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# English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy

## **English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects**

*Lusa Lo, Nicole Lavan, Faye Karp, and Rosann Tung*

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This Report is part of *English Learners in Boston Public Schools in the Aftermath of Policy Change: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes, AY2003-AY2006*, a project of the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education, Boston.

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## Explanation of Terms

Models	
<b>Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)</b>	Model for teaching English Learners which relies on the use of simple English in the classroom to impart academic content, using students' native languages only to assist students in completing tasks or to answer a question.
<b>Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)</b>	Model for teaching English Learners that relies on the student's own language as a bridge to the acquisition of English as a second language.
Study Populations	
<b>English Learners (ELs)</b>	Students who are enrolled in a program for English language development.
<b>Limited English Proficiency Students (LEPs)</b>	Students whose first language is a language other than English and who are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English
<b>Native English Speakers (NES)</b>	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was English
<b>Native Speakers of a Language Other than English (NSOL)</b>	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was a language other than English
Outcomes: Engagement	
<b>Median Attendance Rate</b>	The attendance rate measures the percentage of school days in which students have been present at their schools. Attendance is a key factor in school achievement as well as an important factor used to measure students' engagement with school.
<b>Out-of-School Suspension Rate</b>	The out-of-school suspension rate is the ratio of out-of-school suspensions to the total enrollment during the year.
<b>Grade Retention Rate</b>	The proportion of students required to repeat the grade in which they were enrolled the previous year.
<b>Annual Drop-Out Rate</b>	The annual drop-out rate reports the percentage of students who dropped out of school in a specific year (MDOE, 2007b). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports only on the high school drop-out rate, that is, school desertion taking place after the ninth grade.
<b>Transfer Rate</b>	The proportion of students who transfer out of the district in a given year.
Outcomes: Achievement	
<b>MCAS Pass Rates in Math and ELA</b>	Pass rates are the sum of the proportions of students scoring in the Advanced, Proficient, and Needs Improvement performance categories in MCAS exams on these subjects in a given grade in a given year.

Varied terms are used to refer to students whose verbal, reading, and/or writing skills in English are limited, who cannot do classroom work in English, and who are placed in language acquisition and support programs in American schools. Often the terms "English Learners" ("ELs"), "English Language Learners" ("ELLs"), and "students of limited English proficiency" ("LEPs") are used interchangeably. In this report, we use the term "students of limited English proficiency," or "LEPs," to refer to those students whose first language is not English and who are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English. This is the definition used by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, (MDOE, 2004.) LEPs can be enrolled in General Education programs as well as in special language acquisition and support programs. We use "English Learners," or "ELs," to refer to those students who are enrolled in a program of English language acquisition or support. We do not use the term "English Language Learners" in this report but the term is interchangeable with "English Learners," but not with "LEPs."

## Introduction

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In November 2002, the voters of Massachusetts approved Referendum Question 2. This referendum spelled an end to Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) as the primary program available for children requiring language support in Massachusetts. In its place came a radically different policy called Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). Unlike TBE, which relies on the English learners' own language to facilitate the learning of academic subjects as they master English, SEI programs rely on the use of simple English in the classroom to impart academic content; teachers use students' native language only to assist them in completing tasks or to answer a question. This change represented a dramatic shift in the philosophy and practice of teaching English to populations of English Learners.

Five years after the start of the implementation of SEI in Massachusetts, there is still scant information about the impact of this change on language education. Models of implementation have varied across the state, with those districts that approach the process most flexibly exhibiting the most substantial gains or the least losses (DeJong, Gort, & Cobb, 2005; Rennie Center, 2007). But there has been no analysis of the outcomes for students under SEI at the state level or in the city of Boston, where the largest number of English Learners in Massachusetts live and attend school.

