

TO: School Committee

FROM: Tim Piwowar, Superintendent

DATE: December 12, 2024

RE: Proposed Revision to Policy IKFA: Graduation Requirements

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Under Massachusetts state law, students must satisfy the requirements of the “competency determination” (CD) in order to graduate from high school. G.L. c. 69, s. 1D (i). MCAS testing in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science/Technology have historically met this requirement; however, with the recent passage of Question 2, future MCAS testing will no longer satisfy the requirements of the CD and individual school districts must identify a process to determine that students have met the competency determination requirements.

On December 11, DESE provided [an updated FAQ document](#) about the student competency determination that states that districts must develop a process to determine if students have met the standards to earn a CD by successfully completing coursework in ELA, math, and science, but to date, has not provided guidance on how to develop that process. The FAQ document is clear, however, that students in the Class of 2025 (and beyond) cannot earn a CD by attaining the required score on the spring 2025 MCAS administrations or any future administrations (FAQ Question 6).

Our [existing School Committee Policy IKFA: Graduation Requirements](#) states, “To receive a Westwood High School diploma, a student must earn a minimum of 115 credits (meeting minimum credit requirements in subject areas listed below) **and pass the MCAS examination in Math, English Language Arts, and Science Technology.**” [emphasis added]. Students who meet the requirements of our local graduation policy - that include 20 credits of ELA, 15 credits of Math, and 17 credits of Science - are successfully completing coursework in classes that are aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and are meeting the CD requirements established by state law. As such, the current Westwood requirement that students pass MCAS tests is not necessary to comply with state law. Furthermore, given the uncertainty as to whether or not MCAS retest opportunities will exist in the future (FAQ Question 12), maintaining passing the MCAS as a local graduation requirement has the potential to be a more limiting factor than it has been previously.

As such, it is my recommendation that the Committee [amend Policy IKFA](#) by striking the reference to passing the MCAS test. I further recommend that at the January 16 meeting of the School Committee, the Committee votes to waive the third reading of the policy and to adopt at that meeting, as otherwise students will be required by local requirements to sit for MCAS retests this spring that do not satisfy the competency determination requirements.

Should we receive additional guidance from DESE in the future about the process for locally certifying the competency determination, we may need to either revisit this policy or to adopt a separate policy to address any future requirements.

I will be happy to answer any questions from the Committee at our meeting on December 17.