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English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Native Speakers of Cape Verdean 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 Cape Verdean Creole

Miren Uriarte, Nicole Lavan, Nicole Agusti, 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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Explanation of Terms

Models	
Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)	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.
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)	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	
English Learners (ELs)	Students who are enrolled in a program for English language development.
Limited English Proficiency Students (LEPs)	Students whose first language is a language other than English and who are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English
Native English Speakers (NES)	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was English
Native Speakers of a Language Other than English (NSOL)	Students whose first language learned or first language used by the parent/guardian with a child was a language other than English
Outcomes: Engagement	
Median Attendance Rate	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.
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	The out-of-school suspension rate is the ratio of out-of-school suspensions to the total enrollment during the year.
Grade Retention Rate	The proportion of students required to repeat the grade in which they were enrolled the previous year.
Annual Drop-Out Rate	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.
Transfer Rate	The proportion of students who transfer out of the district in a given year.
Outcomes: Achievement	
MCAS Pass Rates in Math and ELA	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

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 Cape Verdean Creole Speakers

In AY2003, the year of the passage of Question 2, there were 1,718 native Cape Verdean Creole speakers enrolled in Boston Public Schools, the fifth largest non-English language group. In this report we trace the identification of limited English proficiency among native speakers of Cape Verdean Creole from AY2003 to AY2006 and find that their numbers declined. We analyze their enrollment in programs for English Learners, finding that after experiencing a decline for two years, the percentage of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers enrolling in such programs increased by AY2006, surpassing the AY2003 level. We compare engagement indicators for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in EL and general education programs, including attendance, suspensions, and high school drop-out rates, and we find that native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in programs for ELs experienced an increase in their drop-out rate. We examine MCAS results in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs and find both improvements and declines in pass rates during this period.

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

1. Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in the Boston Public Schools

Among Boston’s students, native Cape Verdean Creole speakers¹ are part of the trend of declining enrollments: in the four years of observation the enrollment of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers declined from 1,718 in AY2003 to 1,407 in AY2006 (Table 1). Their proportion within BPS enrollments has also declined, from 2.7% in AY2003 to 2.4% in AY2006, the last year of our observation.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	63,777	61,652	59,608	59,211
Total Enrollment of Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	1,718	1,546	1,437	1,407
Native Speakers of Cape Verdean Creole as a Percentage of Total BPS Enrollment	2.7%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%

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

TABLE 2. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE CAPE VERDEAN CREOLE SPEAKERS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2006

Selected Characteristics	All BPS	Students in Programs for ELs	Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs	Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in General Education
Enrollment	59,211	8,847	1,407 ¹	623	736
LEP Designation	16.4%	100%	47.7%	100%	0%
Gender: % male	51.2%	53.4%	51.1%	52.2%	50.3%
Poverty Status: % receiving free or reduced price lunch	74.9%	84.8%	75.1%	75.6%	73.8%

Note: (1) Includes 48 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 Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	31.1%	19.7%	49.2%

