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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools: Holyoke

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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools Holyoke

by Michael Berardino, MS

March, 2015

THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Holyoke

This report provides a snapshot of current educational outcomes for Latino students in the city of Holyoke. It is based on publicly available data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) that have been analyzed for the community by the Gastón Institute. Using the ethno-racial categories assigned by MADESE, the report focuses on demographic trends and the most recent educational outcomes of Latino students relative to other ethno-racial groups in the school district and to students statewide.¹ The report has four sections:

The first section illustrates the demographic shift occurring in the Holyoke Public Schools. Enrollment has been shrinking among all ethno-racial groups, but less so among Latinos than among other groups, resulting in a larger proportion of Latino students.

The second section compares the performance of Latino students in Holyoke on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests with the performance of all students statewide and other ethno-racial groups in Holyoke. Despite persistent disparities in outcomes, the achievement gap between Latino and White students has been shrinking slightly over recent years. Latino students in Holyoke have made especially large improvements on the Grade 10 English Language Arts and Science/Technology/Engineering tests.

The third section shows Latino graduation, dropout, and college enrollment rates, relative to other students in the district and to all students statewide. Here too, while the data show marked discrepancies between Latino and White students in Holyoke, they also show a narrowing of the gaps in recent years. The Latino graduation rate has notably risen, and the decline of the Latino dropout rate has been equally clear.

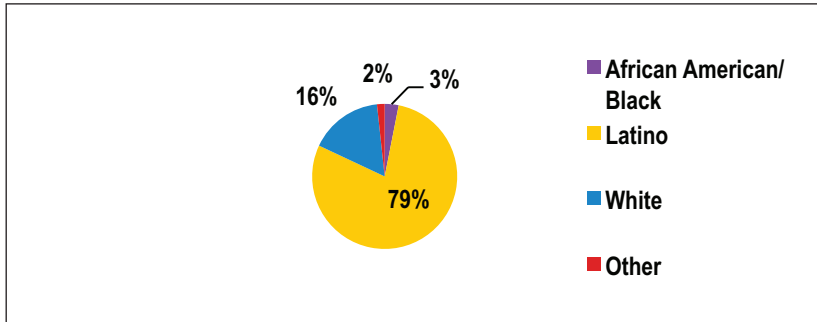
The fourth section compares outcomes and engagement variables at the two high schools in Holyoke, demonstrating the drastic disparities in outcomes between Holyoke High School and Dean Vocational Technical High School and between Latino and White students at Holyoke High School.

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. Ethno-Racial Composition of Holyoke Public Schools, SY2015



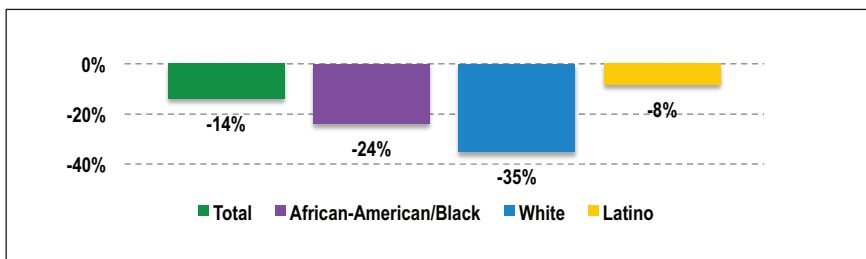
Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Enrollment Data*.

Holyoke is the 36th largest public school district in the state with 5,573 students in SY2015.² A great majority (85%) of its students are classified as low-income, the third highest percentage among all school districts in the state. Almost half (48%) of students in Holyoke spoke a language other than English as their first language and 29% are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), the eighth and fourth highest proportions among all districts in the state. As seen in Figure 1, Latino students are the largest student group: the 4,392 Latino students represent 79% of the total enrollment in Holyoke, the third highest proportion in the state. White students make up 16% of the district, African-American/Black students 3%, and all other ethno-racial groups together 2%.

As seen in Figure 2 below, from SY2006 to SY2015, the overall number of students in the district decreased by 14%. The number of African-American students decreased by 24%, the number of White students by 35%, and the number of Latino students by 8%. During those years, the overall population of Holyoke decreased by 1% (ACS, 2014), meaning that the decline in student enrollment was more dramatic than the citywide population decline.

More than one-third (36%) of Latino students in Holyoke are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Latino students in Holyoke are also highly mobile, as evidenced by the 26% who changed schools in SY2013 (including 19% who left the district entirely). While specific information about the ancestry of the Latino students in Holyoke is not available, the American Community Survey estimates that 92% of Latinos in Holyoke are of Puerto Rican heritage (ACS, 2014).

