

Springfield Public Schools English Language Learner Status Report

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September 2010



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SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STATUS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Springfield Public Schools is an urban district in western Massachusetts with the second largest student population in the state next to Boston, relatively new district leadership, and an ambitious new Strategic Plan to improve the outcomes of its students. Newcomers to the state, many from Puerto Rico and non-English speaking countries, are concentrated in its urban districts, including Springfield. One of the district's most urgent areas of concern is the education of English language learners (ELLs). The subgroup of ELLs has not made Adequate Yearly Progress in Springfield for four consecutive years, and the district is in corrective action in large part due to its ELL programming challenges. The Center for Collaborative Education, with its experience in the analysis of data about ELLs¹ as well as in school and district transformation, was asked to provide a scope of services to Springfield Public Schools with the following overarching goals:

1. *To assist the Springfield Public Schools to create and implement a coherent district-wide plan of programs and services for ELLs focused on closing the achievement gap between ELLs and native English speaking regular education students.*
2. *To build the capacity of the Instructional Leadership Teams and coaches of the eight schools that serve high proportions of ELLs to increase achievement of ELLs (both English proficiency and content) through implementing effective instructional practices, increasing family engagement, and developing the cultural competence of school staff.*

In order to accomplish Goal 1, a district level plan for improving English language learner education, it was necessary to analyze, report, and understand the status of English language learner enrollment, program participation, and outcomes in Springfield Public Schools. The activities associated with Goal 2 began in May 2010 and are ongoing. They are addressed in this Report as they pertain to the findings.

The work on this Report began in February, with school visits to eight schools serving high proportions of ELLs, termed "ELL Pilot schools."² The school visits included interviews with each principal, groups of teachers, and groups of students, and observations of classes with LEP students. Other qualitative data was collected in the

¹ Tung, et al. (2009). *English learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment, engagement, and academic outcomes, AY2003-AY2006*. Final Report. Boston: Gaston Institute. Retrieved from http://www.gaston.umb.edu/articles/2009%20Final%20ELL%20Report_online.pdf.

² The term "ELL Pilot schools" is not to be confused with the term "Pilot school," which refers to autonomous district schools in several Massachusetts districts. "Pilot" in "ELL Pilot schools" refers to their role as testing out anticipated new approaches to ELL education.

form of multiple meetings, phone conferences, and emails with key district staff throughout the data collection period. Quantitative data was provided by the district for the four school years 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09. This data was merged into one student and one teacher data file and included information about enrollment, demographics, assessment, and teacher certifications.³

Other studies, reports, and district ELL policies and programs were also reviewed to inform the report findings and recommendations.⁴ These include state law MGL c71a, Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002 amendment and in federal laws and regulations Title VI Civil Rights Act, Equal Educational Opportunity Act, and No Child Left Behind Act.⁵ Several recent reports have highlighted the differences between ELL and other students' enrollment and outcomes in MA districts.⁶ From a student's entry into the district to exit, this Status Report reviews a student's identification as an ELL, her placement into programs and services, annual assessment of language acquisition, reclassification and transition to core curriculum, instructional plan, educational outcomes, and staffing and professional development. Understanding trends in these aspects of ELL education in Springfield informs recommended actions that the district may take to meet its priority of "high academic achievement for 21st century success."⁷ Thus, the Status Report ends with recommendations for improving the quality of education for English language learners in Springfield.

An accompanying document, the *Springfield Public Schools Recommended Actions and Implementation Plans*, is informed by this Status Report and includes detailed implementation steps for every recommended action.

³ A student level database was created which merged SIMS, MCAS, MEPA, and FLEP data files. A teacher database was created which included licensure and 4-category training information. More detailed information about the database is available upon request.

⁴ A complete reference list is available upon request.

⁵ These laws and regulations are summarized in the School and District Information Package of the Coordinated Program Review Procedures found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/instrument/chapter71A.pdf>.

⁶ English Language Learners Sub-committee Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2009). *Halting the Race to the Bottom: Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts*. Retrieved from http://www.gaston.umb.edu/articles/1-09_HaltingRace_GastonSite.pdf.

⁷ Springfield Public Schools web site:

<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/MandateForChange.pdf>.

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS GOALS AND CONTEXT FOR ELLS

Key Findings

- Since the current superintendent took office in 2008, the district has developed a Strategic Plan, Priority Areas, and Key Initiatives to guide its work; while ambitious and comprehensive, none of these guiding documents explicitly address ELL education.
- By state and federal criteria, the district has not met goals for ELL programming and student outcomes for several years in a row.
- The district does not have documentation of an educational theory or framework guiding ELL education.
- The recent decision to place ELL education under the purview Chief Academic Officer reflects the district's commitment to create academic programs and policies which are inclusive of and designed for this subgroup.

DISTRICT, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOALS FOR ELLS

The stated mission of the Springfield Public Schools is to provide the highest quality of education so that all of its students are empowered to realize their full potential and lead fulfilling lives as lifelong learners, responsible citizens, and leaders in the 21st Century.⁸

In order to achieve this mission, key stakeholders prepared a Strategic Plan for 2009-2012 that contains seven strategic priority areas.⁹ Each priority area has three to seven goals. The priority areas are:

- High academic achievement for 21st century success
- Safe, nurturing, respectful working and learning environment
- Highly qualified staff at all levels
- Effective parent and community partnerships
- Equitable, efficient, and appropriate use of resources and funding
- Responsive, effective, and accountable leadership at all levels
- Responsive multi-cultural, and effective communications at all levels

⁸ Springfield Public Schools web site:
<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/SPS%20Mission,%20Vision,%20Values%20&%20Theory%20of%20Action.pdf>.

⁹ Springfield Public Schools web site:
<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/2009-2012DistrictStrategicPlan.pdf>.

The Strategic Plan notes a number of key district-wide initiatives which are being implemented to address the strategic priority areas. They are:

- Aligned learning communities
- Instructional leadership specialists and teacher leaders
- Organizational Health Improvement process
- High performance model
- Harris Poll interactive school survey
- Focus on Results

While each strategic priority area and key initiative applies to all subgroups, including English language learners, the language currently in the documents does not directly address subgroups and gaps in achievement. The district's guiding documents are not explicit about a focus on the struggling subgroups.

In addition to the district's own guiding documents such as the Mission, Strategic Plan, and Mandate for Change noted above, which describe the district's overarching goals, the state and federal education departments have noted the need for improving SPS ELL education. These reviews are based on measurable goals that could become a part of the district's explicit goals for ELLs.

