



News Release

### **Performance growth trends in the right direction; more acceleration needed**

October 27, 2009 - Student MCAS performance in English Language Arts and math showed a growth percentile of 41 and 38, respectively. And eighth grade students have a growth percentile of 52 in MCAS ELA performance, the school district announced today.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Alan J. Ingram said student growth percentile indicates our students are growing around the typical range, but given our proficiency rates, the district will need to accelerate the growth beyond typical in order to meet proficiency. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) consider typical student growth percentiles to be between 40 and 60. A percentile marks where a student or district ranks in a group from 1 to 100.

Ingram made his remarks following DESE's release of its 2009 Student Growth Report. The report measures change in students MCAS ELA and math growth by tracking the scores of the same student from one year to the next. By way of comparison, the public school districts of Boston and Worcester had growth percentiles of 46 in ELA and 47 in math and 55 in ELA and 54 in math, respectively.

"Our students show some growth," said Ingram. "However, the need for accelerated growth is urgent in Springfield. The percentile of student growth announced today is not enough when you consider that only 29 percent of our students are starting at a baseline of proficiency or above. We must do better."

One of the biggest growth percentiles for Springfield students was in eighth grade ELA and math. Ingram credited in part an improvement in the way the district has connected the curriculum for students in grades six through eight, especially in math classes, with the growth performance.

"Improvement comes only when instruction is aligned so students are constantly building on prior knowledge in a way that is tiered and cohesive," said Ingram. "That is an essential area that we are focusing on this year. I think this approach; along with other improved instructional focus, will help accelerate growth as we move forward."

Ingram said the growth model, fully released for the first time this year, is a valuable tool for the district. "We are happy to have the data," said Ingram. "It will help us identify areas that are in need of improvement, which otherwise may not have been brought to light in this particular format. It's very useful."