Halting the Race to the Bottom:

Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts

A Report of the English Language Learners Sub-Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Committee on the Proficiency Gap

Executive Summary

December, 2009
The Sub-Committee on English Language Learners of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Committee on the Proficiency Gap was formed in September 2009 to provide a short set of recommendations that would serve as “levers” for the improvement of the education of English language learners in Massachusetts. These recommendations would be considered for implementation in the state’s new initiatives focused on under-performing schools in ten districts, designated as priority districts, and which include Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. The committee included 15 educators from across the state, a combination of academics, district superintendents, and directors of ELL services, a school principal, and staff of non-profits working in the area of education. The group met six times in the three months of its tenure. It received organizational and data support from the MDESE. During its inquiry, it also received data support from the Worcester and Framingham Public Schools and received administrative and research assistance from the Gastón Institute at UMass Boston with support from The Barr Foundation.

Members of the Committee:

Miren Uriarte, Associate Professor of Human Services, University of Massachusetts Boston and Senior Research Associate, Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, Chair
Almudena Abeyta, Academic Assistant Superintendent for Middle and K-8 Schools, Boston Public Schools
Maria Estela Brisk, Chair of Teacher Education, Special Education, and Curriculum & Instruction, Lynch School of Education, Boston College
Eileen de los Reyes, Assistant Superintendent for English Language Programs, Boston Public Schools
Jane Lopez, Attorney, Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy, Inc. (META, Inc.)
Susan McGilvray-Rivet, Director of Bilingual, ESL and Sheltered English Programs, Framingham Public Schools
Kara Mitchell, Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
Margarita Muñiz, Principal, Rafael Hernandez School, Boston Public Schools
Sergio Páez Ed.D., ELL Director, Worcester Public Schools
Fernando Reimers, Ford Foundation Professor of International Education, Director, International Education Policy Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education
William Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Juvenile Justice, Wheelock College
State Representative Jeffrey Sánchez, 15th Suffolk District
Maria de Lourdes B. Serpa, School of Education, Lesley University and Co-Chair of MDESE’s English Language Learners/Bilingual Education Advisory Council
Rosann Tung, Director of Research, Center for Collaborative Education, Boston
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Chair of Elementary Education Department and faculty, Wheelock College
Faye Karp, Research Associate, Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, Staff to the ELL Sub-Committee
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Executive Summary

Massachusetts students of limited English proficiency\(^1\) do better academically than students of limited English proficiency in other states. But relative to other students in the state, students of limited English proficiency in Massachusetts face a disadvantage greater than that faced by their peers in most states. This suggests that while the overall higher levels of education in the state benefit LEPs in Massachusetts relative to LEPs who attend schools in states where the quality of education is lower, current policy and practice leads to significantly greater inequality in this state. As the state takes steps to improve performance for all students in Massachusetts, and particularly those in low performing schools, a clear vision and decisive leadership in addressing this gap is essential.

A number of reasons underscore the urgency of addressing this, our most serious education gap in Massachusetts. First, the knowledge-intensive nature of our economy requires that we maximize the potential that exists in the mind of every student. The next generation of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, businesspeople, teachers, artists, and civic leaders needs to come from each of our students today, whether or not they grew up speaking English at home. Second, English learners constitute the only group of public school students whose numbers are growing in the state; as such, they will have an increasing impact on the state’s overall outcomes. Immigrant students will constitute an increasing sector of the state’s future workforce, a workforce that needs to remain educationally competitive for the state to remain a leader in the country.

