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### English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Haitian Creole

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy

## **English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Haitian Creole**

*Miren Uriarte, Cassandra Villari, Nicole Lavan, and Faye Karp*

April 2009



This Report is part of *English Learners in Boston Public Schools in the Aftermath of Policy Change: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes, AY2003-AY2006*, a project of the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education, Boston.

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**English Learners in Boston Public Schools:**  
Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of  
Native Speakers of Haitian Creole

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## Explanation of Terms

Models	
<b>Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)</b>	Model for teaching English Learners which relies on the use of simple English in the classroom to impart academic content, using students' native languages only to assist students in completing tasks or to answer a question.
<b>Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)</b>	Model for teaching English Learners that relies on the student's own language as a bridge to the acquisition of English as a second language.
Study Populations	
<b>English Learners (ELs)</b>	Students who are enrolled in a program for English language development.
<b>Limited English Proficiency Students (LEPs)</b>	Students whose first language is a language other than English and who are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English
<b>Native English Speakers (NES)</b>	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was English
<b>Native Speakers of a Language Other than English (NSOL)</b>	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was a language other than English
Outcomes: Engagement	
<b>Median Attendance Rate</b>	The attendance rate measures the percentage of school days in which students have been present at their schools. Attendance is a key factor in school achievement as well as an important factor used to measure students' engagement with school.
<b>Out-of-School Suspension Rate</b>	The out-of-school suspension rate is the ratio of out-of-school suspensions to the total enrollment during the year.
<b>Grade Retention Rate</b>	The proportion of students required to repeat the grade in which they were enrolled the previous year.
<b>Annual Drop-Out Rate</b>	The annual drop-out rate reports the percentage of students who dropped out of school in a specific year (MDOE, 2007b). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports only on the high school drop-out rate, that is, school desertion taking place after the ninth grade.
<b>Transfer Rate</b>	The proportion of students who transfer out of the district in a given year.
Outcomes: Achievement	
<b>MCAS Pass Rates in Math and ELA</b>	Pass rates are the sum of the proportions of students scoring in the Advanced, Proficient, and Needs Improvement performance categories in MCAS exams on these subjects in a given grade in a given year.

Varied terms are used to refer to students whose verbal, reading, and/or writing skills in English are limited, who cannot do classroom work in English, and who are placed in language acquisition and support programs in American schools. Often the terms “English Learners” (“ELs”), “English Language Learners” (“ELLs”), and “students of limited English proficiency” (“LEPs”) are used interchangeably. In this report, we use the term “students of limited English proficiency,” or “LEPs,” to refer to those students whose first language is not English and who are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English. This is the definition used by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, (MDOE, 2004.) LEPs can be enrolled in General Education programs as well as in special language acquisition and support programs. We use “English Learners,” or “ELs,” to refer to those students who are enrolled in a program of English language acquisition or support. We do not use the term “English Language Learners” in this report but the term is interchangeable with “English Learners,” but not with “LEPs.”

## Introduction

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In November 2002, the voters of Massachusetts approved Referendum Question 2. This referendum spelled an end to Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) as the primary program available for children requiring language support in Massachusetts. In its place came a radically different policy called Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). Unlike TBE, which relies on the English learners' own language to facilitate the learning of academic subjects as they master English, SEI programs rely on the use of simple English in the classroom to impart academic content; teachers use students' native language only to assist them in completing tasks or to answer a question. This change represented a dramatic shift in the philosophy and practice of teaching English to populations of English Learners.

Five years after the start of the implementation of SEI in Massachusetts, there is still scant information about the impact of this change on language education. Models of implementation have varied across the state, with those districts that approach the process most flexibly exhibiting the most substantial gains or the least losses (DeJong, Gort, & Cobb, 2005; Rennie Center, 2007). But there has been no analysis of the outcomes for students under SEI at the state level or in the city of Boston, where the largest number of English Learners in Massachusetts live and attend school.

*English Learners in Boston Public Schools in the Aftermath of Policy Change: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes, AY2003-AY2006* begins to address this gap. It presents information on the outcomes for English Learners (ELs) in Boston's public schools in the year before and in the three years following the implementation of Question 2. The Mauricio Gaston Institute conducted this study in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education and support from the Boston Public Schools. Utilizing four years (AY 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006) of BPS student-level data, we analyze changes in the identification of students with limited English proficiency (LEPs) in Boston Public Schools, their enrollment in programs for English Learners or in general education programs, their engagement in schooling, and their academic outcomes.

