



Boston Public Schools

# **Amendment to Graduation Requirements Policy**

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May 14, 2025



# Current Policy

In May 2021, Boston School Committee voted to adopt DESE's MassCore framework as a universal graduation requirement for BPS students, beginning with the class of 2026.

This policy supports the high quality academic foundation and experience we believe all students should have upon graduation.

*Policy Excerpt:*

**Adoption of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Recommended Course of Study [MassCore] as Boston Public Schools' Graduation Requirement**

*... Accordingly, it is imperative that we adopt standards aligned graduation requirements across the district that will promote and ensure rigor and excellence in our schools, resulting in the elimination of opportunity and achievement gaps and ensuring that every student graduates prepared for life after high school. ...*





# Background

- This policy standardized graduation requirements across all high schools.
- The policy vote happened four months before most high school students would return to in-person school for the first time since March 2020.
- Other districts use the MassCore framework as a guide, but not necessarily as a policy for graduation.

## MassCore Program of Study

| SUBJECT                          | UNITS                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| English Language Arts            | 4 Units                      |
| Mathematics                      | 4 Units                      |
| Science                          | 3 Units of lab-based science |
| History and Social Science       | 3 Units                      |
| World Language                   | 2 Units                      |
| Physical Education               | Must be taught every year    |
| Arts                             | 1 Units                      |
| Additional Core Elective Courses | 5 Units                      |

*\*A unit represents a full academic year of study or its equivalent in a subject that covers all the standards contained in a specific Curriculum Framework.*



# Since the 2021 vote...

## **Equitable Literacy and High Quality Instructional Materials**

We have implemented HQIM, including ESL curriculum, and Equitable Literacy across the district, raising the standards within each class taught toward graduation

**87%** of schools have adopted High Quality Instructional Materials

## **Course Catalog Review and Scheduling Technical Assistance**

We conducted a full review of our course catalog, syllabi, and course codes in Aspen to ensure accurate tracking of student progress. District office staff review and consult with school leaders on schedule development.

Schools are far more aligned in offering the same course codes for the same courses

## **Additional Staffing Allocation**

In FY22, schools identified staffing gaps that were prohibiting them from meeting MassCore. Most of those FTEs were in Physical Education, World Language, and the Arts.

**Over 50** FTEs across 30 schools allocated (approximately \$6 million)

## **Expansion of Early College, Innovation and CTE Pathways**

Early College, Innovation, and Career & Technical Pathways are proven strategies to increase engagement, graduation rates, and post-secondary success

**10** Early College, **6** Innovation and **4** CTE pathways added (students in CTE & Innovation pathways are already expected to reach MassCore)



# Implementation: What We've Learned

| Challenge   | Strategies  |
|---|---|
| More than half of BPS high schools run 6 period schedules. This is typically done to give students more time within each course to get deeper into content. However, a 6 period day only allows 24 units of study over 4 years, and 22 of those units have to be compliant with the MassCore framework. | New BTU Contract includes a process for schools to shift away from a six period schedule by SY27. |



# Alternative Education Schools

| Challenge  | Proposed Solution  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Alternative Education:</b> Our students in alternative education frequently enter their school at age 17+ with less than 2 years of high school credit. A more focused course of study is most appropriate to get more of these students to graduation and good post-secondary outcomes.</p> | <p><b>For Students in Alternative Education Schools (not applicable for alternative programs within comprehensive schools) :</b></p> <p>18 credits to meet graduation requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 Units of English Language Arts</li><li>• 4 Units of Mathematics</li><li>• 3 Units of a Science</li><li>• 3 Units of History</li><li>• 4 Units of Electives<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ College &amp; Career Exposure must be part of the curriculum</li></ul></li></ul> |



# Policy Amendment Language

Students enrolled in a designated Boston Public Schools Alternative Education School must successfully complete a minimum of **18 credits** distributed as follows:

- **English Language Arts:** 4 Units
- **Mathematics:** 4 Units
- **Science:** 3 Units
- **History & Social Studies:** 3 Units
- **Electives:** 4 Units

In addition to the credit requirements, the curriculum provided to students under this alternative pathway must include integrated **College and Career Exposure** activities and instruction. Students graduating under these alternative requirements must still meet the Commonwealth's and the District's requirements for Competency Determination applicable to their graduating class.