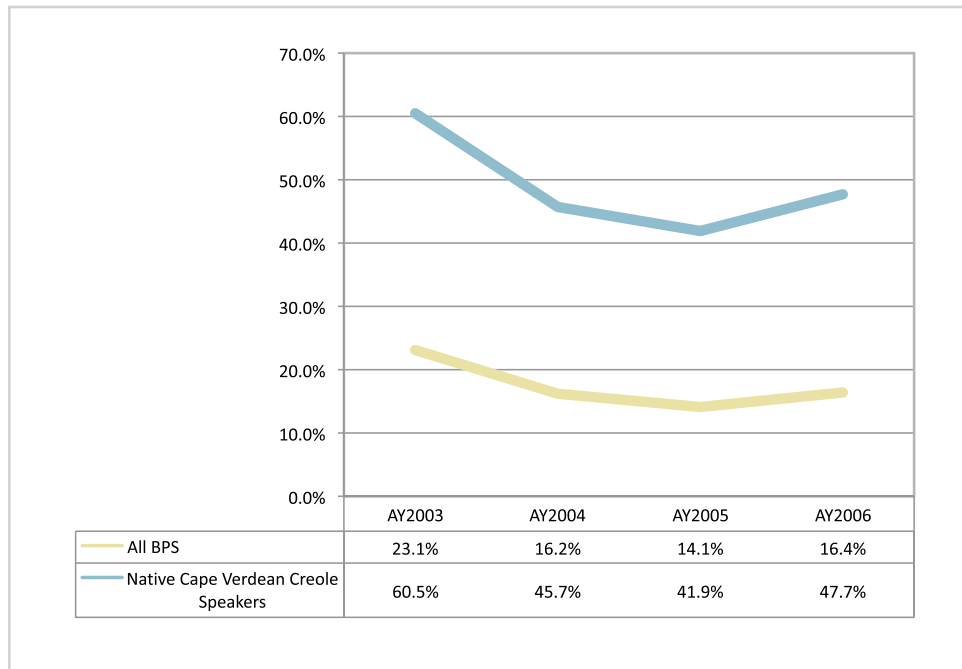
Genders are pretty evenly distributed among native Cape Verdean speakers (Table 2); just over 51% are male, a similar proportion as among the overall BPS population. Within the group of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers those attending programs for English Learners show a larger proportion of male students than those in general education. Among native Cape Verdean speakers, three out of four are receiving free or reduced lunch, a proxy for poverty status since income at this level is a criterion for acceptance into this school program². Of all native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, those attending programs for English Learners also show a larger proportion in poverty than their counterparts in general education programs. Finally, native Cape Verdean Creole speakers are over-represented in the older cohorts of students: a full 49.2% of native Cape Verdean Creole speaking students are in high school compared to 34% among the general BPS enrollment (Table 3).

2. The Identification of Limited English Proficiency among Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers

In AY2006 just under half of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers (47.7%) were identified as having limited English proficiency; this was a much larger percentage than was found among the overall BPS population (Table 2). Still, it represented a sharp decline from AY2003, before the implementation of Question 2. The decline in the numbers of students identified as of limited English proficiency after the implementation of the changes required by Question 2 is one the main findings of this study of English Learners in Boston, where the total number of students designated as LEPs moved from a high of 14,737 students in AY2003 to a low of 8,458 in the subsequent two years, then underwent a modest recovery to 9,989 students in AY2006. The percentage of the BPS enrollment that these students represented also declined, from a high of 23.1% in AY2003 to a low of 14.1% in AY2005 and a partial recovery to 16.4% by AY2006 (Figure 1). This pattern repeats itself even more sharply among

native Cape Verdean Creole speakers. In AY2003, 60.5% of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers were identified as of limited English proficiency. This percentage declined to a low of 41.9% by AY2005, then recovered partially to 47.7% in AY2006.

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



In order to better describe the decline in identification of students of limited English proficiency through time, we calculated the rate of change in identification between AY2003 and each successive year. Table 4 shows the rate of change in identification of all LEPs in BPS and among native Cape Verdean Creole speaking LEPs. The identification of LEPs in the general BPS population decreased by 31.8% in the first year after the implementation of Question 2; by 2005, BPS showed 42.6% fewer students of limited English proficiency than in the baseline year. Even after the small recovery in AY2006, the whole period still showed a decrease of 32.2% from the baseline of AY2003. The decrease in identification experienced by native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in AY2004 and 2005 was slightly greater than that experienced by the overall district, but the recovery for this group of students was not as strong. It is important to note that this change took place in a context of substantial decreases in the numbers of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in BPS during this period; the decrease in the numbers of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers amounted to 22.1% over the four-year period.

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

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
BPS Students Designated as LEP	-31.8%	-42.6%	-32.2%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers Designated as LEP	-32.0%	-42.1%	-35.4%

3. Program Participation by Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers

This section presents findings on the participation of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in programs for English Learners and in special education programs. The data indicates that across time, participation in programs for ELs decreased, although it recuperated in the last year of observation. Meanwhile, the participation in special education, especially in substantially separate programs, increased.

