Case Study: Match High School

Boston, MA **▍** Grades 9-12 **▍** 59% African America **▍** 35% Hispanic
76% Free and reduced lunch **▍** Founded in 2000

Behavioral Data

Match's analysis of behavioral data has helped drive improvements for the entire school, by teacher and by student. Matthew Collins, the school's dean of students and data systems manager, saw that demerits for tardies to class had risen significantly, so the staff decided to clamp down on the tardiness issue by increasing the number of points that a student lost for being late. "*It had been a student would lose 2 points if they're tardy to class, and that's equivalent to any other low-level behavior like an untucked shirt or being unprepared for class, so kids were kind of undeterred by the tardy demerit, and it was just rampant,*" Collins says. The staff doubled the point loss, and kids started moving, resulting in significantly fewer tardies.

"We wouldn't have known how big of a problem it was unless I had access to this kind of data," he says. Collins says he can analyze demerit counts by the type of behavior, or by staff member, so if a teacher hasn't given any demerits or merits, he or she may need a talking to. "*If kids aren't being recognized—and that's a big part of our merit push this year is to get an injection of positivity in the school as opposed to focusing on all the negative behavior all the time. We want to make sure we're encouraging kids. When we see them do something good, let's recognize that,*" Collins says. The data by student enables him to get very specific with kids. One girl came in frustrated about having detention again. Looking at the spreadsheet, he could point out that she had 33 demerits for side conversations this year, and that only two other people in the entire school had more of those demerits than she did. "*I also pointed out to her that when I sort by how many demerits she's earned, only 19 more kids have earned more demerits than her—out of the entire school,*" Collins says.

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"*She kind of straightened up at that after having been whining and complaining 'I'm only two demerits away from not having detention.' But listen, you're chewing gum and you're having side conversations—these are both things you can stop.*" Without the data, he couldn't have given her such a specific goal to focus on. "*If I just say to them 'just stop getting demerits' it's not going to happen,*" he says.

Principal Megan McDonough's focus is on moving the school toward more data-driven instruction. The increased focus on data has already brought improvements. The staff added interim assessments for all four quarters this year. Writing interim assessments has "*shifted our instruction, because the interim assessments are mapped not just to the MCAS (Massachusetts' state exam), but to the AP and to the SAT,*" McDonough says. "*So in terms of rigor level, I think we are continuing to shift our rigor level to make sure we're really preparing our students for those major external exams they need to prepare for the college process, too.*" Students' grades are improving, which she chalks up to the impact of seeing the data on a daily basis. "*We're thinking more deliberately about how we're aligning our curriculum to the standards and skills of the SAT. We're trying to be more thoughtful about the rigor level of texts,*" McDonough says.

Collins also is tasked with getting teachers to input the data—multiple choice answers and all their open response scores for every kid, for every question, for every test. In math and science, where there are more tangible aims, the process has been easier. In English and humanities, "*it's a little more difficult to put such concrete numbers and statistics to things that are more subjective,*" he says.

The Match Corps

In a giant room walled by windows overlooking Boston's busy Commonwealth Avenue, high school students gather in small clusters with their twenty-something tutors. Recently graduated from college, the tutors have pledged a year of their life to helping these high schoolers along to their own college experience, earning a $7,500 stipend and housing on the third-floor of the school building in exchange for their long work weeks. For two hours every day, students work with their tutors, who will remain with them the whole year. The sessions start with a Do Now, quiet conversation filling the room as the tutors direct students through their packets of work, which have been refined by the teaching staff over the past six years.

The school day runs from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., with two hours of after-school activities. Each of the 42 tutors generally have two groups of freshmen and two groups of sophomores. The sessions run one hour. Freshmen and sophomores take four academic courses and have two hours of tutorial along with one elective. Juniors and seniors have five academic courses, one hour of study group and one hour of a seminar that supports their AP classes. Tutors also run the study groups and senior seminars.

The tutors don't necessarily have backgrounds or experience in education. "Fit" is important here too, as candidates must be aligned with the school's values and belief that any student can be successful in college. The year is viewed as a year of service, much like AmeriCorps or Peace Corps. The school also seeks out tutors who have math and science skills, "*because an English major may not be able to teach pre-calculus anymore. Some can, some can't*," says Hannah Larkin, associate director of the Match Corps program. "*There is a pretty small percentage of people who are engineering majors and want to do a year of education. Sometimes those people won't*

have any experience with kids and they end up doing a great job."

Each tutor attends a two-week training program on instructional techniques and on culture. Trainers go over complicated issues like how to uphold your role as an authoritative figure and also as a mentor, Larkin says. Role-playing is key. "*They'll sit around with three other tutors pretending to be kids and they'll have to actually give them a lesson. They'll pretend to misbehave just to get used to the feel of things,*" Larkin says. Other topics they tackle: "*How do you explain an isosceles triangle when you haven't done that since you were 15? And also how do you give a demerit without freaking out and getting nervous?*"

The first couple weeks, there is a lot of growth as tutors adjust to their new roles, second guessing whether they were strict enough or clear in their explanations. Eventually, they hit a groove. The relationship with the students starts with the setting of expectations and talking about the non-negotiables.