This requirement does not apply to students in alternative programs housed within comprehensive high schools.



# Impact of Policy Amendment

The proposed policy amendment for Alternative Education schools would allow for ~100 more current juniors to be identified as on track for graduation.

**Percentage of Class of 2026 at Alt Ed Schools On Track for Graduation**

| <b>School Name</b>               | <b>Total Number of Students</b> | <b>Current Policy Requirements % On Track</b> | <b>Alt Ed Policy Proposal % On Track</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Boston Adult Tech Academy        | 73                              | 4%  | 77%                                      |
| Boston Collaborative High School | 108                             | 33%   | 57%                                      |
| Boston Day-Evening Academy       | 108                             | 28%   | 44%                                      |
| Community Academy                | 9                               | 67%   | 100%                                     |
| Greater Egleston High School     | 14                              | 57%   | 86%                                      |
| All Alt Ed Schools               | 312                             | 27%   | 60%                                      |





# Engagement

## **Key Stakeholders**

- Head of Schools
- Program Directors
- Office Secondary Schools
- Educational Options

- For the past 2 years, Alternative Education Heads of School and Program Directors have participated in a series of meetings conducted with by Office of Secondary Schools along with Academics, Division of Schools, and Alternative Education.
- This solution was developed primarily by the Alternative Education Heads of School and Program Directors



# Competency Determination for Class of 2026

To earn Competency Determination (CD), students in the Class of 2026 must meet the same academic requirements as the Class of 2025. This includes successful completion (a passing grade) of:

- **One approved Science course**
- **Two approved Math courses**
- **Two approved English courses**

The Office of School Counseling will create a transcript review process that will streamline reviews of graduation eligibility, accounting for both the new district graduation requirements and competency determination.

The Governor's Statewide Graduation Council has begun meeting and will share initial recommendations for a new statewide set of requirements by December 2025 and final recommendations by July 2026.



## Next Steps

At the June School Committee meeting, we are asking for your vote to approve the following:

- Amendment to the Graduation Requirements for students attending Alternative Education schools
- Extension of the Competency Determination process to the Class of 2026



