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Halting the Race to the Bottom:

Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts

A Report of the English Language Learners Sub-Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Committee on the Proficiency Gap

December, 2009

The Sub-Committee on English Language Learners of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Committee on the Proficiency Gap was formed in September 2009 to provide a short set of recommendations that would serve as "levers" for the improvement of the education of English language learners in Massachusetts. These recommendations would be considered for implementation in the state's new initiatives focused on under-performing schools in ten districts, designated as priority districts, and which include Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. The committee included 15 educators from across the state, a combination of academics, district superintendents, and directors of ELL services, a school principal, and staff of non-profits working in the area of education. The group met six times in the three months of its tenure. It received organizational and data support from the MDESE. During its inquiry, it also received data support from the Worcester and Framingham Public Schools and received administrative and research assistance from the Gastón Institute at UMass Boston with support from The Barr Foundation.

Members of the Committee:

Miren Uriarte, Associate Professor of Human Services, University of Massachusetts Boston and Senior Research Associate, Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, Chair
Almudena Abeyta, Academic Assistant Superintendent for Middle and K-8 Schools, Boston Public Schools
María Estela Brisk, Chair of Teacher Education, Special Education, and Curriculum & Instruction, Lynch School of Education, Boston College
Eileen de los Reyes, Assistant Superintendent for English Language Programs, Boston Public Schools
Jane Lopez, Attorney, Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy, Inc. (META, Inc.)
Susan McGilvray-Rivet, Director of Bilingual, ESL and Sheltered English Programs, Framingham Public Schools
Kara Mitchell, Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
Margarita Muñiz, Principal, Rafael Hernandez School, Boston Public Schools
Sergio Páez Ed.D., ELL Director, Worcester Public Schools
Fernando Reimers, Ford Foundation Professor of International Education, Director, International Education Policy Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education
William Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Juvenile Justice, Wheelock College
State Representative Jeffrey Sánchez, 15th Suffolk District
Maria de Lourdes B. Serpa, School of Education, Lesley University and Co-Chair of MDESE's English Language Learners/Bilingual Education Advisory Council
Rosann Tung, Director of Research, Center for Collaborative Education, Boston
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Chair of Elementary Education Department and faculty, Wheelock College
Faye Karp, Research Associate, Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, Staff to the ELL Sub-Committee

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I. INTRODUCTION

Massachusetts students of limited English proficiency do better academically than students of limited English proficiency¹ in many other states. Testing by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that in 2007, among LEP students across the country, Massachusetts students of limited English proficiency ranked third in 4th grade reading, fourth in 4th grade math, 9th in 8th grade reading, and 15th in 8th grade math (NCES, 2007). However, relative to other students in their own state, students of limited English proficiency in Massachusetts face a disadvantage greater than that faced by their peers in most states. Using the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) as the measure, gaps in pass rates between LEP and EP students in 2009 hovered around 30 percentage points in English Language Arts, when considering scores for 4th, 8th, and 10th graders. In Math, pass rate gaps were widest between LEP and EP 8th graders, among whom gaps reached 47 percentage points (Table 1).

These large gaps in the testing outcomes of EP and LEP students translate into similar gaps in high school graduation rates, making Massachusetts one of the states in the nation where the gap in opportunity between LEP and EP students is especially large. While 81% of all students graduate from high school in the state, only 53% of ELLs do. Only Delaware, Georgia, New York, Texas, and Wyoming have similar gaps in opportunity.² This suggests that, while the overall higher levels of education in the state benefit LEPs in Massachusetts relative to LEPs who attend schools in states where the quality of education is lower, the lack of specific policies to support the academic engagement and success of LEP students in the Commonwealth causes significantly greater inequality in this State.

A number of reasons underscore the urgency of addressing this, our most serious education gap in Massachusetts. First, the knowledge-intensive nature of our economy requires that we maximize the potential that exists in the mind of every student. The next generation of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, businesspeople, teachers, artists, and civic leaders needs to come from our students today, whether or not they grew up speaking English at home. Second, English learners constitute the only group of public school students whose numbers are growing in the state; as such, they will have an increasing impact on the state's overall outcomes. Native speakers of languages other than English will constitute an increasing sector of the state's future workforce, a workforce that needs to remain educationally competitive for the state to remain a leader in the country. Finally, the current situation is devastating to the individual students and the communities from which they come: failure to graduate from high school seriously undermines the job prospects of half of all ELLs, thus contributing to their growing social and economic marginalization and to growing social inequality in the state.

¹ The terms "students of limited English proficiency" and "English language learners" and their abbreviations ("LEPs" and "ELLs") are used interchangeably in this report. Those students sometimes referred as non-LEPs are referred to here as English-proficient students ("EPs").

² Zeher (2009).

Table 1. LEP–EP MCAS Pass and Proficiency Rate Gaps.¹ MA, 2009

Pass Rate Gaps Percentage Points		Proficiency Rate Gaps Percentage Points
ELA		
4	27.7	39.2
8	34.2	57.8
10	29.3	63.4
Math		
4	23.8	31.4
8	47.1	38.9
10	30.7	44.9
Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 9/30/09)		
Note (1): 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; proficiency rates are the proportions of students scoring in the Advanced and Proficient performance categories.		

In 2008, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to institute “proficiency” (as measured by the MCAS), rather than “passing,” as the standard for achievement and as the requirement for graduation from high school.³ This reflected the state’s commitment to continue to improve the competitiveness of Massachusetts students in relationship to others across the nation and across the world, but it resulted in a larger number of students of all groups failing to reach the new benchmark as well as in even wider gaps between sub-groups of students.⁴ Among the subgroups, students of limited English proficiency showed the worst outcomes of all groups in the state⁵; there was also a substantial widening of the gap between LEPs and EPs as the benchmark moved from “Pass” to “Proficient” (Table 1). The Proficiency Gap Committee, for which this report has been prepared, chose the improvement of the outcomes of LEP students as a target for a strategy to narrow the gap between sub-groups of students in Massachusetts.

The focus on Massachusetts’ students of limited English proficiency was overdue. Aside from the depressed outcomes described above, English language learners had been the subjects of a recent policy change that transformed their education in Massachusetts. Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002, legislated in response to a referendum (popularly known as “Question 2”) in November of that year, replaced a wide-ranging set of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs with Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs beginning in September 2003. Massachusetts, which in 1971 had been the first state in the nation to legislatively mandate transitional bilingual instruction for English language learners, now became the third after California and Arizona to institute policies restricting the use of languages other than English in instruction. TBE presumes that English language learners can effectively acquire English proficiency when taught through meaningful content and that knowledge in content areas can be attained when the student’s own language is used to facilitate the learning of academic subjects while

³ To graduate, a high school student must attain “proficiency” in MCAS Math and ELA or attain “passing” and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) in order to earn a Massachusetts Competency Determination (CD). See MDESE (2009a).

⁴ MBESE (2009, Slides 5 and 6).

⁵ LEPs showed the lowest proficiency rate in ELA (16%) and the second lowest (21%, after special education students) in Math. MBESE (2009, Slides 5 and 6).

they master English. In contrast, immersion programs such as SEI rely on the intensive use of ESL to learn English and the use of simple English in the classroom to impart academic content, using students' native languages only to assist them in completing tasks or to answer a question. The change in policy had broad implications for instruction for English language learners. It affected the way instruction took place in the classroom, constraining the use of the students' native language in instruction and in classroom materials. It also affected the organization of programs and the skills required of teachers.

Evaluations in California and Arizona, the other two states that have implemented similar policies, have revealed that the pace of English learning under SEI remained about the same as under TBE and that test outcomes remained relatively low and unchanged (Crawford, 2004; Parrish et al., 2006; Wright & Pu, 2005). By 2009, Massachusetts had not yet implemented a full assessment of the effect of the policy changes on the education and the outcomes of English language learners, but several studies pointed to the following issues:

- **Broad variation in the implementation of the changes across the state's districts** (DeJong, Gort, & Cobb, 2005; Rennie Center, 2007). Districts used different ways and tests to identify LEPs. The range of programs available for English Learners, the way SEI was defined and implemented, the availability of teachers trained in ESL or in imparting sheltered content, and the process and benchmarks for the reclassification of students (when students are determined to no longer be LEPs) also differed from district to district.
- **An increase in the proportion of LEPs referred to special education.** Studies of English language learners in Boston (Tung et al., 2009) and in the state as a whole documented these changes. In the latter, the proportion of LEPs enrolled in SPED programs had risen from 12.7% in 2004, the first year of the implementation of Question 2 to 16% in 2009 (Uriarte & Karp, 2009).
- **An increase in the annual high school drop-out rate of students of limited English proficiency.** The annual high school drop-out rate for students of limited English proficiency has steadily increased, rising from 3.1% in 2003, the year before the implementation of Question 2, to 10.7% in 2007, before showing a slight decline to 8.8% in 2008 (Uriarte & Karp, 2009). In Boston, the 2007 study of off-track youth by the Parthenon Group showed that 13% of dropouts were English language learners who had entered the Boston Public Schools at the high school level. Tung et al. (2009) and Uriarte et al. (2009), also studying Boston, showed that the annual drop-out rate of Boston students in programs for English language learners increased substantially between 2003 and 2006, trebling among some of the district's language groups.
- **Gaps in the availability of trained ESL teachers and of teachers trained in the four categories of skills that teachers need to have in order to teach sheltered content.** In 2007, the Rennie Center (2007, p. 3) reported that only 35% of the estimated number of teachers requiring content training had received it and that only 64.2% of the state's ESL training needs had been met.
- **Interventions by the U.S. Department of Justice to protect the educational opportunities of students of limited English proficiency.** The Department of Justice had obtained settlement agreements with two districts, Worcester and Somerville (USDOJ, 2008, 2009). In both cases the agreements were broad, encompassing the identification of LEPs, the placement in appropriate programs, the training of teachers, the development of programs and curriculum, and the appropriate

monitoring of progress. The mis-identification and the denial of services to about one third of the students of limited English proficiency in Boston have also prompted a Justice Department intervention (BPS,2009; Vaznis, 2009).

The English Language Learners Sub-Committee

The English Language Learners Sub-Committee of the Proficiency Gap Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (ELL Sub-Committee) began its work in September of 2009. The committee included 15 educators from across the state: a combination of academics, district superintendents and directors of ELL services, a school principal, and staff members of non-profits working in the area of education. The group met six times in the three months of its tenure. It received organizational and data support from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE). During its inquiry, it also received data support from the Worcester and Framingham Public Schools and received administrative and research assistance from the Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, with support from The Barr Foundation.

The charge to the Sub-Committee was to provide a short set of recommendations to the Proficiency Gap Committee and the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that would serve as “levers” for improving the education of English language learners in Massachusetts. These recommendations would be considered for implementation in the state’s new initiatives focused on under-performing schools. Early on, at the suggestion of MDESE, the subcommittee focused on the ten high-priority districts where the Department would be placing significant attention over the next period. These districts encompass many of the state’s underperforming schools and enroll 62% of all students of limited English proficiency in the state. They are Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. We refer to these districts as “priority districts” in this report. The sub-committee examined enrollment patterns and student outcomes using available statewide and district information from MDESE. The group also relied on the recent studies of Boston (Tung et al., 2009; Uriarte et al., 2009) and conducted mini case studies of Worcester and Framingham in order to address some of the gaps in data available for the state and the districts.

This Report. This report presents first information on enrollment and on those elements required for the educational success of English language learners in Massachusetts (and the U.S.): Appropriate Assessment and Placement, Learning English, Learning Content, and Graduating and Going on to College. Following the findings, the report highlights urgent interventions necessary for the state to move forward in five areas:

- Student-Centered Program Development
- Professional Development of Teachers
- District Level Data-Driven Planning, Evaluation, and Transparency
- Identification, Assessment, and Placement
- Professional Development of Educational Leaders at the School, District, and State levels

II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) defines students of limited English proficiency as students “whose first language is a language other than English and who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English” (MDESE, 2009i, p. 1). Table 2, which uses this definition, shows that in 2009, of the 958,910 students in Massachusetts public schools, 147,672 (or 15.4%) were native speakers of a language other than English (NSOL). Of these, 90,670 (or 61.4%) are proficient in English although they speak it as a second language, while 57,002 (or 38.6% of all NSOLs) are students of limited English proficiency (LEPs). LEPs thus account for 5.9% of the total public school enrollment of the state (Table 2). The ten most prevalent languages among LEPs appear in Table 3. Spanish speakers account for the lion’s share of the LEP enrollment at 54.2%. Only 7.6% of LEPs speak the second most prevalent language, Portuguese.

Except for the first year of implementing the changes mandated by Question 2, LEP enrollments have increased steadily in Massachusetts during the last decade; they have grown 27.4% since 2001 (Figure

Table 2. Public School Population Defined by Language Proficiency. MA, 2009

Total	Total MA Enrollment 958,910		
Native Language	NES 811,238	NSOL 147,672	
Language Proficiency	EP 811,238	EP 90,670	LEP 57,002
Definitions: NES: Native English Speakers; NSOL: Native Speakers of Other Languages (also referred to as First Language is not English or FLIN); EP: Proficient in English; and LEP: of Limited English Proficiency. Source: MDESE (2009d and requested data provided on 11/12/09)			

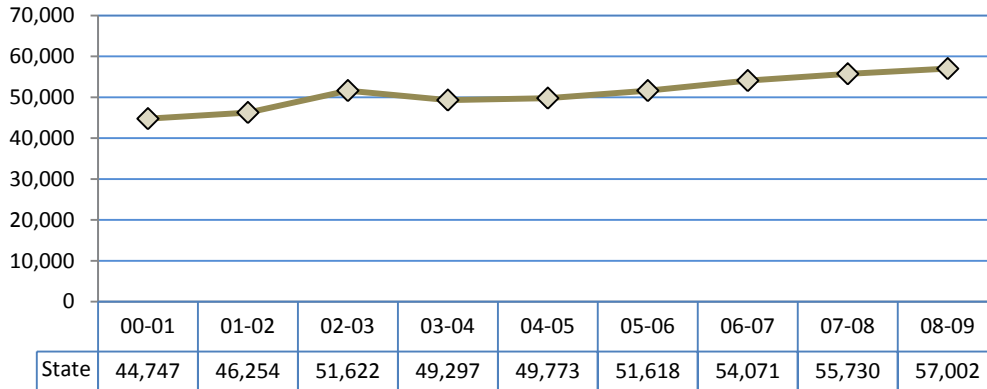
Table 3. Most Prevalent First Languages of Students of Limited English Proficiency. MA, 2009

First Language	% among LEPs
Total LEP Enrollment	57,002
Spanish	54.2%
Portuguese	7.6%
Chinese	5.2%
Khmer	4.2%
Haitian Creole	4.1%
Cape Verdean Creole	3.9%
Vietnamese	3.9%
Chinese	3.4%
Arabic	1.7%
Russian	1.5%

Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 11/12/09). Based on Oct 2009 data.

1). The 10 priority districts reviewed for this report include 7 of the 10 districts with the highest densities of LEP students, enrolling 62% of all LEP students in the state. The highest enrollments are found in Boston (10,579), Worcester (5,621), and Lowell (4,227) but the districts with the highest proportions of LEPs in their enrollments are Lowell (31.5%), Worcester (24.3%), and Holyoke (24.2%) (Table 4).

