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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools: Fall River

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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools

Fall River

by Michael Berardino, MS

June, 2013

THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Fall River

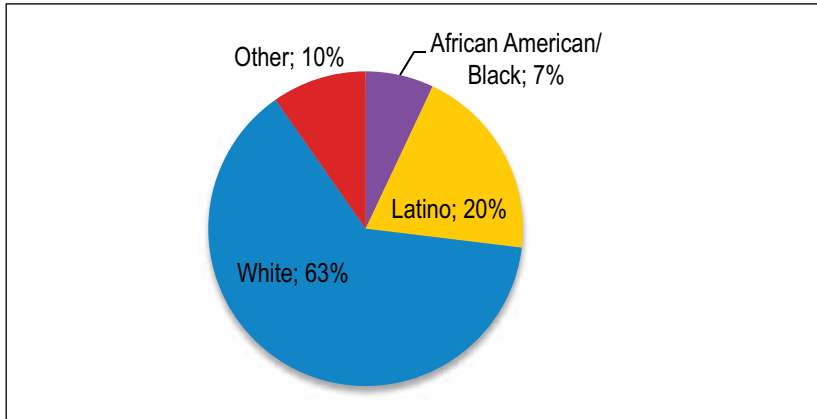
This report provides a snapshot of current educational outcomes of Latino students in the city of Fall River. It is based on publicly available data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) that has been analyzed by the Gastón Institute for the *2013 Latinos in Massachusetts Regional Meeting* in New Bedford. This report uses the ethno-racial categories assigned by MADESE. It focuses on the evolving demographic trends and the most recent educational outcomes of Latino students relative to other ethno-racial groups in the school district. The first section illustrates the demographic shift occurring in the Fall River Public Schools, with a growing Latino student population and a shrinking White and African-American/Black student population. The second section compares the performance of Latino students in Fall River on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests with the performance of all students statewide and other ethno-racial groups in Fall River revealing substantial and persistent gaps in pass rates. The third section shows Latino graduation and dropout rates, and college enrollment rates, relative to White students in the district and to all students statewide. These comparisons show that, despite disparities in graduation and dropout rates, the gap between Latino and White students has been shrinking over recent years.

Notes

¹ While analyzing and presenting the data using MADESE's ethno-racial categories, we use the term "Latino" rather than "Hispanic."

Demographics

Figure 1: Fall River Ethno-Racial Composition, SY2013



Source: MADESE. (n.d.). *Enrollment Data*.

Fall River is the tenth largest school district in Massachusetts with 10,318 students. In SY2013, the increasingly diverse school district comprised 63% White students, 20% Latino students, 7% African-American/Black students, and 10% “other” students. Approximately 22% of these 2,017 Latino students are classified as Limited English Proficient. Latino students are also a highly mobile student group, with 30% changing schools and 19% leaving the district entirely during SY2012 (both well above the district rates of 21% and 13% respectively).

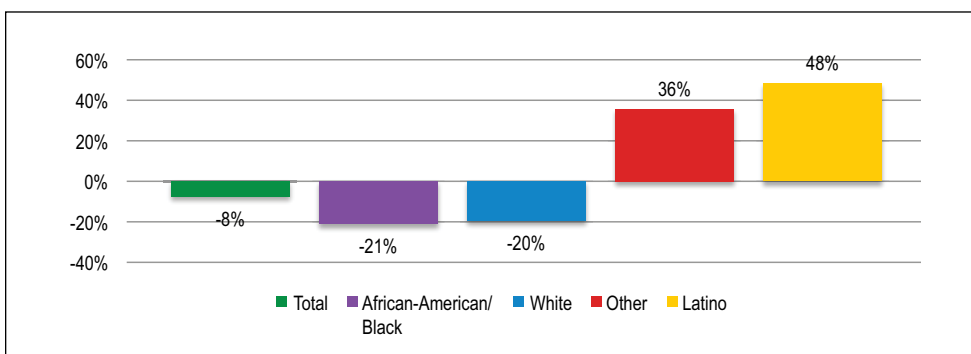
As demonstrated in Figure 2 below, Fall River has experienced a demographic shift in recent years. Since SY2006, the overall student enrollment has decreased by 8%, with White student enrollment decreasing by 20% and African-American/Black enrollment decreasing by 21%. During this same period, the number of Latino students increased by 48%.

