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Nicole Lavan

University of Massachusetts Boston

Miren Uriarte

University of Massachusetts Boston, miren.uriarte@umb.edu

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for
Latino Community Development
and Public Policy



Status of Latino Education in Massachusetts: A REPORT

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by Nicole Lavan and Miren Uriarte

About the Authors

Nicole Lavan is a Researcher at the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy and a Ph.D. candidate in Public Policy at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies.

Miren Uriarte is Director of the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy and Associate Professor of the College of Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts Boston.

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March 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The education of Latino¹ students in Massachusetts is at a crucial crossroads: either the educational outcomes that lag behind those of other students can become entrenched or marked improvement can begin. Currently, on nearly all measures of academic outcomes, Latino students have the lowest rankings. This is especially troubling, not only because of the implications of these outcomes for the life of these children, their community, and the Commonwealth as a whole, but also because they come after many years of sweeping educational reforms at both the state and federal levels – reforms that focus on improving the educational measures and outcomes of “subgroups” including Latino students.

The state reform measure, known as the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA), has been in place for almost 15 years. Among the major provisions of MERA are greater and more equitable funding of schools, accountability for student learning, and statewide standards for students, educators, schools, and districts. The accountability provisions of MERA center on “clear, concise, and measurable statewide standards for students and schools” and on statewide student testing through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). MERA introduced a strong focus on testing as a measure of achievement with substantial implications for students, particularly high school students who do not pass the high-stakes graduation test offered in the 10th grade.

The federal reform effort, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with which the state’s education reform must comply, has been in place for about five years. NCLB is aimed at improving the performance of public schools and at closing the achievement gap by increasing the standards and accountability for states, districts, and schools as well as increasing parental flexibility and choice of schools. As in MERA, the cornerstone of NCLB is testing. Yearly standardized testing of students (as a whole and in subgroups) is used to assess whether schools and districts are meeting standards quickly enough to allow them to have all their students reach proficiency by 2013–2014. Schools are assessed as meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) or in need of some remedial action.

At this point in time, both the federal and the state reforms are in flux, which provides a compelling argument for reviewing the outcomes of students in Massachusetts schools. The federal NCLB is up for reauthorization this year, and although its basic premise is not expected to change, a number of alterations have been introduced², most of which focus on the way schools are rated. Some propose to give the schools more leeway while keeping them accountable – for example, giving them more time to achieve test standards and treating smaller schools with low-achieving students less harshly³. At the state level, the advent of a new, Democratic administration emphasizing the key role of education in propelling the state’s economic growth also augurs change. Currently, the Commonwealth Readiness Project and its several task forces examine possibilities for change in the way education is delivered in Massachusetts⁴. With a commitment to early childhood education, a vision of an integrated K–16 system, and a goal of retaining students through high school and into college, the Readiness Project brings Massachusetts to the portal of a new wave of reform.

Educational reform has brought great improvements in educational outcomes for Massachusetts students. In the past decade, achievement scores have risen for all students in Massachusetts; today the Commonwealth ranks first among all states in the overall National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores⁵. However, it also ranks among the five states with the widest “gap” in achievement between white and Latino students in both NAEP Math and Reading⁶. These gaps in achievement show that the benefits are not reaching all children. Latinos especially, but also African American children, are often left behind in a state with excellent academic institutions. Examining the status of the most vulnerable of Massachusetts’ students is both timely and important.

The Gastón Institute’s 2000 report, *Latino Students and the Massachusetts Public Schools*, provided a historical context of Latino students in Massachusetts, their enrollment in the Commonwealth’s schools, and their educational outcomes⁷. With MCAS barely in place, it also provided an initial quantitative understanding of the gaps in achievement by race in Massachusetts. The present report, *The Status of Latino Education in Massachusetts*, is a follow-up to the 2000 report. It uses more mature indicators of achievement and new ways to compare the educational performance by different racial-ethnic groups, as required by NCLB. After depicting the growth of Latino enrollments in Massachusetts, the report analyzes the engagement of Latino students in Massachusetts schools, using Massachusetts Department of Education data on key indicators. We conclude that this engagement is tenuous, at best, and is characterized by low attendance, high dropout rates, and the lowest graduation rates in the state.

This analysis is followed by a focus on achievement and specifically, the achievement gap between Latino students and others. We begin by presenting the trends in Latino achievement in the MCAS between 2001 and 2006, followed by comparisons with the achievement of other students. We then examine the achievement gap between Latino and other students and Latino and white students in Massachusetts using the Department of Education’s Comprehensive Performance Index (CPI). Massachusetts uses the CPI, a 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-alternative tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together and the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which represents a district’s, school’s, or subgroup’s CPI for the subject and student group. CPIs are generated separately for ELA and Math and at all levels – state, district, school, and student group⁸. As such, the CPI uses the MCAS results to provide a precise comparison between subgroups and over time, which allows us to make a direct comparison between Latino students and other students in assessing the achievement gap.

GROWTH AND PATTERN OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS FOR LATINO STUDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS

In academic year 2006–2007, Massachusetts enrolled 968,661 students in its 389 public school districts and 59 charter schools⁹. This number represented a decline of .55% (or about 5,300 children) since 2002, due primarily to a decline in white and black enrollments. Bucking this trend is the enrollment of Latino children, which increased by 22.7% (or by 23,836 children) in the same period¹⁰. Latino children, who now make up 13.3% of the state's public school enrollment, are the fastest growing group of enrollees. The dynamic of Latino enrollments closely mirrors that of the Latino population of the state, which grew from 275,859 persons in 1990 to 427,340 in 2000¹¹. Population projections by the US Census, estimate that Latinos in Massachusetts will grow by 69% by 2015, while the population of the state grows by only 3.5%, guaranteeing that in years to come Latinos will be even more relevant to the life of educational institutions in the state than they are today¹².

An important factor in the growing Latino enrollments has been the immigration of Latino groups into the state. Massachusetts Latinos are primarily Puerto Rican (46.5% of Latinos are from this group), but persons from Latin America, mainly from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Colombia, and Mexico are increasingly represented in the population¹³. These are immigrants of relatively recent arrival to the state. Over 50 percent of Colombians, Mexicans, and Salvadorans had been in the U.S. for less than ten years in 2000¹⁴. The large immigrant component in the Latino population reflects the overall pattern for the state: according to the U.S. Census, the immigrant population of Massachusetts grew by 35 percent between 1990 and 2000¹⁵.

The large presence of immigrants has led to increases in the number of ELLs (English language learners) enrolled in Massachusetts schools. In 2004–2005, Massachusetts had 49,923 ELLs enrolled, 5.1% of all Massachusetts public and charter school students. Latino ELLs are over half (54.6%) of all ELLs in the state¹⁶. Among Latino children enrolled in Massachusetts schools, 23.6% are ELLs.

Another factor that contributes to Latino enrollments is the youth of the Latino population. The median age of the Latino population in Massachusetts is 24.7 years compared to 36.6 years for the population of the state as a whole. Among Latinos, children 18 years and under account for 36.3% of the population. This compares to 23.6% among the population of the state as a whole. Of the Puerto Rican population, the largest of all Latino groups in the state, 40.2% are children under 18¹⁷.

Patterns of enrollments mirror closely the patterns of settlement of Latinos in Massachusetts. For many decades, the settlement pattern of Latinos in Massachusetts resembled that of other Latinos in the East Coast: large settlements concentrated in urban areas – in this case, Boston and Springfield. But in the last 20 years, this pattern has changed, favoring settlement in smaller cities¹⁸. The area of highest Latino concentration runs along the Eastern part of the state, in a corridor that goes from Boston to Lawrence. A second area of settlement is in the Western part of the state near Springfield and Holyoke, and a more recent one moves along the Southeastern area of the state to the border with Rhode Island. This new settlement pattern has not been haphazard: Latinos are settling in areas where rents are low and low-skilled work is available. Holyoke, Lawrence, Chelsea, Springfield, New Bedford, Worcester, and Lynn – all areas of high Latino concentration – are among the 10 cities in Massachusetts with the highest individual poverty rates.

This settlement pattern leads to a pattern of enrollments that presents Boston and Springfield, the traditional areas of concentration, with the largest number of enrolled students. But the largest percentage of Latino enrollments can be found spread among the smaller cities of the state, such as Lawrence, Chelsea, Holyoke, and Lynn. Those smaller cities and their school districts are also the ones experiencing the most rapid change in the demographics of the student population.

TABLE 1. RANK ORDER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF LATINOS ENROLLED AND THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS THAT ARE LATINO, 2007

Number of Latinos Enrolled		Percent Latino	
State	128,993		
Boston	19,165	Lawrence	87.4%
Springfield	12,806	Chelsea	77.3%
Lawrence	10,592	Holyoke	74.6%
Worcester	7,931	Springfield	49.9%
Lynn	5,575	Lynn	42.4%
Holyoke	5,144	Fitchburg	37.6%
Chelsea	4,205	Southbridge	36.8%
New Bedford	3,259	Boston	35.2%
Lowell	3,130	Worcester	34.3%
Brockton	2,213	Salem	31.9%
		State	13.3%

Source: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/enrollmentbyracegender.aspx?mode=&orderBy=&year=2007&filterBy=>

A TENUOUS ENGAGEMENT

The educational experience of students is multifaceted and interwoven and encompasses more than just achievement. Other important aspects of the educational experience include daily participation in school (which fosters paying attention in class, learning material, and completing homework) and students' feelings about their school environment (which cultivates students' sense of belonging in the school). It is important to broaden the view of education beyond just achievement to encompass engagement – not only because they are intertwined, but also because it is important to understand the participation of Latino students in school and to gauge their feelings of comfort and belonging in academic institutions. Thus, engagement can be broadly conceived as the extent to which students feel attached to, and participate in, school¹⁹.

