes for all students with IEPs and general education students.

4. **Accelerating students' academic performance, as measured by HPS making "substantial progress" towards performance targets on the most recent accountability system.** With the changes in the accountability system and MA Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) over the past few years, it is challenging to measure progress since 2015. Yet, we are pleased that in 2019, all elementary and middle schools with publicly available data made at least moderate progress towards improvement targets, with E.N. White, Kelly, Lawrence and Metcalf "meeting or exceeding" their targets. MCAS achievement levels increased in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math in grades 3-8 and for the lowest performing students (the lowest 25% of students based on prior year's results), meaning that our students who are furthest behind are making more progress. Additionally, the percent of students meeting and exceeding expectations in 3rd grade ELA increased by 6 points, from 18% in 2017 (the first year of the next generation MCAS) to 24% in 2019, which is a signal that our focus on literacy in the primary grades is leading to more students being proficient readers in the critical year of third grade. Finally, the percent of students meeting and exceeding expectations in grade 10 ELA on the legacy MCAS increased by 7 points from 2015 to 2018.

Our academic improvements are the result of many efforts, including lengthening the school day for elementary and middle school students, increasing the time that educators have for professional development and collaboration, investing in new core curriculum and intervention resources, increasing opportunities for students with IEPs (individual education plans) to be included in the general education setting, and initiating the role of a school supervisor to be a hands-on coach to a principal in all aspects of running a highly effective school that supports all students.

5. **Addressing the needs of the whole child, which is resulting in lower rates of chronic absenteeism and fewer out-of-school suspensions.** We are shifting our community mindset around the importance of being in school every day, on time; our family engagement team and teachers are quick to support students and families who encounter barriers to regular attendance. The percent of students chronically absent from school (meaning they miss more than 10% of the school days) has decreased from **28.9% in SY14-15 to 25.7% in SY18-19**. We have experienced a **56% decrease in out-of-school suspensions and 68% reduction in days lost to suspension** since SY13-14. Our district policies also promote students in school. For example, rather than resort to a penalty like suspension, programs like Restorative Justice at Holyoke High repair harm through inclusive practices that engage all stakeholders. We also have behavior analysts to support staff and students to implement plans to improve behavior. Additionally, we have instituted new partnerships to provide intensive social, emotional and behavioral support for students struggling with trauma and acute mental illness at some elementary schools.

6. **Strengthening the home-school connection, as evidenced by 80% of families indicating that they communicate with their child's teacher(s) at least every few months (28-pt increase) and 80% of families indicating that the school provides programming and opportunities for the family to learn how to support students' learning at home at least every few months (11-pt. Increase from 2015).** Many families have embraced teachers and staff visiting their home to learn more about their child and family. In Spring 2019, more than 100 families attended the district-wide Math Carnival, where students used multiplication skills to conquer the escape room; experienced virtual reality; engaged in math, music and movement; examined fingerprints as a forensics activity; and made slime with various substances. Schools also host countless events to connect with families, such as student showcases, report card conferences, and learning events. More families volunteer in important leadership positions across the district, including the district parent advisory group, special education PAC (parent advisory council), English Learner PAC, district equity team and school site councils.

7. **Adopting a professional compensation system, securing updated contracts for 7 units, and expanding career opportunities for staff members.** Our employees are our most valuable asset, as they dedicate their careers to educating our children and/or supporting positive school environments. Our updated contracts establish a more professional, nimble relationship between employer and employee, as exemplified by our professional compensation system. Compensation for all groups is now based on the employee's individual effectiveness on student learning and/or school community and are directly tied to the employee's evaluation; this allows our top performing staff to accelerate more rapidly on the compensation models. Equally important, we are investing in our staff by developing career pathways, such as the Advanced Teacher role (which allows excellent educators to stay in the classroom and serve as a school-wide model) and additional leadership responsibilities tailored to the needs of each school. Furthermore, on the new professional compensation model, teachers can reach their maximum earning potential earlier in their career, which increases lifetime earnings.

