

Mapping School Choice in Massachusetts
Data and Findings 2003

Center for Education Research & Policy at MassINC
The Boston Foundation



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Mapping School Choice in Massachusetts: Data and Findings 2003

Report



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Policy Brief

Introduction

School choice is a highly controversial topic in Massachusetts' educational policy circles these days. In recent years, the Commonwealth has offered students and their families a variety of school choice options, but very little funding has been dedicated to studying the impact of school choice. School choice availability and enrollment trends have not been mapped in the Commonwealth, and, as a result, policymakers are forced to shape a policy agenda based upon conjecture rather than evidence. Independent research has not informed the argument; and thus, the school choice discussion remains largely politicized and ideological. As we seek to shape an effective educational improvement agenda, the collection and analysis of data is imperative to better understand the impact and policy implications of school choice. This report presents that data.

Both nationally and at the state level, school choice has been touted as a promising education reform strategy for a range of reasons. Some advocates argue that from an equity standpoint, school choice provides expanded educational opportunities to low-income and poor students, who have been trapped within persistently underperforming schools. Others believe that students' motivation and performance will be greater if families are able to choose the direction of their children's education. Still others assert that choice will lead to better matching of students and schools, thus improving their educational experience. Proponents of market economics believe that the mainstream educational delivery system will become more efficient and effective because increased competition drives innovation and improvement. Many contend that schools, which are freed from the constraints of the traditional system, will become beacons of learning and laboratories of innovation, developing and sharing promising new educational ideas. Philosophically and pedagogically, advocates believe that school choice offers hope for expanded educational equity, opportunity, and improvement.

Though most Americans favor choice in the most important areas of their lives, school choice has been severely criticized here and across the country. Opponents cite concerns, which include the demise of the American common school and the potential for further balkanization of public education by ethnicity, race, class, and income. Others criticize vouchers and the 2002 U.S. Supreme Court *Zelman* decision for blurring the separation between church and state. Critics of market-based public education oppose the profiteering of private companies that are engaged in school and district management, while some resent any diversion of funds from mainstream schools. Others warn that those who are most at-risk will not benefit from a market-based system because they are the least well equipped to compete for school enrollment. In Massachusetts, we have seen this debate intensify – evidenced by calls for a charter school moratorium, dissatisfaction with school finance formulas, demands for tuition reimbursements, and complaints about "creaming" the most easily educated students from mainstream districts. In the current context of severe state and national budget constraints, these tensions are heightened.

The *Zelman* decision, the widespread growth of charter schools, the choice options featured in the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, and various dissatisfactions with standards-based reform all feed the growing policy chatter on expanding school choice. Policymakers are eager for evidence that enables them to weigh the alternatives and enact effective policy. The Center for Education Research & Policy at MassINC, with the support of the Boston Foundation, commissioned this school choice mapping research to fill the informational gap. With this study, prepared by the researchers at the University of Massachusetts' Center for Education Policy, we seek to provide independently gathered evidence to better inform policymakers and researchers and to draw attention to policy issues, which require further attention and investigation. We believe that school choice will continue to play a central role in the education reform debate and that this initial mapping is essential to display and benchmark current school choice phenomena while providing a basis for future trend analysis. Committed to shaping an informed and effective policy agenda, we offer this report as groundwork for a vital and continuing policy conversation.

School choice is a reality for a substantial proportion of families in Massachusetts

A substantial number of Massachusetts’ families and students can make real choices about their education, while others do not have this opportunity. Students have an array of schooling choices, including: charter schools, inter-district and intra-district options, METCO, district-based magnet and pilot schools, private and parochial schools, home-schooling, vocational technical schools, and Chapter 766 private special education schools. At least one in four Massachusetts students are in a setting over which their families exercised some form of choice.

Educational Entities in Massachusettsⁱⁱ

| Educational Institution | # |
|---|-----|
| Mainstream, regular education districts | 300 |
| Commonwealth charter schools (independent) | 41 |
| Horace Mann charter schools (district-based) | 7 |
| Chapter 766 private special education schools | 125 |
| Regional vocational technical schools | 30 |
| Private schools (non-Chapter 766) | 538 |

A notable proportion of Massachusetts’ students and families are choosing to exercise their school choice options, as detailed in the table below. While many

At least one in four Massachusetts students are in a setting over which their families exercised some form of choice.

of the Commonwealth’s students are educated within the mainstream public school system – where many have intra-district choices – many are being schooled in alternate settings. Increasingly, a hybridized system of education is developing in Massachusetts. Without even considering the substantial number of students engaged in intra-district school choice (let alone those who choose to move from community to community for educational reasons), we know that a

minimum of 200,000 students are now participating in forms of choice for which we have data.

In reality, we know that this figure is much larger because this calculation does not include intra-district choice – a phenomenon, which is widespread but difficult to accurately estimate. Though we are confident that the figures are large, exact statistics on intra-district choice are not included in our calculations because data is neither consistently nor centrally tracked, thus is unavailable. At a minimum, we know that populations from Cambridge and Boston (7,046 and 62,414 students, respectively) can be included in the tally because all students in these districts can exercise intra-district choice.

Distribution of K-12 students in Massachusetts –FY02ⁱⁱⁱ

| Type of Schooling | Students (#) | Students (%) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| All public & private schools | 1,072,349 | 100.0 |
| Intra-district choice | Unknown | Unknown |
| Private & parochial schools | 133,440 | 12.4 |
| Regional vocational schools | 25,141 | 2.3 |
| Home-schooling | 2,300 - 20,000 | .21 - 1.9 |
| Charter schools | 14,381 | 1.3 |
| Inter-district choice | 8,318 | .8 |
| Chapter 766 – Special Education | 6,327 | .6 |
| METCO | 3,313 | .3 |

In addition to formalized school choice, families with economic means can also exert choice by moving to a district with a school system in which they feel confident. This manner of “choosing” cannot be easily quantified, but must be acknowledged as a frequently practiced option. Unfortunately, this school choice “strategy” is not a viable option for most low-income and minority students – the group considered to be the most at-risk within the traditional education delivery system.

Choice opportunities are unevenly distributed across the state

For many students, their ability to exercise school choice remains an accident of birth and is determined by family income and zip code. As a result, not all

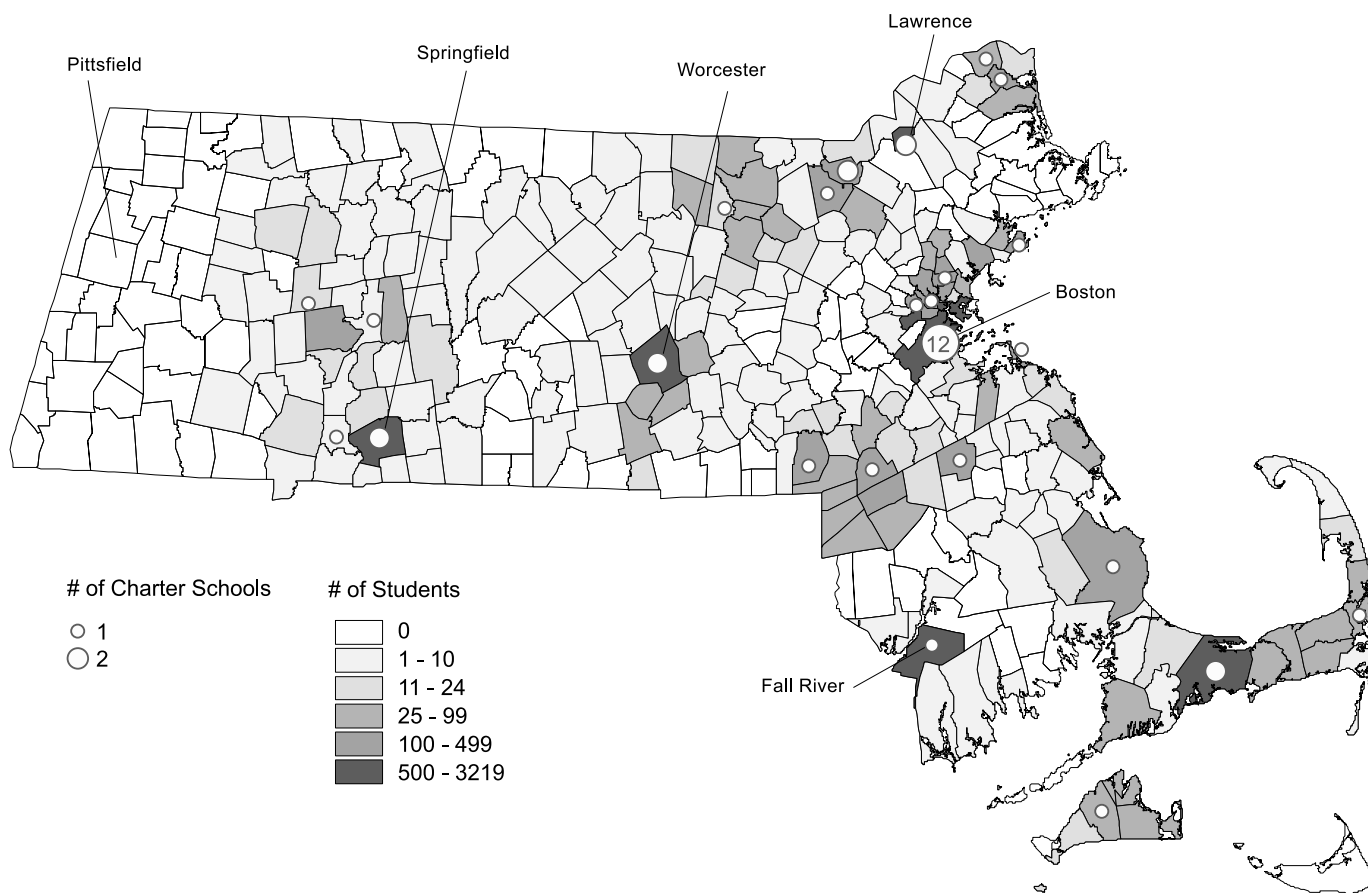
students are benefiting equally from the substantial availability of school choice. A random distribution of choice opportunities and limited enrollment opportunities exist because there are no systems in place to ensure that choice is evenly distributed.

From a geographic perspective, academic options such as METCO and charter schools are not uniformly available to all families. Serving only two urban districts, Boston (3,177 students) and Springfield (136 students), METCO does not benefit students living in the Commonwealth's many other urban hubs. Similarly, charter schools tend to serve urban districts and are less available to students living in rural regions. Nationally, 53% of charter schools are in central cities, compared with 59% in Massachusetts.

Top 10 Districts by Charter School Enrollment

| Rank | Sending District | District Charter Student (#) | District Charter Student (%) | % of Total MA Charter Students |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Boston | 3007 | 4.6 | 20.1 |
| 2 | Springfield | 1454 | 5.5 | 9.7 |
| 3 | Worcester | 1275 | 4.7 | 8.5 |
| 4 | Lawrence | 792 | 5.9 | 5.3 |
| 5 | Fall River | 612 | 4.8 | 4.1 |
| 6 | Lowell | 552 | 3.5 | 3.7 |
| 7 | Malden | 474 | 8.0 | 3.2 |
| 8 | Somerville | 384 | 6.2 | 2.6 |
| 9 | Lynn | 295 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| 10 | Franklin | 275 | 4.7 | 1.8 |

Charter School Enrollment in Massachusetts by District



The issue of geographic concentration is further reinforced when considering that 77% (28) of Commonwealth and 100% (6) of Horace Mann charter schools draw a large proportion of their students from a small number of districts (FY02).

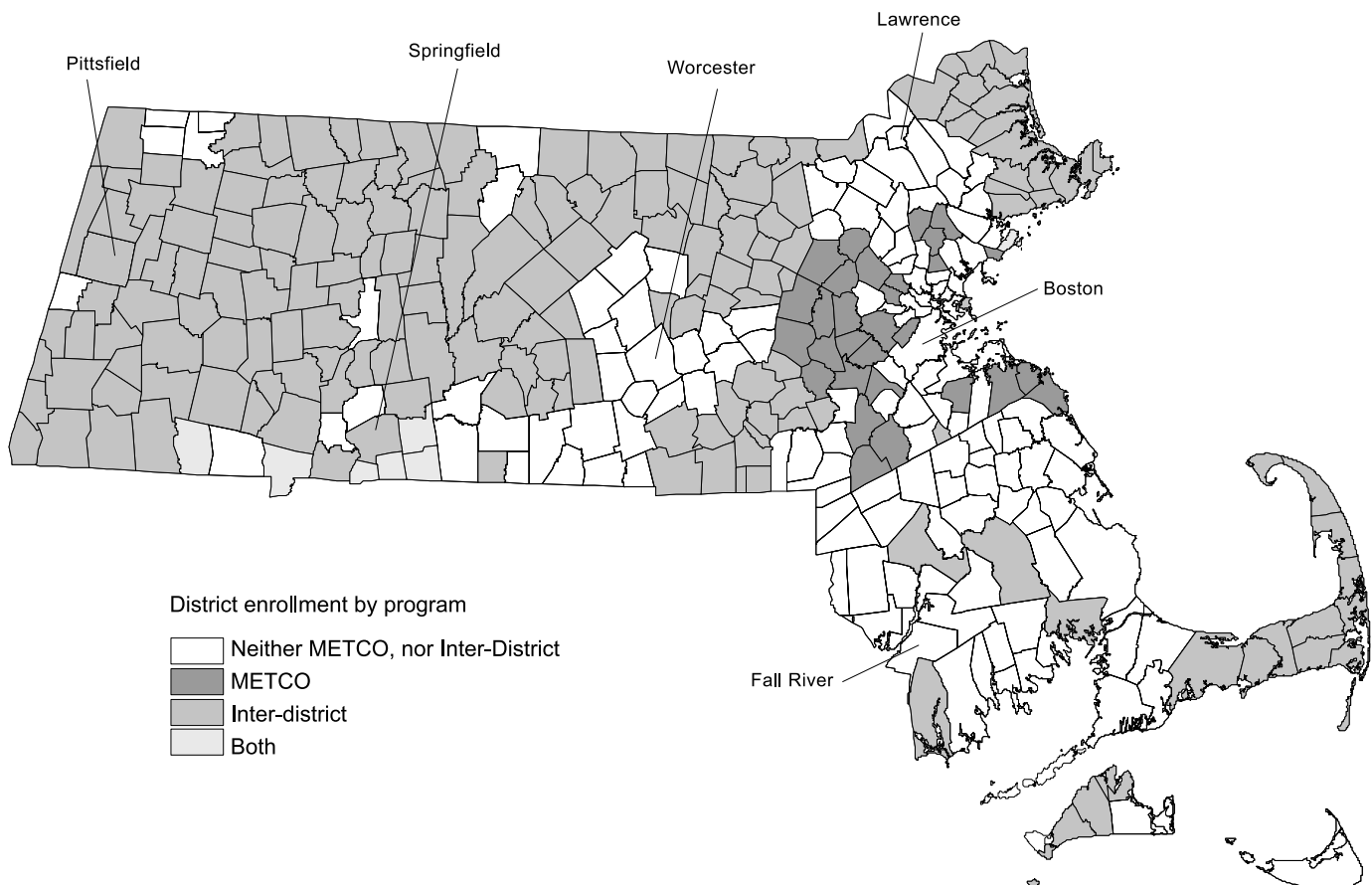
- 274 districts do not contain a charter school.
- 98 districts do not send any students to charter schools.

While charter schools generally serve urban areas, inter-district choice remains a somewhat limited option for these students because many surrounding, suburban districts elect not to receive students from urban regions. Only a 41% (122) minority of non-

charter, academic districts voted to receive students through inter-district choice, thus dramatically limiting the potential of this state-mandated strategy. Aside from METCO, Boston students generally cannot participate in inter-district choice, since none of the mainstream academic districts surrounding the city have chosen to receive students. For this reason, the overwhelming majority (80.9%) of Boston's inter-district choice participants are attending regional vocational-technical schools.

The uneven distribution of school choice is increased by the uneven distribution of family income. Families with economic means are able to move, thus exacerbating the inequity.

Massachusetts District Participation in METCO and Inter-District Choice



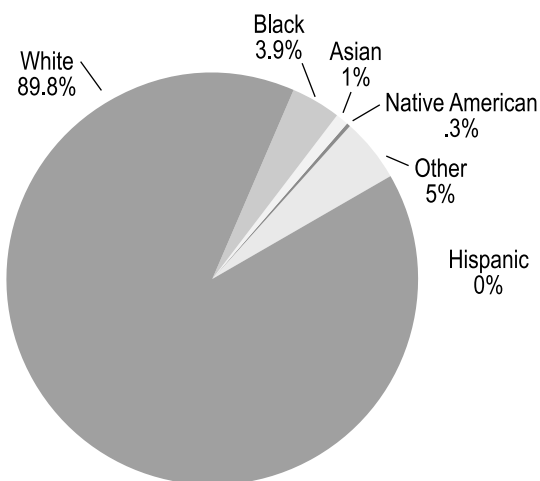
Low-income, minority students are under-represented in school choice participation

From a demographic perspective, public choice alternatives are also unevenly and inequitably distributed. Lower-income and minority populations are under-represented in alternate schooling options.

Statewide, 89.8% of students that participate in inter-district choice are white (compared with 75% of the state's total public school population). As the table below illustrates, inter-district choice seems to lead to accelerated white flight, thus further isolating minority students in districts that, as a matter of state policy, are trying to desegregate.

| Sending District | Inter-District Students % | Inter-District Students # | White Inter-District Students # | White Inter-District Students % | Total White Sending District % | Non-White Inter-District Students # | Non-White Inter-District Students % | Total Non-White Sending District % |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Worcester | 1.9 | 154 | 139 | 90.3 | 51.5 | 15 | 9.7 | 48.5 |
| Lawrence | 1.6 | 132 | 94 | 71.2 | 11.2 | 38 | 28.8 | 88.8 |
| Brockton | 1.7 | 139 | 72 | 51.8 | 41.3 | 67 | 48.2 | 48.5 |
| All MA Students | 100.0 | 8,318 | 7,467 | 89.8 | – | 849 | 10.2 | – |

FY02 Massachusetts Inter-District Choice Students (non-METCO), by Race/Ethnicity



Charter schools serve a population that varies somewhat from that of the sending districts. Proportionate to sending districts, Commonwealth charter schools have somewhat fewer low-income students (37.9% vs. 45.9%), more black students (27% vs. 20%), fewer Hispanic students (16% vs. 24%), fewer bilingual education students (1.3% vs. 10.34%), fewer special education students (8.85% vs. 14.61%), and equivalent numbers of white students (54% vs. 53%).

Unmet demand for school choice is widespread

Families in Massachusetts clearly want to exercise choice over their children’s education. Though significant choice options exist, there is no doubt that demand exceeds current capacity. Long waitlists for METCO and many charter schools illustrate this unmet demand for school choice options. However, true demand for choice opportunities could conceivably be underestimated or overestimated based on waitlist figures. In the case of charter schools, students may have joined more than one waitlist, thus inflating perceived demand. On the flip side, demand may also be underestimated. Students who sought places in charter schools may have been discouraged from applying and subsequently did not place their names on waiting lists. Additionally, if more enrollment opportunities existed, more families might have actively sought enrollment.

Charter schools have no trouble attracting a full enrollment wherever they open. This high demand was anticipated, with state law stipulating that up to 4% of the state’s total public school population can attend charter schools. However, existing charter schools only have the capacity to serve one-third of that projected number, currently enrolling only 1.35% of total public school students. Magnet and exam schools experience a similar phenomenon, resulting in intense competition for continually over-subscribed spaces.

- METCO maintains a waitlist of at least 10,000 students; with an average wait of five years. This waitlist is more than three times the total number of METCO students in FY2002.
- Boston’s four vocational schools received 1,712 applications for 982 spaces in 2001-2. There are now just under 100 students on these schools’ waitlists for particularly popular specialties.
- Charter schools cannot accommodate the quantity of students, who are interested in attending. Statewide, the DOE estimates that charter school waiting lists included 10,975 places in FY2002.
- Statewide, districts with the largest unmet demand for charter schools included: Boston (3,943), Springfield (2,058), Lawrence (599), Malden (453), and Worcester (359).