Today, the outcomes for English language learners in the state need serious attention even when considering the basic elements of learning English, learning content, and staying in school. Our findings are that:

- The enrollments of English language learners are increasing, with large concentrations of English language learners in the priority districts. The enrollment of LEPs has increased by 27% state-wide since 2001, and these students make up an especially large proportion of the enrollments of Lowell, Worcester, Lynn, and Lawrence public schools. Boston has the highest number of LEPs in its enrollment.
- The proportion of LEPs enrolled in special education programs has markedly increased in the last six years, with proportions reaching over 30% in some districts. Some of the high incidence disabilities among LEPs are disabilities whose evaluation is highly sensitive to communication between student and examiner or to the language of the tests used (for example, communication, and intelligence), raising questions about the quality of the assessment process.
- English language learners demonstrate strong engagement with school, with high levels of attendance and low levels of suspensions. Data from Boston (Tung et al, 2009) shows better outcomes for LEPs in

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\(^1\) The terms “students of Limited English Proficiency” and “English Language Learners” and their abbreviations (LEPs and ELLs are used interchangeably in this report. Those students sometimes referred as Non-LEPs are referred to here as English Proficient students (or EP).
these engagement indicators than English proficient students; findings from the Worcester case study conducted for this report, echo the Boston findings.2

- **Learning English:** The Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) measures students’ proficiency at 5 performance levels. Only students scoring at the highest performance levels of MEPA are able to reach “proficiency” in MCAS ELA (Figure 1). The number of LEPs that reach MEPA Level 5 is very small (less than 25%) and the time required for even that small group of students to attain that level is long (five years or more in Massachusetts schools) (Figure 2).

Figure 1. MCAS ELA Proficiency Rate for LEPs at MEPA Performance Levels 4 & 5 and English Proficient Students. MA, 2009

![Figure 1](image1)

Source: MDESE. LEP data provided on 10/08/09; EP data on 9/30/09

Figure 2. Proportion of LEPs Reaching MEPA Performance Level 5 in 4 and 5 Years in Massachusetts Schools By Grade Span. MA, 2009

![Figure 2](image2)

Source: Computed from data in MDESE, 2009

- **Learning Content:** The proportion of students scoring at the highest levels of MEPA who attain “proficiency” in MCAS Math and Science – used here as measures of mastery of academic content – was also low, particularly in Science, which is the area that relies most heavily on English proficiency. In Science, only 29% of 10th graders at MEPA Level 5 scored proficient in the MCAS (Figure 3). The lower levels of performance in Mathematics and Science, even for students at the highest levels of language proficiency, indicates that students with newly acquired English language skills may not have enough

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2 The brief case study appears as Appendix 4 of the Sub-Committee’s full report.
command to access academic content, especially at advanced levels, such as those in high school, and that specific actions may be necessary to provide LEP students with effective opportunities to learn academic subject matter.

Figure 3. Proportion Attaining MCAS Math and Science Proficiency. LEPs at MEPA Performance Levels 4 and 5 and English Proficient Students. MA, 2009

![Bar chart showing proportion attaining MCAS Math and Science Proficiency for LEPs at MEPA Performance Levels 4 and 5 and English Proficient Students.]

Source: MDESE. LEP data provided on 10/08/09; EP data on 9/30/09

- **Graduating**: In the last five years, there have been substantial increases in the drop-out rate of English language learners across the state, double that found among English proficient students (Figure 4). Statewide data was unavailable for this analysis so we use data from our case study of Worcester students of limited English proficiency and show that, currently, the highest proportion of dropouts (67%) come from those students at the higher levels of English proficiency, that is, those LEPs transitioning into general education programs (Table 1). This speaks both to the preparation of these students to address content in general education as well as the preparation of teachers and schools to address the needs of these students.

Figure 4. Annual High School Drop-Out Rate. EP and LEP. MA, 2003–2008

![Line graph showing annual high school drop-out rate for EP and LEP students from 2003 to 2008.]

