



To: Emily Parks, Superintendent of Schools
From: Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent
Date: October 15, 2021
Re: 2021 MCAS Results - Overview

Background

MCAS was cancelled in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. After a year’s hiatus, the assessments returned in spring of 2021 in a pared-down format. Changes to the assessment structure were as follows:

	2021 MCAS Administration	2019 MCAS Administration
<i>Grades 3 - 8</i>	Longer test window One session of each test Remote testing allowed	Shorter Test window Two sessions of each test In person testing only
<i>High School</i>	Longer testing window Later testing window Alternative pathways for CD in ELA/Math for class of 2022 Alternative pathways for CD in STE for classes 2022 & 2023	Longer testing window Earlier testing window Limited pathways for CD

Although the modified tests don’t offer quite as much information about the district's performance, they do provide educators and families with some helpful information about how student learning was impacted by the pandemic. The preliminary testing schedule for 2022 indicates that the state plans to go back to the 2019 structure, including earlier testing windows and two test sessions for each assessed subject area.

In addition, in spring 2022 Westwood can opt to have our 8th graders participate in a pilot of a new civics assessment for grade 8. Pilot participation would give students, families and educators a chance to preview the new assessment before it becomes mandated alongside the ELA, math and STE tests.

Competency Determination

In addition to providing important information to schools and districts, MCAS scores are used to determine a student’s eligibility for graduation with a high school diploma. This requirement is referred to as “competency determination” (CD) under Massachusetts state law (M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D). In a typical year, students have two pathways to earning their CD: 1) achieve a score indicating that they “meet” or “exceed” standards on a test OR 2) achieve a score in the “partially meeting standards” category AND complete an educational proficiency plan.

For students graduating in 2022, pathway #2 has been modified so that “successful completion of a relevant high school course” for math, ELA or science will allow a student to earn a high school diploma.

For the class of 2023, DESE has indicated that the CD standard for ELA and math will be the same as in pre-pandemic times but students will continue to have “successful completion of a relevant high school course” as a CD option for science.

Accountability

DESE requested and was granted a waiver of some federal accountability requirements, and the Board of Education voted to amend state regulations so that no accountability ratings were issued for the 2020-2021 school year. DESE will be reviewing options for accountability reporting for next year and beyond, and the district can expect to hear about any decisions regarding accountability in the months ahead.

Comparison Districts

In order to have a comprehensive view of Westwood’s performance in context, three groups of comparison districts are considered here. The first group includes “DART” districts, identified by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as having similar “grade span configuration, total enrollment and special populations” as the Westwood Public Schools. Schools included in the DART group can change year-to-year as the demographics and structures within the district change. The second group are school districts that Westwood’s Finance and Warrant Commission and School Committee have asked school and district administrators to examine as model, high-performing districts. The final group includes districts who are members of The Education Cooperative (TEC)--an educational collaborative that Westwood belongs to. TEC develops and coordinates programs in order to expand opportunities for the students, educators and communities of member districts in the most cost-effective manner. TEC is the oldest collaborative in Massachusetts.

2021 Comparison Districts

DART Districts (2019)	High Performing Districts	TEC Districts
Duxbury	Concord/Concord-Carlisle	Cantoin
Groton-Dunstable	Dover/Dover-Sherborn*	Dedham
Hamilton-Wenham	Lexington	Holliston
Hanover	Lincoln/Lincoln-Sudbury	Hopkinton
Longmeadow	Medfield*	Medway
Masconomet	Needham*	Millis
North Reading	Wellesley	Natick
Norwell	Weston	Norwood
Reading	Winchester	Walpole
Wayland		
Wilmington	*also in TEC	

Highlights

To date, the data has been reviewed to understand differences between 2019 and 2021 and to see how Westwood students performed when compared with students in our comparison districts.

There is some excellent news worth highlighting:

- Overall there is little difference in the percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations (“M+E”) in ELA between 2019 and 2021. In fact, some grades saw *improved* scores. Grade 4 improved by 1% over 2019. Grade 10 improved by 5%. Grade 7 improved by 10%.
- Westwood’s grade 3 - 8 aggregate scores were very strong: 7th in the state for ELA and 15th in the state for math.
- In grades 3, 4 & 5, Westwood’s M + E scores in ELA were the highest out of all comparison districts.
- Westwood’s math M + E scores were also very strong among comp districts in grades 3, 4, 5 and 7.
- Grade 5 STE (science, technology and engineering) scores were 3rd among the comp districts and 6th in the state.

Appendix A contains detailed comparison data for each subject area and grade level. The primary metric used to compare scores between districts in this analysis is the sum of the percentages of students who are Meeting (M) and students who are Exceeding (E) expectations. *Appendix B* contains data changes in performance since 2018.

Data Analysis Approach 2021

Instead of joining a district-wide data team this year, groups of educators will be examining data that is relevant to their specific role. Curriculum-based teams will be looking for patterns that suggest areas where the district could improve in our instruction related to specific skills and concepts. School-based teams will use individual student reports, along with the STAR assessment and other data, to identify students who might need additional support. Finally, a small team will examine the sub-group data in order to identify any concerning gaps between groups.

Changes Ahead and Conclusion

The Boston Globe headline claiming “MCAS Scores Plummet During the Pandemic” does not capture the reality of what happened here in Westwood. In English language arts, for example, the change between 2019 and 2021 was minimal, and in grades 4, 7, and 10 scores actually improved.

