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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools: Waltham

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Latinos in Massachusetts Public Schools

Waltham

by Michael Berardino

April, 2015

THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Waltham

This report provides a snapshot of current educational outcomes for Latino students in the city of Waltham. 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 Waltham Public Schools. The number of White students in the district has been steadily declining, while the number of Latino and African-American/Black students has increased markedly.

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

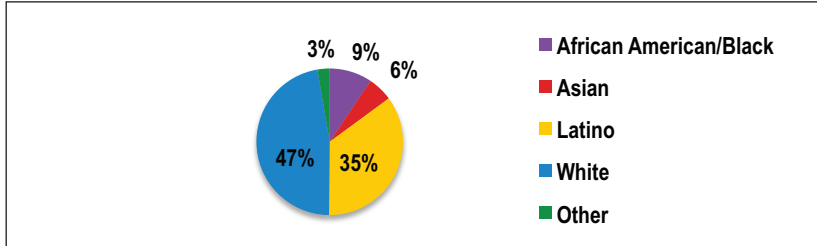
The third section shows Latino graduation, dropout, and college enrollment rates, relative to other students in the district and to all students statewide. Here too, while the data show marked discrepancies between Latino and White students in Waltham, they also show a narrowing of the gaps in recent 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 Waltham Public Schools, SY2015



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

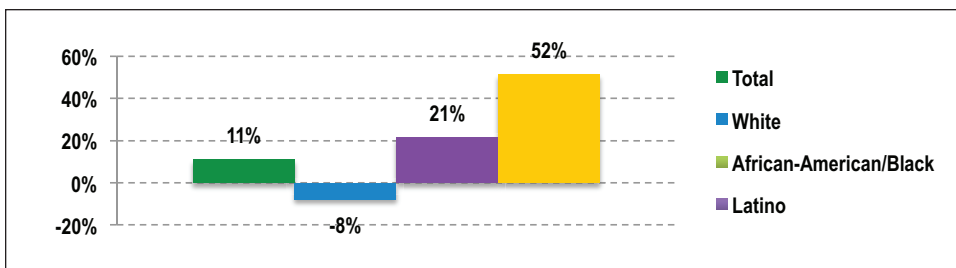
Waltham is the fortieth largest public school district in the state with 5,254 students in SY2015.² More than two-fifths (42%) of its students are classified as low-income. Forty-one percent of students in Waltham spoke a language other than English as their first language and 17% are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), the eleventh and twelfth highest proportions among all districts in the state;³ over the past ten years these rates have increased by 8 and 10 percentage-points respectively. As seen in Figure 1, Latino students are the second largest student group in the district: the 1,849 Latino students represent 35% of the total enrollment in Waltham, the fifteenth highest proportion in the state. White students are the largest ethno-racial group in the district, comprising 47% of the students in the district. African-American/Black students comprise 9% of all students, Asian 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 11%. Over this period, the number of White students decreased by 8%, while the number of Latino students increased by 52% and the number of African-American/Black students by 21%.

Almost one third (31%) of the Latino students in Waltham are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). While specific information about the ancestry of the Latino students in Waltham is not available, the American Community Survey estimates that 38% of Latinos in Waltham are of Guatemalan heritage, 15% of Puerto Rican heritage, 14% Mexican, 5% Salvadoran, 5% Chilean, and the remaining 23% of other Latino heritages (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.

³ As compared to all non-charter school districts in Massachusetts.

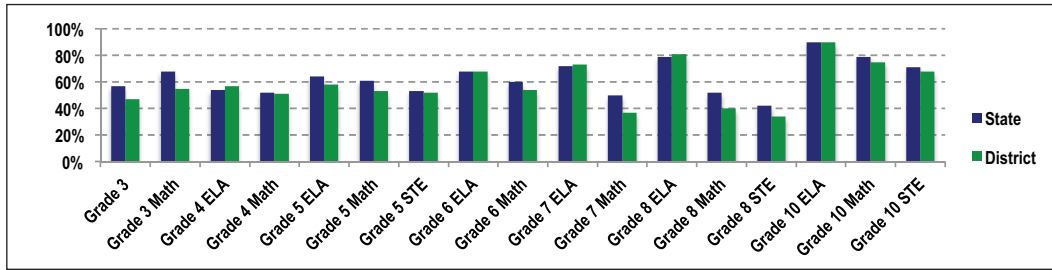
Figure 2: Change in Student Enrollment, Waltham Public Schools, SY2006 to SY2015