Figure 1. LEP Enrollments in MA, 2001–2009



Source: MDESE (2009j)

Table 4. LEP Enrollment. State and Priority Districts, 2009

	LEP Enrollment	Proportion of District's Enrollments
Boston	10,579	18.9%
Brockton	2,536	16.6%
Fall River	705	7.1%
Holyoke	1,460	24.2%
Lawrence	2,791	22.8%
Lowell	4,227	31.5%
Lynn	3,419	25.8%
New Bedford	550	4.4%
Springfield	3,215	12.7%
Worcester	5,621	24.3%
State	57,002	5.9%

Source: MDESE (2009j)

III. KEY ISSUES

For English language learners to have a successful education experience they must undergo three educational transitions. They must learn English, learn content, and graduate from high school (and go on to college). Each of these transitions is supported by a range of factors, some within the control of schools, others resulting from support provided by families and communities. For example, the opportunity to learn English depends in large part on the effectiveness of the English instruction programs available in the school, but is also influenced by the residential segregation of students, which can limit the opportunity to practice English during out-of-school time. Here we focus on those elements that are within the reach of educators to change, without losing sight of the critical importance of the others. In exploring each of these areas, the report uses publicly available data as well as data specifically requested from MDESE for this report. It includes background data from a case study of one of the districts with a high percentage of ELL students. The findings for each of these elements provide the backdrop for the recommendations.

But, before we examine these three transitions, we focus on identification, assessment, and placement of LEPs, for two reasons: first because proper assessment and placement is a key factor in enabling the educational transitions to take place positively, and, second, because the identification and appropriate placement of students has been a focus of concern both in past research (Tung et al., 2009; Uriarte et al., 2009) and in the multiple interventions by the U.S. Department of Justice in Massachusetts districts.

A. ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

Findings:

1. As seen in Figure 1, LEP enrollments in Massachusetts declined in the first year of the implementation of the changes demanded by Question 2 but recovered as districts adapted to the demands of the new policies. This pattern repeats in most of the priority districts except Boston and Lawrence, where enrollments have yet to recover from the sharp declines experienced after 2003. In Boston, the district with the highest number of LEPs in the state, this pattern represented:

- ❖ the re-classification of LEPs at the start of Question 2 implementation (about one half of all LEPs in Boston were re-classified and placed in general education classrooms in the Fall of 2003);
- ❖ incomplete language proficiency assessments (until 2009, Boston assessed native speakers of other languages for “speaking” and “listening” and not the full battery of testing required, which includes also academic “reading” and “writing”); and
- ❖ the action of parents (Tung et al., 2009). Parents, confused about their rights and the quality of the programs, also under-reported that their children were native speakers of other languages.

All these factors tended to depress the number of students identified as LEPs.

2. In the state, the vast majority of LEPs (86.1%) are enrolled in programs for English language learners while the remaining 13.9% are in general education classrooms (Table 5). LEPs in general education classrooms must still receive language support services and be monitored for progress.

- ❖ Among the priority districts, the proportion of LEPs in general education varies from a high of 42.1% in Boston to 0% in Holyoke and New Bedford. A substantial proportion of LEPs are enrolled in general education in Brockton and Fall River (Table 5).
- ❖ In Boston, the enrollment of LEPs in general education programs represented a denial of service caused by (1) misinformation to parents about program availability and their rights to waive SEI placements and still receive services (Tung et al., 2009) and (2) reluctance of the district and individual schools to offer enough SEI seats to fill the demand posed by the rising number of LEPs (BPS, 2009). It is this situation that led to the inquiries by the Department of Justice reported in the *Boston Globe* in August 2009 (Vaznis, 2009).

Table 5. Program Enrollment of Students of Limited English Proficiency. MA, 2009

	Total LEP Enrollment	In Programs for ELLs	In General Education
State	57,002	86.1%	13.9%
Boston	10,579	57.9%	42.1%
Brockton	2,536	73.7%	26.3%
Fall River	705	78.0%	22.0%
Holyoke	1,460	100.0%	0.0%
Lawrence	2,791	85.0%	15.0%
Lowell	4,227	98.1%	1.9%
Lynn	3,419	87.1%	12.9%
New Bedford	550	100.0%	0.0%
Springfield	3,215	90.9%	9.1%
Worcester	5,21	95.7%	4.3%

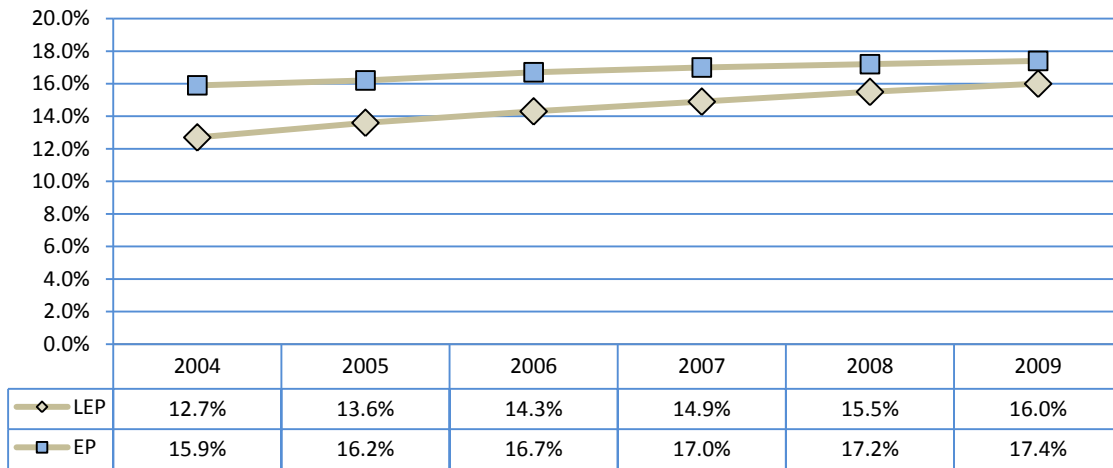
Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 11/4/09)

3. There has been an increase in the proportion of LEP students enrolled in SPED programs across the state, rising from 12.7% in 2004 to 15.9% in 2009 (Figure 2). The SPED rate among EPs has also increased in this period, but the increase among LEPs was twice that of EPs.

- ❖ This rise in the proportion of LEPs enrolled in SPED programs raises concerns because these are not programs specifically designed to support language development. Thus, they may further constrain the opportunities of LEP students to engage with challenging academic content.
- ❖ In two priority districts – Springfield and Holyoke – the proportion of LEPs in SPED programs far surpasses that of the state as well as the proportion of EPs enrolled in SPED in those districts. In Holyoke 39.2% of LEPs are enrolled in a SPED program; in Springfield it is 29.6% (Table 6). The state rate in 2009 was 16%.

- ❖ The wide variation across districts in the proportion of LEPs who are enrolled in SPED programs suggests that such assignment does not result from the application of widely shared norms but of idiosyncratic judgments made by district staff with varying levels of professional competence to make the determination regarding the need for such placement.
 - Studies of English language learners in Boston show that the practice of over-placement of students of limited English proficiency in SPED was shown to be related, in part, to deficiencies in the assessment system (Tung et al., 2009). It is likely that similar limitations in the assessment system exist in other districts.

Figure 2. Proportion of LEP and EP Students Assigned to SPED Programs. MA, 2004–2009



Source: Calculations based on MDESE (2009e)

Table 6. Proportion of Students of Limited English Proficiency Assigned to SPED Programs. MA and Selected Districts, 2009

District	Proportion in SPED Programs, 2009	
	LEP	EP
State	16.0%	17.4%
Boston	19.1%	21.0%
Brockton	10.3%	15.1%
Fall River	14.3%	17.9%
Holyoke	39.2%	21.1%
Lawrence	15.2%	20.0%
Lowell	15.0%	16.5%
Lynn	11.6%	18.6%
New Bedford	11.6%	19.5%
Springfield	29.6%	23.4%
Worcester	17.5%	21.7%

Source: Calculations based on MDESE (2009e)

Table 7. Distribution of LEPs and EPs in SPED Programs by Disability. MA, 2007–2009

	2007		2008		2009	
	EP	LEP	EP	LEP	EP	LEP
Total LEPs in SPED Programs	145,960	7,940	149,963	8,054	149,696	9,056
Autism	4.0%	1.4%	4.7%	1.6%	5.2%	1.8%
Communication	17.4%	23.4%	17.7%	22.9%	18.4%	23.2%
Developmental Delay	10.1%	11.6%	10.4%	12.2%	10.6%	11.5%
Emotional	6.7%	4.4%	6.7%	4.3%	6.8%	4.5%
Health	6.1%	2.8%	6.8%	3.4%	7.3%	3.9%
Intellectual	6.5%	16.4%	6.1%	15.6%	5.8%	15.7%
Multiple Disabilities	2.4%	2.0%	2.3%	1.8%	2.2%	1.5%
Neurological	3.5%	1.0%	3.8%	1.0%	4.0%	1.1%
Physical	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%
Sensory/Deaf-Blindness	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Sensory/Hearing	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%
Sensory/Vision	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Specific Learning Disabilities	41.3%	35.1%	39.6%	35.5%	37.7%	35.1%

Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 11/19/09)

- ❖ The wide variation across districts in the proportion of LEPs who are enrolled in SPED programs suggests that such assignment does not result from the application of widely shared norms but of idiosyncratic judgments made by district staff with varying levels of professional competence to make the determination regarding the need for such placement.
 - Studies of English language learners in Boston show that the practice of over-placement of students of limited English proficiency in SPED was shown to be related, in part, to deficiencies in the assessment system (Tung et al., 2009). It is likely that similar limitations in the assessment system exist in other districts.
4. A common problem in the assessment of disabilities among students of limited English proficiency is the use of tests and other assessment procedures designed for English speakers by monolingual English-speaking staff through a translator⁶ or directly in English. Informal reports suggest that in some districts, assessments are conducted by monolingual English-speaking staff, or at best are conducted through translators, or by professionals who are not yet qualified to assess and evaluate English language learners for special education needs.
- ❖ The assessments of some disabilities rely more heavily than others in direct communication between the child and the examiner. Two high-incidence disabilities among LEPs – communications and intellectual disabilities – are among those which are most sensitive to the communication between the student and the examiner.

⁶ Using translators in the process of administering these tests is not optimal or recommended, although using highly trained translators with experience in the specific testing situation may be a resort when bilingual examiners or trained translators are not available. The use of an untrained translator in a testing situation should never be an option.

- In 2009, 23.2% of LEPs in SPED programs across the state have been diagnosed with a “communications” disability compared to 18.4% for EP population (Table 7). Even higher proportions of LEPs were placed in SPED in 2009 for communications disabilities in Boston (26.3%) and in Lowell (34.0%).⁷
- In the last three years 15.7% of LEPs have been diagnosed with intellectual disabilities compared to 5.86% among EPs (Table 7). The difference in the prevalence of this disability between the two groups is the largest of all disabilities reported here. In Holyoke, Springfield, and New Bedford, the prevalence of this disability among LEPs is 29.9%, 29.2%, and 26.6% respectively.

5. Aside from the issue of over-classification described above, under-classifying LEPs needing SPED programs and under-serving them once in SPED programs are also concerns.

- ❖ under-classification can result either from lack of identification (because of faulty assessment or because disabilities go unnoticed) or from the dearth of LEP services within SPED (leading parents and teachers to opt for keeping the student in an ELL classroom).
- ❖ under-serving LEPs in SPED can reflect a lack of appropriate language development services to address issues related to language for those LEPs who have been correctly identified as needing SPED services and have been placed in SPED programs. This problem, popularly referred to as “SPED trumps LEP,” arises from the erroneous notion that students who have special educational needs *and* are LEPs should not receive *both* SPED and LEP services.

In summary...

An overview of available information about the identification, assessment, and placement of students of limited English proficiency shows that:

- ✓ *The process of assessment of students of limited English proficiency – be it for placement in programs for English language learners or in SPED programs – needs urgent reform and close monitoring. High rates of referral to SPED programs may be due to: (a) lack of academic progress in an English-only environment (SEI or general education); (b) lack of adequately prepared assessors; (c) assessments carried out only in English without validity for this population (IDEA, 2004).*
- ✓ *In three of the priority districts – Boston, Brockton, and Fall River – a large proportion of students of limited English proficiency are enrolled in general education programs. This can be due to the normal transitioning of LEPs into general education. But, as was the case in Boston, this pattern can reflect denial of services to English language learners if these students should rightly be in an ELL program or if they are not receiving supportive services and being monitored for progress while in a general education program.*

⁷ District-level disability data for LEPs was provided by MDESE on 11/18/09

B. LEARNING ENGLISH

“English for the children” was the slogan that won the day in the referendum of 2002, underscoring the importance that Massachusetts voters gave to the attainment of English proficiency by English language learners. None would dispute the critical importance of English proficiency as a vehicle for better educational and, ultimately, better economic outcomes for immigrants to the U.S. It is certainly a critical factor in academic achievement for native speakers of languages other than English residing in the U.S. But it is also undisputable that the preference for immersion programs, which is the current policy in Massachusetts, places tremendous pressure on school systems to teach English quickly and effectively. Unlike transitional or maintenance bilingual programs, which provide academic content in the student’s own language while the student learns English, in immersion programs, content is always delivered primarily in English. Therefore the attainment of English proficiency is the primary vehicle for mastering all other content taught in school, and, ultimately, in the case of Massachusetts, graduating from high school.

Massachusetts tests the proficiency in English of all LEP students using the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA). Up to 2008, the state measured the progress of students through four levels of performance – from beginner to early intermediate, intermediate and transitioning. Beginning in 2009, these were changed to five levels:

- At MEPA Level 1, a student has not yet developed simple written and spoken communication in English
- At MEPA Level 2, a student has developed simple written and spoken communication in English but errors often interfere with basic comprehension and communication although overall meaning may be retained.
- At MEPA Level 3, a student can communicate in English and use the language in a school context but where errors still impede communication and comprehension even though overall meaning is usually retained.
- At MEPA Level 4, a student is nearly fluent in English and uses the language in the school context with few errors.
- At MEPA Level 5, a student has effective communication in English with few errors. (MDESE, 2009g, pp. 20–24)⁸

Students of limited English proficiency also undergo MCAS testing in Reading (Grade 3), English Language Arts (Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10), Math (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10), and Science (Grades 5, 8, and 10) (MDESE, 2009i). English learners who have been in U.S. schools for less than one year are exempt from the ELA test, and Spanish-speaking ELs who have been in U.S. schools for less than three years may take a Math test in Spanish in Grade 10. Students of limited English proficiency are not exempt from the high-stakes nature of the tenth grade ELA and Math tests: students must score

⁸ A fuller description of the meaning of each level of performance in the MEPA appears in Appendix 1.

“Proficient” in the MCAS 10th grade Math and ELA tests or score at least “Needs Improvement” while also completing the requirements of the student’s educational proficiency plan (MDESE, 2009c).