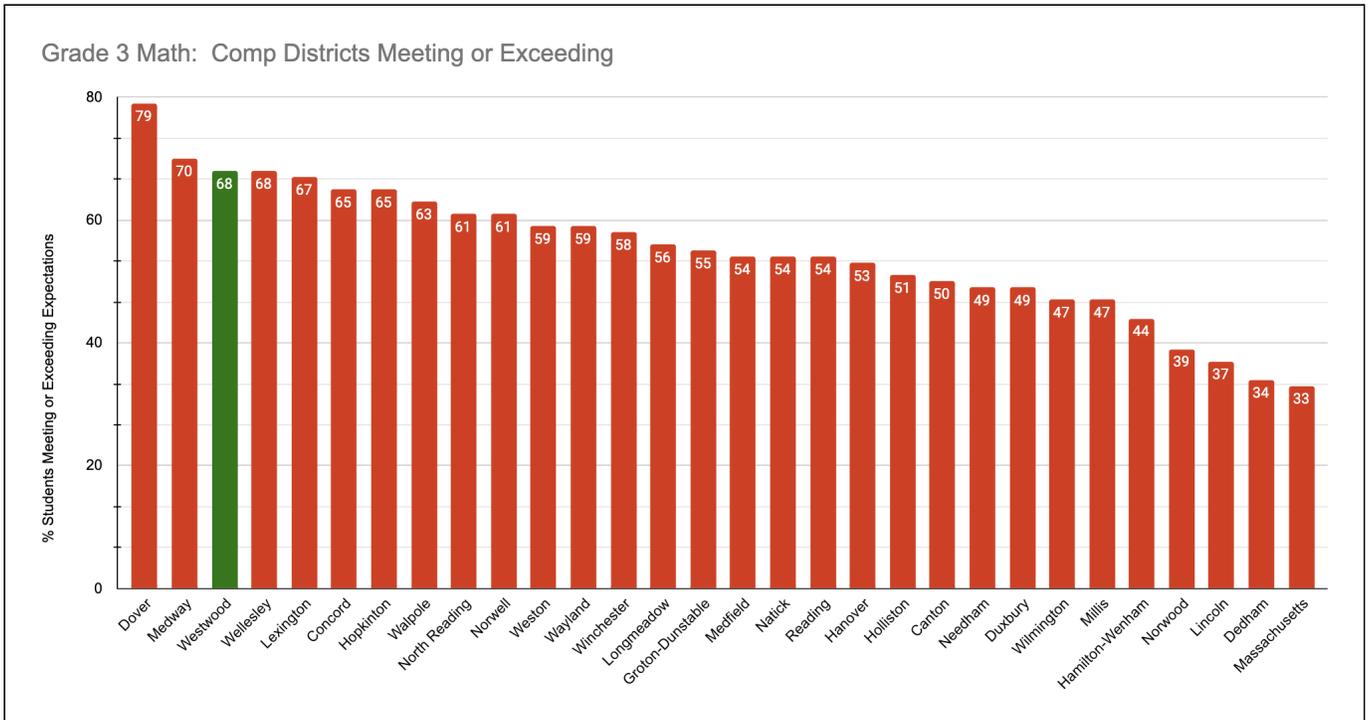
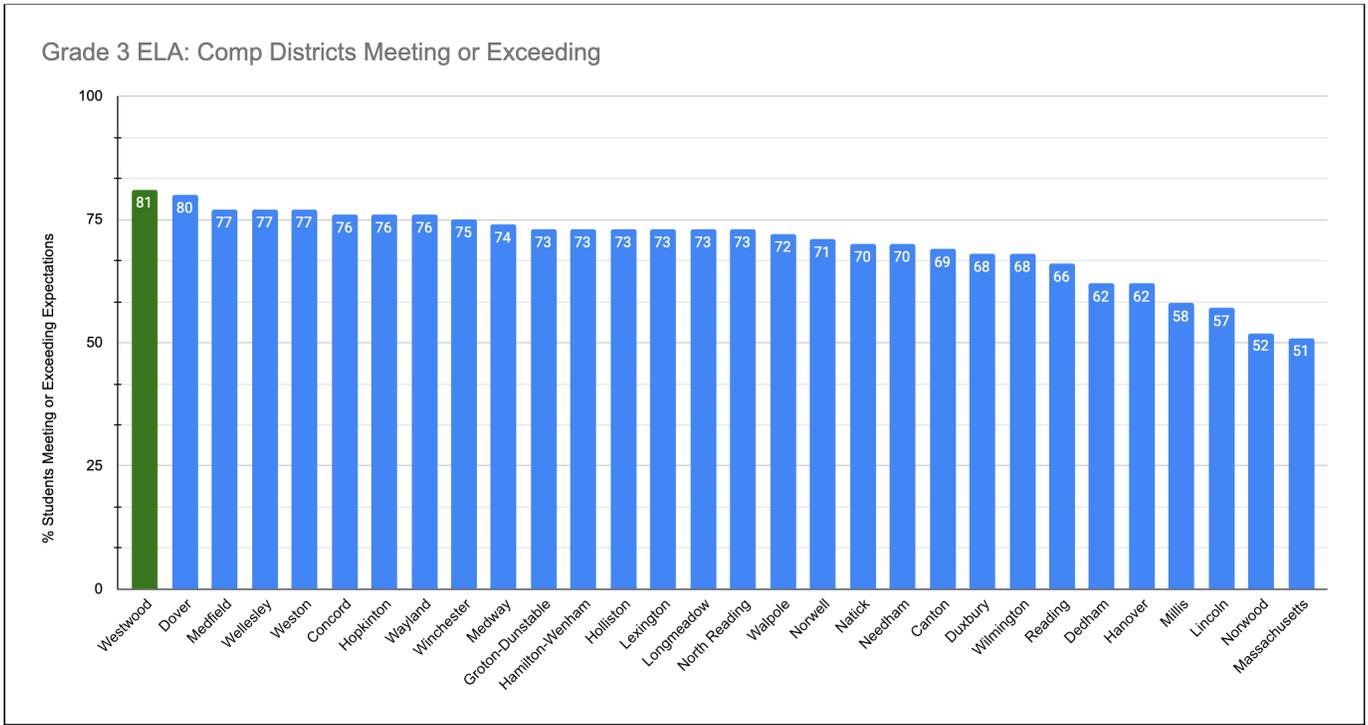
The strength of Westwood’s elementary performance in particular is a testament to the efforts of our classroom teachers, special educators and curriculum specialists. Starting just a week after the initial closure in 2020, specialists and coordinators created lesson templates to help keep learning alive in virtual classrooms. Teachers, working from their kitchens and living rooms and back yards, adapted those plans to meet the needs of students. They put in tremendous effort to keep students as engaged as possible.

With the return to school in the fall of 2020, many educators throughout Westwood found themselves in new roles--a strategy that allowed the district to return students to school safely. School, department and curriculum leaders worked to provide support for teachers, and teachers used new strategies and technology in order to make the most of a hybrid learning model.

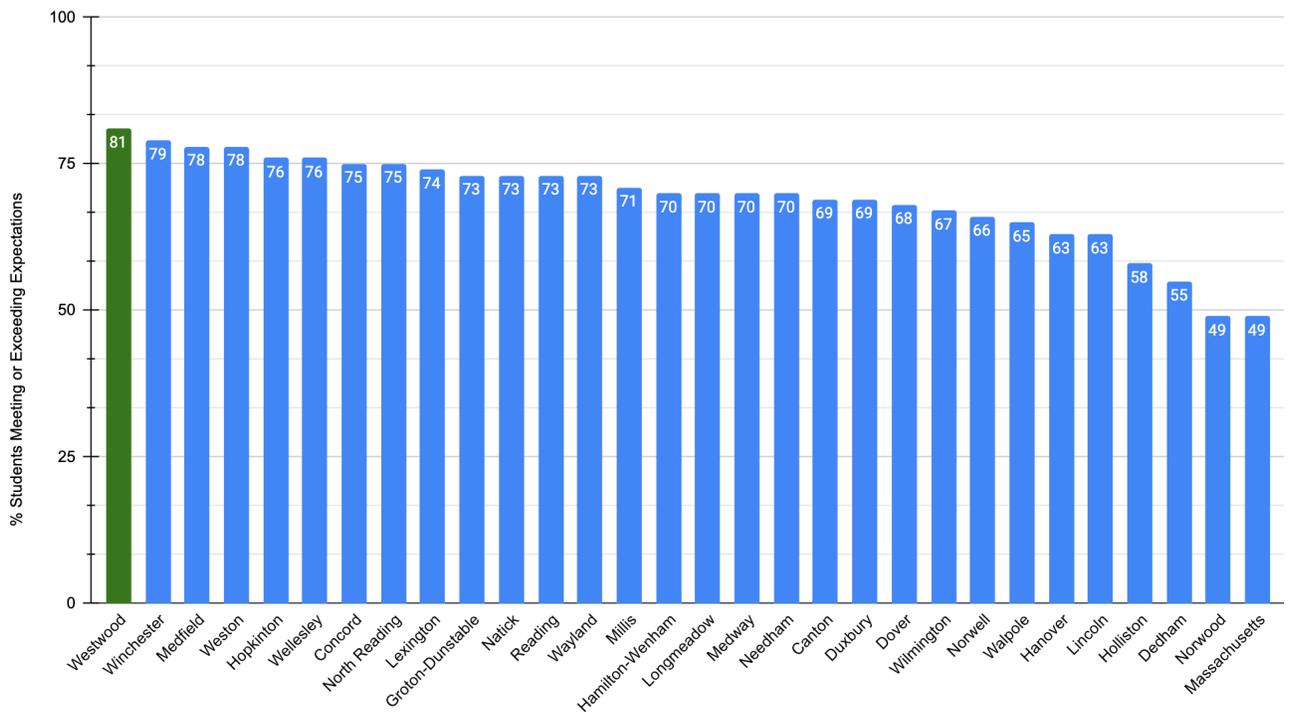
It is important to recognize that Westwood's strong MCAS performance would not have been possible without tremendous support from the community. The community's consistent investment in its schools has helped to create a district that can weather turbulent times and still provide a high quality education for children.

