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Michael Berardino

University of Massachusetts Boston, michael.berardino@umb.edu

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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools Chelsea

by Michael Berardino

April, 2015

THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Chelsea

This report provides a snapshot of current educational outcomes for Latino students in the city of Chelsea. 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. The report has three sections:

The first section illustrates the demographic shift occurring in the Chelsea Public Schools. Enrollment has been shrinking among White and African-American/Black students but increasing among Latinos, driving a growth in overall enrollment. At present, four of every five students in the district are Latino.

The second section compares the performance of Latino students in Chelsea on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests with the performance of all students statewide and with other ethno-racial groups in Chelsea. The achievement gap between Latino and White students, while not disappearing, has narrowed substantially in recent years. Latino students in Chelsea have made especially large improvements on the Grade 10 English Language Arts, Math, 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. Latino students, like other students in Chelsea, graduate and enroll in college at rates that are far below state averages but have been improving in 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. Ethno-Racial Composition of Chelsea Public Schools, SY2015



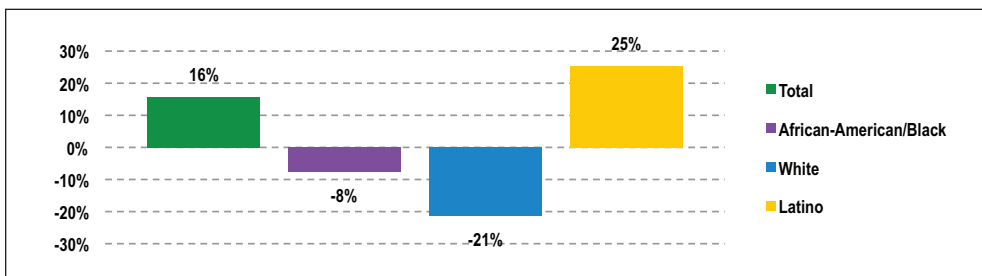
Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Enrollment Data*.

Chelsea is the 26th largest public school district in the state with 6,350 students in SY2015.² A great majority (83%) of its students are classified as low-income, the fourth highest percentage among all school districts in the state. Eighty percent of students in Chelsea spoke a language other than English as their first language and 24% are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), the highest and fifth highest proportions among all districts in the state. As seen in Figure 1, Latino students are the largest student group: the 5,271 Latino students represent 83% of the total enrollment in Chelsea, the second highest proportion in the state. White students make up 8% of the district, African-American/Black students 6%, and all other ethno-racial groups together 3%. As seen in Figure 2 below, from SY2006 to SY2015, the overall number of students in the district increased by 16%. This increase was driven by the 25% increase in the number of Latino students; during this period, the number of African-American students decreased by 8% and the number of White students decreased by 21%.

One-fifth of Latino students in Chelsea are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). While specific information about the ancestry of the Latino students in Chelsea is not available, the US Census' American Community Survey estimates that 32% of Latinos in Chelsea are of Salvadoran heritage, 19% of Puerto Rican heritage, 17% of Honduran heritage, 15% of Guatemalan heritage, 5% are of Mexican heritage, 4% of Dominican heritage, and the remaining 9% of other Latino heritage groups (ACS, 2014).

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.

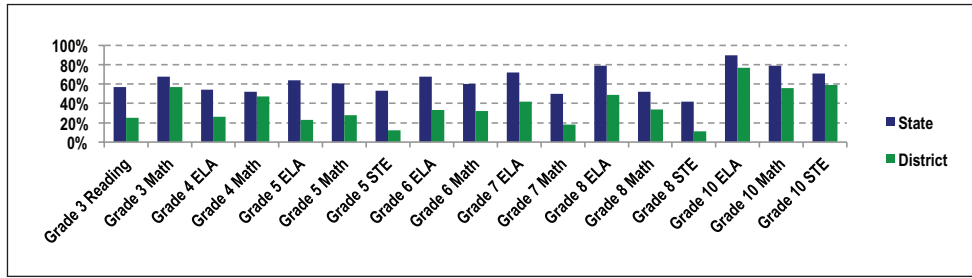
Figure 2: Change in Student Enrollment, Chelsea Public Schools, SY2006 to SY2015