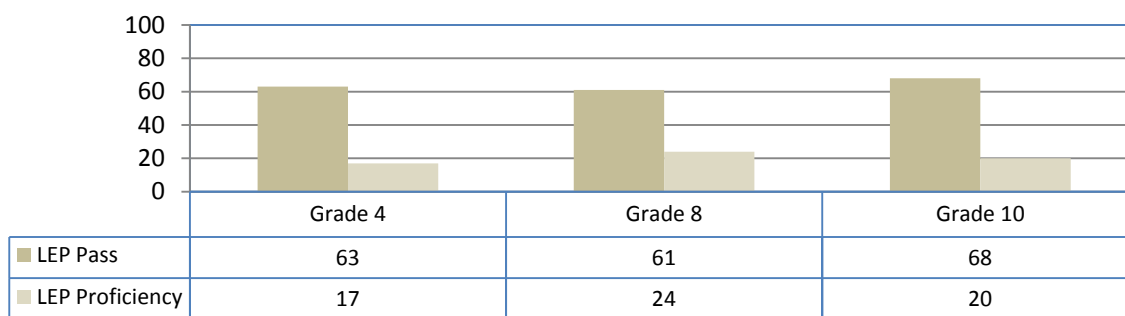
A great source of confusion in the discussion of LEP student performance is the tendency to look at the subgroup as a whole without recognition that many LEP students, especially those at the lowest levels of English proficiency (MEPA Levels 1–3), should not be expected to perform well on the MCAS or any other standardized tests in English. The English mastery necessary to pass the MCAS with proficiency or above, as Massachusetts now requires, far exceeds the levels of English proficiency represented by MEPA Levels 1–3 and to some extent 4. Therefore, it is important to consider the LEP student subgroup not merely as a whole subgroup, but specifically in terms of their levels of English proficiency as determined by MEPA. Currently, this type of data is not easily available.⁹

Findings:

1. What proportion of LEPs attain proficiency in MCAS ELA?

- ❖ **Only 17% of grade 4, 24% of grade 8 and 20% of grade 10 MCAS test-takers of limited English proficiency score “Proficient” in MCAS ELA** (Figure 3). ELA “Pass” rates are substantially higher, but still only about 60% of MCAS test-takers of limited English proficiency reach this outcome. These measures represent the aggregate of LEP students at each of these grade levels without regard to their language proficiency.

Figure 3. Pass and Proficiency Rates in MCAS ELA. LEP Students. MA, 2009



Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 9/30/09)

- ❖ **As expected, proficiency in MCAS ELA is possible primarily for students scoring at the highest MEPA performance levels (Level 5 or, less so, Level 4), but even at these levels of performance in MEPA the proficiency rates are low** (Table 8). Among 4th graders, only 41.9% of those test-takers attaining MEPA Level 5 scored “Proficient” in the MCAS. The proficiency rates for 8th and 10th graders attaining MEPA Level 5 were higher at 60.9% and 54.3% respectively. Proficiency rates for

⁹ We thank the MDESE for providing data disaggregated by language proficiency for our analysis of MCAS results at the state and district levels and we thank the Worcester Public Schools for the disaggregation of dropout data by the language proficiency of the dropout.

students attaining MEPA Level 4 were under 20%; at all other levels, proficiency rates were below 10%.

- ❖ **Pass rates in MCAS ELA among LEPs scoring at MEPA Level 5 are very strong, surpassing those of English-proficient students in the 4th and 10th grade.** LEPs scoring at Level 4 of MEPA also show strong pass rates in Grades 8 and 10.
- ❖ Among the 10 priority districts, ELA outcomes at MEPA Level 5 are particularly low for 4th grade students in Brockton, Fall River, and Holyoke; for 8th graders in Brockton and Springfield; and for 10th graders in Boston, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, and Springfield. MCAS ELA Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels for the 10 priority districts appear in Appendix 2

Table 8. MCAS ELA Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels. EPs and LEPs. MA, 2009

	MCAS ELA Pass Rate (NI+Pro+Adv)	MCAS ELA Proficiency Rate (Prof+Adv)
Grade 4		
MEPA Level 1	0.0	0.0
MEPA Level 2	4.2	0.0
MEPA Level 3	18.8	1.9
MEPA Level 4	66.0	10.1
MEPA Level 5	96.6	41.9
EP	90.7	56.4
Grade 8		
MEPA Level 1	3.6	0.0
MEPA Level 2	16.6	1.3
MEPA Level 3	40.4	4.0
MEPA Level 4	78.5	19.8
MEPA Level 5	95.1	60.9
EP	95.1	72.8
Grade 10		
MEPA Level 1	25.0	8.8
MEPA Level 2	24.2	1.5
MEPA Level 3	58.7	5.9
MEPA Level 4	87.5	17.9
MEPA Level 5	97.9	54.3
EP	97.3	83.4
Source: MDESE (requested LEP data provided on 10/08/09; EP data on 9/30/09)		

2. What proportion of LEPs attain Levels 4 or 5 in MEPA testing?

- ❖ About 95% of LEPs participated in MEPA testing in 2009 (MDESE, 2009g, p. 5). Of these, **the proportion who attained MEPA Level 5 ranged between 13 and 23 percent, depending on grade level** (Table 9). Students in the middle grade levels (Grades 5–8) had the highest proportion of high scorers, but the proportion never reached above 23%.

Table 9. Language Proficiency Levels of MEPA Test-Takers. MA 2009

Grade Span	Total MEPA Test-Takers	Percent Scoring at MEPA Levels:				
		1	2	3	4	5
K-2	21,202	12	17	34	23	13
3-4	11,072	4	6	21	48	20
5-6	7,313	6	8	24	40	22
7-8	5,921	8	13	32	24	23
9-12	9,655	10	13	37	20	20

Source: MDESE, 2009g

3. How long does it take for LEP students to achieve a level of English proficiency (MEPA Level 5) that will allow them to score “Proficient” in the MCAS ELA test?

In the absence of cohort studies to determine the trajectories of students over time, data from the *MEPA Statewide Results: Spring 2009* (MDESE, 2009g) provides some indication of the length of time that is required to attain English proficiency in Massachusetts schools. Table 10 shows the proportion of students reaching MEPA Levels 4 and 5 by grade span and years in Massachusetts schools. Thirty percent of early elementary (Grades 3-4) MEPA test-takers reached MEPA Level 5, this taking place after five years or more in Massachusetts schools. Among late elementary school MEPA test-takers (Grades 5-6), 22% achieved this level after five or more years in the state’s schools. Among MEPA test-takers in middle school (Grades 7-8), 18.7% achieved MEPA Level 5 after 5 or more years. Finally, only 20% of high school MEPA test – takers achieved MEPA Level 5 and this took place after 5 years in Massachusetts schools. The vast majority of LEPs never reach a high enough level of performance to score “Proficient”

Table 10. Proportion of LEPs Reaching MEPA Levels 4 and 5 by Grade Span and Years in Massachusetts Schools. MA, 2009

Grade Span	Percent Reaching MEPA Level 5 After				
	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years +
	In Massachusetts Schools				
3-4	.09%	2.4%	4.4%	16.0%	30.1%
5-6	.9%	2.7%	4.9%	7.1%	22.2%
7-8	.9%	3.3%	5.9%	8.6%	18.7%
9-12	2.5%	6.3%	9.7%	12.7%	20.2%
Grade Span	Percent Reaching MEPA Level 4 After				
	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years +
	In Massachusetts Schools				
3-4	2.2%	8.4%	15.3%	46.8%	73.1%
5-6	2.2%	5.9%	9.4%	12.9%	39.4%
7-8	2.2%	4.1%	6.2%	8.4%	19.2%
9-12	2.7%	5.9%	9.7%	12.5%	19.7%

Source: Computed from MDESE (2009g, p. 6)

in MCAS ELA tests. A much higher proportion of MEPA test-takers in the elementary grades achieve MEPA Level 4; the highest proportion, 73.1%, is achieved by early elementary school students after five or more years in Massachusetts schools. But the proportion of middle school and high school MEPA test-takers reaching this level is comparable to the low proportions achieving MEPA Level 5.

In summary...

Using student outcomes in MCAS ELA as an indicator of attainment of English proficiency, we can conclude that current English instruction leads to proficiency for only about 20% of English language learners and that the time frame for even that small group of students to attain proficiency is long (five years or more in Massachusetts schools).

C. LEARNING ACADEMIC CONTENT

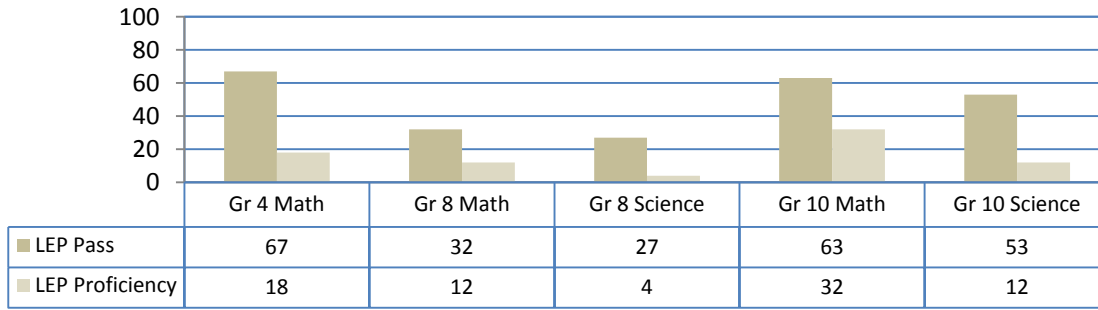
In an educational structure where access to academic content (other than the English language) is so dependent on a student's proficiency in English (or a teachers' ability to communicate this content to an English language learner), concern turns to the mastery of academic content by students along the different levels of English proficiency. Aside from the obvious academic benefits of learning academic content, especially in Massachusetts' highly competitive system, students who stay engaged with math, science, civics, the arts, or any other subject in school are more likely to stay in school and graduate. Here we use MCAS Math and Science proficiency and pass rates as indicators of a student's acquisition of academic content.

Findings

1. What proportion of all LEPs attain "proficiency" in Math and in Science?

- ❖ Current math instruction for English language learners leads to proficiency rates that are below 20% for 4th and 8th graders and rise to 32% among 10th graders.
 - Pass rates are somewhat higher: 67% among Grade 4 test-takers, 27% among 8th graders, and 63% among 10th graders. These measures represent the aggregate of LEP students at each of these grade levels without regard to their language proficiency.
- ❖ Proficiency rates in science are below 15% for both 8th and 10th graders.
 - Pass rates in Science are 27% for 8th graders, doubling to 53% for 10th graders (the latter's test is in Biology). These, again, represent LEPs in the aggregate in terms of language proficiency.

Figure 4. Pass and Proficiency Rates in MCAS Math and Science. LEP Students. MA, 2009.



Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 9/30/09)

2. What proportion of LEPs at MEPA Level 5 attain “proficiency” in Math and in Science?

- ❖ When proficiency rates in Math are disaggregated along MEPA language performance levels, we find that current instruction leads to proficiency in MCAS Math for 39.9% of 4th-grade, 29% of 8th-grade, and 58% of 10th-grade LEPs testing at MEPA Level 5 (Table 11).
 - MCAS Math pass rates are much higher than proficiency rates for students at MEPA Level 5. Among 4th and 10th graders the proportion of students who attain “Pass” in MCAS Math

Table 11. MCAS Math Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Level. MA, 2009

	MCAS Math Pass Rate	MCAS Math Proficiency Rate
Grade 4		
MEPA Level 1	5.3	0.0
MEPA Level 2	11.7	0.7
MEPA Level 3	30.4	3.6
MEPA Level 4	70.9	14.1
MEPA Level 5	94.4	39.9
EP	90.6	50.2
Grade 8		
MEPA Level 1	1.6	0.0
MEPA Level 2	7.3	2.1
MEPA Level 3	16.5	3.0
MEPA Level 4	32.3	10.6
MEPA Level 5	63.8	29.0
EP	79.1	51.0
Grade 10		
MEPA Level 1	36.0	9.3
MEPA Level 2	33.0	11.8
MEPA Level 3	56.5	21.8
MEPA Level 4	75.6	37.6
MEPA Level 5	90.9	58.0
EP	94.2	76.7

Source: MDESE (requested LEP data provided on 10/08/09; EP data on 9/30/09)

exceeds 90%; in the case of 4th graders the proportion of MEPA Level 5 scorers who pass MCAS Math surpasses that of English-proficient students.

- Among the 10 priority districts, Math proficiency outcomes at MEPA Level 5 are particularly low for Grade 4 students in Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, and Springfield; for 8th graders in Fall River, Holyoke, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester; and for 10th graders in Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. MCAS Math “Pass” and “Proficient” rates by MEPA performance levels for the 10 priority districts appear in Appendix 2.
- ❖ Although MCAS Math testing relies strongly on English reading comprehension, outcomes in Science are even more sensitive to a student’s English proficiency. When proficiency rates in Science are disaggregated along MEPA performance levels, we find that proficiency rates for students, even at Level 5 of MEPA, are very low: 12.3% for 8th grade Science and 29.1 for 10th grade Biology (Table 12). Passing rates are higher, as expected, but fall well below Math and ELA pass rates.
 - Among the 10 priority districts, Science outcomes at MEPA Level 5 are low for Grade 8 students in Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, and Springfield. For 10th graders, outcomes are low in Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, and Springfield.
 - In Holyoke and Lawrence no student attained proficiency in Science at either grade level. MCAS Science Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels appear in Appendix 2.

Table 12. MCAS Science Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Level. MA, 2009

	MCAS Science Pass Rate	MCAS Science Proficiency Rate
Grade 8 (Science)		
LEP MEPA 1	0.0	0.0
LEP MEPA 2	2.1	0.0
LEP MEPA 3	11.6	0.6
LEP MEPA 4	28.3	1.1
LEP MEPA 5	58.6	12.3
EP	82.2	40.9
Grade 10 (Biology)		
LEP MEPA 1	19.2	1.4
LEP MEPA 2	20.0	1.6
LEP MEPA 3	42.4	6.8
LEP MEPA 4	66.4	14.0
LEP MEPA 5	84.7	29.1
EP	87.3	61.3
Source: MDESE (requested LEP data provided on 10/08/09; EP data on 9/30/09)		

In summary...

Using LEPs’ outcomes in MCAS Math and Science tests, we find that proficiency rates are very low; for example, among 10th graders at MEPA Level 5, 58% scored proficient in Math and 29% scored proficient in Science. In general, proficiency rates are lower in Science (where teaching and testing rely heavily on the ability to communicate content) than in math, signaling that acquisition of content by students who are still in the process of learning English is a problem.

D. GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

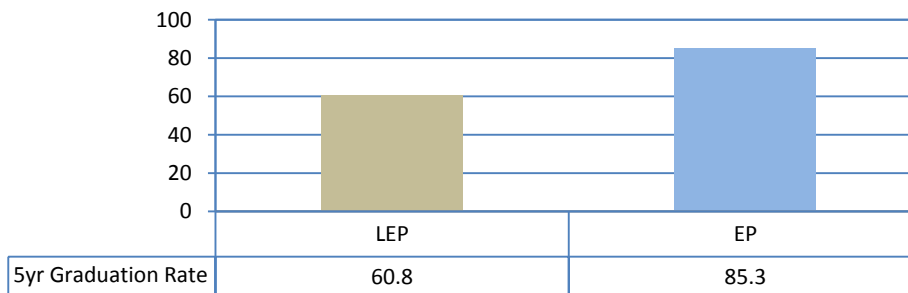
Given the long road to English proficiency and the difficulty of mastering content taught only in English, engaging English language learners in schooling is a tremendous challenge. The findings in this section show that this is indeed the case. Below we examine graduation and drop-out rates for English language learners across the state and in the priority districts.