# Appendix

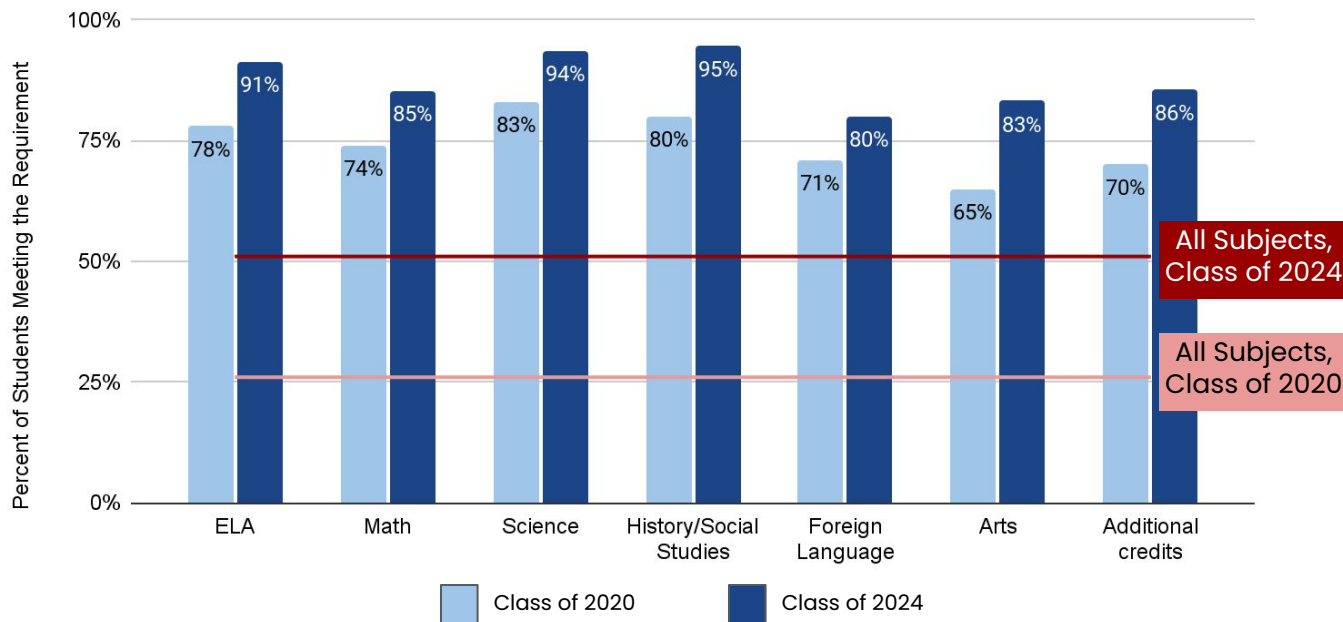




# MassCore Requirements by Subject Area

- The percentage of students meeting MassCore requirements by subject area has improved for all subject areas from the Class of 2020 to the Class of 2024
- Students meeting the arts requirement had the largest increase (+18), and students meeting the foreign language requirement had the smallest increase (+9).

**Percentage of Students Meeting MassCore Requirements By Subject Area**



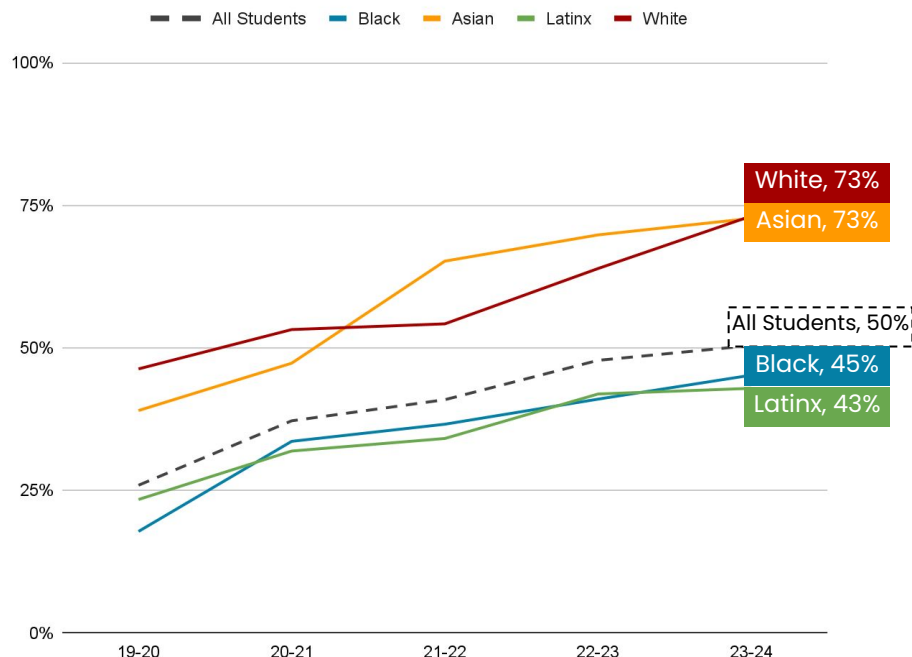
*\*Data for SY23-24 is considered preliminary until published by DESE*



# BPS MassCore Completion Rates

- MassCore completion rates have increased for students in all race groups since 2020.
- Rates for Asian students increased the most (+34 percentage points), followed by Black (+27) and White students (+27).
- Latinx students had the smallest increase at 20 percentage points.