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

II. MCAS Performance

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

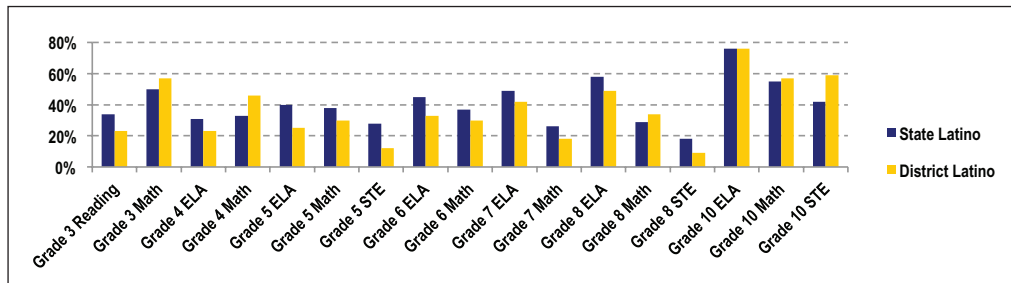


Source: MADESE (2014). *MCAS Tests of Spring 2014, Percent of Students at Each Achievement Level for Chelsea.*

As evidenced by Figure 3 above, Chelsea 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 Chelsea 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 Chelsea are far below the statewide rates across all grades, most noticeably in Grades 5 through 8. Comparing the proficiency rates for Latino students in Chelsea to the proficiency rates for Latino students statewide (Figure 4) also shows performance gaps on many tests, but much smaller ones. On several tests, Latino students in Chelsea scored higher than Latino students statewide, most notably on the Grade 10 tests.

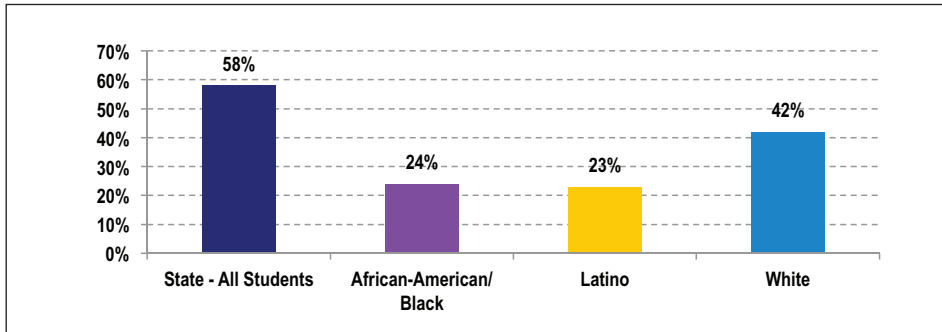
The following section highlights the performance by Latino students in Chelsea on the Grade 3 Reading and Grade 10 ELA, Math, and STE tests, all important performance measures. Grade 3 Reading is considered an important measurement for academic preparation, because the end of third grade marks the time 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 Chelsea are compared to results for the second and third largest ethno-racial groups in Chelsea—African-American and White students—and to all students statewide.

Figure 4: Percentage of Latino 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 Chelsea.*

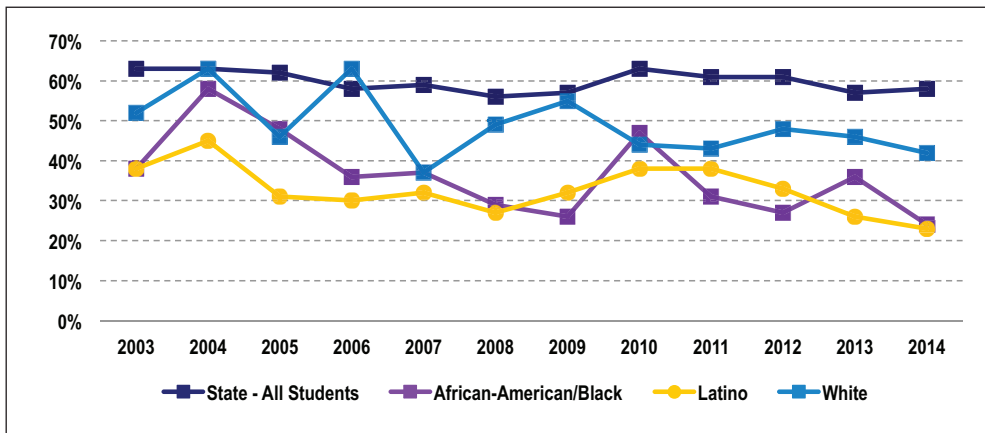
Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