Source: Data provided by MDESE to the Gastón Institute, UMass Boston on 5/20/09
In order to address the educational experience summarized by these findings, the committee highlights interventions in five areas: (1) the development and implementation of student centered programs appropriate for the age and English proficiency of LEP students; (2) stronger requirements for professional development of teachers providing instruction to LEP students; (3) the development of stronger capacity at the district-level for data-driven monitoring of the progress of ELLs and planning, monitoring and evaluating programs for English Learners; (4) improvement in the identification, assessment, and placement of LEP students and (5) enriching the professional development of educational leaders across the state in relationship to the education of ELLs. We focus on those interventions that need to be implemented urgently so that, first of all, the education of students of limited English proficiency can recover from the jolt which recent changes in policy have represented and secondly, that within the limits provided by existing law, the state can move forward with improvements in the education of these students. In doing so, we hope that the state can take the lead in an area where success has proven elusive for educators across the nation.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following general principles undergird the specific recommendations presented in this report:

1. Massachusetts Needs a Welcoming Environment for English Language Learners

Intentionally or not, the implementation of current policy on the education of English language learners has sent an erroneous message that attention to their specific needs is no longer permitted or necessary in Massachusetts.\(^3\) We believe that this environment propitiates practices that have led to the violation of ELLs’ educational rights, as evidenced by recent interventions by the U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of ELLs in two large districts and the investigation of violations in a third;\(^4\) these three districts account for 30% of ELLs in Massachusetts. This environment also disempowers educators charged with the organization of programs for LEPs in districts and schools and also disempowers parents, once a vocal constituency on behalf of ELLs. Finally, this environment contributes to the perception that ELLs

\(^3\) In 2002, Mass voters adopted a referendum which mandated the dismantling of the state’s transitional bilingual education in favor of sheltered English immersion programs. The law began its implementation in September 2003. There have been no formal overall evaluations of the effects of this change but several more limited studies have been conducted, including DeJong, Gort, and Cobb (2005), Rennie Center (2007); Tung et al. (2009); Uriarte et al. (2009); and Uriarte and Karp (2009). These findings are summarized in the final report of this committee.

represent a liability in the process of school accountability, creating an unwelcoming environment for English language learners in some schools.

In situations like this, it is critical for policy makers at every level, but particularly at the highest levels, to communicate a clear and unambiguous message about the rights of these groups and about a vision for the future that includes them in a fair and equitable way. We suggest here two key messages:

- **English language learners have a right to educational opportunity, including an equal opportunity to learn.**
- **Bilingual citizens are an asset to the state in the context of a global economy.** The development of a citizenry comfortable with and capable of acting effectively in global endeavors is an essential component of the skills necessary in the 21st Century.

2. **Compliance Is a Floor, Not a Ceiling**

Providing educational opportunities for English language learners has often come as the result of legal or legislative action, a situation that has favored a framework of compliance, rather than a program development and evaluation perspective, on the part of educational leaders and school systems. More recently, lack of direction and funding for the appropriate implementation of recent policy changes in the education of ELLs have only added to the confusion. At this point in Massachusetts, the legal, the legislative, and the educational perspectives are conflated; there is confusion about how to implement sound educational practices while adhering to current state law. Unfortunately, in this type of environment sound educational policy is trumped by perceived and actual restrictions in state law.

Respecting the rights of English language learners is a minimum requirement: only when these are respected can education truly begin. But the concern about the education of students of limited English proficiency cannot end there: excellence in educational practice is what will protect the rights of English language learners and provide them with equal opportunity to learn. Without losing sight of the fact that it is the state’s responsibility to protect the rights of English language learners (and all students), educational leaders in Massachusetts need to focus on what we know is necessary to adequately and fully educate ELL students. Complying with the law and acting affirmatively to develop a culture of excellence in the education of English language learners are critical ingredients for Massachusetts to move forward in this area.

3. **English Is Not Enough: English Language Learners Need To Attain English Proficiency, Master Content, And Graduate.**

There is no question about the value of English proficiency in the economic and social success of immigrants in the U.S. There is also no question about the strength of English proficiency as a predictor of academic success; both, the academic literature and professional experience underscore its value (Abedi, 2004; Suárez Orozco et al., 2008). But English language learners also need to attain proficiency in academic content areas in order to remain engaged in school and excel educationally.

