



To: Emily Parks, Superintendent of Schools
From: Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent
Date: October 5, 2018
Re: 2018 MCAS Results

Background

In 2018, two types of tests were administered: the newer “Next Generation” computer-based assessments in grades 3 - 8 and “Legacy” paper-based assessments in grade 10. The Next Generation assessments are scored differently, and scores between the two types of tests are not comparable.

It is important to note as well that the Science Technology and Engineering tests administered in grades 5 and 8 are not yet comparable from year to year. These tests are being changed over time so that they align to the new state standards. Specifically:

2017 - assessments based on old standards (2001/2006)

2018 - assessments based on overlapping standards (2001/2006 and 2016)

2019 - assessments based on new standards (2016)

After this spring, we will be able to compare scores in STE year-to-year and track our continuing efforts in these areas.

The issue of the grade 10 science tests is still under review by the department. In other content areas (Math and ELA), high school students will begin taking the Next Generation Assessment this spring.

Accountability and Commendation

WPS did not receive a district-wide accountability designation in 2017, since it was the first year of the Next Generation tests. 2017 data did provide a baseline, however, and this year district-wide accountability results are available.

Westwood was among the minority of districts (17%) who were designated as “Meeting Targets”--the highest category possible. The possible categories and descriptions appear below:

Districts without required assistance or intervention			Districts requiring assistance or intervention	
Meeting targets	Partially meeting targets	Not meeting targets	Focused/targeted support	Broad/comprehensive support
<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 75-100</i>	<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 50-74</i>	<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 0-49</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Districts with low graduation rate</i> • <i>Districts with low participation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Underperforming districts</i> • <i>Chronically underperforming districts</i>

It is important to note that in the past, the district accountability level was determined by the lowest school accountability rating. This is no longer the case. The district new system provides school level accountability ratings, but it also uses a separate calculation to determine the overall district rating.

While Westwood’s overall rating was in the top category, the district’s criterion-referenced target percentage was 75%. This means that WPS is right on the line between “Meeting” and “Partially meeting” targets, and it will be important to examine results and focus on areas where we have room for growth in order to keep meeting our targets.

One area that the district was able to shift from an area of concern to one of relative strength was in the participation rate of subgroups. In 2017, only 91% of students with disabilities took the grade 8 science assessment, for example, placing the district in jeopardy of receiving a “Focused/targeted support” designation. In 2018, however, 100% of the students in this subgroup took the science assessment. As a district, assessment participation ranged from 98% - 100% across all subgroups.

At the school level, accountability designations varied. All five elementary schools were designated as “Meeting targets.” The middle and high school were designated as “Partially meeting targets.” Two of our elementary schools, Downey and Martha Jones, were recognized for their performance. Martha Jones was commended for exceeding growth targets, and Downey earned commendations in all three categories: high achievement, exceeding targets and high growth.

The possible school designation categories appear below:

Schools without required assistance or intervention				Schools requiring assistance or intervention	
Schools of Recognition	Meeting Targets	Partially Meeting Targets	Not Meeting Targets	Focused/targeted support	Broad/Comprehensive support
<i>Schools demonstrating high achievement, exceeding targets or high growth</i>	<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 75 - 100</i>	<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 50-74</i>	<i>Criterion-referenced target percentage 75 - 100</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Non-comprehensive support schools with percentiles 1 - 10</i> ● <i>Schools with low graduation rates</i> ● <i>Schools with low performing subgroups</i> ● <i>Schools with low participation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Underperforming schools</i> ● <i>Chronically underperforming schools</i>

The new system, which includes normative as well as criterion-referenced components, is significantly more complex than the old one. The normative part of the system compares schools with other schools administering similar assessments, and is used primary to identify the lowest performing schools in the state.

The changes that impact Westwood the most are in the criterion-referenced part of the system, where new factors have been added into the accountability formula. In addition to achievement and growth, the new system factors in the performance of our lowest-performing quartile of students, progress toward proficiency for English language learners, chronic absenteeism, high school completion rates, and the percentage of students completing advanced coursework (primarily AP, IB and upper level math courses).

District administrators will be taking time to look at both the old and new factors that determine accountability designations in order to ensure that WPS continues to make progress toward universal proficiency.

