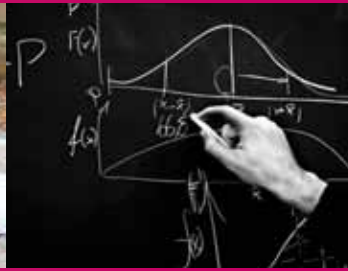




The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy



## Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public Schools

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** | November 2011





This is an Executive Summary of the report ***Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public Schools***. The report and its companion report, ***Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools***, are part of a larger project, Identifying Success in Schools and Programs for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools, commissioned by the Boston Public Schools as part of this process of change set in motion by the intervention of the state and the federal governments on behalf of Boston's English language learners. The project was conducted at the request of the Office for English Language Learners and is a collaboration among this Office, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston. It was conducted under the leadership of principal investigators Miren Uriarte and Rosann Tung and by the following members of the research team: Michael Berardino, Jie Chen, Virginia Diez, Laurie Gagnon, Faye Karp, Sarah Rustan, and Pamela Stazesky. The full report and companion report may be downloaded at [www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute](http://www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute) and [www.cce.org](http://www.cce.org).

***The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy*** was established in 1989 at the University of Massachusetts Boston by the Massachusetts State Legislature at the behest of Latino community leaders and scholars in response to a need for improved understanding of the Latino experience in the Commonwealth. The mission of the Institute is to inform policy makers about issues vital to the state's growing Latino community and to provide this community with information and analysis necessary for effective participation in public policy development.

The Research and Evaluation Team at the ***Center for Collaborative Education*** located in Boston, Massachusetts was established in 2000. Its mission is to conduct research to inform and influence educational policy and practice to improve equity and student achievement. Therefore, the Team focuses on research studies and evaluations that are concerned with increasing educational access and opportunity for all students. To meet its goal of building the capacity of educational stakeholders to engage in the inquiry process, the Team works collaboratively with clients to identify goals, determine purpose, and select appropriate data collection strategies, as well as decide on products that fit the audience and users.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public Schools**

English language learners (ELLs), their teachers, and the schools and programs where they are enrolled face a triple challenge: (1) students must be taught and learn English at a level of proficiency high enough to allow them access to academic content; (2) students must be taught and learn academic content at a level comparable to that of English proficient students; and (3) students must actively engage with learning and schools and programs must effectively engage students so that they graduate from high school. ***Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public Schools*** seeks to assess the academic performance of English language learners in Boston Public Schools in relation to these three challenges. It compares the achievement of ELLs with that of other BPS populations defined by English proficiency and assesses the outcomes of ELLs enrolled in different programs and types of schools.

This study was commissioned by the Boston Public Schools as part of a process of change set in motion by the intervention of the state and the federal governments on behalf of Boston's English language learners in 2009 and 2010 (MDESE, 2008a; U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). The project was conducted at the request of the Office for English Language Learners (OELL) and is a collaboration among this Office, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston. The study addresses the following areas:

- **the enrollment patterns of ELLs in Boston between SY2006 and SY2009**
- **the engagement and academic outcomes of ELLs compared to those of other BPS student populations**
- **the engagement and academic outcomes of ELLs in different types of programs and schools of different characteristics**
- **the analysis of the individual- and school-level factors most relevant to the outcomes of ELLs**

In order to address these questions, the study uses a dataset compiled from several data sources and merged especially for this project which includes (1) demographic and enrollment information from the Student Information Management System

(SIMS) on each BPS student enrolled for each school year (SY2006 to SY2009); (2) testing data from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and for students of limited English proficiency, the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA); (3) school level variables downloaded from the appropriate MDESE websites and merged with the student level SIMS and testing data in order to conduct analyses at the school level; and (4) program enrollment data available through SIMS and through BPS' OELL (See Appendix 1 of the full report for a complete description of the construction and use of the dataset described above).

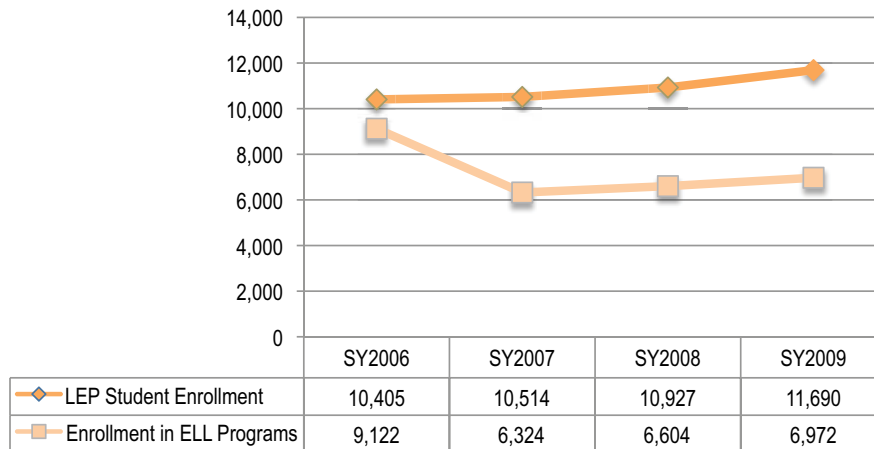
## **A Overall Findings and General Recommendations**

### **Enrollment in ELL Programs**

Although the enrollment of students of limited English proficiency in Boston Public Schools grew by 12.3% between SY2006 and SY2009, enrollment in programs for English language learners in Boston declined by 23.6%. The bulk of this decline took place between SY2006 and SY2007, when 2,536 students in ELL programs were transferred to general education programs causing ELL programs to lose one-third of its students. The decline in SY2006-SY2007 follows a decline in the enrollment in ELL programs of 42.8% between SY2003, the year before the implementation of Chapter 386, and SY2005 when the district decided to re-designate 4,366 LEP students in bilingual education programs as English proficient and insert them into general education programs (Tung et al., 2009, p.45). The SY2006- SY2007 transfer to general education did not involve re-designation (these students continued to be designated as LEP students). The transfer involved primarily students in the lower grades (54.6%), of all English proficiency levels (42% at MEPA performance Levels 4 and 5 and 20% at Levels 1 and 2). Forty-two percent were students designated as LEP students with disabilities (LEP-SWDs).

Although declines in enrollment in ELL programs are usually offset by an increase in demand for them, over the years, the sudden transfers of students have resulted in a decline of close to 30% in the enrollment of students in ELL programs since SY2003. These transfers do not appear to be the result of

**Figure 1. Enrollment of English Language Learners. BPS, SY2006-SY2009<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Notes for all figures and tables appear at the end of this Summary.

a thorough process of student assessment leading to re-designations or a normal pace of transitions out of ELL programs. The pattern resembles what one would expect as the result of an administrative decision, raising the question of BPS's intentions in regard to its programs for ELLs.