*English Learners in Boston Public Schools in the Aftermath of Policy Change: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes, AY2003-AY2006* begins to address this gap. It presents information on the outcomes for English Learners (ELs) in Boston's public schools in the year before and in the three years following the implementation of Question 2. The Mauricio Gaston Institute conducted this study in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education and support from the Boston Public Schools. Utilizing four years (AY 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006) of BPS student-level data, we analyze changes in the identification of students with limited English proficiency (LEPs) in Boston Public Schools, their enrollment in programs for English Learners or in general education programs, their engagement in schooling, and their academic outcomes.

The implementation in Boston Public Schools of the changes demanded by the passage of the new law had a profound effect on the programs offered to students of limited English proficiency, as well as on the academic outcomes of these students. Our overall study finds that both the identification of LEPs and their enrollment in programs for English Learners declined significantly after the implementation of the program changes demanded by Question 2. Both identification and enrollment had increased somewhat by the end of the observation period, but neither had reached the levels of AY2003, the last year of Transitional Bilingual Education in Boston. The study also finds that drop-out rates have increased among students in EL programs. Under TBE, students in programs for ELs had lower drop-out rates than those in general education programs; that situation has been reversed under SEI. Finally, the study finds that the gap in achievement between students in EL programs and those in general education programs has increased over the four-year period.

Aside from providing an account of the performance of English Learners in Boston between academic years 2003 and 2006, this study has allowed for a unique look at the performance of groups of students defined by language. This specific report is one of five reports focusing on the enrollment and academic outcomes of the largest groups of native speakers of languages other than English: speakers of Spanish, Chinese dialects, Vietnamese,

Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole. For Chinese, Vietnamese, Haitian, and Cape Verdean students and families, this is one of the first looks at the performance of students from these groups in Boston schools. Usually reported as part of aggregates defined by race (e.g., “Asian” or “Black”), information specific to these ethnic groups is seldom reported separately. Our presentation is limited to the data available data which does not allow us to determine the outcomes of all students from these groups but only of those students within these groups who are designated native speakers of their particular language. It also precludes the presentation of the standardized testing (MCAS) outcomes of students from these groups who attend programs for English Learners.

The purpose of focusing on the outcomes of specific language groups is to inform community organizations, parents, and students of the impact of this policy on the education of children from these groups. In fact, the commitment to inform parents and community leaders emerged from their role in making this research possible. The absence of information about the impact of Question 2 confused and angered immigrant parents and communities. Working through local education advocacy organizations, they demanded information and analysis on the status of English Learners. That demand, together with the schools’ own need and willingness to “know,” led to the collaboration that made possible this study of the outcomes of English Learners in the Boston Public Schools.

## Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects

Native speakers of Chinese dialects are the third largest cohort of native speakers of a language other than English in BPS.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of a decline of overall student enrollment in BPS (Table 1), the proportion of native speakers of Chinese dialects continues to increase. In AY2003, native speakers of Chinese dialects comprised 3.3% of all BPS students; this percentage rose slightly to 3.5% by AY2006, the last year of our observation.

Among all the native speakers of Chinese dialects, 36.6% are students who were designated as LEPs as of AY2006. This is a much larger percentage than was found among the overall BPS student population (see Table 2). For the ones who were enrolled in EL programs, a majority (91.9%) received free or reduced lunch, a proxy for poverty status since income at this level is a criterion for acceptance into this school program.<sup>2</sup> As compared to native speakers of Chinese dialects who were enrolled in general education classrooms, there were more males and poor students in EL programs. Additionally, native speakers of Chinese dialects were overrepresented in EL programs at the elementary level but not the middle and high school levels (see Table 3). Middle school native speakers of Chinese dialects were much less likely to be in EL programs than their counterparts in elementary and high schools (7.5% as compared with 65% and 27.4%, respectively).

COLOR KEY	
	All BPS
	NES
	NSOL
	EP
	LEP
	In General Ed
	In EL Programs

TABLE 1. ENROLLMENT OF NATIVE SPEAKERS OF CHINESE DIALECTS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	63,777	61,652	59,608	59,211
<b>Total Enrollment of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	2,094	2,044	2,025	2,061
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects as a Percentage of Total BPS Enrollment</b>	3.3%	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%

Note: Total enrollments in this table do not match the BPS official enrollments because of exclusions. See Appendix 1.