Comparable District Performance

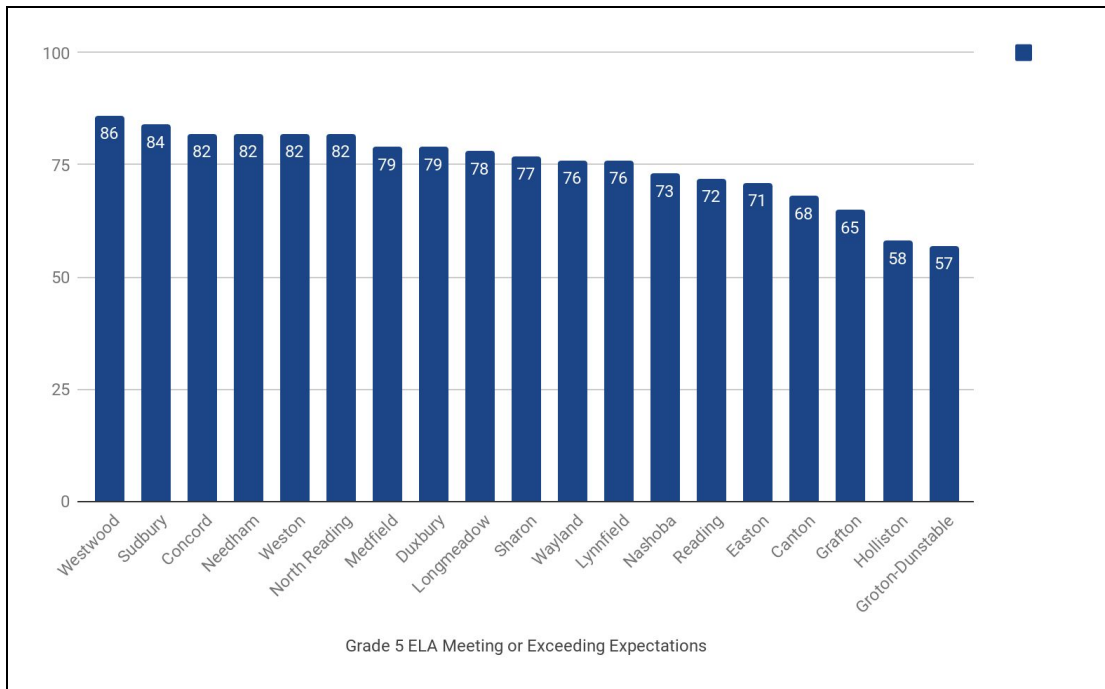
This year, we are examining two sets of communities in our analysis of how Westwood performed compared with comparable districts. The first set includes updated FinCom comparison communities. These communities are selected by FinCom based on financial indicators such as tax assessment rates and bond ratings. The second set of communities are designated as comparison districts by the state department of education based on “grade span, total enrollment and special populations.” Put another