During the year, tutors are observed at least once a week, followed by a meeting where a coach provides feedback on their instruction and their interactions with students. Tutors are coached on how to ask better questions and how to cut down on "tutor talk," in which they tend to over explain.

For the tutoring sessions, students are not just redoing a worksheet from class, there is a separate curriculum that's been developed for these intense small group sessions that may pair one tutor with one student, or a tutor with a group of two or three. Some of the curriculum directly supports what's going on in a class, some of it is independent of their coursework. On a recent day, students worked on an Algebra II tutorial that backed up what they were doing in class, either reviewing what they did the day before in class,

prepping for the next day, or tackling more advanced materials through word problems.

The Algebra II teacher will send out an email to the tutors at the end of the day highlighting the 10 kids who had the most trouble on that day's *"ticket to leave."* It may be *"John was struggling because he can't find the slope of a line"* or *"Jane was struggling because she kept flipping her negative signs."* The tutor receives that information and can remediate the next day.

Tutors are generally straight out of college and not that much older than the high school students, and so must strive to find a delicate balance. *"I wouldn't say they develop a friendship, but a bit of a mentoring relationship happens as it would in any situation if you sit across from a kid for two hours a day,"* Larkin says. *"You get to know them really well."*

Larkin, who taught for three years prior to becoming associate director for Match Corps, says it was a relief for teachers to know that if a student didn't grasp a concept, *"the very next day they were going to have a one-on-one tutor sitting across from them going over it again, making sure they got it,"* she says. *"We can also use it to do a lot of the remediation or individualized instruction that as a teacher you can only do so much of. You maybe stay one day after school to work with them, but a tutor has them every day so I can say, 'Listen, Marcus is still really struggling with his negative signs. Could you just throw in another worksheet on negative numbers every other day?' You have an amazing resource."*

Students also do a 'ticket to leave' at the end of each tutorial, and those tickets are tracked. If freshmen show a low average on a certain skill in a humanities tutorial, the staff will build in a packet the next week to reteach it and redo that skill until the ticket results are where they should be. Tutors also have professional development time where they review interim assessments and create remediation plans.

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School Leader   **Megan McDonough**, principal

Match High School is located near Boston University in a bright building fronted by a large study hall where one of the key pieces of the Match program is housed—the Match Corps. The Match Corps program assigns each high school student a recent college graduate who will lead them through daily tutoring sessions. Tutors live upstairs from the school during the intensive program. Match Education also won approval in 2012 to open a graduate school of education. Participants in the Match Teacher Residency program also assist in Match Corps tutoring. At the end of their first year, teacher residents earn a teaching license from the state of Massachusetts. Their second year is spent as a full-time teacher at another school while taking classes through the new graduate school.

McDonough, who was previously a teacher, dean and assistant principal at Match, is entirely focused on instruction in the classroom. An executive director is focused on culture and operations. Every day starts with the entire team coming together as a community for shout-outs and announcements. The school was built on the philosophy subscribed to by founding principal Charlie Sposato that "kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."
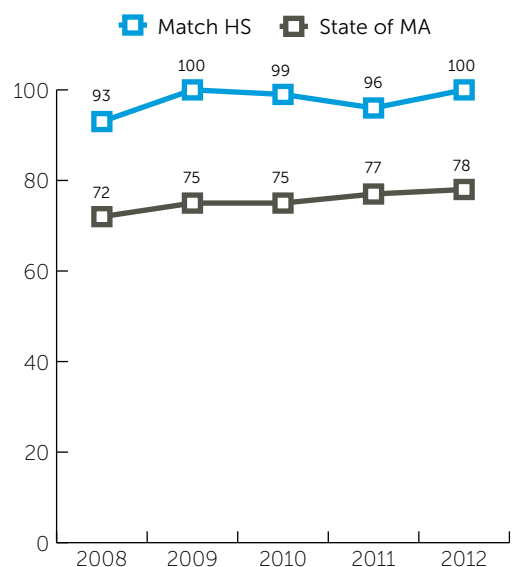
Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) ELA Results Over Time
% Students Proficient or Above
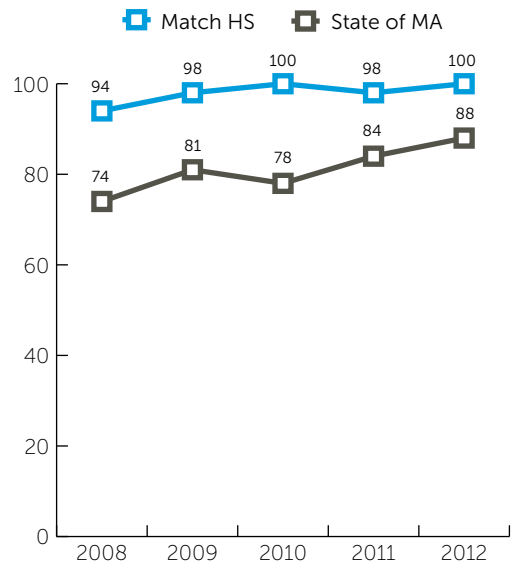
M-CAS Math Results Over Time
% Students Proficient or Above

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Education