

MATCH Transfer Rate: A Comparison With Boston Public Schools

Updated November 29, 2007

The purpose of this memo is to shed some light on what happens to students after they arrive at MATCH in 9th grade.

Who graduates from MATCH; who graduates from other high schools; who drops out of high school entirely?

A. Executive Summary

- Entering MATCH 9th graders had nearly identical demographics and MCAS scores as Boston Public School 9th graders
- 37 of the 91 entering freshmen in September 2004 have left MATCH
 - 11 no longer live in Boston.
 - 8 were expelled or withdrew during discipline proceedings.
 - 12 withdrew after not reaching the teacher-set standards, and being required to repeat the year. Most of these students transferred to district schools.
 - 6 withdrew because the school does not offer enough extra-curricular activities, or because the school's hours are too long.
- 35 of the 37 MATCH transfers are on track to graduate from other high schools (i.e. they did not drop out). The MATCH Transfer Rate is 40%, but the *Dropout* Rate is close to 0% for the students who began in 2004.
- Of the 35 transfers, we have academic data on 15 of them
 - All 15 scored Proficient on Math and English MCAS;
 - 12 of the 15 scored Advanced on one of the tests and were eligible for the Adams scholarship. (i.e. they did not transfer out because they are academically inferior students)
- Students who transfer out of MATCH are much more likely to complete high school than students in Boston Public Schools, despite starting at academically near-identical levels in 9th grade.

B. Questions and Answers

A) Do MATCH students do well because they receive a much more rigorous and intense school experience than other nearby schools?

Or

B) Do MATCH students do well because they admit only “good” students, then “counsel out” bad students? Charter school opponents tend to make this charge when MATCH students show up among the state’s top schools on MCAS.

1. Who arrives at MATCH as 9th graders?

In September 2004, 91 new students arrived in MATCH’s 9th grade. They were selected by lottery from among over four hundred students who applied for the lottery.

Boston Public Schools Student Demographics:

41% Black
35% Hispanic
9% Asian
14% White
73% low-income

MATCH Students Arriving in September 2004:

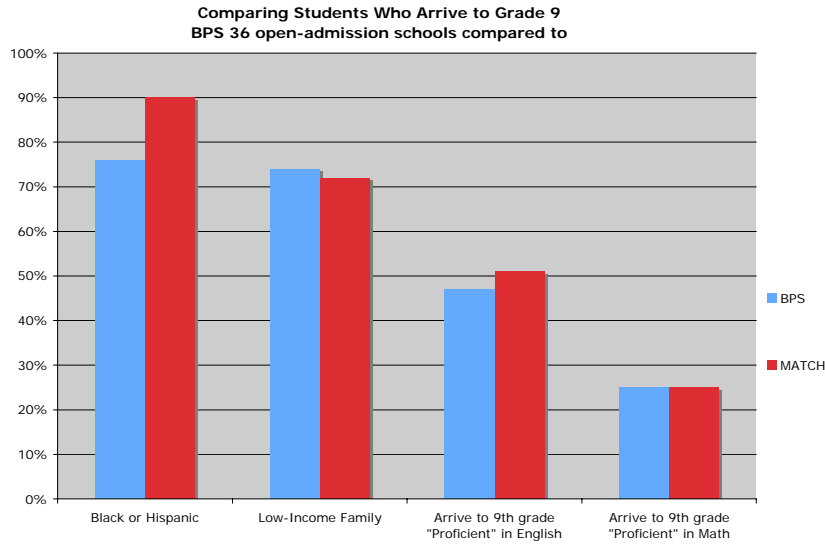
70% Black
20% Hispanic
5% Asian
5% White
72% low-income

MCAS: Boston Public Schools

Of students arriving to Boston public high schools in September 2004, **47%** were proficient or above in English on middle school MCAS, and **24%** were proficient or above in math on middle school MCAS.

MCAS MATCH

Of students arriving to MATCH high school in September 2004, **51%** were proficient or above in English on middle school MCAS, and **24%** were proficient or above in math on middle school MCAS.