For example, the district's Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education included an English Learner Education section.¹⁰ Based on the findings from this CPR, SPS submitted a Corrective Action Plan addressing English learner education criteria based on legal requirements. These areas of concern, addressed in the CPR, could assist the district to define its goals regarding ELL education, since the district has already delineated individual Action Plans for each criterion listed below, many of which overlap with this report's analysis:

- Annual MEPA R/W and MELA-O testing, parent notification
- Annual MCAS testing, parent notification
- Initial identification policies, procedures, parent notifications, and forms
- Program placement, opt-out, and waiver policies, procedures, parent notifications, and forms
- Transition to core curriculum
- Instructional programs and services
- Licensure, professional development

At the federal level, No Child Left Behind Act reporting requirements include Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. These targets, or goals, are set forth by the state and are measured by ELL progress in gaining English proficiency, attainment of English proficiency and content

¹⁰ MA DESE website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/>.

standards, and adequate yearly progress.¹¹ SPS has not achieved its AMAOs in any of these categories for the last four years. The AMAO goals for SPS are:

- 60% of LEP students show progress on MEPA
- 31% of LEP students score in the upper half of level 4 or in level 5 on the MEPA
- LEP students as a subgroup make adequate yearly progress in ELA and Math MCAS.

Thus, while the district has overarching goals delineated in its strategic plan and ELL goals resulting from state and federal review processes, it has not yet created its ELL-specific goals for schools, teachers, or students.

DISTRICT CONTEXT FOR ELLS

EDUCATIONAL THEORY GUIDING ELL PROGRAMMING

In order to improve education for ELLs, in addition to having explicit goals for ELLs, it is necessary to use the knowledge generated by researchers and practitioners in the fields of language and culture studies to inform the work. In our interviews and document review, we found evidence of individual expertise in aspects of curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development which informs ELL programming. However, we did not find documentation that described the district's educational theory for English language learners, which would frame the district's programming and policies for ELLs. Bringing together the wisdom and experience of the district's practitioners to develop a coherent theory of ELL education, in conjunction with goals for ELLs, would provide the foundation for all ELL policy and programming.

LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION

A district's organizational structure reflects the complexity of its mission, in that accomplishing all of the strategic priorities necessitates the collaboration of multiple roles in multiple departments. An organization's structure also reflects its vision and philosophy about schooling. Since the current superintendent took office in July 2008, the overall leadership organization of the district has changed, including the leadership of English language learner education.¹² English language learning has in the recent past been the responsibility of the Chief of Federal Programs. The role within the Office of Federal Programs has been the Title III Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students Director (also known as the Director of English Language Learners or Title III Senior Administrator). This position has been held by an Acting Director for less than a year and is now vacant.

The district also has a new position of Chief Academic Officer (CAO) as of July 2010. Reporting to the CAO is Senior Administrator for Language Acquisition, Advanced

¹¹ MA DESE web site:

http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/amao/amao_report.aspx?linkid=35&fycode=2009&orgtypecode=5&orgcode=02810000.

¹² The new district organizational structure may be found at:

<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/SPS%20Organizational%20Structure.pdf>.

Placement, and International Baccalaureate. The district is also currently recruiting to fill this position. In the past, this staff person oversaw non-English language acquisition, such as the foreign languages taught in high schools. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate are programs that the district has adopted for certain classes and programs at the high school level and are not related to Language Acquisition, English or foreign.

In August 2010, the superintendent placed the responsibility for ELL education within the Office of Academics, reporting to the Chief Academic Officer. This shift is aligned with research on districts that have been successful with English language learners, in which the office or department overseeing the education of ELLs has the decision-making authority to create academic policies and programs, aligned with the district's vision and goals.¹³

SCHOOLS ON WHICH TO FOCUS ELL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

In addition to the eight ELL Pilot schools designated by the district and visited to inform this report, SPS is currently redesigning ten Level 4 schools that have been chronically underperforming. There is overlap in these schools (as shown in Table 1); five of the Level 4 schools are also ELL Pilot schools. For this report, close attention was paid to the enrollment and outcomes of these twelve schools due to the intense efforts and resources that they are and will be receiving. While this report is about all of the district's schools, when relevant, information about these twelve schools is noted throughout this report. The table below shows each of the schools and whether they are ELL Pilot or Level 4 schools.

Table 1: Springfield Public Schools Level 4 and ELL Pilot Schools

	Level 4 School	ELL Pilot School
Brightwood Elementary	*	*
Brookings Elementary	*	*
Gerena Elementary	*	
Homer Elementary	*	
Johnson Elementary		*
Lincoln Elementary		*
White Street Elementary	*	
Zanetti K-8	*	
Chestnut Middle School	*	*
Kennedy Middle School	*	
Kiley Middle School	*	*
The High School of Commerce	*	*
Science Technology High School		*

¹³ Horwitz, A.R. et al (2009). *Succeeding with English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools*. The Council of Great City Schools. Retrieved from http://www.cgcs.org/publications/ELL_Report09.pdf.

Implications of Findings about District Goals and Context for ELLs

SPS has a new Strategic Plan, Priority Areas, and Key Initiatives guiding its improvement efforts. However, while all of this work does describe district goals, they are not goals specific to the education of ELLs. Explicit ELL education goals, spelled out by the state and federal guidelines, would be useful to the planning and implementation of ELL education. The district also has the challenge of developing a theory and framework for its ELL programming, staffing, and policies. Such a theory would assist the district to develop ELL goals as well as to determine where in the district's organizational structure the responsibility for ELL education lies. Given research that shows that the responsibility for ELL education should be in a district leadership role with decision-making authority about policies regarding teaching and learning, the district's decision to place the ELL department within the Chief Academic Officer's responsibility has positive implications for the improvement of instruction and programming. The healthy collaboration of the district ELL director with other district staff and departments is crucial to implementing ELL policies and programs.

ENROLLMENT

Key Findings

- *24% of SPS students speak a first language other than English.*
- *13% of SPS students are Limited English Proficient.*
- *Spanish is the predominant language spoken by non-native English speakers.*
- *Vietnamese, Somali, and Russian are the next most prevalent language groups.*
- *LEP students have higher rates of poverty than the general population.*
- *Hispanic students account for more than half of the SPS student population but 85% of the LEP population.*
- *Twelve district schools have greater than 20% LEP students*

ENROLLMENT BY LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

The enrollment of the district may be analyzed by students' native language, English proficiency, and English learner program participation. Each group of students is a subset of another group, as shown by the table. All SPS students may be divided into two groups: Native English Speakers (NES), and Native Speakers of Other Languages (NSOL). All SPS NSOL may be divided into two groups, those that are English proficient and those that are deemed Limited English Proficient (LEP), or "not currently able to perform ordinary classwork in English." All LEP students may be divided into those who participate in an EL program and those who opt out of participating in an EL program.

Table 2: Enrollment by Language Background, AY2009^{14,15}

Total	Springfield Public Schools 29,108			
Native Language	NES 22,137 (76%)	NSOL 6,971 (24%)		
Language Proficiency	EP 22,137	NSOL EP 3074 (11%)	LEP 3,897 (13%)	
EL Program Participation	In Gen Ed	In Gen Ed	Opt Out 386 (1.3%)	In EL Program 3511 (12%)

Definitions: NES: Native English Speakers; NSOL: Native Speakers of Other Languages (also referred to as First Language is not English or FLINE); EP: Proficient in English; and LEP: of Limited English Proficiency.

Source: SPS, 2006-2009.

