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### Latino Students in Lawrence: An Educational Profile

Lorna Rivera

University of Massachusetts Boston, [lorna.rivera@umb.edu](mailto:lorna.rivera@umb.edu)

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### Now Available Second in Series of Fact Sheets on Education in Massachusetts

With financial support from the National Council of La Raza, the Gastón Institute is developing "Education Profiles" of sixteen Massachusetts public school districts with the highest Latino student enrollments: Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Fitchburg, Framingham, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Salem, Somerville, Springfield, and Worcester. The education profiles present basic data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education, including information on student enrollment, MCAS results, dropout rates, and student aspirations. We hope this information will be used by students, parents, educators, and policymakers to make informed decisions and improve public education for Latino students in Massachusetts.

— Lorna Rivera, Ph.D.,  
Research Associate

## Latino Students in Lawrence: An Educational Profile

### Enrollment

The Lawrence public schools have the highest proportion of Latino student enrollment in the state, with Latinos accounting for 81% of students, compared with 10% statewide (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Lawrence Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2000

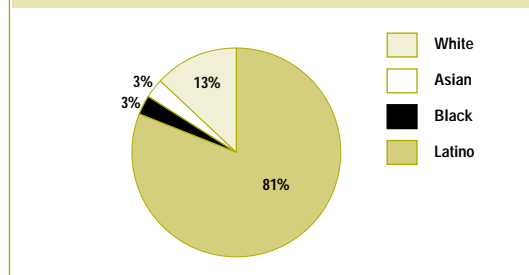
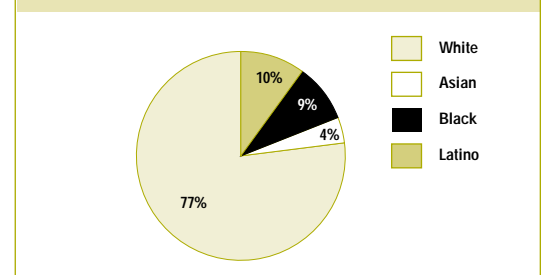


Figure 2. Massachusetts Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2000



Other facts about Latino students in Lawrence:

- About 8 out of 10 students in the Lawrence public schools are Latino.
- 26% of Lawrence public school students are enrolled in Limited English Proficiency (LEP) classes, compared with the statewide average of 5%.
- 77% of Lawrence public school students are eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch.

### Achievement

In 1998, Massachusetts adopted the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) to assess student learning in English language arts, math, science and technology, and history and social science. The Massachusetts Department of Education reports MCAS results using the four categories of advanced, proficient, needs improvement, and failing. In 2001, all students in the 10th grade must score above failing in English language arts and math to graduate from high school in 2003, making it a crucial year. Tenth-grade Latino students have the lowest rates of passing in all subject areas (see Figures 3, 4, 5) and have consistently scored poorly on the math portion of the test since it was first administered in 1998, with passing scores ranging from 9% to 19% (see Figure 6).

Figure 3. Lawrence Public Schools Grade 4 MCAS Results By Race, 2000 (Percent Passing<sup>a</sup>)

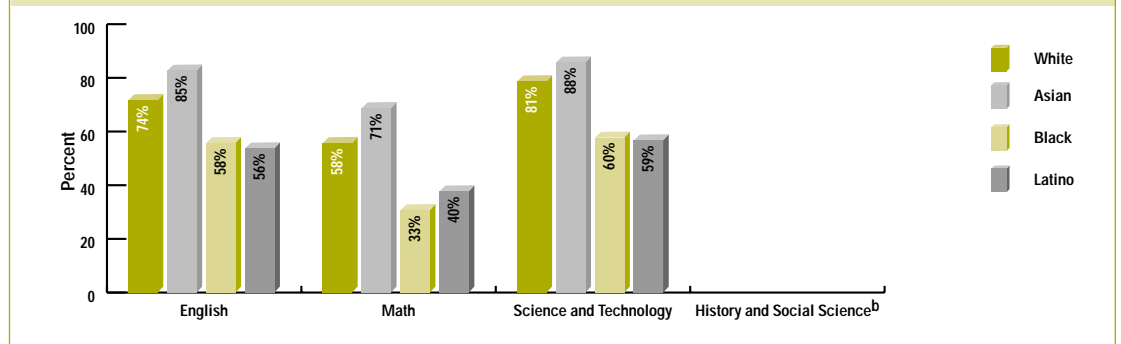


Figure 4. Lawrence Public Schools Grade 8 MCAS Results By Race, 2000 (Percent Passing<sup>a</sup>)