² SY refers to the ending year of the school year. For example SY2013 is the school year that began in September of 2012 and ends in June of 2013

³ This report uses the ethno-racial categories assigned by MADESE: African-American/Black; Asian; Hispanic; Native American; White; Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander; and Multi-race, non-Hispanic. The “other” category includes: Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Multi-race, non-Hispanic students. The “other” category is omitted from further comparisons.

⁴ SY2006 was the first year MADESE reported the Multi-race, non-Hispanic and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander categories

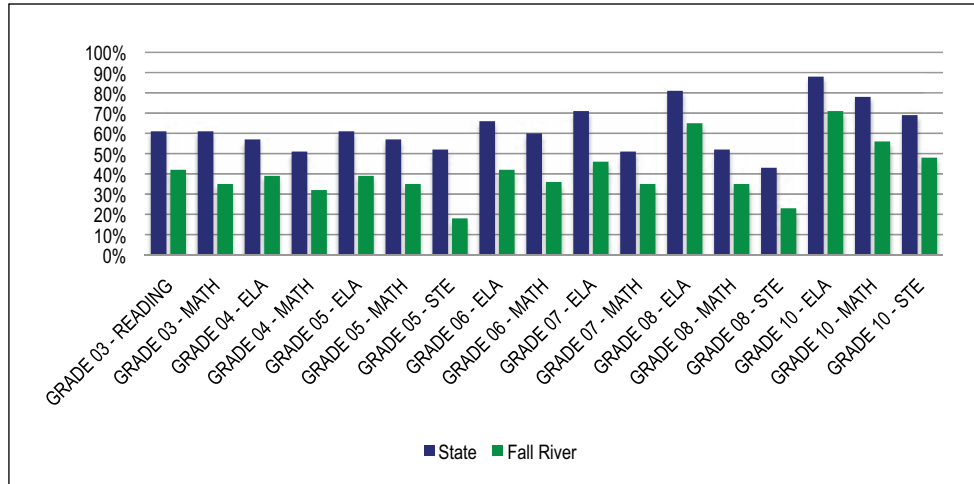
Figure 2: Percentage Change in Enrollment, SY2006 to SY2013



Source: Author’s calculations based on MADESE (2012) Enrollment

MCAS Performance

Figure 3: Percentage of All Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, MCAS by Grade and Subject, SY2012

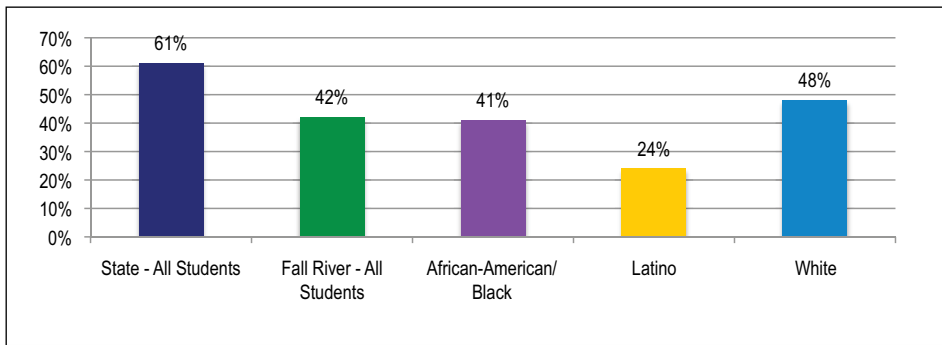


Source: MADESE (2012). 2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.

Fall River, as a district, performs below state averages on the standardized Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests. As seen in Figure 3, on every subject and in every grade, the percentage of students in Fall River scoring “Proficient” or higher on the MCAS is lower than the overall state average. The gap between Latino students in Fall River and Latino students statewide is even larger. Of additional concern is that the gap is largest for Latino students on the three Grade 10 MCAS tests, which are all graduation requirements. A majority of Fall River Latino students scored below the required passing level in SY2012.