TABLE 2. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS OF CHINESE DIALECTS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2006

Selected Characteristics	All BPS	Students in Programs for ELs	Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects	Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in Programs for ELs	Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in General Education
<b>Enrollment</b>	59,211	8,847	2,061 <sup>1</sup>	668	1,306
<b>LEP Designation</b>	16.4%	100%	36.6%	100%	0%
<b>Gender: % male</b>	51.2%	53.4%	53.7%	56.4%	52.1%
<b>Poverty Status: % receiving free or reduced price lunch</b>	74.9%	84.8%	86.7%	91.9%	83.9%

Note: (1) Includes 87 native speakers who opted out of programs for ELs.



TABLE 3. ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2006

	Elementary	Middle	High
All BPS	43.1%	22.9%	34.0%
Students in Programs for ELs	58.5%	13.6%	27.9%
Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects	36.6%	24.4%	39.0%

### 1. The Identification of Limited English Proficiency Students

The results of this study indicated that there was an overall decline in the number of students identified as LEPs after AY2003 (see Figure 1). The total number of BPS students designated as LEPs moved from a high of 14,737 students (23.1%) in AY2003 to a low of 8,458 students (14.1%) in AY2005, then increased again to 9,989 students (16.4%) in AY2006. This pattern repeats itself sharply among the native speakers of Chinese dialects. In AY2003, 1,217 native speakers of Chinese dialects (58.1%) were identified as LEPs. The number dropped dramatically for the next two years, reaching 652 native speakers of Chinese dialects (32.2%) in AY2005, a decline by almost half in the number of native speakers of Chinese dialects who were designated as LEPs.

FIGURE 1. IDENTIFICATION OF LEP STUDENTS. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BPS AND OF NATIVE SPEAKERS OF CHINESE DIALECTS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

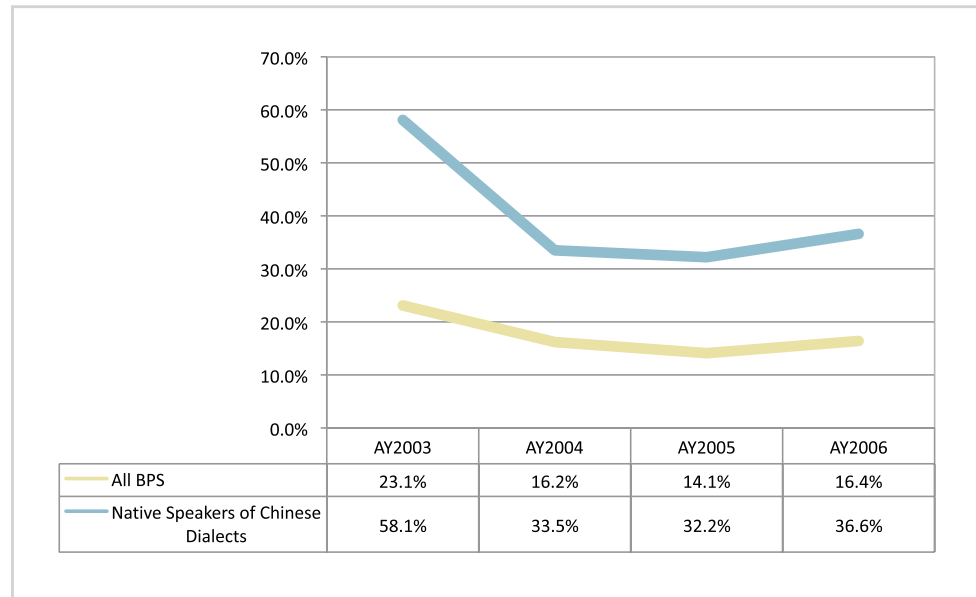


TABLE 4. RATE OF CHANGE IN THE DESIGNATION OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
BPS Students Designated as LEP	-31.8%	-42.6%	-32.2%
Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects Designated as LEP	-43.8%	-46.4%	-38.0%

In order to better understand the decline of LEP students through time, we calculated the rate of change in identification of all LEPs in BPS and among native speakers of Chinese dialects who were designated as LEPs between AY2003 and each successive year (see Table 4). After the first year of implementation of Question 2, the identification of LEPs in the general BPS population decreased by 31.8%. By 2005, BPS showed 42.6% fewer students of LEP status.