In Massachusetts, the teaching of English has taken center stage. Given the fact that currently content is delivered primarily at a basic level of English until the student attains proficiency, there is concern about the level of mastery of content that English learners are attaining, particularly when, as we saw in this review, proficiency in English takes about five years to attain. This is a special concern about students in middle and high school, who may arrive with substantial content knowledge in their own language but are not able to access grade level content instruction in MA schools. Experts suggest that the focus should be on (1) teaching language all the time, including language and literacy classes, math,
science, social studies, and any other classes where ELL students participate (Brisk, 1998); and (2) developing a strong bilingual content curriculum, particularly for middle school and high school students.

URGENT INTERVENTIONS

I. Promote, Support, and Sustain Student-Centered Program Development in the Districts

Exceedingly narrow interpretations of current policy have led to practices that, in our view, hamper the ability of districts to respond to the diversity of need posed by English language learners. It is important to understand that, while state law favors immersion programs, it also provides avenues for districts to address the diversity of needs of English language learners and that it allows parents of these students to make choices regarding the education of their children. Districts are required to develop additional types of programs to meet these needs.

In practice, however, Massachusetts has developed a “one size fits all” approach to the education of English language learners. Across the state, not only are the majority of LEPs enrolled in SEI programs (94.2%) but the concentration in SEI programs increases progressively every year; six of the ten districts considered here only have available one type of program for LEP students. Good educational practice calls for the availability of a range of programmatic options that would allow the district to respond appropriately to the needs of this increasingly diverse population. It suggests also the development of well-organized programs where students can be grouped by language level more effectively, the instruction can be tailored to the level and type of language, and the outcomes can be measured more accurately, monitored and used to improve the delivery of service.

Recommended changes seek to: (1) alleviate the impact of the lack of content instruction for middle school and high school students at the early MEPA performance levels by including bilingual content classes while sustaining a strong ESL component; (2) strengthen the required qualifications for teachers providing instruction to English language learners at all levels, including – for students at the lower levels of MEPA performance – the assignment of teachers capable of providing clarification of content areas for students in their own language, as is permitted by law and (3) offer academically strong alternative education programs for high school students who are at risk of dropping out because they enter school with very low levels of English proficiency and/or interrupted schooling in their own language. Table 2 contains detailed recommendations regarding instructional programs. Others, focusing on dropout prevention programs, parent participation and district leadership in these area, follow.

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5 Data obtained from MDESE, 11/14/2009
Table 2. General Recommendation: Support districts in the development of a range of innovative programs for English language learners that are appropriate for the age and English proficiency of the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEPA Performance Level</th>
<th>Current MDESE Recommendation</th>
<th>Committee’s Specific Recommendations</th>
<th>Under 10 (Grades K-4)</th>
<th>Over 10 (Grades 5-8)</th>
<th>Over 10 (Grades 9-12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 and 2                | (ESL) instruction: 2.5 hours/day to a full day of direct ESL instruction, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher  
Content instruction: other hours as available outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students  
Other Services 2 | Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL  
OR  
Through a dual language program  
Other Services 2 | Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content areas and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary/secondary content areas and ESL  
OR  
ESL provided by ESL certified teacher(s) and content provided through bilingual content classes  
Other Services 2 | Both ESL (minimum 2.5 hours a day) and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in content areas and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content areas and ESL  
OR  
ESL provided by ESL certified teacher(s) and content provided through bilingual content classes  
OR  
Alternative Academic Programs  
Other Services 2 |
| 3                      | English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction: 1-2 hours of direct ESL instruction per day, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher  
ELA or reading instruction: 1-2 hours per day, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in ELA or reading.  
Content instruction: other available hours outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in the appropriate content area  
Other Services 2 | ESL (1-2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL  
OR  
Through a dual language program  
Other Services 2 | ESL (1-2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and ESL  
OR  
Alternative Academic Programs  
Other Services 2 | ESL (1-2 hours per day), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Bilingual teacher(s) licensed in secondary content area(s) and proficient in native language of students  
OR  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content area(s) and ESL  
OR  
Alternative Academic Programs  
Other Services 2 |
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Under 10 (Grades K-4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4 and 5                | ESL instruction: a minimum of 2.5 hours of direct ESL instruction per week, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher  
Content instruction: other available hours outside of ESL instruction, delivered by a teacher qualified to teach LEP students and licensed in the appropriate content area  
Other Services ² | ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in early childhood or elementary and ESL  
OR  
ESL provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in early childhood or elementary with all 4 categories of training  
Other Services ² | ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) and ESL  
OR  
ESL instruction provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in elementary and/or secondary content area(s) with all 4 categories of training  
Other Services ² | ESL (minimum 2.5 hours per week), ELA, and content instruction provided by either:  
Teacher(s) dually licensed in secondary content area(s) and ESL  
OR  
ESL instruction provided by licensed ESL teacher(s) and content provided by standard curriculum teacher(s) licensed in secondary content area(s) with all 4 categories of training  
Other Services ² |