This section highlights the performance by Latino students in Fall River on the Grade 3 Reading and Grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science/Technology/Engineering (STE) tests, all important performance measures. Grade 3 Reading is considered an important time when students go from learning how to read to learning from reading. The Grade 10 MCAS tests are crucial for students: all students in Massachusetts are required to pass the Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE MCAS tests in order to qualify for a high school diploma

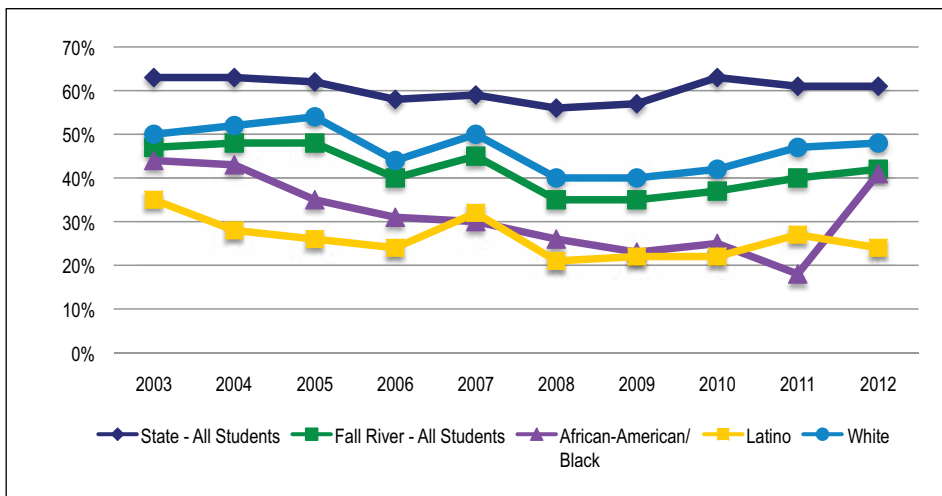
Figure 4: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

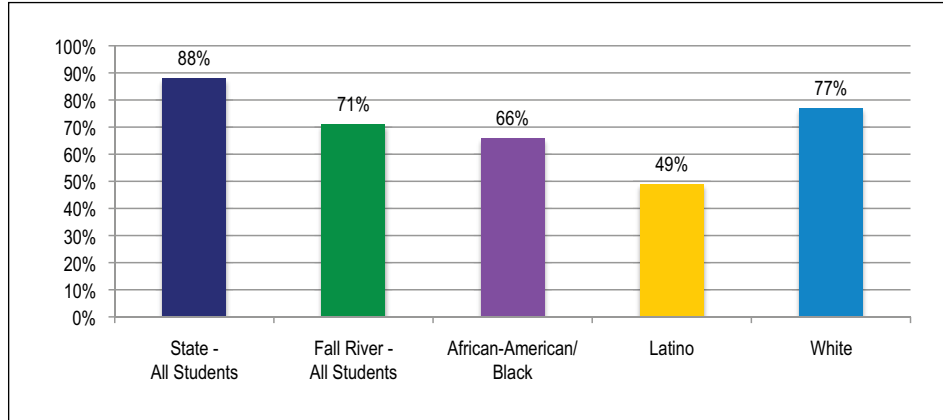
In SY2012, 24% of Latino students in Fall River scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 3 Reading MCAS, the lowest percentage among all ethno-racial groups in Fall River. Figure 4 above illustrates that this rate was 17 percentage points lower than the proficiency rate for African-American/Black students, 24 percentage points lower than the White proficiency rate, and 37 points lower than the rate for all students statewide. Of additional concern is the 32% of Latino students in Fall River who scored in the “Warning” category, the highest among all ethno-racial groups in the district. Moreover, the proficiency rate has declined by 11 percentage points over the past ten years. Figure 5 shows that as a result of the decrease, the gap with White students in Fall River and with all students statewide has increased since SY2003.

Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

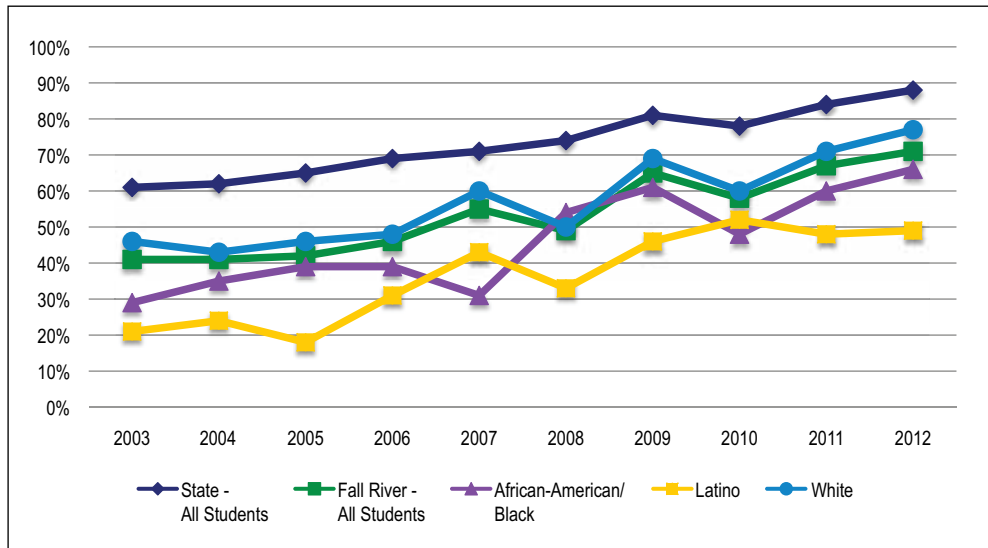
Figure 6: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