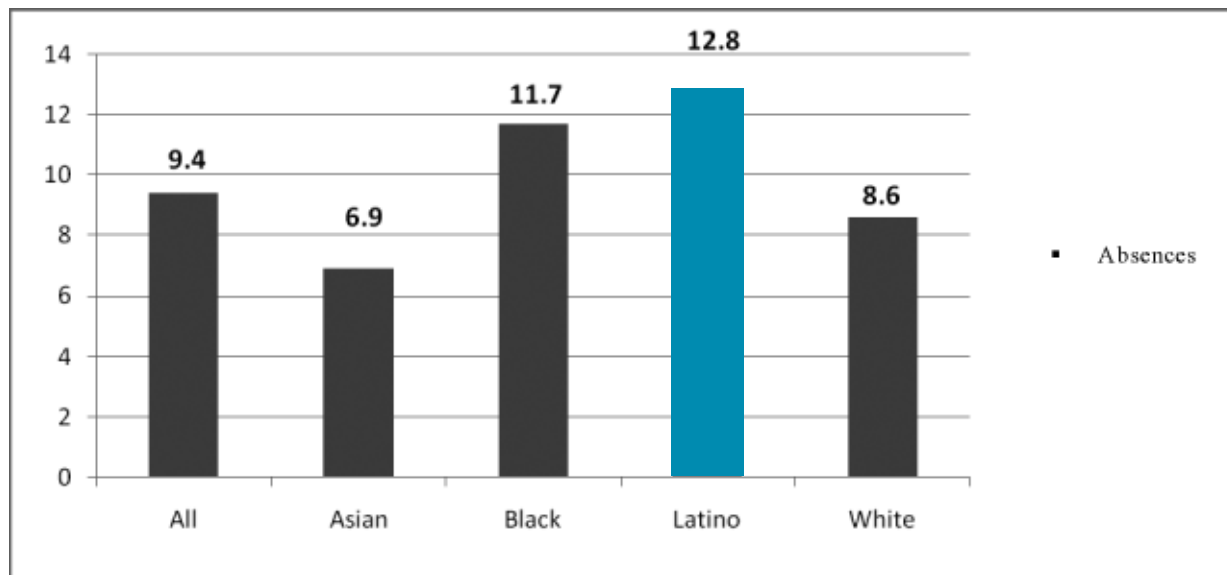
The Massachusetts Department of Education provides several indicators of student engagement including attendance, absence, and suspension rates as well as dropout and graduation rates. These data gauge the extent to which students are connected to or engaged in school. In 2005–2006, Latino students had the worst indicator results in four of the five categories documented by the Department of Education.

1. Low Rates of Attendance

Attendance is often used to measure engagement, because the most fundamental component of engagement is being present. There are important correlations between attendance and academic success. Studies have indicated that students with better attendance records perform better on standardized tests. Also, schools with higher rates of daily attendance generally have students who perform better on achievement tests than schools with lower rates of daily attendance. Furthermore, a high rate of absenteeism correlates strongly with dropping out of school. High levels of absenteeism can be attributed to numerous factors including illness or disability, comfort level in school (including interactions with teachers, staff, and peers), academic performance in school, and family influence and obligations²⁰.

As depicted in Figure 1, Latino students missed the highest number of school days in 2005–2006. The average number of absences for Latino students was 12.78 days. Latino students missed about 3.5 more days of school than the average for all students (9.37 days). Black students had the second highest number of absences at 11.65 days, while Asian students (6.94 days) and white students (8.61 days) were below the average.

FIGURE 1. AVERAGE NUMBER OF ABSENCES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2005-2006



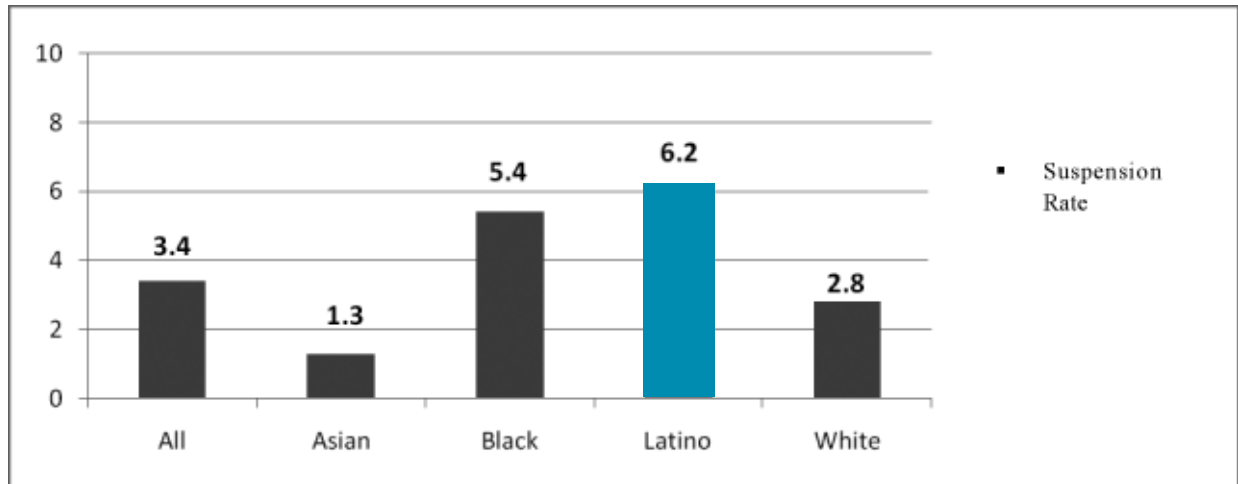
Source: MA DOE (Requested Data: Indicators by race/ethnicity, 2007)

2. Over-Representation in Suspensions

School suspensions can be perceived as an action that pushes students away from school and thus lessens students' engagement with school. Suspension from school is a disciplinary sanction that requires students to be excluded from the classroom (in-school suspension) or from the school (out-of-school suspension). It is a common disciplinary tool used by schools against children who are deemed to have "problem behaviors." Either an in-school or out-of-school suspension may be imposed. A suspension may be for 3 days, 10 days, or for a longer period of time. The use of suspensions and their duration are at the discretion of the principal. All Massachusetts school districts must write a school discipline code that lists offenses for which a student can be disciplined²¹. Out-of-school suspensions generally mandate that a student not be allowed on the school premises for the duration of the suspension²². By contrast, in-school suspension is an in-house program to which a student may be assigned for the duration of the suspension in lieu of out-of-school suspension. During in-school suspension, a student may continue instruction without interruption and special academic help can be provided as needed.

The in-school suspension rate is the percentage of enrolled students who received one or more in-school suspensions during the school year. Latino students had the highest in-school suspension rate in 2005-2006. As Figure 2 shows, the in-school suspension rate for Latino students was 6.2%. This rate is nearly twice as high as the average in-school suspension rate for all students (3.4%). Black students had the second highest in-school suspension rate at 5.4%. Asian students (1.3%) and white students (2.8%) were below the average.

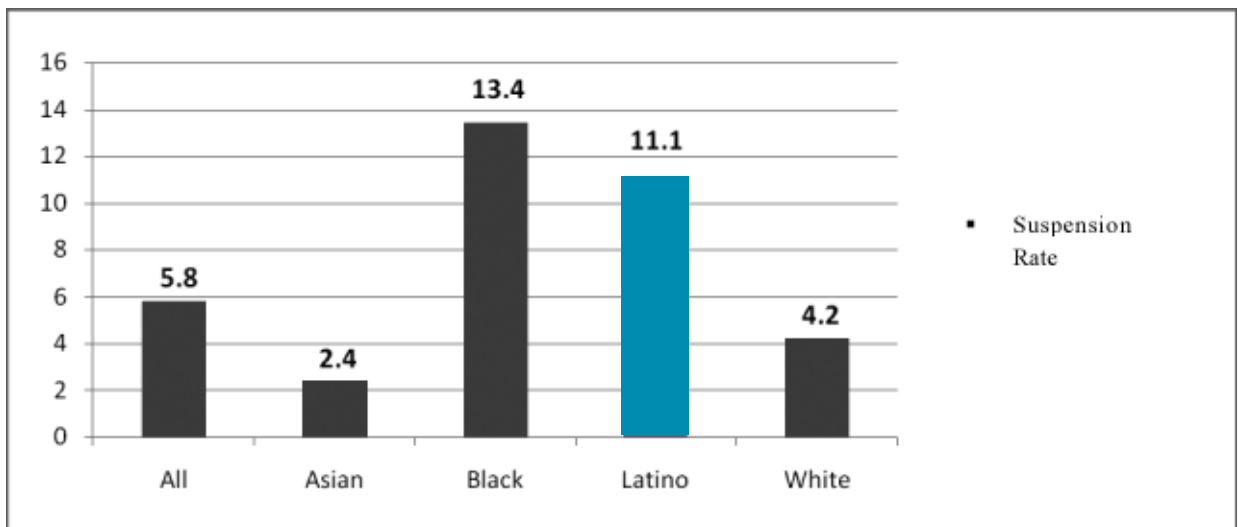
FIGURE 2. IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE (Requested Data: Indicators by race/ethnicity, 2007)

The out-of-school suspension rate is the percentage of enrolled students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions during the school year. Latino students, at 11.1%, had the second highest out-of-school suspension rate in 2005-2006. This rate is nearly twice as high as the average out-of-school suspension rate for all students (5.8%). Black students had the highest out-of-school suspension rate at 13.4%, while Asian students (2.4%) and white students (4.2%) were below the average.