The implementation in Boston Public Schools of the changes demanded by the passage of the new law had a profound effect on the programs offered to students of limited English proficiency, as well as on the academic outcomes of these students. Our overall study finds that both the identification of LEPs and their enrollment in programs for English Learners declined significantly after the implementation of the program changes demanded by Question 2. Both identification and enrollment had increased somewhat by the end of the observation period, but neither had reached the levels of AY2003, the last year of Transitional Bilingual Education in Boston. The study also finds that drop-out rates have increased among students in EL programs. Under TBE, students in programs for ELs had lower drop-out rates than those in general education programs; that situation has been reversed under SEI. Finally, the study finds that the gap in achievement between students in EL programs and those in general education programs has increased over the four-year period.

Aside from providing an account of the performance of English Learners in Boston between academic years 2003 and 2006, this study has allowed for a unique look at the performance of groups of students defined by language. This specific report is one of five reports focusing on the enrollment and academic outcomes of the largest groups of native speakers of languages other than English: speakers of Spanish, Chinese dialects, Vietnamese,

Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole. For Chinese, Vietnamese, Haitian, and Cape Verdean students and families, this is one of the first looks at the performance of students from these groups in Boston schools. Usually reported as part of aggregates defined by race (e.g., “Asian” or “Black”), information specific to these ethnic groups is seldom reported separately. Our presentation is limited to the data available data which does not allow us to determine the outcomes of all students from these groups but only of those students within these groups who are designated native speakers of their particular language. It also precludes the presentation of the standardized testing (MCAS) outcomes of students from these groups who attend programs for English Learners.

The purpose of focusing on the outcomes of specific language groups is to inform community organizations, parents, and students of the impact of this policy on the education of children from these groups. In fact, the commitment to inform parents and community leaders emerged from their role in making this research possible. The absence of information about the impact of Question 2 confused and angered immigrant parents and communities. Working through local education advocacy organizations, they demanded information and analysis on the status of English Learners. That demand, together with the schools’ own need and willingness to “know,” led to the collaboration that made possible this study of the outcomes of English Learners in the Boston Public Schools.

# Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Haitian Creole

In AY2003, the year of the passage of Question 2, native speakers of Haitian Creole were the second largest group of speakers of a language other than English in the Boston Public Schools. With an enrollment of 2,475, native Haitian Creole made up 3.9% of the total enrollment of the district and 10.7% of the students enrolled in programs for English Learners.<sup>1</sup> In this report we trace the identification of limited English proficiency among native speakers of Haitian Creole from AY2003 to AY2006 and find that their numbers declined. We examine their presence in EL programs in this period and observe that it too declined while the enrollment in SPED programs rose sharply among this group’s English Learners. We compare engagement indicators for native Haitian Creole speakers in EL and general education programs, including attendance, suspensions, and high school drop-out rates, and we find that native Haitian Creole speakers in EL programs experienced a sharp rise in out-of-school suspensions and grade retentions, leading to the sharpest increase in the drop-out rate of any of the language groups examined in this report. Finally, we examine MCAS pass rates in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades for native Haitian Creole speakers in general education programs and find improvements in 4th grade Math and 4th and 10th grade ELA pass rates and declines in 8th grade and 10th grade Math pass rates during this period.

COLOR KEY	
	All BPS
	NES
	NSOL
	EP
	LEP
	In General Ed
	In EL Programs

## 1. Native Haitian Creole Speakers in the Boston Public Schools

TABLE 1. ENROLLMENT OF NATIVE HAITIAN CREOLE SPEAKERS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	63,777	61,652	59,608	59,211
<b>Total Enrollment of Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>	2,475	2,350	2,225	2,139
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers as a Percentage of Total BPS Enrollment</b>	3.9%	3.8%	3.7%	3.6%

Note: Total enrollments in this table do not match the BPS official enrollments because of exclusions. See Appendix 1.

Among Boston’s students, native Haitian Creole speakers are part of the trend in declining enrollments; in the four years of observation the enrollment of native Haitian Creole speakers declined by an average of 100 students each year, from 2,475 in AY2003 to 2,139 in AY2006, likely reflecting a slow-down in the pace of Haitian immigration. In the four years observed here, the proportion of native speakers of Haitian Creole declined from 3.9% of BPS enrollments to 3.6%.



TABLE 2. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE HAITIAN CREOLE SPEAKERS, AY2006

Selected Characteristics	All BPS	Students in Programs for ELs	Native Haitian Creole Speakers	Native Haitian Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs	Native Haitian Creole Speakers in General Education
Enrollment	59,211	8,847	2,139 <sup>1</sup>	890	1,151
LEP Designation	16.4%	100%	46.2%	100%	0%
Gender: % male	51.2%	53.4%	49.8%	52.9%	47.7%
Poverty Status: % receiving free or reduced price lunch	74.9%	84.8%	76.6%	76.3%	76.5%

Note: (1) Includes 98 native speakers who opted out of programs for ELs.