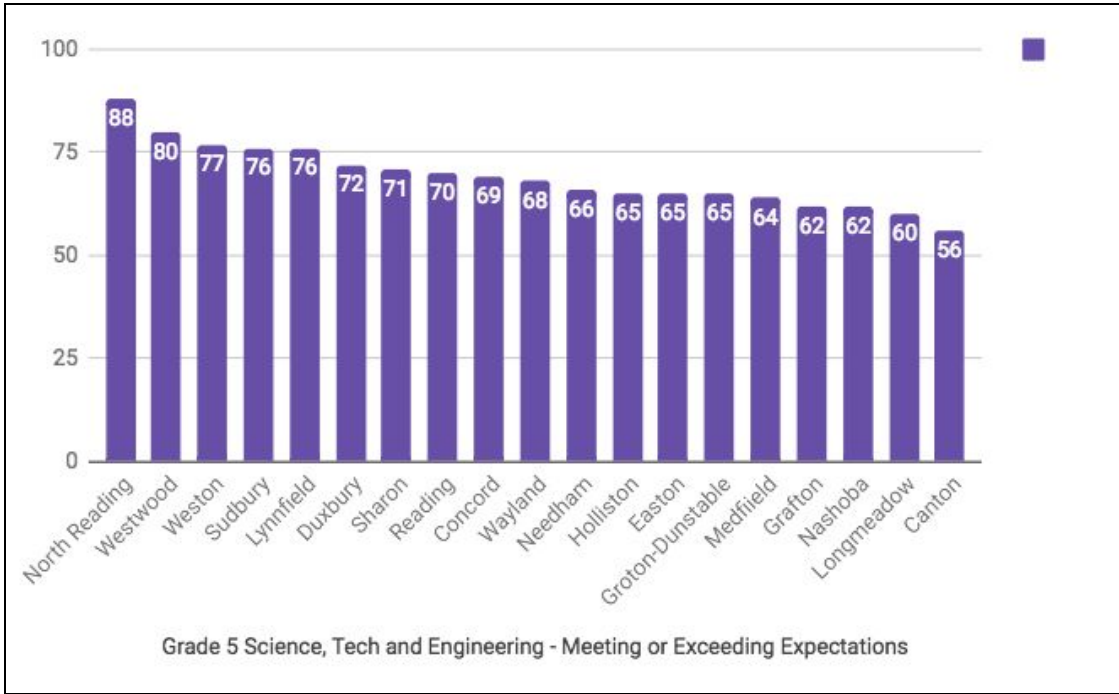
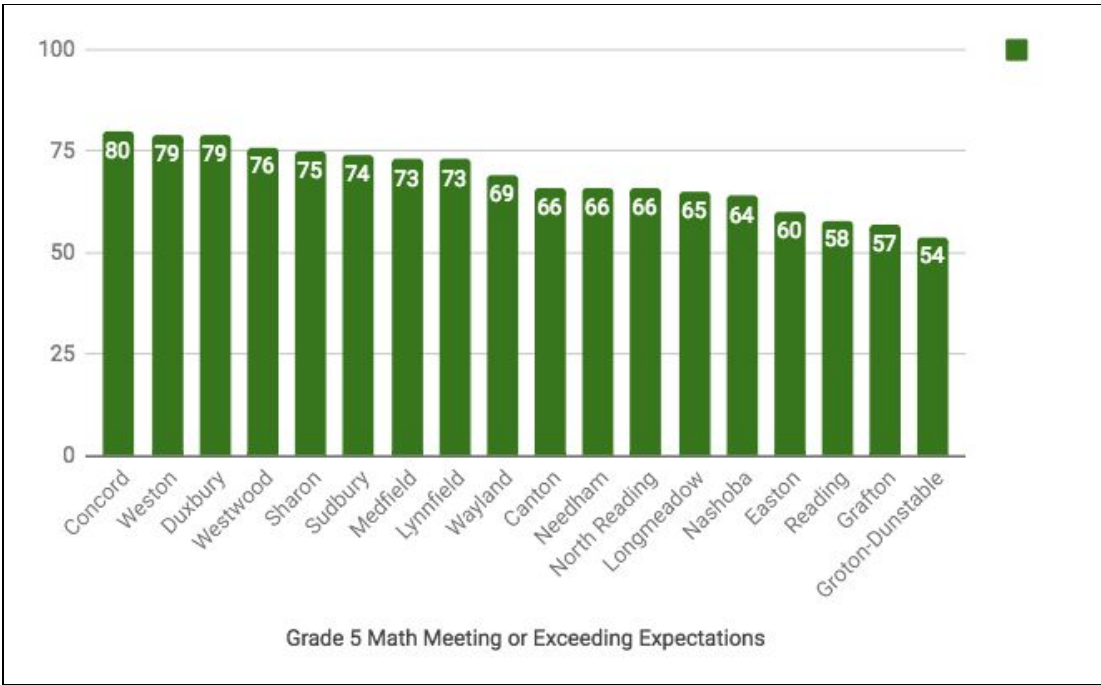
way, we are looking both at districts with similar financial profiles and districts with similar student and school profiles.

Results from grades 5, 8 and 10 for each content area are highlighted below. Broadly speaking, the results from 2018 are very similar to results from 2017.