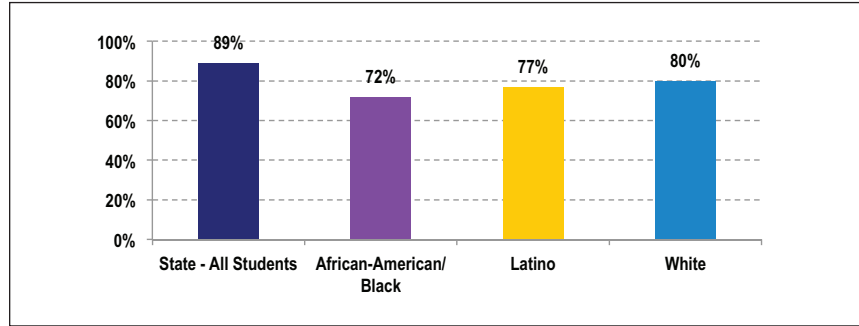
As seen in Figure 5 above, only 23% of Latino students in Chelsea performed at “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 3 Reading MCAS in SY2014. This proficiency rate was 19 percentage points below the rate for White students in Chelsea, 1 point below the rate for African-American/Black students in Chelsea, and 35 points below the rate for all students statewide. Moreover, it was the 11th lowest proficiency rate among all Latino subgroups in all districts in the state. Figure 6 below illustrates that the proficiency rate for Latino students decreased sharply, from 45% in SY2003 to the 23% found for SY2014. (African-American/Black students followed the same pattern, producing no performance gaps with Latino students.) The rate for White students in Chelsea also decreased over this period, but less steeply, so that the White-Latino gap increased by 35%, while the gap with all students statewide increased by 40%.

Figure 6: 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.*

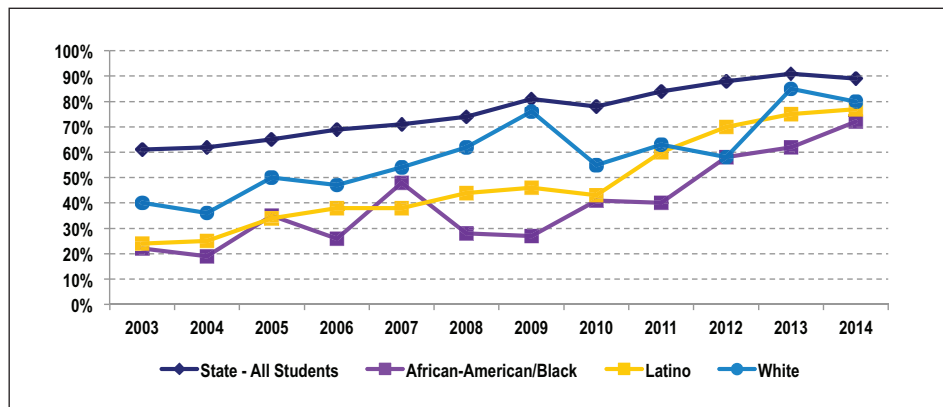
Figure 7: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