Findings

1. Are English language learners graduating from high school?

- ❖ About 60% of them do after five years, according to a report on the 2007 cohort of Massachusetts students by MDESE (2009b). This compares to 85% among English-proficient students.
 - Graduation rates for LEPs are the lowest of any subgroup in the state. MDESE (2009b) reports that graduation rates are higher among female LEPs (65.9% vs. 56.1% for males). The rates are highest among Asian LEPs (79.4%) and lowest among Hispanic LEPs (51.5%), with other racial/ethnic groups falling in between.
 - Among the 10 priority districts, Brockton, Lowell, Lynn, and Worcester have the highest graduation rates for students of limited English proficiency. Among the rest Holyoke, Boston, Lawrence and Springfield stand out for low graduation rates. For example, in Holyoke only 25% of LEPs graduate in five years.

Figure 5. Five Year Graduation Rate. LEP and EP. MA, 2007



Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 10/29/09)

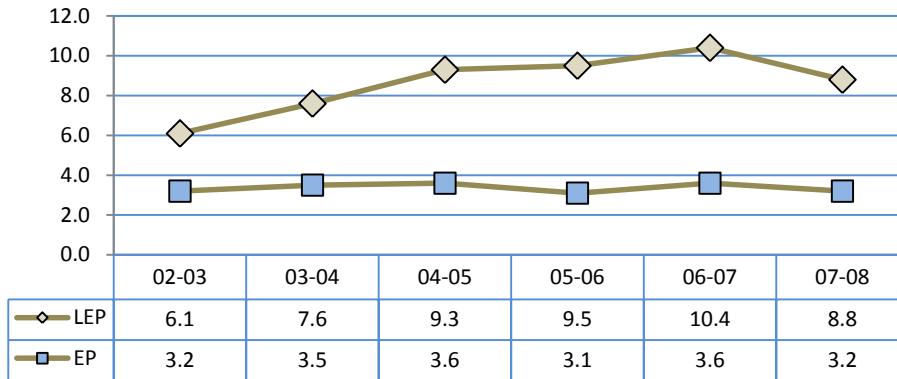
2. Why are LEP graduation rates so low?

- ❖ **Graduation rates are low among LEPs in part because of the high drop-out rates.** The cohort drop-out rate for LEPs is 24.8%; it is the highest of any of the subgroups reported by MDESE (2009b).
 - The annual high school drop-out rate for LEPs has remained more than twice that of EPs since 2004. The annual high school drop-out rate of LEPs rose from 6.1% to 10.4% between 2003 and

2007, declining to 8.8 in 2008.¹⁰ In this time, the annual drop-out rate of EPs remained relatively steady.

- Annual high school drop-out rates among LEPs are very high in the following priority districts: Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, and Springfield. In these districts, the annual drop-out rate for LEPs was above 10% in 2009.

Figure 6. Annual High School Drop-Out Rate. EP and LEP. Massachusetts, 2003–2008.



Source: Data provided by MDESE to the Gastón Institute on 5/20/09

3. What is the most prevalent level of English proficiency among LEP dropouts?

Drop-out data disaggregated by language proficiency was not available at the state level, but data provided by the Worcester Public Schools allows us to examine this relationship. Table 13 presents the proportion of LEP dropouts from different language proficiency levels. In this case, the language proficiency measure is the student’s placement in the LAU performance categories “A” through “D,” with “A” representing a mono-lingual speaker of a language other than English; “B,” a student who predominantly speaks a language other than English; “C,” a balanced Bilingual; and “D,” a student who is a native speaker of a language other than English but predominantly speaks English. At Category D, a student is likely to be transitioning into general education.

- ❖ Worcester Public Schools’ dropout data show that students at the highest level of English language performance – that is, students transitioning into general education programs – show the highest drop-out rates. In 2008, 66.9% of the LEP dropouts were assessed at LAU Category D. This performance shows a reversal from earlier years when transitioning students accounted for the lowest proportion of dropouts among LEP students.
- ❖ The lowest proportion of dropouts have most frequently come from students in at the lowest levels of English proficiency.

¹⁰ Between 2002 and 2004, many changes took place in Massachusetts schools in response to state and federal policy mandates. 2002 is the year that the provisions of No Child Left Behind for “Annual Yearly Progress” came into effect, placing strong accountability requirements on schools. In Massachusetts, the class of 2002 is the first directly affected by the implementation of MCAS as a graduation requirement. Finally September 2003 is the start of the implementation of the changes required by Question 2. All of these, for different reasons, have affected the demands on and the engagement of students with schooling

Table 13. Dropouts by English Proficiency Level of the Dropout. Worcester Public Schools, 2003–2008

Year	# of Dropouts	English Proficiency Level of Dropout				Total
		Beginner	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Transitioning	
2004	162	11.7%	31.5%	27.2%	29.6%	100%
2005	156	13.5%	26.9%	33.3%	26.3%	100%
2006	139	13.7%	27.3%	28.8%	30.2%	100%
2007	180	18.9%	13.3%	27.8%	40.0%	100%
2008	124	10.5%	8.9%	13.7%	66.9%	100%

Source: Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/2009

- ❖ The Worcester dropout data shows a similar pattern to that of the state, showing an increase in the number of dropouts (28% increase between 2003 and 2007) followed by a decline in 2008.
- ❖ The high annual high school drop-out rates among LEPs transitioning into general education echo the findings of Boston’s study of English language learners, which found that the drop-out rate for LEPs in *general education* increased substantially, trebling in the four-year span of the study (Tung et al., 2009). These are not likely to be exceptions. In the case of Boston, several factors seemed to be at play in these higher rates:
 - the lack of preparedness of students to address the challenges of transition. An indication of this is low rates of achievement in academic content areas among students who may have acquired English proficiency in SEI programs but lag behind in the mastery of content.
 - the lack of preparedness of standard curriculum teachers to address the presence of English Learners in their classrooms;
 - the “push-out” of students perceived as academically weak by schools concerned that these students would affect its statistics in regard to academic outcomes.

In summary...

The rise in the drop-out rate among students of limited English proficiency is one of the most salient problems affecting English language learners in Massachusetts. Annual high school drop-out rates for LEPs are almost twice those of non-LEPs in Massachusetts and have climbed steadily since 2002, abating only in 2008. This high drop-out rate has tended to depress the graduation rate for the group, which shows a five-year graduation rate of 60%. In analyzing the language proficiency of dropouts, we reviewed data from the Worcester Public Schools (since state data were unavailable) and show that in recent years, the largest group of dropouts (67%) comes from those students in the highest levels of English proficiency, that is, those students making a transition into general education programs. This raises concerns about the preparation of these students for the standard high school curriculum.

IV. URGENT INTERVENTIONS

In order to address the educational experience summarized by these findings, the committee highlights interventions in five areas: (1) the development and implementation of student centered programs appropriate for the age and English proficiency of LEP students; (2) stronger requirements for professional development of teachers providing instruction to LEP students; (3) the development of stronger capacity at the district level for data-driven monitoring of the progress of ELLs and for planning, monitoring, and evaluating programs for English learners; (4) improvement in the identification, assessment, and placement of LEP students; and (5) enriching the professional development of educational leaders across the state in relation to the education of ELLs. We focus on those interventions that need to be implemented urgently so that, first of all, the education of students of limited English proficiency can recover from the jolt which recent changes in policy have represented and secondly, that within the limits provided by existing law, the state can move forward with improvements in the education of these students. In doing so, we hope that the state can take the lead in an area where success has proven elusive for educators across the nation.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following general principles undergird the specific recommendations presented in this report:

1. Massachusetts needs a welcoming environment for English language learners.

Intentionally or not, the implementation of current policy on the education of English language learners has sent an erroneous message that attention to their specific needs is no longer permitted or necessary in Massachusetts. We believe that this environment perpetuates practices that have led to the violation of ELLs' educational rights (as evidenced by recent interventions by the U.S. Department of Justice in behalf of ELLs in two large districts and the investigation of violations in a third¹¹ – these three districts account for 30% of ELLs in Massachusetts). This environment dis-empowers educators charged with the organization of programs for LEPs in districts and schools and also dis-empowers parents, who were once a vocal constituency on behalf of ELLs. Finally, this environment contributes to the perception that ELLs represent a liability in the process of school accountability, creating an unwelcoming environment for English language learners in some schools.

In situations like this, it is critical for policy makers at every level, but particularly at the highest levels, to communicate a clear and unambiguous message about the rights of these groups and about a vision for the future that includes them in a fair and equitable way. We suggest here two key messages:

¹¹ These are Somerville, Worcester, and Boston. See USDOJ (2008, 2009) and Vaznis (2009).

- ***English language learners have a right to educational opportunity, including an equal opportunity to learn.***

- ***Bilingual citizens are an asset to the state in the context of a global economy.*** The development of a citizenry comfortable with and capable of acting effectively in global endeavors is an essential component of success in the 21st Century.

2. Compliance is a floor, not a ceiling.

Providing educational opportunities for English language learners has often come as the result of legal or legislative action, a situation that has favored a framework of compliance, rather than program development and evaluation perspective, on the part of educational leaders and school systems. More recently, weak direction and low funding for the appropriate implementation of recent policy changes in the education of ELLs have added to the confusion. At this point in Massachusetts, the legal, the legislative, and the educational perspectives on English language learners are conflated; there is confusion about how to implement sound educational practices while adhering to current state law. Unfortunately, in this type of environment sound educational policy is often trumped by perceived and actual restrictions in state law.

Respecting the rights of English language learners is a minimum requirement: only when these are respected can education truly begin. But the concern about the education of students of limited English proficiency cannot end there: excellence in educational practice is what will protect the rights of English language learners and provide them with equal opportunity to learn. Without losing sight of the state's responsibility to protect the rights of English language learners (and all students), educational leaders in Massachusetts need to focus on what we know is necessary to adequately and fully educate ELL students. Complying with the law and acting affirmatively to develop a culture of excellence in the education of English language learners are critical ingredients for Massachusetts to move forward in improving its education of English language learners.

3. English is not enough: English language learners need to attain English proficiency, master content, and graduate.

There is no question about the value of English proficiency in the economic and social success of immigrants in the U.S. There is also no question about the strength of English proficiency as a predictor of academic success; both the academic literature and professional experience underscore its value (Abedi, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). But English language learners also need to attain proficiency in academic content areas in order to remain engaged in school and excel educationally.

In Massachusetts, the teaching of English has taken center stage: content is delivered primarily at a basic level of English until the student attains proficiency. Given this prevailing approach, there is understandable concern about the level of mastery of content that English learners are attaining – particularly when, as we saw in this review, proficiency in English takes about five years to attain. This is a special concern for students in middle and high school, who may arrive with substantial content knowledge in their own language but not be able to access grade-level content instruction in

Massachusetts schools. Experts suggest that the focus should be on (1) teaching language all the time, not just in language and literacy classes but also in math, science, social studies, and any other classes where ELL students participate (Brisk, 1998); and (2) developing a strong bilingual content curriculum, particularly for middle school and high school students.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Promote, Support, And Sustain Student-Centered Program Development In Districts

Exceedingly narrow interpretations of current policy have led to practices that, in our view, hamper the ability of districts to respond to the diversity of needs posed by English language learners. It is important to understand that, while state law favors immersion programs, it also provides avenues for districts to address the diversity of needs of English language learners and that it allows parents of these students to make choices regarding the education of their children. Districts are required to develop additional types of programs to meet these needs.

In practice, however, Massachusetts has developed a “one size fits all” approach to the education of English language learners. Across the state, not only are nearly all LEPs enrolled in SEI programs (94.2%), but the concentration in SEI programs increases progressively every year; currently, six of the ten districts considered here make only one type of program available to LEP students.¹² Good educational practice calls for a range of programmatic options that would allow a district to respond

Table 14. Enrollment in Programs for English Learners. MA, 2009

	In Programs for ELLs	SEI	TBE	2-Way
State	49,073	94.2%	3.3%	2.4%
Boston	6,124	88.1%	6.3%	5.5%
Brockton	1,869	75.0%	20.5%	4.4%
Fall River	550	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Holyoke	1,460	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lawrence	2,372	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lowell	4,148	99.9%	0.1%	0.0%
Lynn	2,978	99.1%	0.9%	0.0%
New Bedford	550	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Springfield	2,921	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Worcester	5,379	93.5%	6.3%	0.3%

Source: MDESE (requested data provided on 11/14/2009)

¹² Data obtained from MDESE, 11/14/2009

appropriately to the needs of this increasingly diverse population. It suggests also the development of well-organized programs where students can be grouped by language level more effectively, the instruction can be tailored to the level and type of language, and the outcomes can be measured more accurately, monitored efficiently, and used to improve the delivery of service.

Recommended changes seek to: (1) alleviate the impact of the lack of content instruction for middle school and high school students at the early MEPA performance levels by including bilingual content classes while sustaining a strong ESL component; (2) strengthen the required qualifications for teachers providing instruction to English language learners at all levels, including – for students at the lower levels of MEPA performance – the assignment of teachers capable of providing clarification of content areas for students in their own language, as is permitted by law; and (3) offer academically strong alternative education programs for high school students who are at risk of dropping out because they enter school with very low levels of English proficiency and/or interrupted schooling in their own language.

Below we present detailed recommendations regarding instructional programs. Recommendations focusing on dropout prevention programs, parent participation, and district leadership in these areas follow in later sections of this report.

General Recommendation:				
Support districts in the development of a range of innovative programs for English language learners that are appropriate for the age and English proficiency of the students				
MEPA Performance Level	Current MDESE Recommendation	Committee’s Specific Recommendations		
		Under 10 (Grades K–4)	Over 10 (Grades 5–8)	Over 10 (Grades 9–12)
1 and 2	(ESL) instruction: 2.5 hours/day to a full day of direct ESL instruction, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher Content instruction: other hours as available outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students Other Services ²	Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either: Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL OR Through a dual language program Other Services ²	Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either: Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content areas and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary/secondary content areas and ESL OR ESL provided by ESL certified teacher(s) and content provided through bilingual content classes Other Services ²	Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either: Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in content areas and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content areas and ESL OR ESL provided by ESL certified teacher(s) and content provided through bilingual content classes OR Alternative Academic Programs Other Services ²

<p>3</p>	<p>English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction: 1–2 hours of direct ESL instruction per day, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher</p> <p>ELA or reading instruction: 1–2 hours per day, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in ELA or reading.</p> <p>Content instruction: other available hours outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in the appropriate content area</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (1–2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL OR Through a dual language program</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (1–2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and ESL</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (1–2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in secondary content area(s) and proficient in native language of students OR Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content area(s) and ESL OR Alternative Academic Programs</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>
<p>4 and 5</p>	<p>ESL instruction: a minimum of 2.5 hours of direct ESL instruction per week, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher</p> <p>Content instruction: other available hours outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in the appropriate content area</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL OR ESL provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary with all 4 categories of training</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and ESL OR ESL instruction provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) with all 4 categories of training</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>	<p>ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:</p> <p>Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content area(s) and ESL OR ESL instruction provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in secondary content area(s) with all 4 categories of training</p> <p>Other Services ²</p>
<p>Notes: (1) Recommendations regarding bilingual content instruction imply parent choice and the initiative of the LEA in facilitating the parental waivers. Under current law, alternatives to SEI are possible when parents of students over 10 yrs request waivers and these waivers are granted by the principal and if there are 20 students per grade in the same language group in the school. (2) Other services include physical education, art, and music in the same schedule as for other students in the grade level</p>				

Other Suggestions for Strengthening Programs at the District Level

- ❖ In those districts with large LEP enrollments, make the director of programs for English language learners a member of the district's leadership team. This will allow for the consideration of the impact on ELLs of any programmatic or instructional policy proposed or changed in the district. It will also allow for the integration of the curriculum offered ELLs with that offered to the district as a whole.
- ❖ Assure the participation of ELLs in all school programs by instructing principals to include ELLs in after-school programs, extended day programs, AP classes, MCAS preparation programs, and any program available to other students. The district should monitor the participation of ELLs in all school and district programs.
- ❖ Aggressively address the professional development gaps for teachers in the district. See section on professional development below.