TABLE 3. ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2006

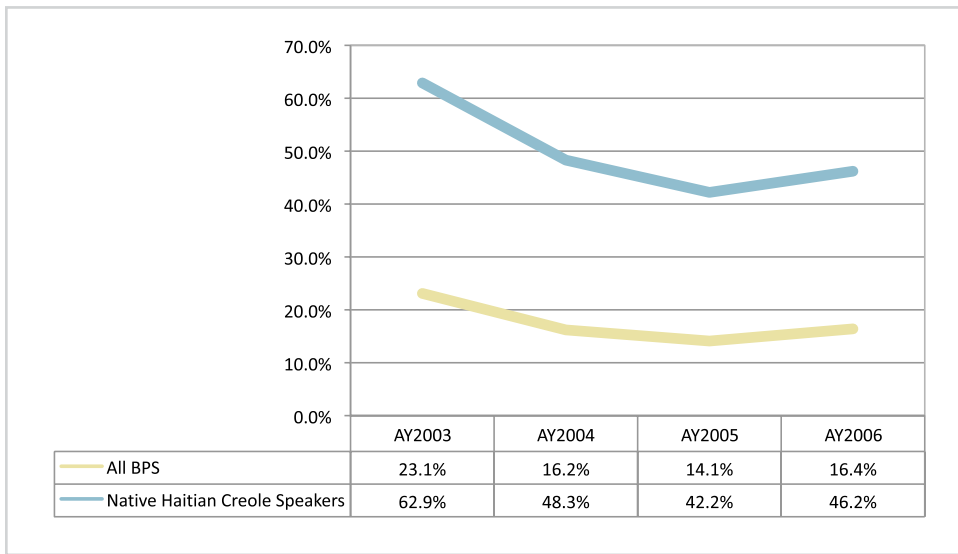
	Elementary	Middle	High
All BPS	43.1%	22.9%	34.0%
Students in Programs for ELs	58.5%	13.6%	27.9%
Native Haitian Creole Speakers	30.4%	20.2%	49.5%

Among all students who are native speakers of Haitian Creole, females slightly outnumbered males. This changes when one focuses on those students in programs for ELs, where males outnumbered females, a pattern similar to what we find among the overall BPS enrollment and among all ELs. Among native Haitian Creole speakers, 76.6% were receiving free or reduced lunch, which is a proxy for poverty status since income at this level is a criterion for acceptance into this school program.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of students fitting this description was higher among Haitian Creole speakers in general education than those in programs for ELs – a reversal of the pattern observed among the overall BPS population, where students in EL programs showed a higher rate of participation in this program. Finally, examining enrollment by grade level (Table 3), the highest number of native Haitian Creole speakers (49.5%) were found at the higher grades; this too is a reversal from the BPS pattern, where only 34.0% of all BPS enrollments were in the high school grades.

## 2. Identification of LEP Students.

Nearly two-thirds of all native Haitian Creole speakers (62.9%) were designated as students of limited English proficiency in AY2003, a decline of 36.6% from AY2006 (Tables 2 and 4). One of the findings of this study of English Learners in Boston is that there was an overall decline in the number of students identified as of limited English proficiency after the implementation of the changes required by Question 2. Figure 1 shows the decline in the proportion of students designated as LEPs among all BPS students and the much sharper decline observed among native speakers of Haitian Creole.

FIGURE 1. IDENTIFICATION OF LEP STUDENTS. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BPS AND OF NATIVE HAITIAN CREOLE SPEAKERS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006



Both groups experienced a recovery in the last year of our observation (AY2006), but neither group reached the high number of designations observed in the baseline year (AY2003). The identification of LEPs in the general BPS population decreased in the first two years after the implementation of Question 2, with a small recovery in the final year of the study. Even after the small recovery in AY2006, the whole period still showed a decrease of 32.2% from the baseline of AY2003. The percentage decrease in identification experienced by native Haitian Creole speakers in AY2004 and 2005 was slightly lower than that experienced by the overall district, but the recovery for this group of students, a decrease of 36.6%, was not as strong (Table 4).

TABLE 4. RATE OF CHANGE IN THE DESIGNATION OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
<b>BPS Students Designated as LEP</b>	-31.8%	-42.6%	-32.2%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers Designated as LEP</b>	-27.2%	-39.8%	-36.6%

### 3. Program Participation by Native Haitian Creole Speakers

This section presents findings on the participation of native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for English Learners and special education (SPED) programs. The data indicate that across time, participation in both programs increased sharply.