3A. Participation in Programs for English Learners. The general pattern following the implementation of the changes required by Question 2 was a decline in the participation in programs for ELs followed by only a partial recovery in the last year of observation. Of all the groups examined in this study, native Cape Verdean Creole speakers were the only group that showed a different pattern. Among all native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, whose enrollments were declining³, the proportion of students in programs for ELs increased from 36.9% in AY2003 to 44.3% in AY2006. Among native Cape Verdean speakers who were designated as of limited English proficiency, the increase in enrollments was even larger, from 60.2% in AY2003 to 92.8% in AY2006.

This pattern is similar to the one observed in the identification of LEPs: a swift decline in the first two years after the implementation of SEI with a slight recovery in the last year of observation. In this case, the difference between the starting and the ending rate of participation was smaller. Table 5 shows the percentage change over time in the participation in EL programs for BPS students and for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers. At the end of the period, after experiencing the fourth-year recovery, there was a decline of 10.7% in the proportion of BPS students in programs for ELs in comparison to those present in AY2003. Among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, the decline was much more modest: the percentage of these students enrolled in programs for ELs was only 1.7% lower in AY2006 than in AY2003.

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

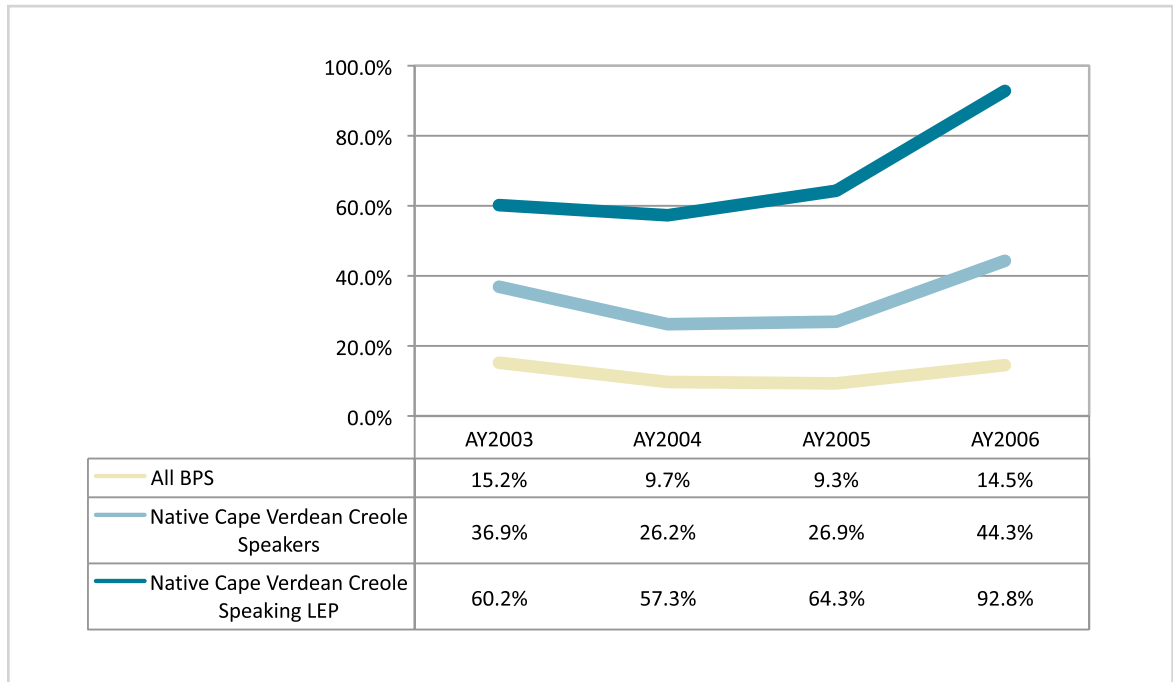


TABLE 5. RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENTS IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. SELECTED SUB-POPULATIONS. BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AY2003–2006

	AY2003–2004	AY2003–2005	AY2003–2006
BPS Students in Programs for ELs	-39.3%	-43.9%	-10.7%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs	-36.1%	-40.0%	-1.7%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speaking LEPs in Programs for ELs	-33.1%	-36.0%	3.0%

3B. Participation in Special Education Programs. For BPS students overall, the period between AY2003 and AY2006 was relatively stable in terms of enrollments in special education (SPED) programs. There were slight changes in the enrollments in mainstream programs (a decrease) and in enrollments 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 enrollments in substantially separate programs.

Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs (non-EL) showed a slight increase in enrollments in mainstream SPED programs and a decrease in enrollments in substantially separate programs, the opposite of what was observed among BPS students overall. Among native Cape Verdean speakers in programs for ELs, enrollments in both types of SPED programs increased in the period, almost quadrupling in the case of substantially separate SPED enrollment.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS				
Full or Partial Inclusion	10.5%	9.8%	10.4%	10.4%
Substantially Separate	7.9%	8.6%	8.7%	8.8%
Students in Programs for ELs				
Full or Partial Inclusion	6.6%	5.8%	6.2%	9.2%
Substantially Separate	4.8%	6.7%	6.8%	10.9%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in General Education Programs				
Full or Partial Inclusion	9.2%	9.1%	9.9%	9.6%
Substantially Separate	4.2%	7.7%	7.6%	2.9%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers in Programs for ELs				
Full or Partial Inclusion	3.5%	3.0%	4.1%	5.5%
Substantially Separate	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%	8.7%

4. The Engagement of Native Cape Verdean 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 four key indicators of attachment: attendance, out-of-school suspensions, grade retention, and the annual high school drop-out rate. These variables are key risk factors of dropping out, one of the main challenges facing BPS. Higher drop-out rates and younger dropouts are two of the key findings of this study of the impact of Question 2 on student outcomes.

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 schools.

The attendance rate of BPS students was unchanged during the period under study: across the four years, the attendance rate for BPS students was 95%. Students in programs for ELs showed a decline in the rate of attendance across the period – from 96.2% to 95.6%. Still, the rates for EL students were slightly higher than those of the general BPS population (Table 7).

Among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, the attendance rate throughout the period was higher among EL students than among those enrolled in general education programs. Cape Verdean EL students also had a higher rate of attendance than did EL students overall. The rate among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in EL programs was sustained during the four years of observation; the rate for students in general education programs declined slightly during the same period.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	95.2%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Students in Programs for ELs	96.2%	96.1%	95.8%	95.6%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers				
In Programs for ELs	96.7%	96.7%	96.6%	96.7%
In General Education Programs	96.1%	96.1%	95.6%	95.0%

4B. Out-of-School Suspensions. There are two types of suspensions reported by school district: in-school and out-of-school. An in-school suspension constitutes the removal of a student from his/her class and placement in a separate setting within the school such as a detention room for a specific length of time for disciplinary reasons. In an out-of-school suspension, the student is removed from the school for the period of the suspension (typically one to three days), and is also unable to participate in any after-school-sponsored activity such as a sports team or student club⁴. In this section, we report the out-of-school suspension rate, which represents the ratio of suspensions to the total enrollment during the year⁵. Out-of-school suspension is a strong disciplinary action that separates the student from the school. Some research associates suspension with increased risk of low academic achievement, of dropping out of school, and of involvement with the juvenile justice system (Ali & Dufresne, 2008).

The rate of out-of-school suspensions for all BPS students declined during the period of observation. That was true also for students in the EL programs, including the native Cape

Verdean Creole speakers (Table 8). The same pattern was true for Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs.

