

English Learner Education Bills

H.3705/S.2070 An act for language opportunity for our kids

Overview

Improves English language learner education:

- Removes the current mandate requiring Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) as the “one size fits all” default English Language Learner (ELL) program model, and gives school districts the flexibility to establish programs based on the educational needs of their ELL students.
- Increases parent engagement and allow parents to request the creation of new Language Acquisition Programs.
- Establishes the State Seal of Biliteracy to recognize high school graduates who speak, write, and write in two languages (with the same language as *S.311/H.285 An Act to promote global trade and economic development through biliteracy*).
- Removes regulations that inhibit and prevent the establishment of alternate language acquisition programs for ELLs.
- Ensures that teachers and administrators are qualified.
- Monitors and supports current and former ELLs.

The bill will not mandate new Language Acquisition Programs or dismantle current programs. Instead, it removes the barriers to selecting the best programs for Massachusetts students.

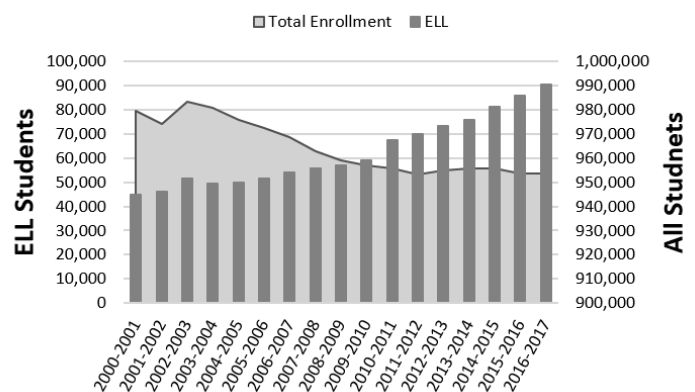
The Need for Reform

1. ELL students are falling between the cracks of Massachusetts’ one-size-fits-all language education model:

→ English Language Learners are the fastest growing student population in Massachusetts schools.

- While total student enrollment has dropped since 2000, the number of **ELL students has doubled** to over 90,204 students, or **9.5% of the student population**.¹
- Last year, **90% of school districts had at least one ELL student**, and 19% of districts had 100 or more ELLs.²
- ELL students represent to the rich diversity of the Commonwealth, speaking **over 150 different languages** at home.³

Massachusetts Student Enrollment 2000-2017



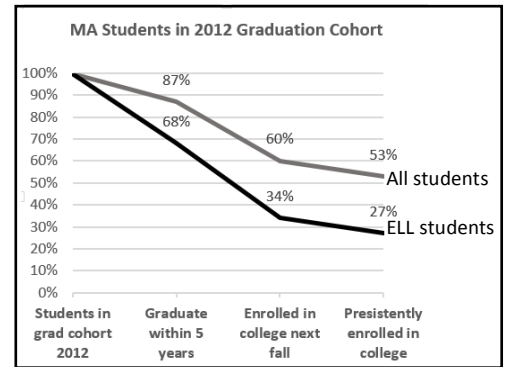
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- **A majority of ELL students were born in the United States** and are U.S. citizens. According to the Migration Policy Institute, nearly 9 in 10 ELL students between kindergarten and grade 5 nationwide were born in the United States, and 60% percent among students in grades 6 to 12.⁴ Additionally, about 82 percent of children of immigrants in Massachusetts are native born.⁵

➔ **Current ELL education policies are failing, and ELL students lag behind their peers in key indicator of academic performance:⁶**

Graduation and College Readiness:

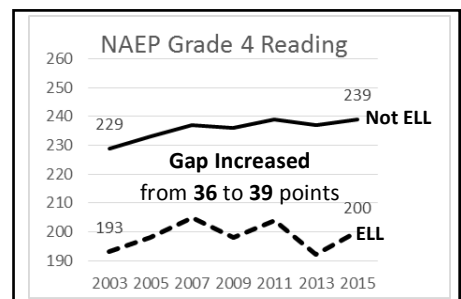
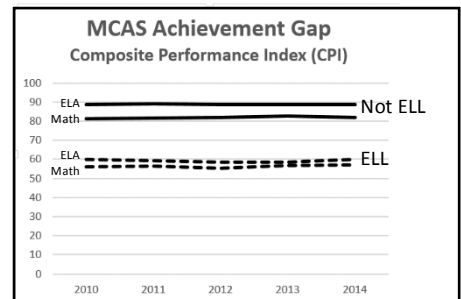
- In 2016, the **ELL dropout rate was 6.6%**, the highest dropout rate of any subgroup, and three times higher than the rate for all students (1.9%).⁷
- **Only 64% of ELL students graduated from high school**, as compared to 87% of all students. While overall graduation rates have risen in the past 10 years, the gap between ELLs and their peers has not significantly changed⁸.
- **Only 44% of ELL students completed the MassCore requirements**, a recommended course of study for college-bound students, as compared to 77% of all students.⁹ This indicates that fewer ELL students are prepared for college.
- **More than 7% of ELL students were “Non-grad Completers,”** meaning they fulfilled all the course requirements for graduation, but **did not receive a high school diploma** due to low MCAS scores. Overall, only 1% of all students in 2016 were “Non-grad Completers.”¹⁰
- Of the ELL students entering the 2012 cohort, **only 34% enrolled in college** and 27% persisted in college.¹¹



Standardized Test Performance:

- The overall **Math and English Language Arts MCAS Performance of ELLs has shown no significant growth** for the past 5 years, and the gap between ELLs and Non-ELLs persists.¹²
- In 2015, **only 27% of ELL students scored Proficient or Advanced** in the 3rd grade English Language Arts MCAS, a benchmark reached by 60% of all third graders.¹³
- **Less than 50% of ELL students scored Proficient or Advanced** in 10th grade English Language Arts and Math MCAS, assessments that determines a student’s eligibility to graduate from high school.¹⁴
- Massachusetts likes to boast that our students score “best in the nation” on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but this obscures the fact that **ELL students trail far behind their non-ELL peers on NAEP, and the gap has gotten wider since 2003.**¹⁵

Note: Spring 2016 state-level achievement and growth results in grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics are not reported because most students in Massachusetts participated in the PARCC test.



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- We must give schools the flexibility to choose high-quality, research-based programs that meet the needs of ELLs.
- **Current law mandates one default program type** for English Language Learners in Massachusetts: Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). This “one-size-fits-all” program model is not the best choice for all ELLs. English Language Learners are a diverse group of students with diverse educational needs.
 - Research shows that **students educated bilingually perform as well as, or better than, comparable students** educated in one language.¹⁶

2. Massachusetts lacks effective bilingual and world language education, despite the NEED for multilingualism in today’s world economy:

- Numerous studies have revealed the benefits for children who know more than one language:
- **Better academic performance** and higher scores on standardized tests.
 - **Greater cognitive development** in such areas as mental flexibility, creativity, and higher-order thinking skills.¹⁷
 - **Stronger identity formation** and the development of cross-cultural competence, or the ability to know oneself and how to relate with others.

- Massachusetts lags behind other states in adopting policies that promote language learning and bilingualism:

- **25 other states and Washington DC have already adopted a State Seal of Biliteracy.**¹⁸ Massachusetts students are being left behind when competing for jobs that require bilingual candidates.



- Our students’ existing language skills are being ignored and squandered:

- **20% of Massachusetts students already speak a first language other than English**, yet little is done to support or develop this asset in our schools.¹⁹
- Few schools offer program choice for ELLs. **Only 2 districts offer Transitional Bilingual Education programs (TBE)**, and **only 10 districts offer Two-Way Immersion programs** that allow ELLs *and* native English speakers to develop bilingualism and biliteracy.

- Our students are being denied the opportunity to develop valuable skills for a global job market:

- Bilingualism, biliteracy, and multicultural understanding are **essential skills** for improving career and college readiness.
- The demand for bilingual workers is rising across the U.S. In Massachusetts, there has been a **159.5% increase in the number of online job postings for bilingual workers** since 2010, with Massachusetts-based employers posting 14,561 job openings online in 2015.²⁰
- The national **demand for bilingual workers is especially high** in certain industries, notably **finance and healthcare**, with employers like Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and the health insurer Humana. Similarly, the demand for bilingual workers is particularly high for specific occupations, such as **registered nurses and customer service representatives.**²¹

For Massachusetts to continue to be a national and global leader in academic achievement, it must recognize, value, and invest in programs that help students acquire skills to be competitive in the 21st century global job market.



H.3705/S.2070 An act for language opportunity for our kids

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