Figure 2: Change in Student Enrollment, Holyoke Public Schools, SY2006 to SY2015

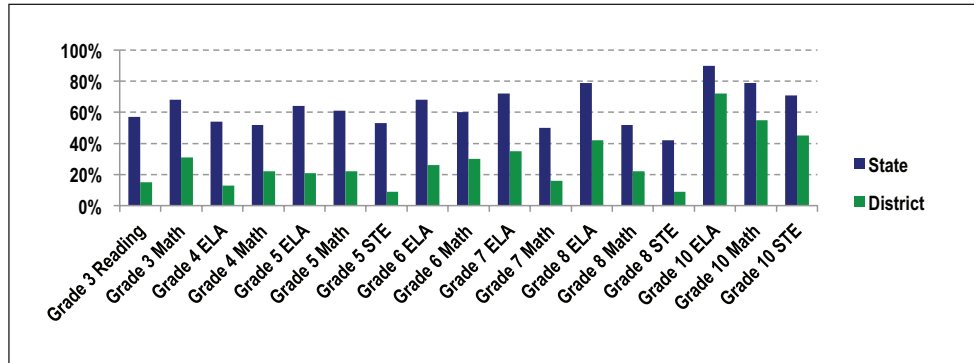


Source: Author's calculations based on MADESE (n.d.). *Enrollment Data*.

² SY refers to the ending year of the school year. For example, SY2014 is the school year that began in September of 2013 and ended in June of 2014.

MCAS Performance

Figure 3: Percentage of All Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on MCAS Tests by Grade and Subject, SY2014

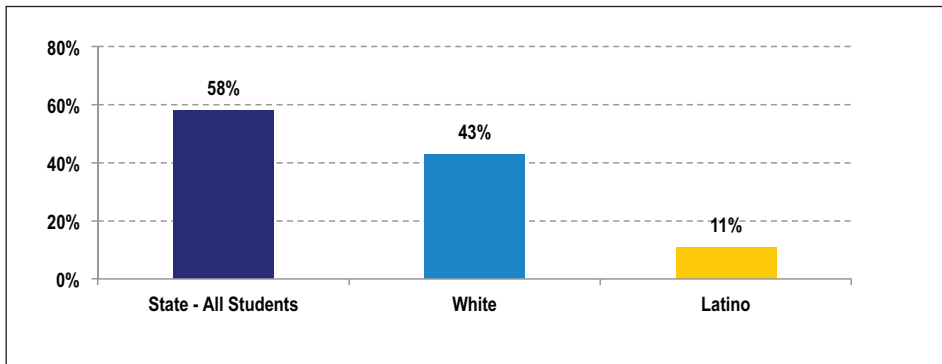


Source: MADESE (2014). *MCAS Tests of Spring 2014, Percent of Students at Each Achievement Level for Holyoke.*

As evidenced by Figure 3 above, Holyoke as a district performs far below statewide averages on the standardized tests in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Figure 3 shows the percentage of all students in Holyoke and all students statewide who scored “Proficient” or higher on the 2014 MCAS tests in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science/Technology/Engineering (STE). As seen, the proficiency rates in Holyoke are far below the statewide rates across all grades, most starkly in the early grades. Comparing the proficiency rates for Latino students in Holyoke to the proficiency rates for Latino students statewide also shows performance gaps, but much smaller ones, especially in the Grade 10 MCAS tests, where the gaps are 8 percentage points or less.

The following section highlights the performance by Latino students in Holyoke on the Grade 3 Reading and Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE tests, all important performance measures. Grade 3 Reading is considered an important measurement for academic preparation, because the end of third grade marks the time when students go from “learning how to read” to “learning from reading.” The Grade 10 MCAS tests are also important as a metric of preparation for participation in post-secondary education. Furthermore, 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. Test results for Latinos in Holyoke are compared to those for White students in Holyoke and for all students statewide.

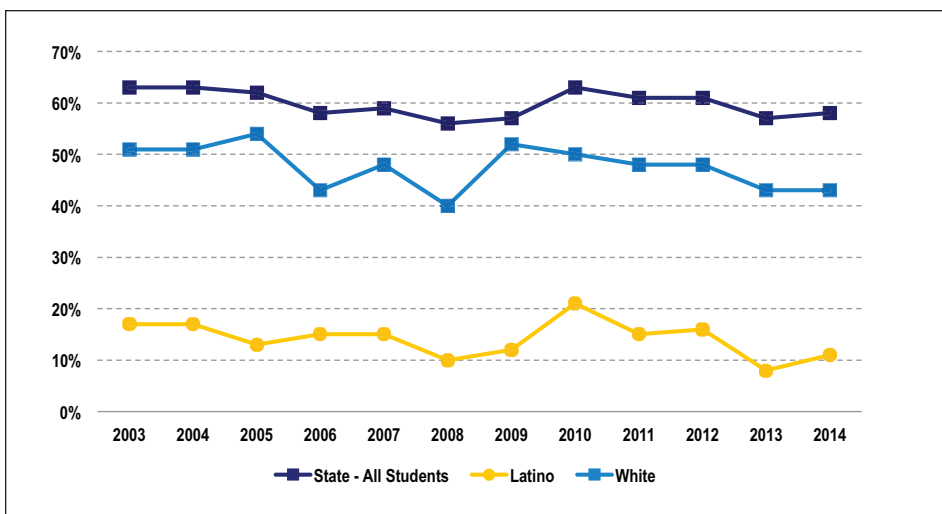
Figure 4: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