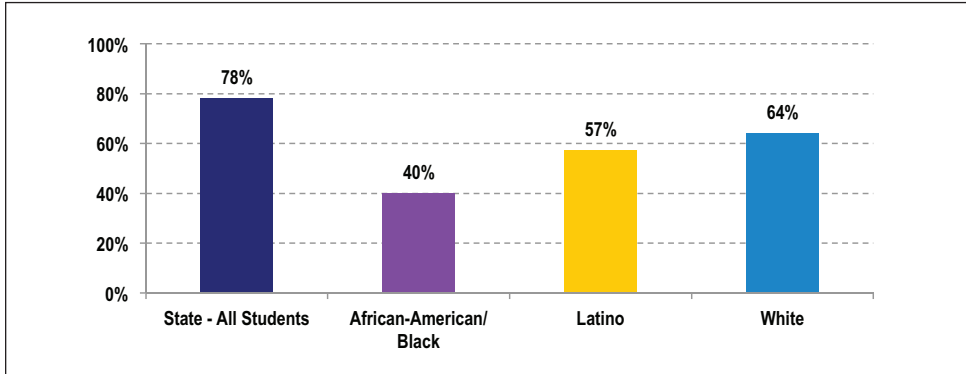
In SY2014, 77% of Latino students in Chelsea scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS test. Although 12 points below the statewide average, this pass rate was only 3 percentage points lower than the rate for White students in Chelsea and was 5 points higher than the rate for African-American/Black students in Chelsea. Moreover, as seen in Figure 8 below, this 77% was the highest pass rate for Latino students to date. In fact, from SY2003 to SY2014, Latino students eliminated 81% of the performance gap with White students in Chelsea and 68% of the gap with all students statewide.

Figure 8: 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*.

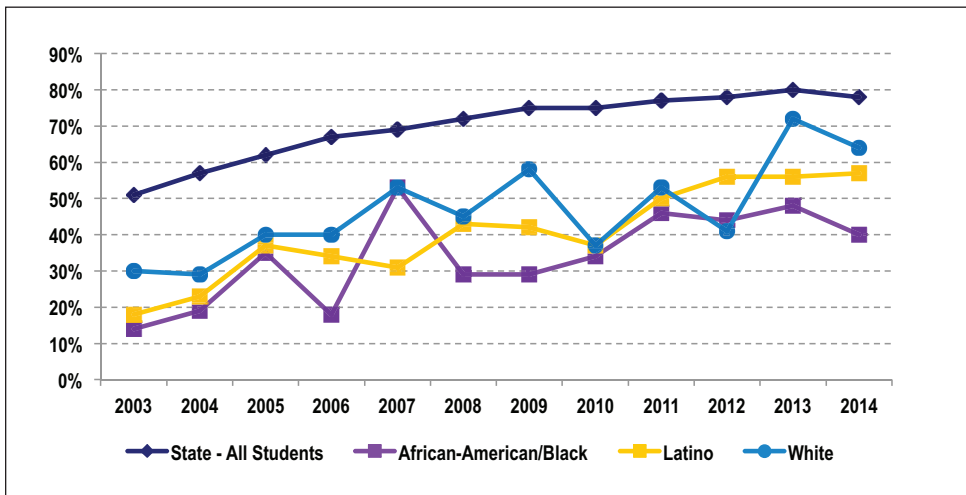
Figure 9: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

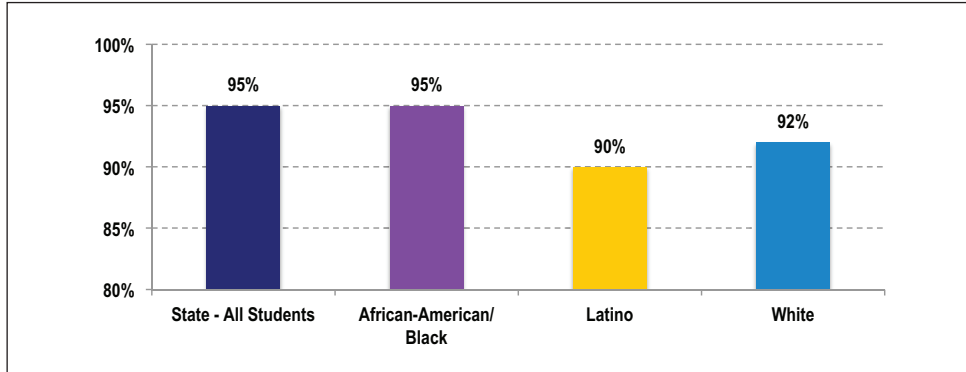
As seen in Figure 9 above, 57% of Latino students in Chelsea in SY2014 passed the Grade 10 Math test. This pass rate was 17 points higher than the rate for African-American/Black students but 7 percentage points below the rate for White students in Chelsea and 21 points below the rate for all students statewide. However, Figure 10 below demonstrates large improvements in pass rates for Latino students in Chelsea from SY 2003 to SY2014. During those 12 years, the gap with White students in Chelsea narrowed by 41% and the gap with all students statewide narrowed by 36%.