Underscoring Dropout Prevention

While there has been a call to arms by public and private officials to address the dropout problem, the problem with these initiatives, including the recently released report by the State-Wide Drop-Out Prevention Commission, is that they do not discuss in any depth or address with any degree of specificity the particular situation leading to the abandoning of school by English language learners. Nevertheless, our recommendations echo those recent reports¹³ and add only that initiatives need to demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of this population, its school experience, and the pressures it faces to stay and to abandon school as well as integrate a high degree of cultural competence in order to have an effect on the group with the highest drop-out rate in the state.

Recommendations include:

- ❖ The development of appropriate instructional programs for English language learners along the lines presented in Table 17
- ❖ Student-centered interventions – to ensure early identification of struggling students, strategies to support them staying in school and enabling youth and young adults who dropped out of school to re-enter school. These may include mentoring, academic support, and wrap-around services delivered by culturally competent staff and organized in ways that are inclusive of English language learners. *Culturally competent programs are those who hire outreach staff that is bilingual and bicultural, and provide linguistically appropriate services and clear information for parents, in their own language, to understand the re-engagement and recovery process.*
- ❖ Alternatives to current high school programs, to enable the student to navigate established programs, with wrap-around supports, targeted instructional strategies, and accelerated credit recovery. These also need to be culturally competent and welcoming to English language learners.
- ❖ Active recovery that reaches out to dropouts and provides them with alternatives to the established educational system
- ❖ Connections to jobs, careers, and further education through mentoring and internships and paid placements

¹³ Youth Transitions Task Force (2006) and MDESE (2009f).

B. Require That All English Language Learners Be Taught By Teachers Prepared To Teach Them

Teacher quality is one of the most critical factors in any student’s learning, yet ample evidence from the field indicates that many English language learners are not yet receiving instruction from appropriately qualified teachers. Changes in the licensure of teachers, following the 2003 changes in state policy, demoted bilingual licensure to an endorsement, even though provisions in the law make skilled bilingual teachers still necessary. Competency requirements for standard-curriculum content teachers working with English language learners were developed by MDESE and represent the most basic training required – and even this training is only “recommended,” not mandated, by MDESE. The result is that LEP students making a transition into general education programs may be exposed to teachers who are not trained to teach them. The current situation in many schools, where teachers without proper training are called upon to address the complex needs of students in the process of English language acquisition, is unfair to teachers who take pride in their profession. It is also not fair to students – as evidenced by their academic outcomes and drop-out rates.

Current Teacher Qualification Requirements in MA

- ❖ Since Q2, Bilingual licensure was demoted to an endorsement status even though two-way bilingual education is still legal and, with appropriate waivers, schools can still have transitional bilingual education programs. The sole requirement for obtaining a bilingual endorsement is to pass a native language proficiency test.
- ❖ There is no licensure for teachers of English language learners with disabilities. Recommended but not mandated are four categories of competencies for general education content teachers working with English language learners at the intermediate levels of proficiency or above, including:
 - Category 1: Introduction to Second Language Learning and Teaching
 - Category 2: Sheltering Content Instruction
 - Category 3: Assessing Speaking and Listening
 - Category 4: Teaching Reading and Writing to Limited English Proficient Students. (MDOE, 2008)

Teacher Preparation in Massachusetts

Currently, teachers in Massachusetts can be trained to work with ELLs in the following ways.

- ❖ In-service teachers and other education professionals may take the four category trainings, which are a recommendation and not a mandate. A teacher needs to have completed all four categories in order to be deemed qualified by the state to teach in a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classroom. However, successfully completing these trainings is not based on any competency measure; rather, completion is determined through attending the mandated number of hours for each training. Since 2003, 9,233 teachers have received training in Category One; 5,718 in Category Two; 998 in Category Three; and 2,036 in Category Four. Special education professionals have had access to one summer institute a year that only covers the assessment of ELLs with disabilities.

- ❖ In-service teachers in some districts may participate in the MELT program that focuses on training already licensed teachers to become licensed ESL teachers. To date 293 teachers have become licensed ESL teachers through this program (MDESE, requested data provided on 11/12/2009).
- ❖ Pre-service teachers may participate in a program for (a) training ESL and/or bilingual teachers and (b) programs for general education teachers (which range from one course to courses with additional infusion in other parts of the program or to a combined ESL-general education degree. Currently 88.5% of teachers working as ESL teachers or support personnel hold an ESL license (MDESE, requested data provided on 11/12/2009).
- ❖ The ESE has issued total 2344 licenses in TBE and currently 1058 educators hold an active TBE license (MDESE, requested data provided on 11/12/2009).

Recommendations

1. Because all teachers in Massachusetts, both in-service and pre-service, need access to quality training regarding the instruction of students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, improving current requirements is critical. This includes improving current in-service training efforts (the four category trainings) and requiring all state accredited pre-service teacher preparation programs for licensure to graduate teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively instruct in classrooms with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.

General Recommendations	Specific Recommendations
1. Strengthen current requirements for the licensure of teachers providing instruction to English language learners	1.1 Reinstate the bilingual and ESL licensure requirements that were in place before Q2 to ensure the quality and effective preparation of all bilingual and ESL teachers in the state. 1.2 Add a new licensure for bilingual/ESL Special Education for teachers of ELL students with Moderate or Severe Disabilities. 1.3 Improve the four category trainings to make them competency-based, ensuring through performance assessments that teachers are putting their new skills and knowledge into practice within their classrooms. 1.4 Require successful completion of the upgraded competency-based four categories as a requirement for re-licensure across all areas of teacher certification except bilingual and ESL. 1.5 Develop ESL & Bilingual Special Education teacher education licensure standards to guide teacher education programs offered by institutions of higher education and thereby help to alleviate the teacher shortage in both ESL-Bilingual and special education.
2. Strengthen in-service professional development for teachers providing instruction to English language learners	2.1 Provide motivation for all teachers to complete the four category trainings by offering PDPs for participation as well as the opportunity to advance across salary lanes. 2.2 Develop capacity of teachers working with ELLs by creating a state-wide comprehensive professional development plan to be enacted over the next five years with short- and long-term goals, a clear timeline, and extensive collaboration with teacher preparation institutions. 2.3. Plan and implement professional development programs for faculty in Schools of Education and other programs preparing teachers. 2.4 Create a method by which licensed bilingual and ESL teachers will not have to complete the four categories in order to be re-licensed.
3. Strengthen pre-service requirements for future teachers of English language learners	3.1 Reinstate the bilingual and ESL certification requirements in place in 2002 and assist teacher preparation programs in re-developing programs to train teachers qualified for such certification. 3.2 Based on the Wingspread Conference (2008) definition of Highly Qualified Teachers and in collaboration with experts from the field, create standards and requirements for all teacher preparation programs in Massachusetts to meet in order to qualify for state accreditation.

2. In the existing definitions of Highly Qualified Teachers, attention to language is often missing. We believe that HQTs must communicate the benefit of knowing and using more than one language, must have high expectations of children regardless of proficiency in English, and must know and respect linguistically and cultural diverse students and their families.

General Recommendation	Specific Recommendations
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All HQTs who use English as the medium of instruction must be English language teachers as it relates to their content area (i.e., a teacher who teaches biology must also teach the language to do biology). 2. All HQTs must have a set of guided experiences in schools and school communities with culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and community partners. 3. All HQTs must be able to demonstrate the ability to work with ELD students to develop language and literacy, to succeed academically, and to successfully function in school and their communities. 4. All HQTs must be able to use culturally relevant teaching techniques and exhibit dispositions that reflect the above requirements. 5. The preparation of a HQT would include coursework that speaks to language, culture, and community. 6. All HQTs will have had coursework and experiences that prepare them for the above requirements.

3. The level of language proficiency of students is the determinant of the qualifications required of the teachers working with students of limited English proficiency. Table 17 describes the necessary qualifications that teachers should have to work with ELLs at each level of proficiency.

C. Enable and Support Data-Driven Planning, Monitoring, and Transparency at the District Level

DeJong, Gort, and Cobb (2005, pp 597–598) write about the persistent lack of reliable data on English learners in Massachusetts. In fact, it was not until the implementation of the MCAS that the academic achievement of ELLs in Massachusetts was known, even though there had been bilingual programs in the state for more than 30 years. In many ways, the data on English language learners reflects the broader problem of a system focused on compliance and accountability rather than on the kinds of data and information that district program planners, principals, and those implementing programs may actually need.

Information must flow to districts in a way that is useful so that they can develop programs that are evidence-based and data-driven, assign teachers appropriately, anticipate problems in enrollment patterns, and provide information to guide parents’ choices for the schooling of their children. Experience from the field shows that some districts do not have in-house data analysis capacity and the data that ELL directors receive is often incomplete and not helpful for planning purposes. (A salient example of this is the unavailability of cross-tabulations of MCAS and MEPA data – in fact, all three ELL

Table 15. Data Points Necessary for Monitoring Outcomes of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating Programs for English Language Learners

Area	Rationale	Data to include
Enrollment	Provides district directors with accurate enrollment figures, comparisons with other groups, and enrollment trend)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enrollment (# and % of total enrollment). 2. Trends in Enrollment (5 years) 3. LEP enrollment by grade level 4. LEP enrollment waived, opted-out, and in program
Home Language and English Proficiency	Provides district directors with language data – English and L1 – necessary for student-centered program planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Home languages (#, %, and rank order) 6. Home language of LEPs by grade level 7. English language proficiency (MEPA 1–5) of all LEPs 8. English language proficiency by grade level 9. English language proficiency by home language and grade level
Program Participation	Provides district directors with program participation data necessary for program planning and monitoring).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. LEPs in general education (#, %, grade level) 11. Trends in LEP enrollment in general education (5 years) 12. LEPs in ELL programs (#, %) 13. LEPs in ELL programs by ELL program type (% , #, grade level) 14. Trends in LEPs in ELL programs by type (5 years) 15. LEPs in ELL programs by program type and English proficiency 16. LEPs in SEI by grade level and English proficiency 17. LEPs in TBE by grade level and English proficiency 18. LEPs in dual language programs by grade level and English proficiency 19. LEP enrollment in SPED 20. LEP enrollment in SPED by disability 21. Trends in LEP enrollment in SPED (5 years)
Outcomes	Provides district directors with outcome data necessary for program adjustment, monitoring, and evaluation as well as compliance	<p>All outcomes by:</p> <p>LEP and non-LEP</p> <p>English language proficiency level of LEPs</p> <p>Home language of LEPs</p> <p>By grade of LEPs and non-LEPs</p> <p>Of LEPs by program type</p> <p>By English language proficiency and grade of LEPs – for all home languages, and all program types</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Median attendance rate 23. Out-of-school suspension rate 24. Retention rate 25. Annual dropout rate 26. 4 and 5 year graduation rates 27. ELA, Math, and Science MCAS pass and proficiency rates 28. Trends in English proficiency over time (by all LEPs, by home language, and by program type) 29. Trends in Annual Dropout Rate Over Time (by all LEPs, by language proficiency, by home language, and by program type) 30. Trends in Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate Over Time (by all LEPs, by language proficiency, by home language, and by program type)
Teacher Qualifications	Provides districts directors with information about human resources available for organize the programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 31. # of Bilingual teachers by language and type of certification. 32. # of Standard curriculum early childhood, elementary, and content teachers with 4-Category Training 33. Teachers dually certified in Early Childhood and ESL 34. Teachers dually certified in Elementary and ESL 35. Teachers dually certified in Content and ESL

directors participating in this committee had manually carried out that analysis.) This hinders the capacity to develop and monitor appropriate programs for ELLs.

Aside from the access to data, available data has to be “translated” in practical terms for those whose use of the data is not at an “expert” level, as is the case of most ELL program planners, principals, etc. Practitioners need to understand how to analyze and use the data in planning and monitoring programs. An example is the use of MCAS data in understanding the achievement of ELLs. Understanding the difference in outcomes of LEPs at the different language proficiency levels brings some realism to the performance expectations of English language learners. It is not the failure of either the student or the school when LEP students at MEPA Levels 1–3 are not proficient on the MCAS. It is, however, a concern when students are not progressing across the MEPA levels and when LEP students at MEPA Levels 4 and 5 are not nearing their English proficient peers on MCAS performance.

Finally, neither the state nor most districts provide parents with information about different programs and their outcomes for LEPs in a way that is accessible to them linguistically or in terms of transparency. Given the critical role of parents, whose power of initiating access to programs for their children is afforded by current law, parents need to be informed about outcomes in different types of programs. Our recommendations appear below, followed by a listing of data points that would support districts’ monitoring of outcomes of English language learners as well as support the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating programs for these students.