**3A. Participation in Programs for English Learners.** The participation in EL programs by native speakers of Haitian Creole decreased in the first two years of the implementation of Question 2 (AY2004 and 2005) and then increased sharply in the last year of observation; AY2006. Overall, native speakers of Haitian Creole experienced a 16.1% decrease in their enrollment in EL programs over this period (Table 5). This trend is similar to that observed

among the overall BPS population. In contrast, among native speakers of Haitian Creole whose proficiency in English is limited (LEPs) there was a slight decline in AY2004 followed by subsequent increases. The enrollment of Haitian Creole speaking LEPs reached 90.1% in AY2006, far above the baseline 66.9% found in AY2003.

FIGURE 2. ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

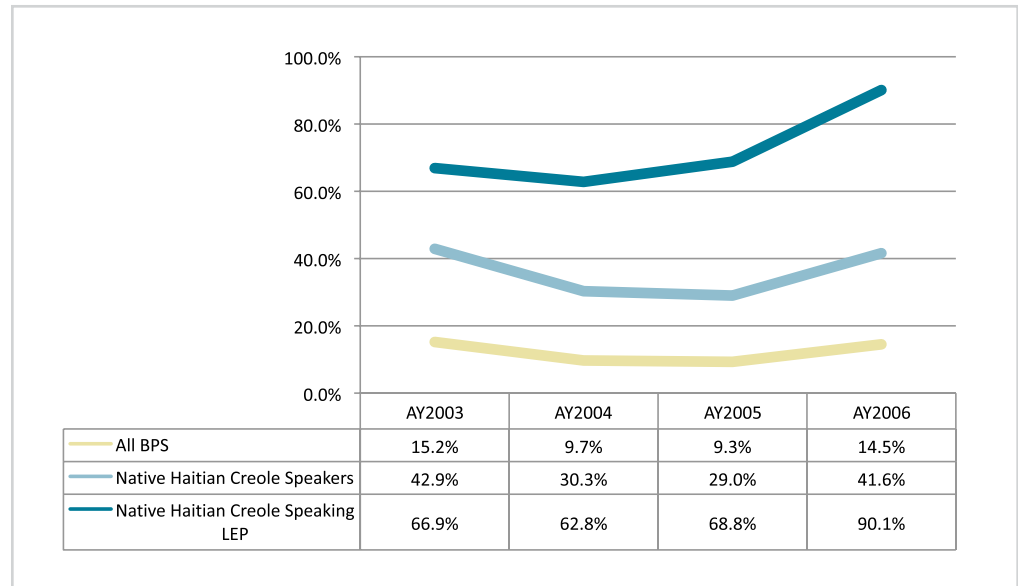


TABLE 5. RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENTS IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
Students in Programs for ELs	-39.3%	-43.9%	-10.7%
Native Haitian Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs	-32.9%	-39.2%	-16.1%
Native Haitian Creole Speaking LEPs in Programs for ELs	-31.7%	-38.2%	-14.7%

**3B. Participation in Special Education Programs.** For all BPS students, the period between AY2003 and AY2006 was relatively stable in terms of enrollments in special education (SPED) programs (Table 6). There were slight changes in the enrollments in mainstream programs (a decrease) and in substantially separate programs (an increase) during that period (Table 6). For students in EL programs, the pattern was different: this period showed a rise from 6.6% to 9.2% in enrollments in mainstream SPED programs and an even sharper rise – from 4.8% to 10.9% – in substantially separate SPED programs.

Among Haitian native speakers in general education programs, we see a modest fluctuation in the enrollment in mainstream SPED programs. Enrollment in the substantially separate SPED programs, by contrast, experienced much greater mobility: a sharp rise in AY2004 and 2005 and an equally sharp decline in AY2006, leaving the rate of participation close to what it was in the baseline year. We observe a different behavior in the enrollments of native speakers of Haitian Creole in programs for ELs. In this case, enrollments in substantially

separate programs are larger than those in mainstream programs across all years, the opposite of the pattern for all other sub-groups of BPS students observed here. Enrollments of native speakers of Haitian Creole increased in both mainstream and substantially separate programs across the time observed, and this increase was particularly salient in substantially separate programs, where the rate more than quadrupled between AY2003 and AY2006.

TABLE 6. STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	10.5%	9.8%	10.4%	10.4%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	7.9%	8.6%	8.7%	8.8%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	6.6%	5.8%	6.2%	9.2%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	4.8%	6.7%	6.8%	10.9%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers in General Education Programs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	7.6%	6.4%	6.6%	6.3%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	4.4%	7.2%	7.3%	4.4%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs</b>				
<b>Full or Partial Inclusion</b>	1.5%	1.1%	1.7%	4.7%
<b>Substantially Separate</b>	2.0%	2.2%	2.9%	8.7%

#### 4. Engagement of Native Haitian Creole Speakers in Schooling

Maintaining students’ attachment to schools and schooling is one of the key challenges of educators, parents, and communities. We explore in this section key indicators of attachment: attendance, out-of-school suspensions, grade retention, and the annual drop-out rate.