**MassCore Completion by Race**



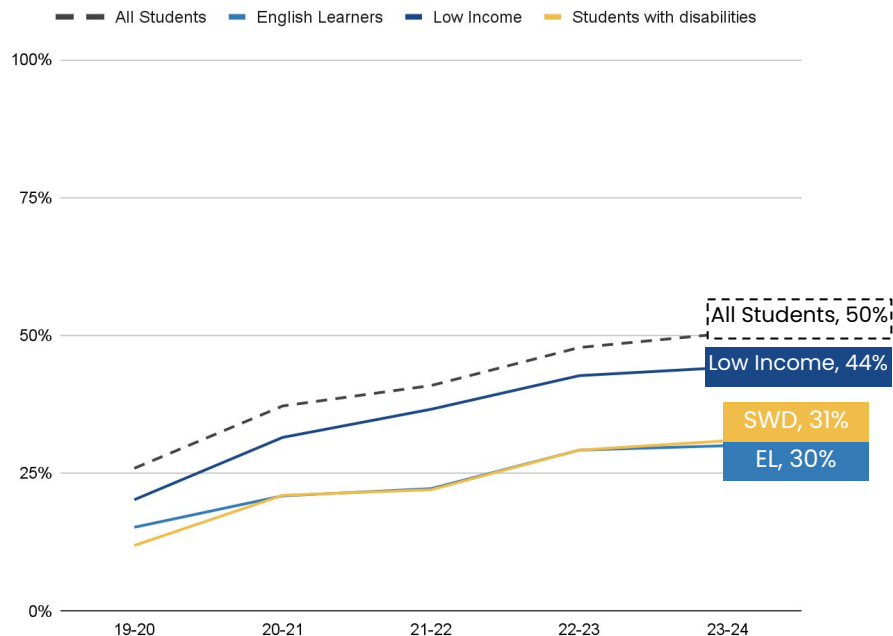
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# BPS MassCore Completion Rates

- MassCore completion rates have increased since 2020 for students with disabilities, English learners and low income students.
- All three groups of students had rates of increase lower than or equal to the all students increase:
  - All Students (+24)
  - Students with Disabilities (+19)
  - English Learners (+15)
  - Low income (+22)

## MassCore Completion by Student Group







# Sample ELD 1 6-Period Schedule

|    | Grade 9 – ELD 1                  | Grade 10 – ELD 2             | Grade 11 – ELD 3               | Grade 12 – ELD 4                          |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| P1 | ESL 1                            | ESL 2                        | ESL 3                          | Core ELA Course/ Embedded ESL Instruction |
| P2 | ESL 1                            | ESL 2                        | Core ELA Course                | Math 12 or Additional Core Math Course    |
| P3 | Math 9 or Algebra I              | Math 10 or Geometry          | Math 11 or Algebra II          | 1 semester PE,<br>1 semester Art          |
| P4 | Physics or Other Lab Science     | Biology or Other Lab Science | Chemistry or Other Lab Science | Required Elective                         |
| P5 | World History                    | US History                   | Cultural Studies               | Required Elective                         |
| P6 | 1 semester PE,<br>1 semester Art | World Language               | World Language                 | Required Elective                         |

\*\*\*This student will be missing 2 years of PE and 1 elective even if they pass every class on their schedule.



# Progress Towards MassCore Definition

DESE defined expected credit accumulation towards MassCore

| Expected by<br>the end of: | ELA Units | Math Units | Science<br>Units | History/<br>Social<br>Science<br>Units | Foreign<br>Language<br>Units | Arts Units | Additional<br>Units | Total<br>MassCore<br>Units |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|--|------------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Grade 9                    | 1         | 1          | 1                | 1                                      |                              |            | 1.5                 | 5.5                        |
| Grade 10                   | 2         | 2          | 2                | 2                                      |                              |            | 3                   | 11                         |
| Grade 11                   | 3         | 3          | 3                | 3                                      | 1                            | 0.5        | 3                   | 16.5                       |
| Grade 12                   | 4         | 4          | 3                | 3                                      | 2                            | 1          | 5                   | 22                         |



# BPS Graduation Requirements for Class of 2025

| Pathway I  | Pathway II  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take and pass four English (or 2 ESL &amp; 2 ELA) courses</li><li>• Take and pass three history courses, including U.S. History 1 &amp; 2</li><li>• Take and pass four math courses</li><li>• Take and pass three lab science courses, including at least two of the following: biology, chemistry, physics</li><li>• Take and pass two years of the same world language courses</li><li>• Take and pass two semester courses in the arts</li><li>• Take and pass four semester courses in PE</li><li>• Take and pass one semester course in health</li><li>• Take and pass one semester course in computers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take and pass four humanities &amp; English, courses, which meet current standards for English and U.S. History 1 &amp; 2</li><li>• Take and pass four math courses</li><li>• Take and pass three lab science courses, including at least two of the following: biology, chemistry, physics.</li><li>• Take and pass two years of the same world language courses</li><li>• Take and pass two semester courses in the arts</li><li>• Take and pass four semester courses in PE</li><li>• Take and pass one semester course in health</li><li>• Take and pass one semester course in computers</li></ul> |

Pathway III: A school can develop its own list of required courses that meet state standards and are approved by the Boston Public Schools.