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

II. MCAS Performance

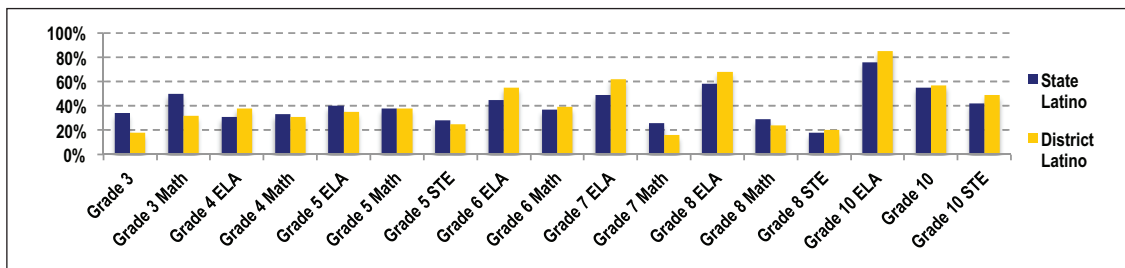
Figure 3: Percentage of All Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on MCAS Tests by Grade and Subject, SY2014



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

As evidenced by Figure 3 above, Waltham as a district performs comparably to statewide averages on the standardized tests in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Figure 3 shows the percentage of all students in Waltham 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). On most Math and STE tests across all grades, the proficiency rates in Waltham are slightly below statewide rates, while on the ELA tests, the proficiency rate in Waltham was equivalent or higher (Grade 4, Grade 7, and Grade 8) than the statewide rate. However, comparing Latino students in Waltham to Latino students statewide, Figure 4 below shows that Latino students in Waltham had a higher proficiency rate than the statewide Latino rate on many tests in SY2014, especially the Grade 10 tests.

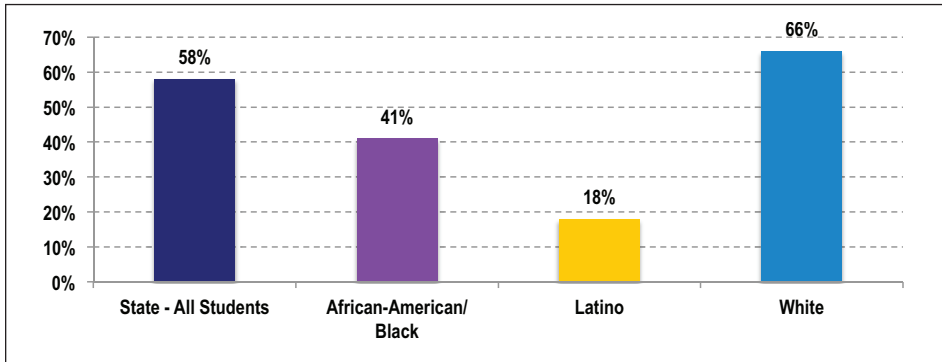
Figure 4: Percentage of Latino Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on MCAS Tests by Grade and Subject, SY2014



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

The following section highlights the performance by Latino students in Waltham 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 Waltham are compared to those for other ethno-racial groups in Waltham and for all students statewide.