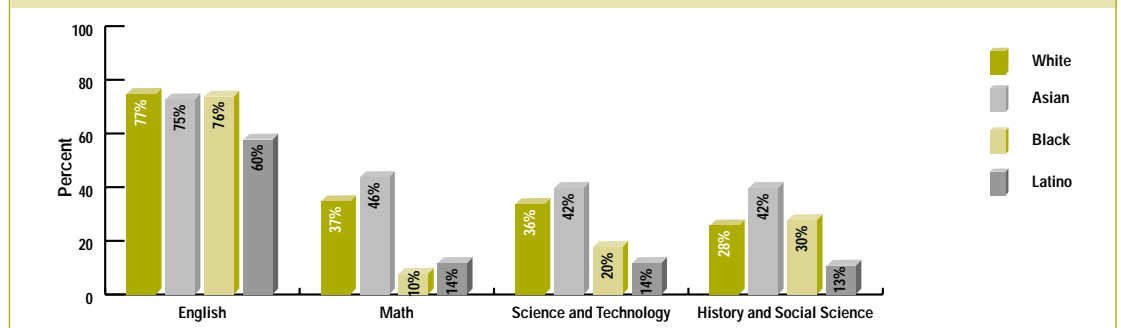
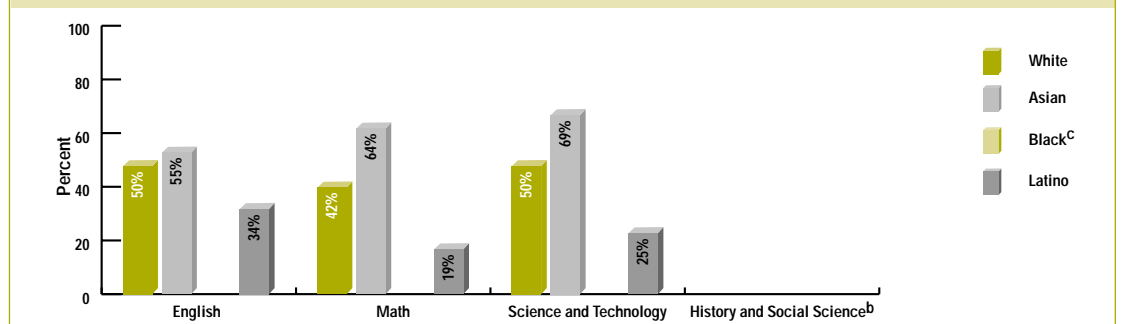


Figure 5. Lawrence Public Schools Grade 10 MCAS Results By Race, 2000 (Percent Passing<sup>a</sup>)



#### Source of MCAS Results pages 6 and 7:

Massachusetts Department of Education, *MCAS Local School Districts Results by Race/Ethnicity, 1998, 1999, 2000.*

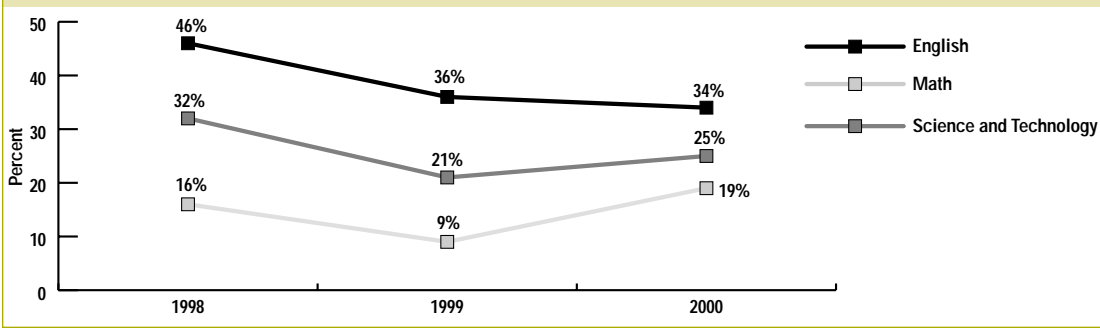
#### Notes

- <sup>a</sup>Percent passing indicates combined percent of advanced, proficient and needs improvement.
- <sup>b</sup>The history and social science test is administered to 8th graders only.
- <sup>c</sup>Results not shown if fewer than 10 students were tested.





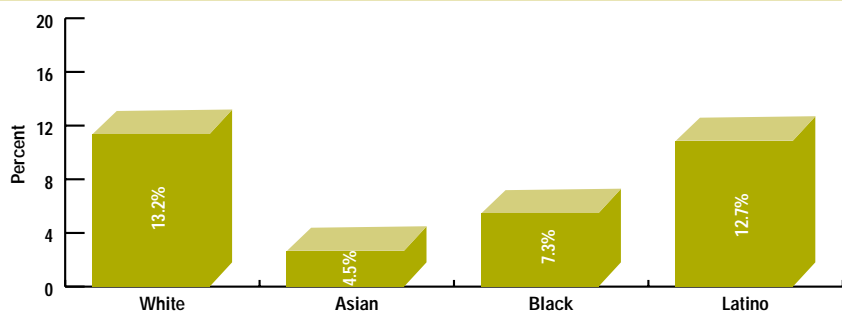
**Figure 6.** Grade 10, Percent Passing, Latino Students in Lawrence, 1998, 1999, 2000