The transfers and declines in participation in ELL programs have not taken place under the current administration of the Boston Public Schools, but nevertheless it is up to this leadership to send a clear message about its commitment to its programs for English language learners. During the implementation of Chapter 386, ELL programs were often seen as no longer necessary since LEP students would quickly be ready for integration into general education classrooms. But this is an unsound policy based on the assumption that ELL students attain academic proficiency in English in one year. Nothing in the literature or in this study provides evidence that students acquire academic English proficiency in so short a time. The literature shows clearly that LEP students who had not participated in ELL programs had lower testing outcomes and the highest dropout rates compared to students who had participated in any type of ELL program (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). The discussion in the educational research literature is about what type of program works best, not whether students should be in a program. Our own findings show that when ELLs in BPS are placed in general education programs they have higher dropout rates and that their outcomes across all subjects (when observing students

scoring at the highest levels of English proficiency) are surpassed by those in Two-Way Bilingual and TBE programs.

A clear statement of mission of the BPS ELL programs and the district's commitment to them as a method would go a long way to support the work of teachers and schools engaged in these programs, to allay the concerns of parents of ELL students. Such a commitment would allow these programs to grow, to be creative in their instruction, and to improve.

### Learning English / Learning Content

This study underscores that English proficiency is the most powerful variable in determining the educational outcomes of English language learners in Boston. It was found to be the most important variable in determining MCAS outcomes across all grade levels and subjects. MEPA performance level was also found to be significant in relation to the dropout rate of high school LEP students, as well as in attendance and retention in grade of these students. Of the variables examined in this study, none had more of an impact on the educational outcomes of LEP students than English proficiency.

This finding leads to questions regarding LEP students' acquisition of English and the linguistic access to academic content available to them. The first is related to the length of time that LEP students need to attain proficiency in academic English, i.e., the English that allows them access to grade-level academic content. Three-year trajec-



**Table 1. SY2009 MEPA Outcomes of Grade 3, 6 and 9 Cohorts of Students Scoring at MEPA Level 1 in SY2006**

	Grade 3 Cohort N=131	Grade 6 Cohort N=93	Grade 9 Cohort N=328
Graduated	NA	NA	3.0%
FLEPed	0%	4.8%	1.2%
MEPA Level 5	9.3%	0%	5.2%
MEPA Level 4	26.7%	7.5%	9.1%
MEPA Level 3	22.9%	41.9%	16.8%
MEPA Level 2	4.6%	11.8%	3.0%
MEPA Level 1	4.6%	6.5%	2.1%
Other	32.1%	27.5%	59.5%
Transferred Out	23.7%	14.3%	25.3%
Dropped Out	3.7%	3.4%	23.2%
Aged-Out	NA	NA	4.6%
Enrolled, Not Tested	4.6%	9.8%	6.4%

stories through the MEPA performance levels of LEP students provide an indication that the acquisition of academic English requires more than this length of time for the majority of students. This longer trajectory was especially the case among middle school and high school students. Boston is not exceptional in this. The educational research literature reviewed for this report shows that the acquisition of academic English takes from four to seven years (e.g., Thomas & Collier, 1997).

This finding about the time required for English proficiency leads to a second concern. The normal road to academic English proficiency would be acceptable for these students if they were receiving instruction of academic content – Math, science, social studies – in a language they understood while they were learning English. If this were the case, once they attained English proficiency they could join their peers at grade level. That is not possible in Boston or in the state because English language learners are unable to participate in content classes that are linguistically accessible to them (except if parents submit a waiver requesting non-SEI program placement) and because English language learners are not always taught by a teacher with experience in making the content accessible across the language divide. The barrier to the former is Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002 and its implementation; the barrier to the latter is the lack of appropriate professional development of teachers.

This situation leaves LEP students, especially older ones with low English proficiency, in a quandary. LEP students at the lowest MEPA performance levels accounted for 23.9% of middle school LEP students and 24% of all LEP students in high school. The MCAS pass rates of middle school LEP students

performing at the lower levels of English proficiency (as measured by MEPA) only reached 22% in Math, and other scores were much lower. Among high school LEPs, the highest pass rates (also in Math) barely reached 15%. In high school, about 18% of LEP students were retained in grade, many of them several times and many of them in the ninth grade to avoid having them fail the tenth grade MCAS exams. Among twelfth graders who dropped out in SY2009 and who were enrolled in BPS for all four years of the study period, 22.4% had passed the MCAS but 63.2% had failed either the tenth grade MCAS ELA or MCAS Math tests. High school dropout rates among students at these low English proficiency levels were more than three times those of the LEP students at the higher levels of English proficiency. These students seem to be assessing their chances and dropping out because – given what they are offered – they see no possibility for success in passing the MCAS ELA and Math exams and graduating from high school. Everything we have analyzed in this study shows that this is a reasonable assumption.

Educating middle school and high school LEP students at the lower levels of MEPA performance requires alternative approaches to instruction and alternative approaches to measuring achievement. Both the 1993 Education Reform Law and Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002 allow for these exceptions; these students will have no real opportunities unless they are provided with these options (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1993, 2002). The Proficiency Gap Task Force (2010) recommended to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that MDESE support the development of alternative programs (e.g., TBE programs) for older



students with these low levels of proficiency. This option would allow the students to learn English while they are also learning grade-level content in their own language. Similarly, alternative measures of achievement in addition to or in place of the MCAS can be implemented under the 1993 Education Reform law. These assessments can include portfolios of high-quality student work in their own language and in English, and testing in Math that is both rigorous and accessible linguistically.

### **Students of Limited English Proficiency with Disabilities (LEP-SWDs)**

About 42% of the students transferred out of ELL programs in SY2006-2007 went to special education programs, many of them young students under Grade 3. One could argue that this transfer was a positive development if there had been a thoughtful assessment of these students, conducted with appropriate testing protocols and with trained bilingual staff. The transfer could also be considered positive if it had resulted in appropriate language supports and instruction provided by special education teachers trained to address the specific needs of LEP-SWDs. Neither one appears to be the case in this transfer.

Designation as student with a disability (i.e., receiving special education services) is the second most important variable in determining the educational outcomes of ELLs in Boston. The gap in MCAS scores between LEP-SWDs and LEP students was 30 percentage points in ELA and almost 20 percentage points in Math in fourth grade and 15 percentage points in ELA and 20 points in Math in tenth grade. LEP-SWD students have higher dropout rates than LEP students (but slightly lower rates than SWD students who are English proficient). In view of the large migration of young LEP students into SPED programs in SY2006-SY2007 – without assurances that those transfers were based on accurate evaluations and that these students would be greeted with appropriate services – these findings are worrisome.

As was the case in our discussion of enrollments, this situation pre-dates the presence of the current leadership of both BPS and of the special education programs in the district. But this fact does not negate the responsibility for the present leadership to redress this situation by assuring that (1) there are appropriate protocols for the assessment and placement of LEP students in SPED programs and that these are followed; (2) there are appropriate services

in place for LEP students placed in SPED programs; and (3) the SY2006 referrals to SPED programs are evaluated to ascertain their appropriateness.

### **Addressing the “Culture of Failure”**

One of the most hopeful points of this analysis was the observation of the success of LEP students once they attain English proficiency. Once LEP students reached MEPA Level 5, the outcomes of LEP students out-paced those of EP students across all subjects in Grade 4, in Math in Grade 8, and in ELA and Science in Grade 10 (Table 2). In those subjects in which EP students outscored LEP students, the gaps were very small. Yet, because it takes time for students to reach MEPA Level 5, because of the restrictions imposed by Chapter 386, and because of the pressure to assess students prematurely, intensely, and inappropriately, the image most hold of LEP students is one of failure. Principals are

concerned about the impact of ELLs on their school's AYP scores; school personnel hold unrealistic expectations of the process of language acquisition and see their students as “lacking” and “failing”; the students themselves perceive themselves as “failing”; and parents year after year receive a notice that communicates to them that their child has “failed” the MCAS. All of this delivered without any explanation that it is not expected for students who are in the process of learning academic English to pass tests developed for English proficient students solely in English.