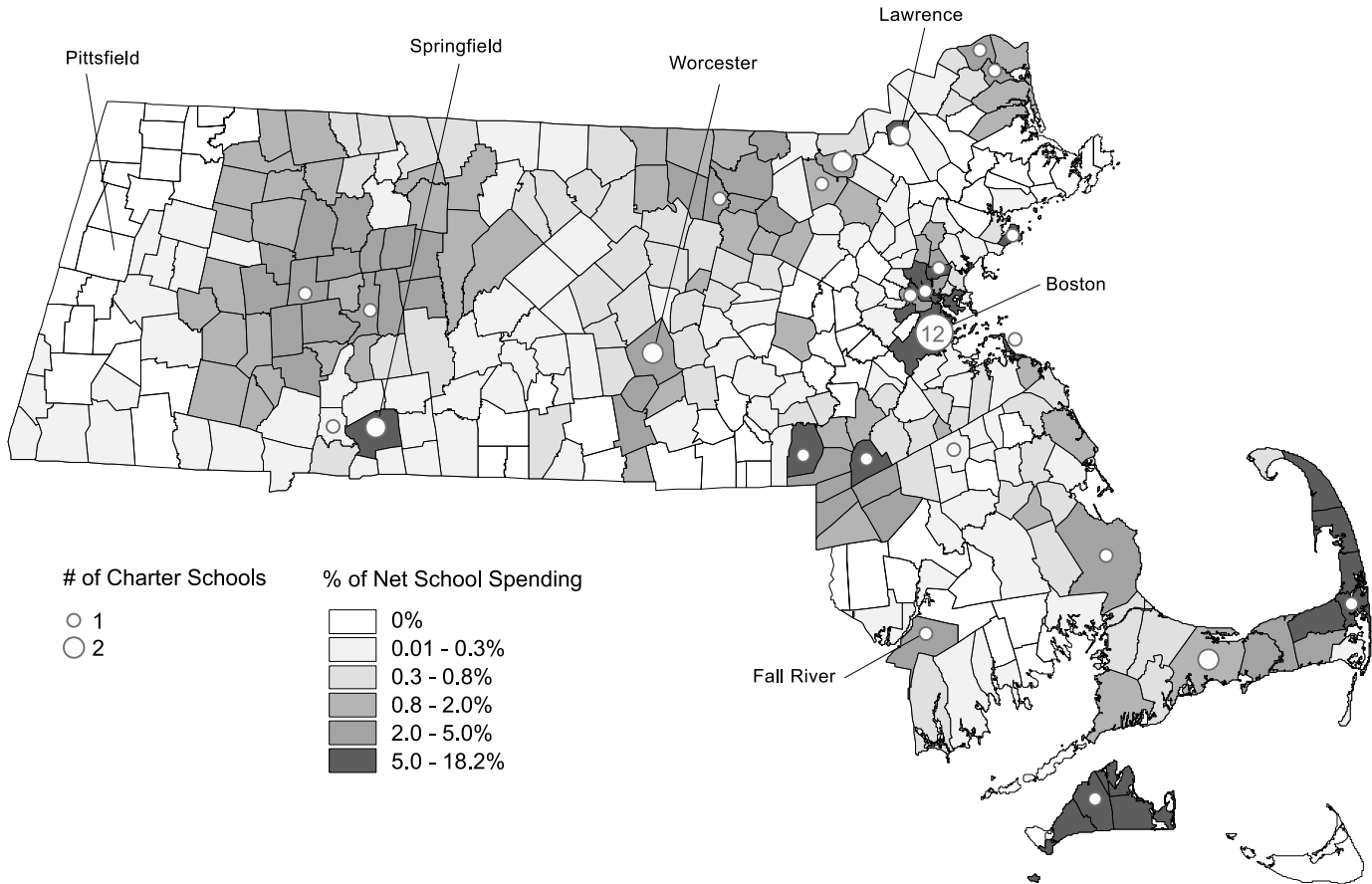
- In the Boston-area, waiting lists for Commonwealth and Horace Mann Charter Schools respectively averaged 305 students and 31 students. The table below details this demand.

Metropolitan Boston Charter School Student Counts – FY02

| School | Waiting List Estimate | Enrollment Estimate | Wait List (% Enrollment) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| TOTAL | 5347 | 4952 | 108.0 |
| Neighborhood House | 1216 | 220 | 552.7 |
| Boston Renaissance | 1109 | 1350 | 82.1 |
| Mystic Valley | 814 | 883 | 92.2 |
| South Boston Harbor Academy | 469 | 240 | 195.4 |
| Academy of the Pacific Rim | 296 | 304 | 97.4 |
| Media & Technology | 220 | 125 | 176.0 |
| Benjamin Banneker | 216 | 357 | 60.5 |
| Lynn Community* | 212 | 270 | 78.5 |
| Conservatory Lab | 204 | 100 | 204.0 |
| City On A Hill | 174 | 231 | 75.3 |
| Marblehead Community | 114 | 176 | 64.8 |
| Health Careers Academy HMCS | 101 | 188 | 53.7 |
| Boston Evening Academy HMCS | 80 | 170 | 47.1 |
| Frederick Douglass | 43 | 136 | 31.6 |
| Roxbury Preparatory | 50 | 168 | 29.8 |
| Codman Academy | 29 | 34 | 85.3 |

*Closed by Department of Education in 2002

Net School Spending on Charter Tuition in Massachusetts by District



The financial impact of school choice can be substantial and is unevenly distributed

Some school districts are experiencing a substantial, negative financial impact from the uneven distribution of school choice. This trend results from the location patterns of charter schools, the availability of inter-district choice options, parent inclination, and the availability of home schooling and private school options. In some larger districts tuition reimbursements are especially hard-hitting, with the losses from tuition reimbursements far exceeding the marginal savings from lower enrollments. Policy-makers will need more data to determine an appropriate mix of choice incentives that does not undermine the effectiveness of public schools.

Tuition Paid by Boston-Area Districts to Charter School (as % of NSS) – FY03

| Rank | Sending District | % NSS to Charters |
|------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Malden | 9.71 |
| 2 | Somerville | 7.30 |
| 3 | Marblehead | 5.95 |
| 4 | Boston | 5.93 |
| 5 | Medford | 5.36 |
| 6 | Everett | 3.72 |
| 7 | Melrose | 3.22 |
| 8 | Cambridge | 2.50 |
| 9 | Stoneham | 1.16 |
| 10 | Wakefield | 1.06 |

Statewide, 132 districts (44.1%) are spending less than 1% of their net school spending (NSS) on charter school tuition payments. However, at the top of end of the spectrum, 16 districts are spending more than 5%.

The city of Boston is currently spending 6% of its NSS. However, the number of charters operating in Boston is still growing, and the Department of Education has projected that Boston will be nearing its 9% NSS cap in a few years.

Inter-district choice impacts schools districts unequally, too, because lower-income districts are more likely to lose tuition income than wealthier ones. Students tend to move towards more affluent districts when participating in inter-district choice (67% of students move to a district with proportionally fewer low-income students than their sending district). Furthermore, more school districts lose tuition money than gain it. Net losses of \$0 – \$499K were experienced by 167 districts (55.9%), in comparison with 68 districts (22.7%) that experienced net gains of the same amount.

Districts Paying >5% NSS to Charter Schools – FY03 (%)

| Rank | Sending District | % NSS to Charters |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Up-Island | 18.20 |
| 2 | Hull | 12.09 |
| 3 | Tisbury | 9.74 |
| 4 | Malden | 9.71 |
| 5 | Nauset | 9.39 |
| 6 | Edgartown | 9.19 |
| 7 | Martha’s Vineyard | 7.75 |
| 8 | Somerville | 7.30 |
| 9 | Oak Bluffs | 6.05 |
| 10 | Lawrence | 6.01 |
| 11 | Springfield | 5.98 |
| 12 | Marblehead | 5.95 |
| 13 | Boston | 5.93 |
| 14 | Medford | 5.36 |
| 15 | Foxboro | 5.31 |
| 16 | Franklin | 5.24 |

Intra-district choice is widespread, though very difficult to track

Though we know the breadth and impact of intra-district choice is significant, exact figures are difficult to quantify because of informal and inconsistent tracking. Officially, 21 districts claim to provide intra-district school choice, but this number climbs when taking into account that intra-district choice occurs through “controlled choice” desegregation plans, magnet schools, pilot schools, transfer waivers, special programs, schools within schools, and other instruments. In districts that do offer intra-district choice, participation varies dramatically from 1% to 100%, depending upon the grade level in question.

Across the state, intra-district choice is constrained by the small size of many districts, which have too few schools to offer any alternatives. A majority of intra-district choice occurs in kindergarten and the elementary grades, though even at these levels, very few districts offer intra-district choice to all students and/or within all schools. At the middle and high school levels, most districts only have one school to “choose;” 206 (68.7%) districts only have a single school at upper grade levels. Decision-making control over intra-district choice varies, occurring at both the central district office level and at the school principal’s discretion.

Massachusetts Districts with Single or Multiple Schools at Each Level, FY02

| School Level | 1 school | 2-4 schools | 5-9 schools | 10+ schools |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Elementary / K-8 school | 74 | 119 | 68 | 19 |
| Middle school | 142 | 35 | 6 | 1 |
| High school | 206 | 14 | 4 | 1 |

Insufficient data exists on intra-district choice enrollment and demand. At a minimum, the following indicators should be tracked so that policymakers can assess access and need.

- How many districts currently offer intra-district choice?
- How many students are participating in intra-district choice, and at what grade levels?

- Within districts that offer intra-district choice, how much space exists at various grade levels?
- How many students are enrolled in magnet schools, and how much demand exists for entry?
- What are the constraints on intra-district school choice?

Meeting “NCLB” mandates for expanded school choice will be challenging

Massachusetts will face a stiff challenge in meeting the mandated expansion of intra-district, and potentially inter-district, choice under the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. This legislation requires districts to provide intra-district choice for students in schools that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least two years, or that have been designated as “persistently dangerous” by state education authorities. Spaces for intra-district transfers are already limited; thus, implementing NCLB mandates will be challenging.

- In Massachusetts, 210 schools are currently failing to make AYP for at least the second year. These schools are in 37 different districts, and nine are charter schools.
- In Boston, 44 schools with 22,500 students were categorized as under-performing for the second year in FY02. If this status persists, these students will be eligible to choose another district school – a number that far exceeds available intra-district spaces.
- In Boston’s East Zone, 20 (67%) elementary and K-8 schools are in their second year of Improvement status; 4 (40%) of middle schools share this designation. Approximately 235 seats are available for the 4,626 students in grades K-5, who have the right to transfer under NCLB.
- In Boston, the only non-vocational inter-district school choice is METCO, with 3,177 (91.6% of all Boston inter-district choice participants).

Federal law states that a district “may not use lack of capacity to deny students the options to transfer” out of under-performing schools. However, in many cases, districts lack sufficient intra-district options to accommodate students wishing to transfer. In these instances, federal guidelines declare that a district must “to the extent practicable, work with other districts in the area to establish a cooperative agreement that would allow inter-district choice.” However, the track record to date with inter-district choice indicates that these NCLB mandates will be difficult to implement.

Vocational & special education choice systems are comprehensive and equitable

Massachusetts has successfully developed vocational and special education choice systems, which provide students with comprehensive and equitable options. As models, these systems demonstrate the viability of developing policy that would expand school choice options to all students on a systemic basis.

Students all across the state generally have access to vocational schooling options. In contrast with other school choice options, vocational technical options are more equitably dispersed throughout the state. Students utilize vocational-technical schools at a significantly higher rate than charter schools or inter-district choice. However, little is known about the actual demand for vocational education – an absence of knowledge that could be addressed with more research.

- Of the state’s 206 operational town districts, 169 (82.0%) are members of regional vocational-technical schools. Within the state’s 55 regional academic districts, 37 (67%) have at least one member town that is also a member of regional vocational-technical school. One independent vocational school district exists.
- There are intra-district vocational schooling opportunities in 39 districts.
- Boston-area students have particularly high access with the option to attend 17 (23.2%) of the state’s 73 vocational technical schools.

- Vocational-technical schools have more special education students than the state average. In fiscal year 2002 approximately 24.4% of regional vocational technical school students were special education students. This is much higher than the figure for non-vocational districts, which had approximately 15.3% of students receiving special education services.
- Regional vocational students are as likely to be eligible for free or reduced lunch as the overall K-12 student population (24.8% vs. 25.3%). However, these figures may underestimate the low-income status of vocational-technical students because teenagers tend to under-report income eligibility.

With its Chapter 766 law, Massachusetts has been a forerunner in making special education opportunities available and has played a national leadership role in promoting the expansion of these entitlements. Historically, special education students (especially those with severe learning challenges) were largely ignored by the public education system. Today, school districts are responsible for providing disabled students with free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. These placements reflect the choices of a team, which is charged with ensuring that the child receives an appropriate education. In the vast majority of instances, teams have decided to accommodate special education students within mainstream public schools, though in some instances alternate public or private placement is deemed more appropriate.

In Massachusetts, a system exists to support families of qualifying children on decisions involving special education options. While questions can be raised about the degree of “choice” associated with special education placements, statistical knowledge about this population is important as an indicator of the quantity of students being served outside of the mainstream public education system.

- Statewide, 150,003 students received special education services in 2001-2002.
- Statewide, 4,959 students received special education services in private day schools during the 2001-02 school year. Another 1,368 were in residential programs.
- Special education students attend 125 private schools in Massachusetts, whose tuition is paid with public funds through the Chapter 766 program.

Boston private & parochial schools disproportionately serve white students

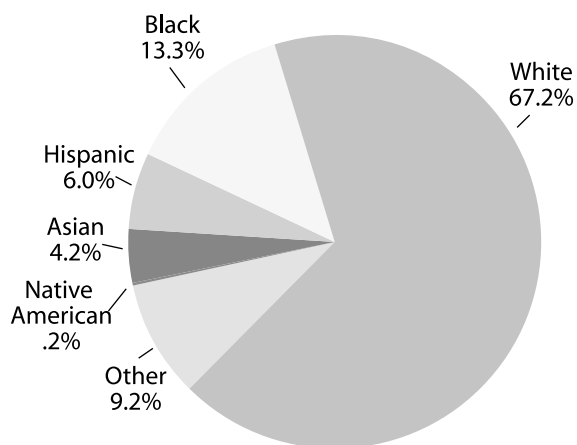
Boston families with sufficient economic means have the choice of sending their children to private, fee-based schools. White students from Boston are disproportionately served by private schools.

In Massachusetts, 538 private and parochial schools (non-Chapter 766) served a population of 133,440 students in K-12 (12.4% of the state’s total enrollment) according to the Department of Education. The majority of Massachusetts’ private school students go to Catholic schools—about 83,000, versus about 50,000 in non-Catholic private schools.

Private school options are especially prevalent in the Boston area. According to DOE data, the Boston area has a larger proportion of its students in private schools than the statewide average (18% vs. 12.4%). Of the 15,405 Boston-area students, who attend private schools, 11,821 (76.7%) of them go to Catholic schools.

Some racial/ethnic groups are less likely than others to be in private schools. Hispanic students are represented at considerably lower rates in private schools than in public schools statewide (4.3% vs. 10.8%) and in the Boston area (6.0% vs. 16.8%). Black students are also somewhat less represented in private schools statewide (6.9% vs. 8.6%) and in the Boston area (13.3% vs. 20.5%).

Metropolitan Boston FY02
Private School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Conclusion – Our Path Forward

From our map of school choice, it becomes apparent that we are at a crossroads. The topography is clearer, but we still have many unanswered questions. Data enables us to know more about the big picture – where we stand as a Commonwealth, what progress has been made, and which challenges lie before us. We know there is substantial school choice participation and opportunity for some students, but significant unmet demand remains. Evidence shows that, while choices exist for many, entitlements and opportunity are unevenly and inequitably distributed. We see that those who are most at risk – lower-income, minority students – have fewer school choice options than others. We know that choice has a major impact on some school districts and little or no impact on others. Equipped with this map, we can make informed decisions about how our policy exploration should continue.

Mapping shows who is participating in school choice and how this choice is segmented. However, we still lack vital data and analysis on why choices are made and how these choices impact individual students, schools, and districts. Additionally, we lack knowledge about how school choice impacts the mainstream system – financially, institutionally, and pedagogically. We must undertake significant qualitative and quantitative research to ensure that policies are informed by evidence and not conjecture, independent analysis and not ideology. Policymakers must carefully consider the data and policy implications before setting the future school choice course for the Commonwealth. Our path forward entails critical examination of the following questions.

- ***What motivates a student and his family to enroll (and remain at) alternative schools?*** What factors influence school choices, and what criteria do families use to inform their decisions? Why are some families choosing and others not? Where do families get the information that informs their choices? How involved are students in the school choice?
- ***Are students and parents satisfied with their choices?*** What level of satisfaction do students and their families experience with their chosen school? How frequently do students who leave the mainstream system return, and for what reasons?

- ***Does school choice impact student performance?*** Can changes in student achievement and motivation be seen? By increasing educational options for families, do we improve the likelihood of effective school/student matching?
- ***Does school choice generate constructive competition within the overall educational system?*** Is there evidence that this competitive pressure has resulted in innovation or improvement? Has it enhanced quality and diversity of educational offerings in either mainstream or alternative schools?
- ***How does school choice impact schools and districts financially?*** What are the costs and benefits of school choice to mainstream public school systems? How should current financial formulas be revised to minimize the negative impact of tuition reimbursement on mainstream districts and/or to assist with the capitalization costs faced by charter schools?
- ***What is the effect of school choice in cities and their contiguous suburbs?*** Why do some towns choose to opt in or out of inter-district choice? How does expansion of choice – including the new mandates from No Child Left Behind – interact with desegregation orders? How do school choice programs affect diversity in other jurisdictions? Do choice programs appear to enhance socio-economic and racial diversity in schools? What strategies can be leveraged to enable the Commonwealth to meet No Child Left Behind’s mandates for expanded school choice?
- ***Which school choice policies might result in a more equitable distribution of school choice opportunities?*** Have other states and jurisdictions found ways and means of distributing choice opportunities more equitably?

Answers to these questions require data gathering, analysis and discussion of potential policy implications. In Massachusetts, the education system can be increasingly described as a mixed delivery model – with public, private, and quasi-public providers – as is the case in the healthcare and early childhood education sectors. Mapping and research must continue to provide the data for analysis needed to inform policymaking and enable leaders to determine the right balance of school choice options and incentives.

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ⁱ The Metropolitan Council on Educational Opportunity (METCO) has operated an inter-district choice program, separate from the state's School Choice law, in the Boston and Springfield regions since 1965. A state-funded program, whose goals are enhanced educational opportunity for urban children and voluntary integration of suburban public schools, allows Boston and Springfield students to attend school in nearby suburbs. Though METCO enrolls a small number of students (.3% of the total student population), it was explicitly designed to accelerate desegregation in urban areas and enrolls an overwhelming majority of black and Hispanic students.

ⁱⁱ For more detailed information on data sources, please see the full text of the report.

ⁱⁱⁱ 616 students are listed as participating in both regional vocational schools and inter-district choice.

Preface

School choice is an extremely complex policy area, encompassing a wide variety of government programs and family motivations. Given increased attention to school choice as a means of improving schools, demands for policy changes to further stimulate choice options, and a fair amount of contentious debate on the subject, the Center for Education Research and Policy at MassINC believes that it is important to inform policymaking in this area by collecting and analyzing the relevant data on the subject. The Center, therefore, contracted with the Center for Education Policy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, School of Education to develop a quantitative picture of the degree to which Massachusetts students and their families are utilizing the current range of school choice options.

This report describes the various school choice options and the extent of each in Massachusetts. To the extent possible using current data, the report includes: (1) information on the national context, (2) statewide information on utilization of each of the options, and (3) an in-depth look at school choice dynamics in the metropolitan Boston area.

