

## An Act Relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) H.498/S.262

### → Close the achievement gap for English Language Learners (ELLs)

- Current law mandates **one** default program type for English Language Learners in Massachusetts: Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). This “one-size-fits-all” model is **not the best choice** for all students and **has not significantly closed the achievement gap** for ELL students.

### → Provide Opportunities for ELLs to develop valuable skills for the global job market

- Current law **inhibits and discourages** language acquisition programs in Massachusetts that develop language skills, including dual language and bilingual programs. This **limits opportunities for all students** — both English Language Learner (ELL) and native English speakers — to build their language skills, a valuable asset in the 21st century global economy.

### The LOOK Bill improves English Language Learner education:

- ✓ Removes the current mandate requiring Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) as the “one size fits all” default 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, read, and write in two languages (with the same language as *An Act to Establish a State Seal of Biliteracy* H.422 / *An Act to Promote Global Trade and Economic Development through Biliteracy* S.336.)
- ✓ 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.**

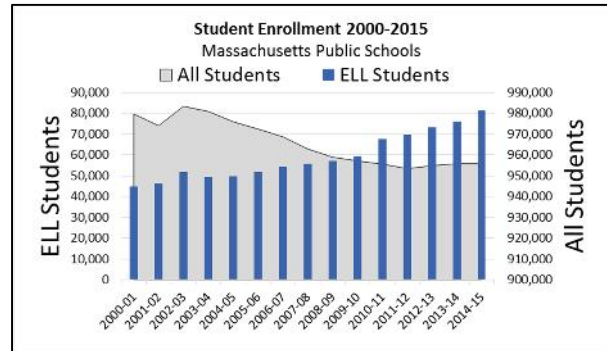
*The voters who passed Question 2 in 2002 were clear: They wanted Massachusetts students to learn English and succeed in school. The last 14 years have demonstrated that that is not happening for thousands of ELLs. Each day that our students aren't learning, we are violating the will of the voters. Since then, educational research has shown the cognitive benefits of developing bilingual abilities, and that students educated bilingually perform as well as -- or better than -- students educated in one language. School districts must have the flexibility to choose high-quality, research-based programs to meet the needs of ELLs. We have a responsibility to the voters and our kids to do better.*

## 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.

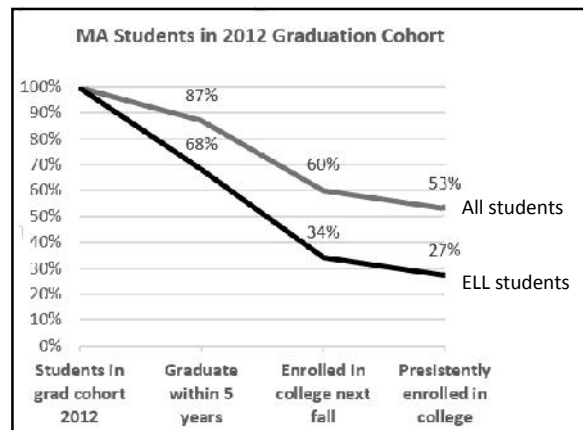
- While total student enrollment has dropped since 2000, the number of **ELL students has almost doubled** to over 85,000 students, or **9% of the student population**<sup>1</sup>.
- Last year, **86% of school districts had at least one ELL student**, 19% of districts had 100 or more ELLs<sup>2</sup>.
- ELL students represent the rich diversity of the Commonwealth, speaking **over 150 different languages** at home.
- **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.<sup>3</sup>



#### → Current ELL education policies are failing, and ELL students lag behind their peers in key indicator of academic performance<sup>4</sup>:

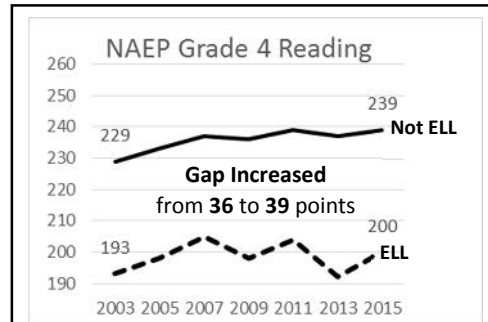
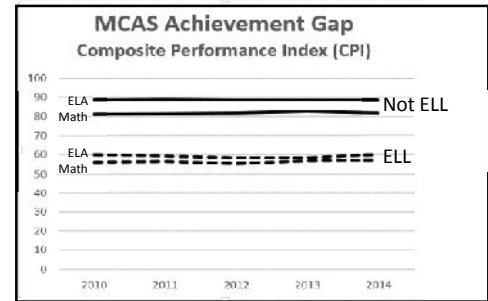
##### Graduation and College Readiness:

- The **ELL dropout rate was 5.7%**, the highest dropout rate of any subgroup, and three times higher than the rate for all students (1.9%)<sup>5</sup>.
- In 2015, **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 changed<sup>6</sup>.
- Of the 64% of ELLs who graduated, **only 34% enrolled in college** the next fall, and 27% persisted in college.
- **Only 43% of ELL students completed the MassCore requirements**, a recommended course of study for college-bound students, as compared to 72% of all students<sup>7</sup>. 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 2015 were "Non-grad Completers"<sup>8</sup>.



**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<sup>9</sup>.
- Last year, **only 27% of ELL students scored Proficient or Advanced** in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade English Language Arts MCAS, a benchmark reached by 60% of all third graders.
- **Less than 50% of ELL students scored Proficient or Advanced** in 10<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts and Math MCAS, assessments that determine a student's eligibility to graduate from high school.
- 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 in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Math<sup>10</sup>.



→ **We must give school districts the flexibility to choose high-quality, research-based programs that meet the needs of English Language Learners (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 ELL students.** English Language Learners are a diverse group of students with diverse educational needs.
- Research shows that **students educated bilingually perform academically as well as – or better than – comparable students** educated in one language<sup>11</sup>.

## **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<sup>12</sup>.
- **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:**

- **16 other states have already adopted a State Seal of Biliteracy<sup>13</sup>.** Massachusetts students will soon be left behind when competing for jobs that require bilingual candidates.



→ **Our students' existing language skills are being ignored and squandered:**

- **18.5% of Massachusetts students already speak a first language other than English**, yet little is done to support or develop this asset in our schools.
- Out of **408 school districts** in Massachusetts, **only 2 districts offer Transitional Bilingual Education programs (TBE)**. Only **8 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:**

- In order to remain successful, the Massachusetts workforce must be equipped to participate within an **increasingly interconnected, international economy**.
- Bilingualism, biliteracy, and multicultural understanding are **essential skills** for improving career and college readiness.
- Bilingual individuals benefit from **enhanced job opportunities** and **greater earning potential**. For example, qualified individuals with bilingual skills earned anywhere between \$6,000 and \$12,000 more in the health professions<sup>14</sup>.
- Foreign investment was responsible for **6.3 percent** of the state's total private-industry employment in 2010. Foreign trade related jobs grew **three times faster** than total employment from 2004 to 2013 and are at large and small companies, on farms, in factories, and at the headquarters of Massachusetts globally engaged firms<sup>15</sup>.

***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 21<sup>st</sup> century global job market.***

# Language Opportunity

Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition



## References

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- <sup>3</sup> Education Writers Association. *In U.S., Students Struggling with English Outnumber Kids Born Abroad*. <http://www.ewa.org/blog-latino-ed-beat/us-students-struggling-english-outnumber-kids-born-abroad>
- <sup>4</sup> Rennie Center, *Condition of Education in the Commonwealth: 2016 Report*, Winter 2016. <http://www.renniecenter.org/research/COE2016ActionGuide.pdf>, pages 4 & 7.
- <sup>5</sup> MA DESE, *2014-15 Student Dropout Rate Report*, <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/dropout/default.aspx>
- <sup>6</sup> MA DESE, *Cohort 2015 Graduation Rates*, [http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/grad/grad\\_report.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/grad/grad_report.aspx)
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- <sup>11</sup> Francis, D., Lesaux, N., & August, D. (2006). Language of instruction. In D. August & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-minority Children and Youth*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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- <sup>13</sup> Seal of Biliteracy, <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>
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