The rates of out-of-school suspension were substantially higher among Cape Verdean students in general education programs than among Cape Verdean students in EL programs: in AY2005, for example, Native Cape Verdean students in general education programs had a suspension rate of 9.2% while their counterparts in programs for ELs experienced only a 3.6% rate of suspensions. Over the four-year period, both groups of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers experienced a decline in their rates of suspensions. The out-of-school suspension rates for native Cape Verdean speakers in programs for ELs were the second highest out of the five native language groups (Haitian Creole had the highest). Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs also had some of the highest out-of-school suspension rates as compared to the other native language groups considered here.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	7.6%	7.1%	6.7%	6.6%
Students in Programs for ELs	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers				
In Programs for ELs	4.6%	4.9%	3.6%	4.5%
In General Education Programs	8.0%	11.1%	9.2%	7.3%

4C. Grade Retention. This section reports on the proportion of students retained in the same grade for an additional school year. Retention in grade, though not common, is more typically used for students in elementary grades. Increasingly, however, there is evidence that students are being retained (or “kept back”) in older grades as well, and that those students typically have a higher risk of dropping out of school and of achieving lower 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 programs for ELs was even higher, and it increased notably 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 Cape Verdean Creole speakers also showed the highest rates when compared to the overall BPS population (Table 9) and students from the other language groups considered here. The rate of retention for native Cape Verdean speakers, both in general education programs and in programs for ELs, increased during this period. This was particularly salient among students in programs for ELs, whose grade retention rate increased from 14.3% in 2004 to 20.1% in 2006.

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 Cape Verdean Creole Speakers			
In Programs for ELs	14.3%	17.0%	20.1%
In General Education Programs	8.3%	9.9%	9.4%

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.)

Some of the most salient findings of this study of English Learners in Boston concern the impact of the programmatic changes on the drop-out rate of students in programs for ELs and on the grades in which this school desertion is taking place. With the data available we are able to explore the increase in the drop-out rate across the four years of observation and across BPS sub-groups. But we are able to present drop-out data only for high school students from the native language groups.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	7.7%	5.3%	8.2%	10.9%
Students in General Education Programs	8.4%	5.2%	8.1%	10.7%
Students in Programs for ELs	6.3%	6.1%	9.1%	12.0%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers				
In Programs for ELs	7.5%	7.8%	8.1%	10.7%
In General Education Programs	9.1%	7.2%	7.9%	9.2%

Table 10 presents the annual high school drop-out rate for several BPS sub-groups. In all cases, the drop-out rate was higher in AY2006 than in AY2003. The sharpest rise took place among students in programs for English Learners, where the rate nearly doubled in the four years. Students in programs for ELs in the baseline year (AY2003) showed drop-out rates that were lower than for the overall BPS population and also lower than for students in the BPS general education programs. This was reversed in the first year of implementing Question 2, and the new pattern generally held through the end of the observation period (AY2006).

Comparing the annual high school drop-out rates of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs and programs for ELs shows a rise in the rate for both, but a much stronger increase (from 7.5% to 10.7%) among students in EL programs. Cape Verdean students in EL programs showed an improvement in relation to the drop-out rate of other students in EL. In AY2003 their drop-out rates were higher than those of the overall EL program enrollment; this reversed by AY2006. The same pattern was evident in the comparison between native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs and the overall enrollment in these programs.

5. MCAS Outcomes for Native Cape Verdean 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 general education programs, for all native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, and for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education. The MCAS results for language subgroups (other than Spanish speakers) in programs for ELs are not reliable because of the small number of test-takers during the period of observation.

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 all native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs

declined in ELA in the years following the passage of Question 2, with partial recovery in AY2006 (Table 11). In Math, native Cape Verdean Creole speakers also improved their pass rates and although they experienced some decline, their pass rates in AY2006 surpassed those of AY2003, the baseline year.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
ELA				
All BPS	73.3%	77.5%	74.1%	73.2%
Students in General Education Programs	77.5%	79.3%	76.3%	77.8%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	67.8%	67.1%	74.2%	53.5%
In General Education Programs	83.9%	72.7%	81.0%	78.9%
Math				
All BPS	63.2%	70.1%	68.5%	73.7%
Students in General Education Programs	65.0%	71.3%	70.0%	76.6%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	62.2%	67.1%	71.2%	69.0%
In General Education Programs	75.8%	63.6%	72.4%	89.5%

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 Cape Verdean Creole speakers were substantially lower than for BPS 8th grade students overall. Among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education, scores declined in the first two years of the implementation of the new programs but recovered by AY2006 (Table 12).