This report is intended to provide baseline data, rather than in-depth analysis of the status of school choice in Massachusetts. This report is meant to inform the current work of policymakers as they formulate school choice policy and is intended to provide a foundation for longer-term policy analysis.

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Definitions

School Choice Any situation in which a student is attending a school other than the public school to which he or she would be assigned on the basis of an attendance zone.

Charter Schools The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 included, among its provisions, the creation of a small number of new independent public schools; charter schools have been operating in Massachusetts since 1995. Charter schools must follow the same state educational standards, administer the same state tests, and abide by most of the same laws and regulations as other public schools. However, they are given the freedom to organize their activities around a core mission, curriculum, theme, or teaching method, and they are allowed to set their own budgets as well as manage their own staff. In return for this freedom, a charter school must show evidence of success in order to have its charter renewed, every five years. There are two types of charter schools: Commonwealth and Horace Mann.

Commonwealth Charter Schools. A Commonwealth charter school operates under a five-year charter from the state Board of Education, independent of any school committee or local school district. It may also operate without collective bargaining agreements. Parents, teachers, non-profit organizations, or community leaders start Commonwealth charter schools. Commonwealth charter schools also do not receive state funds for capital expenses such as buildings and equipment.

Horace Mann Charter Schools. A Horace Mann charter school is a former district public school or part of a public school that operates under a five-year charter approved by the local school committee, the local teachers' union president, and the Board of Education. A Horace Mann school, depending on the terms of its charter, may also be free from some local school district rules and some provisions of the local collective bargaining agreement and regulations.

For each child a Commonwealth charter school enrolls, it receives a sum from the state equal to the average cost per student in the school district in which that child resides. The state then deducts the same amount from the sending district's state aid account. School districts, however, have received additional state funds in order to partially or fully "reimburse" them for losses to charter schools, until 2003 when this reimbursement was vetoed by the governor. Governor Romney's FY04 budget proposal would partially restore the reimbursements to sending districts. Under the law, no school district's total charter school tuition payment to Commonwealth charter schools can exceed nine percent of the district's net school spending, except in a few special cases. Funding for a Horace Mann charter school comes as a lump sum directly from the school district in which the school is located.

Charter schools may not discriminate on the basis of academic achievement or mental or physical disability, and they must comply with the same state and federal laws regarding the provision of special education services that apply to other public schools. However, they are not fiscally responsible for students with particularly severe special needs that require them to be placed in separate day or residential schools. If a charter school student requires such services, the fiscal responsibility remains with the school district in which the student resides.

Inter-district school choice allows any student to attend schools in communities other than the city or town in which he/she resides—provided the receiving district has chosen to accept school-choice students. Inter-district choice, in this sense, is an individual-level entitlement, though it is limited to the pool of participating "receiving" districts. Each district publicly chooses each year whether or not to receive school-choice students from other districts during the upcoming school year. If a school committee chooses not to accept school choice pupils from other districts, it must take a vote and report the result to the Department by the end of June. Districts may also choose to accept outside pupils only in certain grades. In FY02, 122, or 41%, of non-charter, academic districts chose to receive school-choice students. Tuition is paid by the sending district to the receiving district, and is capped at \$5,000 per full-time student, except for special education students with Individual Education Plans, for whom the full cost of services is paid.

Inter-District Choice

The Metropolitan Council on Educational Opportunity (METCO) has operated an inter-district choice program, separate from the state's School Choice law, in the Boston and Springfield regions since 1965. This state-funded program, whose goals are enhanced educational opportunity for urban children and voluntary integration of suburban public schools, allows Boston and Springfield students to attend school in nearby suburbs.

METCO

Intra-district school choice refers to programs that allow families to choose among schools within the school district in which they live. The possible forms of intra-district choice include: district-wide open enrollment in some or all grade levels, magnet schools, "controlled choice" programs in which families choose schools as part of desegregation plans, and the new federal requirement that students in schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) in two consecutive school

Intra-District Choice

years be given the option of transferring to a different school that is making AYP. Racial desegregation orders, transportation issues, and parent perceptions of the relative quality of schools all affect the implementation of intra-district choice.

Private Schools Families may choose to send their children to privately operated schools at their own expense. There is tremendous diversity in the size of Massachusetts private schools, their tuition charges, and in the geographic range from which they draw students.

Home-Schooling Massachusetts law allows families to school their children at home, provided that they have a home-schooling plan approved by the Superintendent of Schools for the district in which they live.

Vocational-Technical Schools Families may also choose vocational-technical high schools for their children. There are four general categories of vocational-technical programs: regional schools, independent schools, city schools, and programs within districts' comprehensive high schools.

Regional Vocational-Technical Schools. Chapter 74 of the Massachusetts education regulations designates and governs regional vocational-technical schools. There are 29 regional vocational-technical schools in the state, each of which is treated as a separate school district by the Department of Education. The regional vocational-technical schools have member districts, which pay annual tuition assessments to their vocational schools based on average usage/participation. Of the state's 206 operational town districts, 169 are members of regional vocational-technical schools. Of the state's 55 regional academic districts, 37 have at least one member town that is also a member of regional vocational-technical school.

Independent Vocational-Technical School. Massachusetts also has one independent vocational-technical school, Northampton-Smith Regional. This school is run like a regional vocational-technical, but does not have member towns. All students are considered "out of district" and towns are required to pay out of district tuition for all participating students.

City Vocational Technical Schools. Some towns that are not affiliated with a regional vocational technical school have vocational and technical options available within their districts. In these districts, city vocational-technical schools are an intra-district choice option for students in the higher grades (generally grades 9-12). Students may select a city vocational-technical school as opposed to another district high school. If these services are not available, some regional vocational-technical schools also accept students from towns that are not part of their membership, with the students' sending districts paying tuition as part of inter-district school choice.

Special Education (Chapter 766) Placements School districts are responsible for providing a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment education for students with disabilities. In the vast majority of cases, students' home districts are able to meet their special needs. When this is not possible, a student may attend a special education program run by an educational collaborative or by another public school district.

A school district may place a student in an approved special education program if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the child. There are 125 special education schools in Massachusetts that have been approved under Chapter 766 of Massachusetts education regulations or the subsequent 603CMR Section 28—these schools are thus often referred to as "Chapter 766 schools." Approved schools are generally privately-run and can offer either day or residential services. School districts contract with these schools—which range from specialized schools for severe disabilities, such as Perkins School for the Blind, to schools for severe emotional disabilities—on a per student basis when they are unable to meet a student's needs "in-house". A school district

may place a student in an out-of-state program if it believes that such program is the most appropriate for the student.

The school choice program (M.G.L. c.76 s.12B) requires the Department to set tuition rates for students with individual education plans reflecting the full cost of such services. These rates are not subject to the \$5,000 tuition rate cap. The state has paid approximately half the tuition cost for special education students placed in private, residential schools under the so-called “50/50” program, administered by the Department of Education. However, the current appropriation is insufficient to pay all anticipated claims for FY03. In past years, the Legislature has covered shortfalls in the program through either supplemental appropriations or authorization to use funds from the following fiscal year. Due to the Commonwealth’s current fiscal situation, such relief is not expected in FY04.

About the Data

To ensure comparability, and because not all data analyses for the 2002-2003 academic year have been completed at the Department of Education, we have used data from the 2001-2002 academic year (Fiscal Year 2002) unless otherwise indicated.

Most of our data were provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education. These include both district- and school-level aggregate data from the “October 1” enrollment reports, and individual-level data on students participating in inter-district choice and Commonwealth Charter Schools. We used the student-level data to determine the overall demographics of the student populations; we did not request or have access to the student identification numbers on the individual-level records.

We collected additional data through surveys of superintendents in the Metropolitan Boston area, as well as those whose districts offer intra district school choice. We also contacted the Boston Public Schools and other organizations with specific questions.

School Districts

In FY02, there were 481 school districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Of these, 108 are non-operating districts, which operate no schools of their own and either participate in a regional district or pay tuition for their children to attend school in nearby districts. Most of the operating districts (245) serve a single town, but there are also 55 regional academic school districts, for a total of 300¹ regular academic school districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, as of FY03, there are 48 charter schools and 30 regional vocational-technical schools, which the Department of Education counts as separate school districts.

The “Boston Area”

This report supplements statewide data with additional information on the dynamics of school choice in the Boston area. We define this area as consisting of the area inside Route 128, including the following districts: Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Dedham, Everett, Lexington, Lynn, Malden, Marblehead, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Nahant, Newton, Peabody, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Somerville, Stoneham, Swampscott, Wakefield, Waltham, Watertown, Winchester, Winthrop, and Woburn, plus all charter and vocational schools that receive students from these districts.

Income Categories

In order to compare the poverty levels of students from different districts, we have divided the state’s mainstream, public districts into five income categories, according to the percentage of their students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunches in 2001.²

Detail of District Income Categories

| District Category | % of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch | Total Enrollment | Enrollment as % of Total State Enrollment | # of Districts |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Highest Income | Less than 5% | 173,734 | 18.1% | 73 |
| High Income | 5%-10% | 208,126 | 21.7% | 93 |
| Middle Income | 11%-23% | 204,244 | 21.3% | 101 |
| Low Income | 24%-49% | 193,726 | 20.2% | 50 |
| Lowest Income | 50% or more | 178,619 | 18.6% | 10 |
| Total | | | | 327³ |

¹ This number includes 299 regular school districts and one district comprised of the state’s institutional schools for hospitalized students.

² According to the guidelines for the federally assisted school lunch program, children in families, whose income is 130% of the poverty-level income, or less, are eligible for free school lunches. Children in families whose income is 185% or less of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price school lunches.

The context: A variety of K-12 schools and districts in Massachusetts

- 300 mainstream, regular-education districts
- 48 charter schools – 41 Commonwealth (independent) and 7 Horace Mann (district-based)⁴
- 30 regional vocational-technical schools⁵
- 125 “Chapter 766” private special education schools
- 538 other private schools

The options: Types of school choice

- Charter schools
- Inter-district school choice
- METCO
- Intra-district school choice
- Private and parochial schools
- Home-schooling
- Vocational options
- Special education programs

Massachusetts school choice participation at a glance

A notable proportion of Massachusetts’ students and families are choosing to exercise their school choice options, as detailed in the table below. While many of the Commonwealth’s students are educated within the mainstream public school system – where many have intra-district choices – many are being schooled in alternate settings. Increasingly, a hybridized system of education is developing in Massachusetts. Without even considering the substantial number of students engaged in intra-district school choice (let alone those who choose to move from community to community for educational reasons), we know that a minimum of 200,000 students are now participating in forms of choice for which we have data. When considering intra-district school choice numbers, we estimate that at least one in four Massachusetts students are in a setting over which their families exercised some form of choice.

Distribution of K-12 students in Massachusetts –FY02⁶

| Type of Schooling | Students (#) | Students (%) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| All public & private schools | 1,072,349 | 100.0 |
| Intra-district choice | Unknown | Unknown |
| Private & parochial schools | 133,440 | 12.4 |
| Regional vocational schools* | 25,141 | 2.3 |
| Home-schooling | 2,300-20,000 | .021-1.9 |
| Charter schools | 14,381 | 1.3 |
| Inter-district choice* | 8,318 | .8 |
| Chapter 766 – Special Education | 6,327 | .6 |
| METCO | 3,313 | .3 |

*616 inter-district choice students are in regional vocational-technical schools

³ This number excludes the institutional schools, which are counted as one district, and two very small districts—Gosnold and Manchester-Essex—which have a total of two students between them.

⁴ FY03 data

⁵ This figure includes the state’s one independent vocational-technical school.

⁶ Table sources: All public and private schools: DOE School Attending Children Report, FY02; Private and parochial schools: DOE October 1 Report, FY02; Regional Vocational Schools: DOE October 1 Report, FY02; Home-schooling: low estimate based on UMass CEP survey of Boston-area districts, high estimate from MA Family Resource Center, Salem MA, which was consistent with national estimates in US OERI report (see References); Charter schools: data provided by DOE charter schools office; Inter-district choice: data provided by DOE finance office; Chapter 766: data provided by DOE; METCO: data provided by DOE METCO office.

Charter Schools

Charter School Enrollment: 14,381 students

Charter schools have a range of effects on sending school districts.

In FY02, a total of 28 Commonwealth Charter Schools (77% of Commonwealth charter schools) drew a large proportion of their students from a small number of districts, and thus can be said to have had a *concentrated effect* on district public schools. Others draw from a larger set of districts, and thus can be said to have a more *diffuse effect* across a broader geographic range.

The 25 districts that send the largest numbers of students to charter schools are an extremely varied group, including the state's three largest districts as well as some slightly smaller districts with low-performing public schools, plus an assortment of districts that are neither large nor especially troubled, but happen to have charter schools in or near them.

Tuition payments to Commonwealth Charter Schools generally may not exceed 9% of a district's overall net student spending (NSS).⁷ In the Boston area, for example, the following chart shows percentage of NSS paid by sending districts to charter schools in FY03.

Percentage of Net School Spending Paid by Boston-Area Districts to Charter Schools, FY03

| Sending district | % NSS to charter schools | Sending district | % NSS to charter schools | Sending district | % NSS to charter schools | Sending district | % NSS to charter schools |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Malden | 9.71 | Stoneham | 1.16 | Watertown | 0.18 | Waltham | 0.02 |
| Somerville | 7.30 | Wakefield | 1.06 | Swampscott | 0.15 | Newton | 0.01 |
| Marblehead | 5.95 | Chelsea | 0.54 | Winthrop | 0.15 | Brookline | 0 |
| Boston | 5.93 | Salem | 0.50 | Lynn | 0.13 | Belmont | 0 |
| Medford | 5.36 | Revere | 0.37 | Quincy | 0.10 | Dedham | 0 |
| Everett | 3.72 | Nahant | 0.28 | Saugus | 0.09 | Lexington | 0 |
| Melrose | 3.22 | Woburn | 0.22 | Milton | 0.06 | Peabody | 0 |
| Cambridge | 2.50 | Arlington | 0.20 | Winchester | 0.03 | | |

Do charter schools “cream?”

One argument of charter school opponents has been that charter schools may “cream,” or attract affluent students, white students, and students with fewer special needs from the mainstream public schools. Our data show that, relative to sending districts, Commonwealth charter schools have proportionately fewer low-income students (37.9% vs. 45.9%), more black students (27% vs. 20%), fewer Hispanic students (16% vs. 24%), fewer bilingual education students (1.3% vs. 10.3%), and fewer special education students (8.9% vs. 14.6%).

Approximately 60-63% of charter school students are attending schools with state MCAS performance ratings that are no higher than those of their sending district; 21-30% are attending schools with higher performance ratings, and 10-15% are attending schools with lower performance ratings.

⁷ Net school spending (NSS) encompasses nearly all of a school district's operating expenditures, and includes those municipal outlays that indirectly benefit school districts. It does not include transportation or capital expenditures, because those are funded through separate state aid accounts. (*Report of the Foundation Budget Review Commission*, June 2001)

Inter-District Choice and METCO

Inter-District School Choice Enrollment: 8,318 students

METCO Enrollment: 3,313 students

Many districts participate in inter-district school choice.

By law, all Massachusetts districts must pay tuition for their students to attend school in other, participating districts through the inter-district choice program, if students so choose (except in METCO, an older choice program in Boston and Springfield whose students' tuitions are paid by the state). A total of 41% of academic districts enroll students from other districts through the inter-district school choice program. There are 79% that either "send" or receive inter-district choice students.

Massachusetts Districts' Participation in Inter-District School Choice, FY02

| Type of Activity | Districts (#) |
|---|---------------|
| Both "send" and receive | 116 |
| Receive students, but don't have students out-of-district | 6 |
| Have students out-of-district, but don't receive | 120 |
| Neither "send" nor receive | 58 |

About as many districts gain students through inter-district choice as lose them.

A small majority (67) of the districts that both send and receive students through school choice have net enrollment gains because of the program. Sixty-four of the 67 districts with enrollment gains were in the middle-income category or above. This suggests that: (1) when districts receive students through inter-district school choice in addition to "sending" them, they tend to experience a net enrollment gain, but (2) the likelihood of a gain is less for low- and lowest-income districts.

If districts receive out-of-district students, they tend to "break even" on enrollment.

Of the state's 300 school districts, 120 (40%) have students attending schools in other districts but enroll no out-of-district students. As a result, they have a net enrollment loss to School Choice. But, if districts both "send" and receive School Choice students, they tend at least to break even.

In our survey of participating inter-district choice districts, one-third of respondents said all of their choice slots were full, and another 12% said that they were at capacity in some grades.

But more districts lose tuition money than gain it.

School choice tuition charges are assessed against sending districts and paid to receiving districts. The following table shows net financial impact on districts.

Financial Impact of Inter-District School Choice on Massachusetts Districts, FY02*

| Net Gain | Districts (#) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Between \$499,999 and \$0 | 68 |
| Between \$999,999 and \$500,000 | 8 |
| \$1 million or more | 3 |
| Net Loss | Districts (#) |
| Between \$0 and (\$499,999) | 167 |
| Between (\$500,000) and (\$999,999) | 5 |
| (\$1 million or more) | 3 |

**Includes regional vocational- technical districts*

Students tend to move to more affluent districts with higher MCAS scores.

Analysis of individual-level data on school choice shows that 67.6% of students have a “receiving” district with proportionately fewer low-income students than their “sending” district. In other words, the evidence suggests that students tend to move towards more affluent districts when given the choice.

On the basis of MCAS scores, 54.3% of inter-district school choice students choose receiving districts with higher mathematics performance ratings and 41.2% choose districts with higher English language arts (ELA) ratings, while 23.2% choose districts with lower mathematics ratings and 14.1% choose districts with lower ELA ratings than their sending districts.

Without METCO, inter-district choice participants are “whiter” than average; even with METCO, Hispanic students appear to be particularly under-represented.

Statewide, white students are disproportionately represented in inter-district school choice—89.5% of participants are white, versus 75% of the state’s total public school population. However, when METCO students are grouped together with inter-district choice students, the combined population is actually more diverse than the state population as a whole. (It should be noted that this impact is not distributed across the state but is a product of the Boston and Springfield school districts, where METCO operates.) The participation of Hispanic students appears to be extremely low: 0.2% of inter-district choice and METCO participants are categorized as Hispanic. It is possible that some of the METCO students whose race/ethnicity is unknown are Hispanic, but even if they are all Hispanic, this would still be a lower proportion of Hispanic students than the Boston and Springfield public schools.

Inter-District Choice and METCO Students, Statewide, by Race/Ethnicity, FY02

| | White | Black | Asian | Native American | Hispanic | Other/Unknown | Total |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Choice | 7467 | 324 | 85 | 22 | 1 | 419 | 8318 |
| METCO | 0 | 3041 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 253 | 3313 |
| METCO % | 0.0% | 91.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 7.6% | |
| Both | 7467 | 3365 | 85 | 22 | 20 | 672 | 11631 |
| Both % | 64.2% | 28.9% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 5.8% | |
| State Total % | 75.7% | 8.6% | 4.5% | 0.3% | 10.8% | * | |

**Source for state totals, DOE 2001 October 1 Report, does not include “other” category. Interpret with care.*

More research is necessary to determine how inter-district school choice interacts with desegregation measures in the districts that have them.

Inter-district choice is limited in the Boston area.

Apart from METCO, Boston students have very little access to inter-district choice, since none of the districts surrounding the city have chosen to participate, other than through METCO. There are 3,177 Boston-area students, who participate in METCO, versus 292 Boston-area students with out-of-district placements through school choice (81% of these are vocational placements, and the rest are students from other Boston-area towns). There are at least 10,000 students on the METCO waiting list; average waiting time on the list is about five years.

In metropolitan Boston, vocational schools are a primary school choice option for students, and are thus attended with greater frequency than the situation statewide, in which fewer than 10% of inter-district choice students are in regional vocational-technical schools.

Intra-District Choice

Intra-District School Choice Enrollment: Unknown

Intra-district choice is hard to measure.

Intra-district is an extremely difficult school choice option on which to collect data, but a significant amount appears to be happening. For example, both Boston and Cambridge have “controlled choice” programs in which all families choose preferred schools within certain limitations set by desegregation plans. The Department of Education does not collect data on most forms of intra-district choice. Many intra-district choice arrangements are informal, and thus do not show up in any records.