BPS is bound by national and state law to test students yearly in a variety of areas, but it needs to take a more proactive stand regarding the appropriateness and the effect of testing on low English proficiency students in middle school and high school. Both federal and state laws allow for alternative forms of testing achievement and BPS, with a contingent of LEP students reaching 28.0% of its enrollment in SY2011, should seek remedy for the most vulnerable. NCLB requires that LEP students be tested in ELA after the first year in the U.S. and offers no exemptions for testing in content areas and offers little in terms of flexibility; it does recognize that LEP students present “unique challenges” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p.3). Federal regulations offer the possibility of “assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on which such students know and can do in academic content areas” (p.11). This has included testing content areas in students’ native

**Table 2. MCAS ELA, Math, and Science Pass Rates. English Proficient Students and LEP Students<sup>1</sup> at Different levels of English Proficiency<sup>2</sup>. BPS, SY2009**

	ELA	Math	Science
<b>Grade 4</b>			
All LEPs	61.6%	69.7%	N/A
MEPA Level 1	0.0%	23.1%	
MEPA Level 2	8.6%	22.2%	
MEPA Level 3	20.2%	40.6%	
MEPA Level 4	66.9%	75.5%	
MEPA Level 5	94.7%	94.2%	
All English Proficient	79.9%	79.9%	
<b>Grade 8</b>			
All LEPs	55.6%	31.6%	17.7%
MEPA Level 1	5.6%	3.7%	0%
MEPA Level 2	15.5%	15.2%	4.8% <sup>3</sup>
MEPA Level 3	44.2%	27.1%	13.7%
MEPA Level 4	83.3%	39.6%	20.4%
MEPA Level 5	89.8%	61.7%	48.3%
All English Proficient	92.2%	61.5%	54.0%
<b>Grade 10</b>			
All LEPs <sup>1</sup>	72.6%	76.3%	59.2%
MEPA Level 1	25.0%	69.2%	23.1% <sup>3</sup>
MEPA Level 2	50.0%	75.0%	41.7%
MEPA Level 3	61.2%	69.7%	52.1%
MEPA Level 4	92.6%	84.7%	75.4%
MEPA Level 5	98.7%	86.7%	84.2%
All English Proficient	95.2%	89.7%	82.4%

language for the first three years after arrival in the U.S. At the state level, the 187th General Court of the Commonwealth's Chapter 69.1.I, provides that "As much as is practicable, especially in the case of students whose performance is difficult to assess using conventional methods, such instruments shall include consideration of work samples, projects and portfolios, and shall facilitate authentic and direct gauges of student performance" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2011). Both federal and state law leave the door open for alternative testing for these vulnerable students. This alternative is not an opportunity for lesser accountability in regards to the achievement of LEP students, but rather an opportunity to develop assessments that measure accurately what they "know and can do" in academic areas.

The key terms here, of course, are "as much as is practicable" given funding constraints and MDESE's priorities. The development of alternative assessments requires investment so that it is a measure of similar quality of other state tests. These alternative assessments also need to be available in a variety of languages.

Nevertheless, with the numbers of LEP students across the state on the rise, Massachusetts' educational leaders should consider additional options for testing requirements and measures. As the state negotiates with the federal government to increase the flexibility available under NCLB, alternative assessment for ELLs is an area that should be considered, and Boston would do well in recommending strongly that Massachusetts seek additional flexibility in the testing LEP students at low levels of English proficiency.

The district should take full advantage of NCLB's exemption from reporting MCAS scores of LEP students in their first year in the U.S. for the purposes of AYP determination, if it is not already doing so. This exemption is a small accommodation for schools whose accountability status is affected by the presence of students at low levels of English proficiency. Again, Boston, with a high proportion of LEP students in its enrollment and a broad distribution of LEP students across the district's schools, would benefit from providing this exemption for its schools. This exemption would recognize the schools' efforts in educating ELLs and would build a stronger understanding of what constitutes realistic

expectations of MCAS results for students at low levels of English proficiency.

Finally, although BPS needs to report scores for LEP students in the aggregate, a requirement which ignores the effect of language proficiency on the outcomes, it should aim to find a way to communicate a more realistic message to school staff, to parents, and to the students themselves. Better understanding of the process of language acquisition across staff charged with the education of ELLs is imperative so that their expectations and perspectives can line up more closely with what we know to be true. Information for school staff needs to allow them to “take English proficiency into account” in the interpretation of MCAS results, not only so that appropriate placements and instruction can take place but also to facilitate the assessment of English acquisition in relation to those outcomes. Similar information should be available to parents with clear statements about the MCAS performance that is appropriate for students at specific levels of English proficiency.

Instilling an image of “failure” solely because a student does not have academic English proficiency is damaging in the school setting and beyond. Reversing the “culture of failure” requires that educators understand the problem, de-politicize the process of education of LEP students and bring to the task good educational and assessment practices.

### Middle School Students

Middle school LEP students seem to be particularly vulnerable to poor educational outcomes, with very low MCAS outcomes across all subjects. Although the data is not clear on this, there is some evidence that dropping out begins in middle school for many LEP students. They received out-of-school suspensions at a very high rate, three and five times higher than those of their elementary and high school peers. Rates of suspension were higher among students at the lower levels of MEPA performance. Overall, the outcomes for middle school students at these levels of MEPA performance are of great concern since these were lower than those of LEP students in other grade levels. Their situation in BPS needs focused attention.

Middle school LEP student outcomes seem to suffer in large middle schools and in SEI programs. Middle school students appear to do better in the few Two-Way Bilingual and TBE programs available for them in BPS. In those programs their outcomes were

close to or surpassed those of English proficiency students. Interventions should focus on the development of programs in smaller schools and special attention should be placed on entering students who are just starting to learn English. The situation of students at the lower levels of MEPA performance seems to be the most difficult and their outcomes are the worst. TBE programs may be most appropriate to engage these students of low English proficiency in schooling. Middle school students’ outcomes in SEI programs of both types were extremely low, indicating that this modality does not offer enough access to the type of academic content required to be successful in the MCAS. Overall, BPS needs to pay close attention to the situation of middle school LEP students and to the development of more appropriate programs for them.

## B Specific Findings and Recommendations Related to Enrollment and Characteristics of English Language Learners

### » Trends

- Between SY2006 and SY2009, the overall enrollment of BPS decreased by 3.9%. The enrollment of students of limited English proficiency and students who are former LEP students increased by 12.3% and 39.0% respectively. These were the only populations to experience growth in this period.

### » Student Characteristics

- LEP students showed a slightly higher representation of males (53.6%) than females and a high proportion of low-income students (87.3%). About 12.9% were students who were mobile and changed schools within a school year, and about 18.7% were students with disabilities.
- Most LEP students were Spanish speakers (56.6%), with Haitian Creole, Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, Portuguese, and Somali speakers composing the bulk of the rest.