Figure 10: 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*.

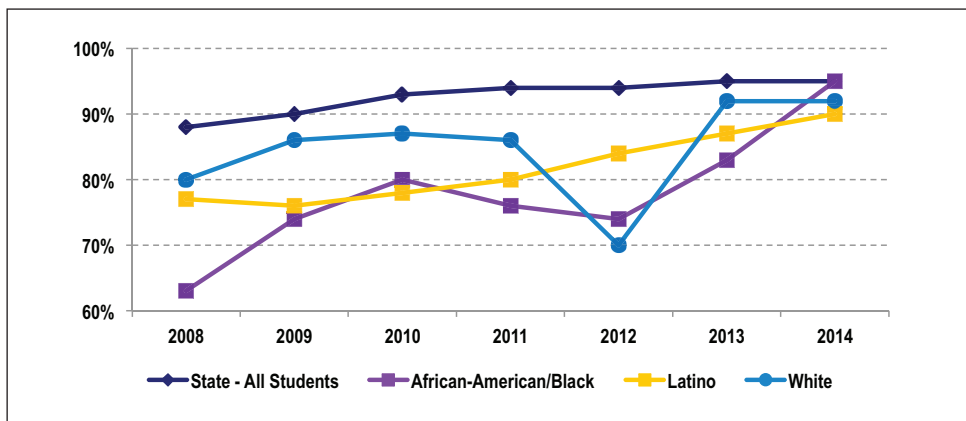
Figure 11: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

Figure 11 illustrates that Latino students in Chelsea have a pass rate of 90% on the Grade 10 Science, Technology, and Engineering MCAS test (for the STE test, passing requires a score of “Needs Improvement” or higher). The Latino rate is 2 percentage points below the rate for White students, 5 points below the rate for African-American/Black students in Chelsea, and 5 points below the rate for all students statewide. Figure 11 below shows that Latino students in Chelsea have made substantial progress on the STE tests since their introduction in SY2008, improving by 13 percentage points in seven years. This improvement resulted in a slight decrease in the small gap with White students in Chelsea and 55% of the gap with all students statewide. The pass rate for African-American/Black students increased on a steeper trajectory, going from a lower rate than Latino students in the beginning to a higher rate by SY2014.

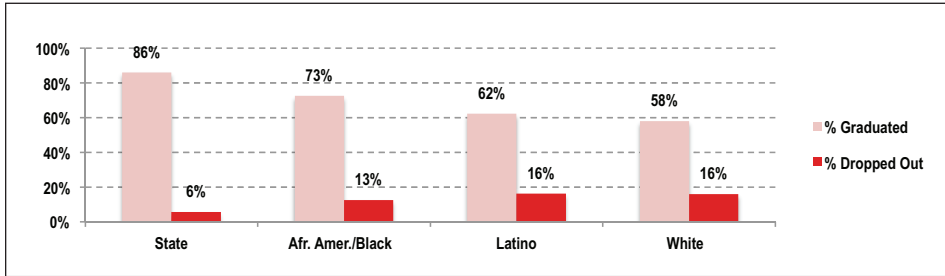
Figure 12: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher on Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2008-SY2014



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

III. Graduation Rate, Dropout Rate, and College Enrollment Rate

Figure 13: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



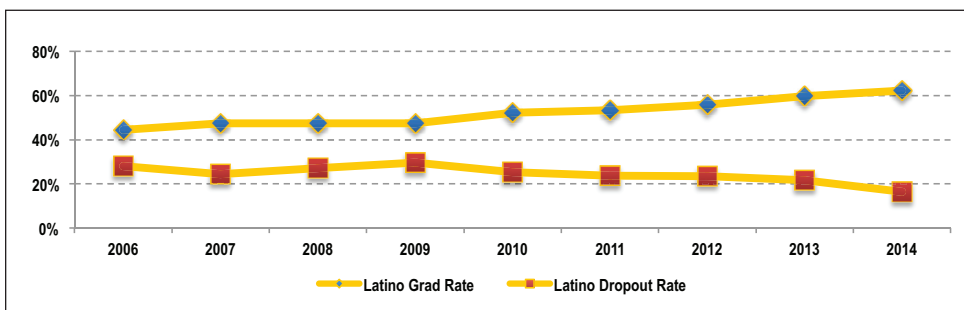
Source: MADESE (n.d.). *Cohort 2014 Graduation Rates*.