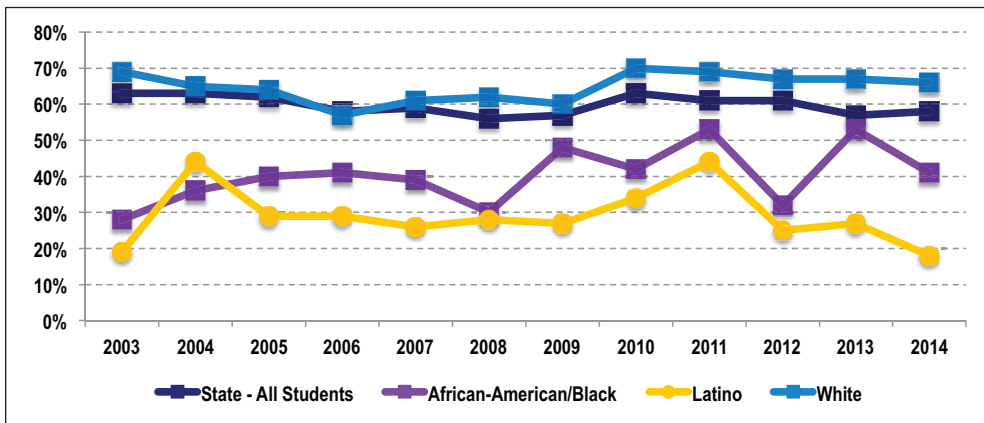
Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 3 Reading MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

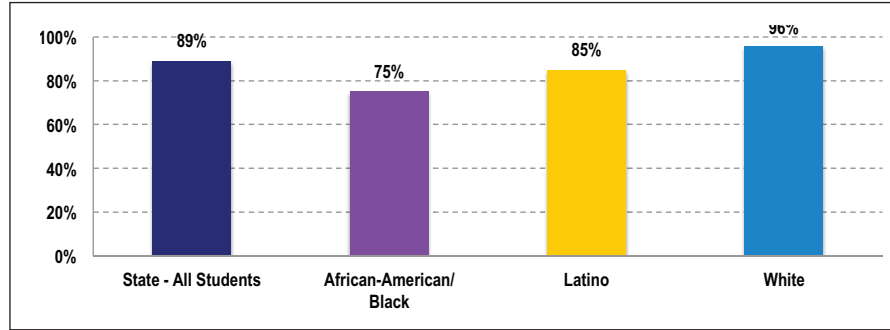
As seen in Figure 5 above, 18% of Latino students in Waltham performed at “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 3 Reading MCAS in SY2014. For Latino subgroups in Massachusetts, this rate was second lowest among districts with at least 100 Latino test-takers. The proficiency rate for Latino students in Waltham was 23 percentage points below the rate for African-American/Black students in Waltham, 48 points below the rate for White students in Waltham, and 40 points below the rate for all students statewide. Figure 6 below illustrates that the proficiency rate for Latino students has fluctuated annually; it reached a high of 44% in SY2011, but then plummeted back down so that the rate in SY2014 was lower than the rate in SY2003. Over this time, the performance gap with African-American/Black students in Waltham more than doubled, while the gap with White students decreased by 4% and the gap with all students statewide narrowed by 9%.

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.

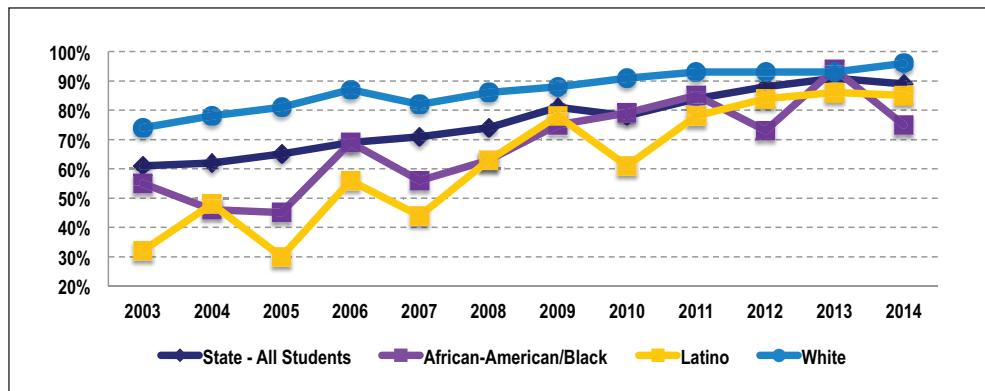
Figure 7: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 ELA MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