There was a small increase in AY2006, but the rate of change over the whole period still represented a decrease of 32.2% from the baseline of AY2003. The decrease in identification experienced by native speakers of Chinese dialects in AY2004 and AY2005 was much steeper than for BPS students overall.

## 2. Program Participation by Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects

This section presents findings on the participation of native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL and in special education (SPED) programs. The data indicate that across time, participation in EL programs decreased for two years but recuperated in the last year of observation. Meanwhile, participation in special education, especially in substantially separate programs, increased.

**2A. Participation in Programs for English Learners.** Throughout the study period, native speakers of Chinese dialects comprised the fourth largest cohort of students enrolled in EL programs. In AY2003, 33.5% of the native speakers of Chinese dialects participated in EL programs (see Figure 2). This number dropped almost 30% the first year after the implementation of SEI and continued to drop in AY2005. Then the number of native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL programs suddenly increased from 24% in AY2005 to 32.4% in AY2006. This pattern is similar to the one observed in the identification of LEPs: a swift decline in the first two years after the implementation of SEI with a slight recovery in the last year of observation. At the end of the observation period, there was a decline of 10.7% in the overall proportion of BPS students in EL programs in comparison to AY2003 and a decline of 4.7% in the proportion of native speakers of Chinese dialects enrolled in these programs over the same period (see Table 5). However, as Figure 4 shows, there was a sharp increase in the percentage of Chinese dialect LEPs enrolling in programs for ELs.

FIGURE 2. ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

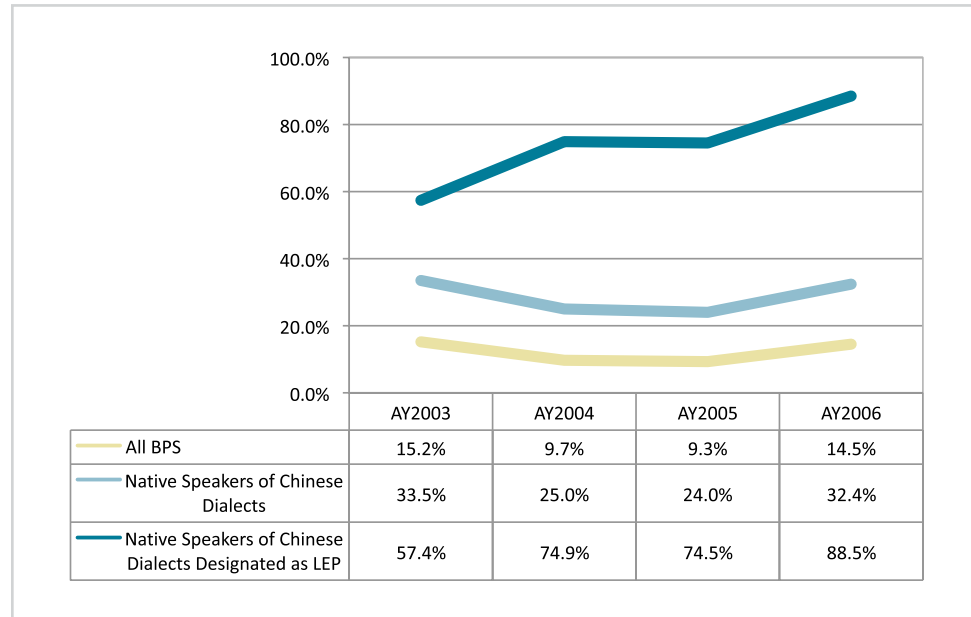


TABLE 5. RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENTS IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>	-39.3%	-43.9%	-10.7%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in Programs for ELs</b>	-27.0%	-30.7%	-4.7%
<b>LEP Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in Programs for ELs</b>	-26.8%	-30.5%	-4.4%