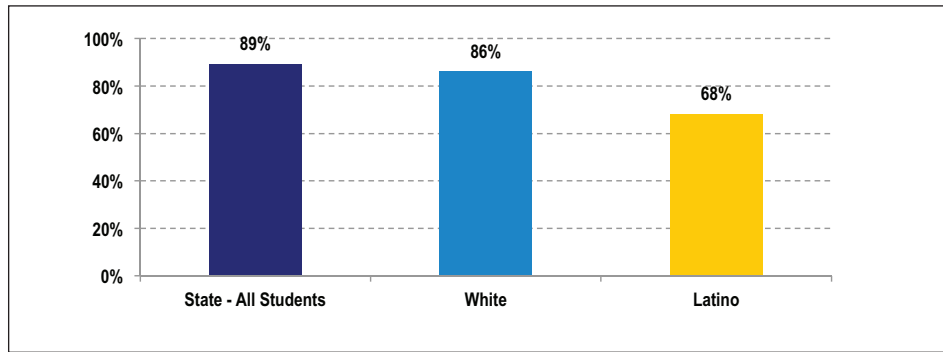
As seen in Figure 4 above, only 11% of Latino students in Holyoke performed at “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 3 Reading MCAS in SY2014. This proficiency rate was 32 percentage points below the rate for White students in Holyoke, and 47 points below the rate for all students statewide. Moreover, it was the lowest proficiency rate among all ethno-racial subgroups in all districts in the state. Figure 5 below illustrates that the proficiency rate for Latino students has decreased slightly since 2003. The rate for White students in Holyoke also decreased over this period and the White-Latino gap actually narrowed by 6%, while the gap with all students statewide increased slightly by 2%.

Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

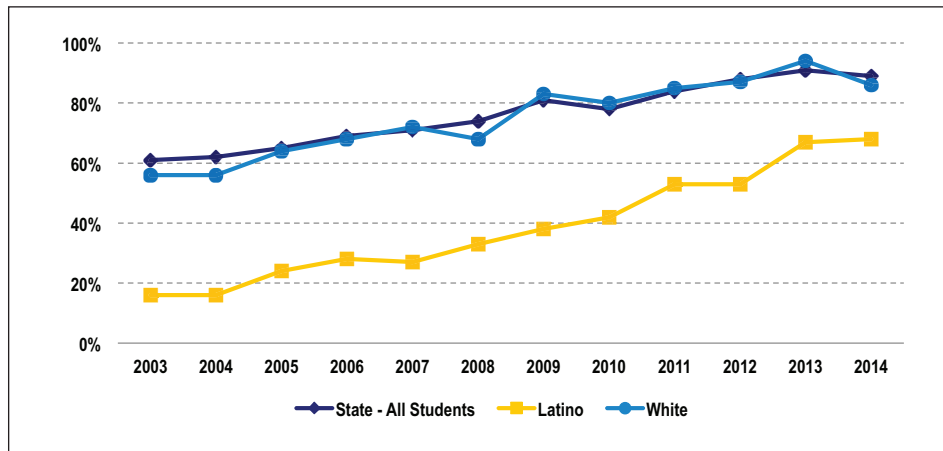
Figure 6: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject*

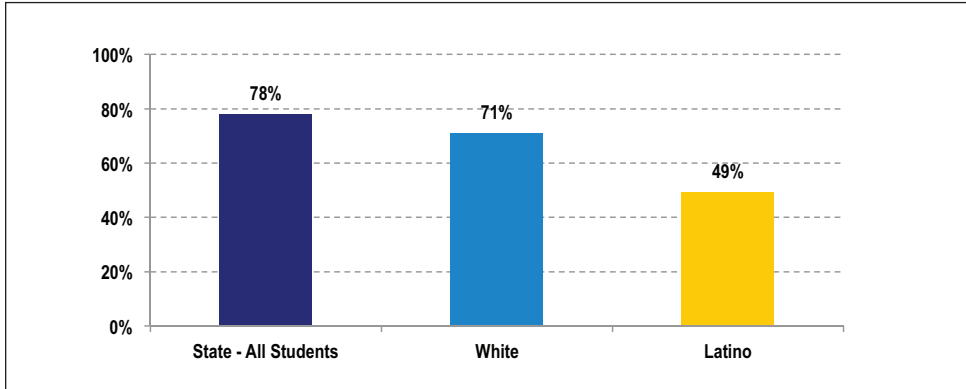
In SY2014, 68% of Latino students in Holyoke scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS test. This pass rate was 18 percentage points lower than the rate for White students in Holyoke and 21 points below the pass rate statewide. As seen in Figure 7 below, however, this 68% was the highest pass rate for Latino students to date. In fact, from SY2003 to SY2014, Latino students eliminated 55% of the performance gap with White students in Holyoke and 53% of the gap with all students statewide.