FIGURE 3. OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE (Requested Data: Indicators by race/ethnicity, 2007)

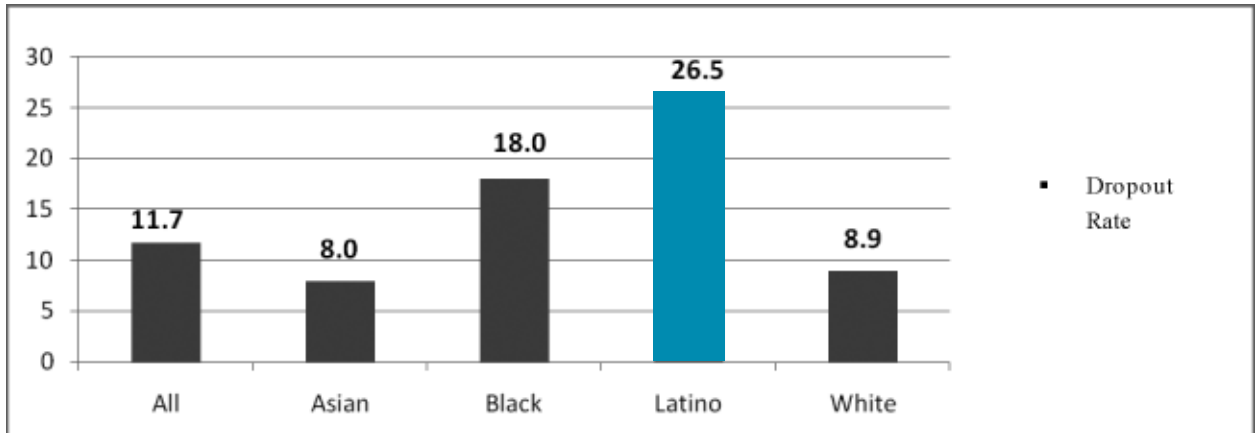
The pattern of high suspension rates for Black and Latino students in Massachusetts is consistent with the general pattern found in other states. Research indicates that blacks and Latinos, males, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities, or low levels of academic achievement are far more likely to be suspended. That is, students who are suspended are disproportionately black and Latino, male, and poor. Many of these students have attended struggling schools that have not provided the services they need and these students have experienced considerable academic difficulties and alienation from school. Thus, these students are already some of the most socially and academically marginalized students and suspending them only serves to worsen these conditions²³. In addition, research shows that students who have been suspended, particularly multiple times, are more likely to change schools and are also much more likely to drop out of school²⁴. Earlier research on the connection between disciplinary procedures and dropout concludes that in too many school districts disciplinarians utilize suspension to get rid of students who are deemed “troublemakers.” The indicators that schools use in labeling students as “troublemakers” are the same factors that place students “at-risk” of dropping out, which leads to an inevitable cycle of suspended students dropping out²⁵. As the data in the next section show, Latinos and black students have the highest dropout rates.

3. High Dropout Rates

There are several methods for calculating and documenting dropout rates: the annual dropout rate, the four year cohort dropout rate, and the status drop out rate. The annual dropout rate is the percentage of students who drop out during a single year. This rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out over a one-year period by the October 1 Grade 9–12 enrollment. Dropouts are those students who dropped out of school between July 1 and June 30 of a given school year and who did not return to school, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1. The four-year cohort dropout rate measures the percentage of students entering 9th grade in a given year who leave school before graduating in the 12th grade. The status dropout rate shows how many dropouts there are within a population based on Census data. Thus, the annual dropout rate provides information about one particular school year and all students enrolled in high school in that year and can be helpful in comparing year-to-year trends. In comparison, the cohort dropout rate provides information about a particular group of students followed over the course of high school, which can be used to determine how likely it is that a freshman in a given school or district will drop out as well as to understand the scope of the dropout problem in a particular school or district. Finally, the status dropout rate can provide insight on the extent of the dropout situation in a community²⁶.

This report uses cohort dropout rate, in conjunction with graduation rates, to see what happens to a particular group – or cohort – of students upon entry to high school. Although there is concern that numerous Latino students drop out of school before they reach high school and thus are not captured by the cohort dropout rate, the cohort dropout rate will provide an outlook on the extent of Latinos leaving high school. Latino students had the highest 4-year cohort dropout rate for the class of 2006 at 26.5%. This rate is over twice the dropout rate for all students (11.7%). Black students had the second highest dropout rate at 18.0%. Asian students (8.0%) and white students (8.9%) had the lowest dropout rates

FIGURE 4. COHORT DROPOUT RATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2005-2006

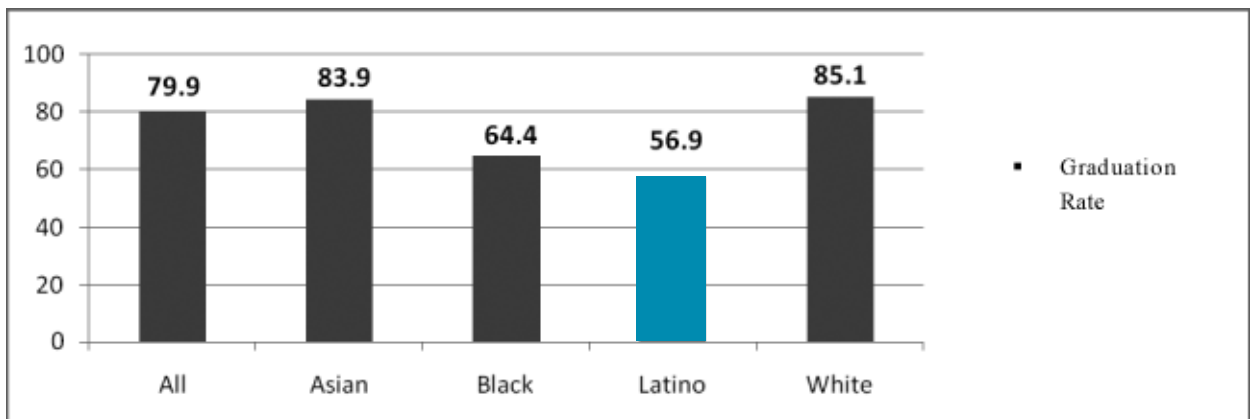


Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/gradrates.aspx>

4. Low Graduation Rates

The cohort graduation rate indicates the percentage of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma within 4 years. This statistic was developed by the Massachusetts DOE in the winter of 2007 and the first year of graduation rate data is 2005–2006. Latino students had the lowest graduation rate in 2005–2006 at 56.9% – fewer than 6 out of every 10 Latino students graduate on time in Massachusetts. Black students had the second lowest graduation rate at 64.4%. Asian students (83.9%) and white students (85.1%) had graduation rates above the graduation rate of all students (79.9%).

FIGURE 5. 4 YEAR GRADUATION RATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/gradrates.aspx>

It is important to note that the dropout rate and graduation rate calculation for any given year does not account for 100 percent of the students. For example, in 2005–2006, when adding the dropout rate for Latino students (26.5%) to the graduation rate for Latino students (56.9%) – the total is 83.4% – which leaves 16.6% of students who did not graduate or drop out. Most of these students are reported as still being in school (12.0%), with some students being considered “non-graduating completers” (3.0%). Non-graduating completers are students who earned the necessary credits to obtain a diploma, but have not passed both sections of the 10th grade MCAS.

Since many students take longer to graduate from high school, a 5 year graduation rate is often presented. Thus, this rate provides a graduation rate for those students (many of whom are students of color, students with special needs, and students who are English language learners) who require 5 years to graduate from high school. These figures are not yet available from the MA DOE, but they will be important to understanding how many Latino students are able to graduate from high school when given a 5th year to do so.

In summary, the engagement of Latino students with their education and their educational institutions is tenuous at best. Latinos had the worst engagement indicators for attendance, in-school suspension, dropout rates, and graduation rates, as well as the second worst out-of-school suspension rate. Thus, Latino students have a precarious engagement with school in which they miss a considerable amount of regular class instruction due to absence and suspension (both in-school and out-of-school) and they are more likely to drop out of school and not obtain a high school diploma.

PERSISTENTLY LOW ACHIEVEMENT

Both the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993 and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 have standardized testing as their main measure of achievement. In spite of the well-documented problems that result from the sole reliance on these measures, standardized testing is the only method for school systems to determine the achievement of students as a whole as well as subgroups of students (identified, by, e.g., race, income, disability or language proficiency)²⁷. For this reason, in this report, we will use standardized testing outcomes as the main measure of achievement.

In Massachusetts, the standardized test used is the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The purpose of the test is to identify individuals and schools needing attention in particular areas. Initially, MERA required that the MCAS be given to students in Grades 4, 8, and 10. By spring 2006, students were being tested in Reading (Grade 3), English Language Arts (Grades 4–8 and 10), Mathematics (Grades 3–8 and 10), and Science and Technology/Engineering (Grades 5 and 8). In addition, MERA mandates that all students, in order to receive a diploma, pass the state's tenth-grade test as well as meeting local district requirements²⁸. MCAS results are intended to evaluate how well students and schools are achieving the learning standards set by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The MCAS is divided into four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Warning/Failure. (Warning applies to Grades 3–8 and Failure applies to Grade 10.)