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
All BPS	48.1%	54.0%	51.6%	53.4%
Students in General Education Programs	50.9%	55.1%	53.2%	55.8%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	36.6%	43.3%	34.0%	36.0%
In General Education Programs	44.7%	42.5%	38.4%	46.6%

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. Among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers, ELA pass rates declined after the implementation of Question 2 but then recovered by AY2006, improving slightly over AY2003 baseline values. In Math, however, these students experienced a sharp decline in pass rates over the four years of observation. Similar patterns show in the results for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs: there was substantial improvement in ELA pass rates over the four years and a decline in the Math pass rates over the same period.

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

	AY2003	AY2004	AY2005	AY2006
ELA				
All BPS	66.8%	65.9%	67.8%	77.4%
Students in General Education Programs	72.7%	72.3%	73.3%	85.2%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	57.1%	40.0%	48.7%	57.9%
In General Education Programs	68.6%	55.5%	59.0%	80.6%
Math				
All BPS	65.5%	68.7%	61.0%	67.8%
Students in General Education Programs	63.5%	69.5%	62.6%	71.7%
Native Cape Verdean Creole Speakers	66.7%	60.7%	54.4%	48.0%
In General Education Programs	62.2%	62.3%	56.4%	58.1%

6. Summary

The shift from Transitional Bilingual Education to Sheltered English Immersion, part of the implementation of Question 2 in Boston, affected native Cape Verdean Creole speakers. For example, a larger percentage of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers are now enrolled in SPED programs, and grade retentions increased among students both in EL and in general education programs. The annual drop-out rate also increased most significantly among native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in programs for ELs. Below we summarize the main findings:

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 Cape Verdean Creole speaking LEPs identified.
- In the first year of the implementation of SEI, there was also a distinct decline in the number of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers enrolled in programs for ELs, but their rate of participation in programs for ELs increased to the point that it surpassed their participation in programs for ELs under TBE.
- During the period between AY2003 and AY2006, native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in programs for ELs experienced an increased placement in SPED. The rate of their placement in substantially separate classrooms quadrupled during the period.

In terms of engagement in schooling:

- Native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs
 - o experienced a decline in attendance and an increase in grade retention, both associated with high drop-out rates. They also experienced a slight decrease in suspensions.
 - o experienced high school drop-out rates that declined once the Question 2 program changes were implemented but recovered to just above the baseline rate by the end of the study period.
- Native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in programs for English Learners
 - o experienced stable attendance rates and a slight decrease in their out-of-school suspension rates. But their grade retention rate increased substantially through the period.
 - o experienced a high school drop-out rate that rose from 7.5% in AY2003 to 10.7% in AY2006.

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

In terms of academic achievement:

- Among 4th grade test-takers
 - o MCAS pass rates in ELA declined both for all native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in BPS and for those in general education programs.
 - o MCAS pass rates in Math improved for both groups.
- Among 8th grade test-takers
 - o MCAS pass rates in Math improved for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs and declined slightly among the overall population of native Cape Verdean Creole speakers.
- Among 10th grade test-takers
 - o MCAS pass rates in ELA improved substantially for native Cape Verdean Creole speakers in general education programs.
 - o MCAS pass rates in Math declined for both groups.

Notes

- ¹ Due to limitations of the data, we are not able to report on how many, if any, students of Cape Verdean background are enrolled in BPS and coded as native English speakers rather than native speakers of Cape Verdean Creole. Cape Verdean students and students of Cape Verdean 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.
- ² 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.
- ³ 1,718 students in AY2003; 1,546 in AY2004; 1,437 in AY2005; 1,407 in AY2006.
- ⁴ For full definitions of in-school and out-of-school suspension, refer to MDESE (2008).
- ⁵ 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

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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