Figure 7: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject*

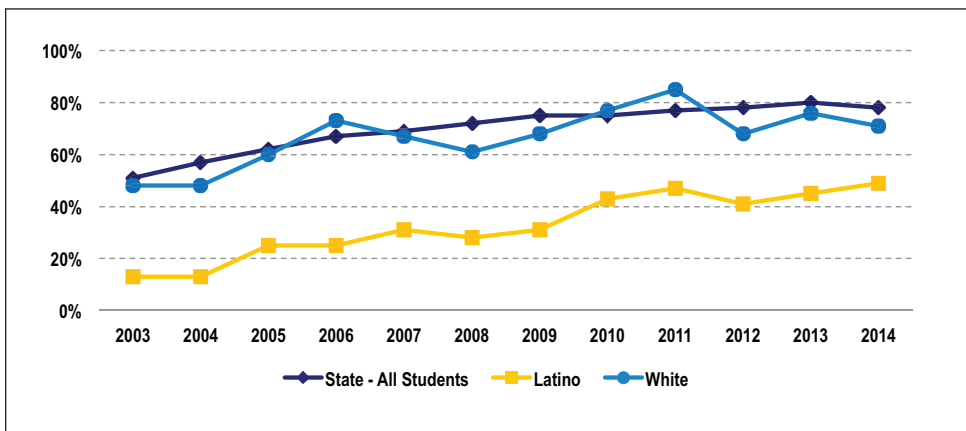
Figure 8: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

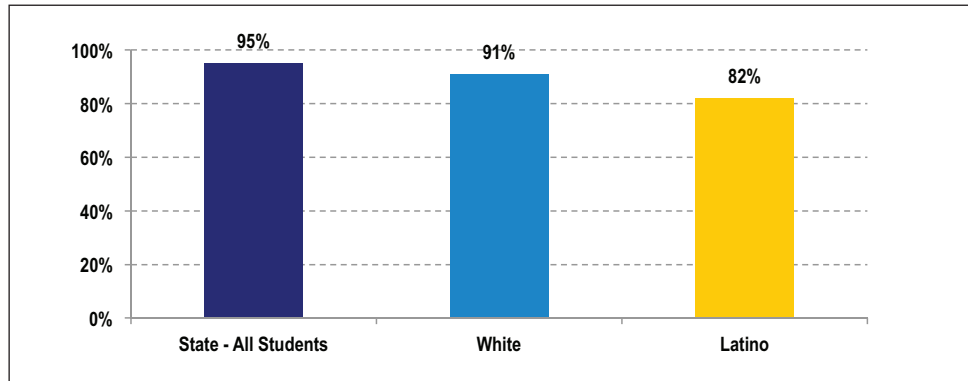
While 68% of Latino students in Holyoke in SY2014 passed the Grade 10 ELA test, only 49% passed the Grade 10 Math test. As seen in Figure 8 above, this pass rate is 22 percentage points below the rate for White students in Holyoke and 29 points below the rate for all students statewide. However, Figure 9 below demonstrates large improvements in pass rates for Latino students in Holyoke from SY 2003 to SY2014. During those 12 years, the gap with White students in Holyoke narrowed by 37% and the gap with all students statewide narrowed by 24%.

Figure 9: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2003-SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

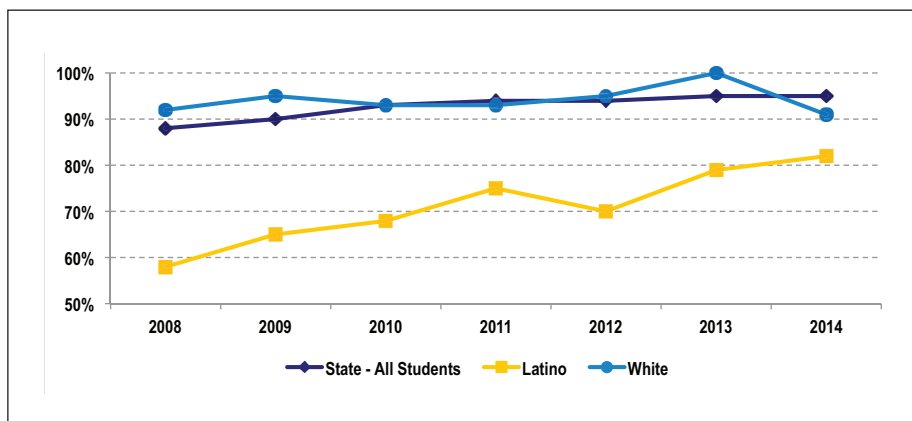
Figure 10: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

Figure 10 illustrates that Latino students in Holyoke have a pass rate of 82% on the Grade 10 Science, Technology, and Engineering MCAS tests (for the STE test, passing requires a score of “Needs Improvement” or higher). The Latino rate is 9 percentage points below the rate for White students and 13 points below the rate for all students statewide. However, Figure 11 below shows that Latino students in Holyoke have made substantial progress on the STE tests since their introduction in SY2008, improving by 24 percentage points in only seven years. This improvement resulted in closing a remarkable 74% of the gap with White students in Holyoke and 57% of the gap with all students statewide.