Finally, MCAS is just one measure of success for the Westwood Public Schools. Students here are accomplished artists, musicians, and athletes. They are thoughtful and respectful contributors to school-based organizations and community groups. They are kind and welcoming to newcomers and support one another through challenges. Our students' achievements are the very best evidence of the impact of the work of the district.

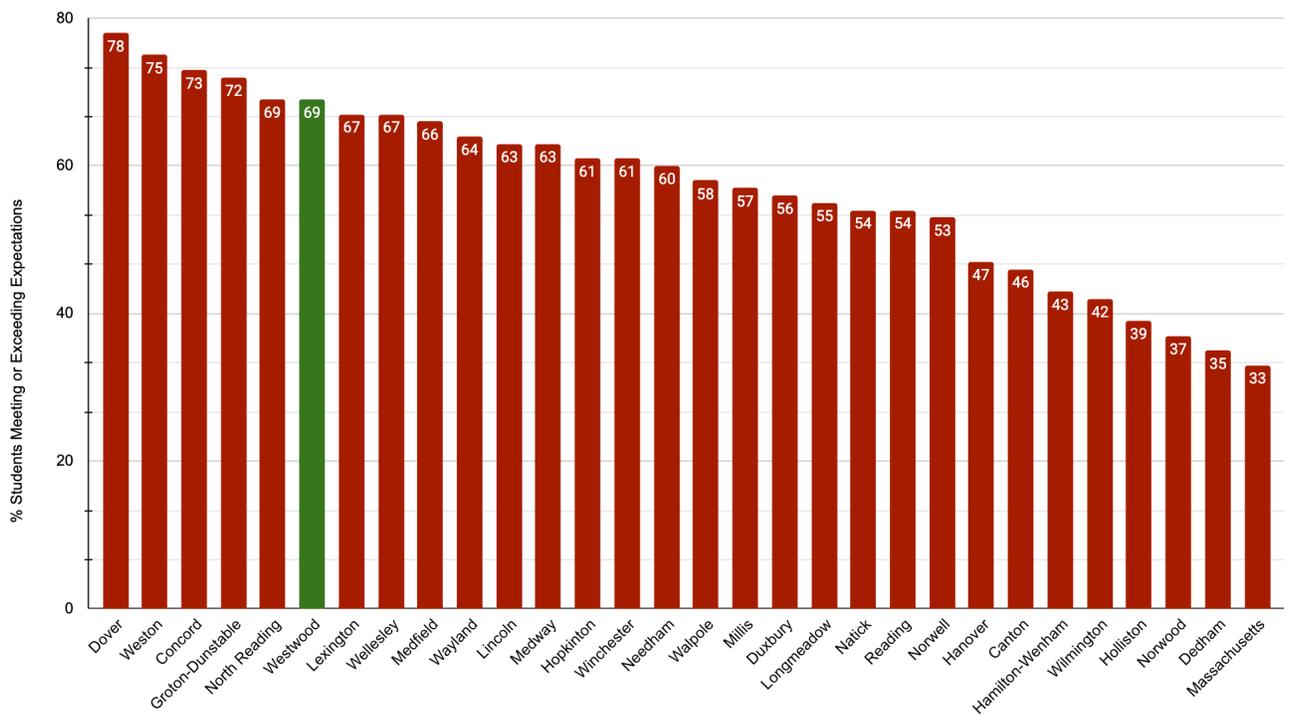
Appendix A: District Comparisons



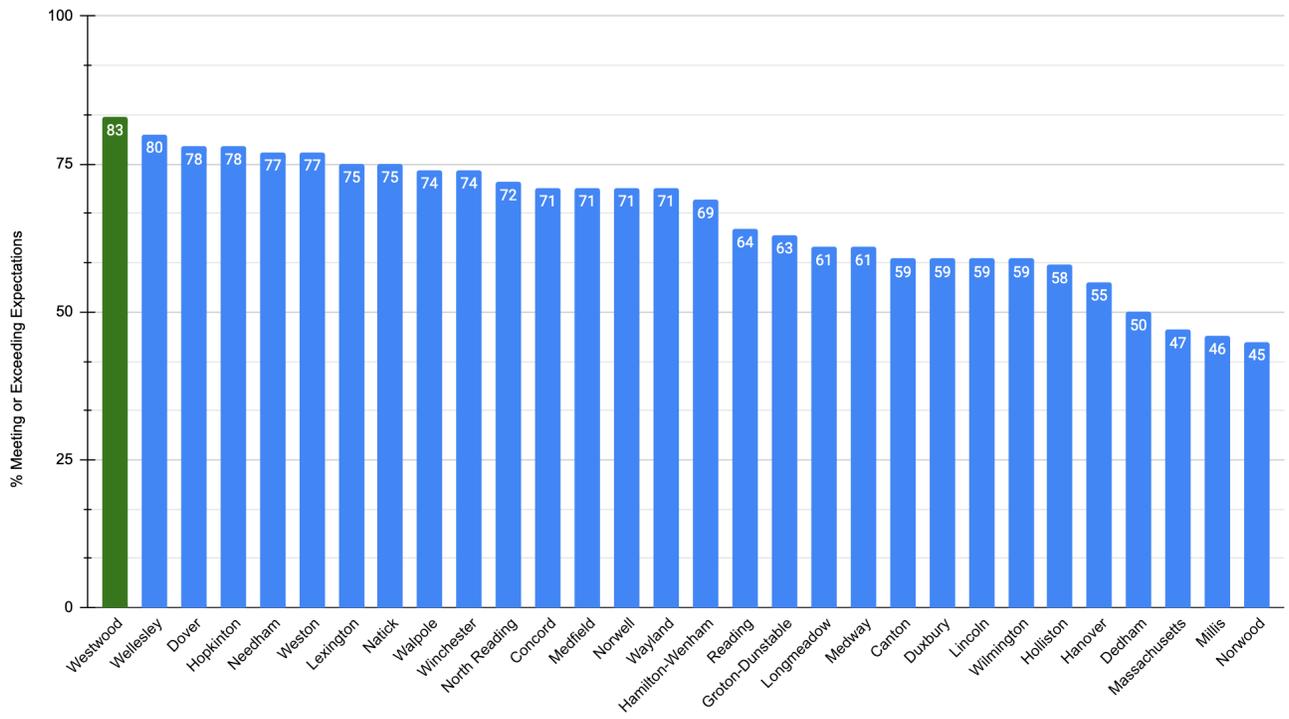
Grade 4 ELA: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