This table shows the population of SPS in AY2009 using this schema of categorization by language background. Numbers outside parentheses represent numbers of students and in parentheses represent the percent of the total population. Twenty-four percent of SPS students speak a first language other than English (row 2). Of those NSOL, 56% are LEP students. Of the LEP students, 90% are in EL programs.

In analyses of four years of data (AY2006-2009), the total population of SPS has fluctuated slightly while the proportion of NSOL has increased steadily, from 21% to 24% in the time period studied. Simultaneously, the number of LEP students in the district remained around 4000 students (13-14%).

Table 3: NSOL and LEP as Proportions of SPS Enrollment

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total	28,241	29,178	27,894	29,108
% NSOL of Total	21	22	24	24
% LEP of Total	14	14	13	13
% LEP of NSOL	69	63	54	56

¹⁴ The data used to derive these numbers may differ from published numbers because this report's analysis includes all students who were enrolled in SPS in AY2009, including those who were enrolled for less than the entire school year, such as transfers out of the district and dropouts.

¹⁵ This scheme is described in more detail in Uriarte, M and Tung, R (2009). *English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools in the Aftermath of Policy Change: Enrollment and Educational Outcomes, AY2003-AY2006*. Boston: Gaston Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.gaston.umb.edu/>.

NATIVE LANGUAGES OF SPS STUDENTS

The four most commonly spoken native languages in SPS, regardless of English proficiency, are Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali, and Russian.

Table 4: Most Prevalent First Languages

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	18.85	20.49	21.35	21.54
Vietnamese	0.73	0.77	0.88	0.91
Somali	0.30	0.32	0.44	0.50
Russian	0.18	0.17	0.13	0.13

Spanish is the most prevalent non-English language, spoken by more than one fifth of SPS students (22%). The proportion of SPS NSOL who are native Spanish speakers has increased during the study period, from 19% to 22%.

Vietnamese, Somali, and Russian are spoken by less than 1% of all SPS students each. Both Vietnamese and Somali native speaking subgroups are growing in SPS, while the Russian subgroup is declining.

Analysis of the proportion of these native speakers of other languages who are already English proficient and those who are still learning English reveals differences among NSOL groups. The next two tables show that Vietnamese students are disproportionately English proficient while Somali students are disproportionately LEP. This disaggregation also confirms that Somali immigrants are increasing and Russian immigrants decreasing as groups in SPS.

Table 5: Most Prevalent First Languages as a Proportion of NSOL EP¹⁶

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	87.2	88.9	89.0	88.5
Vietnamese	5.4	5.0	5.4	5.6
Somali	–	–	–	0.4
Russian	1.4	1.3	0.9	1.0

Table 6: Most Prevalent First Languages as a Proportion of LEP

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	91.9	92.5	91.8	91.0
Vietnamese	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.3
Somali	2.1	2.2	3.2	3.5
Russian	0.6	0.4	–	–

¹⁶ When there are fewer than 10 students in a cell, outcomes are not shown (–).

LOW-INCOME STATUS

Low income status is defined as students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. A comparison of SPS students by language background over time shows that NSOL students have higher rates of low income status than the general population, and LEP students as a subgroup of NSOL students have even higher rates of poverty than NSOL students. Rates for each grouping and by grade level were relatively stable over time and thus are not shown.

Table 7: Low Income Status by Language Background

	2006	2007	2008	2009
All SPS	77	78	80	78
NSOL	90	89	91	89
LEP	92	91	92	90

RACE-ETHNICITY

Race/ethnicity in SPS included for 5 of 7 major categories collected by ESE. The only ones with less than 0.1% were “American Indian or Native Alaskan” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.” The table below shows the racial/ethnic breakdown of SPS students. The largest racial/ethnic group in SPS is Hispanic and the second largest is Black/African American. The size of the groups remained relatively stable over time, with slight growth in the Hispanic groups, and slight reduction in the White and Black/African American groups.

While Hispanic students accounted for about half of the overall SPS student population, they accounted for more than 80% of NSOL and LEP groups each year. The fact that only 13% of SPS students are LEP may be puzzling and could be explained by the fact that many Hispanic students are not newcomers and are proficient in English. The growth in the Black/African American NSOL and LEP populations may be due to new African immigrant groups entering the school system, a hypothesis supported by the analysis of native languages in SPS over these years (Somali and other African languages).

Table 8: Race/Ethnicity by Language Background

	2006			2007			2008			2009		
	All SPS	NSOL	LEP									
White	18	4	4	18	5	5	17	4	4	16	4	4
Black/African American	25	5	6	25	6	8	24	6	8	23	6	7
Asian	2	5	3	2	5	4	2	5	3	2	5	4
Multi-Race	4	1	2	4	2	2	4	1	1	4	1	1
Hispanic	51	85	86	50	82	82	54	84	84	55	84	84

LEP ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL

Schools in Springfield range in the proportion of students who are LEP that they enroll. The school with the highest LEP proportion is Brightwood, with 35.6% LEP students, followed by Lincoln with 25.6% LEP students. Twelve schools have greater than 20% LEP students. Five out of the ten Level 4 schools are in this group, and five out of the eight ELL Pilot schools are in this group. Given the disproportionate number of LEP students who are low-income, these twelve schools with high concentrations of LEP students also face the challenges associated with concentrated poverty. Sixteen schools have less than 10% LEP students; these schools will be referred to as the low incidence LEP schools.

Table 9: SPS Schools by Percent LEP

% LEP					
High Proportion		Medium Proportion		Low Porportion	
Brightwood***	36	Brunton	18	Putnam	9
Lincoln**	26	Science Tech**	17	Academy for Excellence	9
Gerena*	24	Homer*	16	Central High	8
White Street*	23	Boland	16	STEM	7
DeBerry	23	Bowles	15	Zanetti*	7
Bradley	22	Glenwood	15	Dryden Memorial	7
Johnson**	22	Pottenger	14	Duggan	6
Chestnut***	21	DISTRICT	13	Liberty	4
Kensington	21	Forest Park	13	Springfield Renaissance	3
Brookings***	20	Sumner	13	Beal	3
Walsh	20	Kiley***	13	Glickman	2
Washington	20	Commerce***	13	Balliet	2
		Van Sickle	12	Dorman	2
		Freedman	12	Ells	1
		Indian Orchard	12	Talmadge	1
		Harris	11	Warner	0
		JF Kennedy*	11		
		Lynch	11		

*Level 4 school, **ELL Pilot school, ***Level 4 and ELL Pilot school

Implications of Enrollment Findings

Almost one quarter of Springfield Public School students are native speakers of other languages, and more than half of these students are deemed limited English proficient. The vast majority of students who are LEP are native Spanish speakers (89%), which means that a focus on developing resources, staffing, and programming for students from Spanish speaking backgrounds and culture could make a significant difference for many LEP students. In addition, attention to Vietnamese and Somali student enrollment, assignment, and outcomes is warranted as these groups are increasing and speak the next highest native languages in the district. LEP students are concentrated in a dozen district schools; these schools with high LEP populations should be the sites of new support and interventions.

IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Key Findings

- *The identification of ELLs new to SPS relies on outdated processes, forms, and individuals. A system of ELL identification is not documented, digitized, or accessible to more than a few district staff.*
- *The district lacks staff people at the Parent Information Centers who speak a language other than English or Spanish.*
- *Legally required parent notifications about rights, assessment results, and program options are not systematically communicated in a language that the parents understand and stored in a way that is accessible to district and school staff.*
- *The proportion of NSOL students identified as LEP is decreasing over time at middle and high school grades, while the proportion of NSOL students in the district has increased over the same time period. This data suggests that NSOL students are increasingly under-identified as LEP.*

PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION

Through interviews, it is clear that the district has a process of ELL identification that relies on a few key long-time staff members at the district and the Parent Information Center. These district staff members were able to share the process of ELL identification with us. The district does not have its process of identification documented in written or electronic form.

All parents/guardians of students entering the district complete the registration process and an intake form. If on the intake form a family speaks a language other than English at home, they are asked to complete an extensive home language survey. They are also asked to have their students tested for English language proficiency at the parent information center. One person in the district is trained to provide the English language proficiency test at entry. If this part-time tester is present, this test is administered at registration. If not, a date is scheduled for the family to return. The tests used are the Bilingual Syntax Measure I for K-2 and Bilingual Syntax Measure II for 3-12. These tests were published in 1977 and are given in Spanish and English. For those entering students whose first language is not Spanish or English, the test is given in English.

The decision about whether or not a student is LEP should take into account additional information about the student's prior schooling and language, such as grades, assessment data, and teacher reports. However, this information is not collected nor used consistently in making LEP designations.

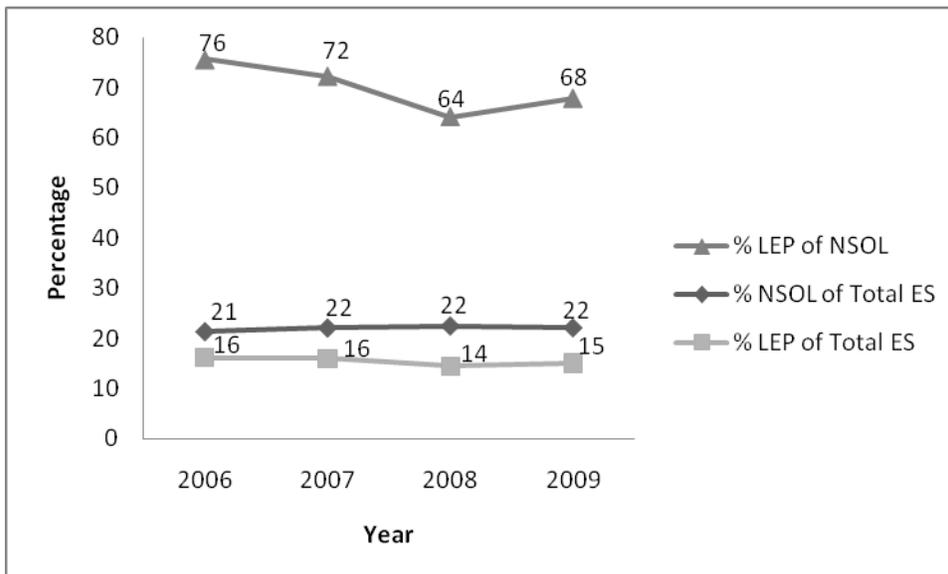
When a student enrolls in the district, language proficiency test results and recommended EL program placement are discussed with parents. Parents then choose a program option or choose to "opt out" of ELL programming, meaning they

understand what the programming would provide to their student and choose to place their student in mainstream, regular classrooms. All forms and test results are reported to be collected and then sent to the student's assigned school. However, we were unable to review such documentation at the district level.

DATA ON IDENTIFICATION

LEP enrollment figures in the aggregate were presented in the previous section on enrollment; LEP students represent about 13% of the students in SPS. In order to understand LEP enrollment by grade span, analysis of LEP enrollment was conducted separately for elementary, middle, and high schools to determine if there were differences in the proportion of LEP students at each grade level. Elementary students account for about half of SPS students. NSOL students account for about 22% of all elementary grade students. LEP students account for about 15% of all elementary grade students. These numbers were stable for the four years of the study. However, the percent of NSOL students who were LEP declined eight percentage points, suggesting either that more NSOL students truly entered the district as English proficient that they were not English proficient and mis-identified as EP.

Figure 1: Proportions of Elementary Grade Students by Language Background



Middle and high schools enroll about 22% and 28% of SPS students, respectively. In 2009, NSOL students account for about 28% and 24% of SPS students, respectively. These proportions have been rising steadily over time, in contrast to the elementary school NSOL enrollment. However, the proportion of LEP students in SPS has remained relatively steady, while the proportion of LEP students among NSOL has declined sharply over time.

This decline suggests again either an NSOL population moving to Springfield that is already English proficient or an under-identification of students as LEP. While the

scope of this report did not allow for determining which of these possibilities is correct, given the trends from other urban districts for LEP under-identification and the disproportionately low income status of SPS LEP students, we hypothesize that this data shows an under-identification of NSOL students as LEP.

Figure 2: Proportions of Middle Grade Students by Language Background

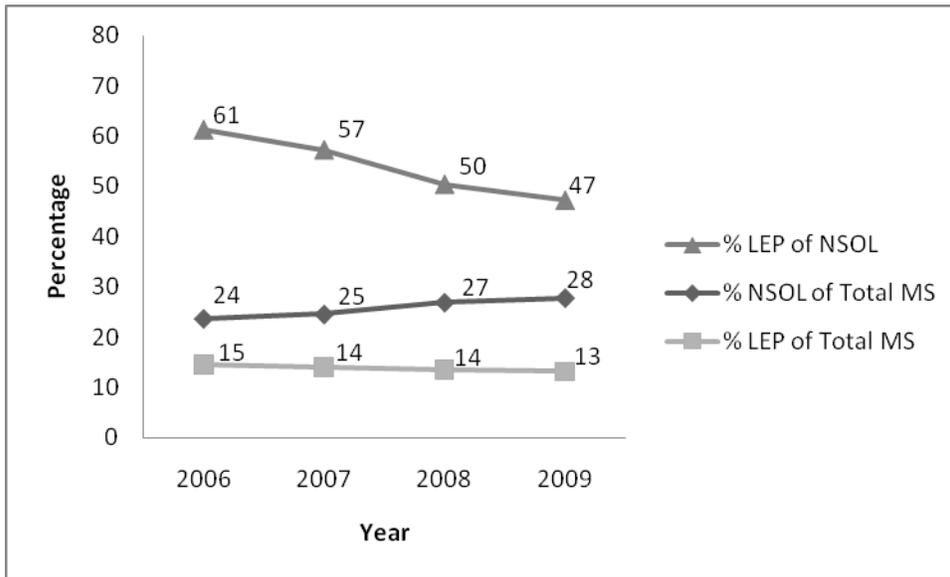
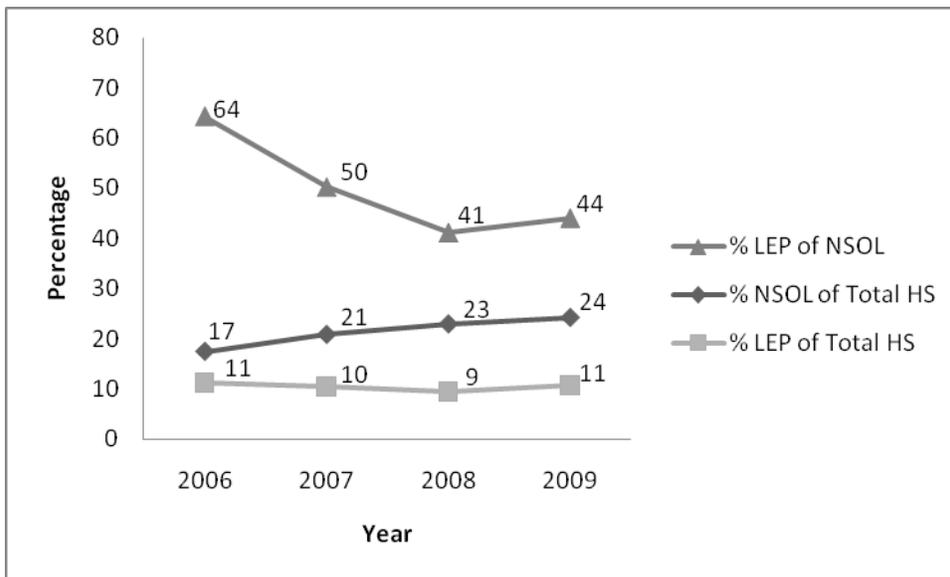