General Recommendation	Specific Recommendation
1. Assure that districts have access to and can use data appropriate for planning and monitoring programs and for monitoring LEP student progress.	1.1 Provide districts with data on enrollment, program participation, and outcomes that is disaggregated by grade, home language, and language proficiency of LEPs (see listing of key indicators in Table 15 below) 1.2 Develop a web page in MDESE’s profiles site akin to that available for SPED, listing the key indicators in Table 15 below. ¹
2. Provide district staff with the training necessary to appropriately use data in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of programs for English language learners.	2.1 Organize regional training sessions in cooperation with local institutions of higher education, focused on the use of data for program planning and evaluation.
3. Mandate and support informed choice for parents of ELLs.	3.1 Information about program choices and outcomes should be made available to parents in linguistically accessible form.
Note (1) This is a grouping of indicators by district; http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/gis/sped_map.aspx?orgcode=00020000&	

D. Improve the Identification, Assessment, and Placement of English Language Learners

Both previous research and the data reviewed here show that the systems for identifying, assessing, and placing LEPs in appropriate programs should be streamlined and monitored closely. Recommendations are:

General Recommendation	Specific Recommendation
1. Standardize the identification of students of limited English proficiency and the assessment of language proficiency and disabilities in this group	1.1 Develop regulations on how districts should define and identify students of limited English proficiency by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a clear definition of what constitutes a LEP student and monitoring its application across districts. • Requiring a process of identification that includes multiple sources of data including information from family; oral, reading, and writing assessment results in both L1 and L2; and past school records • Offering options among specific standards-based tests of English language proficiency and monitoring their appropriate administration in the districts. 1.2. Provide support for districts to train front-line staff on the requirements of G.L.c71A.
2. Review re-classification guidance to the districts to insure that students who are eligible for re-classification are sufficiently prepared to function in a general education classroom without support for English language development	
3. Develop clear statewide guidelines and procedures for the testing of LEP students suspected of learning disabilities. Monitor implementation closely.	3.1. Monitor closely the increase in SPED placement among LEPs in districts. Intervene promptly in those districts where the SPED rate surpasses that of EP students or increases steeply over time. 3.2. Develop an addendum or revise the Mass Chapter 71B Special Education Regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to address directly federal law requirements (IDEA 2004 & Regulations 2006) for assessments that are non-discriminatory and are administered in the native language by qualified professionals • that require communication with parents in the native language or mode of communication including team meetings and • to coordinate and integrate the research based ‘language of instruction’ needs of English language learners with moderate and severe disabilities. 3.3 Prioritize the training of ESL-Bilingual professional staff in the areas of speech and language therapy, school psychology, instruction of moderate and severe disabilities and social work to support the assessment of English language learners in the specific area of disability. This is a critical factor in reducing the disproportionate representation of ELLs in special education is the availability of appropriately trained staff to assess the needs of English language learners.

Suggestions for Improving the Process of Assessment of English Language Learners in Districts and in Schools

- ❖ Provide training to front-line staff on the requirements of G.L. c 71A & C 71B, emphasizing the rights of ELLs with and without disabilities to a “free and appropriate education” (FAPE) in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE).
- ❖ Develop and implement a home survey that accurately identifies those students who are native speakers of a language other than English. Assure that all front-line enrollment staff are well trained in the administration of the home survey.
- ❖ Develop and implement a process for testing the English Language Proficiency (ELP) of students whose first language is not English. Provide professional staff trained in the administration and interpretation of ELP tests. Assure a process that brings each NSOL before a trained professional tester. Provide an appropriate environment for testing at the schools and assessment centers designated for this task. Enforce testing guidelines. Monitor the implementation of the process.

- ❖ Communicate testing results to parents in their own language, clearly explaining the programmatic options available for their child and their rights before the law. Parents should be informed about the requirements of the laws from general and special education. Parents should be given the opportunity to make informed programmatic choices for their children – that is, parents should be informed of the academic outcomes that LEP students in the district are experiencing in different types of programs.
- ❖ Parents should also be informed of their right to waive their child’s participation in SEI or bilingual education and the district’s responsibility to provide an alternative program for their child.
- ❖ Parents should be informed that even if they decide to enroll their child in a general education program, their child will be offered language support in his/her education.
- ❖ Develop procedures and implement processes for the appropriate assessment of LEP students suspected of learning disabilities. Testing should take into account students’ proficiency in English, should use language-appropriate tests, and should be administered by testers proficient in the student’s L1. Home assessments should be conducted by trained bilingual professional staff.
- ❖ Communicate assessment and evaluation results in the native language or through a mode of communication that is appropriate to parents’ level of English proficiency. Parents should participate in the process of evaluation and decision-making using their own language.

E. Enrich the Professional Development of Educational Leaders at the School, District, and State Levels

Given that Massachusetts has to implement a rather unique and restrictive method of instruction for English language learners, leaders at the state, district, and school levels need to be more familiar than most educational leaders in other areas of the country about the key elements of the learning process and the methods of teaching of English and content to English language learners. Our recommendation is very simple and straightforward:

General Recommendation	Specific Recommendations
MDESE must develop, implement, and evaluate professional development for state, district, and school leaders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Included in this professional development should be those responsible for planning, developing, monitoring, and evaluating programs for English language learners as well as those charged with the assessment of the academic performance of ELLs and the performance of teachers. 2. This professional development should be included as part of the process of re-licensure 3. The following areas of competence should be addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the laws governing compliance in providing education services to English language learners. • Understanding the process of language acquisition and its implications for program development and instruction. • The use of data in monitoring enrollment and outcomes of ELLs and in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs for these students • Evaluating ELL instruction • Cultural competence for educators

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APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF MEPA PERFORMANCE LEVELS

	Grades K–2	Grades 3–12
Level 1	A student at this performance level has not yet developed simple written and spoken communication in English. Errors (lexical, phonological, syntactic, semantic) consistently interfere with communication, and comprehension is mostly demonstrated either non-verbally, through a few basic words, or in a language other than English.	A student at this performance level has not yet developed simple written and spoken communication in English. Errors (lexical, phonological, syntactic, semantic) consistently interfere with communication, and comprehension is mostly demonstrated either non-verbally, through a few basic words, or in a language other than English.
Level 2	A student at this performance level has developed simple written and spoken communication in English. Errors often interfere with basic comprehension and communication, although the meaning is sometimes retained. Limited lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features of English are present.	A student at this performance level has developed simple written and spoken communication in English. Errors often interfere with basic comprehension and communication, although the meaning is sometimes retained. Limited lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features of English are emerging.
Level 3	A student at this performance level communicates in English and uses the language in the school context. Errors may still impede communication and comprehension; however, the overall meaning is usually retained. A limited range of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features are used, and oral and written communication, although somewhat inconsistent, is usually accurate and understandable.	A student at this performance level communicates in English and uses the language in the school context. Errors may still impede communication and comprehension; however, the overall meaning is usually retained. A limited range of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features of English are used, and oral and written communications, although somewhat inconsistent, are usually accurate and understandable.
Level 4	A student at this performance level is moderately fluent in English and uses the language in the school context with few or minor errors. The student usually demonstrates control of many lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features, with continued support and assistance as needed; and oral and written communication is mostly accurate and usually understandable.	A student at this performance level is nearly fluent in English and uses the language in the school context with few or minor errors. The student usually demonstrates control of many lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features, with continued support and assistance as needed; and oral and written communication is mostly accurate and usually understandable.
Level 5	A student at this performance level communicates effectively in English in the school context with few errors. The student demonstrates control of most lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features, and oral and written communication is accurate and understandable.	A student at this performance level communicates effectively in English in the school context with few errors. The student demonstrates control of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features, and oral and written communication is primarily accurate and understandable.
MDESE: <i>Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) Statewide Results: Spring 2009, 20–24.</i>		

APPENDIX 2. MCAS PASS AND PROFICIENCY RATES BY MEPA PERFORMANCE LEVELS FOR THE 10 PRIORITY DISTRICTS, AY 2009

Source: MEPA data provided by MDESE (requested data provided on 10/8/09). EP data calculated from MDESE (2009h)

LEP pass and proficiency rates represent the rates of MEPA test-takers who also took the MCAS and scores Needs Improvement, Proficient and Advanced (for the pass rate) and Proficient and Advanced (for the proficiency rate). About 95% of all LEPs take the MEPA. Because of confidentiality, particularly for district level data, MDESE did not provide the numbers of students at each grade who also took the MCAS.

English Language Arts (ELA)

BOSTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	78.1%	0.0%	34.2%
04	2	3.0%		0.0%	
04	3	20.6%		2.4%	
04	4	66.8%		10.3%	
04	5	94.9%		39.5%	
08	1	5.3%	90.0%	0.0%	64.6%
08	2	16.4%		1.6%	
08	3	42.3%		5.1%	
08	4	83.0%		21.0%	
08	5	89.7%		50.0%	
10	1	33.3%	93.5%	8.3%	70.8%
10	2	47.6%		4.8%	
10	3	58.9%		6.8%	
10	4	92.9%		21.2%	
10	5	98.6%		47.9%	
BROCKTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	81.0%	0.0%	39.1%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	2.8%		0.0%	
04	4	63.4%		5.4%	
04	5	95.1%		19.7%	
08	1	0.0%	93.7%	0.0%	74.4%
08	2	12.5%		0.0%	
08	3	62.9%		11.4%	
08	4	73.7%		21.1%	
08	5	96.4%		46.4%	
10	1	50.0%	95.4%	0.0%	80.5%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	47.2%		0.0%	
10	4	72.7%		9.1%	
10	5	91.3%		52.2%	

FALL RIVER					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	80.2%	0.0%	30.9%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	6.3%		0.0%	
04	4	57.1%		2.4%	
04	5	100.0%		30.0%	
08	1	0.0%	89.5%	0.0%	64.5%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	18.2%		0.0%	
08	4	71.4%		42.9%	
08	5	100.0%		87.5%	
10	1	0.0%	93.3%	0.0%	67.1%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	90.9%		9.1%	
10	4	83.3%		33.3%	
10	5	100.0%		40.0%	

HOLYOKE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	63.7%	0.0%	21.4%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	9.5%		0.0%	
04	4	29.5%		6.8%	
04	5	85.7%		14.3%	
08	1	0.0%	82.5%	0.0%	55.2%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	32.5%		0.0%	
08	4	46.4%		10.7%	
08	5	83.3%		50.0%	
10	1	33.3%	88.5%	0.0%	58.5%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	52.4%		4.8%	
10	4	60.0%		0.0%	
10	5	100.0%		50.0%	

LAWRENCE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	79.8%	0.0%	31.7%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	32.3%		3.2%	
04	4	67.4%		5.3%	
04	5	96.2%		38.5%	
08	1	0.0%	86.3%	0.0%	53.2%
08	2	28.6%		7.1%	
08	3	58.5%		7.3%	
08	4	73.7%		21.1%	
08	5	100.0%		70.0%	

10	1	0.0%	87.8%	0.0%	52.0%
10	2	10.0%		0.0%	
10	3	14.3%		2.9%	
10	4	64.7%		0.0%	
10	5	83.3%		0.0%	
LOWELL					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	76.4%	0.0%	33.5%
04	2	7.1%		0.0%	
04	3	13.8%		0.0%	
04	4	66.7%		6.3%	
04	5	97.3%		51.7%	
08	1	0.0%	92.1%	0.0%	70.9%
08	2	22.2%		0.0%	
08	3	39.1%		4.3%	
08	4	84.3%		24.3%	
08	5	97.4%		68.7%	
10	1	90.0%	94.3%	50.0%	76.4%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	63.0%		8.7%	
10	4	90.2%		24.4%	
10	5	100.0%		62.5%	
LYNN					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	81.6%	0.0%	39.8%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	14.3%		3.6%	
04	4	55.5%		4.7%	
04	5	93.4%		32.3%	
08	1	0.0%	89.6%	0.0%	67.1%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	41.0%		2.6%	
08	4	86.7%		20.0%	
08	5	91.4%		68.6%	
10	1	12.5%	92.9%	0.0%	70.4%
10	2	9.1%		0.0%	
10	3	66.7%		11.1%	
10	4	89.3%		14.3%	
10	5	100.0%		61.8%	

NEW BEDFORD					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	83.8%	0.0%	33.6%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	0.0%		0.0%	
04	4	70.8%		12.5%	
04	5	100.0%		0.0%	
08	1	0.0%	84.9%	0.0%	55.6%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	41.7%		8.3%	
08	4	88.9%		11.1%	
08	5	100.0%		83.3%	
10	1	0.0%	89.6%	0.0%	57.1%
10	2	33.3%		0.0%	
10	3	57.1%		0.0%	
10	4	66.7%		0.0%	
10	5	100.0%		50.0%	
SPRINGFIELD					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	77.6%	0.0%	31.0%
04	2	11.8%		0.0%	
04	3	21.1%		2.6%	
04	4	58.9%		8.0%	
04	5	87.5%		37.5%	
08	1	0.0%	85.8%	0.0%	53.5%
08	2	12.9%		0.0%	
08	3	31.7%		1.2%	
08	4	56.8%		2.3%	
08	5	85.0%		30.0%	
10	1	16.7%	90.1%	0.0%	54.1%
10	2	31.6%		0.0%	
10	3	64.1%		5.1%	
10	4	72.2%		11.1%	
10	5	85.7%		21.4%	
WORCESTER					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	79.7%	0.0%	37.5%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	23.2%		2.1%	
04	4	72.0%		7.9%	
04	5	99.1%		35.3%	
08	1	0.0%	90.9%	0.0%	66.3%
08	2	23.5%		0.0%	
08	3	40.9%		4.5%	
08	4	82.7%		13.5%	
08	5	96.1%		56.9%	

10	1	0.0%	94.6%	0.0%	72.7%
10	2	33.3%		0.0%	
10	3	56.9%		9.2%	
10	4	89.3%		17.9%	
10	5	95.8%		70.8%	

Math

Source: MEPA data provided by MDESE (requested data provided on 10/8/09). EP data calculated from MDESE (2009h)

BOSTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	6.7%	78.1%	0.0%	29.9%
04	2	9.7%		0.0%	
04	3	38.0%		3.9%	
04	4	75.8%		18.4%	
04	5	94.3%		34.1%	
08	1	3.8%	59.7%	0.0%	30.4%
08	2	13.4%		6.0%	
08	3	23.6%		6.4%	
08	4	37.8%		14.3%	
08	5	60.0%		26.7%	
10	1	66.7%	88.2%	25.0%	64.3%
10	2	71.8%		38.5%	
10	3	66.1%		41.1%	
10	4	83.8%		55.9%	
10	5	85.7%		62.9%	
BROCKTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	85.9%	0.0%	35.4%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	21.6%		0.0%	
04	4	56.4%		6.4%	
04	5	95.1%		23.0%	
08	1	0.0%	65.5%	0.0%	29.4%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	22.2%		0.0%	
08	4	42.1%		15.8%	
08	5	64.3%		21.4%	
10	1	0.0%	86.8%	0.0%	60.6%
10	2	25.0%		0.0%	
10	3	36.8%		10.5%	
10	4	72.7%		36.4%	
10	5	87.5%		50.0%	

FALL RIVER					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	77.2%	0.0%	29.8%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	31.3%		0.0%	
04	4	51.2%		4.9%	
04	5	100.0%		20.0%	
08	1	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	26.5%
08	2	100.0%		0.0%	
08	3	16.7%		0.0%	
08	4	42.9%		0.0%	
08	5	87.5%		25.0%	
10	1	0.0%	83.6%	0.0%	47.8%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	70.0%		10.0%	
10	4	66.7%		33.3%	
10	5	100.0%		0.0%	

HOLYOKE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	66.9%	0.0%	17.6%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	10.0%		0.0%	
04	4	25.0%		2.3%	
04	5	85.7%		14.3%	
08	1	0.0%	42.5%	0.0%	18.0%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	2.5%		0.0%	
08	4	11.1%		0.0%	
08	5	33.3%		0.0%	
10	1	33.3%	77.2%	0.0%	48.1%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	22.7%		0.0%	
10	4	50.0%		0.0%	
10	5	100.0%		50.0%	