**2B. Participation in Special Education Programs.** For all BPS students, the period between AY2003 and AY2006 was relatively stable in terms of enrollments in special education (SPED) programs. The proportion of students enrolled in mainstream SPED classrooms remained steady, although with a slight drop in AY2004. The proportion of all BPS students placed in substantially separate SPED classrooms increased over the four-year period. However, the percentage of students in EL programs showed larger increases in special education assignment and this group of students was more likely to be placed in substantially separate programs. The proportion of EL students in substantially separate classrooms more than doubled from AY2003 to AY2006.

Among the native speakers of Chinese dialects who were in EL programs, the enrollment in mainstream SPED programs increased after the initiation of policy changes due to Question 2. But the increase was much steeper in substantially separate SPED classes: the percentage of these students more than doubled during this same three-year period. In addition, native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL programs were more likely to be receiving special education services (both mainstream and substantially separate) than Chinese dialect speakers in general education programs.

TABLE 6. STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	10.5%	9.8%	10.4%	10.4%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	7.9%	8.6%	8.7%	8.8%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	6.6%	5.8%	6.2%	9.2%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	4.8%	6.7%	6.8%	10.9%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in General Education Programs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	3.2%	3.5%	3.8%	2.7%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	0.6%	1.4%	1.8%	1.0%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in Programs for ELs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	4.7%	4.5%	4.7%	6.4%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	4.1%	6.6%	6.6%	8.5%

### 3. Engagement of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects in Schooling

Maintaining students’ attachment to schools and schooling is one of the key challenges of educators, parents, and communities. We explore in this section the key indicators of attachment: (a) attendance, (b) out-of-school suspensions, (c) grade retention, and (d) drop-out rate.

**3A. Attendance.** The attendance rate of BPS students remained the same during the observation period, AY2003–2006, about 95%. There was a decline in the rate of attendance among the students enrolled in EL programs, from 96.2% in AY2003 to 95.6% in AY2006 (see Table 7). The attendance rate of native speakers of Chinese dialects in both EL and general education programs remained steady at about 99%.

TABLE 7. MEDIAN ATTENDANCE RATE. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS. AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	95.2%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>	96.2%	96.1%	95.8%	95.6%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>				
<b>In Programs for ELs</b>	98.9%	98.9%	98.9%	98.9%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	98.9%	98.9%	98.3%	98.9%

**3B. Out-of-School Suspensions.** The rate of out-of-school suspensions for all BPS students declined during the period of observation. That was true as well for students in the EL program. However, for native speakers of Chinese dialects, the rate of out-of-school suspensions actually increased (see Table 8): a 100% increase for those who were in EL programs and a 29% increase for those who were in general education programs.

TABLE 8. OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATE. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	7.6%	7.1%	6.7%	6.6%
Students in Programs for ELs	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects				
In Programs for ELs	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%
In General Education Programs	1.4%	0.9%	1.5%	1.8%

**3C. Grade Retention.** In addition to attendance and out-of-school retention, our study also examined the proportion of students being retained in the academic school years. The rate of grade retention for BPS students increased slightly during the observation period (see Table 9). This rate, though relatively stable, was higher than the overall rate of grade retention for BPS students (see Table 9). The overall BPS rate, in turn, was more than three times that of the state as a whole, where grade retention through these years averaged 2.6% (MDOE, 2006). The grade retention rate among native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL programs (8.8%) was higher than for any other sub-group in AY2003, but in AY2006 it declined to 6.7%, below that of all BPS students and of all BPS students in EL programs. On the other hand, the rates for native speakers of Chinese dialects who were in general education programs fluctuated, climbing dramatically from AY2004 (1.9%) to AY2005 (3.3%) and then decreasing in AY2006 (2.0%).