Figure 3: Proportions of High School Grade Students by Language Background



Implications of ELL Identification Findings

Identification of students as limited English proficient is one of the most important steps at which the district may begin to improve its ELL outcomes. Our interviews revealed that the ELL identification process is clear in the minds of a few key district staff but not yet systematized or documented in a way that is accessible to others. Dependence on individuals may result in missed assessment opportunities or under-identification of students as LEP. Review of the data on the identification of SPS students as Limited English Proficient suggested an increase of native speakers of other languages in the district over the last four years, concomitant with a decrease in identification of NSOL students as LEP, particularly at the secondary level. Late entrant ELLs are a group at high risk for dropping out of school.¹⁷ If these students are not identified as LEP, they are not receiving services. One clear solution to the challenge of accurate identification, with significant implications for programming and for outcomes, is to codify the process for initial intake, assessment, and school assignment.

¹⁷ The Parthenon Group (June 2007). *Strategic Planning to Serve Off-Track Youth*. Unpublished Presentation. Author.

PLACEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Key Findings

- *There is one English Learner program offered by the district, English as a Second Language with sheltered content instruction (SEI).*
- *The rate of families opting out of English learner programs in SPS has remained 9% over the last four years. There was no documentation of an academic monitoring process for these students.*
- *Many LEP students whose native language is not Spanish attend schools in groups of 1-10 students and are therefore isolated by language.*
- *LEP students were in special education at higher rates than English proficient students. The LEP disproportionality in special education was more pronounced for students with substantially separate special needs than for students who are in inclusion settings.*
- *Fifteen schools had more than twice the rate of participation in substantially separate special education for LEP students as EP students.*

SHELTERED ENGLISH INSTRUCTION IN CONTENT (SEI)

There is one EL program in SPS – called Sheltered English Instruction, or SEI. SEI is an approach to teaching academic content to English language learners. It is not a formal program. In SEI, students who are Limited English Proficient are provided content instruction in English, with clarification in the student's native language when possible or needed.

The waiver process, which allows families to waive their right to SEI, also provides opportunities for the district to put into place other English learner programs such as transitional bilingual education and two-way bilingual education. We did not find evidence of a waiver process being used in SPS. Thus, all LEP students are coded as either in SEI or opted out of SEI. LEP students who opt out are in general education. These LEP students are still entitled to English language learner services even if they are not in an EL program. The district must monitor these students as closely as they monitor those in EL programs. We found no evidence of the monitoring of LEP students in general education.

ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Not only did LEP enrollment stay relatively stable during the study period, the proportion of students in the district program for ELLs was also stable. Each year, about 90% of LEP students were in SEI, while about 10% of LEP students opted out of SEI.

Table 10: LEP Student Enrollment in EL Program

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total	28,241	29,178	27,894	29,108
LEP	4,079	4,117	3,582	3,897
% of LEP in SEI	91	92	91	90
% of LEP Who Opted Out of SEI	9	8	9	10

Disaggregation by grade span (not shown) revealed that SEI participation rates were highest at the high school level, with 92-94% of LEP students in SEI. These participation rates were also stable.

Analysis of the enrollment in EL programs in the ELL Pilot schools and Level 4 schools showed that while most had high proportions of LEP students, their LEP students enrolled and opted out at a rate that was commensurate with the district average of 10% (as shown in Table 11). Only three schools had slightly higher opt-out rates.

Table 11: LEP Student Enrollment in EL programs in Level 4 and ELL Pilot Schools

	Sheltered English Immersion	LEP: Opt Out of ELL
Brightwood***	90	10
Brookings***	91	9
Johnson**	91	9
Homer*	90	10
Zanetti*	90	10
Lincoln**	89	11
White Street *	94	6
Gerena*	93	7
Chestnut***	90	10
JF Kennedy*	87	13
Kiley***	89	11
Commerce***	91	9
Science Tech**	94	6
Total	90	10

*Level 4 school, **ELL Pilot school, ***Level 4 and ELL Pilot school

The district did not share a parent opt-out letter explaining the ramifications of such a decision. More analysis must be conducted to determine whether or not there are patterns in the students who opt out and their reasons for opting out. Such analysis is crucial to understanding this significant proportion of ELLs.

Analysis of the LEP student distribution in SPS schools by native language showed that for languages other than Spanish, students are distributed in groups of 1-10 students per school. Thus, many LEP students tend to be isolated by language. A few schools seem to be "magnets" for certain language groups, as determined by the numbers of LEP students who speak the same native language. Brightwood, Johnson, Harris, and Commerce each serve more than 10 native Somali speakers.

Washington, White, and Central serve the greatest numbers of native Vietnamese speakers. When students are not grouped by native language, there is little ability to tailor instruction or staff accordingly.

Some schools have no formal ELL program. It was important to determine if those schools had significant numbers of LEP students. Schools that have no formal ELL program include:

- Balliet
- Dorman
- Ells
- Glickman
- Liberty
- Talmadge
- Beal
- Warner

The 2009 data show that there are a few students coded as LEP in these schools, and that most but not all of the LEP students in these schools opt out. None of these schools are Level 4 schools or ELL Pilot schools.

