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Contact:

Lawrence Public Schools, Partnering with Boston's Match Education, Help High School Students Make Big Math Gains

English language Learners at Lawrence's International HS make dramatic turnaround in math achievement

LAWRENCE, Mass. – Tenth grade students at two historically struggling Lawrence high schools have shown a dramatic turnaround in their math achievement, after two years of tutoring support by Boston-based [Match Education](#), working to support Lawrence's state-appointed receiver/superintendent Jeffrey Riley.

The Lawrence school district was placed under state receivership in 2011, and Superintendent Riley enlisted a number of established partners beginning in the fall of 2012 to assist in his effort to turnaround the district. Match Education was selected to provide in-school-day, full-time professional tutoring in mathematics to 600 ninth and 10th grade students at the two lowest performing of the district's six high schools—the International HS (INT) and the Business, Management and Finance HS (BMF). Uniquely, the International HS (INT) is comprised entirely of recent immigrant students from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico who are placed in that school until their English language ability increases.

More than 100 INT 10th graders took the MCAS math exam, yet of this 100, only 20 had taken the MCAS in 8th grade -- allowing analysis of their gains over two years. Eighteen of the 20 had been with Match since the beginning, as 9th graders in the fall of 2012. For these students, the turnaround in their math achievement was dramatic:

- Not one of the 18 had passed the 8th grade MCAS math exam; after two years of tutoring, 10 of the 18 passed. Of those 10, 5 reached the highest two levels of performance—proficient or advanced. In addition, the growth score (SGP) for this group of 18 students was 67—a score that would place that small cohort of students in the top 7% of all HS students in the state in math growth.

Similar dramatic turnarounds were achieved for the BMF students:

- Of the 41 BMF HS students who had been with Match tutoring from the beginning, as 9th graders in 2012, more than half (54%) had failed their 8th grade math MCAS exam before the district was put into receivership. After two years, including Match tutoring, that percentage was reduced drastically, to 15%. Before Match tutoring, 9% had scored in the highest two levels (proficient or advanced); after two years, the percentage rose to 63%, an unprecedented rate of improvement in just two years in the history of this school.

"The Match tutors gave us everything we asked for, and their support was a crucial boost to the hard work of our students and teachers. Our goal in Lawrence has been to accelerate student achievement and become a model for other struggling school systems, and with impressive results at both BMF and INT, Match Education helped us to accomplish that," said Lawrence Superintendent/Receiver Jeffrey C. Riley. Riley also noted that the district hired Match this year to help it integrate the tutoring into all six of the district's high schools.

“Our tutoring program, which originated at Match High School in Boston, continues to prove its effectiveness in improving student achievement, building parent involvement and bringing talent into traditional urban public school districts. In two years, Lawrence students have risen to the challenge and proven that they can achieve at a high level,” said Alan PG Safran, Director of Dissemination for Academic Support for Match Education.

“We created this unique program to support students at chronically failing schools, and also to provide evidence of new ideas and practices that can transform education. Everyone is watching Lawrence to see if a struggling district can really turn itself around, and we’re excited to have been part of the solution,” said the CEO of Match Education, Stig Leschly.

Additional analysis:

In the school years prior to the intervention of Superintendent Riley and Match, the International High School’s tenth graders achieved a state Student Growth Percentile of less than 30--that means their students’ scores grew from the prior MCAS test by a slower rate than 70% of students who scored as they had in the previous year. In 2014, the SGP of International High School reached 57—a strong turnaround from the years prior to the intervention. Moreover, that comparison is to all students with similar baseline scores—and the International HS students are all English Language Learners who are recent immigrants to the US.

The Student Growth Percentile ranking of the Business, Management and Finance (BMF) HS--the second school in which Match Education provided full-time tutoring-- was 67. In the year prior to the intervention, the SGP was 23, and in the first year of the intervention, the SGP was 75. The BMF score in 2014 placed its students in the top 7% -- 16th best -- in HS mathematics of all 250 high schools in the state reporting SGP data in 2014.

In 2013, the results at BMF set a historic high mark in the state’s student growth percentile (SGP) measurement, which compares the median growth of a school’s students to similar students’ scores. In 2011-12, BMF’s growth percentile was 23 -- meaning that more than three-quarters of similar students in Massachusetts performed better in math than BMF 10th graders. After one year of Match tutoring, the SGP number climbed 52 points to 75 -- meaning that BMF students outperformed three-quarters of students like themselves and essentially reversed the negative trend. This 52-point gain from one year to the next was the largest gain in the four years the state has measured student growth. The next highest gain was 36 points.

The Match tutoring program was developed in 2004 at the Match charter public schools in Boston, where math tutoring is incorporated as a period in the school day and trained professional tutors work with students individually or in small groups. In addition to Lawrence, Match has provided tutoring within the Houston Independent School District and launched a two-year partnership with the University of Chicago to do similar work in more than a dozen Chicago Public High Schools. Evaluated by Harvard economist Roland Fryer, the tutoring in Houston was found to have a significant effect, equating to between two and four years of math growth for the students. The Match tutoring currently underway in Chicago has shown a similar rate of growth for the at-risk students enrolled in the program, and is being evaluated by the University of Chicago which also is measuring the impact that increasing student achievement has on reducing the likelihood of being involved in violent crime.

About Match Education

[Match Education](#) is an engine of innovation in education. Match operates three high-performing urban public charter schools in Boston and a unique graduate school of education that trains teachers for high-poverty schools. Out of this applied work, Match refines, validates and disseminates new ideas and practices in school design and teacher preparation.