Grade 5

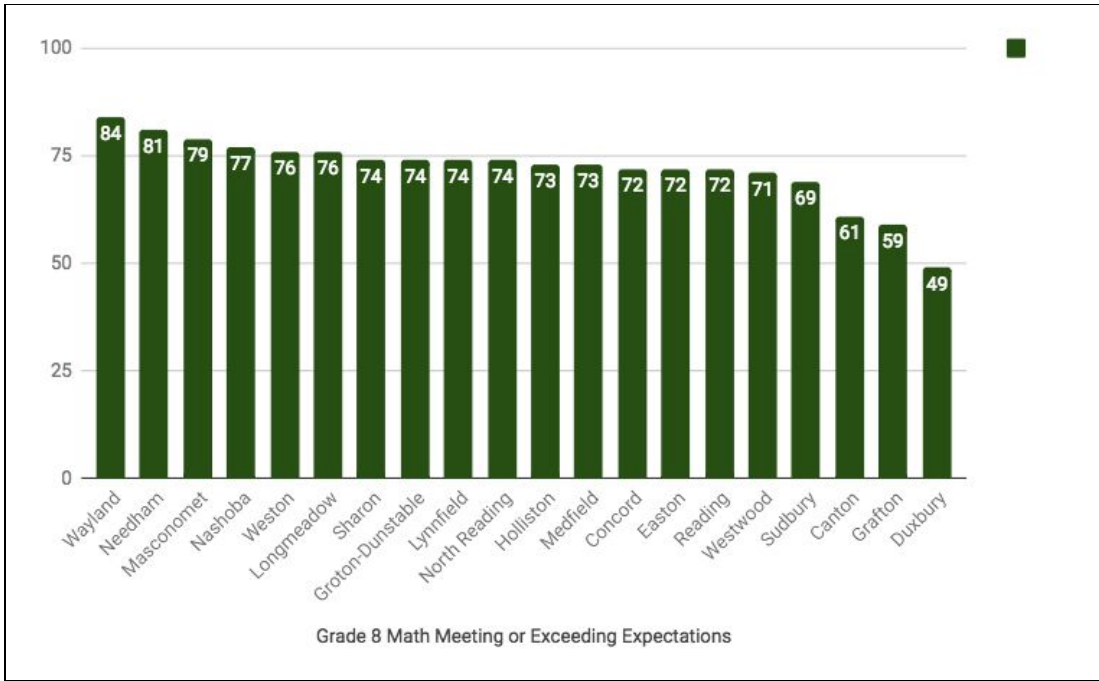
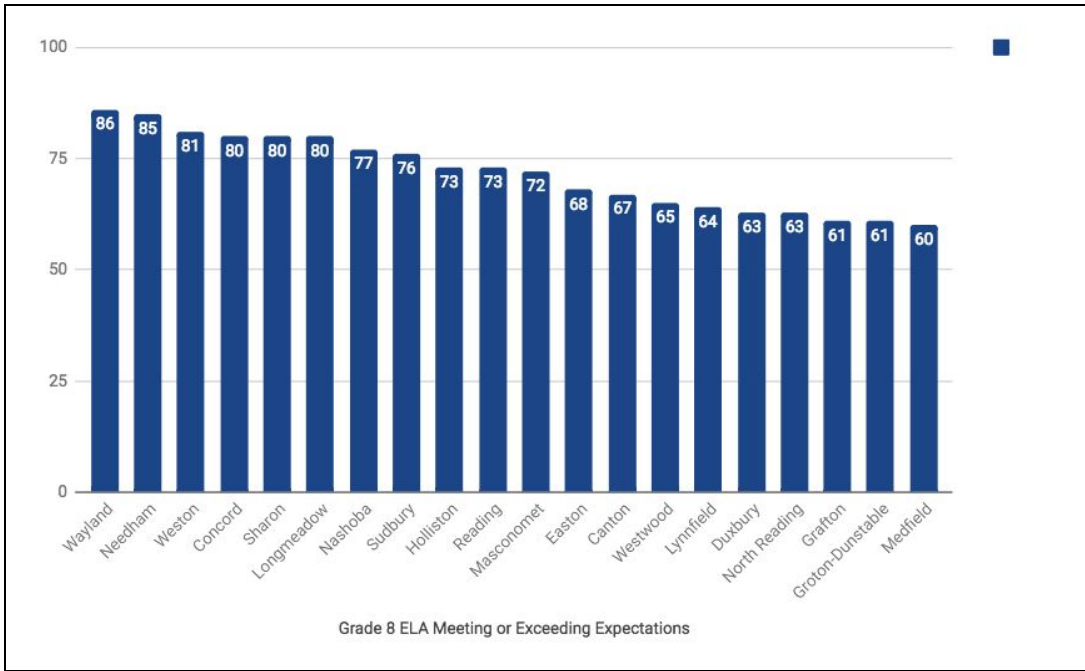
Grade five students' performance is strong across all three content areas when compared with students in other similar districts.