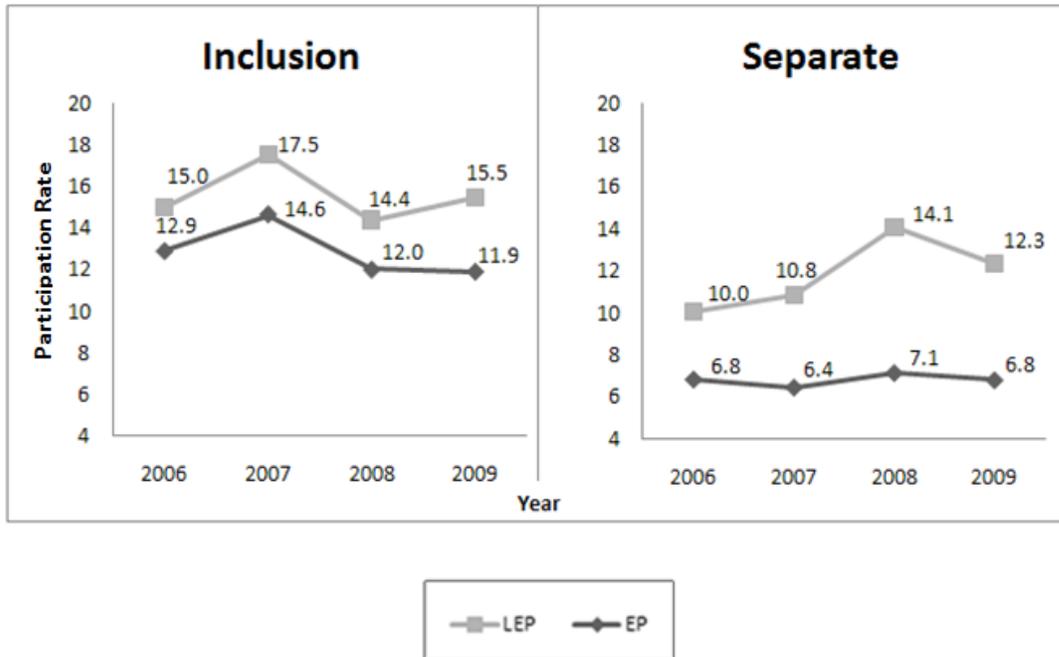
SPECIAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Recent studies have found that LEP student participation in special education occurs at a higher rate than the general population.¹⁸ Possible reasons for this disproportionality include a lack of knowledge about language acquisition or student culture, teacher frustration at the pace of English acquisition, or the intent of providing more intensive support for ELLs. Analyses of the district's LEP student enrollment compared with all English proficient students (Native English speakers and Native speakers of other languages who are English proficient) are presented in Figures 4-7. Students with special needs were grouped by their level of inclusion. Students who were included in mainstream classrooms for full or partial days were grouped as "Inclusion," while students who were grouped in substantially separate classrooms were grouped as "Separate." Students who attended facilities outside of the district were not included.

All four years of data showed that LEP students were in special education at higher rates than English proficient students. The disproportionality in LEP participation was more pronounced for students with substantially separate special needs, with almost twice the proportion of LEP students requiring substantially separate placement than EP students (12% compared to 7%).

¹⁸ English Language Learners Sub-committee Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2009). *Halting the Race to the Bottom: Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts*. Retrieved from http://www.gaston.umb.edu/articles/1-09_HaltingRace_GastonSite.pdf and Tung, et al. (2009). *English learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment, engagement, and academic outcomes, AY2003-AY2006*. Final Report. Boston: Gaston Institute. Retrieved from http://www.gaston.umb.edu/articles/2009%20Final%20ELL%20Report_online.pdf.

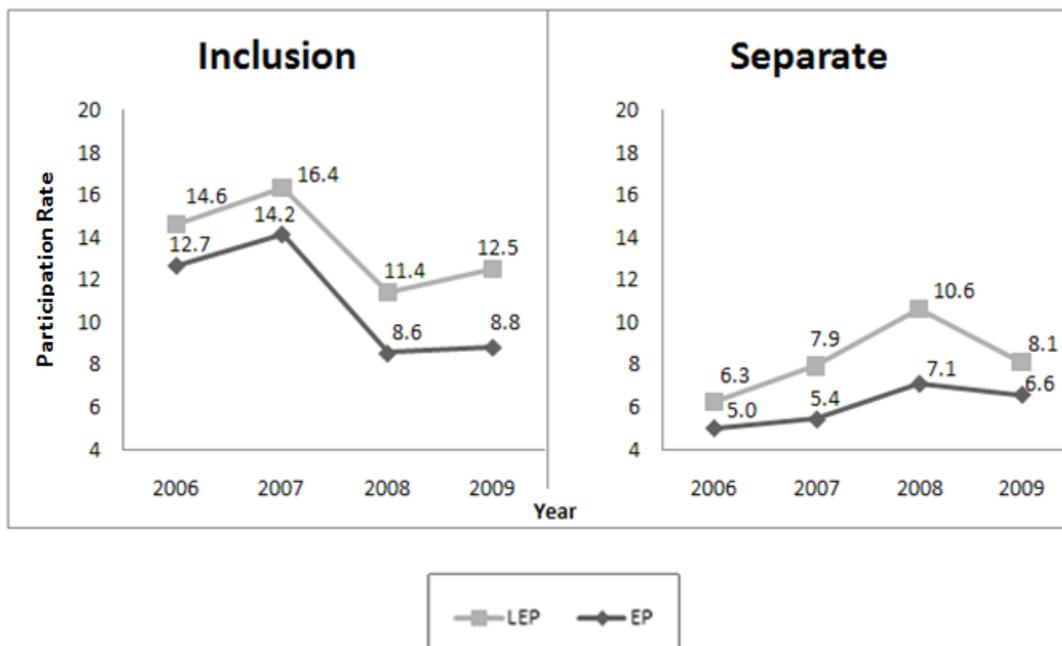
Figure 4: Special Education Participation by LEP Status K-12



SPECIAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

Closer examination of the enrollment of LEP students in special education reveals differences in their placement rates by grade level. In grades K-5, enrollment of LEP students in inclusion and substantially separate special education mirrored the overall district patterns, with LEP students identified for special education services at higher rates than EP students, and with inclusion rates dropping slightly while separate rates increased slightly over the study period.