**Student Dropout Rates**

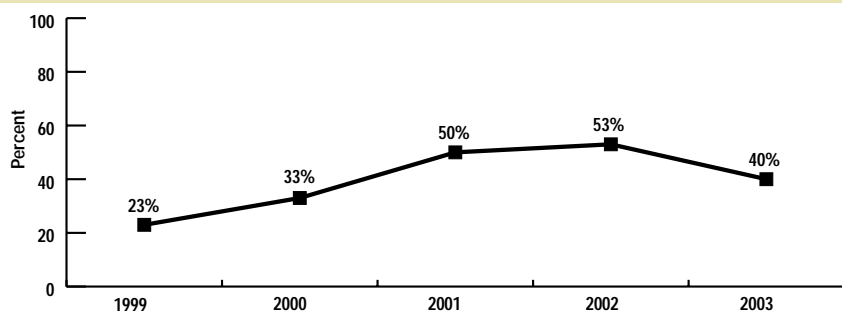
In 1999, 19.2% of Lawrence students dropped out compared with 3.6% of students statewide. Of those students who dropped out, 12% were Latino. Statewide, the Latino dropout rate decreased from 9.8% in 1998-1999 to 8.2% in 1999-2000. However, the Latino dropout rate is still the highest among all racial/ethnic groups in the Massachusetts Public Schools.

**Figure 7.** Annual Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Lawrence, 1999-2000



Note: The Department of Education determines the projected four-year dropout rate by calculating the cumulative effect of four years of dropping out.

**Figure 8.** Projected Four-Year Dropout Rates in Lawrence (all students)

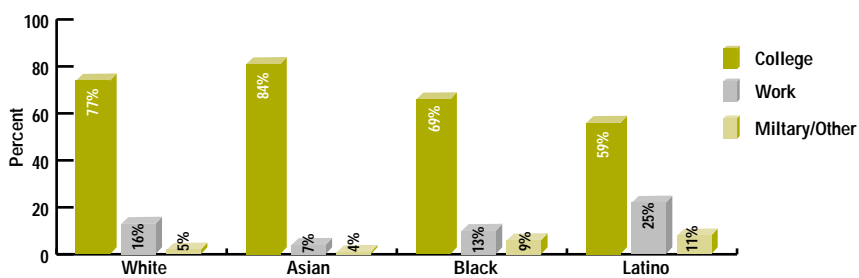


Note: Information on 2000-2001 dropout rates by race/ethnicity was not available as of the date of this publication.

**Student Aspirations**

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, the majority of public school students, regardless of racial and ethnic background, aspire to go to college. In 1999, 59% of Latino students graduating from high school in Massachusetts expressed interest in going to college. Although the specific figures for Latino students in Lawrence are not yet available, 74% of all students in Lawrence indicated they wanted to attend college.

**Figure 9.** Plans of High School Graduates 1999 (by percent)



Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ata/hsg/99/default.html>

**Conclusion**

As we go to press with this publication, the 2001 MCAS scores are being released. In 2001, all 10th graders must pass the MCAS in order to graduate. Over the past three years of MCAS implementation most 10th-grade Latino students in Lawrence have not passed the MCAS. The high MCAS failure rates may have a negative impact on the dropout rates for Latino students in Lawrence. Indeed, the time is ripe for educators, parents, and community leaders to better understand and address the needs of Latino students in Lawrence. ▲

**Resources**

**City of Lawrence**  
Official website:  
<http://www.ci.lawrence.ma.us>

**City of Lawrence School Department**  
255 Essex Street  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
(978) 975-5905

**MCAS Parent Resource Center**  
c/o Lawrence Public Schools Parent Information Center  
226 Essex Street  
Lawrence, MA  
(978) 975-2768

**Massachusetts Advocacy Center**  
100 Boylston Street, Suite 200  
Boston, MA 02116  
(617) 357-8431

**Lawrence Adult Learning Center**  
243 South Broadway Street  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
(978) 975-5956

**Northern Essex Community College**  
45 Franklin Street  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
(978) 738-7000

For information about a particular school, visit the following websites:

**Massachusetts Department of Education**  
Website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu>

**Lawrence Public Schools**  
Website:  
<http://www.vcni.com/lpschools/menu.htm>

**Source of dropout rates, figures 7 and 8:**

Massachusetts Department of Education, *Dropout Rates in Massachusetts Public Schools, 1999-2000*.

**Notes**

The annual dropout rate indicates how many students left school for reasons other than transferring to another school in the course of a year. Cohort dropout rates measure the four-year rate of school dropout in the group of children that begin the 9th grade in a given year.