In conjunction with, MERA, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) governs school reform efforts from the federal level. NCLB is aimed at improving the performance of public schools and at closing the achievement gap by increasing the standards and accountability for states, districts, and schools as well as increasing parental flexibility and choice of schools. As in MERA, the cornerstone of NCLB is high-stakes testing. The primary goal of NCLB is that all students will achieve high academic standards, by attaining proficiency or better in both reading and mathematics by the 2013–2014 school year. In order to determine if schools and school districts are meeting the state standards quickly enough to allow them to have all of their students proficient on the academic standards by 2013–2014, adequate yearly progress (AYP) is measured each year for all students and the select subgroups through the use of standardized tests²⁹. In order to measure AYP, the Massachusetts Department of Education developed the CPI, a 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-alternative tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together and the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which represents a district's, school's, or subgroup's CPI for the subject and student group. It is through the scores on the CPI that the Massachusetts Department of Education is able to ascertain if districts, schools, and subgroups are making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

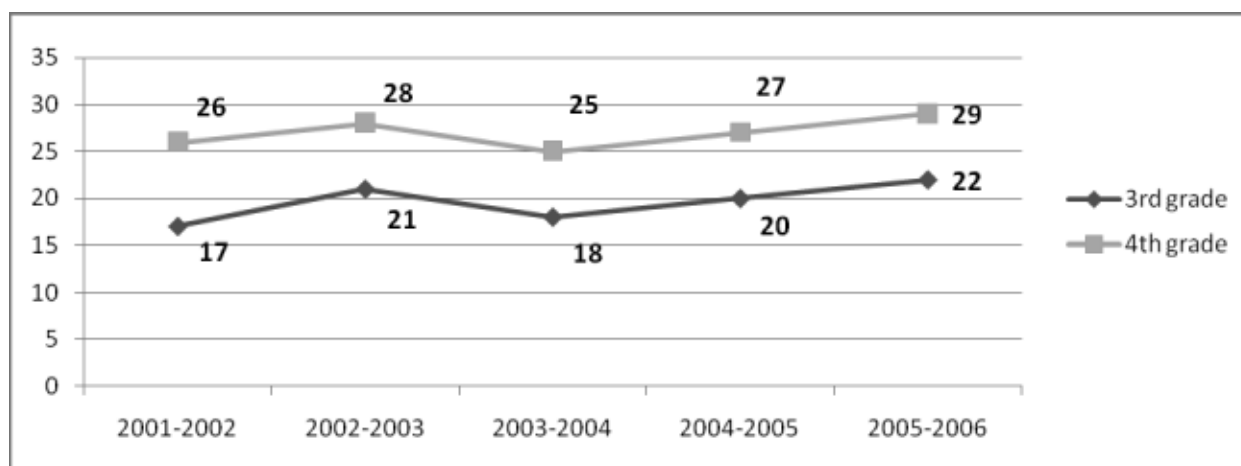
Thus, standardized tests are at the forefront of both MERA and NCLB. Although there are other ways to measure achievement – such as grades and percentage of students to attend college – the current focus on standardized tests has caused the MCAS to be the primary measure of outcome.

1. MCAS Outcomes in the Elementary School Grades (3rd, 4th, 5th grades)

Trend data for Latino students in the 3rd and 4th grade show a worsening in the percentage of those who scored in the Warning category on the ELA exam from 2001–2002 to 2005–2006. For 3rd graders, Warning scores increased by 5 percentage points – from 17% of Latino students scoring in the Warning category in 2001–2002 to 22% in 2005–2006. Fourth grade scores show a similar pattern, although the increase was smaller: Warning scores increased by from 26% in 2001–2002 to 29% in 2005–2006.

Massachusetts students began their math testing regime in the 4th grade. Trend data show that the percentage of Latino 4th graders scoring in the Warning range fluctuated, but was slightly better in 2005–2006 than in 2001–2002: 33% as opposed to 35% in the earlier year.

FIGURE 6. PERCENT OF 'WARNING' MCAS ELA SCORES FOR LATINOS FOR GRADES 3-4, 2002- 2006

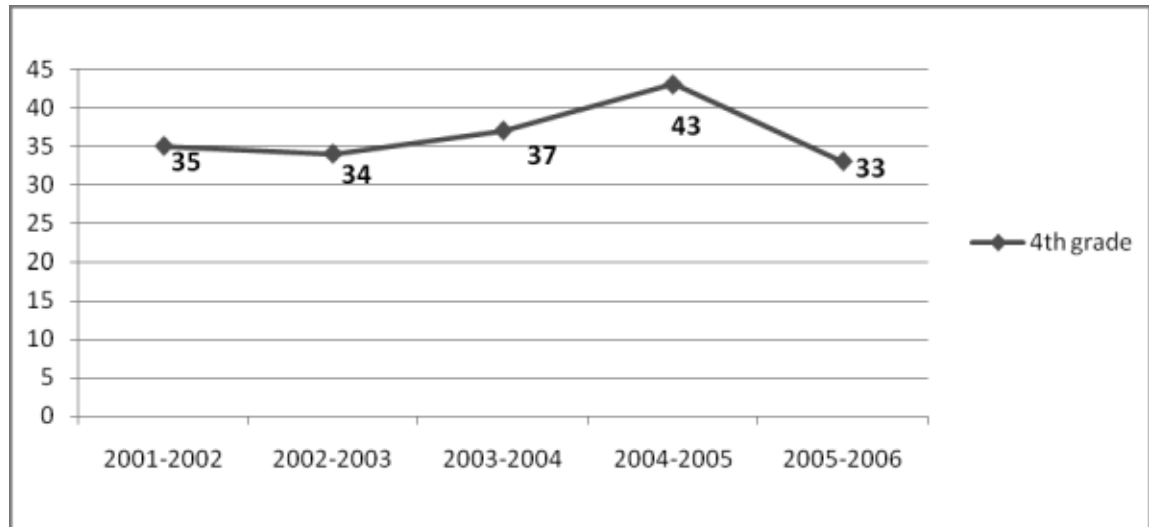


Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

Note: MCAS data provided by DOE is given in whole numbers; that is with no decimals.

Massachusetts students began their math testing regime in the 4th grade. Trend data show that Latino 4th graders scoring in the Warning range saw some improvement through time but ended in 2005-2006 several percentage points higher than their rankings in 2001-2002. The increase over time was 2 percentage points or 5.7%.

FIGURE 7. PERCENT OF 'WARNING' MCAS MATH SCORES FOR LATINOS FOR GRADE 4, 2002- 2006



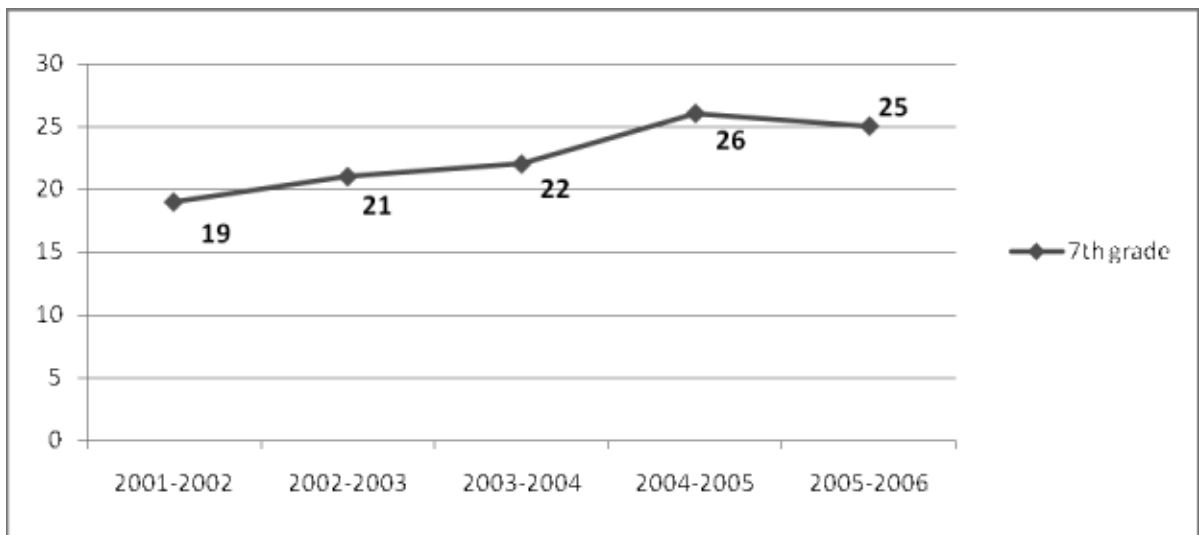
Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

2. MCAS Outcomes in the Middle School Grades (6th, 7th, and 8th grades)

The trend data for the percentage of Latino 7th graders who scored in the Warning category on the ELA portion of the MCAS show a pattern of sharply increasing rates of Warning scores, from 19% in 2001-2002 to 25% four years later.

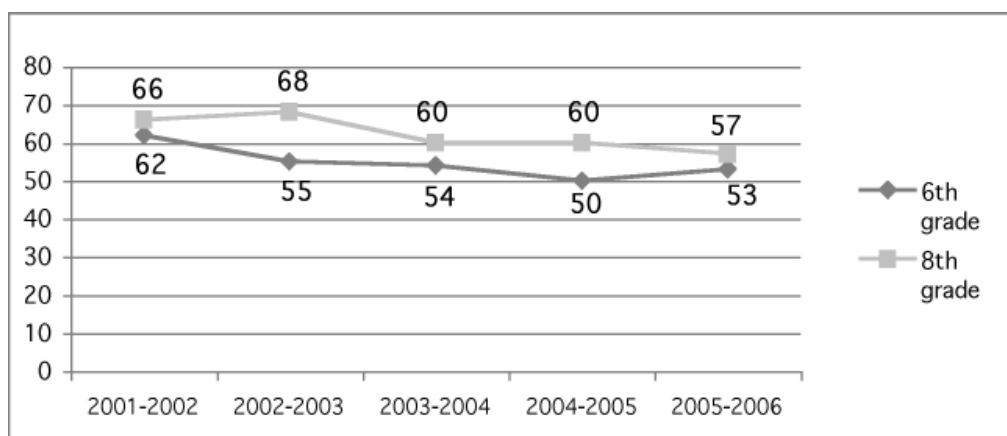
On the other hand, both 6th and 8th grade trends in Math scores for Latino students show improvement. In both cases, the percentage of students who scored Warning in 2005-2006 was 9 percentage points below the percent of students scoring in that category in 2001-2002.