LAWRENCE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	25.0%	80.0%	0.0%	32.4%
04	2	20.0%		0.0%	
04	3	34.4%		3.1%	
04	4	71.9%		12.5%	
04	5	96.2%		46.2%	
08	1	0.0%	41.8%	0.0%	15.0%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	7.3%		2.4%	
08	4	26.3%		10.5%	
08	5	80.0%		40.0%	
10	1	0.0%	71.7%	0.0%	33.0%
10	2	22.2%		11.1%	
10	3	41.7%		0.0%	
10	4	41.2%		11.8%	
10	5	100.0%		16.7%	
LOWELL					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	78.0%	0.0%	34.6%
04	2	14.3%		0.0%	
04	3	20.7%		0.0%	
04	4	71.5%		8.3%	
04	5	98.0%		49.0%	
08	1	0.0%	68.0%	0.0%	37.1%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	33.3%		2.2%	
08	4	30.4%		8.7%	
08	5	62.6%		26.1%	
10	1	75.0%	89.0%	37.5%	68.2%
10	2	33.3%		0.0%	
10	3	53.2%		21.3%	
10	4	89.5%		39.5%	
10	5	96.8%		70.5%	
LYNN					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	82.0%	0.0%	37.2%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	18.5%		3.7%	
04	4	60.9%		3.9%	
04	5	94.0%		35.1%	
08	1	0.0%	63.8%	0.0%	31.3%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	10.3%		2.6%	
08	4	23.3%		3.3%	
08	5	45.7%		14.3%	

10	1	0.0%	87.4%	0.0%	61.1%
10	2	8.3%		0.0%	
10	3	47.2%		3.8%	
10	4	82.1%		35.7%	
10	5	97.1%		67.6%	

NEW BEDFORD

Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	86.9%	0.0%	33.7%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	14.3%		0.0%	
04	4	83.3%		37.5%	
04	5	100.0%		0.0%	
08	1	0.0%	54.0%	0.0%	22.6%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	0.0%		0.0%	
08	4	30.0%		10.0%	
08	5	71.4%		14.3%	
10	1	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	45.4%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	0.0%		0.0%	
10	4	50.0%		0.0%	
10	5	50.0%		50.0%	

SPRINGFIELD

Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	78.1%	0.0%	29.7%
04	2	16.7%		0.0%	
04	3	29.5%		3.8%	
04	4	67.9%		13.4%	
04	5	87.5%		22.9%	
08	1	0.0%	36.4%	0.0%	12.7%
08	2	3.6%		0.0%	
08	3	5.3%		0.0%	
08	4	14.3%		0.0%	
08	5	42.1%		21.1%	
10	1	55.6%	77.5%	11.1%	38.6%
10	2	23.8%		19.0%	
10	3	35.0%		10.0%	
10	4	55.6%		5.6%	
10	5	40.0%		13.3%	

WORCESTER

Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	34.4%
04	2	15.4%		0.0%	
04	3	41.5%		8.5%	
04	4	72.5%		17.1%	
04	5	93.1%		45.7%	

08	1	0.0%	57.5%	0.0%	31.0%
08	2	6.3%		0.0%	
08	3	7.6%		0.0%	
08	4	21.6%		7.8%	
08	5	51.0%		19.6%	
10	1	0.0%	86.8%	0.0%	62.0%
10	2	9.1%		0.0%	
10	3	56.5%		12.9%	
10	4	70.4%		14.8%	
10	5	95.7%		43.5%	

Science

Source: MEPA data provided by MDESE (requested data provided on 10/8/09). EP data calculated from MDESE (2009h)

BOSTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	52.5%	0.0%	11.0%
08	2	6.1%		0.0%	
08	3	10.9%		1.5%	
08	4	19.6%		0.0%	
08	5	47.5%		5.1%	
10	1	25.0%	82.5%	0.0%	37.7%
10	2	35.7%		4.8%	
10	3	47.2%		11.2%	
10	4	74.3%		15.9%	
10	5	83.1%		14.1%	
BROCKTON					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	67.5%	0.0%	16.3%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	22.2%		0.0%	
08	4	47.4%		0.0%	
08	5	53.6%		7.1%	
10	1	0.0%	87.9%	0.0%	54.4%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	10.5%		0.0%	
10	4	54.5%		9.1%	
10	5	87.0%		34.8%	

FALL RIVER					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	67.3%	0.0%	20.8%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	16.7%		0.0%	
08	4	42.9%		0.0%	
08	5	87.5%		12.5%	
10	1	0.0%	82.5%	0.0%	47.8%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	40.0%		10.0%	
10	4	66.7%		50.0%	
10	5	60.0%		40.0%	
HOLYOKE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	51.9%	0.0%	11.1%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	2.5%		0.0%	
08	4	14.3%		0.0%	
08	5	33.3%		0.0%	
10	1	0.0%	79.5%	0.0%	20.5%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	50.0%		4.5%	
10	4	66.7%		0.0%	
10	5	100.0%		0.0%	
LAWRENCE					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	47.2%	0.0%	5.5%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	9.8%		0.0%	
08	4	15.8%		0.0%	
08	5	50.0%		10.0%	
10	1	0.0%	70.1%	0.0%	12.9%
10	2	11.1%		0.0%	
10	3	18.4%		0.0%	
10	4	33.3%		0.0%	
10	5	83.3%		0.0%	

LOWELL					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	71.5%	0.0%	24.3%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	17.8%		0.0%	
08	4	25.7%		2.9%	
08	5	65.2%		11.3%	
10	1	63.6%	90.0%	9.1%	50.5%
10	2	20.0%		0.0%	
10	3	43.8%		4.2%	
10	4	70.7%		14.6%	
10	5	86.2%		22.3%	
LYNN					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	67.9%	0.0%	18.9%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	7.7%		2.6%	
08	4	20.0%		0.0%	
08	5	45.7%		5.7%	
10	1	12.5%	78.3%	0.0%	38.0%
10	2	16.7%		0.0%	
10	3	28.3%		0.0%	
10	4	39.3%		10.7%	
10	5	82.4%		32.4%	
NEW BEDFORD					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	54.6%	0.0%	12.2%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	8.3%		0.0%	
08	4	0.0%		0.0%	
08	5	57.1%		0.0%	
10	1	0.0%	70.3%	0.0%	26.5%
10	2	0.0%		0.0%	
10	3	12.5%		0.0%	
10	4	50.0%		0.0%	
10	5	50.0%		0.0%	

SPRINGFIELD					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	48.2%	0.0%	9.0%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	11.7%		0.0%	
08	4	14.6%		0.0%	
08	5	42.1%		0.0%	
10	1	12.5%	66.6%	0.0%	25.0%
10	2	5.6%		0.0%	
10	3	34.4%		6.3%	
10	4	21.4%		0.0%	
10	5	28.6%		14.3%	
WORCESTER					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	65.2%	0.0%	20.4%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	7.7%		0.0%	
08	4	26.0%		0.0%	
08	5	54.9%		15.7%	
10	1	0.0%	88.8%	0.0%	35.8%
10	2	45.5%		0.0%	
10	3	49.2%		1.6%	
10	4	74.2%		9.7%	
10	5	96.0%		24.0%	

APPENDIX 3.

English Language Learners in Worcester Public Schools

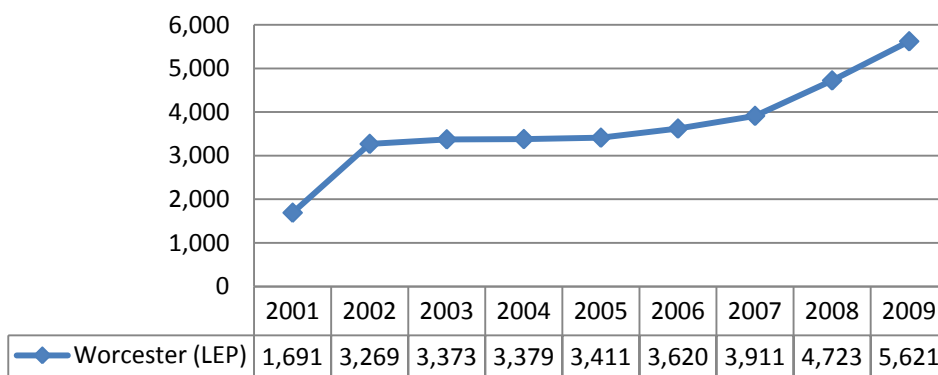
As a way to gather a more detailed understanding of the dynamics influencing educational opportunities for LEP students, the Sub-Committee conducted a case study of LEPs in Worcester, one of the 10 priority districts. This study was based on an analysis of data made available by MDESE and the district, as well as interviews with the Director of ELL Education and with ELL coordinators in the high schools.

The picture that emerges from this case study is that LEP students, a growing share of the student population in this district, are limited in their opportunity to learn English, even at the high school level. They are even more limited, however, in their opportunities to engage with academic subject matter and to develop plans to attend college. The result is high number of dropouts among English language learners in Worcester.

Enrollment

1. The enrollment of LEP students in Worcester has been increasing dramatically in the past decade, rising from 3,379 (13.5%) in 2004 to 5,621 (24.3%) in 2009. (See Figure 1.) This pattern differs from that found statewide, where after the implementation of the changes demanded by Question 2, enrollments dropped and then recovered. In Worcester, ELL enrollments have steadily climbed, more than tripling since 2001.

Figure 1. LEP Enrollments in Worcester Public Schools, 2001 – 2009

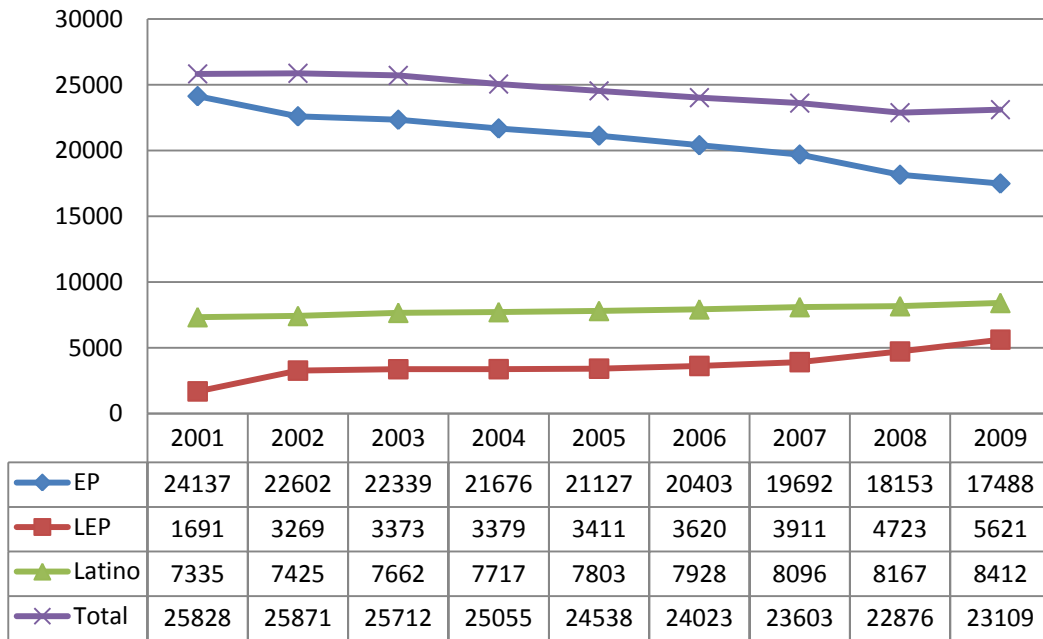


Source: MDESE (2009e)

2. The increase in LEP enrollments in WPS comes in the context of declining enrollments, overall – a 10.5% decline between 2001 and 2009. The decline among EP students is 27%. Latino students, and among them students of limited English proficiency, are the fastest growing groups in Worcester Public Schools.¹⁴ (See Figure 2.)

¹⁴ The racial breakdown of WPS in 2009 was the following: Black: 13.6%; Asian: 7.9%; Hispanic: 36.4%; and White: 39.0%. The percentage of students of low income in WPS was 65.8%.

Figure 2. Enrollment of Selected Groups. Worcester Public Schools, 2001–2009



3. Nearly all LEP students in Worcester (95.7%) are enrolled in programs for ELLs, with the great majority (93.5%) enrolled in SEI programs (Table 1). This is a pattern similar to that observed statewide, though a smaller percentage of LEP students statewide are enrolled in a program for ELLs.

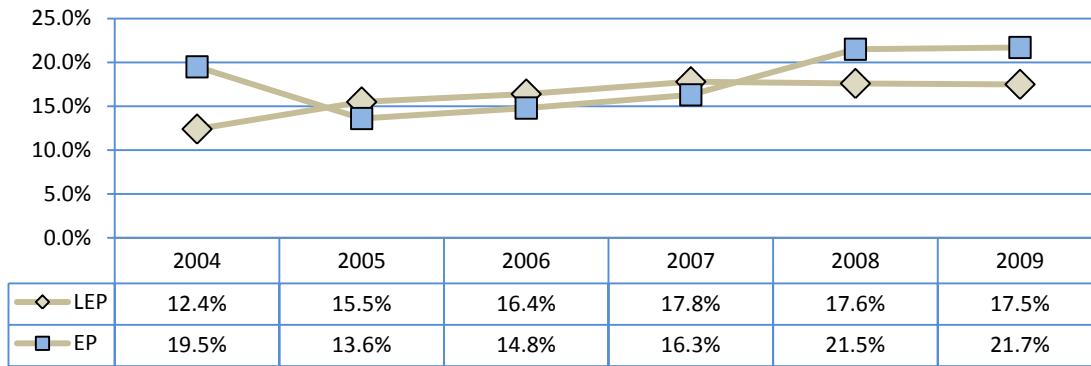
Table 1. Program Enrollment of Students of Limited English Proficiency. Worcester, 2009

	In General Education	In Programs for ELLs	SEI	TBE	2-Way
State	13.9%	86.1%	94.2%	3.3%	2.4%
Worcester	4.3%	95.7%	93.5%	6.3%	0.3%

4. In 2009, WPS enrolled most of its ELL students at the elementary grade level (74.2%), while about 9% of ELLs were middle school students and 17% were in high school (Table 2). These ELL students included students from the large Puerto Rican population living in the area as well as immigrant students. The school system receives ELLs at any grade level.

5. There has been an overall increase in the proportion of LEP students enrolled in SPED programs in Worcester, rising from 12.4% in 2004 to 17.5% in 2009 and decreasing very slightly from 2007 to 2009 (Figure 3). In 2004, 2008, and 2009, the proportion of EP students enrolled in SPED programs exceeded that of LEPs. Still, this rise in the proportion of LEPs enrolled in SPED programs raises concerns because these are not programs specifically designed to support language development and because they may further constrain the opportunities for LEP students to engage with challenging academic content.