In SY2014, the four-year cohort graduation rate for all students in Chelsea was 64% and the four-year dropout rate was 15%, the fifth worst rates among all school districts in the state.³ As shown in Figure 13 above, for Latino students in SY2014 the four-year graduation rate was 62% and the dropout rate was 16% slightly better than the graduation rate of 58% and dropout rate of 16% for White students in Chelsea, but substantially worse than the 86% and 6% for all students statewide. Despite these disparities, as seen in Figure 14 below there have been marked improvements on four-year cohort graduation and dropout rates for Latino students in Chelsea over the past seven years, with the graduation rate improving from 44% to 62% and the dropout rate decreasing from 28% to 16%.

³ This does not include independent charter schools, which are considered their own school districts.

A large proportion of Latino students in Chelsea are still in school after four years of high school. In the class of 2013, 14% 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 74% of Latino first-time ninth graders in Chelsea 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 11 percentage points higher than the four-year cohort rate.

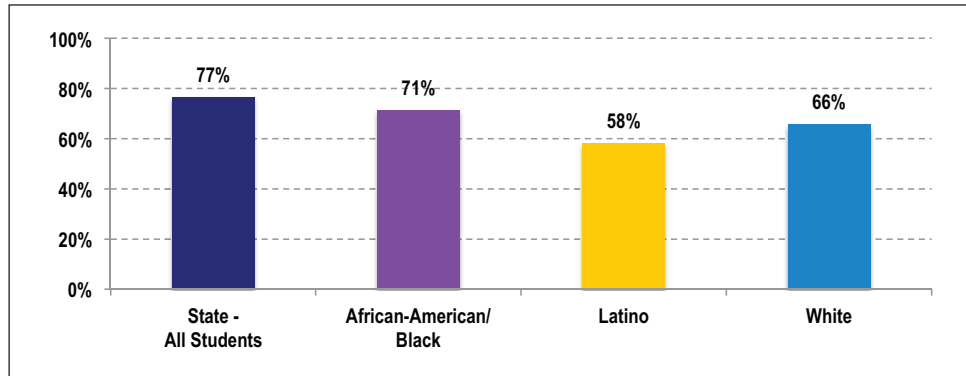
Figure 14: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate, Chelsea Latino Students Only, SY2006-SY2014



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

College Enrollment

Figure 15: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2013



Source: MADESE (n.d.). *2012-13 Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education, All Colleges and Universities*.

Among all students in Chelsea who complete high school, 61% enroll in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school. This is 16 percentage points lower than the rate for all students statewide. As shown in the figure above, among Latino students in Chelsea who completed high school in SY2013, 58% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school. This was 8 percentage points below the rate for White students in Chelsea, 13 points below the rate for African-American/Black students, and 19 points below the overall statewide rate. However, the 58% Latino college enrollment rate was an increase from 40% in SY2004; in those nine years the gap with White students in the district remained unchanged, but Latino students eliminated 32% of the college enrollment gap with all students statewide.

Among the Latino students in Chelsea who enrolled in college, 55% enrolled in two-year rather than four-year colleges. This figure, while 20 percentage points lower than the rate for African-American/Black students in Chelsea, was 3 points higher than the proportion for White students in Chelsea, and 25 points higher than the statewide rate. 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.

Sources

American Community Survey [ACS] (2014). U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey. Chelsea, MA.

Chronicle of Higher Education (n.d.). *College Completion – Massachusetts Public Colleges*. Retrieved from http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=ma§or=public_two.

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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 public schools has increased by 36% (from 125,436 to 171,096 students), rep-

resenting a jump from 13% to 18% in the 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 14%. 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 an 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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