8. **Promoting equity and inclusion across all levels of our school system, as evidenced by a 9-point increase in teachers of color to 22% (108 teachers of color in total).** We have made a concerted effort to diversify our teaching force by increasing access to earning a teaching license through partnerships with area colleges and organizations, recruiting and prioritizing candidates from diverse backgrounds, and hosting affinity groups to support staff. We have also increased access to leadership opportunities for students and families because we know that hearing everyone's voice, especially those historically underrepresented, will make us all stronger. For example, our Student Advisory Group meets monthly to advise the Superintendent on issues of opportunity and access for students and is being trained to facilitate community dialogue, and our equity coalition has developed an action plan to promote and ensure equity across the district. Importantly, we have dramatically increased access and quality of translation and interpretation services, so that families have important information about their child and the school system in their preferred language.

9. **Reducing operational and non-school costs by more than \$1 million annually, while strengthening services offered to support schools.** We have eliminated more than \$1 million annually in recurring expenses, in order to preserve funds for schools. We eliminated about 20 central staff positions and reconfigured about 20 more central staff positions in order to enhance services to schools. For example, financial analysts, human resource generalists, and maintenance/custodial supervisors have a portfolio of schools to ensure that each school has the operational support needed to run an effective school, especially so the principal can then focus their team on meeting the academic and social emotional needs of students. Food Services now provides breakfast at all schools and is providing healthier, more nutritious school meals. The Enrollment Center has virtually eliminated any wait time for processing applications, even during the busiest months. The Transportation Department introduced a phone app that allows families to track the location of their child's bus. We have also successfully pursued many grants since 2015, resulting in more than \$10 million in new funds to Holyoke.

10. **Investing more than \$17 million in the physical infrastructure of our schools.** Our school portfolio is among the oldest in MA. Through a partnership with the Massachusetts State Building Authority (MSBA) and City of Holyoke, we have updated our facilities at Donahue, Holyoke High School - North and Dean Campuses, Kelly, Morgan, Sullivan, and E.N. White, through a variety of projects, including new carpet, new windows, new doors, new boilers, lighting upgrades and more. We have installed air conditioning units where possible. We have installed cameras and increased the safety and security of all schools' front entrances. Unfortunately, our efforts to fund two new middle school buildings through a debt exclusion ballot question in Fall 2019 failed; however, we are working with the City of Holyoke and MSBA to work towards this goal. New, mid-sized middle school buildings would allow sufficient resources to provide a robust and rigorous middle school experience, while promoting strong relationships, student safety and personalization. It also would alleviate tight spaces in elementary schools.

# **STOP TRANSLATING**

*For Erin's reference: Partial list Data Sources*

Graduation release announcement

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/17Yhyr4wwy3pDx5BGCFcmGcHiUF3jBKIG6ACiL-QUIW8/edit>

PK PPT:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Zx05HnoUjvRgS5CymM7GWOtFSESKwbg72wcnR1rKQ\\_g/edit#slide=id.p5](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Zx05HnoUjvRgS5CymM7GWOtFSESKwbg72wcnR1rKQ_g/edit#slide=id.p5)

Pathways into teaching:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1AjfrsHj-wmwDxZfoNc2wgGueNQZu-P7K9NAxXiE2HyY/edit>

Suspension presentation:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1iIDoMwlfQQaACcneOchjvAJdYxe6LOBEMosgHiGQd4U/edit>

MCAS Accountability letter

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10rQKpgMDBYwum00MqBVJOh6Sn12wQrFunkHSQZmnVjw/edit>

Central Office Savings over 2 years

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GR\\_NFiTSixIolk7VMqXyTtVpEIVXpHjT/edit#gid=1185244413](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GR_NFiTSixIolk7VMqXyTtVpEIVXpHjT/edit#gid=1185244413)

MS Enrichment offerings

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hzA0UVzq9iD2q9Ayk\\_\\_Xtqn0jmCB-AhZr9HMm5h-l9k/edit?folder=1UHUAnkC73dej-lZjbyogYBVt3vIrlbJ](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hzA0UVzq9iD2q9Ayk__Xtqn0jmCB-AhZr9HMm5h-l9k/edit?folder=1UHUAnkC73dej-lZjbyogYBVt3vIrlbJ)