FIGURE 8. PERCENT OF 'WARNING' MCAS ELA SCORES FOR LATINOS FOR GRADE 7, 2002- 2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

FIGURE 9. PERCENT OF 'WARNING' MCAS MATH SCORES FOR LATINOS FOR GRADES 6 AND 8, 2002- 2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

3. MCAS Outcomes in High School (10th grade)

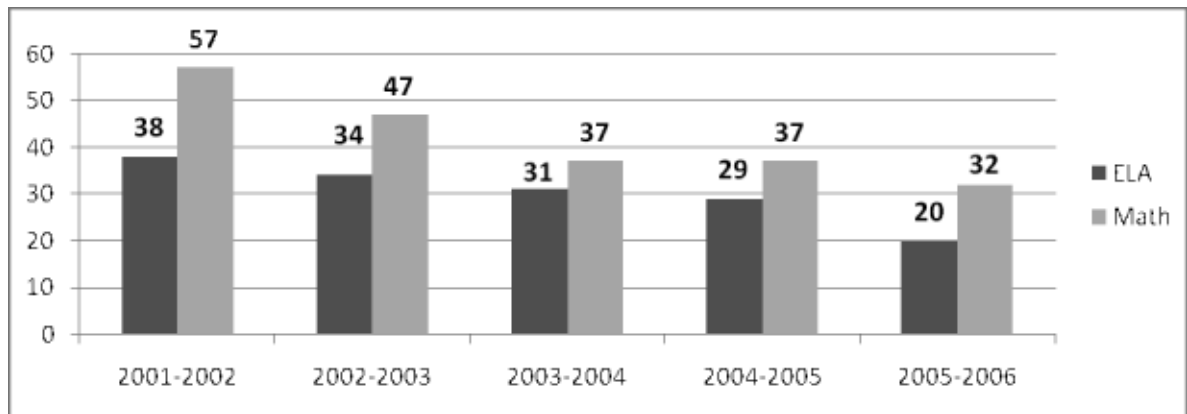
The 10th grade MCAS is particularly important because it serves as a high school graduation requirement – that is, students must pass this exam in order to graduate from high school³⁰. Thus, it is somewhat encouraging that Latino students' scores improve on the 10th grade MCAS in comparison to the scores on the MCAS taken in the middle school years.

However, the number of Latinos who take the 10th grade MCAS is consistently lower than the numbers of Latinos who took the 8th grade MCAS two years prior. For example, 8,795 Latino students took the 8th grade Math portion of the MCAS in 2004 and only 7,410 Latino students took the 10th grade MCAS portion of the MCAS in 2006. Likewise, 1,522 fewer Latino students took the 10th grade Math MCAS in 2005 compared to the number who took the 8th grade Math MCAS in 2003; 995 fewer from 2004 to 2002; and 429 fewer from 2003 to 2001.

Among those 10th graders who did take the exam, the percentage who scored "Failing" in their MCAS ELA test decreased sharply between 2001-2002 and 2005-2006. In 2001-2002, 38% of Latino 10th graders' ELA scores were in the Failure category; that rate had decreased by almost half to 20% by 2005-2006.

Failure rates in math had an equally auspicious outcome. In 2001-2002, 57% of Latino 10th graders' Math scores were in the Failure category; these decreased sharply to 32% by 2005-2006.

FIGURE 10. PERCENT OF 'FAILURE' MCAS ELA AND MATH SCORES FOR LATINOS FOR GRADE 10, 2002- 2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

This analysis indicates that there have been improvements, substantial ones, in the outcomes for students in the higher grades, particularly in the 10th grade. The opposite is the case among the younger students, whose scores worsened during the period of 2001-2002 to 2005-2006.

DIFFERENTIAL ACHIEVEMENT AND THE “ACHIEVEMENT GAP”

According to Education Week, the “achievement gap” in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. It is most often used to describe the performance gaps between many black and Latino students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their white peers; and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income and well-off families. The achievement gap can be seen in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates. It has become a focal point of education reform efforts³¹.

This section provides a comparison of the percentage of test takers by race/ethnicity who scored in the Warning/Failure category on the ELA and Math MCAS tests in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. At each grade level for both the ELA and Math tests, Latino students’ scores are most likely to be at the Needs Improvement or Warning/Failure level. Moreover, Latino students have the highest percentage of students who scored in the Warning/Failure category for every grade level on both ELA and Math. As Table 2 shows, the percentage of Latino students scoring in the Warning category is significantly higher than the average of all students as well as the average of white students. The MCAS Math scores in the middle school years (6th–8th grades) are particularly distressing, with over half of all Latino students scoring in the Warning category. For a complete breakdown of MCAS scores by all four categories, please see Table 5 in Appendix A.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF ‘WARNING/FAILURE’ MCAS SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2005-2006

	All Students	Asian	Black	Latino	White
ELA					
3rd grade	8%	7%	15%	22%	5%
4th grade	12%	9%	24%	29%	7%
5th grade	9%	8%	18%	24%	5%
6th grade	8%	6%	16%	22%	5%
7th grade	9%	8%	18%	25%	6%
8th grade	7%	6%	14%	21%	4%
10th grade	7%	6%	13%	20%	4%
MATH					
3rd grade	16%	11%	32%	37%	11%
4th grade	15%	9%	30%	33%	10%
5th grade	23%	13%	44%	48%	17%
6th grade	25%	15%	48%	53%	18%
7th grade	28%	16%	51%	57%	20%
8th grade	29%	18%	54%	57%	22%
10th grade	12%	7%	26%	32%	8%

Source: MA DOE (Requested Data: MCAS scores by race/ethnicity, 2007)

1. Trends in the Latino Achievement Gap in Massachusetts

As the previous section indicated, Latino students are scoring in the Warning category of the MCAS at a far higher rate than white students as well as all students. Furthermore, Latino students had the highest percentage of scores in the Warning category for any racial/ethnic subgroup. So we know that Latino students' achievement – as determined by MCAS "Warning" scores – is in need of improvement. But how large is the gap between Latino students and other students, particularly white students (who are generally used as the benchmark for the achievement gap)? This section will analyze the achievement gap utilizing two primary measurements – the Composite Performance Index (CPI) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). We will first examine the Latino achievement gap based on the CPI in the 2005–2006 school in detail. We find that Latino students have the lowest CPI scores throughout the Commonwealth and consequently severe gaps exist between Latino students and all students as well as white students. Then, we will analyze the trends of the achievement gap based on CPI and the NAEP. The analysis shows that according to the NAEP, the Latino-white math gap has basically remained the same from 1998 to 2005 for both 4th and 8th grades, and the reading gap has narrowed considerably for 4th grade and slightly for 8th grade. A review of the Latino-white achievement gap according to the CPI, which provides us with a singular measure for each subgroup to determine the achievement gap, shows a steady lessening of the gap in all grades and in both ELA and Math; however the gains are miniscule in middle school Math, which is an area where Latino students are struggling.

The Composite Performance Index (CPI) is a measure of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency in ELA and mathematics. The CPI is a 100-point index that combines the scores of students who take standard MCAS tests with the scores of those who take the MCAS-Alternate Assessment. The CPI assigns 100, 75, 25, or 0 points to each student based on his or her performance on the MCAS and MCAS-alternative tests. CPIs are generated separately for ELA and Math and at all levels – state, district, school, and student group. The CPI is used to measure performance and improvement for the purposes of issuing AYP determinations as well as Performance and Improvement Ratings³². Therefore, the CPI provides a single score based on the MCAS results, which allows us to make a direct comparison between Latino students and other students in assessing the achievement gap. The CPI conversion chart is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. CPI CONVERSION CHART

Performance Level	Scaled Score	CPI Points Per Student
Advanced	260-280	100
Proficient	240-258	100
Needs Improvement – High	230-238	75
Needs Improvement – Low	220-228	50
Warning/Failure – High	210-218	25
Warning/Failure – Low	200-208	0

As Table 4 indicates, Latino students had the lowest CPI in all grades for both ELA and Math and thus the largest achievement gap. The ELA gap decreases a bit through the middle school years, but the math gaps far worsen. Once again, middle school math is troubling, as Latino students' CPI is below 50 points and the gap between Latino students and all students as well as white students is well over 20 points.