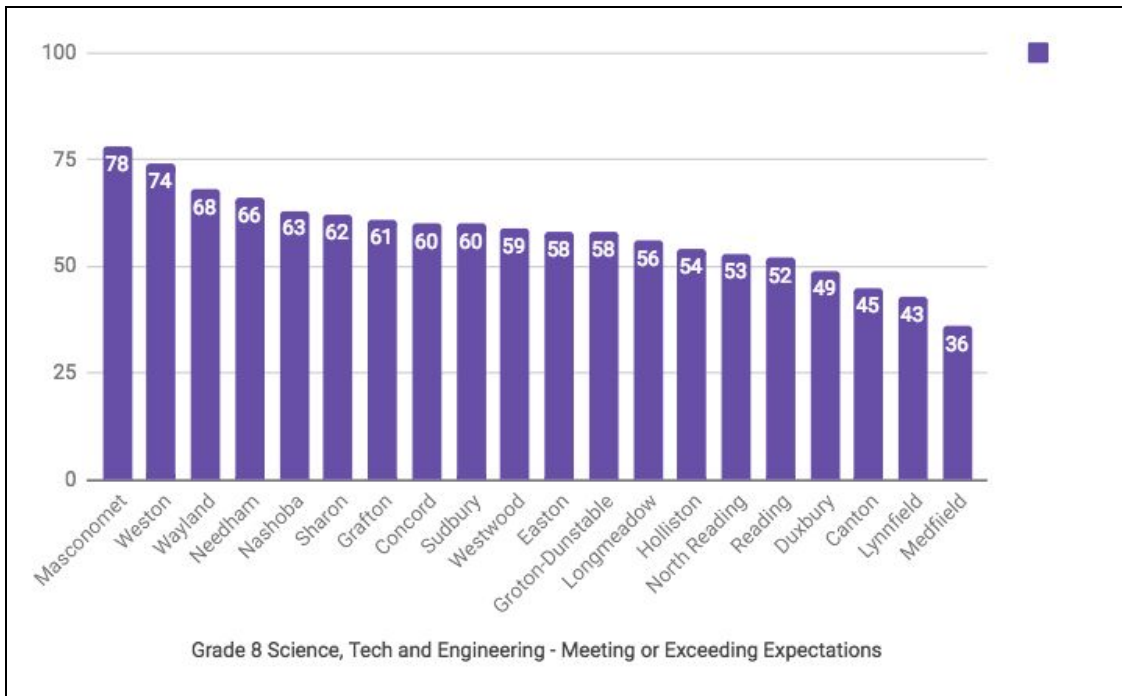




Grade 8

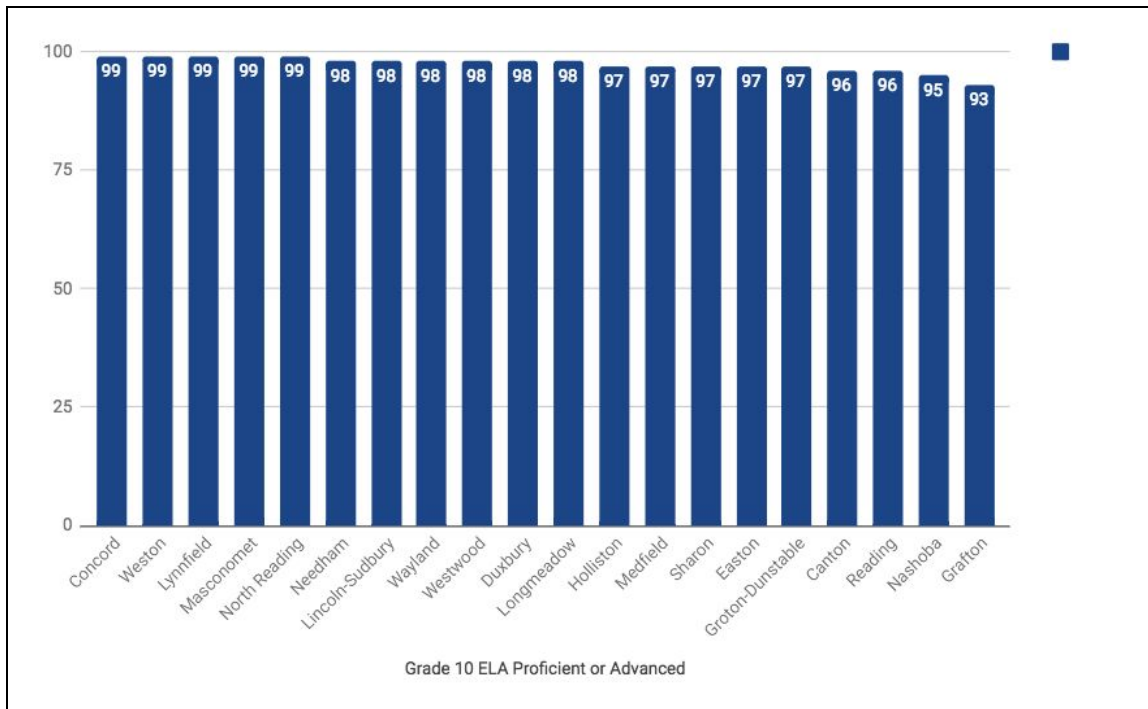
At the middle school level, Westwood’s students scores are in the middle or lower part of the range, comparatively speaking. Between 2016 and 2017, grade 8 science scores jumped noticeably. While this year’s scores did not continue to climb, they held relatively steady during the change in test format and content.