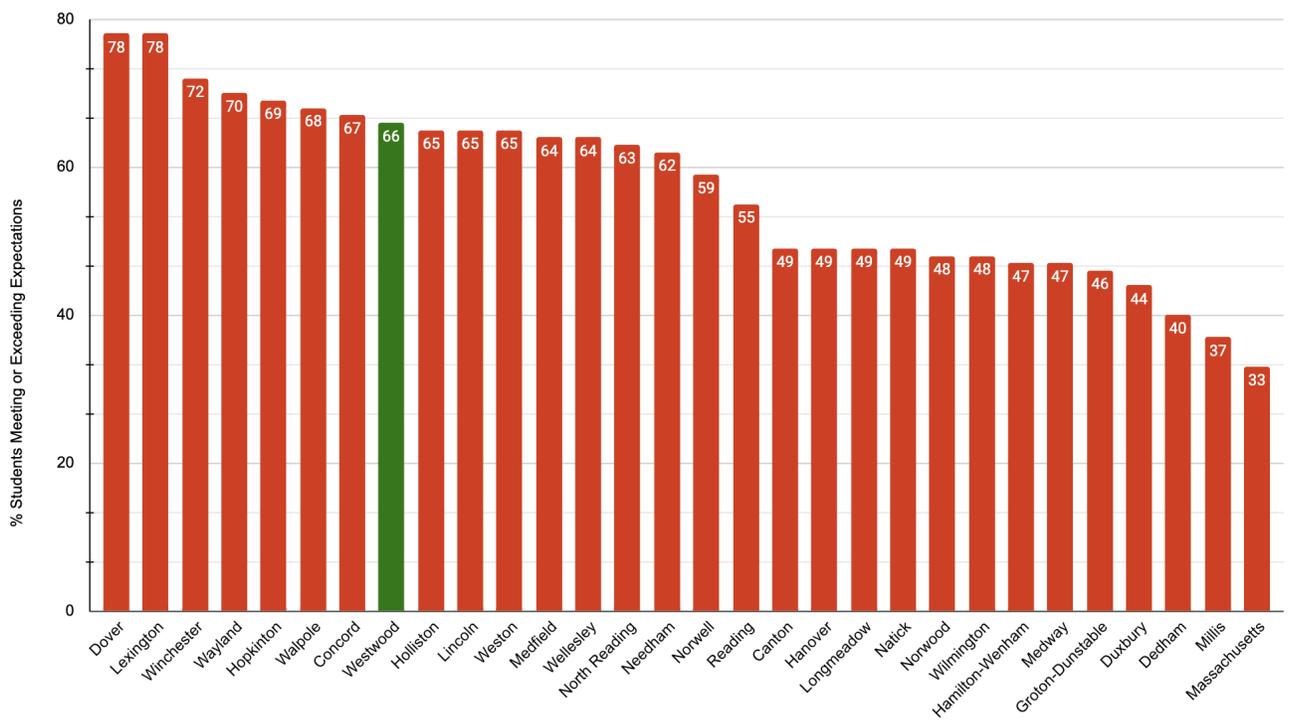
Grade 4 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



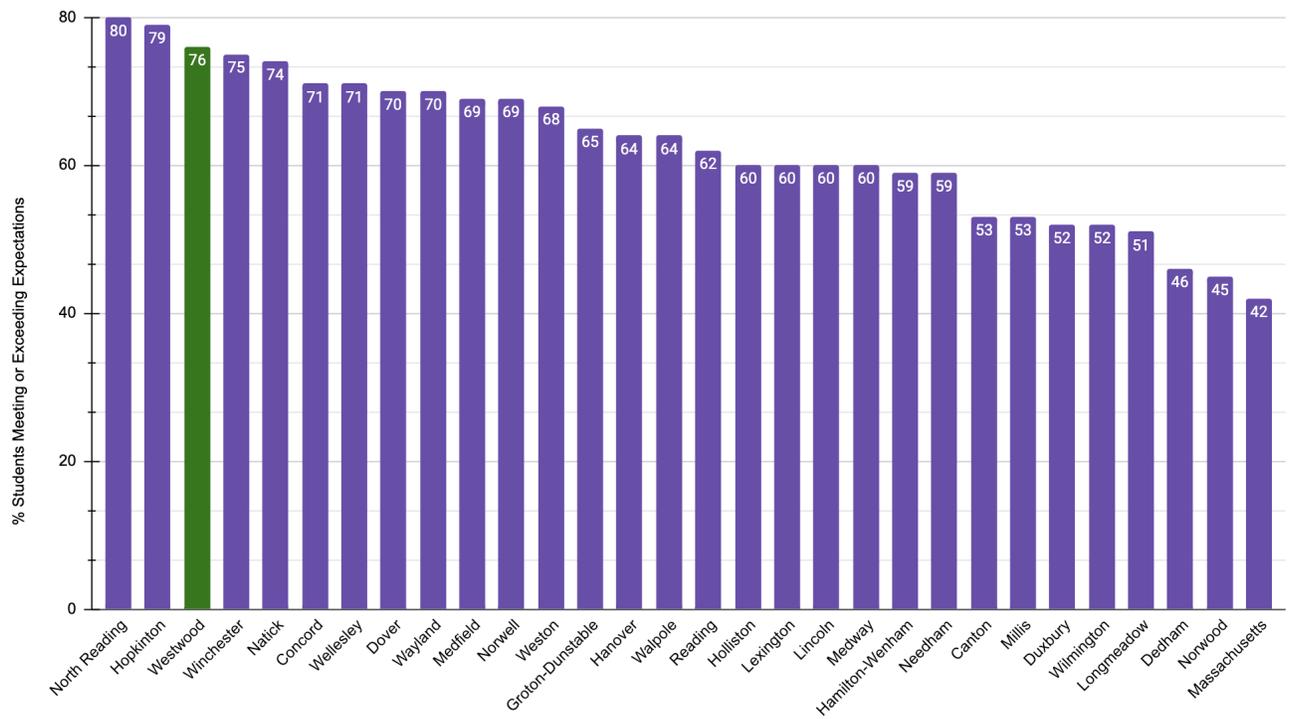
ELA Gr 5: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