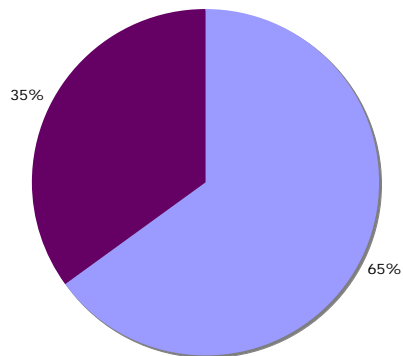
Conclusion

So these 91 MATCH students arrived at roughly the same academic levels as the Boston district as a whole and nearly exact percentages of minority and low-income students.

2. Do MATCH students arrive happy to join us?

Generally, no. We work hard, beginning the summer before 9th grade, to win them over. Teachers and tutors work feverishly to build individual relationships with each student. We then try to use those relationships to at least get nominal buy-in for the academic workload (school until 5pm each day; sometimes until 7.30pm; 3 hours of homework).

Do new students WANT to come to MATCH?
 Blue = My parent signed me up for the lottery and I was not excited
 Purple = I signed myself up for the lottery b/c it sounded like the right place for me
 Survey of 9th graders, November 2007



3. What usually happens to Boston Public School 9th graders?

According to a 2007 report by the Parthenon Group, and another report by Northeastern University, roughly 60% of Boston students who enroll in the city's 36 open and lottery-

admissions high schools ultimately get a **high school diploma**.

The district does not publish its *transfer* rates. So we don't know how many of the graduates started at High School X and finished at High School Y.

Fewer than 5% of the students in these 36 open-admission Boston high schools get "Advanced Placement diplomas." By that, we mean the student graduates from high school having taken at least 4 "college level classes" – either an actual class at a local college, or an Advanced Placement class, or an "International Baccalaureate" class.

This last category is so important because most inner-city students who begin college ultimately drop out. An Advanced Placement diploma is no guarantee of college success, but it does make it much more likely. By contrast, most of the students in Boston's 3 elite exam-admissions public schools graduate with this sort of rigorous curriculum.

(It's important to distinguish the policy issues here. There is a "Core Curriculum" that Boston already has adopted, which requires students to take math, English, science, history, etc...instead of less rigorous electives. The question here is simply how challenging those classes are at the 11th and 12th grade levels, and whether they plausibly prepare students for "Grade 13" – i.e., freshman year of college).

So, among the 36 open-admissions BPS Schools

*AP Diploma =	<5%
*Traditional Diploma =	58%
*Transfer Rate =	??%
*Dropout Rate =	40% (This may include transfers too)

4. What happens to MATCH School 9th graders?

The Massachusetts Department of Education does not provide us with data on students who transfer out of MATCH. We have long tried to get such data.

However, we have tracked down the students, one at a time, to determine where they are as of September 2007.

Of the 91 MATCH students who enrolled in September 2004, 37 have since departed as of September 2007.

11 of the 37 no longer live in Boston.

8 were expelled or withdrew during discipline proceedings.