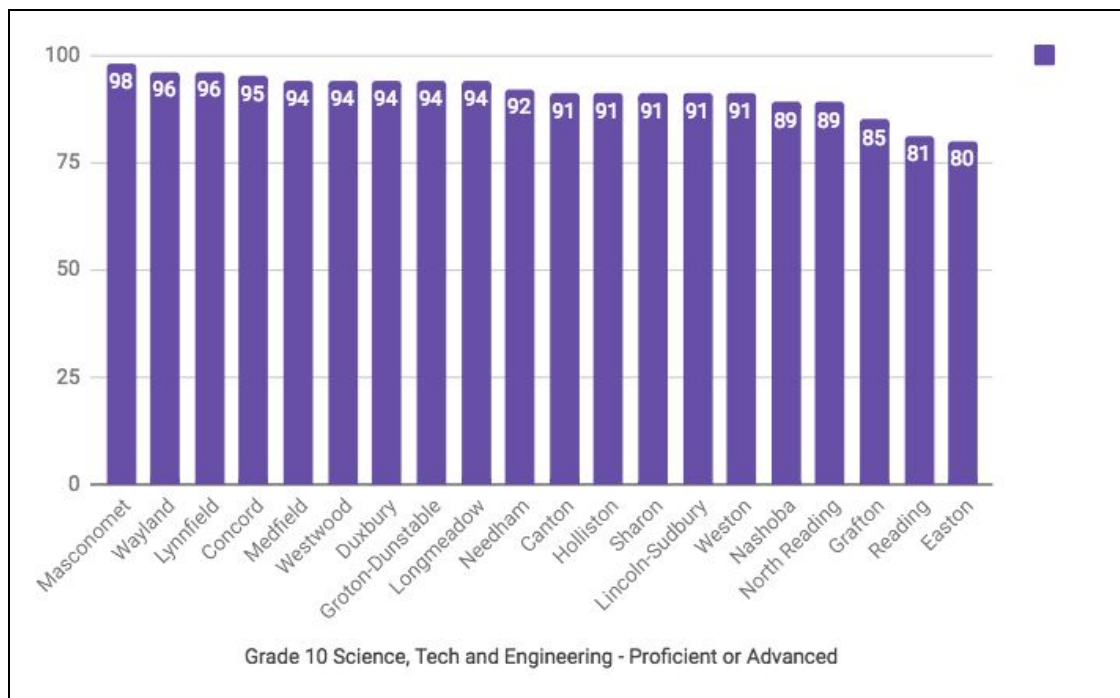
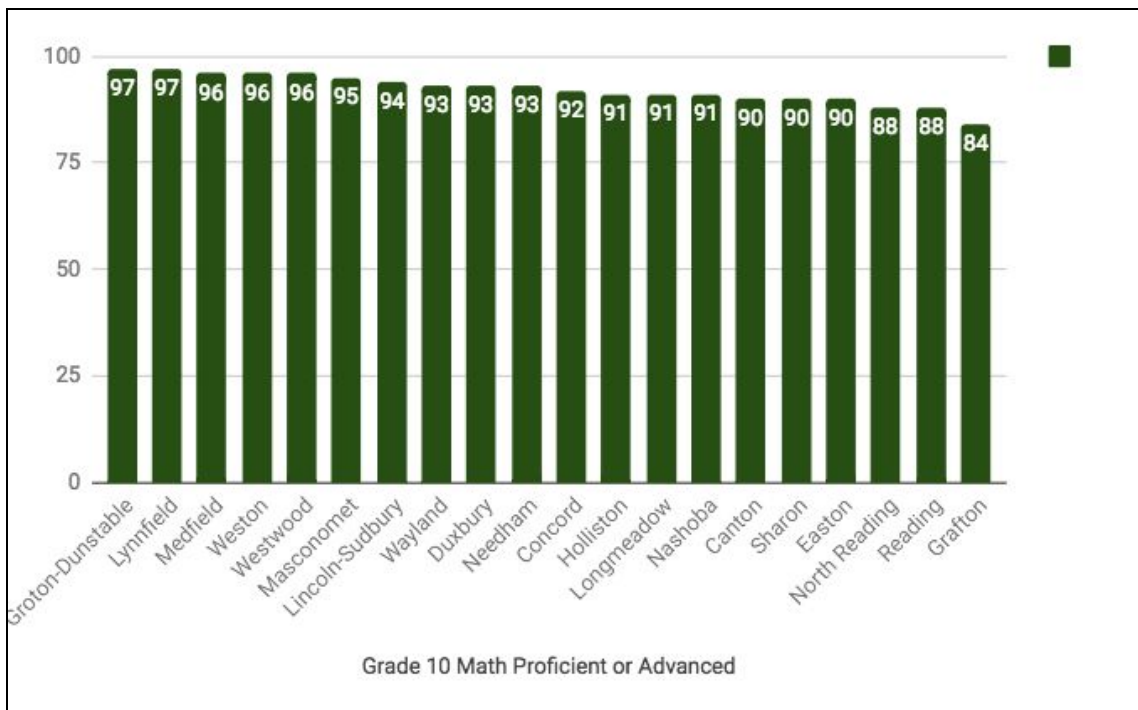