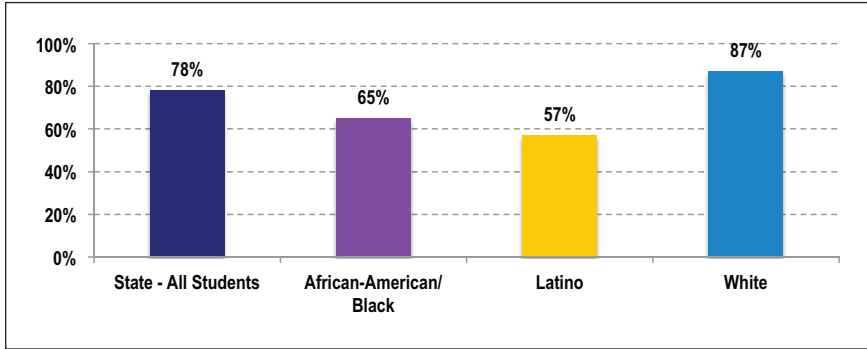
In SY2014, 85% of Latino students in Waltham scored “Proficient” or higher on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS test. While the Grade 3 proficiency rate for Latino students in Waltham was among the lowest in the state, the pass rate for Latino students in Waltham on the Grade 10 ELA was the second highest pass rate for Latino students among districts with at least 100 Latino test-takers. The pass rate for Latino students in Waltham was 10 percentage points higher than the rate for African-American/Black students in Waltham, but 11 points lower than the rate for White students in Waltham and 4 points below the pass rate statewide. As seen in Figure 8 below, the Latino pass rate in Waltham has improved dramatically since SY2003, improving from 32% in SY2003. From SY2003 to SY2014, Latino students eliminated 74% of the performance gap with White students in Waltham and a remarkable 86% of the gap with all students statewide, and went from a lower pass rate than African-American/Black students in Waltham to a higher one.

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

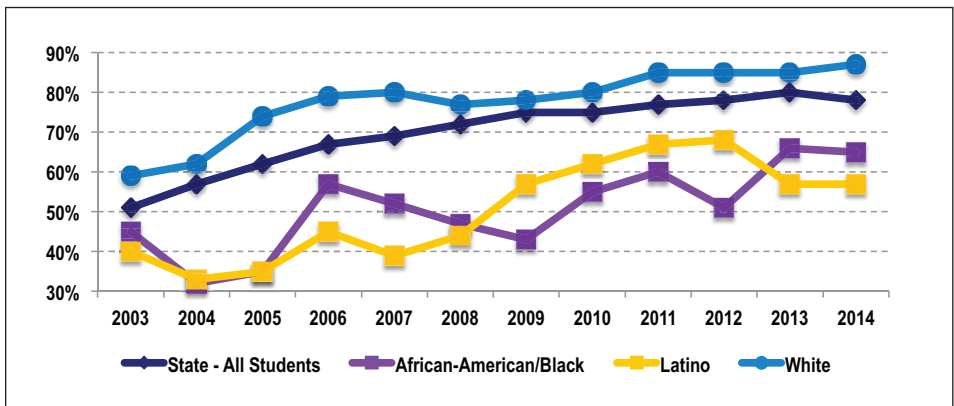
Figure 9: Percentage of Students Scoring “Proficient” or Higher on Grade 10 Math MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

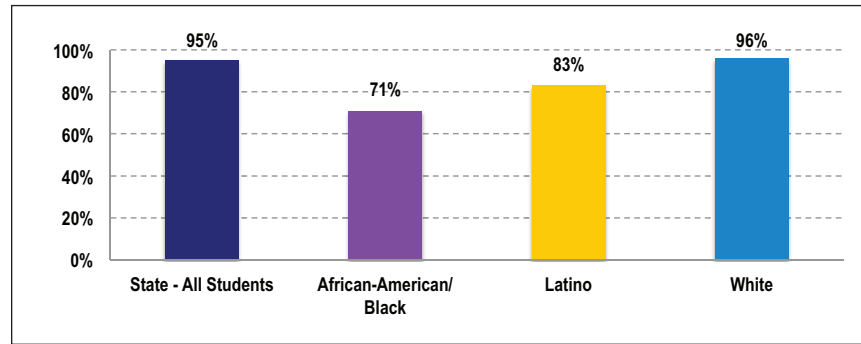
While 85% of Latino students in Waltham passed the Grade 10 ELA test in SY2014, only 57% passed the Grade 10 Math test. As seen in Figure 9 above, this pass rate was 12 percentage points below the rate for African-American/Black students in Waltham, 30 points below the rate for White students in Waltham, and 21 points below the rate for all students statewide. Figure 10 below demonstrates that, overall, the pass rate for Latino students in Waltham has improved since SY2003, but has decreased since a high of 68% in SY2012. Since SY2003, all other ethnogroups in Waltham made larger improvements and as a result, the gap with African-American/Black students almost tripled (180% increase), while the gap with White students in Waltham increased by 58% and the gap with all students statewide increased by 91%.