- In terms of English proficiency, the majority of LEP students scored at the higher performance levels (Levels 3, 4, and 5) of the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA); the largest proportion scored at Level 3. Across the four years examined, there was a clear tendency for the number of students at the lower proficiency levels to decline, likely the effect of the observed decline in immigration to the region.

» *LEP Enrollment in Different Types of Schools*

- Analysis of LEP student enrollment in schools of different characteristics points to several risk factors:
  - (1) LEP students were enrolled in high-poverty schools at a much higher rate than English proficient students: 81.6% compared to 60.1%.
  - (2) LEP students were overwhelmingly enrolled in schools that did not meet accountability status in ELA (77.5%) or in Math (85.0%).
  - (3) Students' MEPA performance level and their designation as LEP-SWDs have broad significance in the distribution of students across schools of different characteristics. Low MEPA performance level was found to be significant in the distribution of students across all types of schools considered here. Most notably, higher proportions of these students were found in schools with lower teacher qualifications. Designation as a LEP-SWD was also found to have broad significance in the distribution of students in schools of lower LEP densities and where a lower proportion of teachers are licensed in their teaching assignment.

**Recommendation 1:** The fact that LEP students are more heavily concentrated in high-poverty schools and in schools that did not meet AYP – and that the most vulnerable LEP students are exposed to a teaching corps with less qualifications than is average for the district – suggests that the district needs to pay more attention to the assignment of LEP students, assuring that they have access to “seats” in schools with more favorable characteristics.

- LEP students in Boston are not segregated or highly concentrated: 88.4% were in schools with less than 50% LEP density. LEP students also tend to be enrolled in schools where a high proportion of core courses are taught by highly qualified teachers (72.9%).

**Recommendation 2:** The district should continue to be watchful of its assignment of LEP students so that they are not overly concentrated with other language-minority students and without access to English-speaking students.

» *Enrollment in Programs*

- While the enrollment of students of limited English proficiency in Boston increased steadily between SY2006 and SY2009, there were strong shifts in the enrollment of LEP students in different programs (See Figure 1). The most salient was the 23.6% decline in the enrollment in programs for English language learners and a 267.7% increase in the enrollment of LEP students in educational settings which are not specifically designed for the instruction of ELLs (for example, general education classrooms and special education programs).

This shift in students took place between SY2006 and SY2007, when 2,536 students were transferred from ELL programs to programs not designed for ELLs. Of these students, 54.5% were students in Grade 3 or lower, 42.8% were students at the higher levels of English proficiency (but 20% were at very low levels), and 42.0% were designated as students with disabilities.

**Recommendation 3:** The large transfer of ELL students out of ELL programs between SY2006 and SY2007 points to the need for the district to have a clear and consistent process for the transfer of students out of ELL programs. It also needs to develop and communicate clear criteria for designating and de-designating students as LEPs.

**Recommendation 4:** The district should refrain from transferring students with low English proficiency out of ELL programs, particularly students transitioning out of elementary school and those in middle school and in high school. Dropout rates among LEP students at these grade levels and at these levels of proficiency are very high in comparison to the rates of similar students in ELL programs.

**Recommendation 5:** Students of limited English proficiency who also have one or more disabilities are legally required to receive both ELL and SPED services. Placement only in an ELL program or only in a SPED program is not an appropriate education for LEP-SWDs. To echo the comments at the beginning of this executive summary, BPS needs to increase its capacity to conduct proper identification, assessment and placement of LEP-SWDs. No students of limited English proficiency who do not have a disability should be placed in a SPED program merely because there is no ELL “seat” in their school.

- Most students in ELL programs are enrolled in SEI programs (88.1%). Two-Way Bilingual, TBE, and SIFE programs, together, account for the rest.
- There are significant differences between students in different types of programs along key variables generally associated with academic outcomes.

- (1) Students in ELL programs were more likely to be mobile and to have lower levels of English proficiency than students not in programs for ELLs.
- (2) The comparison among the different ELL programs – Sheltered English Immersion, Two-Way Bilingual, programs for students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), and Transitional Bilingual Education – shows that SIFE programs stand out for their higher proportion of male students, of students who are mobile, and of students at the lower levels of English proficiency as well as the lower proportions of those who are of low income.

- (3) Two-Way Bilingual and TBE programs stand out for the high proportion of low-income students in their enrollment.

**Recommendation 6:** Because of the wide diversity of LEP students’ situations and characteristics, increasing the availability of programs is critical to addressing their educational needs. Program options need to be expanded so that appropriate programs are available for different types of students. For example, given the strong showing of Two Way Bilingual programs among elementary school students, more seats in this type of program should become available. These programs also need to be designed in a way that accommodates students at different levels of English proficiency. There is also a need to increase seats in programs appropriate for students at the lowest levels of English proficiency at the middle school and high school levels. Appropriate programs for students at these grade levels should support the acquisition of English as well as provide appropriate linguistic access to academic content in order to engage them in schooling.

**Recommendation 7:** Parents of LEP students need to be informed about the program options available to their children, the differences in instruction each entails, and the outcomes BPS students have shown in these programs. Today, the BPS website offers parents only SEI programs as a choice. The fact that SEI programs have lower outcomes than other programs for ELLs may keep parents away from all programs for ELLs.

## C Specific Findings and Recommendations Related to English Acquisition

### » Characteristics of Students at Different Levels of English Proficiency

- In SY2009, the majority of LEP students in Boston scored in the middle levels of proficiency, Levels 3 and 4 (61.7%) on MEPA. Males and mobile students were over-represented among those LEP students scoring at

Levels 1 and 2 of MEPA in SY2009. Among students at Levels 4 and 5, the most salient characteristics were their stability (only 3.8% changed schools in SY2009 compared to 9.9% among all test-takers) and the higher representation of girls in their numbers (49.8% compared to 46.8% among all test-takers).

» *Level of English Proficiency Required to Access Academic Content and Length of Time Required to Acquire This Level of Proficiency*

- We used passing MCAS ELA as the indicator of the attainment of academic English. The expectation is that students at high MEPA performance levels would have a level of English proficiency that allows them to pass MCAS ELA at rates comparable to those of English proficient students. We found that among elementary and middle school students only those at MEPA Level 5 obtained pass rates in ELA comparable to those of English proficient students. Among high school LEP students, those scoring at both Levels 4 and 5 of MEPA had pass rates comparable to those of their English proficiency peers.
- Analysis of language acquisition among third, sixth, and ninth grade cohorts formed in SY2006 from students testing at MEPA Level 1 shows that the trajectory of the Boston cohorts were similar to those reflected in the research and confirms that language acquisition takes significantly more than three years for most students.

**Recommendation 8:** In the current Massachusetts education policy environment, appropriate access to content is dependent on being proficient in English. Consequently, educational leaders, principals, and teachers need to have a profound understanding of the process of second language acquisition and of the importance of English language development levels in the planning of programs, in the assignment of students to these programs, and in the instruction students receive in them.

**Recommendation 9:** The district needs to underscore the importance of the MEPA test so that school personnel, as well as parents and students, understand its relevance. School personnel need to take the test seriously and prepare their students well for the test. Students should be informed about the test and its importance so that their English proficiency can be adequately assessed. Parents need to understand the importance of the test so that they can support their children in the process of testing and program assignment.

