

PRESS RELEASE

**Students in Roxbury Master the MCAS**

*Roxbury Prep is the highest-performing urban middle school in Massachusetts*

September 28, 2005 – Roxbury, MA. For the second consecutive year, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School—a Mass Insight Education 2005 Vanguard Model School—stands as the highest-performing urban middle school in the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> Roxbury Prep is a public middle school in Roxbury enrolling 195 Black and Latino students, 70% of whom qualify for the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

Since enrolling its first 6<sup>th</sup> grade class in 1999, Roxbury Prep has redefined what families can expect from urban public education. On the 2005 math and English MCAS tests, the percentage of Roxbury Prep students scoring Advanced or Proficient was higher than that of the state’s White students. Roxbury Prep demonstrates with clarity that the long-standing “racial achievement gap” can be closed.

- On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math test, Roxbury Prep had the highest percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient (82%) of any predominantly Black school in the state and any public school in Boston with the exception of the Boston Latin School. Roxbury Prep students scored Advanced or Proficient at a higher rate than students in Wayland (77%), Wellesley (76%), and Weston (70%). **Roxbury Prep was the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest-performing district in Massachusetts and ranked 9<sup>th</sup> of 456 schools in the state on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math test.**
- On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science test, Roxbury Prep had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient (35%) of any predominantly Black school in the state and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of any non-exam public school in Boston. Roxbury Prep students scored Advanced or Proficient at the same rate as students in Plymouth and Stoneham (35%) and outperformed students in Stoughton (27%).
- On the 7<sup>th</sup> grade English test, Roxbury Prep had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient (81%) of any predominantly Black school in the state and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of any non-exam public school in Boston. For the fourth consecutive year, 100% of Roxbury Prep students passed the 7<sup>th</sup> grade English test. Roxbury Prep students scored Advanced or Proficient at the same rate as students in Lincoln and Wakefield (81%) and outperformed students in Chelmsford (79%).
- On the 6<sup>th</sup> grade math test, Roxbury Prep had the highest percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient (71%) of any predominantly Black school in the state and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of any school in Boston. More Roxbury Prep students scored Advanced or Proficient than students in Harvard (69%), Hingham (67%), and Belmont (65%).

“At Roxbury Prep, we do not shy away from the MCAS because we believe in accountability. The MCAS provides a standard by which families, communities, and lawmakers can evaluate the quality and effectiveness of education across the state,” states Dana Lehman, Co-Director of the school. “If schools aren’t helping students make measurable academic progress each year, then families and the public need to know that—and changes need to be made.”

Roxbury Prep teachers are intent on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of their students. “One-third of our sixth grade students enroll two years below grade level in reading and math, but that should never be an excuse. Our job is to overcome the challenge and give our students the tools to succeed in college and beyond,” says Jennifer Forgues, the school’s Numeracy Coach and 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher. Roxbury Prep places an intense focus on its core academic program. Every student participates in two language arts classes and two mathematics classes each day as

---

<sup>1</sup> Middle schools serve students in grades 5-8 or 6-8 exclusively. Among all urban public schools serving students in grades 6-8 (including K-8, 5-12, and 6-12 schools), Roxbury Prep had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of students scoring advanced or proficient on the four MCAS tests – behind the K-8 Community Day Charter School in Lawrence, MA.

well as classes in social studies and science. Extended learning occurs before school, after school, during occasional Saturday sessions, and through summer opportunities.

However, Josh Phillips, the school's other Co-Director, quickly points out, "Until Roxbury Prep students perform at the level of students in the state's most affluent communities like Wayland and Wellesley on every single test, we will continue to refine our curriculum and work harder. We are proud that Roxbury Prep is the highest performing urban middle school in Massachusetts. At the same time, we will not be satisfied until we are the highest performing middle school in the nation."

Despite the current controversy surrounding standardized tests, Phillips sees the MCAS as an important advocacy tool for students and families, especially students and families of color. He argues, "The MCAS has revealed the truth—that many public schools are failing our state's students, especially students of color. This annual public review of academic progress maintains a sense of urgency that is necessary to improve public education." Lehman adds, "Our students are proof that race and socio-economic status do not preclude high student achievement. Every child is capable of learning; it is the school's job to make sure that they do. Roxbury Prep's performance on the 2005 MCAS should inspire families and community leaders statewide to demand a higher quality education for low-income students and students of color."

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School is a public charter school founded to offer Boston's students a rigorous, college-preparatory education. Roxbury Prep's mission is to prepare its students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. For more information about Roxbury Prep, please visit [www.roxburyprep.org](http://www.roxburyprep.org).