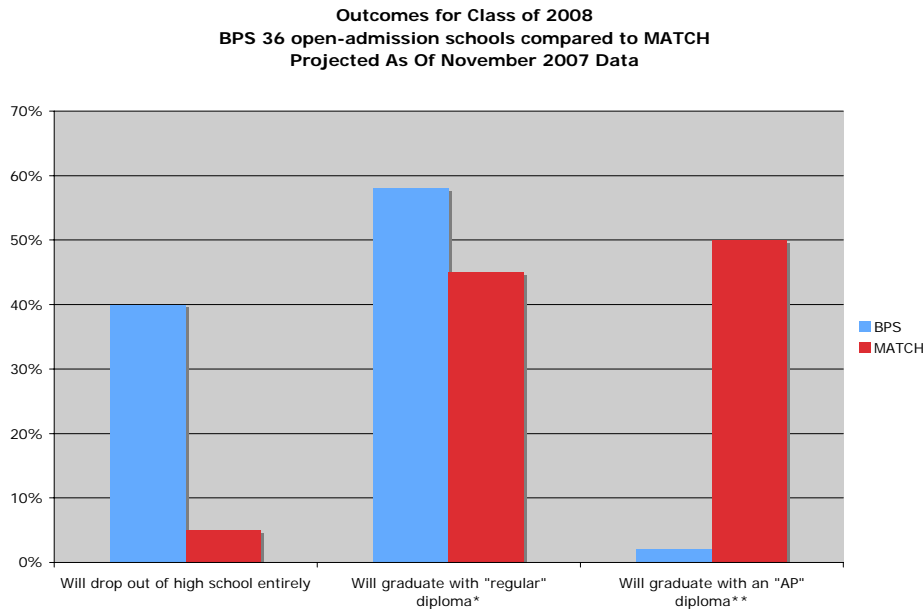
12 withdrew after not hitting the teacher-set standards, and being required to repeat the year. Most of these students transferred to district schools.

6 withdrew because the school does not offer enough extra-curricular activities, or because the school's hours are too long.

But at least 35 of the 37 departed *are still in high school* and on track to graduate from high school. (We have not been able to track down the other 2 students).

Overall, 89 of 91 students who started at MATCH in September 2004 are still enrolled in high school; and the other 2 simply have not been located.

The MATCH Transfer Rate is 40%, but the *Dropout Rate* is close to 0%.



This chart shows the essence of what MATCH is all about.

We want to *transform* a typical Boston 9th grader, who will otherwise attend a traditional high school, and have less than 10% chance of ever earning a college degree.

We *only* offer an “AP diploma.” (Each year there are one or two exceptions for students with special needs, although the majority of our SPED students complete our normal course load).

Where we fall short, a typical student “*downshifts*” not to becoming a dropout, but instead transfers out of MATCH and instead graduates from a traditional high school, where school is dismissed at 2pm, and no advanced courses are required.

We’re not making any claim that our mission, or our methods, are right for every student.

However, we do believe that MATCH offers the Boston community – parents in particular – a legitimate, important choice...a very intensive intervention that results in a legitimately college-ready student.

Students who transfer out of MATCH **are much more likely to complete high school**

than students in Boston Public Schools, despite starting at academically near-identical levels in 9th grade.

5. But who are these 37 students who go back to BPS or elsewhere? Are they weak students compared to other students in BPS?

Seemingly: No. Unfortunately, the Massachusetts Department of Education does not make the data available to establish what happens to “MATCH departed.”

However, we do have the MCAS scores of the 15 MATCH juniors and seniors who, over the past 3 years, transferred back to Boston Public Schools. That’s because MCAS is given at the end of 10th grade, so the scores for those students were sent to our school.

Not only had all 15 of these departed students *passed* MCAS, all 15 had scored at least proficient on both math and English.

In fact, 12 of the 15 had at least one “Advanced” score and therefore are eligible for the state’s Adams MCAS-based scholarship! That 100% proficiency rate compares to BPS rates of 50% in English and 55% in math.

So, to the degree we can establish, when a student leaves MATCH, BPS gets a student who is among their top performers in math and English. **A MATCH student who transfers back to BPS has, on average, much higher English and math skills than the other BPS students.**

6. So let’s return to the 37 students who have left MATCH from those who started in 2004. 11 don’t live in Boston, fine. What about 8 involved in discipline issues? Doesn’t BPS now have to educate MATCH’s “bad” kids?

Here were the 8 discipline issues:

One student brought a knife to school.

Two had several cheating violations.

Two fought.

Three withdrew after continuous smaller behavior violations.

We believe the question isn’t “Can all public schools have the same rules as MATCH?” (No, unfortunately, they probably can’t as currently situated).

If we did not enforce our rules, we believe that the other students would have dramatically worse academic outcomes, and lose the likelihood of ever earning a 4-year college degree.

