



Leading the Nation is a 2018 statewide celebration in which Massachusetts and its public school students and individual communities are celebrating successful test performance, impressive student growth, and unique learning experiences across a broad spectrum of measures. Of course, academic performance metrics are one way to judge the quality of the state's schools and the success of educators across the Commonwealth. However, student achievements in the arts, in athletic endeavors, and in civic and service oriented activities are also important in defining program quality, relevance to a 21st Century world, and readiness for college, the world of work or other postsecondary experiences and career explorations. Every district is different in how it contributes to MA being recognized as being Number 1 in the nation in educational achievement among its students.

On April 5, educators, students, parents, policymakers, and other stakeholders came together at the State House to celebrate 25 years of education reform in Massachusetts.

Passed into law in 1993, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act changed school structures, redefined hiring practices and the roles of principals, and introduced School Councils as part of the leadership model. In the initial days of Ed Reform, school funding was stabilized with an elaborate formula for distributing state aid to districts. Sadly, much needed changes in that formula have not yet been fully funded to provide for school needs, some of which did not even exist in 1993. Over the last 25 years, MA has adopted higher learning standards at all levels, more challenging common assessments for students, and mandated teacher evaluation protocols, all of which make it easier to see where schools are doing well and where changes might still be needed.

So, where are we 25 years later? Today, Massachusetts public schools are "Leading the Nation" in academic performance and creative excellence. Data from across the state has shown steady growth in the four-year graduation rate for all students and a corresponding decline in dropouts. Some signature achievements stand out: We have been #1 in 4th and 8th grade reading and math performance on the NAEP, commonly called the Nation's Report Card, over the last 12 years; we were #1 in the World on the 2016 PISA (International) assessment; and this year, MA students are # 1 in the country for their AP Test scores.

Although we lead the nation, much is still to be done with respect to equity and narrowing the remaining achievement gap between high needs students and the general population. We need equitable access to funding and learning resources and high quality teaching. We share pride in MA achievements, but we are not complacent about what remains undone. We can be better!

Over the next week May 7 – May 11, Hingham and many other communities will join the state celebration. We are proud of Hingham students' scores on the MCAS and College Board SAT I and II and AP exams. The record of recent twelfth grade college acceptances to selective colleges and specialized schools and programs that meet a range of HHS student interests and talents is another indicator of quality teaching and measurable student success.

Recent drama productions at HMS and HHS and the recent All-Town Art Show at Town Hall highlight the special talents of many students, but also add opportunities for exploring the arts and creative endeavor for all students. Looking at the compilation of stats and honors for our sports teams and the broad schedule of clubs and events that focus on community service and the development of leadership potential across all levels helps us to visualize the breadth of opportunity that exists for Hingham students.

But this week, we also want to share info about the HPS that not all of our parents and other citizens may know as much about. So each day this week, we will share PSAs and celebrate programs, events, special successes, and everyday achievements that represent the core values of the HPS mission and that reflect who we are in the Hingham Public Schools and what we represent and value. Mostly, we want to share evidence about why we believe that **Hingham students and staff help Massachusetts to Lead the Nation**. So each day in the coming week, look for the logo.



By the way, let's also celebrate National Teacher Appreciation Day on Tuesday!