The possible forms of intra-district choice include: (1) district-wide open enrollment, (2) controlled choice programs, (3) magnet schools, (4) waivers of placement based on individual circumstances, and (5) the new federal requirement that students in schools that fail to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) in two consecutive school years be given the option of transferring to a different school in the district that is making AYP.

Many districts have too few schools to offer intra-district choice.

Indeed, in most districts, at the middle and high school levels, there is only one school to “choose.”

Numbers of Massachusetts Districts with Single or Multiple Schools at Each Level, FY02

| School level | 1 school | 2-4 schools | 5-9 schools | 10+ schools |
|------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Elem/K-8 schools | 74 | 119 | 68 | 19 |
| Middle schools | 142 | 35 | 6 | 1 |
| High schools | 206 | 14 | 4 | 1 |

Some Massachusetts districts, such as Boston and Cambridge, have district-wide “controlled choice” student assignment plans that began as desegregation remedies. Nine districts—Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Revere, Springfield, Waltham, and Worcester—report having magnet schools as part of their desegregation plans. In addition, Boston has thirteen “Pilot Schools” within its public school system. These schools are intended to offer distinctive programs, and are free of some district regulations. Two of them are also Horace Mann Charter Schools. The eleven non-charter Pilot Schools enroll 2,868 students, and two new schools will be opening in the fall of 2003. Demand for places in the schools is high.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act increases the importance of intra-district choice.

Implementing the intra-district choice requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) will be challenging because of the limited number of places some districts have for students to transfer. Federal law encourages districts unable to provide intra-district choice as an option for students in under-performing schools to try to work with other districts to provide inter-district options. Regulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education states that lack of capacity is not a valid reason for districts to deny students the right to transfer out of under-performing schools. It is too early to tell exactly what these guidelines will mean in practice.

In Boston, 44 schools with 22,500 students were categorized as under-performing for the second year in FY02. If this status persists, these students would be eligible to choose another district school, but the number of eligible students greatly exceeds the number of spaces available in adequately performing Boston schools.

This year, some districts have already offered intra-district choice options as a result of NCLB. It will be interesting to see which choices families utilize, and why.

Options Outside the Public Schools

Private & Parochial School Enrollment: 133,440 students

Private schools are very diverse.

It is difficult to generalize about private school characteristics. Some private schools are quite small, and others are large. The tuition at certain private schools may be comparable to that of private colleges, but many diocesan Catholic schools keep their tuitions relatively low.

The majority of Massachusetts private school students go to Catholic schools.

There are approximately 83,000 students in Catholic schools, versus about 50,000 in non-Catholic private schools. Nationally, the mean Catholic elementary school tuition is \$2,178, and the median tuition for high-school freshmen is \$4,289. Non-Catholic private school tuitions are generally much higher, with median tuition of \$12,225 for grades 1-3 to \$17,900 for grades 9-12.

Private school options are especially significant in the Boston area.

According to Massachusetts Department of Education data, the Boston area has a larger proportion of its students in private schools (18%) than the statewide average (12.4%). There are 15,405 Boston-resident students, who attend private schools; 11,821 of them are in Catholic schools.

Some racial/ethnic groups are less likely than others to be in private schools.

Hispanic students are represented at considerably lower rates in private schools than in public schools statewide (4.3% vs. 10.8%) and in the Boston area (6.0% vs. 16.8%). Black students are also somewhat less represented in private schools statewide (6.9% vs. 8.6%) and in the Boston area (13.3% vs. 20.5%).

The Commonwealth's home-schooling population may be quite large.

It is extremely difficult to obtain data on home-schooled students. The most definite thing that can be said at present about the Massachusetts home-schooling population is that it is somewhere between 2,300 and 22,000 students. If the true population is close to the high end of that range, it would mean that more students are home-schooled than are currently enrolled in charter schools.

Estimates by the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement and the Family Resource Center, a Massachusetts home-schooling organization, support the higher-end estimate. However, a survey of Boston-area superintendents conducted for this report yielded the lower projection—a figure that is almost certainly too low, since many families who home-school their children do not file the required paperwork with their towns' school departments.

A notable proportion of Massachusetts students choose to attend a private school. Given the significance of this trend, the Department of Education would benefit from better data for tracking enrollment.

Vocational Education Options

Regional Vocational-Technical School Enrollment: 25,141 students

There are four types of vocational education options.

Vocational education options for Massachusetts students fall into four general categories: regional vocational-technical schools (29 statewide, 4 in the Boston area), independent public vocational schools (1 in Northampton), high schools within school districts (12 statewide, 4 in the Boston area), and vocational-technical programs within comprehensive high schools (31 statewide, 9 in the Boston area).

Types of Vocational Programs in Massachusetts and the Boston Area, FY02

| Type of Program | Massachusetts | Boston |
|---|---------------|--------|
| Regional vocational-technical school | 29 | 4 |
| Independent public vocational school | 1 | 0 |
| Vocational-technical high school within a larger district | 12 | 4 |
| Vocational-technical high school within a comprehensive high school | 31 | 9 |

Some vocational-technical school students are also exercise inter-district school choice.

If a student wants to attend a particular regional vocational-technical school, but does not live in one of its member districts, he or she may enroll through the state's inter-district School Choice program. In 2001-02, 618 regional vocational-technical school students participated in this program.

Vocational-technical schools have more special education students than state average.

In FY02, approximately 24.4% of regional vocational-technical school students were special education students. This is much higher than the figure for non-vocational districts, which had approximately 15.3% of students receiving special education services.

Special Education

Chapter 766 Private School Enrollment: 6,327

Statewide, 4,959 students received special education services in private, day schools during the 2001-02 school year. Another 1,368 special education students were in residential programs. There are 125 private schools that serve special education students whose tuition is paid with public funds through the Chapter 766 program.

For those who qualify, Massachusetts has successfully developed special education choice systems, which provide students with comprehensive and equitable options. This kind of system demonstrates the viability of developing policy that would expand school choice options to all students on a systemic basis.

Today, school districts are responsible for providing disabled students with free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. These placements reflect the choices of a team, which is charged with ensuring that the child receives an appropriate education. In the vast majority of instances, teams have decided to accommodate special education students within mainstream public schools, though in some instances alternate public or private placement is deemed more appropriate.

Charter Schools

The National Context

The number of charter schools has expanded dramatically since the early 1990's. Currently, 39 states plus the District of Columbia have charter schools. The legal environment for charter schools varies among the states, with some states putting more restrictions than others on what entities may charter schools and how extensively charter schools are regulated. The Center for Education Reform, an organization that advocates greater school choice, recently judged the Massachusetts charter school laws as among the "strongest" in the nation and gave the Commonwealth an "A" on a scale of "A" through "F." The other "A" rated states were Arizona, Minnesota, Delaware, Michigan, and Indiana, plus the District of Columbia (The Center for Education Reform, 2003).

Nationally, 53% of charter schools are in cities, compared with 59% in Massachusetts. Charter schools in cities, like their host districts, are more likely than public schools in general to have high proportions of students of color and low-income students (Condition of Education 2002, p. 90). However, concerns have arisen about the degree to which charter schools are "creaming," or taking students that are in some way more "desirable" from their sending districts. More research is needed in this area.

According to enrollment estimates from the 1999-2000 school year, about 267,000 students in the U.S. attended charter schools, and there has been significant growth since that time. The largest charter school enrollments were in Arizona (39,860 students in 207 schools), California (64,152 students in 133 schools), and Michigan (36,052 students in 135 schools). These three states together accounted for more than half of nationwide charter school enrollments (The Condition of Education 2002, Table 30-1, p. 178).

A U.S. Department of Education report on charter schools released in 2000 ranked Massachusetts 9th in percentage of students in charter schools, out of the 27 states that had charter schools at the time (The State of Charter Schools 2000).

Total Massachusetts Enrollment

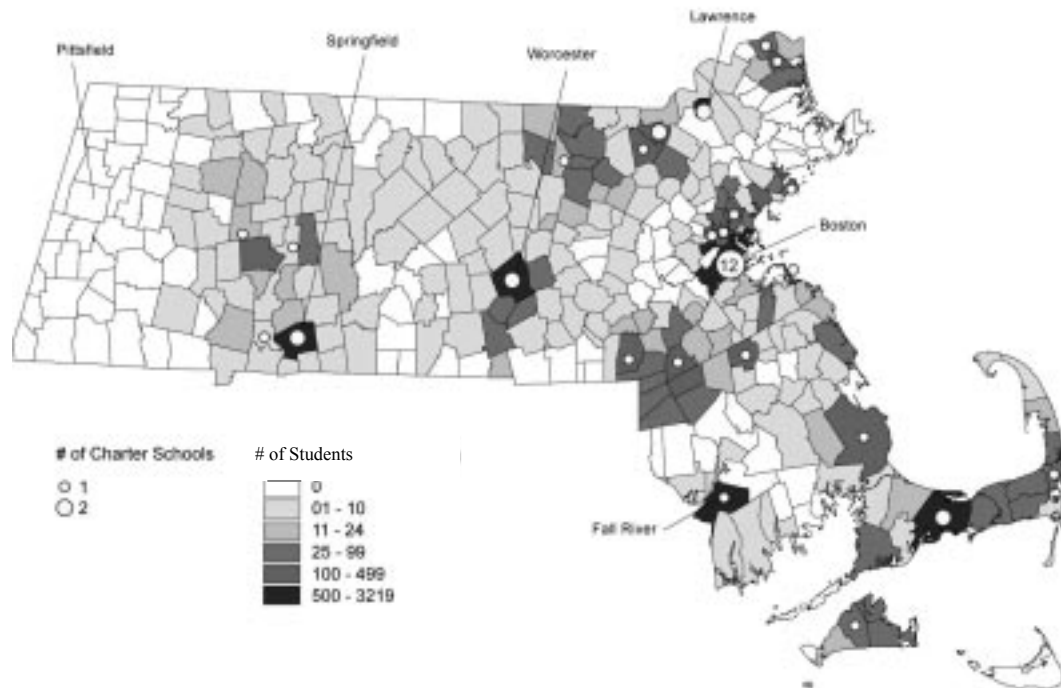
In FY02, the state's charter schools enrolled 14,381 students in 36 Commonwealth Charter Schools and 6 Horace Mann Charter Schools⁸. According to the state charter school law, there can be no more than 120 charter schools (72 Commonwealth and 48 Horace Mann) in operation at any one time.

Both the number of charter schools and the number of students attending them have increased steadily since the first charters schools opened in 1996. As of February 2003, 41 Commonwealth charter schools were in operation and 7 were chartered to open in the fall of 2003, with 25 additional Commonwealth schools authorized for groups that may wish to develop them. Seven Horace Mann charter schools were in operation, with 24 additional Horace Mann schools authorized for groups that may wish to develop them.

No more than 4% of the state's total public school population may be enrolled in Commonwealth Charter Schools. The current percentage in charter schools is 1.35%. If a Commonwealth Charter School is located in a town with a population of under 30,000, it must be a regional school (serving and giving preference in enrollment to students residing in a region made up of more than one municipality).

⁸ The Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science is not included in our charter school analysis.

Charter School Enrollment in Massachusetts by District



**The map above utilizes enrollment figures and school data from FY02.

Currently, more students are interested in attending charter schools than the schools can accommodate. Statewide, DOE “projected”⁹ a total of 10,975 places occupied on charter school waiting lists for FY02. However, it is likely that the actual number of students on waiting lists is less, since the same students may be on more than one waiting list. At the same time, there may be many more students, who sought places in charter schools but were discouraged and did not even place their names on waiting lists. Furthermore, charter schools are not uniformly distributed across the state, and we do not know what the total demand would be in areas that currently do not have local charter-school options. Because waiting list information is kept at the individual school level, and we did not survey individual schools for this report, we do not have more detail on the waiting-list populations.

Unmet Demand

Based on FY02 Department of Education projections, Commonwealth Charter Schools had an average of 305 students on their waiting lists, with a range from 0 (Sturgis) to 1,949 (SABIS International). Horace Mann Charter Schools had an average of 31 students on their waiting lists, with a range from 0 (Barnstable Grade 5, Champion, and New Leadership) to 101 (Health Careers Academy).

There are 16 charter schools located within the Boston metropolitan area (there are students from the Boston metro area, who attend 3 more schools that are not physically located within the region). Based on the Department of Education’s estimates of enrollment and waiting list membership for each school, the number of wait-listed students ranged from 29 at Codman Academy to 1,216 at Neighborhood House. Four of the schools had more students on their waiting lists than they had actually enrolled—in the case of Neighborhood House, over five times more waitlisted (see table on page 27).

⁹ This information comes from a 2001 Massachusetts Department of Education report, “FY02 Projected Charter School Enrollment and Waiting Lists By District.” There is some ambiguity as to what is meant by “projected” waiting list places.

Metropolitan Boston Charter School Student Counts

| School | FY02 Waiting List Estimate | FY02 Enrollment Estimate | Wait List as % of Enrollment |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Total | 5347 | 4952 | 108.0 |
| Neighborhood House | 1216 | 220 | 552.7 |
| Boston Renaissance | 1109 | 1350 | 82.1 |
| Mystic Valley | 814 | 883 | 92.2 |
| South Boston Harbor Academy | 469 | 240 | 195.4 |
| Academy of the Pacific Rim | 296 | 304 | 97.4 |
| Media & Technology | 220 | 125 | 176.0 |
| Benjamin Banneker | 216 | 357 | 60.5 |
| Lynn Community * | 212 | 270 | 78.5 |
| Conservatory Lab | 204 | 100 | 204.0 |
| City On A Hill | 174 | 231 | 75.3 |
| Marblehead Community | 114 | 176 | 64.8 |
| Health Careers Academy HMCS | 101 | 188 | 53.7 |
| Boston Evening Academy HMCS | 80 | 170 | 47.1 |
| Frederick Douglass | 43 | 136 | 31.6 |
| Roxbury Preparatory | 50 | 168 | 29.8 |
| Codman Academy | 29 | 34 | 85.3 |

*Closed by Department of Education in 2002

It is also useful to examine the waiting-list numbers by district. The number of waiting list places occupied by students from a particular district provides a measure of each district's level of unmet demand for charter school options. Within the Boston region, unmet demand ranges from 0 in Belmont, Brookline, Dedham, and Waltham to 3,943 in Boston.

Statewide, the districts with the largest unmet demand are Boston (3,943), Springfield (2,058), Lawrence (599), Malden (453), and Worcester (359). As a proportion of district enrollment, the largest unmet demand for charter schools is in (in descending order) Malden, Springfield, Foxborough, Plainville, Boston, Mansfield, Norfolk, Tisbury, Lawrence, and Wrentham.

District Impacts

Charter schools have been controversial in Massachusetts because of their effects on sending school districts. Charter schools are intended to expand the educational choices available to families, serve as laboratories for exploring innovations in education, and (by at least some of their advocates) to put competitive pressure on school districts.

Districts With Large Charter-School Enrollments. The 25 districts, which send the largest numbers of students to charter schools are an extremely varied group (see tables below). They include the state's three largest districts, as well as some slightly smaller districts with low-performing public schools and an assortment of districts that are neither large nor especially low performing, but happen to have charter schools in or near them.

Districts By Charter School Enrollment

| | Sending District | Charter Students (#) | Charter (%) ¹⁰ |
|----|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Boston | 3007 | 4.6 |
| 2 | Springfield | 1454 | 5.5 |
| 3 | Worcester | 1275 | 4.7 |
| 4 | Lawrence | 792 | 5.9 |
| 5 | Fall River | 612 | 4.8 |
| 6 | Lowell | 552 | 3.5 |
| 7 | Malden | 474 | 8.0 |
| 8 | Somerville | 384 | 6.2 |
| 9 | Lynn | 295 | 1.9 |
| 10 | Franklin | 275 | 4.7 |
| 11 | Medford | 246 | 5.2 |
| 12 | Cambridge | 200 | 2.8 |
| 13 | Hull | 192 | 12.6 |
| 14 | Everett | 188 | 3.4 |
| 15 | Plymouth | 175 | 1.9 |
| 16 | Mansfield | 157 | 3.3 |
| 17 | Nauset | 143 | 7.4 |
| 18 | Marblehead | 141 | 4.7 |
| 19 | Foxborough | 135 | 4.5 |
| 20 | Barnstable | 123 | 2.0 |
| 21 | Northampton | 118 | 3.9 |
| 22 | Newburyport | 111 | 4.6 |
| 23 | Chelmsford | 106 | 1.8 |
| 24 | Melrose | 97 | 2.7 |
| 25 | Dennis-Yarmouth | 96 | 2.1 |

District Charter Enrollment as % of Total

| | Sending District | Charter (%) | Charter Students (#) |
|----|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Hull | 12.62 | 192 |
| 2 | Up-Island Regional | 9.68 | 48 |
| 3 | Tisbury | 8.38 | 31 |
| 4 | Malden | 7.98 | 474 |
| 5 | Nauset | 7.37 | 143 |
| 6 | Edgartown | 6.95 | 26 |
| 7 | Somerville | 6.21 | 384 |
| 8 | Lawrence | 5.87 | 792 |
| 9 | Springfield | 5.48 | 1454 |
| 10 | Medford | 5.21 | 246 |
| 11 | Fall River | 4.81 | 612 |
| 12 | Marblehead | 4.71 | 141 |
| 13 | Worcester | 4.70 | 1275 |
| 14 | Franklin | 4.67 | 275 |
| 15 | Boston | 4.60 | 3007 |
| 16 | Newburyport | 4.56 | 111 |
| 17 | Foxborough | 4.55 | 135 |
| 18 | Oak Bluffs | 4.32 | 21 |
| 19 | Northampton | 3.88 | 118 |
| 20 | Frontier | 3.64 | 24 |
| 21 | Lowell | 3.51 | 552 |
| 22 | Everett | 3.37 | 188 |
| 23 | Mansfield | 3.34 | 157 |
| 24 | Millbury | 2.80 | 54 |
| 25 | Cambridge | 2.76 | 200 |

In FY02, the Commonwealth Charter Schools drew their students from 216 different districts.¹¹ Slightly more than half (118) of the districts from which students attended charter schools had students in only one charter school.

Concentrated vs. Diffuse Effects

Number of Charter Schools to which Districts are Sending Students

| # Charters | # Districts |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| One charter | 118 |
| Two charters | 64 |
| Three charters | 21 |
| Four charters | 4 |
| Five charters | 7 |
| More than five charters | 2 |

Districts that had students enrolled in 5 or more charter schools were Boston (15), Billerica (6), Brockton (5), Chelsea (5), Lawrence (5), Lowell (5), Lynn (5), Revere (5), and Springfield (5).

A total of 28 Commonwealth Charter Schools (77% of Commonwealth Charter Schools) draw a large proportion of their students from a small number of districts, and thus can be said to have a *concentrated effect* on district public schools.

¹⁰ This number represents a sending district’s charter student enrollment as a proportion of the district’s total student enrollment (including students attending charters within this district).

¹¹ This analysis, the analysis of districts’ sending patterns, and the analysis of waiting lists are based on DOE’s FY02 projections of charter school enrollments.