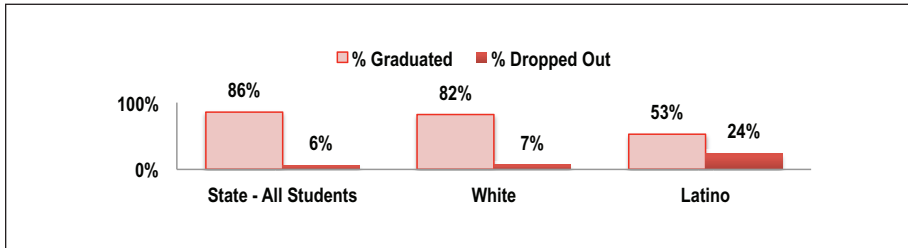
Figure 11: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher on Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2008-SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject.*

Graduation Rate, Dropout Rate, and College Enrollment Rate

Figure 12: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, SY2013

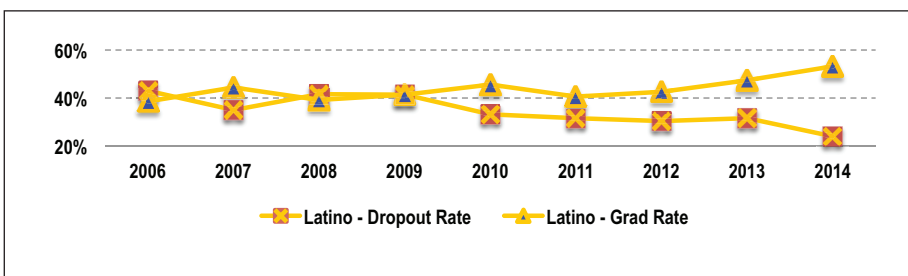


Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2013 Graduation Rates*.

In SY2014, the four-year cohort graduation rate for all students in Holyoke was 60% and the four-year dropout rate was 19%, the worst and second worst rates among all school districts in the state. As demonstrated in Figure 12 above, Holyoke particularly struggles to graduate Latino students within the anticipated four years of high school. For Latino students, the SY2014 four-year graduation rate was 53% and the dropout rate was 24% as compared to a graduation rate of 82% and a dropout rate of 7% for White students in Holyoke and 86% and 6% for all students statewide. Despite these disparities, as seen in Figure 13 below there have been marked improvements on four-year cohort graduation and dropout rates for Latino students in Holyoke over the past seven years, with the graduation rate improving from 39% to 53% and the dropout rate decreasing from 43% to 24%.

A large proportion of Latino students are still in school after four years of high school. In the class of 2013, 12% of Latino students were still in school after four years. One explanation for this large proportion of students still in school after four years is the relatively low percentage of first-time ninth graders who are promoted to tenth grade. For instance, in SY2013, only 70% of Latino first-time ninth graders in Holyoke were promoted to tenth grade, much lower than the rate of 92% of all first-time ninth graders statewide. The SY2013 five-year Latino cohort graduation rate was 4.5 percentage points higher than the four-year cohort rate.

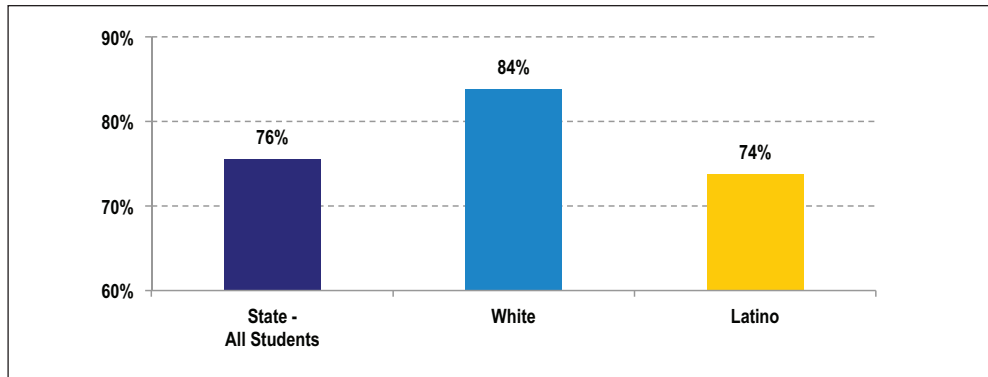
Figure 13: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate Holyoke Latino Students Only, SY2006-SY2014



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2014 Graduation Rates*.

College Enrollment

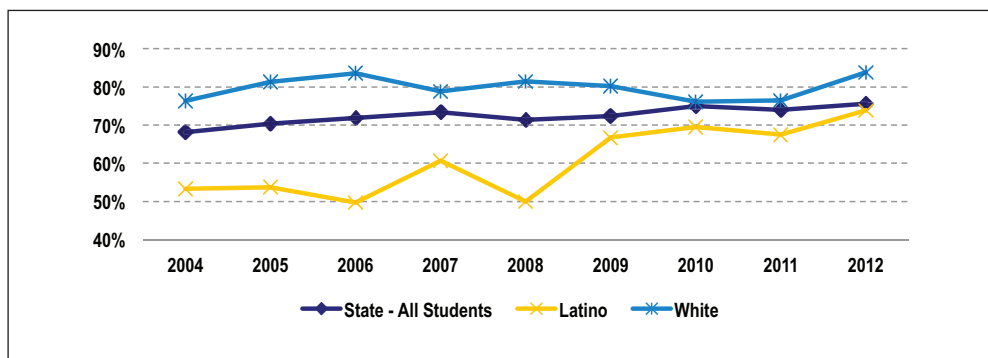
Figure 14: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2012



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *2011-12 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.*

Among all students in Holyoke who complete high school, 78% enroll in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school, two percentage points higher than the rate for all students statewide. As shown in the figure above, among Latino students in Holyoke who completed high school in SY2012, 74% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school. This was 10 percentage points below the rate for White students in Holyoke but only 2 points behind the overall statewide rate and 11 points higher than the rate for Latino students statewide. As seen in Figure 15 below, the 74% Latino college enrollment rate was an increase from 53% in SY2004; in those nine years, Latino students eliminated 57% of the gap with White students in Holyoke and 87% of the gap with all students statewide.