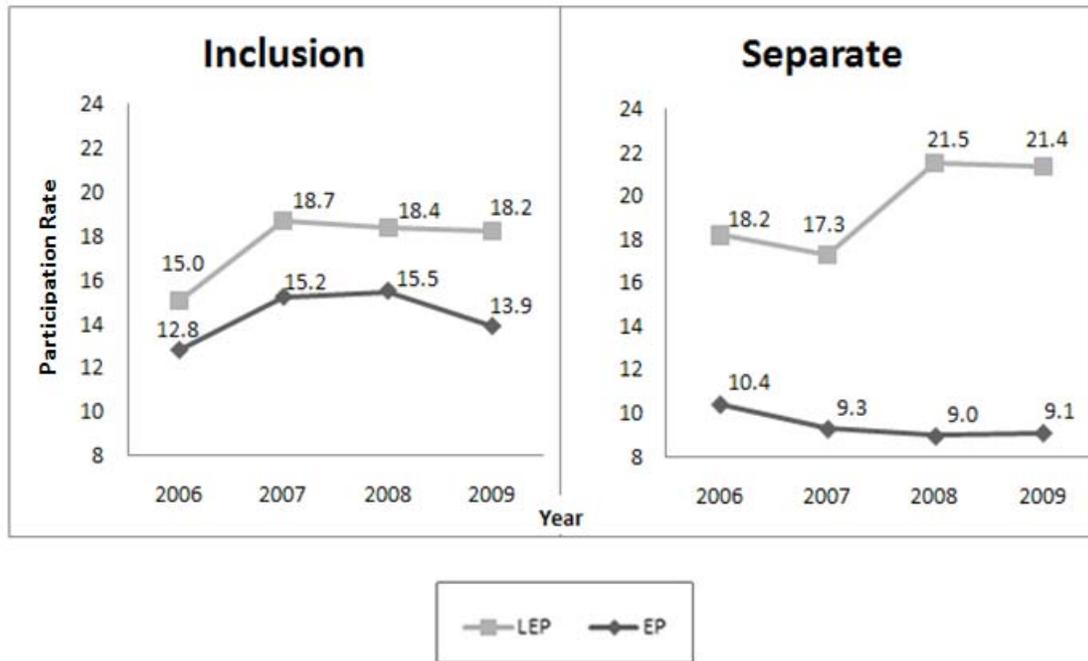
Figure 5: Special Education Participation by LEP Status in Elementary Grades



SPECIAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION IN MIDDLE GRADES

The data at the middle grades revealed overall higher rates of special education enrollment than at elementary grades. For students with special needs in inclusion settings, LEP students were disproportionately represented, and their participation rates grew more over the study period than did EP students in inclusion settings. In substantially separate special education, the disproportionality between LEP and EP was stark and growing. While EP participation rates dropped slightly, LEP participation rates increased, widening the gap. In 2009, LEP students participated at twice the rate of EP students in substantially separate special education. More than one in five LEP students were in substantially separate settings that year.

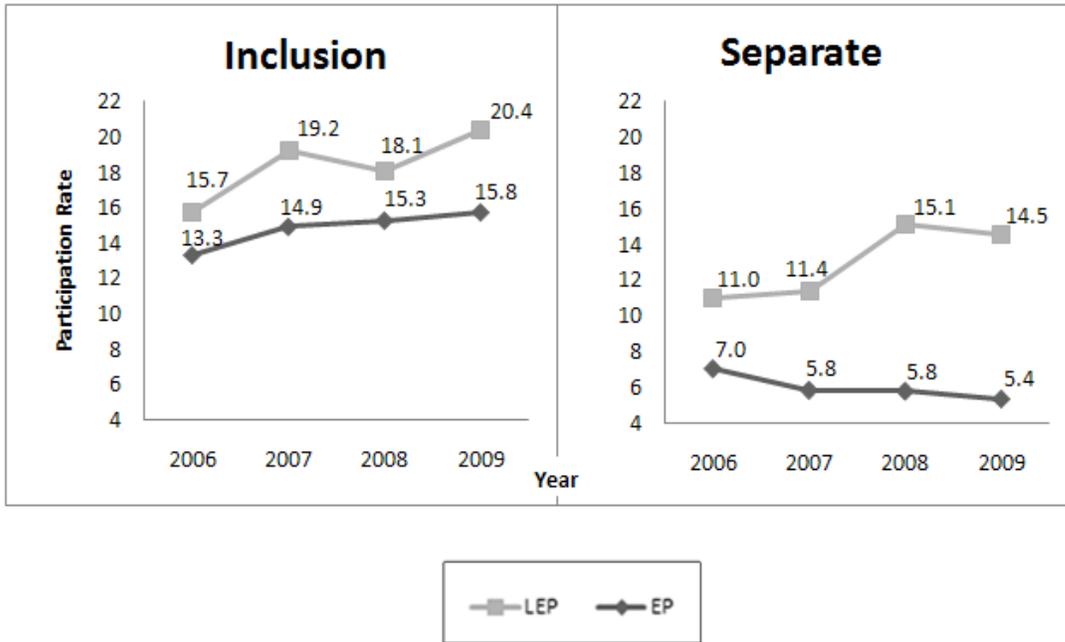
Figure 6: Special Education Participation by LEP Status in Middle School Grades



SPECIAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

In the high school grades, rates of participation in inclusion special education increased for both EP and LEP students, but the gap between the two groups widened to five percentage points. In substantially separate settings, the rate of participation among EP students declined over the study period, while the rate of participation among LEP students increased, resulting in a 9 percentage point gap between EP and LEP substantially separate special education participation.

Figure 7: Special Education Participation by LEP Status in High School Grades



SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPROPORTIONALITY BY SCHOOL

In order to understand rates of special education participation at individual schools, particularly the ELL Pilot schools and the Level 4 schools, we computed a ratio of LEP participation:EP participation in the two special education settings. If the ratio was greater than 1, the LEP participation in special education was higher than EP participation. If the ratio was less than 1, the opposite was true. Disproportionality is defined as having a ratio of 1.5 or more in this report.

For inclusion, we found that the ratio of LEP/EP ranged from 0 (these schools do not have LEP students) to 2.9 (not shown). Twenty of the district's 45 schools had LEP/EP participation ratio of 1.5 or greater, and nine schools had more than twice the rate of participation in inclusion special education for LEP students as EP students (high disproportionality). There was no trend in disproportionality for ELL pilot and Level 4 schools.

Disproportionality was more pronounced in substantially separate special education programs, with the ratio of LEP/EP ranging from 0 to 9 and one outlier at 31. Twenty-five of the district's schools had LEP/EP participation ratio of 1.5 or greater, and fifteen schools had more than twice the rate of participation in substantially separate special education for LEP students as EP students. Of the thirteen schools that are ELL Pilot and/or Level 4, eleven had a participation ratio of 1.5 or greater. Clearly, LEP participation in special education at high rates is a district-wide challenge.

Table 12: LEP/EP Participation Ratios in Substantially Separate Special Education Programs, 2009

	Ratio		Ratio
Zanetti*	30.68	Brookings***	1.54
STEM	8.76	Duggan	1.53
Ells	5.75	Boland	1.44
Balliet	5.61	Central High	1.14
Beal	4.86	Sumner	1.08
Bowles	4.16	Dryden Memorial	1.05
Lynch	3.57	Pottenger	1.01
Putnam	3.49	Warner	1.00
Academy for Excellence	3.18	Indian Orchard	0.99
Science Tech**	2.95	Walsh	0.93
Brunton	2.79	Johnson**	0.75
JF Kennedy*	2.43	Glenwood	0.73
Kiley***	2.40	Washington	0.58
Chestnut***	2.33	Harris	0.56
Van Sickle	2.09	Gerena*	0.50
Forest Park	1.93	DeBerry	0.48
Bradley	1.90	Kensington	0.44
Homer*	1.88	Dorman	0.00
White Street*	1.80	Freedman	0.00
Lincoln**	1.74	Liberty	0.00
Commerce***	1.70	Springfield Renaissance	0.00
Brightwood***	1.61	Talmadge	0.00
Glickman	1.54		

*Level 4 school, **ELL Pilot school, ***Level 4 and ELL Pilot school

Implications of Findings from Program Placement in SEI and Special Education

The placement of ELLs in schools with SEI classrooms or programs occurred at a consistent rate of about 91% of LEP students over the last four years, with 9% of LEP students opting out of SEI. Understanding the motivations for opting out and the outcomes of this significant proportion of LEP students is important to educating all LEP students. Almost all schools had native Spanish speaking LEP students in SEI classrooms, while other LEP students were linguistically isolated; this wide distribution of small groups of LEP students across district schools has implications for scheduling and staffing. Certain schools serve greater numbers of Somali and Vietnamese students and appear to be magnets for these students. Formal designation of language specific sites for SEI programs would allow more targeted staffing with bilingual, bicultural teachers who speak Somali or Vietnamese.