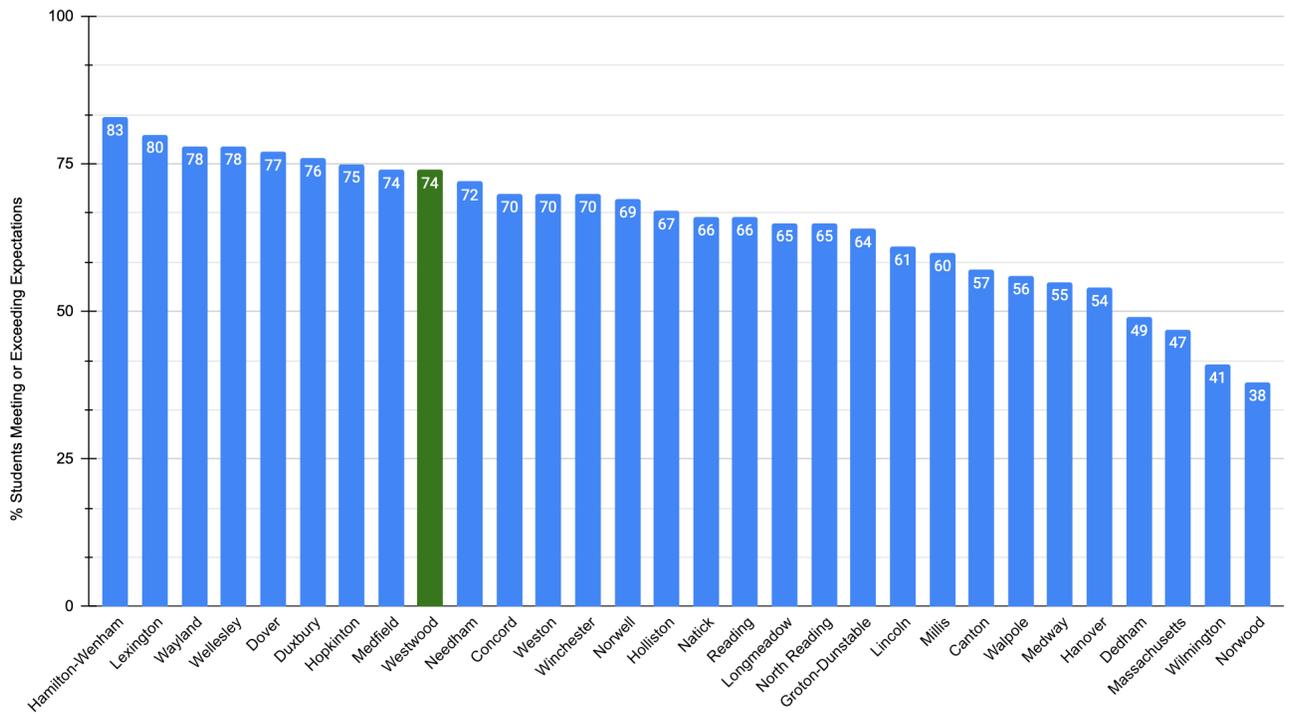
Gr. 5 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



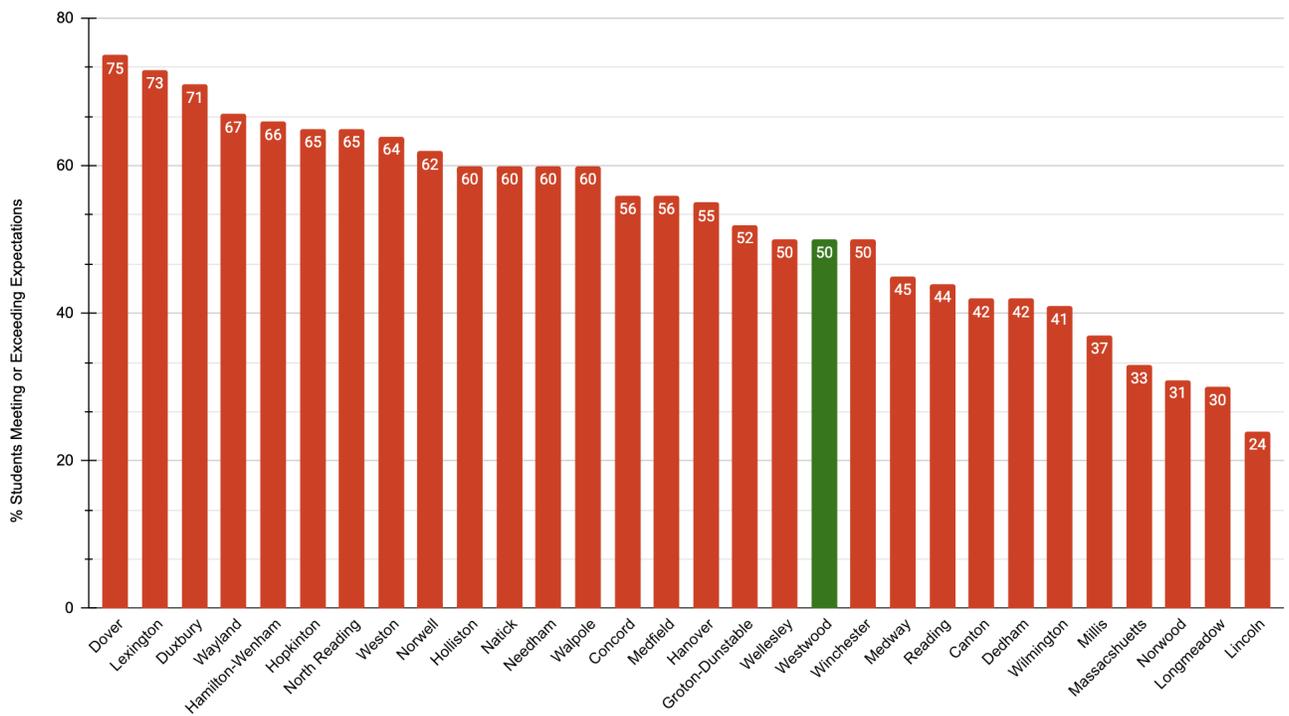
Gr. 5 STE: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



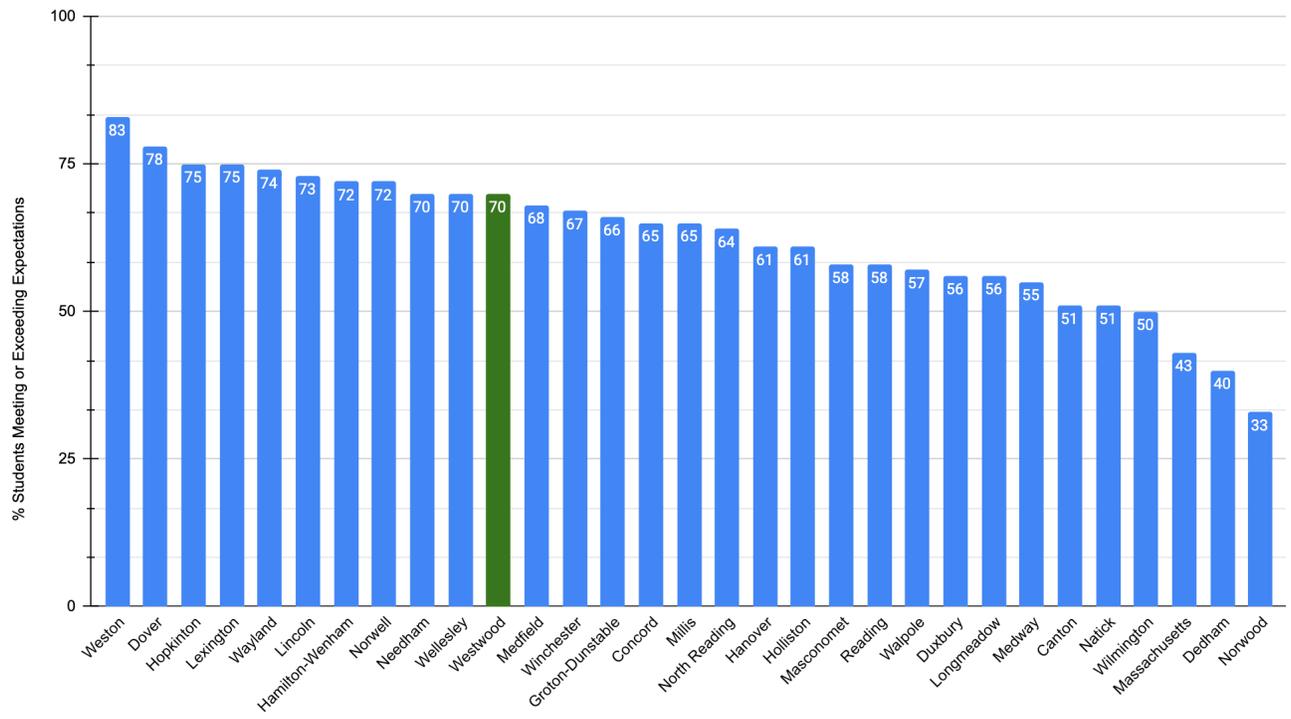
Gr. 6 ELA: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