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.

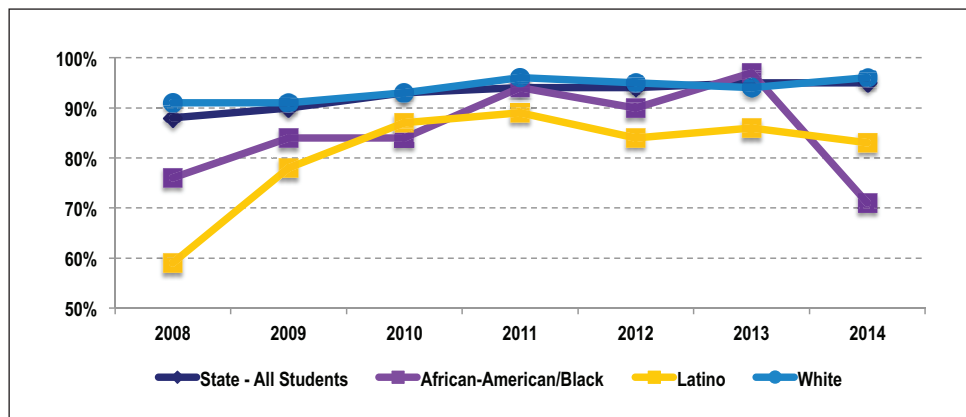
Figure 11: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher, Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

Figure 11 illustrates that in SY2014, Latino students in Waltham had a pass rate of 83% on the Grade 10 Science, Technology, and Engineering MCAS tests (for the STE tests, passing requires a score of “Needs Improvement” or higher). The Latino rate was 12 percentage points higher than the rate for African-American/Black students in Waltham but 13 points below the rate for White students in Waltham and 13 points below the rate for all students statewide. Figure 12 below shows that Latino students in Waltham made substantial progress on the STE tests since their introduction in SY2008, reaching a high of 89% in SY2011 though falling slightly in recent years. Between SY2008 and SY2014, the pass rate among Latino students improved by 24 percentage points, which resulted in closing 59% of the gap with White students in Waltham and with all students statewide. Meanwhile, Latino students went from having a lower pass rate than African-American/Black students in Waltham to having a higher one.

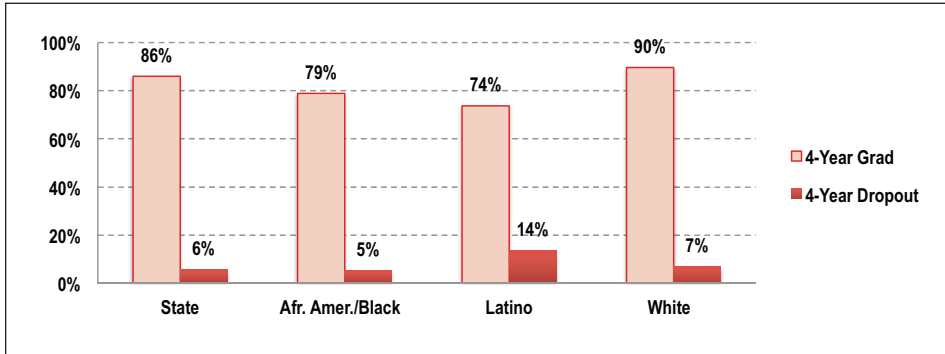
Figure 12: Percentage of Students Scoring “Needs Improvement” or Higher on Grade 10 STE MCAS by Race/Ethnicity, SY2008-SY2014