Charter Schools* With Concentrated Effects (50% or More Students From One District)

| School | # Sending Districts | Majority District | Majority District Students (%) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Academy of the Pacific Rim | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Boston Renaissance | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Codman Academy | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Community Day | 1 | Lawrence | 100 |
| Conservatory Lab | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Media and Technology | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Robert M. Hughes | 1 | Springfield | 100 |
| Roxbury Preparatory | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| SABIS International | 1 | Springfield | 100 |
| Seven Hills Charter School | 1 | Worcester | 100 |
| Frederick Douglass | 2 | Boston | 99.3 |
| South Boston Harbor Academy | 2 | Boston | 99.1 |
| Lynn Community Charter School | 3 | Lynn | 98.1 |
| City on a Hill | 4 | Boston | 97.8 |
| Neighborhood House | 4 | Boston | 97.7 |
| Lawrence Family Development | 3 | Lawrence | 97.0 |
| Lowell Community Charter School | 7 | Lowell | 96.9 |
| Atlantis | 10 | Fall River | 94.9 |
| Marblehead Community Charter School | 6 | Marblehead | 83.0 |
| Rising Tide Charter School | 13 | Plymouth | 76.4 |
| Cape Cod Lighthouse | 7 | Nauset | 72.3 |
| Benjamin Franklin Classical | 15 | Franklin | 71.4 |
| Abby Kelley Foster | 19 | Worcester | 67.3 |
| Lowell Middlesex Academy | 10 | Lowell | 66.7 |
| South Shore Charter School | 23 | Hull | 53.3 |
| Somerville Charter School | 23 | Somerville | 52.6 |
| Hilltown Community | 16 | Northampton | 52.1 |
| Murdoch Middle | 13 | Chelmsford | 50.4 |

*Commonwealth Charter Schools Only

Others draw from a larger set of districts, and thus can be said to have a more *diffuse effect* across a broader geographic range.

Charter Schools With Diffuse Effects (Less than 50% of Students From Any One District)

| School | # of Sending Districts | Plurality District | % of Students From Plurality District |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Benjamin Banneker | 19 | Cambridge | 47.9 |
| Mystic Valley | 9 | Malden | 47.5 |
| River Valley | 4 | Newburyport | 45.5 |
| Sturgis Charter School | 11 | Barnstable | 38.0 |
| Martha's Vineyard | 6 | Up-Island | 29.1 |
| SABIS Foxboro | 21 | Mansfield | 20.5 |
| Francis W. Parker | 31 | Groton-Dunstable | 15.6 |
| Pioneer Valley Performing Arts | 30 | Amherst-Pelham | 13.0 |

Horace Mann charter schools draw an overwhelming majority of their students from the districts in which they are located. This is not surprising because Horace Mann charter schools are approved by the local school committees of the districts in which the schools are located. Of the Horace Mann charter schools, four draw all their students from the same district, and two draw their students from more than one district.

Horace Mann Charter Schools (FY02)

| School | # of Sending Districts | District | % of Students From District |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Boston Evening Academy | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| Champion | 1 | Brockton | 100 |
| Health Careers Academy | 1 | Boston | 100 |
| New Leadership | 1 | Springfield | 100 |
| Barnstable Grade 5 | 3 | Barnstable | 99.4 |
| Academy of Strategic Learning | 3 | Amesbury | 84.0 |

Commonwealth charter schools have a financial impact on the districts from which their students come, because for each child a Commonwealth charter school enrolls, it receives a sum from the state equal to the average cost per student in the school district in which that child resides. The state then deducts the same amount from the sending district’s state aid account. In addition to tuitions, districts also may incur additional transportation costs. Commonwealth charter schools are not eligible for the state School Building Assistance program, although they are eligible for some limited state and federal grant support for capital expenses.

Financial Impact

Under Chapter 46 of the Massachusetts Acts of 1997, districts sending students to charter schools were fully or partially reimbursed for the first several years of their payments to charter schools, beginning in FY99. The reimbursements were based on a percentage of the increase, if any, in tuition paid between the current year and the previous year. For the first year, reimbursement was 100%. In the second year, it dropped to 60%, and in the third year to 40%. In FY03, there were no reimbursements because Governor Swift vetoed the appropriation for them. Consequently losing a student to a charter school now has a greater impact on the sending district’s budget than it did in previous years. Governor Romney’s FY04 budget proposal would partially restore the reimbursements to sending districts.

Sending-district tuition is calculated for each school district. If a sending district is at or below the foundation level of funding, the charter school will receive the average cost per student within the district; however, if the sending district spends above the foundation level of funding the charter school receives the foundation cost per student, rather than the district’s actual per-pupil spending, as tuition. Currently, charter school per-pupil receipts range from \$6,988 at SABIS Foxboro Regional Charter School up to \$13,134 at Martha’s Vineyard Charter School. The mean is \$8,764.

If a student was previously attending a private/parochial school or being home schooled, the DOE pays the first year of tuition. In subsequent years the school district in which the student resides is responsible for this tuition. In FY02 the payments made by the State to charter schools for previously privately schooled students totaled \$2,712,374, or about 2.4% of all tuitions paid to charter schools in FY02. Charter schools handle transportation of students in a variety of ways, so transportation is not part of the tuition calculation.

Charter School Tuition Payments as % of Net School Spending (FY03)

| Percentage Range | Districts (#) |
|------------------|---------------|
| Less than 1% | 132 |
| 1.0% - 2.99% | 42 |
| 3.0%-4.99% | 11 |
| 5.0%-6.99% | 8 |
| 7.0%-8.99% | 2 |
| 9% or more | 5 |

Tuition payments to Commonwealth Charter Schools may not exceed 9% of a district's overall net school spending (NSS)¹², with a few exceptions. Districts must pay tuition for siblings to attend the same charter school, even if doing so puts them over the 9% cap. Under Chapter 46 of the Acts and Resolves of 1997, the Nauset, Hull, and Up-Island districts may spend an additional 3% of their NSS on charter tuition. The Department of Education has also acted to keep the Edgartown, Malden, and Tisbury districts below their 9% cap, by adjusting their tuition payments for FY03.

Statewide, most districts are spending less than 1% of their NSS on charter school tuition.

Massachusetts Districts Spending >5% of Their NSS on Charter Tuition

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Up-Island (18.2%) | Martha's Vineyard (7.75%) | Boston (5.93%) |
| Hull (12.09%) | Somerville (7.30) | Medford (5.36%) |
| Tisbury (9.74%) | Oak Bluffs (6.05%) | Foxboro (5.31%) |
| Malden (9.71%) | Lawrence (6.01%) | Franklin (5.24%) |
| Nauset (9.39%) | Springfield (5.98%) | |
| Edgartown (9.19%) | Marblehead (5.95%) | |

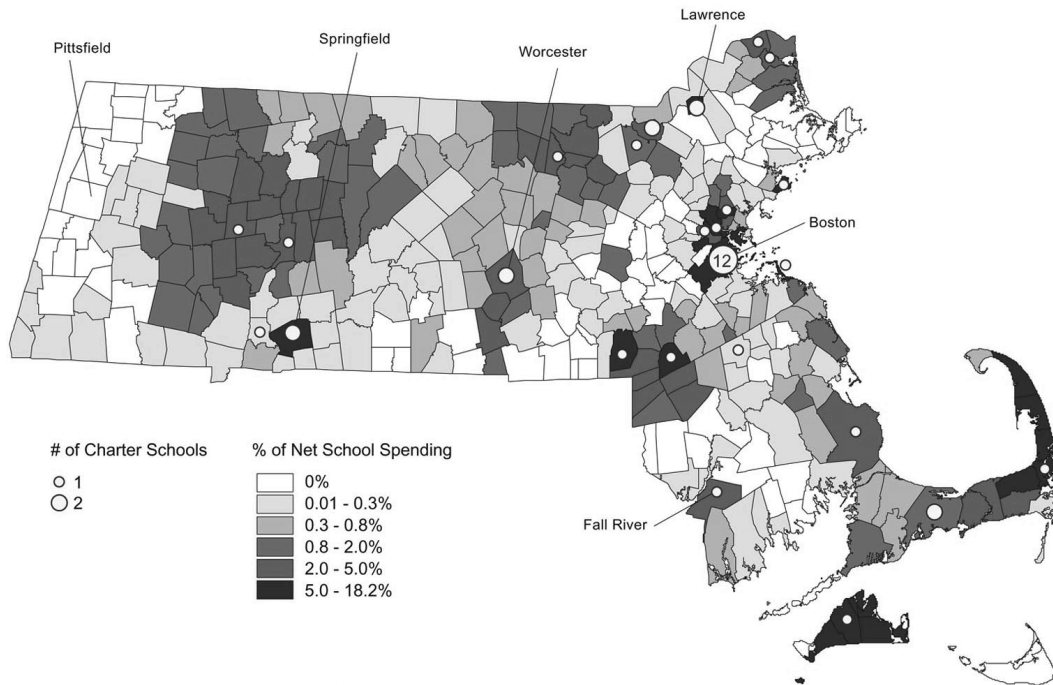
Tuition Paid by Boston-area Districts to Charter Schools (% Net School Spending FY03)

| Sending District | NSS to Charters (%) | Sending District | NSS to Charters (%) | Sending District | NSS to Charters (%) |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Malden | 9.71 | Chelsea | 0.54 | Quincy | 0.10 |
| Somerville | 7.30 | Salem | 0.50 | Saugus | 0.09 |
| Marblehead | 5.95 | Revere | 0.37 | Milton | 0.06 |
| Boston | 5.93 | Nahant | 0.28 | Winchester | 0.03 |
| Medford | 5.36 | Woburn | 0.22 | Newton | 0.01 |
| Everett | 3.72 | Arlington | 0.20 | Brookline | 0 |
| Melrose | 3.22 | Watertown | 0.18 | Belmont | 0 |
| Cambridge | 2.50 | Swampscott | 0.15 | Dedham | 0 |
| Stoneham | 1.16 | Winthrop | 0.15 | Lexington | 0 |
| Wakefield | 1.06 | Lynn | 0.13 | Peabody | 0 |

The city of Boston is currently only at about 6% of NSS. However, because of the number of charters operating in Boston that are still growing to their approved capacity and schools with approved enrollment numbers that have yet to open, the Department of Education has projected that Boston will be nearing the 9% cap in a few years. The Department thus foresees very limited growth for new schools or enrollment beyond what has already been chartered.

¹² Net school spending (NSS) encompasses nearly all of a school district's operating expenditures, and includes those municipal outlays that indirectly benefit school districts. It does not include transportation or capital expenditures, because those are funded through separate state aid accounts. (*Report of the Foundation Budget Review Commission*, June 2001)

Net School Spending on Charter Tuition in Massachusetts by District



***The above map utilizes NSS data from FY03 and data on the number of charter schools from FY02.*

By combining our student-level data that showed which school districts charter school students live in (or, in terms of tuition, which districts are financially responsible for them) with the Department of Education's performance ratings¹³ of school districts and charter schools, we were able to conduct a preliminary analysis of whether students who attend charter schools are in a higher-performing academic environment than their home school districts would have been.

Academic Performance Comparisons

Two caveats should be kept in mind in interpreting this analysis. First, district aggregate performance ratings are being compared with single charter schools' performance ratings. We do not know which individual school a charter school student might have attended within her/his home district, or if indeed s/he would have enrolled in public school at all. Second, the DOE performance ratings are based only on MCAS and thus do not capture other relevant differences between charter schools' programs and those of the schools that students might otherwise attend.

Analyses for English language arts and mathematics performance ratings were completed separately. In English language arts, 60% of charter school students are attending schools that have the same performance rating as their sending school district. Thirty percent are attending schools with higher performance ratings than their sending districts, and 10% are in charter schools with lower performance ratings than their sending districts. Roughly the same pattern holds for the mathematics performance ratings: 63% are in schools at the same level, 21% are in charter schools with a higher performance rating than their sending district, and 15% are in charter schools with a lower performance rating than their sending district.

¹³ Cycle II proficiency index ratings based on student performance on MCAS, calculated by the state for each school and district for accountability purposes.

Comparison of MCAS Performance Ratings of Charter Schools & Sending Districts¹⁴

| Charter School Performance Rating | English Language Arts | Mathematics |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Higher than sending district | 30% | 21% |
| Same as sending district | 60% | 63% |
| Lower than sending district | 10% | 15% |

According to the data above, 70% or more of charter school students are choosing schools that, on the MCAS Performance Ratings, do not academically outperform their sending districts. More research is needed to provide greater insight into the reasons families are choosing charter versus mainstream schools.

Student Demographics

One concern about charter schools is that they will “cream off” middle-class, white, regular-education students, leaving behind a population that is disproportionately made up of low-income students, students of color, and students who need special education or bilingual education services. Our data suggest that there is some reason for concern about creaming of middle-class, regular-education students, but not of white students.

Income Status. According to analysis of FY02 student-level data from the Department of Education, 67.6% of charter school students attend charter schools with fewer low-income students than their sending school districts. Overall, 45.9% of sending districts’ students are from low-income backgrounds, while 37.9% of Commonwealth charter school students were considered low-income in the 2001-2002 academic year.¹⁵

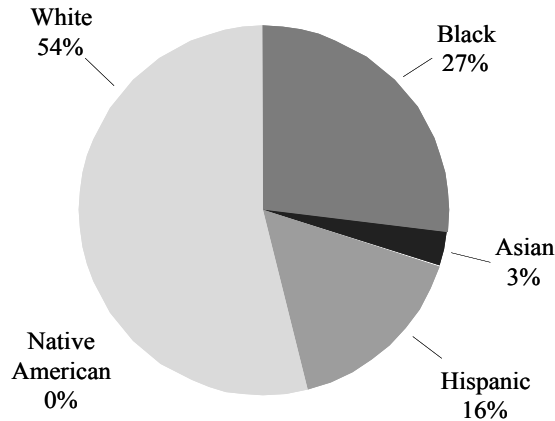
Racial/Ethnic Characteristics. On the whole, the racial/ethnic composition of the Commonwealth Charter Schools differs only slightly from what we would expect if students of all races/ethnicities from their sending districts were equally likely to enroll.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cycle II proficiency index ratings based on student performance on MCAS, calculated by the state for each school and district for accountability purposes.

¹⁵ The low-income indicator is based on percentages of students receiving free and reduced priced lunch. Some charter schools choose not to participate in the federal free/reduced priced lunch program, and consequently, do not report student eligibility.

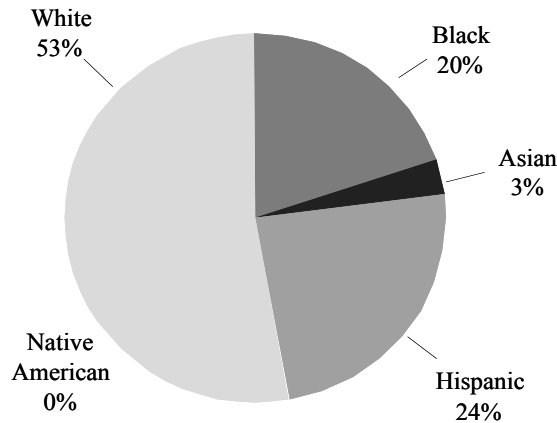
¹⁶ We compared the racial/ethnic distribution of charter schools to the racial/ethnic distribution of a weighted composite of sending districts (and similar calculations for low-income, bilingual, and special education status). This was created by multiplying the number of students sent by each district by factors representing the racial/ethnic makeup of that district and then summing for all districts, thus producing an “expected” racial/ethnic distribution of charter school students, which could be compared to the actual distribution. This model was utilized previously by Jennifer Wood in *An Early Examination of the Massachusetts Charter School Initiative* (MA Education Reform Review Commission, 1999). For more information, <http://www.merrc.org/research/textreports/charterstext.htm>

Race/Ethnicity of Students in Commonwealth Charter Schools, FY02



Although the percentage of white students is about the same, Commonwealth charter schools have proportionally more black students and fewer Hispanic students than their sending districts.

Weighted Race/Ethnicity of Commonwealth Charter School Sending Districts, FY02

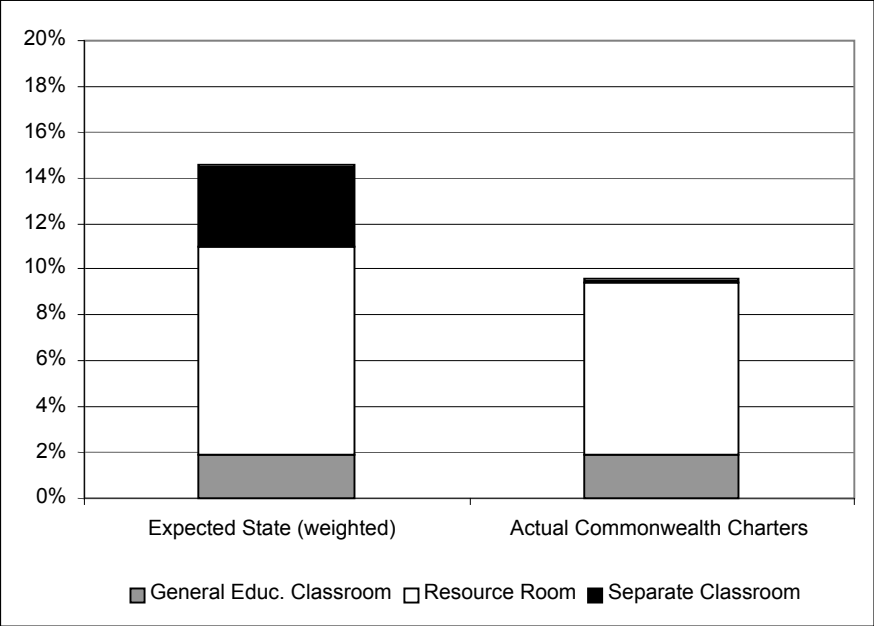


Student Status. A much smaller proportion of Commonwealth charter school students was eligible for bilingual education in FY02 than would be expected based upon sending-district composition.¹⁷ About 1.3% of charter-school students were eligible for bilingual education, compared with a weighted 10.34% of sending-district students. *None* of the bilingual-eligible charter school students actually received bilingual education services, because their parents had waived their right to enroll.

¹⁷ See footnote 12 for methodology.

Charter schools are limited to less-intensive special needs students by regulation, but even in the three special-education categories served by charter schools, participation rates were somewhat lower than in sending districts: 9.6% of Commonwealth charter school students were in special education¹⁸ programs, compared with a weighted 14.6% of sending-district students. Commonwealth charter schools were far less likely to serve students in the separate-classroom category than sending districts (0.2% vs. 3.6%).

Students in Special Education Programs, by SPED level, by School Type (%)



¹⁸ This comparison is made based on the first three categories of SPED (General Education, Resource Room and Special Classroom), those in which charter schools are required to serve students. Students who require separate day and residential schools are maintained as the responsibility of those students' home districts.

Inter-District School Choice and METCO

This section provides data on participation in the state-level inter-district school choice program, which began in 1991 and was expanded as part of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993. School choice was a major sticking point during the legislative process for Education Reform. The House version of the bill called for a moratorium on inter-district choice, and the Senate version included a provision making it mandatory for districts to accept choice students. According to the compromise included in the final version of the law, all students have the right to attend school outside their home districts, with their home district paying tuition to districts that participate in school choice. In other words, all districts must be “sending” districts if there are students who want to attend public schools elsewhere. All districts are required to accept out-of-district students (in other words, to be “receiving” districts), unless their School Committee takes a public vote *not* to accept such students. Districts voting not to participate must repeat the process each year.

We also include information in this section on the METCO program, which is a special form of inter-district school choice. METCO began in Boston’s Roxbury neighborhood and was originally intended to allow black children to attend suburban schools, thus expanding the educational options open to the children while also increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of the suburban districts. According to the METCO Boston main office, which we contacted in February 2003, any Boston child is now entitled to participate in METCO, regardless of race. METCO serves children from Boston and Springfield.

METCO is like the general inter-district choice program in that it brings funds into the districts where the students attend school, but different, in that the funds come from a state grant program rather than being tuition paid by the students’ districts of residence.

According to the most recent available data from the U.S. Department of Education, the proportion of students participating in inter-district school choice grew during the 1990s. In the 1999-2000 school year, 42.4% of districts nationwide allowed their students to enroll in other districts, and 45.8% of districts accepted students from other districts. Compared with districts in the Midwest, South, and West, districts in the Northeast were less likely to participate in inter-district choice.

The National Context

Programs similar to METCO are also in operation in other states, including Connecticut and Missouri. One of the older ones, Project Concern, began in Hartford, Connecticut in 1966. Like METCO, it was a voluntary urban-to-suburban transfer program that mostly served African-American students. It has since evolved into Open Choice, which operates in several Connecticut metropolitan areas. Unlike METCO, Open Choice has become a two-way transfer program that also allows suburban students to attend urban schools. Another contrast with METCO is that Open Choice is currently being expanded, as part of the legal settlement between the state of Connecticut and the plaintiffs in the *Sheff v. O’Neill* desegregation lawsuit. The METCO program has not expanded in quite some time.