**4A. Attendance.** The attendance rate measures the percentage of school days in which students have been present at their schools. Attendance is a key factor in school achievement as well as an important factor used to measure students’ engagement with school.

The attendance rate of BPS students was unchanged during the period under study; across the 4 years, the attendance rate for BPS students was 95%. Students in EL programs showed a decline in the rate of attendance across the period – from 96.2% to 95.6% – but their attendance rate was still higher than those of the general BPS population (Table 7).

Among both groups of native Haitian Creole speakers – those in general education and those in programs for ELs – the attendance rate was higher than among all BPS students and among students in EL programs. The rates among native Haitian Creole speakers in EL programs and general education programs were sustained during the four-year observation period (Table 7).

TABLE 7. MEDIAN ATTENDANCE RATE. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	95.2%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>	96.2%	96.1%	95.8%	95.6%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>				
<b>In Programs for ELs</b>	97.8%	97.8%	97.5%	97.8%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	96.7%	96.7%	96.7%	96.7%

**4B. Out-of-School Suspensions.** There are two types of suspensions reported by the school district: in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. An in-school suspension constitutes the removal of a student from his/her class and placement in a separate environment within the school. In an out-of-school suspension, the student is removed from the school for the time of the suspension and is unable to participate in any school activity.<sup>3</sup> In this section, we report on the out-of-school suspension rate, which represents the ratio of suspensions to the total enrollment during the year.<sup>4</sup> Out-of-school suspension is a strong disciplinary action that separates the student from the school. Research points to increased risk of low academic achievement, of dropping out of school, and of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Ali & Dufresne, 2008).

The rate of out-of-school suspensions for all BPS students and for students in EL programs declined during the period of observation. However, suspensions of native Haitian Creole speakers in EL programs increased for two consecutive years, from 4.3% in AY2003 to 6.2% in AY2005. Although there was an improvement in AY2006, the rate of out-of-school suspensions stayed well above the AY2003 baseline. Suspension rates also increased for native speakers of Haitian Creole in general education, from 6.7% in AY2003 to 8.4% in AY2006. Among this group, in AY2006, suspension rates were found to be higher than for the overall BPS population.

TABLE 8. OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATE. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	7.6%	7.1%	6.7%	6.6%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>				
<b>In Programs for ELs</b>	4.3%	4.6%	6.2%	5.2%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	6.7%	6.4%	6.5%	8.4%

**4C. Grade Retention.** This section reports on the proportion of students retained in grade for an extra school year. Retention in grade usually takes place in the early years, but in some school systems students across all grades are exposed to this practice. Increasingly, there is evidence that students retained (or “kept back”) in grade have a higher risk of dropping out of school and of depressed educational outcomes (Kelly, 1999).

The rate of grade retention for BPS students increased slightly during the four years under study (Table 9). This rate, though relatively stable, was more than three times that of the state as whole, where grade retention through these years averaged 2.6% (MDOE, 2006). Grade retention among students in EL programs was even higher, across all the years. Their

rate increased over the period, from 8.6% retained in 2004 (same grade as in 2003) to 13.1% in 2006 (same grade as in 2005).

In this indicator, native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for ELs show higher rates than their counterparts in general education programs as well as the overall rates for BPS students and for students enrolled in EL programs. Native speakers of Haitian Creole also show among the top rates of retention when compared to students from other language groups considered here. The rate of retention for native Haitian Creole speakers declined very slightly among students in general education but almost doubled among students in EL programs.

TABLE 9. GRADE RETENTION. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	8.4%	8.6%	8.9%
Students in Programs for ELs	8.6%	10.2%	13.1%
Native Haitian Creole Speakers			
In Programs for ELs	10.6%	12.3%	20.3%
In General Education Programs	7.3%	7.6%	7.2%

**4D. Annual High School Drop-Out Rates.** Districts report on their enrollment several times a year, allowing the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to keep track of students who abandon school. A student may “drop out” because he or she entered the Job Corps, the military, employment, or a non-degree-granting educational program, or because the student was incarcerated; in some cases the school district may be unaware of the student’s plans, or even the location of the student (MDESE, 2008).