Figure 15: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2004-SY2012

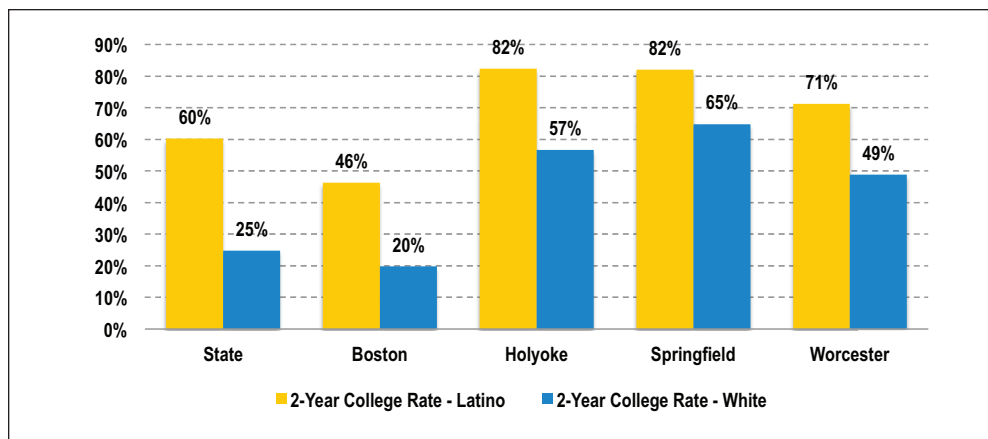


Source: MADESE (n.d.). *2011-12 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.*

Upon first glance, the 78% college enrollment rate for Holyoke is remarkable. It is higher than the rate for large districts with similar demographics (e.g., 65% for Boston, 60% for Chelsea, 74% for Lawrence, 66% for Springfield, and 66% for Worcester). However, there is a disparity in the types of colleges that students from the various districts are enrolling in. In SY2012, 72% of the Holyoke students who enrolled in an institution of higher education enrolled in a two-year college. This was slightly lower than the rate of 74% in Springfield, but much higher than the state rate of 30%, the Boston rate of 35%, and the Worcester rate of 55%.

As seen in Figure 16 below, over four-fifths (82%) of the Holyoke Latino students attending higher education are enrolled in two-year colleges, as compared to 57% for White students in the district. The Holyoke Latino 2-year college enrollment rate is the same rate as among Latino students in Springfield, but is higher than the for Latino students statewide (60%), Latino students in Boston (46%), and Latino students in Worcester (71%). Community colleges offer great opportunities to students, but completion rates at two-year colleges are much lower than the completion rates at four-year colleges and universities. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education (2013), only 11% of first-time Latino students at Massachusetts two-year public colleges graduate within three years as compared to the 44% of Latino students at Massachusetts four-year public colleges who graduate within six years.

Figure 16: Percentage of College Attendees Enrolling in Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges, SY2012



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *2011-12 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities.*

Spotlight on Holyoke High Schools

Previous Gastón Institute research working with the Latino community in Holyoke has shown drastically different perceptions of the two major high schools in Holyoke. The purpose of this section is to compare key educational outcomes at the two high schools.

Table 1: Characteristics of Holyoke High Schools, SY2015

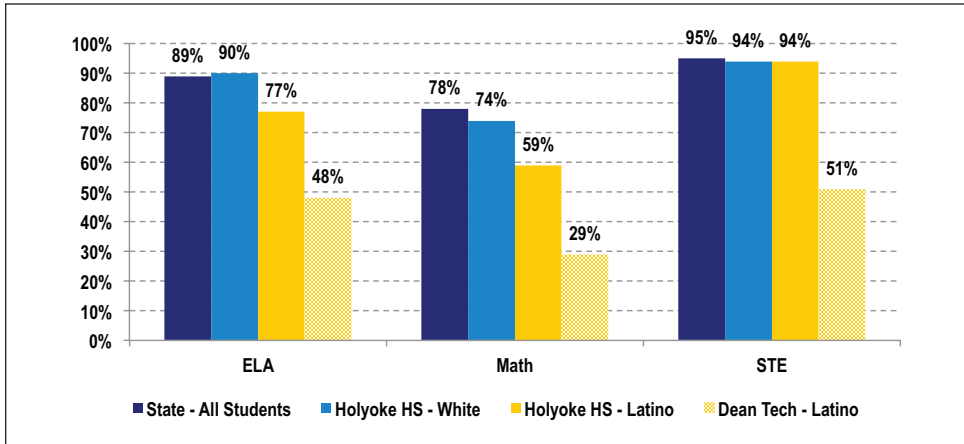
	Enroll-ment	% ELL	% Latino	% Low income (2014)	% Students with Disabilities	High School Type/ Focus	Account-ability Level
Holyoke HS	1,319	68%	14%	71%	14%	Comprehensive	Level 3
Dean Tech	403	93%	31%	92%	35%	Vocational/ Technical	Level 4