Notes:
1. Recommendations regarding bilingual content instruction imply parent choice and the initiative of the school and district in facilitating the parental waivers. Under current law, alternatives to SEI are possible (a) when parents of students over 10 yrs of age request waivers and (b) these waivers are granted by the principal and (c) there are 20 students per grade in the same language group in the school.
2. Other services include: Physical education, art, music in same schedule as for other students in the grade level.

Other recommendations in the area of programs include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Recommendations</th>
<th>Specific Recommendations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Require the inclusion of ELLs in all school programs such as afterschool and extended day programs, AP classes, MCAS preparation programs</td>
<td>2.1 Provide training and support to the district and school staff in the delivery of these programs and monitor the participation of ELLs in them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Support and guide the development and implementation of dropout prevention initiatives that demonstrate cultural competence in serving English language learners.</td>
<td>3.1 Follow the recommendations outlined in the reports of the Youth Transition Task Force (2006) and the Graduation and Dropout Prevention Commission (2009) with this addition: That initiatives need to integrate a high degree of cultural competence in their practice.¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Require the development of a mechanism affording genuine participation of language minority parents at the school and district level. | 4.1 Schools should establish ELL parent councils where language minority and newcomer immigrant parents and families can become an integral part of the planning and evaluation of ELL programs to be provided to their children.  
4.2 Districts should also form ELL parent councils to insure a more active participation in the planning processes or policy development for ELL student education. These same parent councils would also then serve as a source of informed ELL parents, willing and able to meaningfully participate on district and state level policymaking groups. |
| 5. Encourage those districts with large LEP enrollments to make the director of programs for English language learners a member of the district’s leadership team. | 5.1 Making the director of ELL programs part of the district’s leadership team will allow for the consideration of the impact on ELLs of any programmatic or instructional policy proposed or changed in the district. It will also allow for the integration of the curriculum offered ELLs with that offered to the district as a whole. |

Note 1: Cultural competence in this arena involves: hiring an outreach staff that is bilingual and bicultural; providing linguistically appropriate services; and having the capacity to provide clear information for parents, in their own language so that they can understand and support the re-engagement and recovery process.
II. Require That Every English Language Learner Be Taught by a Teacher Trained to Teach Them