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

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

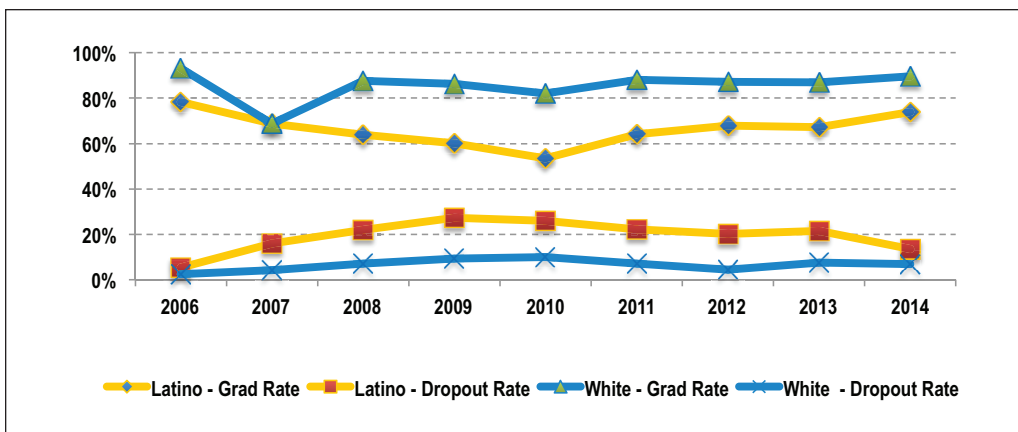
Figure 13: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, SY2014



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

As shown in Figure 13 above, the SY2014 four-year graduation rate for Latino students in Waltham was 74% and the dropout rate was 14% as compared to rates of 90% and 7% for White students in Waltham, 79% and 5% for African-American/Black students in Waltham, and 86% and 6% for all students statewide. As seen in Figure 14 below, the four-year graduation rate for Latino students in Waltham increased steadily after SY2010, but the SY2014 rate was not quite as high as the 78% graduation rate in SY2006. Similarly, the four-year dropout rate for Latino students has improved since a high of 27% in SY2009, but was worse in SY2014 (14%) than in SY2006 (5%). This time period saw widened gaps in graduation and dropout rates with African-American/Black students in Waltham, with White students in Waltham, and with all students statewide.

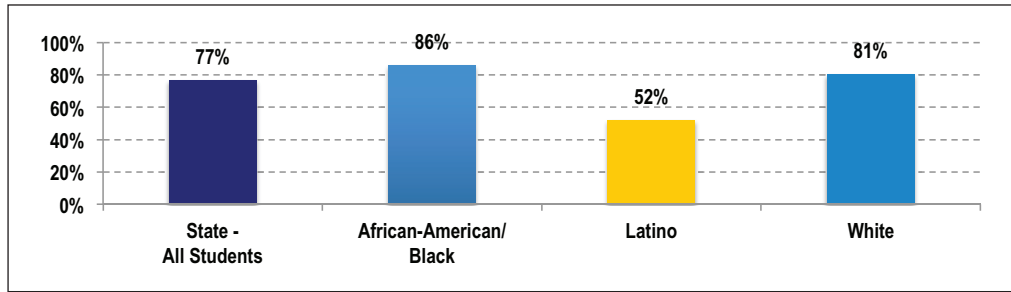
Figure 14: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate, SY2006-SY2014



