

**REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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2009-10 ANNUAL REPORTS ON GRADUATION RATES AND DROPOUTS

A key indicator of a district's effectiveness and success is its graduation rate and dropout rate. Annually, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, reports on these two key indicators. The state's 2009-10 reports indicate that the 4-year graduation rate continues to rise while the statewide annual dropout rate remained steady. The four year cohort graduation rate is calculated by including the number of first time entering ninth graders in the 2006-07 school year, factoring transfers out and transfers in, and the number who actually graduate in four years or less. The dropout rate is "snapshot of those students who dropped out of school in any given year" [MDESE, 2009-10]. Similar to the state, Worcester Public Schools saw an increase in its 4-year graduation rate. However, Worcester Public Schools saw a decrease in its dropouts in 2009-10 from its 2008-09 data. This is significant change from last year's results. Worcester Public Schools was one of only seven urban districts to experience an increase in dropouts in 2008-09 while all other urban districts saw declines in that same year.

A brief review of the past five years of data is helpful to understand Worcester's progress. Worcester Public Schools has only seen an overall 1% increase in the 4-year graduation rate, moving from 73.4% in 2005-06 to 74.4% in 2009-10. Additionally, the graduation rate gap between Worcester Public Schools students has persisted during this same time period, hovering around the seven to eight percentage point range compared to all graduates at the state level. The gap is the difference between the rate of graduation of groups of students in the district compared to those in the state. The graduation rates for African-Americans, Hispanic/Latino, limited English proficient, and low income students in Worcester Public Schools during this five year period have tended to exceed the state averages for these subgroups. Conversely, the graduation rates of White students and students with disabilities have lagged the state averages for these same categories. The district does see an increase in the numbers and percentage students graduating from Worcester Public Schools in five years.

The Annual High School Dropout report has undergone a series of changes over the last few years. This report is currently reflective of the percent of students across grades nine through twelve who dropout in a particular year. Therefore, the state cautions drawing year to year comparisons due to those changes. However, significant in the 2009-10 year report is that Worcester Public Schools had 93 fewer students to drop out compared to 2008-09 school year, resulting in an overall dropout rate of 3.8 %. This is a 1.3% decrease from the previous year. This places the Worcester Public Schools dropout rate within one percentage point of the state's rate of 2.9%.

As the district strives to more closely align its practices and expectations to achieve college and career readiness for all students, these data on dropouts and graduation rates carry even more significance. While there has been steady progress, there is certainly a great deal more that needs to be done to close gaps among and between subgroups and the state performance. These results are indicative of the coherent and focused efforts being undertaken within the district through increased and effective use of data, ongoing commitment and attention to individual students by teachers and principals, and programming that is designed to address current needs to increase relevance of academic offerings and services to all students. In short, the hard work of principals, teachers, students and parents is supporting improved performance for all students.

The attached table shows the 4-year and 5-year graduation trend for Worcester Public Schools and includes state data for the same years. Additional analysis of the graduation and dropout trends over the past five years will be included in the full presentation to the School Committee during the March 3, 2011 meeting.

As always, I am available to answer any questions you may have about this report.

**Worcester Public Schools
2006-2001 Graduation Trend Data**

School Year	WPS 4 Year Graduation Rate (adjusted) % of graduates	State 4 Year Graduation Rate % of graduates	WPS 5 Year Graduation Rate (adjusted) % of graduates	State 5 Year Graduation Rate % of graduates
2009-10	74.4	82.1	NA	NA
2008-09	72.9	81.5	76.1	84.0
2007-08	72.4	81.2	78.5	84.2
2006-07	72.2	80.9	77.7	84.0
2005-06	73.4	79.9	76.6	82.7