Figure 3. Proportion of LEP and EP Students Assigned to SPED Programs. Worcester, 2004–2009

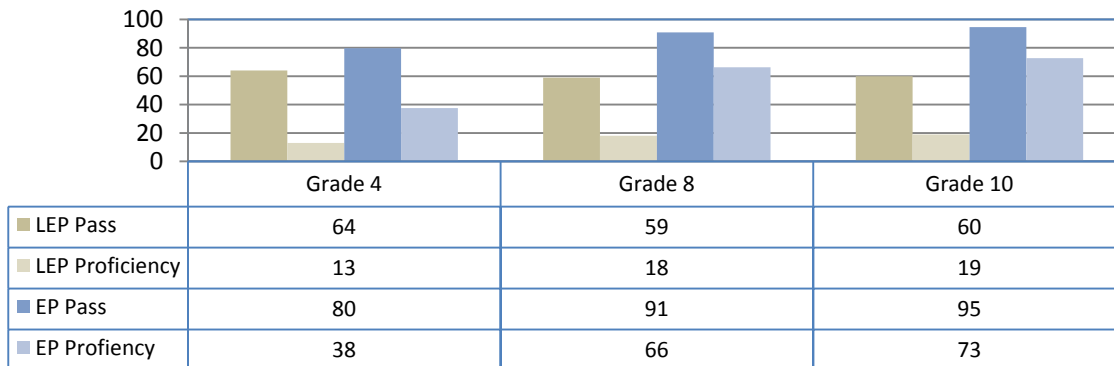


Source: Calculations based on MDESE (2009d)

Student Outcomes – Learning English

1. When we look at pass and proficiency rates in the aggregate, EP students far outperform LEP students, with the widest gaps appearing in high school. The pass and proficiency rates for ELLs in Worcester are lower than those found among LEPs across the state.

Figure 4. Pass and Proficiency Rates in MCAS ELA. LEP Students. Worcester, 2009



Source: MDESE data, http://Profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx

2. As the LEP population is disaggregated by language proficiency, we observe that at all grade levels, the largest proportion of students were at the higher language proficiency levels – Intermediate and Transitioning (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of ELL Students at Various Levels of Proficiency by Education Level. Worcester, 2009

	Beginner	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Transitioning	Total LEP
High School	17.0%	12.5%	38.3%	32.2%	16.9%
Middle School	14.9%	11.8%	27.0%	46.3%	8.9%
Elementary School	21.6%	16.1%	25.9%	36.5%	74.2%

Note: In 2009, Worcester Public Schools reported language proficiency using the former MEPA categories.
 Source: Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/09

3. Table 3 shows the MCAS ELA outcomes by language proficiency using the 2009 MEPA language performance. In this scheme, Levels 4 and 5 roughly combine to form Worcester’s “transitioning” performance level.

- Pass rates in ELA for LEP students in Level 5 of MEPA (high end of transitioning performance level in Table 2) surpass those of EPs at every grade level. Pass rates of those in Level 4 of MEPA are slightly lower but comparable to those of EPs.
- Proficiency rates for those at the highest MEPA Level (5) are low: 35% for 4th graders, 57% for 8th graders, and 70% for 10th graders.
- Compared to EPs in Worcester, proficiency rates for LEPs in Level 5 of MEPA are slightly lower, but comparable, with the widest gap occurring in middle school. We must note that the EP proficiency rates for Worcester are substantially lower than those of EPs across the state.

Table 3. MCAS ELA Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels. EPs and LEPs. Worcester, 2009

ELA					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	79.7%	0.0%	37.5%
04	2	0.0%		0.0%	
04	3	23.2%		2.1%	
04	4	72.0%		7.9%	
04	5	99.1%		35.3%	
08	1	0.0%	90.9%	0.0%	66.3%
08	2	23.5%		0.0%	
08	3	40.9%		4.5%	
08	4	82.7%		13.5%	
08	5	96.1%		56.9%	
10	1	0.0%	94.6%	0.0%	72.7%
10	2	33.3%		0.0%	
10	3	56.9%		9.2%	
10	4	89.3%		17.9%	
10	5	95.8%		70.8%	

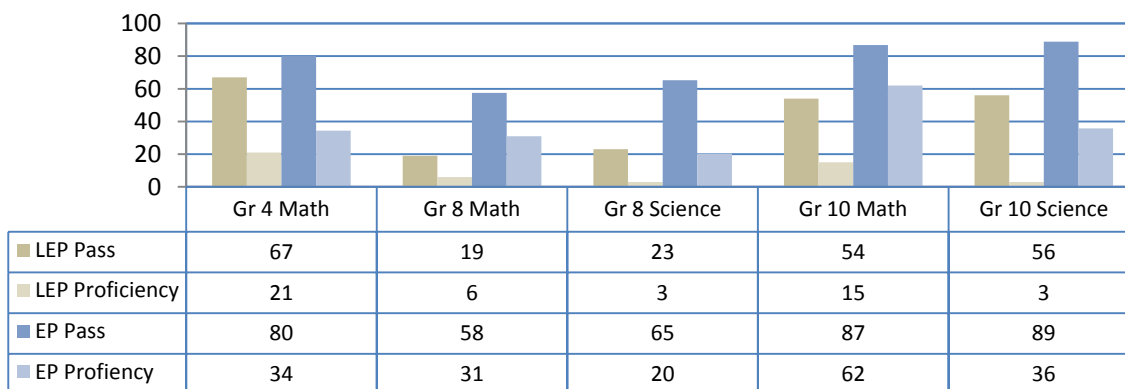
(Source: MEPA data provided by MDESE (requested data provided on 10/8/09). EP data calculated from MDESE data, http://Profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx)

Student Outcomes – Learning Content

1. Low levels of English proficiency result in low levels of academic achievement as measured in the MCAS. As shown in Figure 5, LEPs in the aggregate have lower pass rates and substantially lower proficiency rates on the ELA, Math, and Science exams, as compared to their EP counterparts.

2. In Math and Science, for a number of grades students at MEPA Level 5 attain both passing rates and proficiency rates comparable to those of EP students. However, students at MEPA Level 4 often fall far behind (Tables 4 and 5). Students at all other levels of language proficiency obtain significantly lower

Figure 5. Pass and Proficiency Rates in MCAS Math and Science. LEP Students. Worcester, 2009



Source: MDESE data, http://Profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx

levels of performance in these three subjects. This association results from the fact that the assessment system presupposes command of the English language. In addition, because instruction of subject matter takes place in English, academic input is inaccessible to those students who have not yet acquired a sufficient command of the language. The lower proficiency rates in Math and Science, even for students at the highest levels of language as measured by MEPA, indicate that specific actions are necessary to provide LEP students effective opportunities to learn academic subject matter, beyond focusing on teaching English. It may not be realistic to assume that students with newly acquired English language skills have enough command to access academic content, especially at advanced levels such as those in high school.

Table 4. MCAS Math Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels. EPs and LEPs. Worcester, 2009

Math					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
04	1	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	34.4%
04	2	15.4%		0.0%	
04	3	41.5%		8.5%	
04	4	72.5%		17.1%	
04	5	93.1%		45.7%	
08	1	0.0%	57.5%	0.0%	31.0%
08	2	6.3%		0.0%	
08	3	7.6%		0.0%	
08	4	21.6%		7.8%	
08	5	51.0%		19.6%	
10	1	0.0%	86.8%	0.0%	62.0%
10	2	9.1%		0.0%	
10	3	56.5%		12.9%	
10	4	70.4%		14.8%	
10	5	95.7%		43.5%	

Table 5. MCAS Science Pass and Proficiency Rates by MEPA Performance Levels. EPs and LEPs. MA, 2009

Science					
Grade	MEPA-PL	LEP Pass Rate	EP Pass Rate	LEP Proficiency Rate	EP Proficiency Rate
08	1	0.0%	65.2%	0.0%	20.4%
08	2	0.0%		0.0%	
08	3	7.7%		0.0%	
08	4	26.0%		0.0%	
08	5	54.9%		15.7%	
10	1	0.0%	88.8%	0.0%	35.8%
10	2	45.5%		0.0%	
10	3	49.2%		1.6%	
10	4	74.2%		9.7%	
10	5	96.0%		24.0%	

Source for Tables 4 and 5: MEPA data provided by MDESE (requested data provided on 10/8/09). EP data calculated from MDESE data, http://Profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx

3. Interviews with high school counselors in the district revealed the challenges of making appropriate placements of students whose knowledge of subject matter was at or above grade level but who could not follow lessons in English. At present the district appears to be constrained in its ability to engage these students both as learners of English *and* of academic content, and must instead resort to focusing only on English instruction. These constraints stem from the very cursory training and understanding of language acquisition practices on the part of content teachers and from the limited supervision of content instruction for ELL students at the high school level.

4. The opportunity to learn English in order to master academic content is further influenced by the patterns of allocation of students to schools, a function of the location of residence of immigrant communities. For middle schools and high schools in Worcester, where the zones of residence served are greater, there is more integration, with the percentage of ELL students ranging from 5% to 23% of total enrollment in each high school, where ELL students represent 15% of the total population of students. There is even less heterogeneity in the percentage of enrollments represented by ELL students at the middle school level, where they range from 14% to 25%, for a total of 19% of ELL students. At the elementary level, there is greater deviation among schools from the 34% ELL represent of total enrollments, although in no case is the percentage of ELL greater than twice this proportion – a conventional definition of segregation. In four of the 33 elementary schools more than half of the students are ELL and in five of them less than 20% of the students are ELL.

The large percentage of ELL students in many schools underscores the importance of providing language accommodation as well as high-quality programming for language and academic instruction.

Student Outcomes – Graduation

1. Given the limited special efforts and resources to provide high-quality academic programming that engages LEP students with rigorous academic content while they are instructed in the English language, the engagement of these students in schools is remarkable. LEPs in Worcester attend school at the same rates (94%) as their EP peers. The rates of suspensions and long-term suspensions among LEP students are lower than the rates among their EP peers (Table 6).

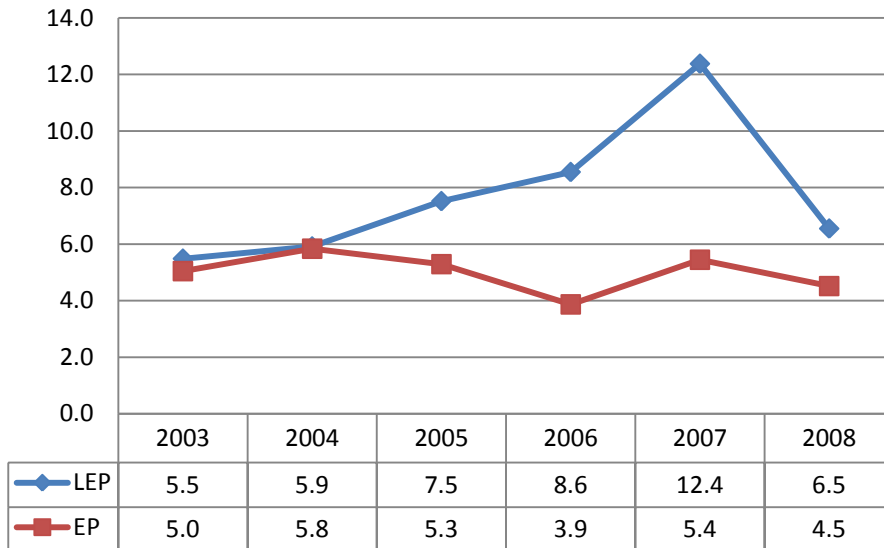
Table 6. Attendance and Suspensions. LEP and EP Students. Worcester, 2009.

	LEP	EP
Total Enrollment	5,637	17,759
Attendance	94.3%	93.8%
Suspensions	14.8%	16.3%
Long-Term Suspensions	0.1%	0.3%

Source: Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/09

2. The cumulative result of the schools’ failure to support some LEP students in mastering the English language as well as mastering academic content is an increase in the number of students who eventually drop out of high school. The annual drop-out rate in Worcester is higher among LEP students than among EP students. Though 2008 showed a decrease in the drop-out rates of both groups, narrowing the gap between LEPs and EPs, from 2003 to 2007, the LEP drop-out rate more than doubled (from 5.5% to 12.4%) while the EP drop-out rate was more steady: 5.0% in 2003 and 5.4% in 2007 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Annual Drop-Out Rate. LEP and EP Students. Worcester, 2003–2008.



Source: MDESE (requested data provided to the Gastón Institute on 05/20/2009)

3. Worcester’s dropout data show that students at the highest level of English language performance – that is, students transitioning into general education programs – show the highest drop-out rates. In 2008, 66.9% of the LEP dropouts were assessed at the transitioning level. The high annual high school drop-out rates among LEPs transitioning into general education suggests that these students do not feel adequately prepared to address the challenges of this transition (Table 7).

Table 7. Dropouts by English Proficiency Level of the Dropout. Worcester Public Schools, 2004–2008

Year	# of Dropouts	English Proficiency Level of Dropout				Total
		Beginner	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Transitioning	
2004	162	11.7%	31.5%	27.2%	29.6%	100%
2005	156	13.5%	26.9%	33.3%	26.3%	100%
2006	139	13.7%	27.3%	28.8%	30.2%	100%
2007	180	18.9%	13.3%	27.8%	40.0%	100%
2008	124	10.5%	8.9%	13.7%	66.9%	100%

Source: Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/2009

4. An analysis of a cohort of students enrolled in ninth grade in 2005 sheds more light on the dropout issue. Only 40% graduated from high school five years later and a full 27% had dropped out over the course of this period. The others had transferred out of state, temporarily dropped out, or were still in school. These findings are consistent with the district’s aggregate records of enrollments.

5. “*Los desaparecidos.*” Each year, about 10% of the students in each grade from grades 1 to 12 “disappear” from the public records. These are students who are reported as having neither been promoted to the next grade nor repeated and they include students who transfer to private schools, drop out, or leave the state. This percentage is much greater in high school, and significantly greater for LEP students than their EP peers. Based on the analysis of this cohort we assume that most of the students who disappear starting in 9th grade are in effect dropouts. In the 9th grade a full quarter of the LEP students disappear, compared to 13% of their EP peers. The corresponding figures for the 10th grade are 17% for LEPs and 13% for EPs; for the 11th grade, 24% for LEPs and 17% for EPs (Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/09).

6. Further attesting to the deficient academic preparation LEP students receive, there are substantial differences in the post-graduation plans of LEPs and their EP counterparts (Table 8). For the class graduating in 2009, LEP students (SEI) were half as likely to plan attending a four-year college than their EP peers, and they were twice as likely to not have plans. While these differences are arguably also influenced by economic constraints facing families, a high school counselor in the district highlighted the importance of college preparation and bridge programs (which included visits to college and support preparing college applications), as having proven successful at helping scores of students in the Commonwealth be the first in their families to access a college education. These programs, she stressed, are urgently needed to support the academic success of LEP students, and are sorely lacking in the district.

Table 8. Plans after High School. EPs and LEPs. Worcester, 2009

	4 Yr Private	4 Yr Public	2 Yr Private	2 Yr Public	Other Post Sec	Military	Employment	Other (Travel)	Unknown
EP	21.0%	18.4%	1.3%	41.8%	2.9%	2.0%	8.4%	0.9%	3.4%
LEP (in SEI)	10.8%	9.2%	3.3%	56.7%	2.5%	0.8%	6.7%	4.2%	5.8%

Source: Worcester Public Schools, 11/20/2009

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, other districts across the Commonwealth experience many of the same challenges Worcester has faced in providing its LEP students access to a quality education, one that will prepare them to graduate from college and to participate in the knowledge-based economy. The Sub-Committee hopes that this case study will serve as a model for the kind of data analysis that should be done at the district level, while highlighting the need for MDESE to halt the race to the bottom by implementing the recommendations outlined in the main text of this report.