TABLE 4. THE CPI ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN 2005-2006

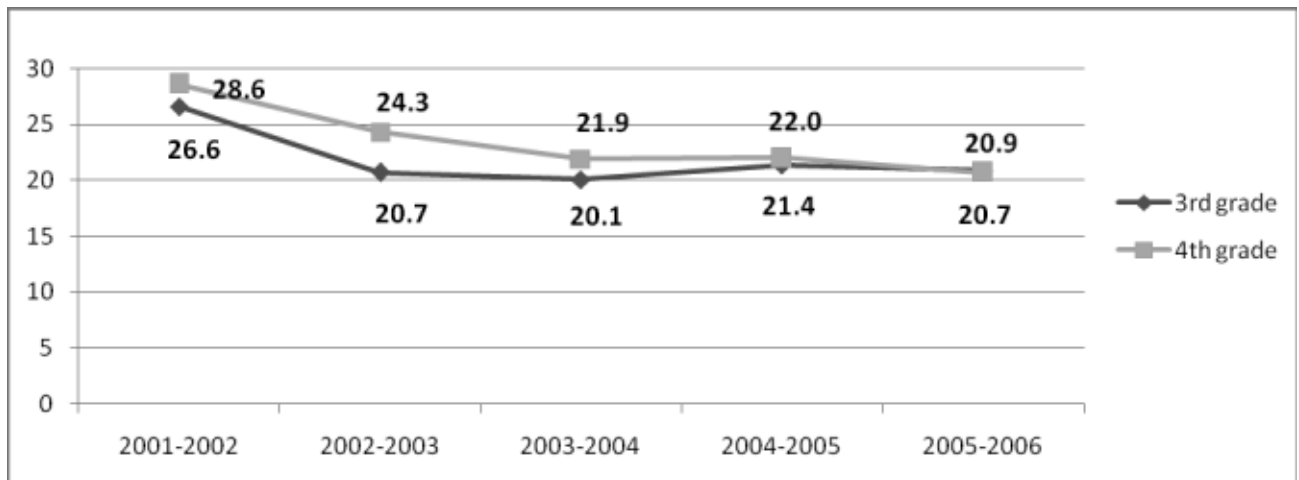
	All Students	Asian	Black	Latino	White	Gap Latino-All Students	Gap Latino-White Students
ELA							
3rd grade	83.4	84.8	72.0	66.6	87.5	16.8	20.9
4th grade	78.8	82.2	65.1	62.2	82.9	16.6	20.7
5th grade	83.7	85.6	71.0	65.6	88.1	18.1	22.5
6th grade	84.9	87.3	72.3	67.0	89.2	17.9	22.2
7th grade	84.6	86.6	72.4	67.2	88.9	17.4	21.7
8th grade	88.3	89.2	78.2	72.1	92.3	16.2	20.2
10th grade	86.8	88.2	75.7	70.2	90.3	16.6	20.1
MATH							
3rd grade	78.0	83.7	63.0	60.1	82.3	17.9	22.2
4th grade	73.3	81.8	57.9	57.0	77.2	16.3	20.2
5th grade	70.2	80.8	52.4	50.4	75.0	19.8	24.6
6th grade	70.5	80.7	51.3	48.7	75.8	21.8	31.3
7th grade	66.6	78.3	46.8	44.4	72.1	22.1	27.6
8th grade	66.3	77.7	47.0	45.0	71.6	21.3	26.6
10th grade	83.2	90.1	68.0	63.5	87.3	19.7	23.8

Source: MA DOE (Requested Data: MCAS scores by race/ethnicity, 2007)

Elementary Grades (3rd and 4th grades)

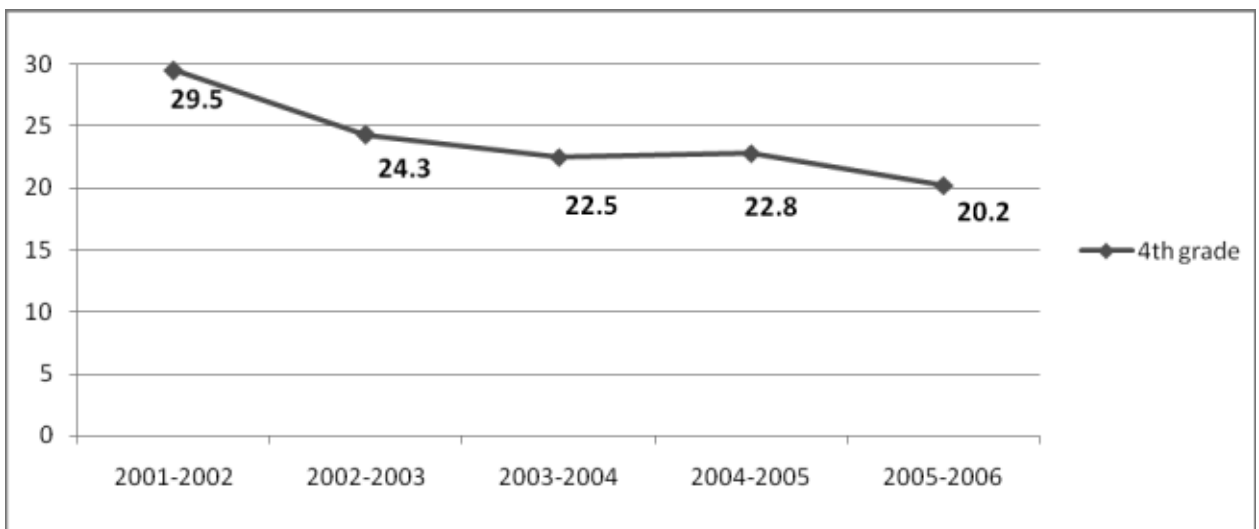
As Figure 11 shows, the Latino-white achievement gap for ELA in grades 3 and 4 has been declining. In 3rd grade, the gap as measured by the CPI dropped from 26.6 points in 2001-2002 to 20.9 points by 2005-2006. A similar pattern can be seen in the 4th grade ELA gap. This represents a decline in the gap between Latino and white students of 21% in 3rd grade and 28% in 4th grade. Similarly, the Latino-white achievement gap for Math in grade 4 has also been declining, from 29.5 in 2001-2002 to 20.2 in 2005-2006, for a decline of 32% in that period (Figure 12).

FIGURE 11. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR ELA CPI GRADES 3-4, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

FIGURE 12. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR MATH CPI GRADE 4, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006

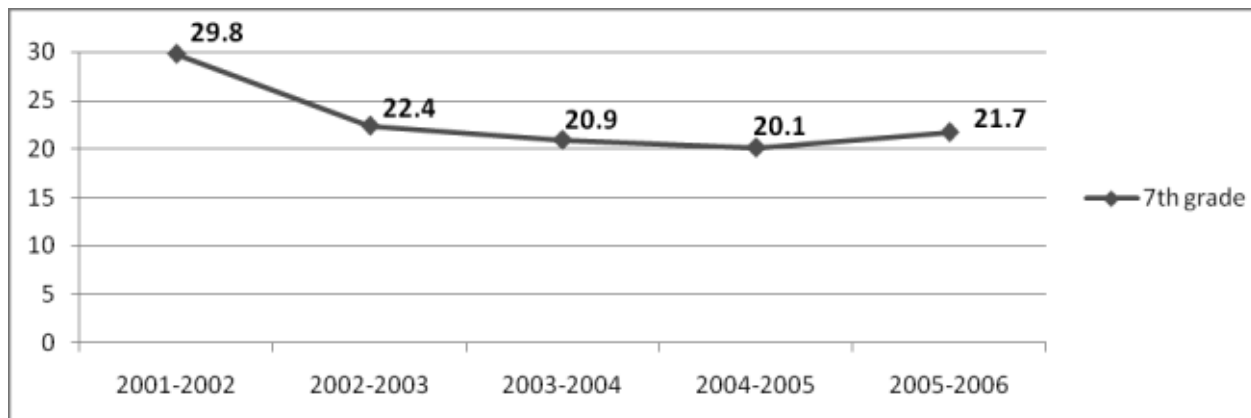


Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

Middle School Grades (6th, 7th, and 8th grades)

The Latino-white gap has also been declining in the middle school years. The 7th grade ELA, for example, shows a decline from 29.5 in the difference between white and Latino CPI scores in 2001-2002, to a difference of 20.2 points in 2005-2006. This represents a decline of 32% in this gap.

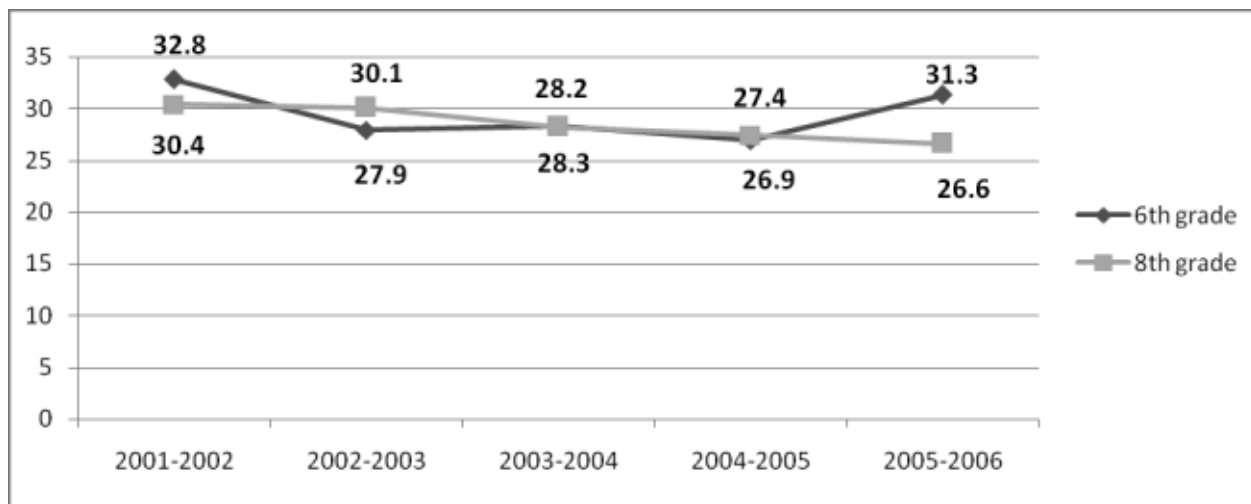
FIGURE 13. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR ELA CPI GRADE 7, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

The Latino-white achievement gap in Math for grades 6 and 8 has also declined but more modestly. In the 6th grade, for example, the gap declined from 32.8 points in 2001-2002 to 31.3 in 2005-2006. A similar, but more encouraging, pattern can be seen in the 8th grade math gap.