TABLE 9. GRADE RETENTION. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	8.4%	8.6%	8.9%
Students in Programs for ELs	8.6%	10.2%	13.1%
Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects			
In Programs for ELs	8.8%	6.9%	6.7%
In General Education Programs	1.9%	3.3%	2.0%

**3D. Annual Drop-Out Rates.** Some of the most salient findings of this study are the impact of the programmatic changes on the drop-out rate of students in EL programs and on the grades in which this school desertion is taking place. Table 10 presents the high school drop-out rate for several subgroups during the period of observation. The high school drop-out rate, both of BPS students who were in EL programs and of those who were not, increased substantially during the period of observation. The overall drop-out rate increased from 7.7% in AY2003 to 10.9% in AY2006, and the drop-out rate for students in EL programs doubled in the same period, from 6.3% in AY2003 to 12.0% in AY2006.

TABLE 10. ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUT RATE, SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	7.7%	5.3%	8.2%	10.9%
Students in General Education Programs	8.4%	5.2%	8.1%	10.7%
Students in Programs for ELs	6.3%	6.1%	9.1%	12.0%
Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects				
In Programs for ELs	3.8%	7.3%	0.9%	2.8%
In General Education Programs	3.6%	1.4%	2.4%	1.3%

Generally speaking, the drop-out rates for native speakers of Chinese dialects do not appear to be negatively impacted by the Question 2. The high school drop-out rates of native speakers of Chinese dialects in general education programs showed a 64% decrease from AY2003 to AY2006. For native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL programs, their drop-out rates fluctuated throughout the four years: it jumped to 7.3% in AY2004, fell to 0.9% in AY2005, and then increased again to 2.8% in AY2006.<sup>3</sup> Still, these fluctuations amounted to an overall decrease from the baseline rate by AY2006.

#### 4. MCAS Outcomes of Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects

Below we present the MCAS outcomes for the BPS 4th, 8th, and 10th graders, for students in EL programs, and for native speakers of Chinese dialects in general education during the period of observation. It is important to note that we do not present results in AY2005 for students in EL programs because the small number of test-takers in that year makes the results unreliable.

**4A. Fourth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in ELA and Math.** Among all BPS students, fourth grade MCAS pass rates in ELA remained relatively stable through the period, rising slightly in the middle years and declining to close to the baseline value by AY2006. Pass rates among students in general education programs followed a similar trend. By contrast, pass rates in MCAS Math improved for both groups, rising over 10 percentage points among BPS students and students in general education programs. The MCAS pass rates for all native speakers of Chinese dialects and for those in the general education programs were steady in ELA and increased in Math (see Table 11) and were much higher than the overall student population in BPS and BPS students in general education programs.

TABLE 11. 4TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN ELA AND MATH. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>ELA</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	73.3%	77.5%	74.1%	73.2%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	77.5%	79.3%	76.3%	77.8%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	86.1%	88.8%	86.9%	87.5%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	94.6%	94.1%	92.8%	94.6%
<b>Math</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	63.2%	70.1%	68.5%	73.7%
<b>Students in General Education</b>	65.0%	71.3%	70.0%	76.6%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	89.8%	94.8%	93.4%	93.3%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	93.7%	96.1%	96.0%	94.6%

**4B. Eighth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in Math.** MCAS Math pass rates improved slightly for BPS 8th graders and BPS students in general education programs (see Table 12). Similar to the 4th grade native speakers of Chinese dialects, their 8th grade peers’ MCAS Math pass rates were much higher than the overall student population in BPS and BPS students in general education programs. In AY2003, the 8th grade MCAS Math pass rates for native speakers of Chinese dialects were 91.3%, while the pass rate for the general student population in BPS was only 48.1%. Although the Math pass rate for 8th grade native speakers of Chinese dialects decreased after AY2004, it was still higher than for other students in BPS, whether or not in EL programs.