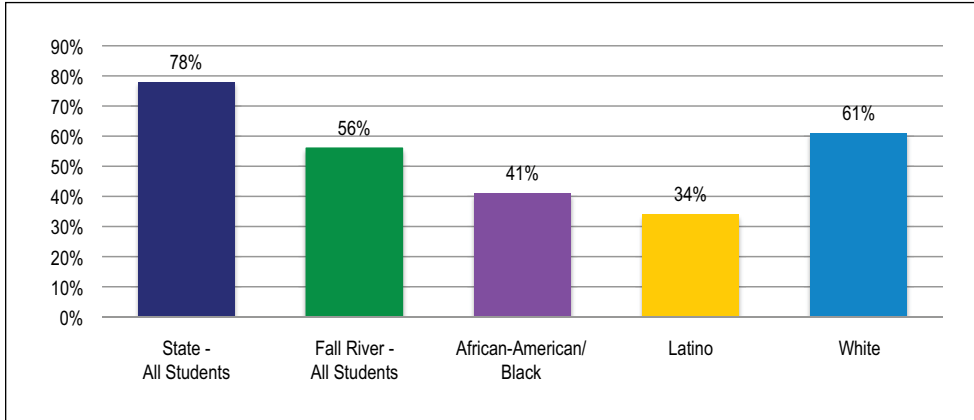
In SY2012, 49% percent of Latino students in Fall River scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS, 17 percentage points below the pass rate for African-American/Black students and 28 points below the rate for White students in Fall River. Figure 7 below illustrates that the Grade 10 ELA pass rate for Latino students in Fall River increased steadily from 21% in SY2003 to 49% in SY2013. Despite these improvements, the gap with White students in Fall River increased over this period and the gap with all students statewide remained unchanged.

Figure 7: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

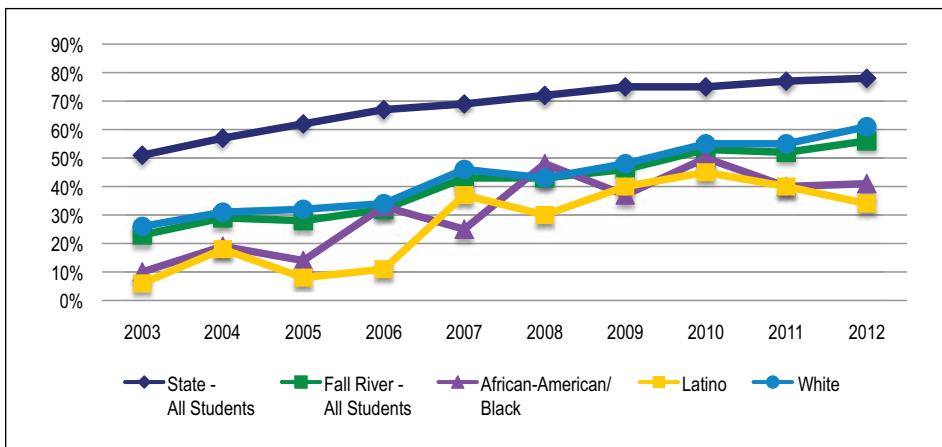
Figure 8: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject*.