Source: MADESE (2014). *Enrollment Data*; MADESE (2014). *DART for Schools*

The two high schools in Holyoke are Holyoke High School (Holyoke HS) and Dean Vocational Technical High School (Dean Tech). Holyoke HS has a much larger enrollment at 1,319 as compared to 403 students at Dean Tech. Over the past ten years, the enrollment at Dean Tech has decreased by 44%, while the enrollment at Holyoke HS has increased by 5%. As seen in Table 1, the demographics of the schools differ greatly, with Dean Tech having a larger proportion of Latino students, ELLs, low income students, and students with disabilities as compared to Holyoke HS. Dean Tech is also one of 36 Level 4 schools in the state; based on four-year MCAS trends (MADESE, 2014).

The following section provides more detailed information on the performance and engagement of students in the two high schools, disaggregated by race/ethnicity. This section highlights the disparities that exist between Holyoke HS and Dean Tech and between White and Latino students at Holyoke HS, focusing on MCAS scores, graduation rate, dropout rate, and suspension rate. While not shown in this report, similar disparities exist when looking at attendance rates, chronic absenteeism, and participation in AP exams.

Figure 17: Percentage of Students Passing Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



Source: MADESE (2014). *2014 MCAS Results by Subgroup by Grade and Subject*.

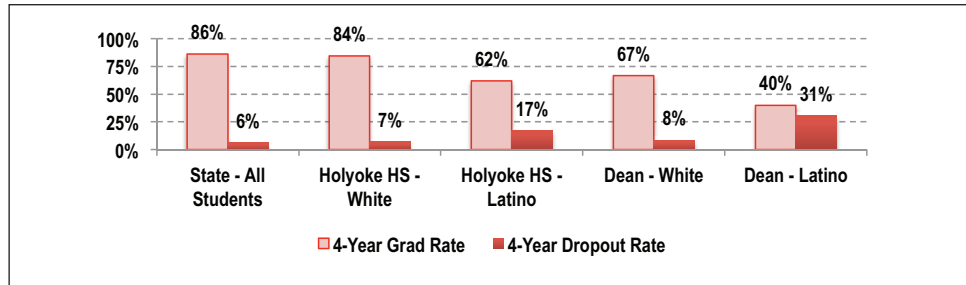
Figure 17 above shows the disparities in pass rates between Latino students at Dean Tech and Holyoke HS as well as the gaps in pass rates between Latino and White students at Holyoke HS.⁴ Looking at the Grade 10 ELA results shows that 77% of Latino students at Holyoke HS passed the test, 29 percentage points higher than the rate for Latino students at Dean Tech but 13 points lower than the rate for White students at Holyoke HS.

As seen earlier in the report, Latino students in Holyoke struggle with the Grade 10 Math MCAS test. As Figure 17 shows, the Grade 10 Math Latino pass rate of 59% at Holyoke HS was 30 points higher than the Latino pass rate at Dean Tech but 15 points below the pass rate for White students at Holyoke HS.

Figure 17 shows that Latino students at Holyoke HS have a pass rate of 94% on the Grade 10 STE tests, the same rate for White students at Holyoke HS and 43 points higher than the Latino pass rate at Dean Tech.

⁴ There were insufficient numbers of White students in SY2014 at Dean Tech to report MCAS outcomes.

Figure 18: Four-Year Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rate, State and Holyoke High Schools, White and Latino Students SY2014

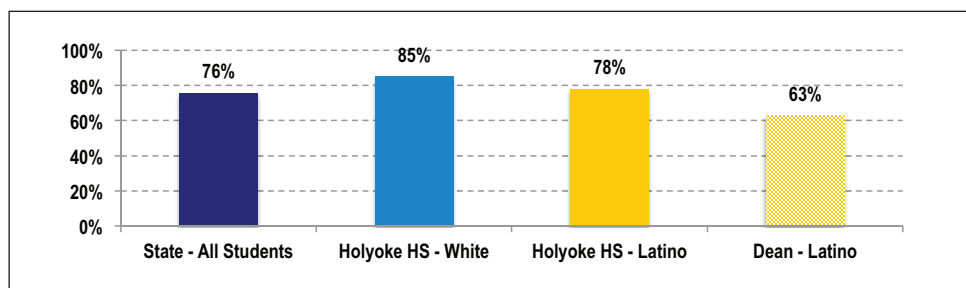


Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2014 Graduation Rates*.