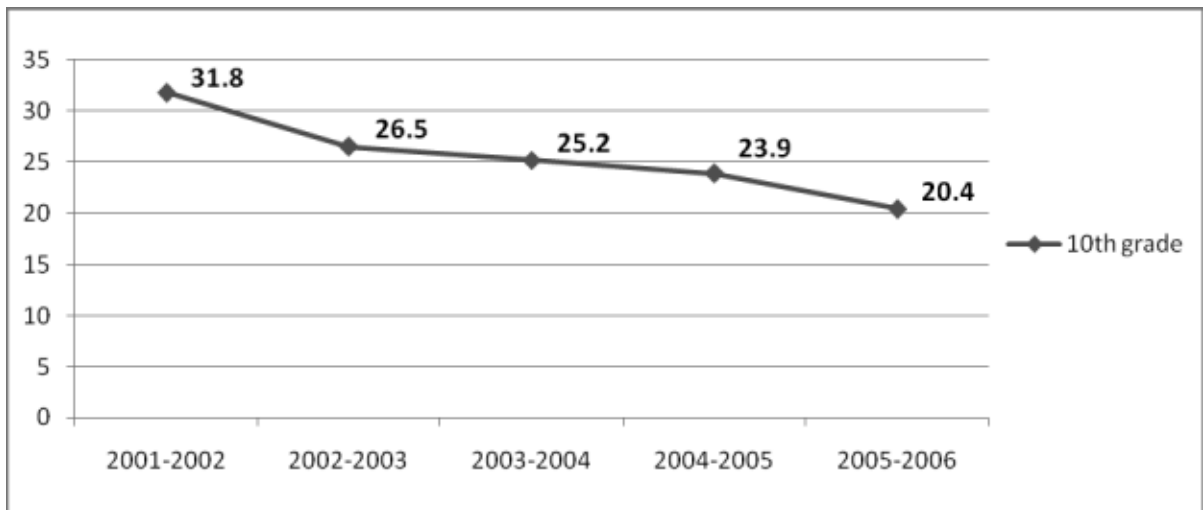
FIGURE 14. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR MATH CPI GRADES 6 AND 8, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

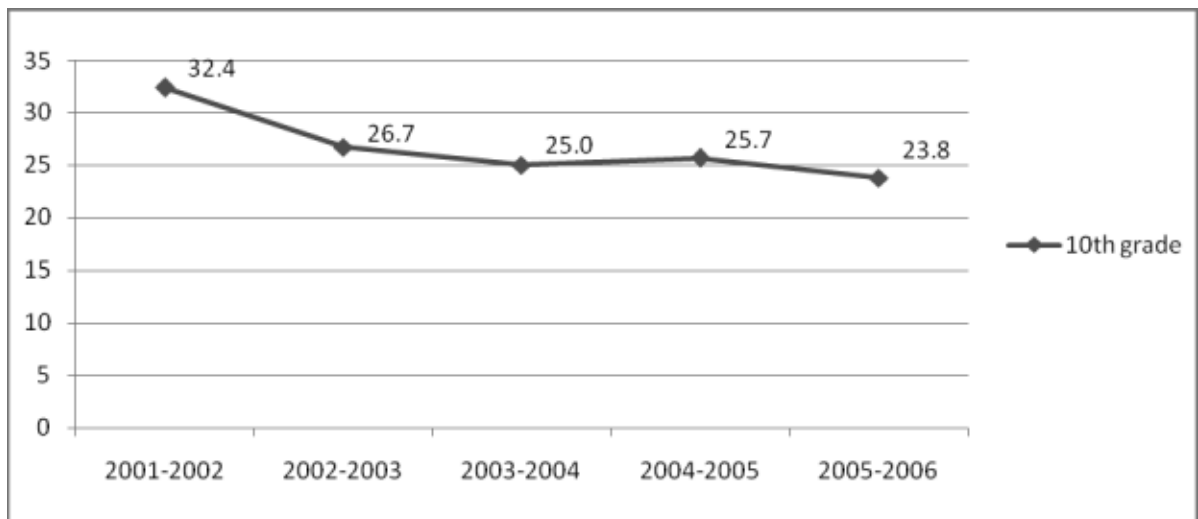
The trend of decline in the difference in achievement between Latino and white students for 10th grade ELA and Math, as measured by the CPI for each group, mirrors that of the younger grades. As depicted in Figure 15, the Latino-white gap has declined in 10th grade. The ELA Warning score dropped from 31.8 in 2001-2002 to 20.4 in 2005-2006, a decline of 36% in this index. The Latino-white gap has also been declining in 10th grade Math. In 2001-2002, the gap was 32.4, decreasing to 23.8 in 2005-2006.

FIGURE 15. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR ELA CPI GRADE 10, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

FIGURE 16. TREND OF LATINO-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR MATH CPI GRADE 10, 2001-2002 TO 2005-2006



Source: MA DOE <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas.aspx>

In sum, the CPI measures a steady decline in the achievement gap in ELA between white and Latino students in Massachusetts at all levels during the last five years. The decline in the gap in achievement is also observed in Math in both the elementary grades and, particularly, in high school. Although a decline in the achievement gap in math is also observed in middle school, the dimension of the change is much smaller in comparison to that observed in the other grade levels.

The trends observed in the achievement gap as measured by the composite of MCAS scores present a somewhat different, albeit more positive picture, than those depicted by national tests. One of the most common measures of the achievement gap is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is also known as the “Nation’s Report Card.” NAEP is a nationally representative assessment of what students in US schools know and can do. The assessments have been conducted periodically since 1969 in reading, mathematics, science, writing, history, geography, and other fields. Under No Child Left Behind, national and state NAEP assessments are conducted at least every two years in reading and mathematics at Grades 4 and 8 and are administered to a sample of students. NAEP differs from MCAS (and other state standardized tests) because it allows comparison of results from one state with another, or with results for the rest of the nation; whereas MCAS measures student performance on Massachusetts’s curriculum standards. Thus, together, MCAS and NAEP can develop a comprehensive picture of student performance as measured through standardized tests³³.

According to NAEP, the achievement gap in reading between Latinos and whites in 4th grade decreased significantly from 2000 (36.1) to 2003 (25.4). However, there was a slight widening of the gap in 2005 (26.8). The achievement gap in math between Latinos and whites in 4th grade has actually increased from 1998 to 2005. The gap was 33.8 in 1998, decreased to 32.0 in 2002, increased slightly to 32.4 in 2003, and increased again in 2005 to 34.5. The 8th grade reading gaps between Latinos and whites are large though this gap has slightly narrowed over time. The gap was 37.4 in 2000 and 32.5 in 2005. The 8th grade reading gaps between Latinos and whites are far larger, though this gap was slightly narrowed over time. The gap was 37.4 in 2000 and 32.5 in 2005.

The trend in NAEP is somewhat different from the trend that is seen in the CPI. The NAEP shows significant narrowing in the 4th grade reading gap from 2000 to 2003; however, a discouraging uptick in the 4th grade reading gap occurred in 2005. The CPI indicates a steady but not major decline in the 3rd and 4th grade ELA scores. The NAEP’s 4th grade Math Latino-white achievement gap remains virtually unchanged from 1998 to 2005. However, the CPI indicates a sizable decrease in the 4th grade Math Latino-white achievement gap.

The middle school pattern of the NAEP and CPI more closely resemble each other. The 7th grade ELA CPI, like the 8th grade NAEP reading, shows a continuous and moderate narrowing of the Latino-white achievement gap. Also, the 6th and 8th grade CPI and the 8th grade NAEP show virtually no change in the Latino-white Math achievement gap.

The NAEP is a constant and consistent measure of the achievement gap over time, so it is extremely important to include the NAEP in Latino-white achievement gap measures to provide a more comprehensive view of the gap. Utilizing both the CPI and the NAEP, it is apparent that gains are being made in reading/English Language Arts, though more extensive gains are needed. However, the Latino-white achievement gap in Math appears to be more entrenched and unyielding; measures must be taken to significantly reduce this gap.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary purpose of this report is to assess how Latino students are faring in Massachusetts public schools and to assess what areas of academic achievement are the most problematic. Academic engagement and achievement are generally intertwined and reinforce each other: lack of achievement fuels disengagement, and disengagement leads to lower levels of academic achievement.

