

THE CHALLENGE:

Holyoke Public Schools (HPS) is an urban school district situated in one of the poorest communities in Massachusetts. According to district officials, 76% of all students are eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program and 1 out of every 10 students is homeless. In 2002, HPS was declared “underperforming” by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Only 29% of tenth-grade students scored in the proficient range on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System English Language Arts (MCAS ELA).

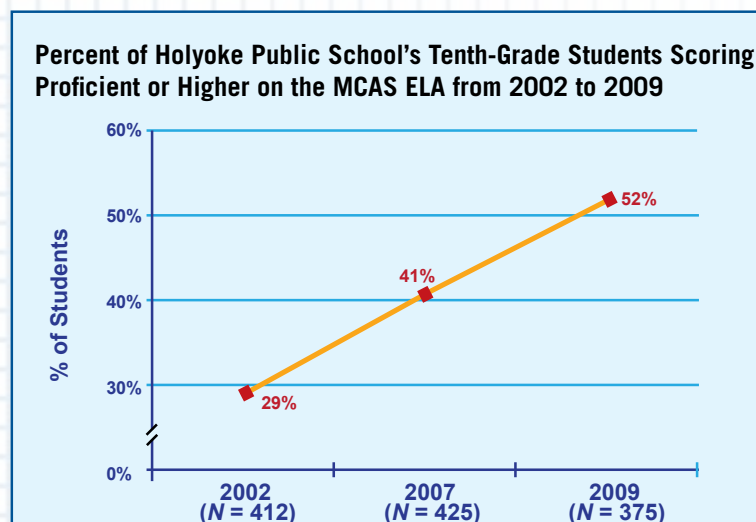
LITERACY IN ACTION:

HPS’s literacy improvement plan included the following elements:

- ✓ **Assessment** that pinpoints students’ literacy deficiencies and strengths;
- ✓ **Research-based literacy intervention** to accelerate students’ reading achievement;
- ✓ **Data** to benchmark and monitor student literacy performance;
- ✓ **Professional development** to help educators use data to differentiate literacy instruction;
- ✓ **Extended time** for reading instruction;
- ✓ **Nonprofit partnership** with America’s Choice to increase student achievement;
- ✓ **Small learning communities** to help teachers respond to students’ diverse literacy needs;
- ✓ **Tutoring** programs to perfect students’ reading performance;
- ✓ **Teacher evaluation system** based on student reading achievement;
- ✓ **25 Book Campaign** to encourage students to read one million words over the course of the school year; and
- ✓ **Framework** that organizes school literacy around state ELA curricula.

THE RESULTS:

HPS tenth-grade students improved their performance on the MCAS ELA after the district implemented its school turnaround strategy. Findings show that from 2002 to 2009, the percentage of students achieving proficiency improved from 29% to 52% on the MCAS ELA.



From 2002 to 2009, the percentage of students achieving proficiency on the MCAS ELA increased 23 percentage points. While just over a quarter of students fell in the proficient or higher performance level in 2002, more than half did in 2009.



Holyoke Public Schools: *Holyoke, Massachusetts*

LITERACY: A KEY SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGY

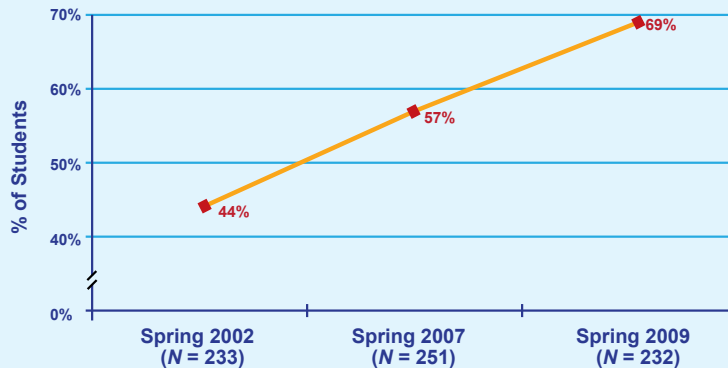
HPS, in partnership with Scholastic, accomplished the following:

- Implemented Scholastic's READ 180® with struggling middle school students;
- Provided training and support through on-site coaching and training; and
- Provided data analytics services to examine literacy metrics, implementation quality, and student results.

RESULTS IN ACTION

Findings show that HPS's literacy improvement plan had a measurable effect on student reading achievement at Holyoke High School. Data indicate that from 2002 to 2009, the percentage of tenth-grade students achieving proficiency or higher on the MCAS ELA increased from 44% to 69%.

Percent of Holyoke High School Tenth-Grade Students Scoring Proficient or Higher on the MCAS ELA from 2002 to 2009



From 2002 to 2009, the percentage of Holyoke High School tenth-grade students scoring in the Proficient or higher level on the MCAS ELA increased 25 percentage points. While less than half of students fell in the Proficient or higher performance level in 2002, more than two thirds did in 2009.

CONTACT: Lynn Lajoie, District Academic Coordinator **RESULTS IN ACTION:** Diane Bauer, Interim Principal

llajoie@hps.holyoke.ma.us
(413) 493-1608

Holyoke High School
500 Beach St., Holyoke, MA 01040
(413) 534-2020