TABLE 12. 8TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN MATH. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	48.1%	54.0%	51.6%	53.4%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	50.9%	55.1%	53.2%	55.8%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	91.3%	92.0%	91.2%	88.8%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	94.5%	93.3%	91.7%	93.4%

**4C. Tenth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in ELA and Math.** MCAS ELA pass rates improved significantly among BPS students overall, rising from 66.8% in AY2003 to 77.4% in AY2006. Similarly, the pass rates improved among BPS students in general education programs, with a pass rate of 85.2% in AY2006. In comparison to the ELA scores, improvements in Math were much more subdued for BPS students overall and for those in general education programs. Tenth grade native speakers of Chinese dialects, however, continued to perform way above the overall BPS students (and BPS students in general education programs) throughout the four years. Their ELA pass rates increased while Math remained about the same, except for dips in both pass rates in AY2004.

TABLE 13. 10TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN ELA AND MATH, SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>ELA</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	66.8%	65.9%	67.8%	77.4%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	72.7%	72.3%	73.3%	85.2%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	88.2%	87.2%	91.8%	94.3%
<b>    In General Education Programs</b>	92.0%	91.7%	94.8%	98.7%
<b>Math</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	65.5%	68.7%	61.0%	67.8%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	63.5%	69.5%	62.6%	71.7%
<b>Native Speakers of Chinese Dialects</b>	97.1%	92.1%	96.5%	97.0%
<b>    In General Education Programs</b>	95.0%	92.7%	96.4%	97.5%

## 5. Summary

In the years of the transition from Transitional Bilingual Education to Sheltered English Immersion in Boston, the numbers of native speakers of Chinese dialects participating in programs for ELs decreased. In contrast, their numbers increased in SPED programs, particularly among those students in EL programs. In terms of the engagement and achievement indicators, native speakers of Chinese languages in general education programs experienced either stability or improvements. Below we summarize the main findings:

### In terms of enrollments:

- In AY2004, as BPS began the implementation of the program changes demanded by Question 2, there was a sharp decline in the number of native speakers of Chinese dialects who were identified as LEPS.
- There was also a decline in the number of native speakers of Chinese dialects enrolled in EL programs.
- By AY2006, the third year after the initiation of the policy change, there were increases in both identification and placement, but in neither case did these reach the level found in AY2003.
- During the period between AY2003 and AY2006, there was a rise in enrollment in SPED across all groups but particularly among students in programs for English Learners. SPED placement rates also increased among native speakers of Chinese dialects. Native speakers of Chinese dialects in EL programs were more likely to be receiving special education services (in both mainstream and substantially separate programs) than their counterparts in general education programs.



**In terms of engagement in schooling:**

- Native speakers of Chinese dialects in general education programs
  - o experienced constant attendance rates, increases in suspensions, and a fluctuating grade retention rate.
  - o Unique among the native language groups, the high school drop-out rate decreased among native speakers of Chinese dialects in general education.
- Native speakers of Chinese dialects in programs for English learners
  - o experienced constant attendance rates, an increase in suspensions, and a decrease in grade retention.
  - o Experienced an overall decrease in the drop-out rate from AY2003 to AY2006, but with quite a large increase the first year of the Question 2 implementation.

Despite any changes in the engagement indicators observed over the four-year period, in nearly all years native speakers of Chinese of dialects in both general education and EL programs had higher attendance rates, lower grade retention rates, lower suspension rates, and lower drop-out rates than their counterparts among the other four native language groups.