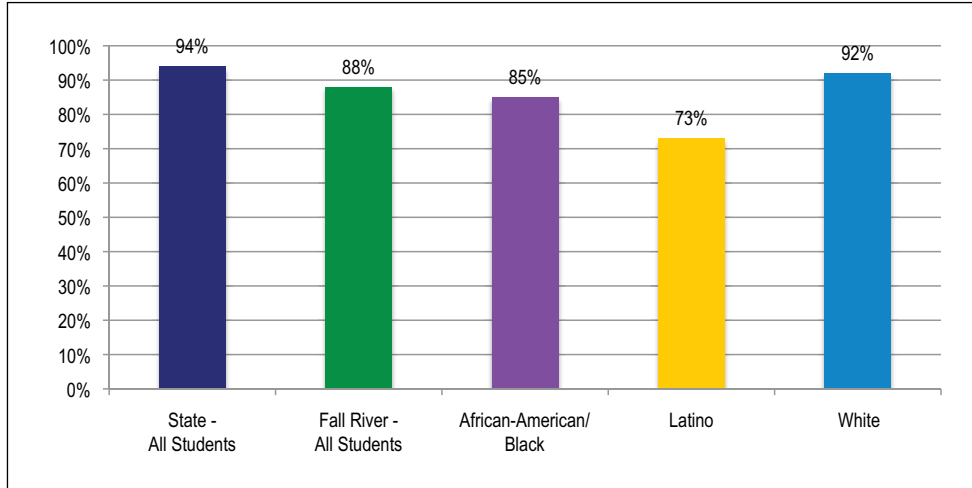
As seen in Figure 8 above, 34% of Latino students in Fall River scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 Math MCAS, the lowest rate among all ethno-racial groups in the district. This pass rate was 7 percentage points below the pass rate for African-American/Black students, 27 points below the rate for White students, and 44 percentage points below the statewide pass rate. Figure 9 below demonstrates that, the pass rate for Fall River Latino students improved by 28 percentage points from SY2003 to SY2012, but the gap with White students in Fall River and all students statewide increased over this period.

Figure 9: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher, Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject*.

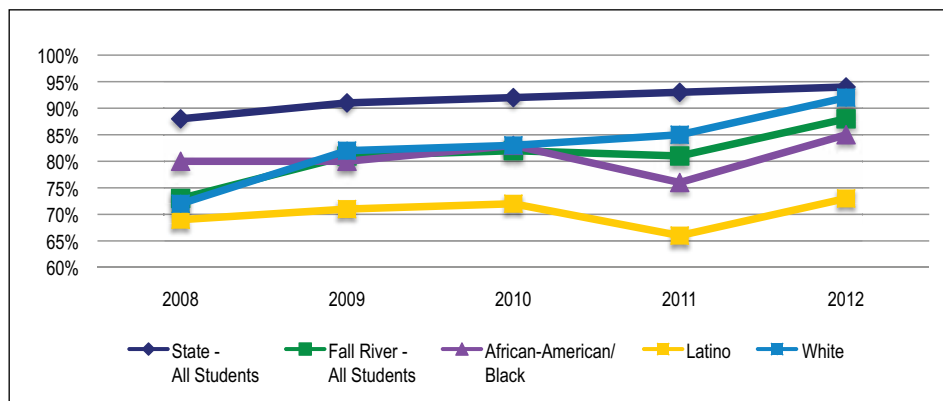
Figure 10: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

Figure 10 illustrates that Latino students in Fall River have the lowest Grade 10 STE MCAS tests pass rate among all ethno-racial groups in the district, with 73% scoring at “Needs Improvement” or higher on the various STE tests (the required score to “pass” the STE tests). This pass rate was 12 percentage points below the pass rate for African-American/Black students in Fall River, 19 percentage points below the rate for White students in Fall River, and 22 percentage points below the state-wide rate for all students. As seen in Figure 11 below, the Grade 10 STE pass rate for Latino students in Fall River has increased slightly by 3 percentage points since the introduction of the test in SY2008. However, over this period the gap with White students in the district has grown substantially (from 3 points to 19 points) and the gap with all students statewide increased slightly.