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports drop-out data in two ways: the annual drop-out rate and the four-year (or cohort) drop-out rate. The annual drop-out rate reports the percentage of students who dropped out of school in a specific year (MDESE, 2007b). The four-year or cohort drop-out rate reports the percentage of students in a cohort who dropped out of school at any time between Grades 9 and 12 during a specific four-year period; this rate shows the accumulated effect of students dropping out over four years (MDESE, 2007a,b). Although the cohort drop-out rate gives a more complete view of the drop-out problem in schools, in this report we focus on the annual drop-out rate for each of the years under observation because the expanse of time of the data set does not allow for the four-year analysis. (The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports only on the high school drop-out rate, that is, school desertion taking place after the 9th grade.)

Among the most salient findings of this study of English Learners in Boston is the impact of post-Question 2 changes on the drop-out rate of students in EL programs and on the grades in which school desertion is taking place. With the data available, we are able to trace an increase in the drop-out rate across the four years of study for BPS language groups.

Table 10 presents the annual high school drop-out rate for several BPS sub-groups. All groups experienced increases, particularly in the first year after the implementation of the program changes demanded by Question 2; in all cases there was a recovery in the third year and another increase at the end of the period. In all cases, the drop-out rate in AY2006 was higher than that of AY2003. The sharpest rise takes place among Native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for English Learners, where the rate tripled in the four years from 3.6% to 10.6%.

In the baseline AY2003, native speakers of Haitian Creole showed drop-out rates that were relatively quite low. Immediately following the implementation of Question 2, the drop-out rate doubled among Haitian students in EL programs; then it rose again in the following year: in AY2004, Haitian students in EL programs had the highest drop-out rate of all subgroups noted in Table 10 as well as of all language groups noted here. In AY2005, the drop-out rate of Haitian students in EL programs continued to rise, but by then the rate was also rising rapidly among other groups (Table 10). By the end of the observation period (AY2006) drop-out rates for Haitian students in EL programs stood at 10.6%, almost triple their numbers in AY2003.

TABLE 10. ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUT RATE. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	7.7%	5.3%	8.2%	10.9%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	8.4%	5.2%	8.1%	10.7%
<b>Students in Programs for ELs</b>	6.3%	6.1%	9.1%	12.0%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>				
<b>In Programs for ELs</b>	3.6%	7.5%	8.6%	10.6%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	4.4%	2.9%	5.6%	7.6%

## 5. MCAS Outcomes of Native Haitian Creole Speakers in General Education

As part of the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act of 1993, the state instituted the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System to provide measures of achievement of Massachusetts public school students. These measures of accountability, later folded into the state’s response to the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, were deployed fully in 2001. Tenth graders taking the MCAS test that year were required to pass in both Math and English Language Arts in order to graduate from high school in June 2003. The process of educational reform in Massachusetts, with MCAS as its linchpin, has led to concerns among educators about the amount of testing required and about the way this testing is impacting the quality and breadth of teaching in the classroom. There are also concerns about the effect of this high-stakes culture on the drop-out rate, which has increased in Massachusetts in recent years (MDESE, 2006). It has also led to overall increases in achievement, which have placed Massachusetts at the top of the scores in the National Assessment of Educational Progress for more than a decade, as well as to sharp increases in the gaps in achievement based on class, race, and language ability (NAEP, n.d.). The full deployment of the MCAS, along with its impact on teaching, learning, achievement, and school desertion in Massachusetts, pre-dated the program changes demanded by Question 2.

Below we present the MCAS outcomes for Boston’s 4th, 8th, and 10th graders, for all students in EL programs, and for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education. The MCAS results for language subgroups (other than Spanish speakers) in EL programs are not reliable because of the small number of test-takers during the period of observation. We present scores for students of different language groups in general education since this information is usually not available. The “All Native Haitian Creole Speakers” category includes students both in general education and in programs for ELs.

**5A. Fourth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in ELA and Math.** Among all BPS students, fourth grade MCAS pass rates in ELA remained relatively stable through the period, rising slightly in the middle years and declining to close to the baseline value by AY2006. Pass rates among students in general education programs followed a similar trend. By contrast, pass rates in MCAS Math improved for both groups, rising over 10 percentage points among BPS students and students in general education programs.

The pass rates for 4th graders who are native speakers of Haitian Creole improved in both ELA and Math in the years following the implementation of Question 2. Those in general education improved by more than 10.3 percentage points in ELA and 22.6 percentage points in Math between AY2003 and AY2006.