**In terms of academic achievement:**

- Among 4th grade test-takers
  - o The MCAS pass rates for native speakers of Chinese dialects and for those in the general education programs stayed fairly constant in ELA.
  - o MCAS pass rates among both groups showed an overall increase in Math.
- Among 8th grade test-takers
  - o MCAS pass rates in Math declined for native speakers of Chinese dialects and for those in general education programs.
- Among 10th grade test-takers
  - o Among native speakers of Chinese dialects and among those in general education programs, MCAS pass rates in ELA and Math increased above baseline levels by AY2006, despite a sharp decline in AY2004.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Due to limitations of the data, we are not able to report on how many, if any, Chinese American students are enrolled in BPS and who are coded as native English speakers rather than native speakers of Chinese dialects. Chinese students and students of Chinese background are usually aggregated into a general “Asian” racial category which includes other Asian ethnic groups and thus their exact numbers are difficult to determine.
- <sup>2</sup> The dataset provided “receiving free or reduced lunch” rather than “eligible for free or reduced lunch.” The former underestimates the level of poverty in the group since many poor students who are eligible by status may not actually receive the service.
- <sup>3</sup> Though the change in dropout rate from AY2003 to AY2004 constitutes a sudden 200% increase, the 7.3% in AY2004 only represents eight students who dropped out.

## Appendix: Data and Methods

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The information presented in the language group reports comes from a four-year, student-level administrative dataset provided by the Boston Public Schools (BPS). It includes demographic and enrollment information from the Student Information Management System (SIMS) on each BPS student enrolled in AYS 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. Using a unique identifier for each student, results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests have been merged with the SIMS, allowing for the analysis of outcomes. Although the dataset includes students' outcomes on Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), these data were not merged because it was not present in a consistent enough form across years to provide appropriate analyses.

For the analysis, students were grouped in two categories: (a) students enrolled in programs for ELs and (b) students in general education. The analysis uses June data and excludes students who were enrolled in the district for only one day and who attended zero days; these students are included in the dropout analysis. Students attending schools serving special populations – the Carter Center, Community Academy, Expulsion Alternative Program, Horace Mann, McKinley Schools, Middle School Academy, and Young Adult Center – were also excluded. For the analysis presented in the language group reports, the students who “opted out” of programs for ELs are not included in general education programs but are part of the total analysis of BPS students. In most tables for the language group reports, we compare the outcomes of EL students from these groups with all students in general education, all students in EL programs, and native speakers of the specific language in general education. (Students who are native speakers of a language other than English but who are in general programs include former students of programs for ELs as well as students who may be native speakers of a language other than English but who were never enrolled in a program for ELs.) In the case of MCAS outcomes, the comparison with ELs from all language groups except Spanish-speakers is not possible because the number of test-takers reported is too small. Throughout, we examine the differences between these groups along enrollment, engagement, and academic outcome variables, including attendance rate, out-of-school suspension rate, grade retention rate, annual drop-out rate, and MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) and Math pass rates. The definitions of the outcome indicators examined are as follows:

- **Attendance rate:** Median percentage of days that students in each program type attended school in a given year.
- **Out-of-School suspension rate:** the ratio of suspensions to the total enrollment during the school year. The suspension rate as discussed here counts each suspension as a discrete event, counting separately each suspension even in cases when they happen to the same student.
- **Grade retention rate:** The proportion of students in a given school year who were not promoted to the next grade.
- **Annual drop-out rate:** The proportion of students in a given school year who dropped out.
- **MCAS ELA and Math pass rates:** The sum of the proportions of students scoring in the Advanced, Proficient, and Needs Improvement performance categories on the English Language Arts and the Math MCAS exams in a given grade in a given year.

Basic statistical analyses were conducted to examine the significance of the differences we observed between groups and within the same group over time.

In addition to analyzing the dataset received from BPS, researchers collected documentary data pertinent to the process of implementing the changes required by the passage of Question 2. They also interviewed personnel of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (one) and the Boston Public Schools (nine) to assess the reasons for the changes observed in the quantitative data. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2008 and focused on the identification and assessment of LEPs, the enrollment in programs for ELs, the guidance received by the district and the schools regarding the implementation of SEI, and teacher training. Interviews were handled in a manner appropriate to this type of data.

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