The interaction of inter-district choice and desegregation mandates is an important question that warrants further research.

Massachusetts Enrollment

Inter-District School Choice. According to student-level data provided for this study by the Massachusetts Department of Education, there were 8,318 students, or 0.87% of all academic and regional vocational students, participating in inter-district school choice in the 2001-02 academic year. Of these students, 616 were in regional vocational-technical schools. (Some regional vocational school students count as school choice participants, and others do not. For more detail on vocational options, see the Vocational Education Options section of this report).¹⁹

METCO. In FY02, 3,313 students participated in METCO, attending school in 35 districts. Of these students, 3,177 were from Boston and 136 were from Springfield.

Interaction of METCO & School Choice

Apart from METCO, Boston students have very little access to inter-district choice, since none of the districts surrounding the city have chosen to participate, other than through METCO (see map below, in District Impacts section). A total of 3,177 Boston-area students participate in METCO, versus 292 Boston-area students with out-of-district placements through school choice (81% of these are vocational placements, and the rest are students from other Boston-area towns).

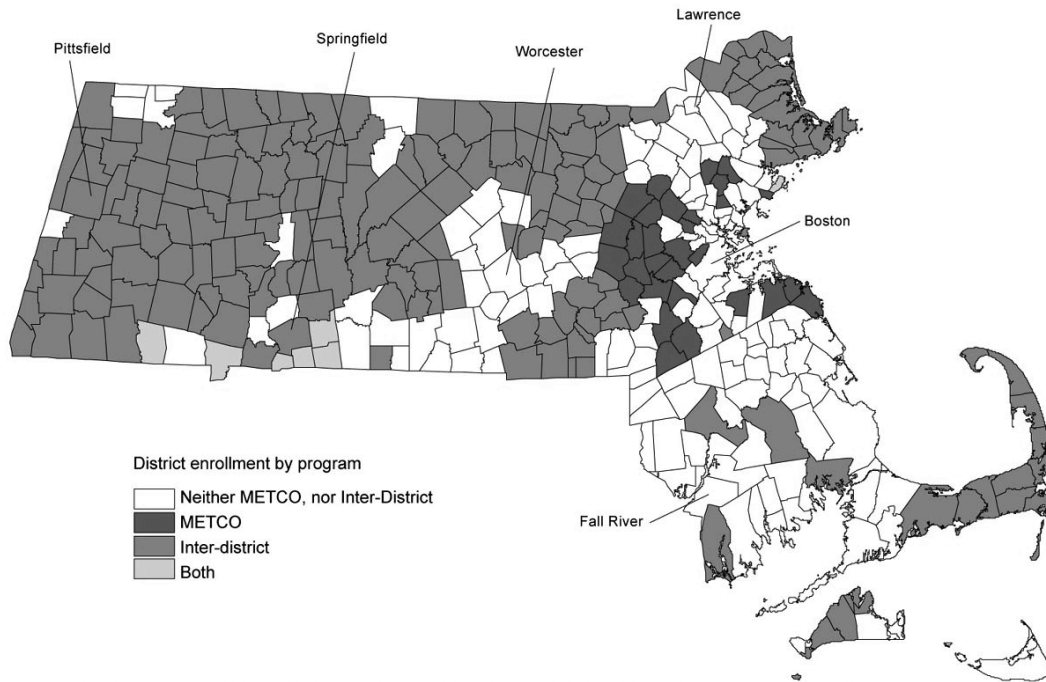
Because METCO is a complicating factor in analyzing Boston’s participation in inter-district choice, we also examined the participation of three other urban districts: Worcester, Lawrence, and Brockton. These three districts were sending between 1.6% and 1.9% of students to other school districts. Participation in inter-district choice by non-white students varied widely, from 9.7% in Worcester to 48.2% in Brockton. In all three districts, non-white students participate at rates that are lower than their group’s representation in the district population (9.7% vs. 48.5% in Worcester, 28.8% vs. 88.8% in Lawrence, and 48.2% vs. 58.7% in Brockton). These examples suggest that the goals of desegregation and choice may be pulling in opposite directions. In other words, increasing choice may also exacerbate racial/ethnic segregation.

Inter-District Choice Participation Rates (Students Sent) for Three Urban Districts, FY02

| Sending District | Inter-District Students (%) | Inter-District Students (#) | White Inter-District Students (#) | White Inter-District Students (%) | Total White Sending District (%) | Non-White Inter-District Students (#) | Inter-District Students (%) Non-White | Total Non-White Sending District (%) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Worcester | 1.9 | 154 | 139 | 90.3 | 51.5 | 15 | 9.7 | 48.5 |
| Lawrence | 1.6 | 132 | 94 | 71.2 | 11.2 | 38 | 28.8 | 88.8 |
| Brockton | 1.7 | 139 | 72 | 51.8 | 41.3 | 67 | 48.2 | 58.7 |
| All MA Students | 100.0 | 8,318 | 7,467 | 89.8 | --- | 849 | 10.2 | --- |

¹⁹ This number is different from the ones in DOE’s report *Final FY02 School Choice Tuition*,” which lists 6,976.2 “Receiving FTE’s” and 7,558.1 “Sending FTE’s,” not including students attending regional vocational-technical schools.

Massachusetts District Participation in METCO and Inter-District Choice



Inter-District School Choice. The degree of unmet demand for school choice placements varies among the districts that make them available. According to the Department of Education, 123 school districts indicate that they receive students through inter-district school choice. We sent an email survey to these 123 districts and received completed surveys back from 43% of them. Of the responding districts, 63% said that they had School Choice slots available, although in at least 12% of districts overall, slots were available at some grade levels but not others.

Unmet Demand

METCO. According to staff in the Boston METCO office, far more students are interested in METCO than the program can accommodate. There are at least 10,000 Boston children on METCO’s waiting list, and the average time between when a child is added to the list and when he or she is placed in a suburban school is about 5 years. From this enormous backlog of demand, we can surmise that if more School Choice slots (non-METCO) were available in the Boston area, they would rapidly be filled.

Districts Participating in Inter-District Choice. Massachusetts districts are much more likely than districts nationwide (41% vs. 25.6%) to have their students enrolled out-of-district (presumably, this is because not all states have the legal requirement that students be allowed to enroll out-of-district). Seventy-nine percent of districts in Massachusetts (not counting the regional vocational districts) have students participating in inter-district choice. This counts both districts that pay tuition for their students to enroll in other districts and districts that receive students from other districts. Forty-one percent enrolled out-of-district students. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education’s report on FY02 school choice tuition payments, a total of 242 districts either pay tuition for students to enroll in other districts through School Choice, receive students from other districts through School Choice, or both.²⁰ The types of participation are summarized in the table below. (See end of section and Appendix for lists of districts.)

District Impact

²⁰ These data do not include regional vocational-technical school districts.

Distribution of District Participation in Inter-District School Choice FY02

| Type of Activity in District | Districts (#) |
|---|---------------|
| Both “send” and receive | 116 |
| Receive students, but don’t have students out-of-district | 6 |
| Have students out-of-district, but don’t receive | 120 |
| Neither “send” nor receive | 58 |

A small majority (67) of the districts that both send and receive students through School Choice have net enrollment gains because of the program. Sixty-four of the 67 districts with enrollment gains were in the middle-income category or above. This analysis suggests two conclusions: (1) when districts receive students through inter-district school choice in addition to “sending” them, they tend to experience a net gain in enrollment, but (2) the likelihood of a gain is less for low-income and lowest-income districts.

Districts Participating in METCO. The districts that received Boston METCO students were Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Braintree, Brookline, Cohasset, Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Dover-Sherborn, Foxborough, Framingham, Hingham, Lexington, Lincoln, Lincoln-Sudbury, Lynnfield, Marblehead, Melrose, Natick, Needham, Newton, Reading, Scituate, Sharon, Sudbury, Swampscott, Wakefield, Walpole, Wayland, Wellesley, Weston, and Westwood. The districts that received Springfield METCO students were East Longmeadow, Hampden-Wilbraham, Longmeadow, and Southwick-Tolland.

Financial Impact of School Choice

School choice tuition charges are assessed against sending districts and paid to receiving districts. By looking at the amount of tuition school districts are receiving from and sending to districts, it is possible to estimate some of the financial implications of school choice for districts.

Tables below show the ten districts that are taking in the most tuition and the ten districts losing the most tuition through the state school choice program in FY02. In total, \$41,127,701 was transferred among district accounts for inter-district choice in FY02.

Financial Impact Due to School Choice

| NET GAIN | # Districts |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Over \$1 million | 3 |
| \$500,000 - \$999,999 | 8 |
| \$0 - \$499,999 | 68 |
| NET LOSS | # Districts |
| Over (\$1 million) | 3 |
| \$500,000 - \$999,999 | 5 |
| \$0 - \$499,999 | 167 |

Top Ten Districts Gaining and Losing Funds from School Choice

| Top 10 Districts Gaining Funds | Net Gain |
|---|-------------|
| Whittier (Regional Vocational Technical School) | \$1,481,021 |
| Newburyport | \$1,299,014 |
| Ayer | \$1,058,610 |
| Avon | \$930,090 |
| Quabbin | \$928,464 |
| Manchester Essex | \$759,301 |
| Chatham | \$757,303 |
| Hamilton Wenham | \$684,668 |
| Holliston | \$679,665 |
| Berkshire Hills | \$577,809 |

| Top 10 Districts Losing Funds | Net Loss |
|---|---------------|
| Greater Lawrence (Regional Vocational Technical School) | (\$1,524,967) |
| Leominster | (\$1,321,152) |
| Springfield | (\$1,272,880) |
| Worcester | (\$786,883) |
| Brockton | (\$725,522) |
| Pittsfield | (\$656,465) |
| Lawrence | (\$648,368) |
| North Adams | (\$515,520) |
| Triton | (\$499,820) |
| Easthampton | (\$487,528) |

Of course, districts that lose funds through inter-district choice may also reduce costs, in terms of the number of students to whom they need to provide services. However, these marginal revenue reductions and marginal cost reductions do not necessarily equate, because districts' costs (e.g., teacher salaries) cannot generally be cut in per-student increments.

Combining our individual-level data on inter-district choice with the Department of Education's district Performance Ratings (Cycle II ratings from the DOE website) suggests that the role of academic factors in inter-district school-choice decisions is complicated.²¹ We were able to determine whether choice students were leaving lower-performing districts for higher-performing ones, higher-performing ones for lower-performing ones, or transferring within the same performance rating categories.

***Academic
Performance &
School Choice***

The largest group of students moved towards districts with higher performance ratings, but this was true to a greater extent for math than for English language arts, and many students moved within the same performance-rating category or moved towards districts with lower performance ratings. For FY02, 41.2% of choice participants had a "sending" LEA with a lower English language arts performance rating than their "receiving" LEA. Another 44.7% had both their sending and receiving LEA within the same performance-rating category. Only 14.1% had a receiving LEA whose English language arts performance rating was lower than that of their sending LEA. A majority (54.3%) had a receiving LEA whose math performance rating exceeded that of their sending district, while 23.2% had a receiving LEA with a lower math performance rating and 22.5% had sending and receiving LEA's with the same math performance ratings.

Comparison of MCAS Performance Ratings of Sending and Receiving Districts FY02

| Receiving District's Performance Rating | English Language Arts | Mathematics |
|---|-----------------------|-------------|
| Higher than sending district | 41.2% | 54.3% |
| Same as sending district | 44.7% | 22.5% |
| Lower than sending district | 14.1% | 23.2% |

Income Status and Inter-District School Choice. Analysis of individual-level data on school choice shows that 67.6% of students have a "receiving" district with proportionately fewer low-income students than their "sending" district. In other words, the evidence suggests that students tend to move towards more affluent districts when given a choice.²²

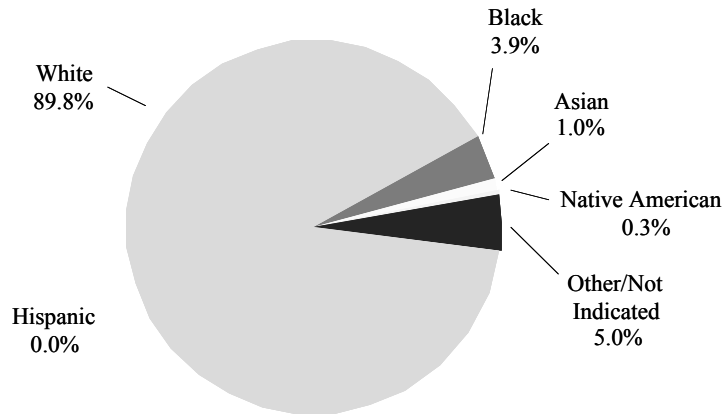
***Student
Demographics***

Racial/Ethnic and Gender Characteristics of Inter-District School Choice. Statewide, white students are disproportionately likely to participate in inter-district school choice. A total of 89.8% of participants are white, compared with 75% of the state's total public school population.

²¹ In order to get a complete picture of what academic factors students and parents consider in deciding to participate in school choice, we would need to conduct surveys or interviews, which were beyond the scope of this project. Ideally, one would consider other measures of school performance in addition to a performance index that is based entirely on MCAS scores.

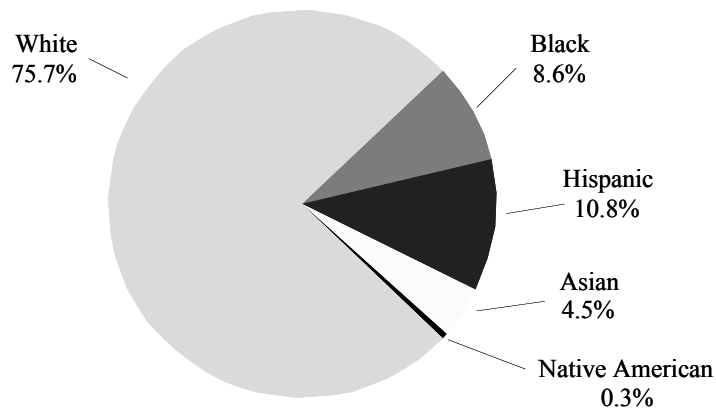
²² DOE was not able to provide data on inter-district choice participants' eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. We also do not know whether the individual *schools* the students ended up attending had higher or lower proportions of low-income students than the schools they would have otherwise attended.

FY02 Massachusetts Inter-District Choice Students (non-METCO), by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Data from the School Choice Claim Form aggregate data MA Department of Education

FY02 Massachusetts Students, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: October 1, 2001 School Enrollment data from the MA Department of Education

Note: These graphics come from two different data sources. The data from which we generated the first graphic included an “other” category, while the data for the second do not. Interpretation should be made with care.

Within the Boston region, white students are also over-represented in inter-district school choice. This is probably because most students of color in the Boston metropolitan area live in the city of Boston, but the suburban districts closest to Boston generally do not participate in the inter-district school choice program. Instead, they make space available for Boston students via the METCO program. Of the 292 inter-district choice students who live in Boston region school districts, 85% are white, compared with 54% of all students in the Boston region.

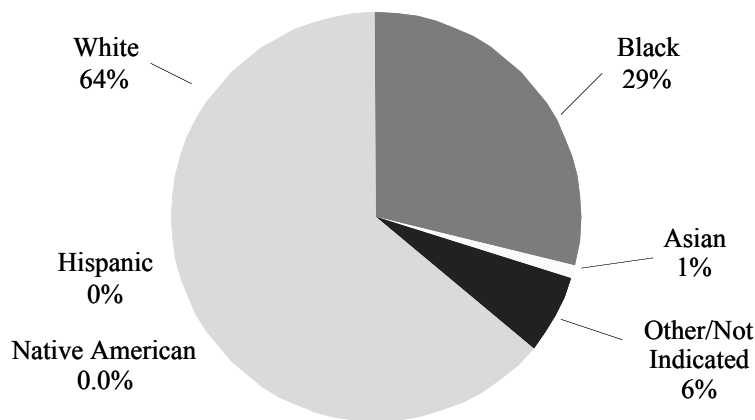
However, when METCO students are grouped together with inter-district choice students, the combined population is actually more diverse than the state population as a whole. (It should be noted that this impact is not distributed across the state but is a product of the Boston and Springfield school districts, where METCO operates.) The participation of Hispanic students—to the extent that they are not represented in the “other/unknown” category—appears to be extremely low: 0.2% of inter-district choice and METCO participants are categorized as Hispanic.

Inter-District Choice and METCO Students, Statewide, by Race/Ethnicity, FY02

| | White | Black | Asian | Native American | Hispanic | Other/Unknown | Total |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Choice | 7467 | 324 | 85 | 22 | 1 | 419 | 8318 |
| METCO | 0 | 3041 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 253 | 3313 |
| METCO % | 0.0% | 91.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 7.6% | |
| Both | 7467 | 3365 | 85 | 22 | 20 | 672 | 11631 |
| Both % | 64.2% | 28.9% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 5.8% | |
| State Total % | 75.7% | 8.6% | 4.5% | 0.3% | 10.8% | * | |

**Source for state totals, DOE 2001 October 1 Report, does not include "other" category, thus interpret with care.*

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Inter-District Choice & METCO Students Statewide, FY02



The overwhelming majority (80.9%) of inter-district school choice students (not counting METCO) in the Boston region are attending regional vocational-technical schools. This is because most of the region’s mainstream academic districts do not accept school choice students, but all of its four regional vocational-technical districts do accept such students. The importance of vocational schools in school choice in metropolitan Boston is very different from the situation statewide, in which fewer than 10% of inter-district choice students are in regional vocational-technical schools.

According to DOE student-level data, boys and girls participated in inter-district school choice in almost equal numbers statewide (4,184 boys and 4,134 girls). However, in the metropolitan Boston area, boys substantially outnumber girls, probably because of the importance of vocational education for Boston-area inter-district choice participants. Of the 194 inter-district choice students enrolled in metropolitan Boston districts, 131 are boys and 63 are girls.

**Special &
Bilingual Services**

Compared with sending districts, inter-district school choice participants are somewhat less likely to be participating in special education programs. Based on enrollment, we would expect²³ 15.12% of inter-district choice participants to be in special education programs, compared with an actual value of 12.43%. Less than .5% of inter-district school choice students were bilingual education²⁴ students in FY02, compared with an expected percentage of 5.56% bilingual students from sending districts.

Districts Not Receiving Inter-District School Choice Students in FY02

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Abington | Edgartown | Middleton | Sandwich |
| Amherst | Erving | Millbury | Saugus |
| Andover | Everett | Monroe | Seekonk |
| Athol Royalston | Fall River | Munson | Shrewsbury |
| Attleboro | Falmouth | Natick | Silver Lake |
| Auburn | Florida | New Ashford | Somerset |
| Becket | Foxborough | New Bedford | Somerville |
| Bellingham | Framingham | New Salem Wendell | Southampton |
| Berkeley | Franklin | Newton | Southbridge |
| Billerica | Freetown | Norfolk | Stoughton |
| Boston | Freetown Lakeville | North Adams | Sudbury |
| Bourne | Grafton | North Andover | Swampscott |
| Boxborough | Hadley | North Attleborough | Tantasqua |
| Brewster | Hanover | North Reading | Tewksbury |
| Bridgewater Raynham | Holbrook | Northborough | Tryingham |
| Brimfield | King Philip | Northborough/Southborough | Wachusett |
| Brockton | Lawrence | Norton | Walpole |
| Cambridge | Leicester | Orange | Waltham |
| Chelmsford | Lincoln Sudbury | Orleans | Wayland |
| Chelsea | Lowell | Oxford | Webster |
| Chicopee | Lynn | Palmer | Wellfleet |
| Clarksburg | Lynnfield | Peabody | West Springfield |
| Concord Carlisle | Malden | Pembroke | Westborough |
| Danvers | Mansfield | Plymouth | Westhampton |
| Dartmouth | Marlborough | Plympton | Weymouth |
| Dighton Rehoboth | Masconomet | Quincy | Whitman Hanson |
| Dudley Charlton | Mashpee | Randolph | Winchester |
| East Bridgewater | Medfield | Revere | Worcester |
| Eastham | Medford | Richmond | Wrentham |
| Easton | Methuen | Salem | |

²³ See footnote 12 for methodology.