**Recommendation 10:** Students at the lower levels of MEPA performance are at great risk of low educational outcomes in the Boston Public Schools. They are exposed to expectations of performance (on the MCAS) that are unrealistic and impossible for them to attain; they are retained in grade in high numbers; and they do not have linguistic access to a curriculum that engages them in learning. As a result 23% of students who performed at MEPA Level 1 in ninth grade dropped out of school by the twelfth grade.

The Boston Public Schools should:

- (1) develop interventions for late entry ELLs at the lower English proficiency levels and monitor closely their social and academic progress.
- (2) focus special programmatic attention on the transition grades (fifth to sixth and eighth to ninth grades).
- (3) place all students performing at MEPA Levels 1 to 3 in ELL programs. English language learners at this level of English proficiency who are placed in general education settings have much higher dropout rates.
- (4) seek remedy from the application of tests of achievement in which LEPs students at MEPA levels 1 and 2 are unable to demonstrate what they “know and can do in academic content areas” and collaborate with MDESE in the development of alternative measures of achievement as allowed by law. (See Recommendation 23.)



**Recommendation 11:** The highly politicized process that led to the passage of Question 2 profoundly misinformed the Massachusetts public about the characteristics of English language acquisition and the time required to attain academic English proficiency. The Boston Public Schools, the district with the highest enrollment of LEP students in Massachusetts, needs to lead the way in providing accurate information to the public and to policy makers on this issue. Without ignoring the law of the state, it needs to be forceful in its communication of the reality of acquiring a second language, the realistic expectations of students at different language proficiency levels, and the kind of instruction required for LEP students to be successful in one of the most competitive educational environments in the nation.

**Recommendation 12:** Develop a strong sense of community and belonging for LEP students in early high school. Attention needs to be paid to the process of transition between middle school and high school grade levels, to the change in schools as well as to students' individual development needs.

**Recommendation 13:** Collaborate with community partners in the design of support services for ELL students, specifically for the transition years, such as mentoring and youth development programs.

» *Individual Factors Related to Dropping Out*

Gender, income, mobility, and English proficiency were found to be significant in the dropout rates of high school LEP students.

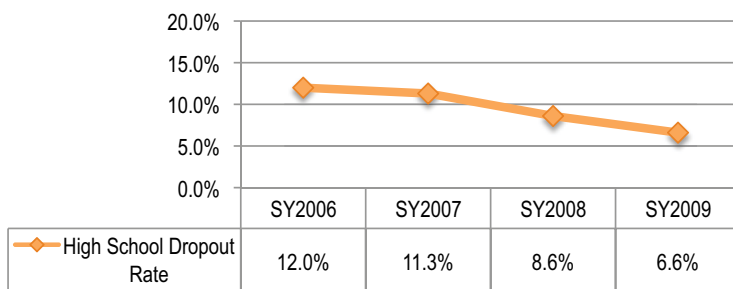
- Comparisons of the characteristics of LEP high school students who dropped out with those of LEP students who remained in school, showed that among high school dropouts there was a higher proportion of males; of those who were not eligible for free or reduced price lunch (not low-income); of native speakers of Spanish and Portuguese; of mobile students; and of students scoring at MEPA Levels 1 and 2, as compared to LEP students who did not drop out. All of these differences were found to be statistically significant.
- LEP students who dropped out of high school in SY2009 had a significantly lower median attendance rate and significantly higher out-of-school suspension and retention rates than those who did not drop out.

**D Specific Findings and Recommendations Related to Dropout Rates**

» *Trends*

- The dropout rates of high school students have declined substantially between SY2006 and SY2009. By SY2009, the high school dropout rate of LEP students was lower than that of English proficient students.
- Among LEPs, the largest proportion of dropouts (30.8%) left school in the ninth grade.

**Figure 2. Trend in Annual High School Dropout Rate. LEP Students. BPS, SY2006-SY2009**





**Table 3. Annual High School Dropout Rates of Selected BPS Populations Of Different Characteristics. BPS, SY2009**

	EP		LEP	
	N Dropouts	Dropout Rate	N Dropouts	Dropout Rate
Annual High School Dropout Rate <sup>3,4</sup>				
All	1,225	7.0%	201	6.6%
Male	746	8.4%	134	8.0%
Female	479	5.5%	67	4.8%
Low income <sup>1</sup>	642	5.9%	85	3.8%
Not Low Income	583	8.8%	116	14.4%
Native Language <sup>2</sup>				
Spanish	215	7.5%	127	8.5%
Cape Verdean Creole	23	8.4%	21	4.8%
Haitian Creole	18	3.9%	26	5.7%
Mobile	251	18.8%	45	8.3%
Stable	880	5.6%	144	5.8%
SWD	310	9.9%	34	7.7%
Not SWD	915	6.4%	167	6.4%

**Table 4. Annual High School Dropout Rates of LEP Students of Different English Proficiency Levels. BPS, SY2009.**

	EP	LEP	LEP MEPA Test Takers <sup>1</sup>			
			Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Annual High School Dropout Rate <sup>2</sup>	7.0%	6.6%	9.2%	7.4%	5.3%	2.9%

**Table 5. Attendance, Suspension and Retention Rates of High School Dropouts. BPS, SY2009**

	EP		LEP	
	Dropped Out	Did Not Drop Out	Dropped Out	Did not Drop Out
Median Attendance Rate <sup>1</sup>	56.8%	87.7%	63.1%	87.1%
Suspension Rate <sup>1</sup>	11.9%	6.6%	6.3%	3.0%
Retention Rate <sup>1</sup>	42.7%	8.8%	34.9%	19.8%

**Recommendation 14:** Monitor indicators such as mobility, English proficiency, attendance, and retention to identify students most at risk of dropping out. OELL should set up structures and policies to help schools monitor these indicators.

**Recommendation 15:** Since retention is a leading risk factor for dropping out, improve grade promotion rates through a focused attention on the quality of the instruction available to students at the lowest MEPA levels, who are the students most often retained.

**Recommendation 16:** Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole speakers have the highest dropout rates among LEP students. They also face the greatest challenges in terms of attendance (except Haitian Creole speakers) and suspension rates. The district should seek support from community groups working with these populations for a better cultural understanding and help in student engagement. These and other students at risk of dropping out need mentoring, academic support, and wrap-around services delivered by culturally competent staff who are able to provide linguistically appropriate services to the students and clear information to parents.

► **School and Program Factors Related to Dropping Out**

- Factors related to school characteristics and program participation also proved to be significant in the dropout rates of LEP students. A school’s LEP density was found to be significant in relation to the dropout rate of LEP high school students. The high school dropout rate of LEP students in schools with LEP concentrations between 30 and 50% was 11.6%, much higher than the dropout rate of students in schools with higher densities of LEP students (6.7%) or those with lower densities (5.3%). There are 19 high schools in BPS with this characteristic.

**Recommendation 17:** BPS should assess the conditions at high schools producing such high rates of ELL dropouts and develop plans to address the causes of this problem.