TABLE 11. 4TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN ELA AND MATH. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>ELA</b>				
All BPS	73.3%	77.5%	74.1%	73.2%
Students in General Education Programs	77.5%	79.3%	76.3%	77.8%
Native Haitian Creole Speakers	72.6%	78.8%	72.5%	76.7%
In General Education Programs	82.4%	80.0%	77.0%	92.7%
<b>Math</b>				
All BPS	63.2%	70.1%	68.5%	73.7%
Students in General Education Programs	65.0%	71.3%	70.0%	76.6%
Native Haitian Creole Speakers	60.7%	71.8%	61.8%	69.2%
In General Education Programs	60.3%	70.9%	66.7%	82.9%

**5B. Eighth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in Math.** MCAS Math pass rates improved slightly for BPS 8th graders and BPS students in general education programs. Throughout the period, pass rates for native Haitian Creole speakers were substantially lower than for BPS 8th grade students overall. Among native Haitian Creole speakers in general education, scores declined in the first two years of the implementation of the new programs; they recovered by AY2006, but still remained slightly below the baseline value (Table 12). Also noteworthy is the fact that in AY2003, the Math pass rate among native speakers of Haitian Creole in general education was higher than that of the overall BPS population; that pattern reversed in AY2004, the first year of implementation of Question 2, and the negative trend continued for the rest of the observation period.



TABLE 12. 8TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN MATH. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>All BPS</b>	48.1%	54.0%	51.6%	53.4%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	50.9%	55.1%	53.2%	55.8%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>	39.7%	44.2%	43.6%	41.1%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	50.0%	50.7%	47.2%	48.7%

**5C. Tenth Grade MCAS Pass Rates in ELA and Math.** MCAS ELA pass rates improved significantly among BPS students overall, rising from 66.8% in AY2003 to 77.4% in AY2006. Similarly, the pass rates improved among BPS students in general education programs, with a pass rate of 85.2% in AY2006. In comparison to the ELA scores, improvements in Math were much more subdued for BPS students overall and for those in general education programs.

TABLE 13. 10TH GRADE MCAS PASS RATES IN ELA AND MATH. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
<b>ELA</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	66.8%	65.9%	67.8%	77.4%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	72.7%	72.3%	73.3%	85.2%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>	56.3%	47.3%	49.0%	59.4%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	77.5%	64.8%	66.8%	87.2%
<b>Math</b>				
<b>All BPS</b>	65.5%	68.7%	61.0%	67.8%
<b>Students in General Education Programs</b>	63.5%	69.5%	62.6%	71.7%
<b>Native Haitian Creole Speakers</b>	77.5%	72.4%	47.9%	54.4%
<b>In General Education Programs</b>	83.0%	75.0%	59.5%	67.9%

Among all native Haitian Creole speakers, ELA pass rates declined after the implementation of Question 2, but these recovered by AY2006, improving slightly over AY2003 baseline values. The improvement in ELA pass rates is larger for native Haitian Creole speakers in general education programs (9.7 percentage points between AY2003 and 2006) than for all native speakers of Haitian Creole (3.1 percentage points in the same period). In Math, both groups of native speakers of Haitian Creole experienced a sharp decline in pass rates over the four years of observation. Pass rates declined more than 20 percentage points among all native Haitian Creole speakers and 15 percentage points among those in general education.

## 6. Summary

The programmatic shift that accompanied the implementation of Question 2 in Boston had several effects on the experience of Native Haitian Creole speakers, especially those in programs for ELs. For example, there were declines in the identification of students with limited English proficiency and therefore declining enrollments in programs for ELs. These recovered, but never reached the values found in the baseline year of AY2003. There was a worrisome increase in the participation of EL students from this group in SPED programs, particularly the substantially separate ones. Suspensions and grade retention increased and, with them, the drop-out rate – which rose rather dramatically among this group of students. And although we observed improvements in MCAS pass rates, particularly in the 4th grade, there were serious declines in Math pass rates in both 8th and 10th grade.

The findings were:

### **In terms of enrollments:**

- In AY2004, as BPS began implementing the program changes demanded by Question 2, there was a sharp decline in the number of native Haitian Creole speaking LEPs identified.
- In the first year of the implementation of SEI, there was also a distinct decline in the number of native Haitian Creole speakers enrolled in programs for ELs. Their rate of participation in programs for ELs increased in the last year of observation, but not enough to surpass their participation in programs for ELs under TBE.
- During the period between AY2003 and AY2006, native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for ELs experienced an increased placement in SPED. The rate of their placement in substantially separate classrooms more than quadrupled during the period.

### **In terms of engagement in schooling:**

- Native Haitian Creole speakers in general education programs
  - o experienced stable attendance
  - o experienced an increase in the rates out-of-school suspension and grade retention, both associated with high drop-out rates.
  - o experienced increases in their high school drop-out rates of 3.2 percentage points between AY2003 and AY2006.
- Native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for English Learners
  - o experienced stable attendance
  - o experienced increases in their out-of-school suspension rate, and their grade retention rate increased substantially through the period. Both are associated with high drop-out rates
  - o experienced a swift increase in the high school drop-out rate, rising from 3.6% in AY2003 to 10.6% in AY2006.