²⁴ Bilingual education students are defined as students whose first language is not English and who are unable to perform regular classroom work. This is different from those students who participate in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs, in that not all districts have enough students to meet the threshold for a TBE program.

Intra-district choice is an extremely difficult area on which to collect data, but a significant amount appears to be happening. For example, both Boston and Cambridge have “controlled choice” programs in which all families choose preferred schools within certain limitations set by desegregation plans. The DOE does not collect data on most forms of intra-district choice. Many intra-district choice arrangements are informal, and thus do not show up in any records.

The possible forms of intra-district choice include: (1) district-wide open enrollment, (2) controlled choice programs, (3) magnet schools, (4) waivers of placement based on individual circumstances, and (5) the new federal requirement that students in schools that fail to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) in two consecutive school years be given the option of transferring to a different school in the district that is making AYP.

Nationwide, 24.7% of districts offered intra-district choice options in the 1999-2000 school year, up from 13.8% in 1993-94. The number of districts with magnet schools decreased slightly, from 7.8% to 5.9% of districts, during this same period. School districts in the Northeast were less likely than districts elsewhere in the country to provide either kind of choice (The Condition of Education 2002, p. 114).

The National Context

Intra-District Choice and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all districts will be required to allow intra-district choice for students in schools that have failed to make “Adequate Yearly Progress” on state assessments for two consecutive years, or that have been designated as “persistently dangerous” by state education authorities. This year, some districts have already offered intra-district choice options as a result of NCLB. It will be interesting to see which choices families utilize, and why.

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s “No Child Left Behind” website, about 7,000 schools nationwide have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress for at least two years. (<http://www.nclb.gov/parents/supplementalservices/index.html>). The U.S. DOE’s “Draft Non-Regulatory Guidance” on NCLB school choice requirements states that the lowest-achieving students from low-income families should be given priority in school choice. States have not yet released lists of “persistently dangerous” schools, but they must do so no later than July 1, 2003. They will also be required to include data on the number of students and schools who participate in school choice in their annual Title I report to the U.S. Secretary of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The extent of Massachusetts participation in intra-district choice—meaning the number of students who are attending schools within their own school districts that they chose instead of being assigned to on the basis of where they live—is difficult to determine. The Department of Education does not maintain statewide data on intra-district choice

Massachusetts Enrollment

Limits to Intra-District Choice. Intra-district choice is limited by the number of schools in a district at a given grade level. In many districts, intra-district choice is not a viable option because there are too few schools. Indeed in most districts, at the middle and high school levels, there is only one school to “choose.”

At the elementary level (including K-8 schools), 74 districts have one school, 119 have 2-4 schools, 68 have 5-9 schools, and 19 have 10 or more schools. At the middle school level, 142 have only a single school, 35 have 2-4 schools, 6 have 5-9 schools, and one has 10 or more. The vast majority of districts—206—have only one high school. Fourteen have 2-4 high schools, 4 have 5-9 schools, and one (Boston) has 10 or more. (Source: DOE School and District Profiles)

Number of Districts with Single or Multiple Schools, by Grade Level

| | 1 School | 2-4 Schools | 5-9 Schools | 10+ Schools |
|------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Elem/K-8 schools | 74 | 119 | 68 | 19 |
| Middle schools | 142 | 35 | 6 | 1 |
| High schools | 206 | 14 | 4 | 1 |

District-wide Open Enrollment. In the Massachusetts Department of Education’s “School District Profiles,” 21 districts indicate that they offer intra-district choice. We sent an e-mail survey to these districts to find out more about the characteristics of these districts. About half of the districts responded.

According to the survey, a majority of intra-district choice occurs in kindergarten and the elementary grades, with very few districts offering intra-district choice to all students and within all schools. At the upper grade levels, many districts (206 of 300) in the Commonwealth only have a single school. In the earlier grades, intra-district choice often accommodates families’ childcare needs or the location of the parents’ place of work.

Over half of the responding districts use choice to comply with Chapter 636 desegregation requirements, and a few allow for choice because of magnet schools or to accommodate the special need or interest of a student.

The percentage of students actually participating in intra district choice varied dramatically from 1% to 100% (within the grades offering choice) among the responding districts. The control of intra-district choice ranged from centrally managed choice in the district office to choice offered at the discretion of the school principal on a case-by-case basis.

Our survey data are necessarily incomplete, because the Department of Education school profiles do not include information on all districts with intra-district choice. Some districts with controlled-choice programs or magnet schools do not indicate on their profiles that they have intra-district choice.

Controlled Choice. We also examined the details of controlled choice in the Boston and Cambridge public schools. In both cities, all students participate in intra-district school choice. In other words, no students are automatically assigned to a school solely on the basis of their address.

The legal status of desegregation measures within Massachusetts and several other New England states changed in 1998 when the federal First Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Boston Public Schools could no longer use race as a criterion for admission to the selective examination high schools. Since this case (*Wessmann v. Gittens*), public schools throughout Massachusetts have de-emphasized race/ethnicity in their pupil assignment procedures. Further legal activity continued in early 2003, as a lawsuit challenging Boston’s student-assignment formula was heard in federal court.

Boston’s schools serving grades K-8 are divided into three zones, within which parents exercise choice. Historically, the purpose of controlled choice was to produce racial balance without mandatory busing of students, but the racial criteria for placement were removed in 1999. Parents now must indicate at least three choices of school, and student assignments are made by lottery. In addition, at least 50% of a school’s students must live within walking distance. There are also preferences that allow siblings to attend the same school if they choose. For high school students, choice is city-wide, and also includes three schools to which students are admitted by competitive examination. According to the Boston Public Schools, approximately 85% of students get their first or second choice of school (This information is from Boston Public Schools Implementation Department). Boston’s Pilot Schools (see below) are not part of Controlled Choice.

Cambridge still uses race as a factor in its controlled choice plan, but added balance between lower and higher socioeconomic-status to its assignment criteria in December 2001. Because Cambridge has only one high school,²⁵ all of the choice is at the K-8 level. Under the old controlled choice policy, about 90-92% of students got one of their first three choices of school.

Magnet Schools. Magnet schools are schools open to all students in a district, or students from several different neighborhoods that generally offer a distinctive curricular focus. Magnet schools historically have been seen as strategies for voluntary desegregation, although the degree to which they have achieved that goal is a matter of some debate. Of 22 Massachusetts districts with current desegregation plans, nine—Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Revere, Springfield, Waltham, and Worcester—report having magnet schools (this number does not include Boston’s pilot schools or examination schools).

Boston’s Pilot Schools. Boston has 13 “Pilot Schools” within its public school system. According to the website of the Boston Pilot School Network, the pilot schools began as a “research and development arm of the Boston Public Schools, to develop best practices and to be a catalyst for change that could be transferred to the rest of the system.”²⁶ These schools are intended to offer distinctive programs, and are free of some district and union regulations. Two of them are also Horace Mann Charter Schools. The eleven non-charter Pilot Schools enroll 2,868 students, and two new schools will be opening in the fall of 2003. Demand for places in the schools is high. According to the Center for Collaborative Education, which supports the Pilot Schools, over 450 people recently attended a Pilot/Horace Mann Schools Expo and expressed interest in enrolling their children in the schools.²⁷

Examining the Impact of NCLB’s Choice Provision in Massachusetts. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, 210 schools are currently categorized as failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress for at least the second consecutive year, a status that triggers the right to intra-district school choice participation for their students. These schools are in 37 different districts, nine of which are charter schools.

Of the schools whose students would be eligible to participate in intra-district choice under NCLB, 69 are in districts in the Boston metropolitan area, and 44 are within the Boston Public Schools. The total number of students enrolled in these 69 metro-Boston schools was approximately 31,000 (22,500 in the Boston Public Schools) in the 2001-02 school year. The number of students eligible for choice under NCLB is likely to exceed the number of spaces available in adequately performing schools within their districts.

In Boston, NCLB choice is being implemented within the same zoned system as its existing controlled choice program. In the East Zone, 20 elementary and K-8 schools are in their second year of Improvement Status, and only 10 are not. The situation is not as difficult in the East Zone middle schools, or in the other two zones, but there will still be challenges implementing NCLB choice within the city public schools if a significant number of the eligible children exercise their choice rights.

According to data provided by the Boston Public Schools, the East Zone has approximately 235 seats available for the 4,626 students in grades K-5 who have a right to transfer under NCLB. In the West Zone, there are about 493 seats available for 1,570 K-5 students with an NCLB transfer right. In the North Zone, there are actually more available seats (683) than there are K-5 students with a right to transfer. These data are for regular education students only, and do not include special education or bilingual students, or students in other special programs.

²⁵ Cambridge’s high school includes four smaller schools-within-a-school to which students are randomly assigned.

²⁶ See <http://www.ccebos.org/pilotschools/bostonpilotschools.html>.

²⁷ See <http://www.ccebos.org/pilotschools/news.html>.

Boston public schools are divided into three zones – East, North, and West – as detailed in the chart below.

Boston Schools Whose Students are Eligible for Choice Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*

| Zone | Level | Schools From Which Students Have Right to Transfer | Schools to Which Students May Transfer ¹ |
|--------------|----------------|---|--|
| East | Elementary/K-8 | 20 | 10 |
| | Middle | 4 | 6 |
| North | Elementary/K-8 | 7 ² | 22 |
| | Middle | 1 | 7 ² |
| West | Elementary/K-8 | 10 | 15 |
| | Middle | 2 | 4 |

¹ All students may also transfer to 3 citywide elementary schools and 2 citywide middle schools that are making Adequate Yearly Progress.

² Includes the Tobin School (K-8), whose Grade K-5 students have a transfer right, but whose Grade 6-8 students do not. Source: Boston Public Schools website (<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/nclb/ayp.doc>)

Cambridge and Lynn may also face large challenges in implementing NCLB choice requirements. In Cambridge, 10 out of 25 Kindergarten-8 schools are in Improvement Status for the second year. In Lynn, 8 of 19 elementary schools and 1 out of 5 middle schools are in Improvement Status for the second year.

Federal Guidelines for Implementing School Choice When Capacity is Limited. The U.S. Department of Education’s guidelines state that if a district has no schools to which students can transfer, either because all schools at a particular grade level are under-performing, because there is only one school in the district, or because “the rural or isolated nature of the LEA [district] prevents choice,” the district must “to the extent practicable, work with other districts in the area to establish a cooperative agreement that would allow inter-district choice.” The guidelines also declare that a district “may not use lack of capacity to deny students the option to transfer” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). It is too early to tell exactly what these guidelines will mean in practice.

Choices Outside Public System: Private/Parochial Schools & Home-Schooling

The traditional form of school choice, outside of choosing to live in a place with attractive local public schools, has been private school. In recent years, another option—home-schooling—also appears to have been gaining momentum. In this section of the report, we analyze data on students in private and parochial²⁸ schools (other than the Chapter 766 private special education schools, which are covered in a separate section) and provide estimates of the Massachusetts home-schooling population. The data on private school enrollments and on home-schooling are much less complete than the available data on public school choice.

According to *The Condition of Education 2002*, produced by the U.S. Department of Education, about 3.2 million of all U.S. students attended church-related private schools and 1.1 million attended non-church-related private schools in 1999, the most recent year for which data were available. In percentage terms, students in church-related private schools dropped slightly between 1993 and 1999 from 7.5% to 7.3%, but the percentage in non-church-related private schools increased from 1.6% to 2.3%. (*The Condition of Education 2002*, Table 29-2, p. 177)

Private Schools – The National Context

The Northeastern states have the largest private-school enrollments as a percentage of their total student population. In 1999-2000, 8.7% of Northeastern students attended church-based private schools and 3.6% attended non-church-based private schools, making a total of 12.3%. The corresponding national total was 9.6%.

Characteristics of Private Schools. It is difficult to generalize about private school characteristics. Some private schools are quite small, and others are large. The tuition at certain private schools may be comparable to that of private colleges, but many diocesan Catholic schools keep their tuitions relatively low. Nationally, the mean Catholic elementary school tuition is \$2,178, and the median tuition for high-school freshmen is \$4,289 (McDonald, 2002). Non-Catholic private school tuitions are generally much higher, with median tuition of \$12,225 for grades 1-3 to \$17,900 for grades 9-12.²⁹

The single largest category of private schools, both in Massachusetts and nationally, is Catholic schools. Even though enrollment in urban Catholic schools appears to be in decline, (McLaughlin, 2003), there are still about 2.6 million students in the nation's Catholic schools (McDonald, 2002). According to the National Catholic Education Association's 2001-02 Report on Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, 3,477 out of 8,114 Catholic schools (42.8%) have waiting lists.

Data on Massachusetts private school enrollment are available from both the state Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics. The two sets of data do not agree. According to the Department of Education, there are 538 private schools (not counting the 125 Chapter 766 schools) in Massachusetts. In FY02 (school year 2001-02), these schools enrolled 133,440 students in grades K-12, or about 12.4% of the state's total school enrollment. According to DOE, the smallest private school in the state is Robin Crest, which has two students, and the largest is Boston College High School, with 1,286.

Private Schools – Massachusetts Enrollment

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Digest of Education Statistics, 2001, Table 63), private school enrollment in Massachusetts rose slightly through the 1990s. However, the NCES estimate of Massachusetts private school enrollment is different than that of the state Department of Education. NCES estimated a private school enrollment of 132,154 in 1999,

²⁸ In this section, we generally use the term "private" school to encompass all types of non-publicly funded schools, including independent private schools, Catholic parochial schools, and others.

²⁹ Figures are for New England schools. Source: Conversation with Steve Clem, President, Association of Independent Schools in New England.

different from 125,006 in 1991. (Public school enrollment was also rising during this period.) The NCES also indicates a larger number of private schools (694 in 1999) than does the Massachusetts Department of Education.

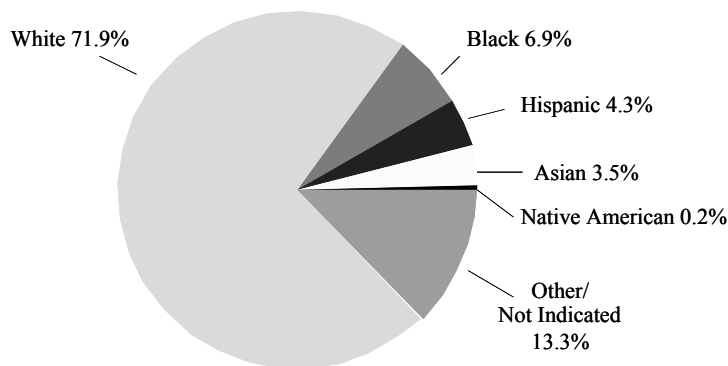
The majority of Massachusetts private school students go to Catholic schools—about 83,000, versus about 50,000 in non-Catholic private schools. There were 85,257 Catholic school students in 2001-02, and there are 82,989 in 2002-03.³⁰

Boston-Area Enrollment. Based on Massachusetts Department of Education data, the Boston area has a larger proportion of its students in private schools (18%) than the statewide average (12.4%). Within the Boston metropolitan area, 45,997 students in grades K-12 attend private schools. Of those students, 15,405 are in the city of Boston, with 11,821 of these attending Catholic schools.

**Private Schools –
Student
Demographics**

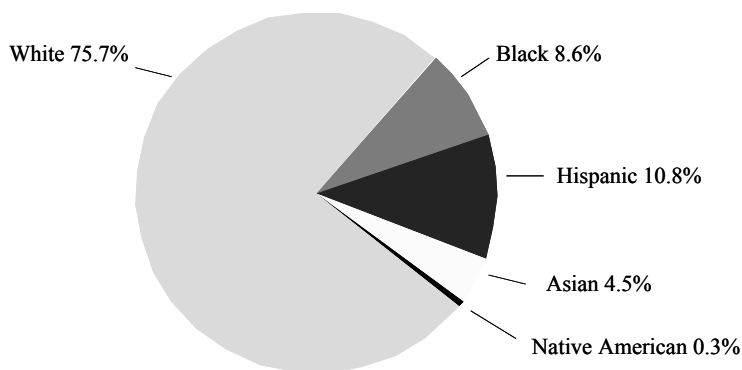
Massachusetts Demographics. Statewide, 71.9 % of private school K-12 students are white, while 6.9% are black, 4.3% are Hispanic, 3.5% are Asian, 0.2% are Native American, and 13.3% did not indicate or are another race/ethnicity. Percentages for Massachusetts public-school students are 75.7% white, 8.6% black, 10.8% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian and 0.3% Native American.

Massachusetts FY02 Private School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Private School Enrollment Data, MA Department of Education

Massachusetts FY02 Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



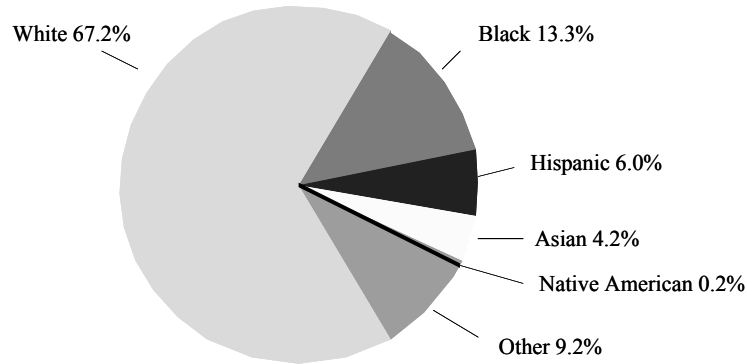
Source: October 1, 2001 School Enrollment from MA Department of Education

Note: The data for the graphics on pages 49 and 50 come from two different data sources. The data from which we generated the private school graphics included an “other” category, while the data for the overall populations do not. Interpretation should therefore be made with care.

³⁰ Data per Fr. Joseph O’Keefe, Director of Research and Public Policy, National Catholic Educational Association and Associate Dean of the Boston College Lynch School of Education).

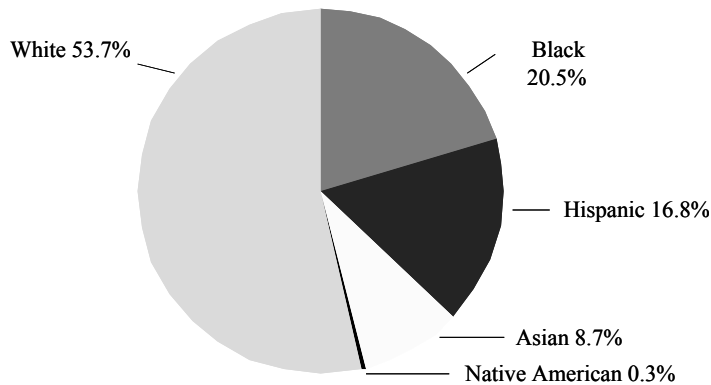
Boston-Area Demographics. Compared to public-school enrollment in the Boston metropolitan area, there is a greater percentage of white students in the private-school population than in the public-school population. Black students comprise approximately 20.5% of public-school enrollment in the Boston area, but only 13.3% of private school enrollment. Similarly, 16.8% of Boston-area public-school students are Hispanic, while only 6.0% of private-school students are Hispanic.

Metropolitan Boston FY02 Private School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Private School Enrollment Data, MA Department of Education

Metropolitan Boston FY02 Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Source: October 1, 2001 School Enrollment from MA Department of Education

Home-Schooling

It is extremely difficult to obtain data on home-schooled students. The most definite thing that can be said at present about the Massachusetts home-schooling population is that it is somewhere between 2,300 and 22,000 students. If the true population is close to the high end of that range, it would mean that more students are home-schooled than are currently enrolled in charter schools.

In the late 1990s, the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) issued a study of the nationwide home-schooling population, which estimated that between 1 and 2% of the nation's children were being taught at home. If the national pattern held in Massachusetts, that would mean a home-schooling population of between 11,000 and 22,000 based on an estimated school-aged population of about 1.1 million. Consistent with this estimate, the Family Resource Center (FRC), a Massachusetts home-schooling organization, claims that there are currently 20,000 home-schooled students in the state.