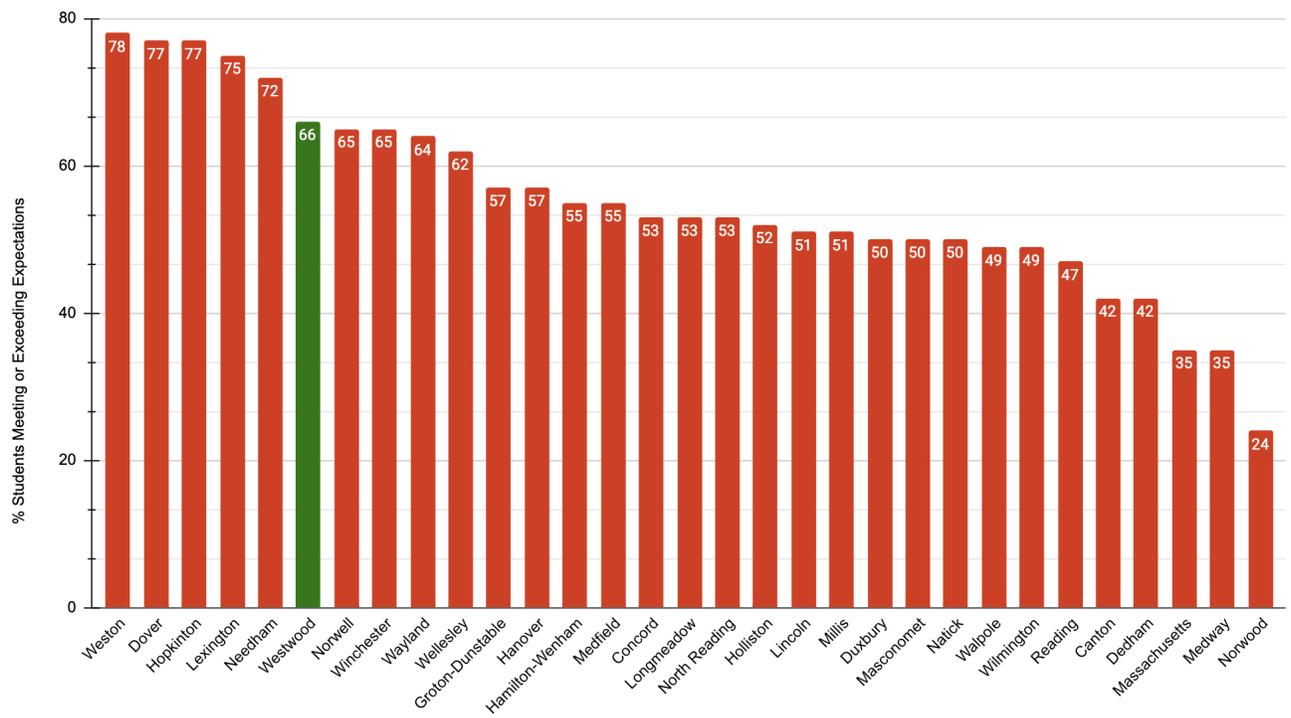
Gr. 6 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



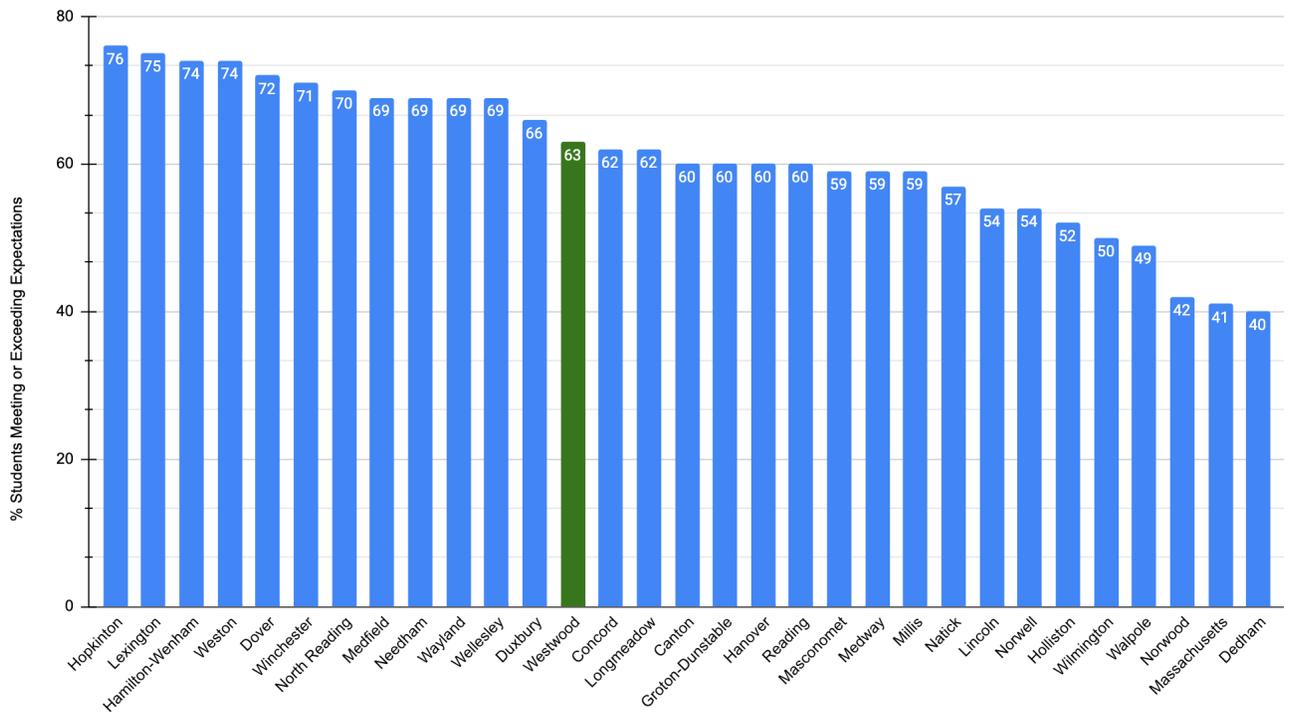
Gr. 7 ELA: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