The worsening of the drop-out rate among native Haitian Creole speakers in programs for ELs is the most salient effect on this group of the changes in policy and programs following Question 2.

**In terms of academic achievement:**

- Among 4th grade test-takers
  - o Both ELA and Math MCAS pass rates increased between AY2003 and AY2006.
- Among 8th grade test-takers
  - o MCAS pass rates in Math improved slightly among the overall population of native Haitian Creole speakers and declined slightly among native Haitian Creole speakers in general education programs.
- Among 10th grade test-takers
  - o After declining in the middle years of the study, MCAS pass rates in ELA ultimately improved for native Haitian Creole speakers in general education programs and for the overall population of native Haitian Creole speakers.
  - o MCAS pass rates in Math declined substantially for both groups.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Due to limitations with the data, we are not able to report on how many, if any, Haitian students are enrolled in BPS who are coded as native English speakers rather than native speakers of Haitian Creole. Haitian students and students of Haitian background are usually aggregated into a general “Black” racial category which includes other Black ethnic groups and, thus, their exact numbers are difficult to determine.

<sup>2</sup> The dataset provided “receiving free or reduced lunch” rather than “eligible for free or reduced lunch.” The former underestimates the level of poverty in the group since many poor students who are eligible by status may not actually receive the service.

<sup>3</sup> For full definitions of in-school and out-of-school suspension, refer to MDESE (2008).

<sup>4</sup> The suspension rate as discussed here counts each suspension as a discrete event, counting separately each suspension even in cases when they happen to the same student.

## Appendix: Data and Methods

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The information presented in the language group reports comes from a four-year, student-level administrative dataset provided by the Boston Public Schools (BPS). It includes demographic and enrollment information from the Student Information Management System (SIMS) on each BPS student enrolled in AYS 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. Using a unique identifier for each student, results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests have been merged with the SIMS, allowing for the analysis of outcomes. Although the dataset includes students' outcomes on Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), these data were not merged because it was not present in a consistent enough form across years to provide appropriate analyses.

For the analysis, students were grouped in two categories: (a) students enrolled in programs for ELs and (b) students in general education. The analysis uses June data and excludes students who were enrolled in the district for only one day and who attended zero days; these students are included in the dropout analysis. Students attending schools serving special populations – the Carter Center, Community Academy, Expulsion Alternative Program, Horace Mann, McKinley Schools, Middle School Academy, and Young Adult Center – were also excluded. For the analysis presented in the language group reports, the students who “opted out” of programs for ELs are not included in general education programs but are part of the total analysis of BPS students. In most tables for the language group reports, we compare the outcomes of EL students from these groups with all students in general education, all students in EL programs, and native speakers of the specific language in general education. (Students who are native speakers of a language other than English but who are in general programs include former students of programs for ELs as well as students who may be native speakers of a language other than English but who were never enrolled in a program for ELs.) In the case of MCAS outcomes, the comparison with ELs from all language groups except Spanish-speakers is not possible because the number of test-takers reported is too small.

Throughout, we examine the differences between these groups along enrollment, engagement, and academic outcome variables, including attendance rate, out-of-school suspension rate, grade retention rate, annual drop-out rate, and MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) and Math pass rates. The definitions of the outcome indicators examined are as follows:

- **Attendance rate:** Median percentage of days that students in each program type attended school in a given year.
- **Out-of-School suspension rate:** the ratio of suspensions to the total enrollment during the school year. The suspension rate as discussed here counts each suspension as a discrete event, counting separately each suspension even in cases when they happen to the same student.
- **Grade retention rate:** The proportion of students in a given school year who were not promoted to the next grade.
- **Annual drop-out rate:** The proportion of students in a given school year who dropped out.
- **MCAS ELA and Math pass rates:** The sum of the proportions of students scoring in the Advanced, Proficient, and Needs Improvement performance categories on the English Language Arts and the Math MCAS exams in a given grade in a given year.

Basic statistical analyses were conducted to examine the significance of the differences we observed between groups and within the same group over time.

In addition to analyzing the dataset received from BPS, researchers collected documentary data pertinent to the process of implementing the changes required by the passage of Question 2. They also interviewed personnel of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (one) and the Boston Public Schools (nine) to assess the reasons for the changes observed in the quantitative data. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2008 and focused on the identification and assessment of LEPs, the enrollment in programs for ELs, the guidance received by the district and the schools regarding the implementation of SEI, and teacher training. Interviews were handled in a manner appropriate to this type of data.

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