We attempted to verify the FRC estimate with DOE data, but the data did not permit the kind of analysis necessary.³¹ OERI was also unable to provide an estimate of Massachusetts home-schoolers in its 1999 study.

In spring, 2003, we asked Boston-area school districts for information about their home-schooling populations. Fifteen districts replied, and all reported home-schooling populations that were less than 1% of their total number of students. The mean percentage was 0.21%. If that percentage were accurate statewide, then the home-schooled population would be about 2,300. This figure is almost certainly too low, since many families who home-school their children do not file the required paperwork with their towns' school departments.

Home-schooling trends have important policy implications and should be further explored. As part of this analysis, we must better quantify the home-schooled population and understand families' rationale for selecting this alternative.

³¹ The DOE October 1st Report includes home-schooled children in the same category as private-school students. DOE also collects enrollment data from individual private schools, and made these data available to us. We hoped to estimate the number of home-schooled children by subtracting the known private school enrollments from the October 1st estimate of private school plus home-schooling populations, but for many towns the total students reported by the private schools exceeded the October 1st totals.

Vocational Education Options

In many ways, the vocational education system is the most highly developed choice system in the state. Vocational education options for Massachusetts students fall into four general categories: regional vocational-technical schools, independent public vocational schools, high schools within school districts, and vocational-technical programs within comprehensive high schools (see Introduction and Definitions section for more information).

Regional Vocational-Technical High Schools. Among the four types of vocational education programs, regional vocational-technical and agricultural schools enroll the largest number of students. In the 2001-02 academic year, 24,665 students attended 29 of these schools statewide (including the county agricultural schools). There are four regional vocational-technical schools (Minuteman, Northeast Metro, North Shore, and Blue Hills) that serve students from communities within the Boston Metropolitan area. 3,112 students attend these schools.

Massachusetts Enrollment

If a student wants to attend a particular regional vocational-technical school, but does not live in one of its member districts, he or she may enroll through the state's inter-district School Choice program. In 2001-02, 616 regional vocational-technical school students participated in this program (see the Inter-District Choice section of this report for more information).

Independent Public Vocational-Technical School. The Smith Vocational-Agricultural High School, in Northampton, is considered an "independent" vocational-technical school. In the 2001-2002 school year, it enrolled 476 students. As such, it has no member districts. Districts pay tuition for any student who wants to attend.

District-Based Vocational-Technical High Schools. Twelve Massachusetts school districts have specialized vocational-technical high schools. Four are in the Boston metropolitan area (Boston, Lynn, Peabody, and Quincy). The other eight are Attleboro, Fall River, Leominster, Holyoke, Pittsfield, Springfield, Westfield, and Worcester.

Programs Within Comprehensive High Schools. There are 31 school districts in Massachusetts that offer vocational-technical programs within their comprehensive high schools. Of these districts, 9 are in the Boston metropolitan area: Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, Everett High School, Medford, Newton North, Revere, Somerville, Wakefield, Waltham, and Winthrop.

Vocational-education programs maintain waiting lists for each of the specialties they offer. We collected waiting list information from the four vocational-education programs in the Boston area. For last year's freshman class, the four schools received a total of 1,712 applications (students may apply to more than one school) for 982 available slots in the various specialties offered. However, only 684 students ended up enrolling, apparently because of greater competition for limited spaces in certain specialty areas. In addition, there are now almost 100 students on the schools' waiting lists for particularly popular specialties.

Unmet Demand

Income Status. Based on the available data, it appears students in regional vocational-technical schools are as likely as the overall student population to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Of vocational-technical students, 24.8% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared with 25.3 % of the overall K-12 student population. However, data were not available for all regional vocational-technical schools. Also, all regional vocational-technical students are of at least high-school age, and high-school students are generally less likely than younger peers to complete paperwork establishing eligibility. Thus, it is possible that regional vocational-technical students are actually more likely than the overall population to be in low-income families.

Student Demographics

Student Status. Regional vocational-technical schools on average serve higher populations of special education students than non-vocational districts. In FY02, approximately 24.4% of regional vocational-technical school students were special education students. This is much higher than the figure for non-vocational districts, which had approximately 15.3% of students receiving special education services.

Special Education

Special education placement decisions reflect the choices of a team that is charged with ensuring that the child receives an appropriate education. However, parents can be integral to the team process, and in general, the greater the advocacy of the parents, the more intervention alternatives they are likely to have. Once a child is identified as in need of special education services, she may be recommended to receive them in her own public school district, in another public school district, or in an approved special education private school.

Massachusetts Enrollment

Statewide, 4,959 students received special education services in private schools during the 2001-02 school year. Another 1,368 were in residential programs. There are 125 private schools that serve special education students whose tuition is paid with public funds through the Chapter 766 program.

The total number of children receiving special education services in Massachusetts (including all special education programs) peaked at 164,925 in the 1998-99 school year, before declining to 150,003 in 2001-02. The numbers of children in private placements, and in placements in separate public schools, both peaked in 2000-01 before declining slightly in 2001-02. Despite increases in the total enrollment of all students, there has been a slight downward trend in the percentage of students who receive special education services.

Massachusetts Students Receiving Special Education Services, by Service Type, FY02
(% of All Students)

| | Inclusion % | Resource Room % | Separate Class % | Public Separate School (day) % | Private Separate School (day) % | Residential Facilities % | Home-bound/Hospital % | Program for Children Ages 3 & 4 % | % in SPED Programs of All Types |
|---|-------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Charter Schools | 1.92 | 7.37 | 0.19 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 9.52 |
| Academic School Districts | 1.90 | 9.18 | 2.42 | 0.33 | 0.55 | 0.14 | 0.02 | 0.83 | 15.38 |
| Overall State Percentage | 1.98 | 9.44 | 2.23 | 0.31 | 0.51 | 0.14 | 0.02 | 0.78 | 15.40 |
| Regional Academic School Districts | 1.80 | 9.73 | 1.23 | 0.23 | 0.39 | 0.20 | 0.04 | 0.67 | 14.29 |
| Regional Vocational School Districts | 5.37 | 17.55 | 1.48 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 24.41 |

Metropolitan-Boston Students Receiving Special Education Services, by Service Type, FY02
(% of All Students)

| | Inclusion % | Resource Room % | Separate Class % | Public Separate School (day) % | Private Separate School (day) % | Residential Facilities % | Home-bound/Hospital % | Program for Children Ages 3 & 4 % | % in SPED Programs of All Types |
|---|-------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Charter Schools | 1.10 | 6.40 | 0.21 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.02 | 7.73 |
| Academic School Districts | 1.01 | 9.68 | 4.16 | 0.42 | 0.75 | 0.12 | 0.01 | 0.73 | 16.88 |
| Overall Metro Boston % | 1.07 | 9.80 | 4.04 | 0.40 | 0.73 | 0.12 | 0.01 | 0.70 | 16.87 |
| Regional Academic School Districts | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Regional Vocational School Districts | 5.43 | 24.0 | 2.63 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 32.07 |

Areas for Further Research

In this report, we emphasized collection of quantitative data that would provide a basis for discussion of school choice policies in the Commonwealth. This type of mapping shows who is participating in school choice and how this choice is segmented. However, we still lack vital data and analysis on why choices are made and how these choices impact individual students, schools, and districts. Additionally, we lack knowledge about how school choice impacts the mainstream system – financially, institutionally, and pedagogically.

We must undertake significant qualitative and quantitative research to ensure that policies are informed by evidence and not conjecture, independent analysis and not ideology. Policymakers must carefully consider the data and policy implications before setting the future school choice course for the Commonwealth. Our analysis suggests several further questions that researchers should address:

- ***What motivates a student and his/her family to enroll (and remain at) alternative schools?*** What factors influence school choices, and what criteria do families use to inform their decisions? Why are some families choosing and others not? Where do families get the information that informs their choices? How involved are students in the school choice?
- ***Are students and parents satisfied with their choices?*** What level of satisfaction do students and their families experience with their chosen school? How frequently do students who leave the mainstream system return, and for what reasons?
- ***Does school choice generate constructive competition within the overall educational system?*** Is there evidence that this competitive pressure has resulted in innovation or improvement? Has it enhanced quality and diversity of educational offerings in either mainstream or alternative schools?
- ***Does school choice impact student performance?*** Can changes in student achievement and motivation be seen? By increasing educational options for families, do we improve the likelihood of effective school/student matching?
- ***How does school choice impact schools and districts financially?*** What are the costs and benefits of school choice to mainstream public school systems? How should current financial formulas be revised to minimize the negative impact of charter-school tuition reimbursement on mainstream districts and/or to assist with the capitalization costs faced by charter schools?
- ***What is the effect of school choice in cities and their contiguous suburbs?*** Why do some towns choose to opt in or out of inter-district choice? How does expansion of choice—including the new mandates from No Child Left Behind—interact with desegregation orders? How do school choice programs affect diversity in other jurisdictions? Do choice programs appear to enhance socio-economic and racial/ethnic diversity in schools? What strategies can be leveraged to enable the Commonwealth to meet No Child Left Behind's mandates for expanded school choice?
- ***Which school choice policies might result in a more equitable distribution of school choice opportunities?*** Have other states and jurisdictions found ways and means of distributing choice opportunities more equitably?

Answers to these questions require data gathering, analysis and discussion of potential policy implications. Research and mapping must continue to provide the data and analysis needed to inform policymaking and to enable leaders to determine the right balance of school choice options and incentives.

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Appendix

Massachusetts School Districts' Inter-District Choice Status, 2001-02 & 2002-03

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Abington | N | N | |
| Acton | Y | N* | |
| Acushnet | N | N | |
| Agawam | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Amesbury | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Amherst | N | N | |
| Andover | N | N | |
| Arlington | N | N | |
| Ashland | Y* | Y | 10-12 |
| Attleboro | N | N | |
| Auburn | N | N | |
| Avon | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Ayer | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Barnstable | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Bedford | N | N | |
| Belchertown | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Bellingham | N | N | |
| Belmont | N | Y | 9-10 |
| Berkeley | N | N | |
| Berlin | Y | Y | 1,3,5 |
| Beverly | Y | Y | 1-5 & 7-12 |
| Billerica | N | N | |
| Boston | N | N | |
| Bourne | N | N | |
| Boxborough | N | N | |
| Boxford | N | N | |
| Boylston | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Braintree | N | N | |
| Brewster | N | N | |
| Brimfield | N | Y | K-6 |
| Brockton | N | N | |
| Brookfield | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Brookline | N | N | |
| Burlington | N | N | |
| Cambridge | N | N | |
| Canton | N | N | |
| Carlisle | N | N | |
| Carver | N | N | |
| Chatham | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Chelmsford | N | N | |
| Chelsea | N | N | |
| Chicopee | N | N | |
| Clarksburg | N | N | |
| Clinton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Cohasset | N | N | |
| Concord | N | N | |
| Conway | Y | Y | K,1,4 |
| Danvers | N | N | |
| Dartmouth | N | N | |
| Dedham | N | N | |
| Deerfield | Y | Y | K-6 |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Douglas | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Dover | N | N | |
| Dracut | Y | Y | 7-12 |
| Duxbury | N | N | |
| East Bridgewater | N | N | |
| Eastham | N | N | |
| Easthampton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| East Longmeadow | Y* | N** | |
| Easton | N | N | |
| Edgartown | N | Y | K-8 |
| Erving | N | N | |
| Everett | N | N | |
| Fairhaven | N | N | |
| Fall River | N | N | |
| Falmouth | N | Y | 7-11 |
| Fitchburg | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Florida | N | N | |
| Foxborough | N | N | |
| Framingham | N | N | |
| Franklin | N | N | |
| Freetown | N | N | |
| Gardner | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Georgetown | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Gloucester | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Gosnold | N | N | |
| Grafton | N | N | |
| Granby | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Granville | N | N | |
| Greenfield | Y | Y | K-5 |
| Hadley | N | Y | 7,8,9,11 |
| Halifax | N | N | |
| Hancock | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Hanover | N | N | |
| Harvard | Y* | Y | 1,7,9,10 |
| Harwich | Y | Y | K,1,5,8,10,11 |
| Hatfield | Y | Y | 7-12 |
| Haverhill | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Hingham | N | N | |
| Holbrook | N | N | |
| Holland | N | N | |
| Holliston | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Holyoke | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Hopendale | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Hopkinton | Y* | N** | |
| Hudson | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Hull | N | N | |
| Ipswich | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Kingston | N | N | |
| Lakeville | N | N | |
| Lanesborough | Y | Y | K-6 |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Lawrence | N | N | |
| Lee | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Leicester | N | N | |
| Lenox | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Leominster | Y* | Y | K-12 |
| Leverett | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Lexington | N | N | |
| Lincoln | N | N | |
| Littleton | Y | Y | 6,9,10 |
| Longmeadow | Y | Y | 9 |
| Lowell | N | N | |
| Ludlow | Y | Y | 2,3,5,8,10-12 |
| Lunenburg | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Lynn | N | N | |
| Lynnfield | N | N | |
| Malden | N | N | |
| Mansfield | N | N | |
| Marblehead | Y* | N** | |
| Marion | N | N | |
| Marlborough | N | N | |
| Marshfield | N | N | |
| Mashpee | N | N | |
| Mattapoisett | N | N | |
| Maynard | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Medfield | N | N | |
| Medford | N | N | |
| Medway | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Melrose | N | N | |
| Methuen | N | N | |
| Middleborough | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Middleton | N | N | |
| Milford | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Millbury | N | N | |
| Millis | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Milton | N | N | |
| Monson | N | Y | 5 |
| Nahant | N | N | |
| Nantucket | N | N | |
| Natick | N | N | |
| Needham | N | N | |
| New Bedford | N | N | |
| Newburyport | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Newton | N | N | |
| Norfolk | N | N | |
| North Adams | N | N | |
| Northampton | Y | Y | K-5, 7, 9-12 |
| North Andover | N | N | |
| North Attleborough | N | N | |
| Northborough | N | N | |
| Northbridge | Y | Y | K, 9-12 |
| North Brookfield | Y | Y | K12 |
| North Reading | N | N | |
| Norton | N | N | |
| Norwell | N | N | |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Norwood | N | N | |
| Oak Bluffs | Y | Y | K-8 |
| Orange | N | N | |
| Orleans | N | N | |
| Oxford | N | N | |
| Palmer | Y* | N** | |
| Peabody | N | N | |
| Pelham | N | N | |
| Pembroke | N | N | |
| Petersham | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Pittsfield | Y | Y | K-2 & 5-10 |
| Plainville | N | N | |
| Plymouth | N | N | |
| Plympton | N | N | |
| Provincetown | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Quincy | N | N | |
| Randolph | N | N | |
| Reading | N | N | |
| Revere | N | N | |
| Richmond | N | N | |
| Rochester | N | N | |
| Rockland | N | N | |
| Rockport | Y | Y | 1,7,9-11 |
| Rowe | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Salem | N | N | |
| Sandwich | N | N | |
| Saugus | N | N | |
| Savoy | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Scituate | N | N | |
| Seekonk | N | N | |
| Sharon | N | N | |
| Sherborn | N | N | |
| Shirley | Y | Y | N-8 |
| Shrewsbury | N | N | |
| Shutesbury | N | N | |
| Somerset | N | N | |
| Somerville | N | N | |
| Southampton | Y | **N | |
| Southborough | N | N | |
| Southbridge | N | N | |
| South Hadley | Y | Y | K-3, 5-11 |
| Springfield | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Stoneham | N | N | |
| Stoughton | N | N | |
| Sturbridge | N | N | |
| Sudbury | N | N | |
| Sunderland | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Sutton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Swampscott | N | N | |
| Swansea | N | N | |
| Taunton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Tewksbury | N | N | |
| Tisbury | Y | Y | K-8 |
| Topsfield | N | N | |
| Truro | Y | Y | 4-6 |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Tyngsborough | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Uxbridge | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Wakefield | N | N | |
| Wales | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Walpole | N | N | |
| Waltham | N | N | |
| Ware | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Wareham | Y* | N** | |
| Watertown | N | N | |
| Wayland | N | N | |
| Webster | N | N | |
| Wellesley | N | N | |
| Wellfleet | N | N | |
| Westborough | N | N | |
| West Boylston | Y | Y | K-12 |
| West Bridgewater | N | N | |
| Westfield | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Westford | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Westhampton | N | N | |
| Weston | N | N | |
| Westport | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| West Springfield | N | N | |
| Westwood | N | N | |
| Weymouth | N | N | |
| Whatley | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Williamsburg | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Williamstown | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Wilmington | N | N | |
| Winchendon | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Winchester | N | N | |
| Winthrop | N | Y | K-12 |
| Woburn | N | N | |
| Worcester | N | N | |
| Wrentham | N | N | |
| Northampton Smith | N | N | |
| Acton Boxborough | Y* | N** | |
| Adams Cheshire | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Amherst Pelham | Y | Y | 8-12 |
| Ashburnham | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Westminster | | | |
| Athol Royalston | N | Y | K-12 |
| Berkshire Hills | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Berlin Boylston | Y | Y | 8-12 |
| Blackstone Millville | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Bridgewater Raynham | N | N | |
| Chesterfield Goshen | Y | Y | K-6 |
| Central Berkshire | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Concord Carlisle | N | N | |
| Dennis Yarmouth | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Dighton Rehoboth | N | N | |
| Dover Sherborn | N | N | |
| Dudley Charleton | N | N | |
| Nauset | Y | Y | 6-12 |
| Farmington River | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Freetown Lakeville | N | N | |
| Frontier | Y | Y | 8-11 |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Gateway | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Groton Dunstable | Y* | N** | |
| Gill Montague | Y | Y | K-3, 5-8 |
| Hamilton Wenham | Y | Y | 8-12 |
| Hampden Wilbraham | Y | Y | 4-6, 9 |
| Hampshire | Y | Y | 7-12 |
| Hawlemont | Y | Y | K-6 |
| King Philip | N | N | |
| Lincoln Sudbury | N | N | |
| Manchester Essex | Y | Y | K-11 |
| Martha's Vineyard | N | N | |
| Masconomet | N | N | |
| Mendon Upton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Mount Greylock | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Mohawk Trail | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Narrangansett | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Nashoba | Y | Y | 6-12 |
| New Salem Wendell | N | N | |
| Northborough | N | N | |
| Southborough | | | |
| North Middlesex | Y | Y | K-2, 6-12 |
| Old Rochester | N | N | |
| Pentucket | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Pioneer | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Quabbin | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Ralph C. Mahar | Y | Y | 9-11 |
| Silver Lake | N | N | |
| Southern Berkshire | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Southwick Tolland | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Spencer East Brookfield | N | Y | 1-12 |
| Tantasqua | N | Y | 8-12 |
| Triton | Y | Y | K-12 |
| Upisland | Y | Y | K-8 |
| Wachusett | N | N | |
| Quaboag | Y | Y | 1-4, 9-12 |
| Whitman Hanson | N | N | |
| Assabet Valley | N | N | |
| Blackstone Valley | N | N | |
| Blue Hills | N | N | |
| Bristol Plymouth | N | N | |
| Cape Cod | N | N | |
| Franklin County | N | N | |
| Greater Fall River | N | N | |
| Greater Lawrence | Y | Y | 10-12 |
| Greater New Bedford | N | N | |
| Greater Lowell | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| South Middlesex | N | N | |
| Minuteman | Y* | N** | |
| Montachusett | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Nothern Berkshire | N | N | |
| Nashoba Valley | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Northeast Metropolitan | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| North Shore | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Old Colony | N | N | |
| Pathfinder | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Shawsheen Valley | N | N | |

| School District | 01-02 Status | 02-03 Status | Grades for 02-03 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Southeastern | N | N | |
| South Shore | N | N | |
| Southern Worcester | N | N | |
| Tri County | N | N | |
| Upper Cape Cod | N | N | |
| Whittier | Y | Y | 9-12 |
| Bristol County | N | N | |
| Essex County | N | N | |
| Norfolk County | N | N | |

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