Teacher quality is one of the most critical factors in any student’s learning yet ample evidence from the field indicates that many English language learners are not yet receiving instruction from appropriately qualified teachers. Changes in the licensure of teachers following the 2003 changes in state policy, demoted bilingual licensure to an endorsement, even though provisions in the law –allowing for two-way bilingual programs and, with appropriate waivers, transitional bilingual education programs– make skilled bilingual teachers still necessary. Competency requirements for standard curriculum content teachers working with English language learners were developed by MDESE and represent the most basic training required and even this training is only “recommended,” not mandated, by MDESE. The result is that LEP students making a transition into general education programs may be exposed to teachers who are not trained to teach them. The current situation in many schools, where teachers without proper training are called upon to address the complex needs of students in the process of English language acquisition, is unfair to teachers who take pride in their profession. It is also not fair to students – as evidenced by their academic outcomes and drop-out rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Recommendations</th>
<th>Specific Recommendations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strengthen current requirements for the licensure of teachers providing instruction to English Language Learners</td>
<td>1.1 Reinstate the bilingual and ESL licensure requirements that were in place before Q2 to ensure the quality and effective preparation of all bilingual and ESL teachers in the state.</td>
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<td>1.2 Add a new licensure for bilingual/ESL Special Education for teachers of ELL students with Moderate or Severe Disabilities.</td>
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<td>1.3 Improve the four category trainings to make them competency-based, ensuring through performance assessments that teachers are putting their new skills and knowledge into practice within their classrooms.</td>
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<td>1.4 Require successful completion of the upgraded competency-based four categories as a requirement for re-licensure across all areas of teacher certification except bilingual and ESL.</td>
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<td>1.5 Develop ESL &amp; Bilingual Special Education teacher education licensure standards to guide teacher education programs offered by institutions of higher education and thereby help to alleviate the teacher shortage in both ESL-Bilingual and special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strengthen in-service professional development for teachers providing instruction to English Language Learners</td>
<td>2.1 Provide motivation for all teachers to complete the four category trainings by offering PDPs for participation as well as the opportunity to advance across salary lanes.</td>
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<td>2.2 Develop capacity of teachers working with ELLs by creating a state-wide comprehensive professional development plan to be enacted over the next five years with short- and long-term goals, a clear timeline, and extensive collaboration with teacher preparation institutions.</td>
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<td>2.3 Plan and implement professional development programs for faculty in Schools of Education and other programs preparing teachers.</td>
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<td>2.4 Create a method by which licensed bilingual and ESL teachers will not have to complete the four categories in order to be re-licensed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strengthen pre-service requirements for future teachers of English Language Learners</td>
<td>3.1 Reinstate the bilingual and ESL certification requirements in place in 2002 and assist teacher preparation programs in re-developing programs to train teachers qualified for such certification.</td>
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<td>3.2 Based on the Wingspread Conference definition of Highly Qualified Teachers and in collaboration with experts from the field, create standards and requirements for all teacher preparation programs in Massachusetts to meet in order to qualify for state accreditation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Strengthen the meaning of a Highly Qualified Teacher by including in its definition elements of cultural</td>
<td>4.1 All HQTs who use English as the medium of instruction must be English language teachers as it relates to their content area (i.e., a teacher who teaches biology must also teach the language to do biology).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These categories are: Category 1: Introduction to Second Language Learning and Teaching, Category 2: Sheltering Content Instruction, Category 3: Assessing Speaking and Listening and Category 4: Teaching Reading and Writing to Limited English Proficient Students
competence related to the culture and language of ELL students.

4.2. All HQTs must have a set of guided experiences in schools and school communities with culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and community partners.

4.3. All HQTs must be able to demonstrate the ability to work with ELD students to develop language and literacy, to succeed academically, and to successfully function in school and their communities.

4.4. All HQTs must be able to use culturally relevant teaching techniques and exhibit dispositions that reflect the above requirements.

4.5. The preparation of a HQT would include coursework that speaks to language, culture, and community.

4.6. All HQTs will have had coursework and experiences that prepare them for the above requirements.”

III. Enable and Support Data-Driven Planning, Monitoring, and Transparency at the District Level

Information must flow to districts in a way that is useful so that they can develop programs that are evidence-based and data-driven, assign teachers appropriately, anticipate problems in enrollment patterns, and provide information to guide parents’ choices for the schooling of their children,. Experience from the field shows that some districts do not have in-house data analysis capacity and the data that ELL directors receive is often incomplete and not helpful for planning purposes. (A salient example of this is the unavailability of cross-tabulations of MCAS and MEPA data – in fact, all three ELL directors participating in this committee had manually carried out that analysis.) This hinders the capacity to develop and monitor appropriate programs for ELLs.