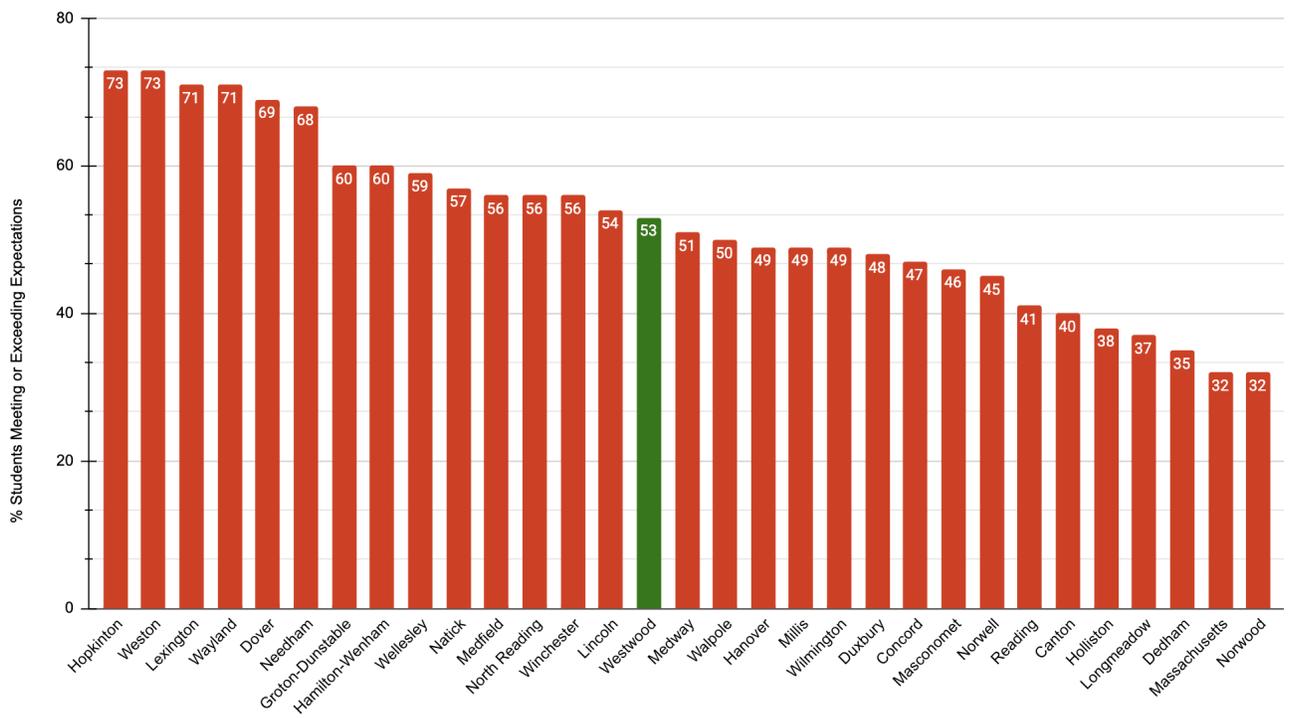
Gr. 7 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



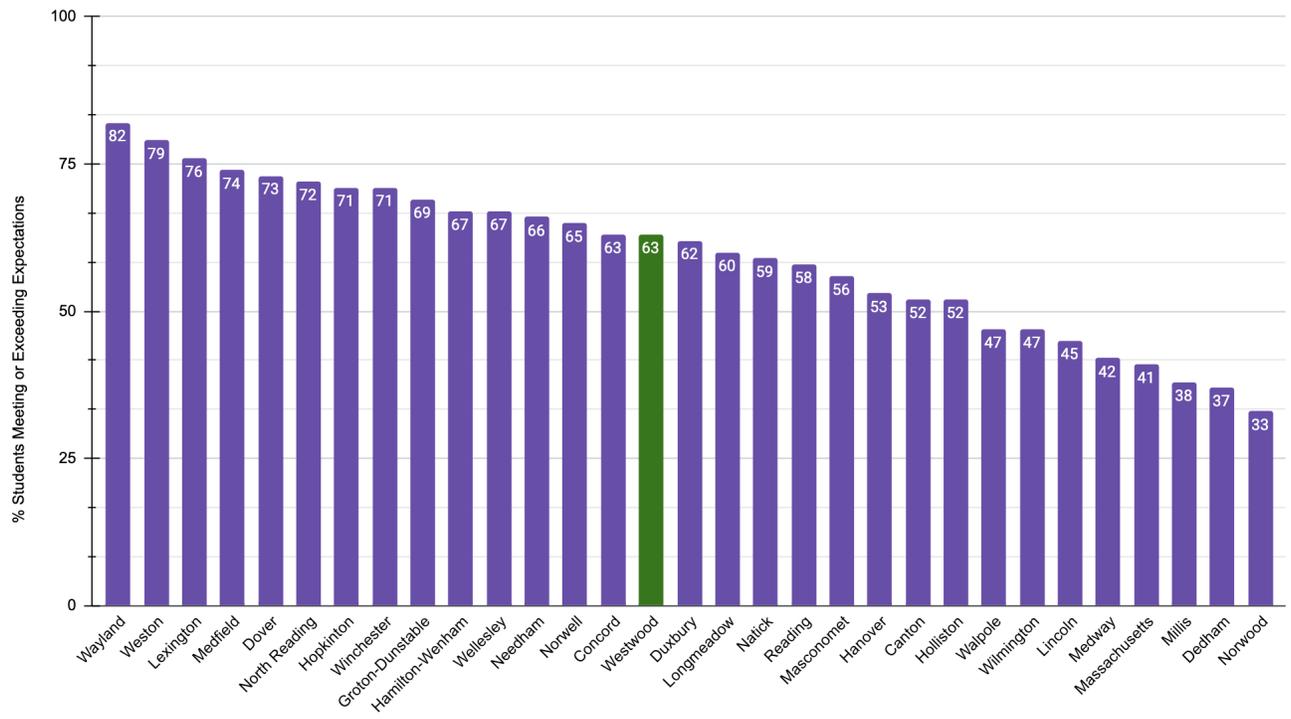
Gr. 8 ELA: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