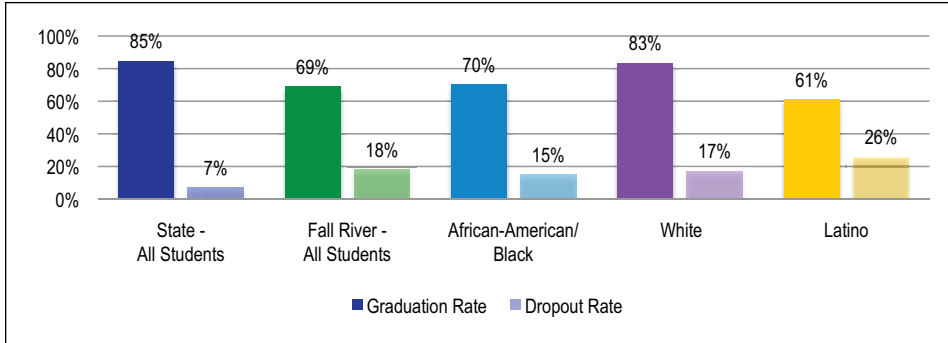
Figure 11: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS, SY2008-SY2012



Source: MADESE (2012). *2012 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

Graduation and Dropout Rates

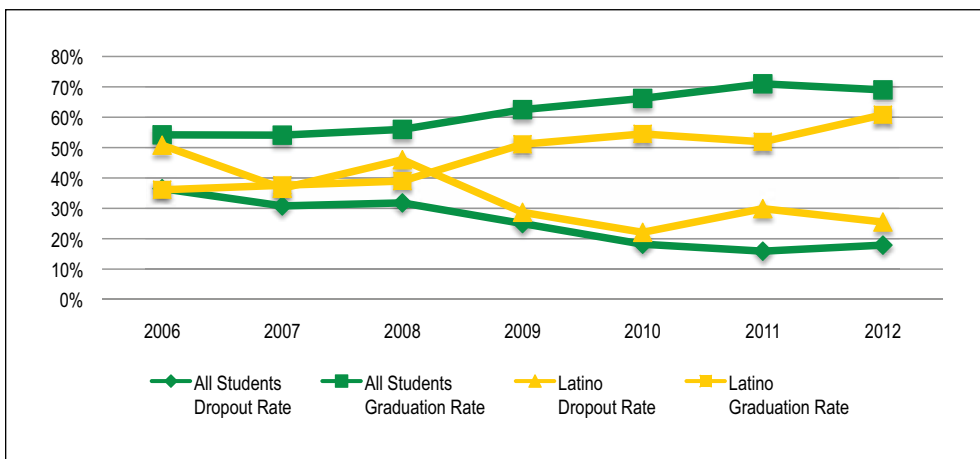
Figure 12: Four-Year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2012 Graduation Rates*.

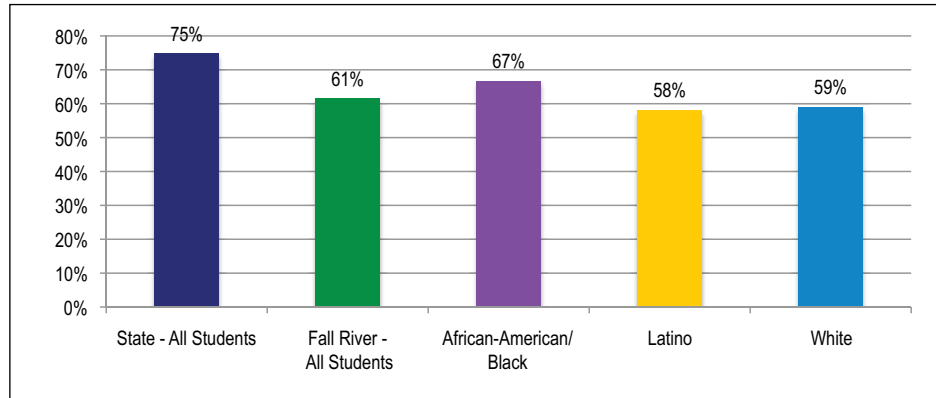
As illustrated in Figure 12 above, Fall River faces a graduation and dropout problem. Only 69% of students graduate and 18% drop out within four years of beginning high school, far below the state graduation rate (85%) and far above the state dropout rate (7%). This problem is more severe among Fall River's Latino students, who have the lowest four-year cohort graduation rate (61%) and the highest dropout rate (26%) of all ethno-racial groups in the district. This ethno-racial disparity in graduation and dropout rates is also seen statewide, where Latino students have the lowest graduation rate (66%) and highest dropout rate (18%) of all ethno-racial groups. Figure 13 below demonstrates that the four-year cohort outcomes for Latino students have improved over recent years, with the graduation rate increasing by 35 percentage points and the dropout rate decreasing by 35 points from SY2006 to SY2012, decreasing the graduation gap with all students by 56% and the dropout gap by two-thirds. Despite these drastic improvements, the low graduation rate and high dropout rate continue to be a problem for Latino students in Fall River.

