



The State of Education for Students Experiencing Foster Care in Massachusetts

Massachusetts's students perform, on average, much better than students from other states. However, achievement gaps persist.

- Massachusetts excelled on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam.ⁱ
 - Fourth and eighth graders have scored highest on reading and math since 2005.
 - Fourth graders tied for first and eighth graders tied for second in science performance in 2009.
- The average ACT score of a Massachusetts student is three points higher than the national average.ⁱⁱ
- In 2010, public high school students in Massachusetts outscored students in other states on the SAT, with African-Americans leading their nationwide peers.ⁱⁱⁱ
- However, foster youth in Massachusetts continue to struggle academically.
 - Youths in foster care are two times more likely to fail the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and three times more likely to receive special education services than their peers.^{iv}
 - Only 46 percent of Massachusetts foster youth complete high school.^v

Massachusetts has been a forerunner in providing for the well being of all children.

- In 2006, Massachusetts extended foster care until age 21 for "specific educational or rehabilitative programs".
- From 1995 to 2008, the number of children in DCF placement dropped 32 percent.^{vi}
 - In addition to shorter terms of stay, a streamlined process resulted in the adoption of 68 percent of children over age 12 and 11 percent of children over 17 in 2008.
- Foster care review panels begin at age 14, supporting the preparation of youth for a successful transition out of care.
- State law even exceeded many of the provisions laid out in the sweeping federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*.
 - State law required a shorter timeframe (12 to 96 hours) for relative notification after placement than *Fostering Connections*.
 - Massachusetts already considered kinship care first for out-of-home placements.
 - Massachusetts has been heralded for its sibling policy, which prioritizes the preservation of sibling groups. State law requires visits when siblings are separated.

Massachusetts has begun implementation of *Fostering Connections* including a focus on critical educational stability mandates.

- Foster care was expanded to all children until age 22 in 2010.^{vii}

- In 2009, Sen. Anthony Galluccio introduced legislation, SB 41, to require the collaboration of the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Office of the Child Advocate, and the Secretary of Education on a plan for the educational stability of children placed in foster care.^{viii}
 - The education plan would consider the number of school aged foster children in the state, the feasibility of extending *McKinney-Vento* guarantees to foster children, methods of reducing the loss of learning time due to school placement changes, efficient procedures for the transfer of records, the necessity of an educational liaison for foster youth, and the sources of funding for transportation of foster students to their school of origin.
- In January of 2011, an “Act Relative to the Educational Stability of Foster Children” was submitted as bill S0037 into the State Senate. The bill will make it easier for foster children’s records to follow them as they bounce from school to school.

ⁱ Press Release, Executive Office of Education , Massachusetts 4th and 8th Graders Show Strong Performance on 2009 NAEP Science Exams (Jan. 25, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=edupressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eoedu&b=pressrelease&f=20110125_naep_science&csid=Eoedu.

ⁱⁱ Press Release, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Graduates Outscore Nation on 2010 ACT (Aug. 18, 2010), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5672>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Press Release, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Reading & Writing scores hold steady; African-American students make strong gains in all three subjects; Participation and Performance on AP Exams also increase (Sept. 13, 2010), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5724>.

^{iv} Law after Foster Care In Massachusetts, The Massachusetts Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 18 and Out (last visited Jan. 31, 2011), http://www.msppcc.org/assets/updoli_18andOut.pdf.

^v Preparing Our Kids for Education, Work, and Life: A Task Force on Youth Aging Out of DSS Care, The Boston Foundation (last accessed Jan. 31, 2011), www.tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility.../DSS_Report_0522.pdf.

^{vi} How States are Implementing the Fostering Connections Act, Massachusetts’s At-Risk Children, National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (last accessed Jan. 31, 2011), www.napcwa.org/Legislative/docs/Massachusetts.pdf.

^{vii} Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 119 § 23(H) (2006); Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 119 § 23(F) (2010).

^{viii} An Act Relative to Educational Stability for Foster Children, MA S.B. 41 (2009).



FOSTERING MEDIA CONNECTIONS

www.fosteringmediaconnections.org

Fostering Media Connections (FMC) is a project of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. FMC harnesses the power of journalism and media to drive public and political will behind policy and practice that improve the well being of children in foster care through increased stability and greater educational opportunity.