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

College Enrollment

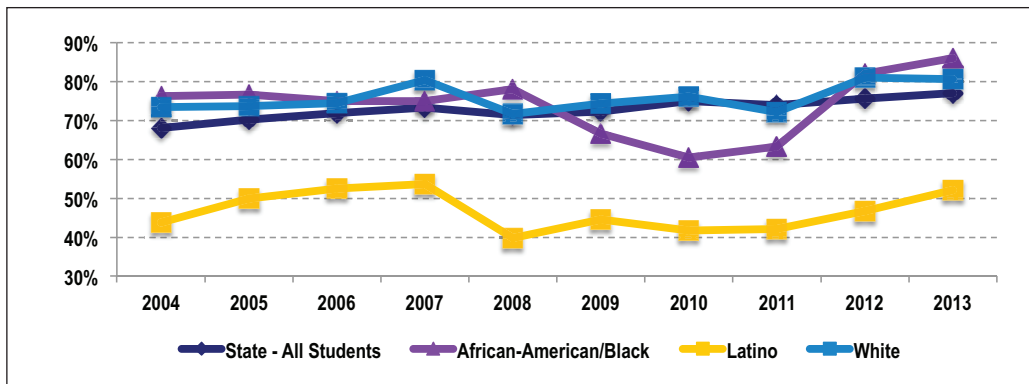
Figure 15: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2013



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

Among all students in Waltham who completed high school in SY2013, 75% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school, just 2 percentage points lower than the rate for all students statewide. As shown in the figure above, among Latino students in Waltham who completed high school in SY2013, 52% enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of completing high school. This was 29 percentage points below the rate for White students in Waltham, 34 points below the rate for African-American/Black students in Waltham, and 25 points below the overall statewide rate. This Latino college enrollment rate was tenth worst among all districts in the state. As seen in Figure 16 below, however, the 52% Latino college enrollment rate was a marked improvement from a low of 40% in SY2008 and was 8 percentage points than in SY2004. Still, all the comparison groups – African-American/Black students and White students in Waltham and all students statewide – improved college enrollment rates at a higher trajectory, resulting in larger enrollment gaps than in SY2004.

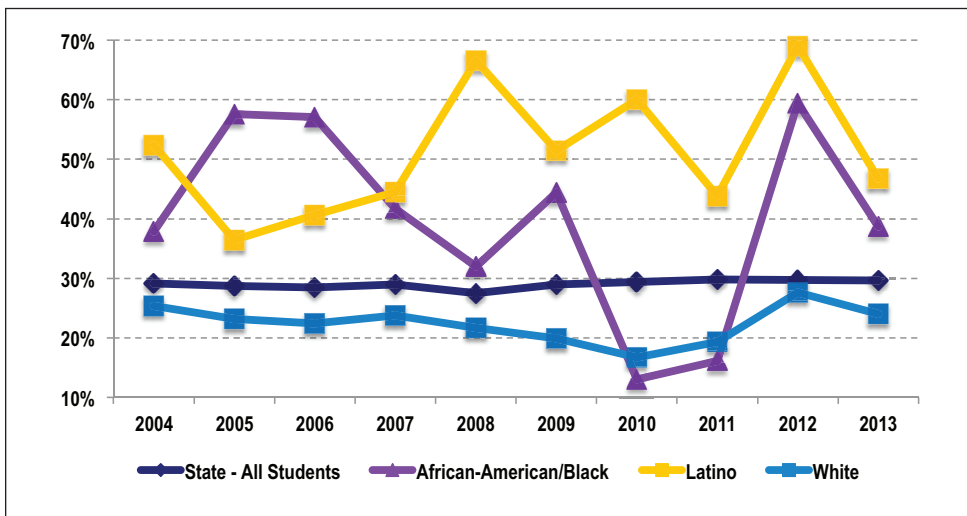
Figure 16: Percentage of High School Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education within 16 Months of Completing High School, SY2004-SY2013



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

Not only is there a disparity in the proportion of Latino high school graduates who enroll in college, but there are also differences in the types of colleges attended. In SY2013, 47% of the Latino students who enrolled in college did so in a two-year college; comparable figures are 39% for African-American/Black college enrollees in Waltham, 24% for White college enrollees in Waltham, and 30% for all college enrollees statewide. As seen in Figure 17 below, since SY2007 the proportion of Latino students enrolling in two-year colleges has consistently been the highest in the district, reaching a peak of 69% in SY2012. Community colleges offer great opportunities to students, but completion rates at two-year colleges are much lower than 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 17: Percentage of Students Attending College Enrolling in a Two-Year College, SY2004-SY2013



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

Sources

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

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

Suggested Citation

Berardino, Michael. “Latino Students in Massachusetts Public Schools – Waltham.” Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston: *Gastón Institute Publications*. April 2015.

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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