# MassCore Progress for Class of 2026

Students have multiple opportunities to accumulate credit, making it hard to predict who will meet all MassCore requirements by the end of senior year. However, two years into implementation for the class of 2026:

- 50% of students in the class of 2026 are considered making progress in all subject areas towards meeting MassCore.

| Student Group                  | % Making Progress in All Areas |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| All Students                   | 50%                            |
| Asian                          | 56%                            |
| Latinx                         | 49%                            |
| Black                          | 48%                            |
| White                          | 51%                            |
| Economically Disadvantaged     | 51%                            |
| Non-Economically Disadvantaged | 47%                            |
| Students with Disabilities     | 44%                            |
| Students without Disabilities  | 51%                            |
| English Learner                | 21%                            |
| Former English Learner         | 66%                            |
| Never English Learner          | 59%                            |
| ELD 1                          | 5%                             |
| ELD 2                          | 15%                            |
| ELD 3                          | 21%                            |
| ELD 4                          | 44%                            |

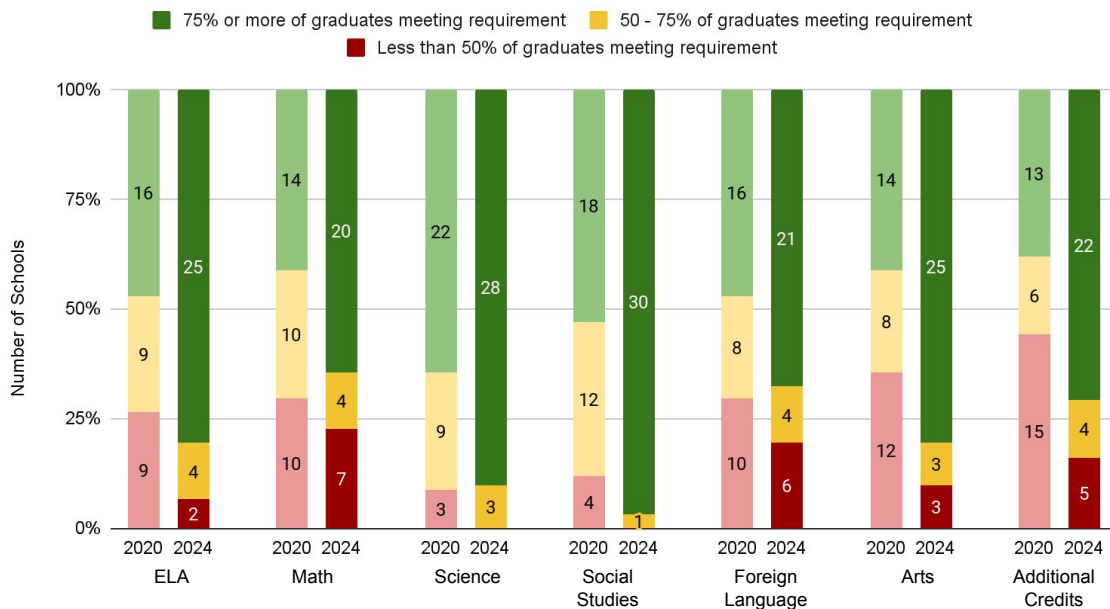
*Making progress towards MassCore is defined as completing 2 ELA, 2 Math, 2 Science, 2 Social Studies and 3 additional credits by the end of grade 10, as aligned with DESE identified progress expectations (see appendix)*



# School-Level MassCore Data

- This graph shows the number of schools, color-coded by the percentage of graduates meeting MassCore requirements in each of the subject areas.
- The number of schools with 75% or more of graduates meeting MassCore requirements in each of the subject areas has increased from the Class of 2020 to the Class of 2024.

**Number of Schools Meeting MassCore Requirements by Subject Area**



*\*Data for SY23-24 is considered preliminary until published by DESE*