Figure 13: Four-Year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rate, SY2006-SY2012



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2012 Graduation Rates*.

Figure 14: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Higher Education Institutions within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2010

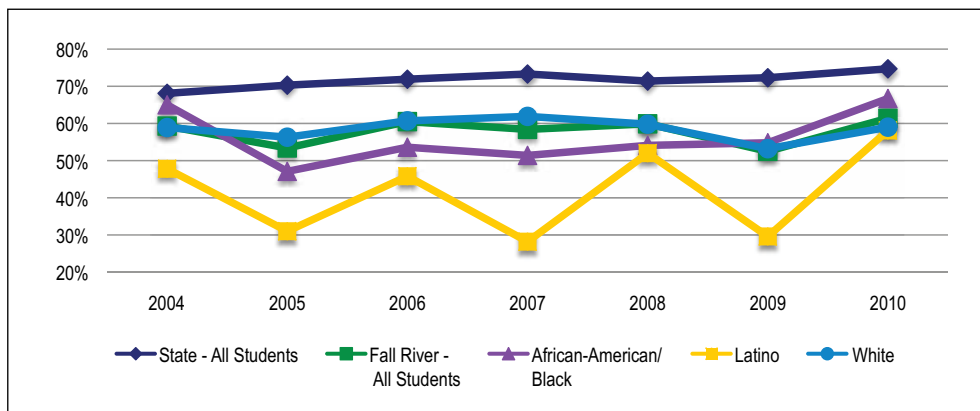


Source: MADESE. (n.d.). *2009-10 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education All Colleges and Universities.*

As illustrated in Figure 14, in Fall River only 61% of all students enroll in higher education within 16 months of completing high school, 14 percentage points below the rate for all students statewide

Latino students in Fall River have the lowest percentage of high school graduates attending higher education among all ethno-racial groups in the district. Although 58% of Latino high school completers in SY2010 attended some form of higher education institutions within 16 months of completing high school, this percentage was approximately 9 points lower than the rate for African-American/Black students and one point below the rate for White students. Furthermore, 72% of these college-attending Latino students were attending public two-year colleges (community colleges), a much higher proportion than for all other ethno-racial groups in Fall River. As Figure 15 illustrates, the college enrollment rate fluctuates annually for Latino students making longitudinal comparisons problematic.

Figure 15: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Higher Education Institutions within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2004 - SY2010



Source: MADESE. (n.d.). *2009-10 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education All Colleges and Universities.*

The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy conducts research on and for the Latino population in New England. Our goal is to generate the information and analysis necessary to develop more inclusive public policy, and to improve Latino participation in the policy making process. As part of its effort to present vital information about Latinos to diverse audiences, the Gastón Institute has produced this series of demographic and educational profiles for selected cities and towns. Reports can be downloaded from www.gaston.umb.edu.

Latinos in Public Schools is a series of reports based on publicly available data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (www.profiles.doe.mass.edu). The public school system in Massachusetts reflects the demographic shift in the diversity of the entire population. The total student enrollment has decreased over the past ten years, but during this period the state has witnessed a growing population of Latino students both in terms of overall enrollment and in proportion of total enrollment. Since the SY2006 school year, the number of Latino students in Massachusetts has increased by 25% (from 125,436 to 156,883

students) representing almost a 4-percentage-point increase in the proportion of total student enrollment (from 12.9% to 16.4% of all students) (MDESE, 2012, MA Enrollment). In contrast, during the same period the number of White and African-American/Black students has decreased by 14% and 5% respectively. This growing Latino population in the state is experiencing an achievement gap as compared to White students. They face persistently lower pass rates on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state-required standardized tests. In addition, Latino students experience the highest dropout rate and lowest graduation rate as compared to other ethno-racial groups in the state. The growing Latino student population in many Massachusetts school districts presents these districts with a changing configuration of students and with new challenges and opportunities. We hope that this series of reports will be helpful, both to school officials and to the Latino communities of these cities and towns.

About the Author

Michael Berardino holds a M.S. in Public Policy from University of Massachusetts Boston and is currently a Research Associate at the Gastón Institute and a doctoral candidate in Public Policy at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. His research focuses on the impacts of language instruction and high-stakes testing policies on English Language Learners, with special attention to Latino student outcomes, school discipline, and civic engagement.

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