- The dropout rate was also higher in high schools that did not meet AYP goals, suggesting that “good schools” are better able to engage these students. Surprisingly, high schools with teachers with higher qualifications had higher dropout rates indicating that (1) there is no assurance that teachers with high qualifications are consistently teaching LEP students in these schools and that (2) additional interventions – in addition to the presence of good teachers – are required to retain students in school.
- Comparison of the dropout rates of students in ELL programs and those not in ELL programs showed that the high school dropout rate was lower among LEP students enrolled in ELL programs than among those in programs not for ELLs. Dropout rates among students not in ELL programs were particularly high among those scoring at the lower

levels of MEPA. Students in ELL programs had higher attendance and lower suspension rates than those not in programs. But they also had a much higher retention rate.

- Sixty-three percent of the SY2009 twelfth graders (who were enrolled in BPS for all four years of the study period) who dropped out had failed one or both of the tenth grade MCAS ELA and Math exams.

**Recommendation 18:** LEP students, especially those at the lower levels of English proficiency, should be enrolled in ELL programs. These programs are better able to engage students and prevent their dropping out. Parents of students who test at MEPA Levels 1 and 2 should be informed of the advantages of having their child attend an ELL program.

**Recommendation 19:** Provide linguistic access to grade-level academic content for middle school and high school LEP students at the lowest levels of English proficiency. This can be done by increasing “seats” in TBE programs and expanding access to TBE programs in other languages in addition to Chinese.

**Recommendation 20:** Federal and State laws allow for the development of alternative ways of testing achievement in addition to the MCAS. The state and the district should develop these alternatives for LEP students at the lowest levels of English proficiency, particularly for late-entrant ELLs who will likely not have time to attain the level of proficiency required to pass content-based MCAS tests in time to graduate. (See Recommendation 23.)

**Table 6. Annual High School Dropout Rates of LEP students in ELL programs by English Proficiency Level. BPS, SY2009.**

	LEP	LEP MEPA Test Takers			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Annual High School Dropout Rates <sup>4</sup>					
Rate of English Proficient		7.0%			
All	6.6%	9.2%	7.4%	5.3%	2.9%
LEPs NOT in an ELL Program	8.7%	12.2% <sup>2</sup>	13.0% <sup>2</sup>	9.7%	4.3%
LEPs in ELL Programs <sup>3</sup>	5.9%	9.0%	6.4%	3.5%	2.3%
SEI	6.5%	10.4%	7.1%	3.8%	2.6%
Other bilingual (TBE and SIFE)	1.2% <sup>2</sup>	3.0% <sup>2</sup>	0%	0%	0%

Recommendation 21: There should be a clear path to graduation for ELLs at the different levels of English proficiency that includes a specific sequence of courses and activities – including summer and Saturday school – so that all students who are motivated and able can pass the MCAS or its alternatives and graduate from high school.

ment in the MCAS. It also demonstrates the inappropriateness of the MCAS test as a measure of content knowledge for the LEP students at the lower MEPA performance levels (See Table 2).

## E Specific Findings Related to Outcomes on the MCAS

- Using the MCAS pass rates for the aggregate of LEP students, there is evidence that there have been strong gains in MCAS outcomes across all subjects and grade levels. When comparing students' performance in SY2009 to SY2006, we found that ELA, Math, and Science pass rates rose at every grade level without exception and that gaps between LEP and EP students declined. But in spite of this advance, the pass rates remained very low and the gaps between LEP and EP students remained wide.
- Taking language proficiency into account shows that, as expected, MCAS scores are very low among students scoring at MEPA performance Levels 1 through 3. Once MEPA Level 5 was reached, the outcomes of LEP students were higher than those of EP students across all subjects in Grade 4, in Math in Grade 8, and in ELA and Science in Grade 10; in those subjects in which EP students outscore LEP students, the gaps remained below 6 percentage points. This highlights the significant role of language proficiency in the demonstration of achieve-

**Recommendation 22:** BPS should set clear and realistic expectations of the level of achievement in MCAS tests for students at different levels of English proficiency (especially at the lower levels) and communicate these to parents and school personnel. It should also communicate clearly the positive outcomes that derive from higher levels of proficiency in order to stimulate students' work to acquire English proficiency and parents' support for their efforts.

**Recommendation 23:** NCLB, the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act, and more recent state law collected under Chapter 69 and Chapter 71 A allow for the development of alternative measures of achievement for "students whose performance in difficult to assess using conventional methods" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2011). BPS should request this remedy from the state and collaborate with MDESE to develop alternative measures of achievement for LEP students at MEPA levels 1 & 2. These accommodations can include testing academic content in the student's native language, using testing programs such as ONPAR (Kopriva, 2009) for the assessment of Math and Science content, or developing portfolios of multiple assessments that would better measure the true extent of the knowledge acquired by LEP students with low English proficiency.

Table 7. MCAS ELA, Math, and Science Pass Rates of LEP Students. BPS, SY2006-SY2009.

	SY2006	SY2007	SY2008	SY2009
<b>ELA Pass Rates</b>				
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	57.1%	63.7%	56.6%	61.6%
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	42.9%	48.2%	41.8%	55.6%
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	44.8%	55.3%	68.6%	72.6%
<b>Math Pass Rates</b>				
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	64.0%	68.9%	69.0%	69.7%
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	23.1%	24.9%	26.2%	31.6%
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	56.6%	66.4%	71.1%	76.3%
<b>Science Pass Rates</b>				
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	8.1%	12.9%	15.0%	17.7%
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	NA	29.7%	42.3%	59.2%

**Recommendation 24:** While more appropriate measurements of achievement are developed by the state, BPS should seek authorization from MDESE to expand the use of accommodations for testing.

- (1) the only accommodation allowed by Massachusetts (in addition to the exemption from testing in ELA in the students' first year in the U.S.) is the use of a dictionary. This has not proven to be as effective an accommodation as, for example, extra testing time, small group and individual administration, and/or a glossary of key terms (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2009). BPS should request that MDESE add these accommodations and implement them across BPS schools during testing.
- (2) We found instances in which students had taken MCAS tests when they had been in the country less than a year. Until the testing regime is changed, school staff should be made aware of the exemptions and asked to respect them.

**Recommendation 25:** The district should take full advantage of NCLB's exemption from reporting MCAS scores of LEP students in their first year in the U.S. for the purposes of AYP determination (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). This is a small accommodation for schools whose accountability status is affected by the presence of students at low levels of English proficiency. This exemption would acknowledge schools' efforts and build a stronger understanding of what constitutes realistic expectations of MCAS results for students at low levels of English proficiency.

► *Differences in MCAS Outcomes among LEP Students of Different Demographic Characteristics*

- The individual factors that proved to be most significant in MCAS ELA and Math pass rates at all grade levels were English proficiency and disability. Regression analysis supported the descriptive findings by underscoring the power of language proficiency in explaining the variation in the ELA and Math MCAS scores of LEP students in all grade levels. The same was the case in the effect on outcomes of designation as a student with disabilities.
- Mobility was significant in the MCAS ELA pass rates of elementary and middle school students and in the Math pass rates of middle schoolers. Gender proved significant in the MCAS pass rates of LEP students at the elementary and high school levels. These findings were not reinforced in the regression analysis.
- Significant differences in the attendance rates of LEP students who passed/did not pass MCAS tests in all areas were also found, where those who passed MCAS showed higher attendance rates than those who did not.

