

CPS People's Forum participants shared common vision of what high school grads should know, how to measure it

After Massachusetts voters chose to eliminate the MCAS graduation requirement in November 2024 by a vote of 59% to 41%, Governor Maura Healey convened a 31-member advisory council to consider new graduation requirements.

In the wake of such a decisive vote on Question 2, Citizens for Public Schools wanted to ensure that the opportunity to listen to stakeholders and come up with a better system would not be squandered. CPS decided to plan, along with education and community groups around the state, a series of People's Forums on Graduation Readiness. We invited diverse education stakeholders – students, parents, educators, elected leaders and community members – to answer three questions:

1. What should students know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school?
2. How should students demonstrate their readiness to graduate?
3. What should high school look like to prepare students for your recommended graduation requirements?

The CPS forums were modeled on an extensive, multiyear process New York State followed when the state decided to stop using its Regents exams as a graduation test.

Forums held last spring and this fall in Cambridge, New Bedford, Worcester and E. Boston have drawn more than 165 participants to discuss what they think graduation readiness and requirements should look like in the future. More forums are scheduled in October and November in Dorchester, the South End, and Lowell, as well as a Zoom forum geared toward western Massachusetts and rural residents. (Details and registration for upcoming forums are posted at citizensforpublicschools.org.)





The conversations at our People's Forums about what students should know and be able to do when they graduate from high school were consistently thoughtful, rich and varied. It became clear that education stakeholders around the state share many common values and priorities.

Forum participants said they expect and want students to develop a wide range of skills and capacities, most of which are not measurable with a multiple choice, standardized exam like the MCAS. Participants also said they wanted students to be literate in math, English language arts, science, and history. The skills and capacities fell into six categories, adding up to a

graduate who is a:

- Competent navigator
- Effective communicator
- Critical thinker
- Civic-minded
- Purposeful collaborator
- Life-long learner

Among the ideas proposed to measure readiness for graduation were:

- Performance assessment capstones and portfolios
- Community service and internships
- Apprenticeships
- Post-graduate plan
- Teach a unit in an academic discipline of choice
- Passports or badges

Again and again, participants underscored the need to address the way the state raises and allocates school funding to ensure resources to support the education participants envision for our students.

Citizens for Public Schools is compiling the results of all the forums and sharing them with the governor's council, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the legislature, and the public.

People's Forum endorsers included: *Citizens for Public Schools, Educational Association of Worcester, Worcester Education Justice Alliance, Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, Free Worcester Coalition, Worcester Education Collaborative, Senator Robyn Kennedy, the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), AFT Massachusetts, New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools, Fall River Educators Association, New Bedford Educators Association, Greater New Bedford Educators Union, New Bedford Support Specialists Union, New Bedford Federation of Paraprofessionals Local 2378, Cambridge Education Association, Somerville Educators Union, Cambridge Retired Educators United, NAACP Cambridge Branch, Cambridge Families of Color Coalition, Educators of Color Coalition, Cambridge Families of Asian Descent, Our Revolution Cambridge, Cambridge Residents Alliance, The Black Response, UAW Region 9A, Senator Pat Jehlen, Rep. Christine Barber, Rep. Mike Connolly, Rep. Marjorie Decker, Rep. Steven Owens, Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven, Boston Debate League, Maverick Landing Community Services, Boston Student Advisory Council, Boston Teachers Union, St. Stephens Youth Programs, Quality Education for Every Student, United Teachers of Lowell, Lowell Education Justice Alliance, MA Education Justice Alliance, Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council, Rep. Rodney Elliott, Rep. Vanna Howard, Lowell School Committee members Dave Conway, Connie Martin & Dominic Lay, Lynn Councillor at Large Brian LaPierre.*

Citizens for Public Schools is a 43-year-old statewide public education advocacy organization.