Summary of Major Findings

1. In the last 5 years, Latino enrollments in Massachusetts public schools have increased by 22.7%; Latino students today make up 13.3% of the public school enrollments; they are the fastest growing group of enrollees.
2. A diverse group of children, both native born and immigrants from a large number of Latin American countries make up the Latino enrollments in Massachusetts public schools.
3. Latino children experience a tenuous engagement with educational institutions and with their education.
 - Latinos have the highest rates of absences and in-school suspensions compared to other racial/ethnic groups in the state. Their out-of-school suspension rates are second only to those of Black children. The result is that Latino children are missing a tremendous amount of schooling.
 - The cohort dropout rate for Latino students stands at 26.5%, that is, more than one quarter of Latino students that start in the 9th grade in Massachusetts schools drop out of school before graduation. Latinos have the highest dropout rate of any racial/ethnic group in the state.
 - Fifty seven percent of Latino students are graduating from high school in four years. Theirs is the lowest graduation rate of any group in the state.
4. In general the achievement of Latino children, as measured by the MCAS, is low.
 - Far too many Latino students' scores on the MCAS are in the Warning category. In English Language Arts, the Warning/Failure rates hovers between 20 and 30% at every level of schooling. Math Warning and Failure rates are, in general, higher than those for ELA with the worst scores – ranging in the 50-60 percentile – appearing in middle school.
 - Trends in the MCAS scores for Latinos in the last five years show that the percentage of Latino students scoring in the Warning/Failure category in ELA has increased in the elementary and middle school grades, but that it has decreased in high school. The percent of Math Warning/Failure scores has decreased slightly at all levels.
5. There continues to be significant gaps in achievement between Latino students and others, but these gaps seem to be narrowing at all levels.
 - Utilizing the Composite Performance Index (CPI) to compare the gaps in achievement between Latino students and students from other groups reveals that Latino students continue to lag behind other students in attaining proficiency. In ELA, the average difference between Latino students and all students was 17.1 points and between Latino students and white students was 21.2 points. The ELA gap was most pronounced

in 5th, 6th, and 7th grades. In Math, the average difference between Latino students and all students was 19.8 points and between Latino students and white students was 24.5 points. The Math gap was most pronounced in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

- Trend data examining the achievement gap as measured through the CPI shows that the Latino-white gap has narrowed in all grade levels on both ELA and Math from 2001-2002 to 2005-2006. The CPI measures a steady decline in the achievement gap in ELA between white and Latino students in Massachusetts in the elementary grades, middle and high school during the last five years. The decline in the gap in achievement is also observed in Math in both the elementary grades and, particularly, in high school.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of this report, there are two prevailing issues that need intense attention: keeping Latino students in school and helping Latino children succeed academically, particularly through improvements in MCAS scores in the context of the importance of high-stakes testing in MERA and NCLB.

Keeping Latino Students in School

- Work with the student, family, and community to improve attendance. Explain the attendance policy explicitly at the beginning of school. Understand what is causing students to miss school and attempt to devise solutions with the school, student, and family. Develop activities that will engage students in a culturally relevant and sensitive manner to help increase their comfort level and attachment with the school.
- Reduce the over-reliance on in-school and out-of-school suspensions for Latino students. This accelerates a path of disengagement and leads students to believe they are not wanted in school.
- When students display indicators of potentially dropping out, provide more supportive services, such as counseling and academic tutoring, and attempt to incorporate these students into school activities.

Helping Latino Children Succeed

- Build upon moderate achievement in the elementary school years by ensuring that all students are being adequately and sufficiently prepared, including proficiency in reading by 3rd grade.
- Start preparing for the middle school decline sooner. Extra assistance should be provided to students who are beginning to fall behind in elementary school. Students who are performing adequately in elementary school, but find the jump to middle school problematic, should be challenged further to sufficiently prepare them for middle school. Particular attention should be focused on math, as Latino student performance in math is especially troublesome.
- All students should be given supports to transition from middle school to high school and students should be prepared to take the MCAS upon first offering in 10th grade. Students with poor 8th grade MCAS scores should be identified and provided with extra support so that they do not leave school before the 10th grade MCAS and are given academic tutoring that will enable them to pass the 10th grade MCAS.

Appendix A

TABLE 5. MCAS SCORES

English Language Arts						
		Adv	Prof	NI	W/F	#Students
03	All students	18%	40%	34%	8%	70,751
03	Asian	22%	40%	32%	7%	3,611
03	Black	7%	29%	49%	15%	5,920
03	Latino	5%	24%	50%	22%	8,689
03	White	21%	45%	29%	5%	52,0522
04	All students	8%	42%	39%	12%	71,277
04	Asian	14%	43%	33%	9%	3,675
04	Black	2%	25%	49%	24%	6,115
04	Latino	2%	22%	48%	29%	8,609
04	White	9%	47%	37%	7%	52,515
05	All students	15%	44%	31%	9%	72,714
05	Asian	22%	43%	27%	8%	3,605
05	Black	5%	30%	47%	18%	6,594
05	Latino	3%	25%	48%	24%	8,659
05	White	18%	50%	27%	5%	53,467
06	All students	10%	54%	28%	8%	73,382
06	Asian	18%	52%	24%	6%	3,468
06	Black	3%	37%	44%	16%	6,582
06	Latino	2%	31%	45%	22%	8,789
06	White	12%	60%	23%	5%	54,158
07	All students	10%	55%	26%	9%	74,509
07	Asian	17%	53%	22%	8%	3,363
07	Black	3%	40%	39%	18%	6,857
07	Latino	2%	33%	40%	25%	9,066
07	White	12%	60%	22%	6%	54,838
08	All students	12%	62%	19%	7%	76,243
08	Asian	20%	56%	18%	6%	3,423
08	Black	3%	50%	33%	14%	6,935
08	Latino	2%	42%	35%	21%	9,293
08	White	14%	67%	14%	4%	56,139
10	All students	16%	53%	24%	7%	73,351
10	Asian	24%	49%	21%	6%	3,338
10	Black	5%	42%	40%	13%	6,408
10	Latino	3%	36%	41%	20%	7,563
10	White	18%	57%	20%	4%	55,630

Mathematics						
		Adv	Prof	NI	WF	#Students
03	All students	4%	48%	32%	16%	70,741
03	Asian	8%	55%	26%	11%	3,618
03	Black	1%	28%	39%	32%	5,920
03	Latino	1%	25%	37%	37%	8,693
03	White	5%	53%	31%	11%	52,035
04	All students	15%	25%	45%	15%	71,417
04	Asian	28%	29%	34%	9%	3,682
04	Black	4%	14%	52%	30%	6,127
04	Latino	5%	13%	49%	33%	8,645
04	White	17%	28%	44%	10%	52,633
05	All students	17%	26%	34%	23%	72,798
05	Asian	32%	28%	27%	13%	3,608
05	Black	4%	14%	37%	44%	6,616
05	Latino	4%	14%	34%	48%	8,671
05	White	19%	29%	34%	17%	53,548
06	All students	17%	29%	29%	25%	73,470
06	Asian	32%	30%	22%	15%	3,469
06	Black	5%	16%	32%	48%	6,604
06	Latino	4%	14%	30%	53%	8,881
06	White	19%	33%	30%	18%	54,253
07	All students	12%	28%	33%	28%	74,647
07	Asian	28%	30%	26%	16%	3,386
07	Black	2%	12%	35%	51%	6,877
07	Latino	2%	11%	30%	57%	9,100
07	White	14%	32%	33%	20%	54,943
08	All students	12%	28%	31%	29%	76,276
08	Asian	27%	32%	24%	18%	3,432
08	Black	3%	14%	30%	54%	6,947
08	Latino	3%	12%	29%	57%	9,317
08	White	14%	32%	32%	22%	56,213
10	All students	40%	27%	21%	12%	72,738
10	Asian	63%	17%	14%	7%	3,325
10	Black	16%	24%	34%	26%	6,330
10	Latino	14%	22%	32%	32%	7,410
10	White	45%	28%	19%	8%	55,337

Notes

- ¹ This report uses the term Latino, though the data collected by the Massachusetts Department of Education uses the term Hispanic.
- ² Over 100 pieces of legislation have been introduced in 2007 on Capitol Hill to alter No Child Left Behind according to the NEA. <http://www.nea.org/lac/esea/index.html>
- ³ Anne C. Lewis. NCLB Reauthorization. *The Education Digest*, 73 (2), 70–72 (Oct 2007).
- ⁴ http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov3terminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Key+Priorities&L2=World-Class+Education&sid=Agov3&b=terminalcontent&f=key_priorities_readiness_project&csid=Agov3
- ⁵ NAEP. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/statecomp/>
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Miren Uriarte and Lisa Chavez. Latino Students and the Massachusetts Public Schools. Mauricio Gaston Institute, University of Massachusetts-Boston (April 2000).
- ⁸ Massachusetts Department of Education. School Leaders' Guide to the 2006 Cycle IV Accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Reports. August 2006.
- ⁹ <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state.asp>
- ¹⁰ <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state.asp>
- ¹¹ U.S. Census 2000 (SF4) and 1990 (STF 3), American Fact Finder, www.census.gov.
- ¹² www.census.gov/population/projections/state/stpjpjpop.txt, www.census.gov/population/projections/state/stpjrace.txt
- ¹³ <http://www.gaston.umb.edu/resactiv/index.html>
- ¹⁴ Miren Uriarte, Phillip J. Granberry, and Megan Halloran. Immigration Status, Employment, and Eligibility for Public Benefits among Latin American Immigrants in Massachusetts. In Andres Torres (ed) *Latinos in New England* (Temple University Press, 2006).
- ¹⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, (SF4) and 1990 (STF3).
- ¹⁶ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/statistics/lep.html>
- ¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, (SF4)
- ¹⁸ Ramon Borges Mendez and Miren Uriarte. Latino settlement and incorporation in Lawrence and Holyoke, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island. Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, August 2004.
- ¹⁹ Monica K. Johnson; Robert Crosnoe; and Glen H. Elder, Jr. Students' Attachment and Engagement: The Role of Race and Ethnicity. *Sociology of Education*, 74, 318–340 (October 2001).
- ²⁰ Steven B. Sheldon. Improving Student Attendance with School, Family, and Community Partnerships. *The Journal of Educational Research*. 100 (5), 267–277 (May/June 2007).
- ²¹ Children's Law Center of Massachusetts, Inc. School Suspension and Expulsion. http://www.clem.org/student_suspension.htm
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was established in 1989 at the University of Massachusetts-Boston by the Massachusetts State Legislature at the behest of Latino community leaders and scholars in response to a need for improved understanding of the Latino experience in the Commonwealth. The mission of the institute is to inform policy makers about issues vital to the state's growing Latino community and to provide this community with information and analysis necessary for effective participation in public policy development.

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Latino Community Development
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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy

University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393

Telephone: 617-287-5790 | Fax: 617-287-5788

E-mail: Gaston.feedback@umb.edu | Website: www.gaston.umb.edu