Grade 10

As students move through WPS and other districts, more and more are able to meet the current proficiency benchmarks. In addition, the differences in performance between comparable districts all but disappear. This trend is seen across all content areas. It is not yet clear whether the new assessment that will be given to 10th graders in the spring of 2019 will impact this trend.





District, School and Department Data Analysis

This year, we are looking to analyze results using three distinct lenses. First, school-based teams will review school results and individual students' results. The resulting information will help us to identify children in need of intervention and support, and to refine classroom instruction and intervention. In addition, curriculum-specific teams will analyze students' performance on critical standards in order to identify curriculum gaps and areas where professional development is needed. Finally, a district team

convenes on October 26 to examine comparative results, including a comparison of achievement gaps. As part of that work, the district will look to learn as much as we can from any comparable districts that are seeing success in closing achievement gaps.

In addition to looking outward at what works in other districts, this year we will be looking at standout performance within our district and working to replicate that performance across schools and levels. For example, this fall high school educators celebrated the success of a cohort of students who “passed” the assessments for the first time during their tenure as students in the Westwood Public Schools. We’ll examine the structures and strategies that were put in place to support these students and see which ones might be work in earlier grades. We will also look into the specific programs and practices that helped the Downey earn commendations. Downey is a particularly interesting case study, since educators there were able to not only meet but exceed targets for their students with disabilities.

Conclusion

While some elements of the statewide testing program have stabilized, there are still some significant changes ahead. The MCAS science test will be fully updated this spring to reflect new state standards in science. Also this spring, high school students will begin taking the Next Generation version of the English and Math tests. As early as 2020, the state could re-calibrate scores on the high school exams--a change that will impact students’ capacity to earn a diploma.

These changes present a challenge, but I am confident that Westwood’s commitment to reflection and growth places us in an excellent position to meet that challenge. Educators will continue to use MCAS data alongside other key indicators as we consider how to meet the learning needs of all of our students.