As seen in Figure 18 above, the SY2014 four-year cohort graduation rate of 62% for Latino students at Holyoke HS was 22 points lower than the rate for White students at Holyoke HS, 5 points lower than the rate for White students at Dean Tech, and 22 points higher than the rate for Latino students at Dean Tech. Similarly, the 17% four-year cohort dropout rate for Latino students at Holyoke HS was 10 points higher than the rate for White students at Holyoke HS, 9 points higher than the rate for White students at Dean Tech, and 14 points lower than rate for Latino students at Dean Tech. It is noteworthy, however, that the Latino graduation rate at Holyoke HS improved from 43% in SY2006 to 62% in SY2014, and at Dean Tech it improved from 33% to 40%.

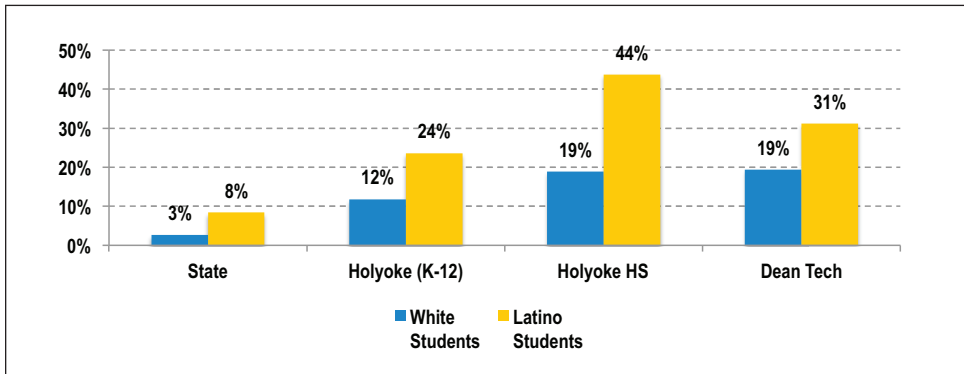
As seen in Figure 19 below, among the students who complete high school, a high proportion enroll in post-secondary school. Nearly four-fifths (78%) of Latino students from Holyoke HS enrolled in college. This was 7 points below the rate for White students at Holyoke HS, 2 points higher than the overall statewide average, and 15 points higher than the rate for Latino students at Dean Tech. However, among the Latino students who enrolled in an institution of higher education, 97% from Dean Tech and 78% from Holyoke HS enrolled in a two-year college, as compared to 56% of White students at Holyoke HS and 30% of all students statewide.

Figure 19: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2012



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *2011-12 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities*.

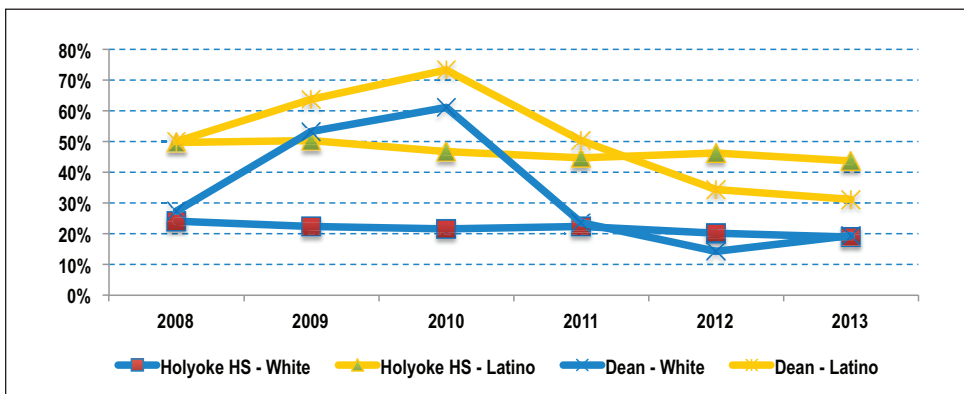
Figure 20: Annual Percentage of Students Receiving at Least One Out-of-School Suspension, SY2013



Source: MADESE (2014). *DART Detail: Success After High School*.

An additional area of concern is the disparity of out-of-school suspension rates seen between Latino and White students district-wide and within the two high schools. Holyoke as a district has a much higher out-of-school suspension rate (22%) than the state rate (4%) for students in grades K-12. As seen in Figure 20, Latino students at both Holyoke HS and Dean Tech have suspension rates far above the suspension rates for White students at the respective schools. 44% of Latino students at Holyoke HS and 31% of Latino students at Dean Tech received at least one out-of-school suspension in SY2013. The Latino-White suspension gap was 25 percentage points at Holyoke HS and 12 points at Dean Tech (as a comparison, the statewide Latino-White suspension gap is 5 points). As seen in Figure 21 below, the Latino suspension rates at both high schools have been declining over recent years, with the rate at Holyoke HS decreasing by 6 percentage points since SY2008. The Latino rate at Dean Tech decreased dramatically since a suspension rate of 73% in SY2010.

Figure 21: Annual Percentage of Students Receiving at Least One Out-of-School Suspension, SY2008-2013



Source: MADESE (2014). *DART Detail: Success After High School*.

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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 30% (from

125,436 to 162,475 students) representing a jump from 13% to 17% in the Latino proportion of all students). In contrast, during the same period the number of African-American/Black students has increased by 3%, while the number of White students has decreased by 12%. 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 the 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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