

October 25, 2007

Dear Parents,

Parents received MCAS reports in the mail last week. My sister, the mother of three children, called me to ask questions about her children's scores and to let me know how my nephews and niece performed. During this call, I was able to answer her questions and realized that you might like to know a bit more about how we use the data received from these lengthy tests. While the school system uses the aggregate data to compare our progress to similar cohorts, it also helps parents assess how their children performed during a given year.

Overall, we are pleased with our students' progression through their nine years in Carlisle. By the time students finish eighth grade, all scores indicate that they have mastered curriculum and excel as top performers in the State. Each year we examine our work closely by looking at grade level scores. We examine student responses to specific questions to determine if individuals struggled or if the entire cohort missed information. This can help guide our instruction. We also follow trends and watch the performance of each class over time. Our goal is to see annual improvement. Each grade level performance varies due to size and unique needs; smaller classes may see more variance in scores as fewer students tend to skew the score more easily. Sometimes we realize that the curriculum is not aligned, and we make adjustments to help students be better prepared; our curriculum reviews will focus on vertical articulation (across grade levels) as well. The MCAS scores also help us identify who needs assistance, and we provide MCAS support and Homework Clubs for extra help. The data also let us know if we are reaching our top students as indicated by the growing numbers in the advanced category as compared to other districts.

The MCAS is one tool that helps us analyze our progress. If you have specific concerns about your child's scores, please contact his or her counselor for more information. The MCAS is only one assessment tool, but can be helpful to educators and parents in assessing the progress of children.

Sincerely,
Marie Doyle