**Recommendation 26:** The MCAS outcomes of LEP-SWDs were by far the worst of any group: worse than LEP students without disabilities and worse than those of other SWDs. There is a full discussion of this issue at the start of this executive summary but here we underscore the need for appropriate assessment and the availability of language support resources in SPED programs, including the capacity for communication with students' families.

**Recommendation 27:** The importance of attending school every day needs to be communicated early and often to all immigrant parents, explaining the pervasive impact it has on the educational outcomes of their children. The effect of attendance on their outcomes should also be part of what adults communicate to students in the school setting as well as the afterschool and community programs in which they participate.

» *Differences in MCAS Outcomes among LEP Students in Different Types of Programs*

- The comparison of outcomes of students across all programs showed that ELA pass rates were highest among elementary and middle school students attending the three Two-Way Bilingual programs. Among high school LEP students, those in the only TBE program showed the highest pass rates in ELA. In all other programs, ELA pass rates were very low.
- In MCAS Math, Two-Way Bilingual and TBE LEP students, again, scored the highest of all groups of LEP students considered here. The pass rates of Two-Way Bilingual students were the highest among elementary school LEPs students and those of TBE students topped all others in middle school and high school. Aside from the rates of the students in these two programs, which almost reached those of EP students, pass rates for LEPs were very low. They were particularly low among middle school students.
- In Science pass rates for all groups of LEP students considered here are very low, particularly for middle school students. Among LEP students in elementary grades, those in Two-Way Bilingual programs showed the highest Science pass rates. At the middle school and high school levels, students in TBE programs outscored all others, including English proficient students.
- SEI programs are the largest programs for English language learners in Boston. Yet, SEI programs operate very unevenly. At the elementary level, they showed the lowest pass rates of all programs in both ELA (76.6%) and Math (69.5%) among students at MEPA performance Levels 4 and 5. In middle school, among students of these same proficiency levels, students in SEI programs showed the lowest pass rates overall, but students in Multilingual SEI programs outscored English proficient students in Math. In high school, SEI students outscored English proficient students in ELA and within 2 percentage points of their pass rates in Math.
- There were consistent differences in the outcomes of students in ELL and non-ELL programs, with students not in ELL programs showing stronger MCAS outcomes in ELA, Math, and Science than those in ELL programs at all grade levels (except high school Math and Science). This difference is likely due to the preponderance of SEI programs,

**Table 8. MCAS ELA and Math Pass Rates of LEP students at MEPA Performance Levels 4 & 5 in Different Types of Elementary School ELL programs. BPS, SY2009**

	LEP Pass Rate	LEP MEPA Test-takers at Levels 4 & 5	
<b>Elementary School ELA<sup>1</sup></b>			
Pass Rate of English Proficient		84.0%	
		N	Percent
LEP	64.9%	986	80.6%
LEP Not in an ELL Program	70.6%	535	82.6%
In ELL Program	59.0%	451	78.3%
In SEI	58.6%	397	76.6%
In SEI Multilingual	52.6%	15	66.7%
In SEI Language Specific	58.8%	382	77.0%
In Two-Way Bilingual	81.4%	48	91.7%
In SIFE Programs	29.7%	-	-
<b>Elementary School Math<sup>2</sup></b>			
Pass Rate of English Proficient		76.3%	
LEP	61.8%	988	75.1%
LEP Not in an ELL Program	67.2%	534	78.5%
In ELL Program	56.5%	454	71.1%
In SEI	55.2%	400	69.5%
In SEI Multilingual	52.2%	15	-
In SEI Language Specific	55.3%	385	70.1%
In Two-Way Bilingual	74.6%	48	83.3%
In SIFE Programs	50.0%	6	-

**Table 9. MCAS ELA and Math Pass Rates of LEP students at MEPA Performance Levels 4 & 5 in Different Types of Middle School ELL Programs. BPS, SY2009**

	LEP Pass Rate		LEP MEPA Test-takers at Levels 4 & 5	
<b>Middle School ELA</b>				
Pass Rate of English Proficient	90.3%			
		N	Percent	
LEP	59.0%	751	85.1%	
LEP Not in an ELL Program	69.7%	472	85.6%	
In ELL Program	47.8%	279	84.2%	
In SEI	48.0%	241	82.6%	
In SEI Multilingual	69.0%	21	85.7%	
In SEI Language Specific	46.5%	220	82.3%	
In Two-Way Bilingual	89.3%	27	92.6%	
In TBE <sup>1</sup>	84.0%	-	-	
In SIFE Programs	7.5%	-	-	
<b>Middle School Math<sup>2</sup></b>				
Pass Rate of English Proficient	65.5%			
LEP	37.7%	751	56.6%	
LEP Not in an ELL Program	45.9%	473	57.7%	
In ELL Program	30.3%	278	54.7%	
In SEI	29.4%	241	52.7%	
In SEI Multilingual	38.8%	21	66.7%	
In SEI Language Specific	28.7%	220	51.4%	
In Two-Way Bilingual	59.3%	26	61.5%	
In TBE <sup>3</sup>	92.3%	8	-	
In SIFE	1.6%	3	-	

**Table 10. MCAS ELA and Math Pass Rates of LEP students at MEPA Performance Levels 4 & 5 in Different Types of High School ELL programs. BPS, SY2009**

	LEP Pass Rate		LEP MEPA Test-takers at Levels 4 & 5	
<b>High School ELA</b>				
Pass Rate of English Proficient	95.2%			
		N	Percent	
LEP	72.6%	198	94.9%	
LEP Not in an ELL Program	75.0	57	94.7%	
In ELL Program	71.9%	141	95.0%	
In SEI	72.4%	131	95.4%	
In SEI Multilingual	66.7%	23	94.0%	
In SEI Language Specific	73.9%	108	95.7%	
In TBE	93.5%	10	90.0%	
In SIFE Programs	18.8% <sup>1</sup>	0	-	
<b>High School Math<sup>1</sup></b>				
Pass Rate of English Proficient	89.7%			
LEP	76.3%	193	85.5%	
LEP Not in an ELL Program	69.1%	55	78.2%	
In ELL Program	78.7%	138	88.4%	
In SEI	79.2%	128	87.5%	
In SEI Multilingual	91.2%	23	100%	
In SEI Language Specific	76.1%	105	84.8%	
In TBE	100%	10	100%	
In SIFE	15.4% <sup>1</sup>	0	-	

where pass rates were very low, as well as the much higher proportion of students at the lowest levels of English proficiency in ELL programs. Nevertheless, this difference proved significant only in the MCAS Math pass rates of elementary school students.

**Recommendation 28:** LEP students in Two-Way Bilingual and TBE programs demonstrated the strongest MCAS outcomes. These programs are likely successful because they provide linguistic access to academic content for students at all levels of English proficiency. The district should consider expanding these programs in BPS. For example, Two-Way Bilingual programs should be more available to students at low levels of English proficiency and in more languages than Spanish/English. TBE programs are extremely limited (available in one middle school and one high school) and serve only Chinese students. These programs should be expanded and their implementation and outcomes monitored consistently.

**Recommendation 29:** An evaluation of BPS programs is a necessary next step in order to assess the quality of the programs and to be able to attribute any differences in outcomes to the programs being implemented in BPS. While this study analyzed the outcomes of LEP students by the type of ELL program in which they were enrolled, we were limited in our assessment because there implementation of programs within a specific type varies widely in the district. As was noted in the discussion about the research on the relationship of program type and achievement, this is a consistent problem across districts and states.