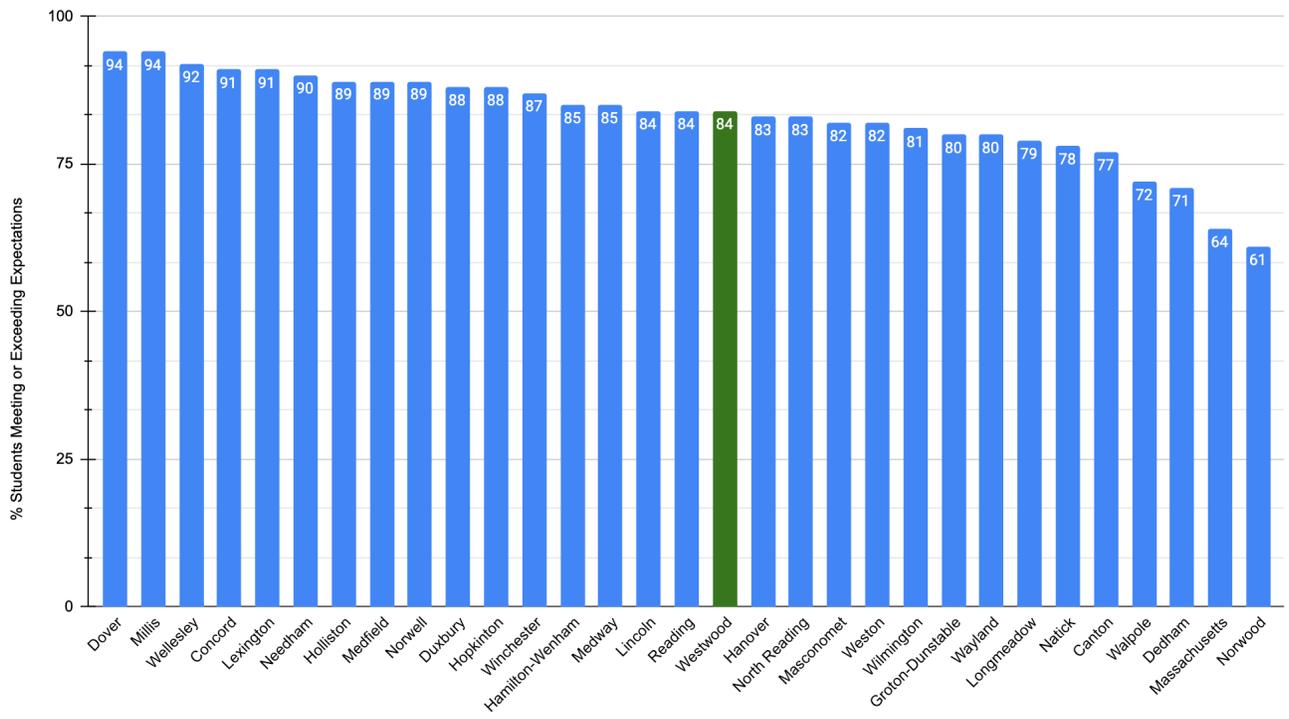
Gr. 8 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



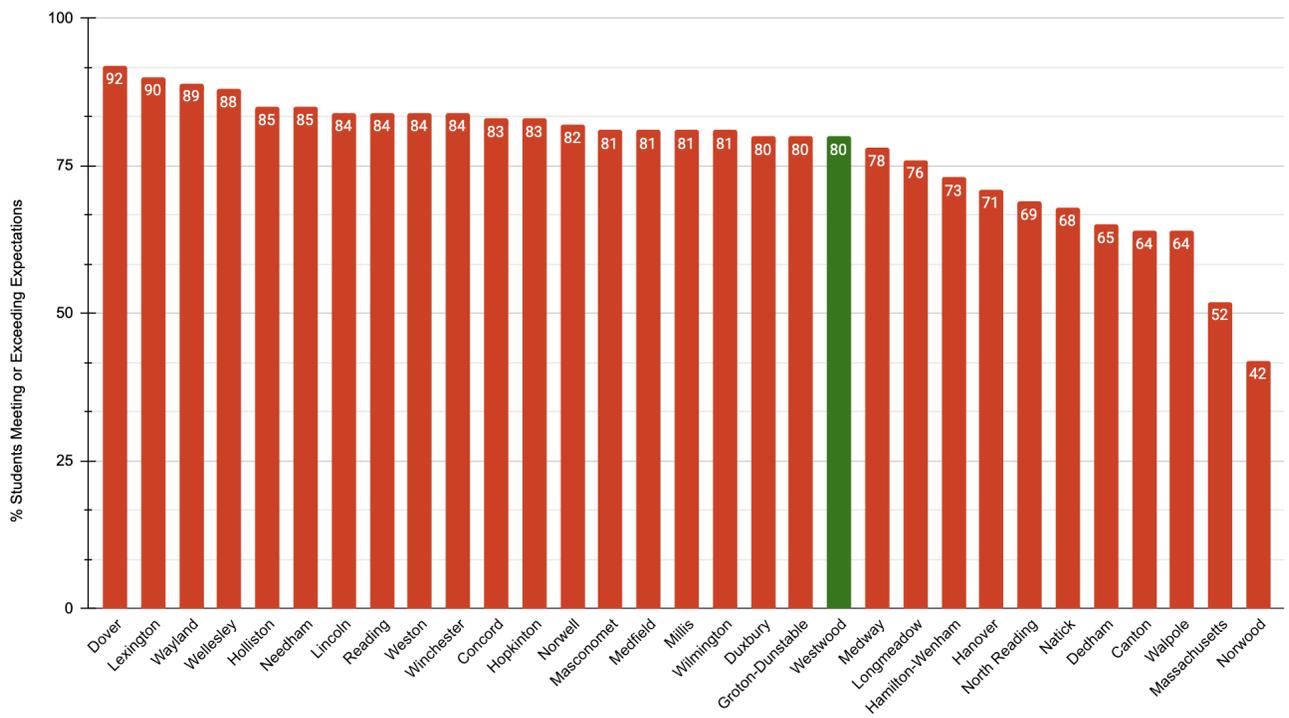
Gr. 8 STE: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



Gr. 10 ELA: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



Gr. 10 Math: Comp Districts Meeting or Exceeding



Appendix B: Westwood MCAS Scores 2018-2021

	2021						2019					2018				
	E	M	E+M	Δ	PM	NM	E	M	E+M	PM	NM	E	M	E+M	PM	NM
Grade 3 ELA	22%	60%	82%	-4%	17%	0%	26%	60%	86%	12%	2%	22%	54%	76%	23%	1%
Grade 3 Math	17%	51%	69%	-10%	28%	4%	25%	54%	79%	18%	2%	17%	53%	70%	27%	3%
Grade 4 ELA	20%	62%	82%	1%	18%	0%	24%	57%	81%	19%	0%	32%	50%	82%	18%	0%
Grade 4 Math	12%	58%	70%	-14%	26%	4%	19%	65%	84%	15%	1%	20%	57%	77%	20%	2%
Grade 5 ELA	34%	50%	84%	-3%	16%	0%	41%	46%	87%	11%	2%	19%	67%	86%	13%	1%
Grade 5 Math	15%	53%	68%	-9%	31%	1%	19%	58%	77%	21%	2%	14%	63%	77%	22%	1%
Grade 5 STE	16%	62%	78%	-5%	22%	0%	32%	51%	83%	15%	1%	39%	42%	81%	18%	1%
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	2021						2019					2018				
	E	M	E+M	Δ	PM	NM	E	M	E+M	PM	NM	E	M	E+M	PM	NM
Grade 6 ELA	36%	38%	74%	-10%	20%	6%	33%	51%	84%	15%	2%	30%	47%	77%	22%	1%
Grade 6 Math	6%	44%	50%	-23%	44%	6%	23%	50%	73%	25%	1%	12%	57%	69%	28%	3%
Grade 7 ELA	20%	51%	71%	10%	21%	8%	11%	50%	61%	36%	3%	11%	53%	64%	32%	4%
Grade 7 Math	22%	44%	65%	-10%	27%	7%	28%	47%	75%	21%	4%	13%	51%	64%	32%	4%
Grade 8 ELA	18%	46%	64%	-2%	31%	5%	16%	50%	66%	31%	4%	18%	47%	65%	31%	4%
Grade 8 Math	8%	45%	53%	-14%	38%	10%	15%	52%	67%	31%	2%	17%	54%	71%	26%	3%
Grade 8 STE	15%	48%	63%	-7%	31%	6%	18%	52%	70%	28%	3%	39%	42%	81%	18%	1%

	2021	2019	2018
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