Aside from the access to data, available data has to be “translated” in practical terms for those whose use of the data is not at an “expert” level, as is the case of most ELL program planners, principals, etc. Practitioners need to understand how to analyze and use the data in planning and monitoring programs. An example is the use of MCAS data in understanding the achievement of ELLs. Understanding the difference in outcomes of LEPs at the different language proficiency levels brings some realism to the performance expectations of English language learners. It is not the failure of either the student or the school when LEP students at MEPA levels 1-3 are not proficient on the MCAS. It is, however, a concern when students are not progressing across the MEPA levels and when LEP students at MEPA levels 4 and 5 are not nearing their English proficient peers on MCAS performance.

Finally, neither the state nor most districts provide parents with information about different programs and their outcomes for LEPs in a way that is accessible to them linguistically or in terms of transparency. Given the critical role of parents, whose power of initiating access to programs for their children is afforded by current law, parents need to be informed about outcomes in different types of programs. Our recommendations appear below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Recommendation</th>
<th>Specific Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assure that districts have access to and can use data appropriate for planning and monitoring programs and for monitoring LEP student progress.</td>
<td>1.1 Provide districts with data on enrollment, program participation, and outcomes that is disaggregated by grade, home language, and language proficiency of LEPs. (See listing of key indicators in Appendix 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide district staff with the training necessary to appropriately use data in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of programs for English language learners.</td>
<td>2.1 Organize regional training sessions in cooperation with local institutions of higher education, focused on the use of data for program planning and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mandate and support informed choice for parents of ELLs.</td>
<td>3.1 Information about program choices and outcomes should be made available to parents in linguistically accessible form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note (1) This is a grouping of indicators by district; http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/gis/sped_map.aspx?orgcode=00020000&
IV. Improve the Processes of Identification, Assessment, and Placement of English Language Learners

Both previous research and the data reviewed here show evidence that the systems for identifying, assessing, and placing LEPs in appropriate programs should be streamlined and monitored closely. Recommendations are:

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<tr>
<th>General Recommendation</th>
<th>Specific Recommendation</th>
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<td>1. Standardize the identification of students of limited English proficiency and the assessment of language proficiency and disabilities in this group</td>
<td>1.1 Develop regulations on how districts should define and identify students of limited English proficiency by: • Providing a clear definition of what constitutes a LEP student and monitoring its application across districts. • Requiring a process of identification that includes multiple sources of data including information from family; oral, reading, and writing assessment results in both L1 and L2; and past school records • Offering options among specific standards-based tests of English language proficiency and monitoring their appropriate administration in the districts. 1.2 Provide support for districts to train front-line staff on the requirements of G.L.c71A.</td>
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<td>2. Review re-classification guidance to the districts to insure that students who are eligible for re-classification are sufficiently prepared to function in a general education classroom without ELD support.</td>
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<td>3. Develop clear statewide guidelines and procedures for the testing of LEP students suspected of learning disabilities. Monitor implementation closely.</td>
<td>3.1 Monitor closely the increase in SPED placement among LEPs in districts. Intervene promptly in those districts where the SPED rate surpasses that of EP students or increases steeply over time. 3.2 Develop an addendum or revise the Mass Chapter 71B Special Education Regulations to address directly federal law requirements (IDEA 2004 &amp; Regulations 2006) for assessments that are non discriminatory and administered in the native language by qualified professionals that require communication with parents in the native language or mode of communication including team meetings and to coordinate and integrate the research based “language of instruction” needs of English language learners with moderate and severe disabilities. 3.3 Prioritize the training of ESL-Bilingual professional staff in the areas of speech and language therapy, school psychology, instruction of moderate and severe disabilities and social work to support the assessment of English language learners in the specific area of disability. This is a critical factor in reducing the disproportionate representation of ELLs in special education is the availability of appropriately trained staff to assess the needs of English Language Learners.</td>
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V. Enrich the Professional Development of Educational Leaders at the School, District, and State Levels