Informal follow-up with BPS principals suggests that the students have not been troublemakers in their new schools.

7. You’ve covered the Class of 2008 who either moved out of Boston, or who were

involved in discipline issues. What about the 12 who left because they didn't get promoted?

In each case, we tried hard to keep the student at MATCH.

However, BPS usually offers those students an automatic promotion to the next grade – essentially overruling our teachers. A student who failed 10th grade at MATCH is invariably able to transfer to the district and get promoted to 11th grade.

Senior BPS officials agreed that this should NOT happen, but it still happens.

What did you do to help the 12 students before they failed for the year?

Every MATCH students gets at least 2 hours of tutoring each day.

These students (strugglers) get an additional 2 or 3 hours of tutoring each Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evening, and once each weekend. If the student has special needs, the support is even greater.

So in total, these struggling students got at least 16 hours of tutoring each week!

What else did you do?

For any failing student, there are multiple meetings with the student, parent, teachers, and principal. Our teachers proactively phone parents (and log the calls into a database), to work collaboratively with them. Our parent outreach far exceeds any other public school in Boston.

What's the bottom line?

Each year, about 40% of our students struggle to meet the expectations set by their teachers. By the end of the year most of these students have, through significant intervention, reached those standards. But about 10% of the students do not.

We believe the right thing to do at that point is to honor the teacher decisions – that the student is not yet ready for the next grade, and should repeat. BPS schools generally offer these students an “automatic” promotion to the next grade, and sometimes students do that, despite our strenuous protests.

Let's Return to the Original Question

A) Do MATCH students do well because they receive a very different, and much more rigorous, school experience than other nearby schools?

Or

B) Do MATCH students do well because they admit only “good” students, then kick out bad students?

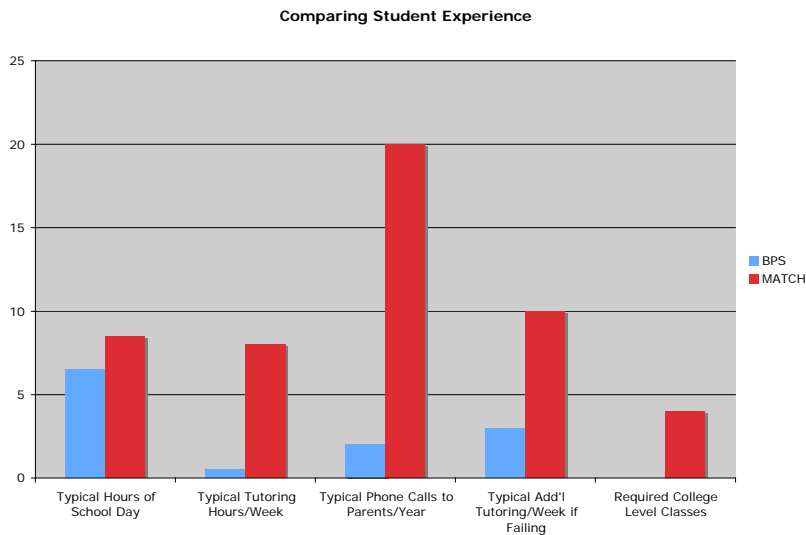
Factual Differences

The typical MATCH School day is 8.5 hours. The typical BPS School day is 6.5 hours.

A MATCH student gets at least 8 hours per week of tutoring. The typical BPS student gets perhaps ½ hour of tutoring per week.

The average MATCH parent receives over 50 “update” phone calls from teachers and tutors each year. The average BPS parent receives perhaps a couple “update” phone calls from teachers and tutors each year.

A typical MATCH student does 3 hours of homework per night. A typical BPS student does much less (though hard to measure).



Nobody, to our knowledge, disputes the simple, factual differences on the experience of a typical student at MATCH or in a BPS open-admissions school. Therefore, we argue, the most straightforward explanation to student performance at MATCH is that they get a much different “product” from typical schools.