In order to better evaluate the outcomes of its programs, BPS should clearly define the characteristics of each program model and how these models differ from each other in terms of the use of native language and specific instructional practices. As much as possible, programs within each model should function in a consistent manner across the district. An SEI Spanish program in one school should “look” similar to an SEI Spanish program in another school; a Two-Way Bilingual program in one school should

not “look” the same as an SEI Spanish program in another school. This would allow for the evaluation of the effects of different programs on outcomes and more effectively guide the priorities and investment of the district.

► *Differences in MCAS Outcomes among LEP Students in Different Types of Schools*

- The proportion of LEP students in a school was significant in LEP students’ MCAS outcomes in all subjects and grade levels except elementary MCAS ELA pass rates. AYP also proved significant in the outcomes of all subjects and grades except high school ELA pass rates. Poverty status, size, and the proportion of teachers licensed in their teaching assignment were also significant.

**Recommendation 30:** The quality of instruction is an essential ingredient in the success of any student. As was expressed by Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, in response to the U.S. Department of Justice’s investigation of the gaps in the qualifications of Massachusetts teachers of ELLs, teaching these students requires “specialized preparation in terms of being attuned to their needs” (Vaznis, 2011). In Boston, 67% of the teachers in middle schools and high schools and 48% of those in elementary schools have not completed the recommended 4-category training, according to the Justice Department (Vaznis, 2011). BPS needs to:

- (1) provide motivation for all teachers to complete the 4-category training by offering Professional Development Points for participation as well as the opportunity to advance across salary lanes (BESE Proficiency Gap Task Force, 2010).
- (2) assure that appropriate professional development for teachers teaching ELLs are included in the professional development hours negotiated with the Boston Teachers’ Union in this round of contract negotiations.
- (3) evaluate the quality of the professional development 4-category training offered to Boston’s teachers.



**Recommendation 31:** Because BPS has the largest number of ELLs, it should advocate with MDESE to

- (1) strengthen current requirements for the licensure of teachers providing instruction to English language learners, reinstating the bilingual and ESL requirements to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the preparation of teachers in the state. This should include the development of licensure requirements for bilingual/ESL Special Education for teachers of LEP-SWDs.
- (2) strengthen the meaning of a Highly Qualified Teacher by including in its definition elements of cultural competence related to the culture and language of ELL students and competencies related to teaching ELLs (BESE Proficiency Gap Task Force, 2010). This study showed that just having LEP students enrolled in a school with a high proportion of core academic courses taught by HQTs was not enough to affect the outcomes of ELLs, because it is not clear that ELLs in those schools are taught by those teachers or that these highly qualified teachers have adequate training in teaching ELLs.

## **F** Other Recommendations

The analysis conducted for this study was dependent upon combining several sets of data: SIMS, MEPA, MCAS, and ELL program data maintained by OELL.

**Recommendation 32:** Going forward, as BPS conducts its own monitoring of the enrollment and achievement of ELLs, it is crucial that BPS has the capacity to link these datasets together. In addition, this data system must be accessible district wide, so that staff from the OELL, Special Education and Student Services, Research, Assessment & Evaluation, and other departments are all able to use the data to address the educational needs of ELLs in BPS and so that multiple departments serving ELLs are able to collaborate in the provision and monitoring of services.

## Notes

### Notes for Table 2:

- <sup>1</sup> Includes all LEP students in 4th, 8th and 10th grade who took the MCAS test in SY2009.
- <sup>2</sup> Includes only those LEP students who had taken MEPA and MCAS in SY2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Represents less than 10 students.

### Notes for Table 3:

- <sup>1</sup> Eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
- <sup>2</sup> Does not include English for either EP or LEP students; other languages are not shown for reasons of confidentiality.
- <sup>3</sup> The differences in the dropout rates of LEP high school students was significant in relationship to gender ( $p=.000$ ), income ( $p=.000$ ), and mobility ( $p=.030$ ), but with minimal, small and minimal effect sizes respectively.
- <sup>4</sup> The differences in the dropout rates of LEP and EP students were significant only in relationship to low income and mobility ( $p=.000$  for both), although effect sizes were small and minimal respectively.

### Notes for Table 4:

- <sup>1</sup> For summer dropouts or students who dropped out in SY2009 without having taken the MEPA, MEPA data was taken from SY2008. For SY2009 dropouts who took the MEPA, the highest MEPA score was used from that year: either the fall 2008 administration or the spring 2009 administration, the latter of which was converted to the pre-2009 scale with 4 levels.
- <sup>2</sup> The differences in dropout rates among high school LEP students were significant only in the comparisons between students scoring at MEPA levels 1 & 3 ( $p=.004$ , minimal effect size), 1 & 4 ( $p=.000$ , small effect size), 2 & 4 ( $p=.001$ , small effect size) and 3 & 4 ( $p=.012$ , minimal effect size).

### Note for Table 5:

The differences in attendance rates, suspension rates and retention rates between LEPs who dropped out and those who stayed in school were all found to be statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ,  $p=.011$  with minimal effect size, and  $p=.000$  with minimal effect size, respectively).

### Notes for Table 6:

- <sup>1</sup> Differences in the high school dropout rates between LEP students in and not in programs is statistically significant ( $p=.006$ ), but with minimal effect size. Differences in the high school dropout rates of MEPA levels 2 and 3 LEP students in and not in ELL programs was also significant ( $p=.032$  with small effect size and  $p=.027$  with minimal effect size, respectively); that was not the case for the difference in rates between MEPA Level 1 or 4 students in /not in ELL programs.
- <sup>2</sup> Represents less than 10 students.
- <sup>3</sup> Not all ELL programs appear here because (1) there are no Two-Way Bilingual programs in high schools; (2) this analysis is based on SIMS data which does not disaggregate SEI programs or other bilingual programs.

*Notes for Table 8:*

- <sup>1</sup> Chi2 is only significant when testing for the difference in MCAS ELA pass rates between LEP students scoring MEPA levels 4 & 5 in SEI /not in ELL program and SEI/ Two-Way Bilingual programs ( $p=.022$  and  $.017$ , respectively, with small effect size).
- <sup>2</sup> Chi2 is only significant when testing for the difference in MCAS Math pass rates between LEP students scoring at MEPA levels 4 & 5 in ELL/not in ELL program, SEI/not in ELL program and SEI/2way ( $p=.008$ ,  $.002$  and  $.046$ , respectively, with minimal effect size).

*Notes for Table 9:*

- <sup>1</sup> The pass rate for TBE students at MEPA level 3 is 91.7%.
- <sup>2</sup> Chi2 is only significant when testing for the difference in MCAS Math pass rates between LEP students scoring at MEPA levels 4 & 5 in SEI and LEP students scoring at MEPA levels 4 & 5 in TBE ( $p=.008$ , small effect size).
- <sup>3</sup> The pass rate for TBE students at MEPA level 3 is 100%.

*Note for Table 10:*

Chi2 is only significant when testing for the difference in MCAS Math pass rates between LEP students scoring at MEPA levels 4 & 5 in SEI Multilingual and LEP students scoring at MEPA levels 4 & 5 in SEI Language Specific programs ( $p=.045$ , small effect size).

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