Given that Massachusetts has to implement a rather unique and restrictive method of instruction for English language learners, leaders at the state, district, and school levels need to be more familiar than most educational leaders in other areas of the country about the key elements of the learning process and the methods of teaching of English and content to English language learners. Our recommendation is very simple and straightforward:
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| MDESE must develop, implement, and evaluate professional development for state, district, and school leaders. | 1. Included in this professional development should be those responsible for planning, developing, monitoring, and evaluating programs for English language learners as well as those charged with the assessment of the academic performance of ELLs and the performance of teachers.  
2. This professional development should be included as part of the process of relicensure  
3. The following areas of competence should be addressed:  
Understanding of the laws governing compliance in providing education services to English language learners.  
Understanding the process of language acquisition and its implications for program development and instruction.  
The use of data in monitoring enrollment and outcomes of ELLs and in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs for these students  
Evaluating ELL instruction  
Cultural competence for educators |
References


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<th>Area</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Data to include</th>
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</table>
| **Enrollment**                   | Provides district directors with accurate enrollment figures, comparisons with other groups and enrollment trend) | 1. Enrollment (# and % of total enrollment).  
2. Trends in Enrollment (5 years)  
3. LEP enrollment by grade level  
4. LEP enrollment waived, opted-out, and in program |
| **Home Language and English Proficiency** | Provide district directors with language data – English and L1 – necessary for student-centered program planning | 5. Home languages (#, %, and rank order)  
6. Home language of LEPs by grade level  
7. English language proficiency (MEPA 1-5) of all LEPs  
8. English language proficiency by grade level  
9. English language proficiency by home language and grade level |
| **Program Participation**        | Provides district directors with program participation data necessary for program planning and monitoring. | 10. LEPs in General Education (#, %, grade level)  
11. Trends in LEP enrollment in General Education (5 years)  
12. LEPs in ELL Programs (#, %)  
13. LEPs in ELL programs by ELL program type (#, %, grade level)  
14. Trends in LEPs in ELL programs by type (5 years)  
15. LEPs in ELL programs by program type and English proficiency  
16. LEPs in SEI by grade level and English proficiency  
17. LEPs in TBE by grade level and English proficiency  
18. LEPs in dual language programs by grade level and English proficiency  
19. LEP enrollment in SPED  
20. LEP enrollment in SPED by disability  
21. Trends in LEP enrollment in SPED (5 years) |
| **Outcomes**                     | Provides district directors with outcome data necessary for program adjustment, monitoring, and evaluation as well as compliance | All outcomes by:  
LEP and non-LEP  
English language proficiency level of LEPs  
Home language of LEPs  
By grade of LEPs and non-LEPs  
Of LEPs by program type  
By English language proficiency and grade of LEPs – for all home languages, and all program types  
22. Median Attendance Rate  
23. Out-of-School Suspension Rate  
24. Retention Rate  
25. Annual dropout rate  
26. 4 and 5 year graduation rates  
27. ELA, Math, and Science MCAS pass and proficiency rates  
28. Trends in English proficiency over time (by all LEPs, by Home Language, and by program type)  
29. Trends in Annual Dropout Rate Over Time (by all LEPs, by language proficiency, by Home Language, and by program type)  
30. Trends in Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate Over Time (by all LEPs, by language proficiency, by Home Language, and by program type) |
| **Teacher Qualifications**       | Provides districts directors with information about human resources available for organize the programs | 31. # of Bilingual teachers by language and type of certification.  
32. # of Standard curriculum early childhood, elementary, and content teachers with 4-Category Training  
33. Teachers Dually Certified in Early Childhood and ESL  
34. Teachers Dually Certified in Elementary and ESL  
35. Teachers dually certified in Content and ESL |