The rate of placement of ELLs in special education is higher than for EP students across grade levels. Disproportionate enrollment of ELLs in special education is greatest and rising in the secondary grades, particularly in substantially separate settings. Understanding patterns of special education placement and mis-placement, providing professional development to school staff on placement and how to provide special education to students, and hiring staff who are bilingual, ESL licensed, and special education certified would all begin to address this disproportionality.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Key Findings

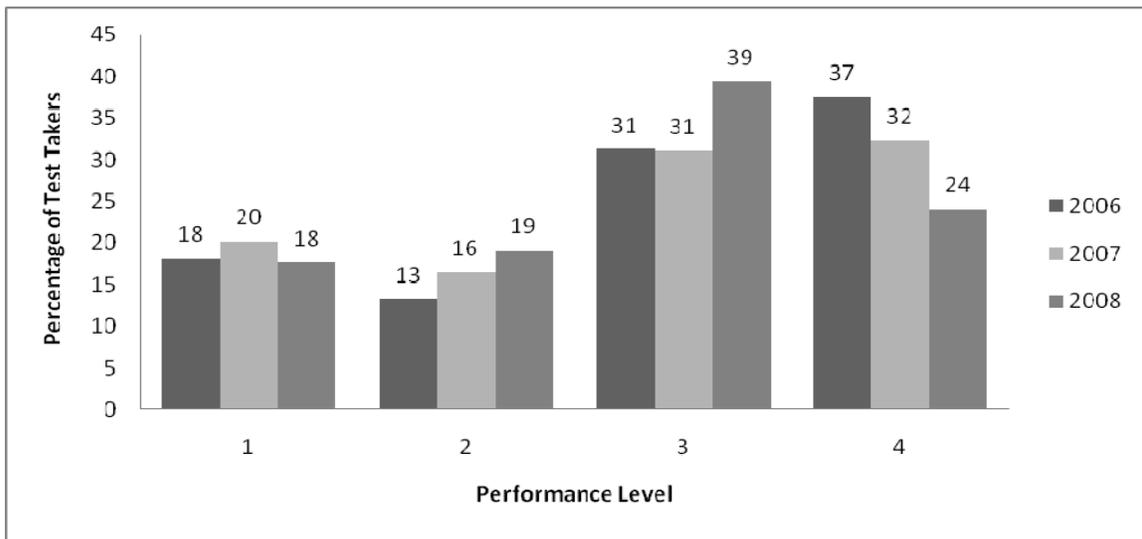
- MEPA sub-scores in Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking declined in every category from 2006 to 2009.
- MEPA sub-scores in Reading and Writing, necessary for learning academic content, were significantly lower than in Listening and Speaking each year, a fact masked by the aggregate scaled scores.
- Somali ELLs score disproportionately in the lowest performance levels of the MEPA.
- A significant number of LEP students do not take the MEPA exam annually, which has implications for reporting, programming, and instruction.

MEPA PERFORMANCE LEVELS

State and federal regulations require annual testing of English proficiency using the MEPA R/W for reading and writing and the MELA-O for listening and speaking.¹⁹ These standardized tests must be administered by trained testers. The sub-scores are combined into a performance level for each student who has taken the test. Performance levels were divided into four levels in 2006, 2007, and 2008, and they are currently divided into five levels starting in 2009. The levels are not equated nor comparable across years, so we report them separately throughout this report.

In 2006-2008, greater proportions of SPS LEP students who took the MEPA/MELA-O scored in the higher performance levels than the lower ones. However, decreasing proportions of students scored in level 4 over the three years.

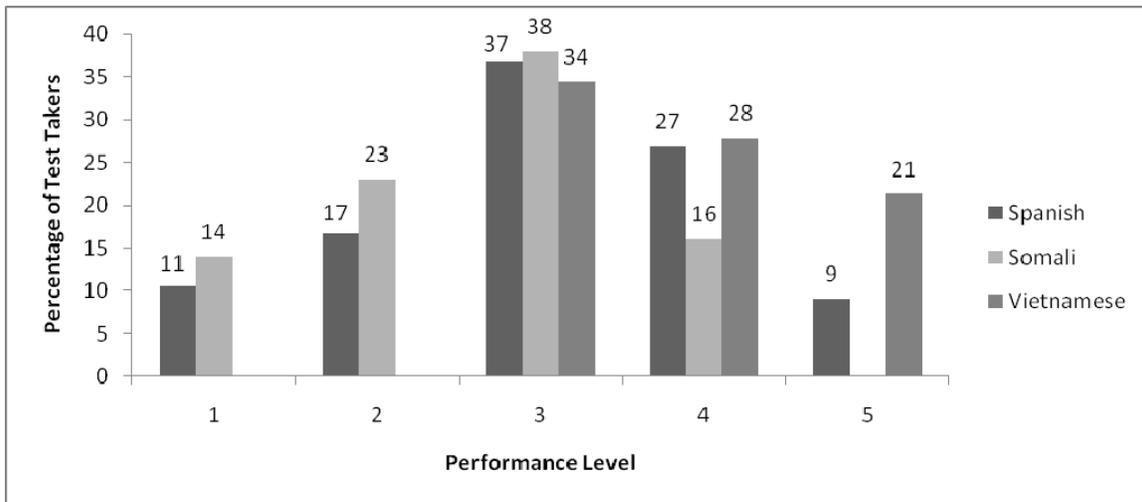
Figure 8: MEPA Performance Levels of LEP Test Takers, AY2006-2008



¹⁹ More information about the MEPA test may be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/>.

In analyzing the distribution of students in MEPA performance levels by LEP native languages for 2009, there are clear differences in each group's English proficiency levels. These differences reflect the data in 2006-2008 (not shown). Compared to the average LEP test taker, greater proportions of Somali students score in the lower performance levels and greater proportions of Vietnamese students score in the highest level. Our interviews suggested that many Somali students came to SPS with limited formal education due to disruptions in their schooling caused by the country's war, relocation to refugee camps, and immigration to the US.

Figure 9: MEPA Performance Levels of LEP Test Takers by First Language, AY 2009²⁰



MEPA SUB-SCORES

The MEPA scaled score is derived from four sub-scores (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Each category has a different total score, so to standardize, we report points scored out of the total possible points, listed here:

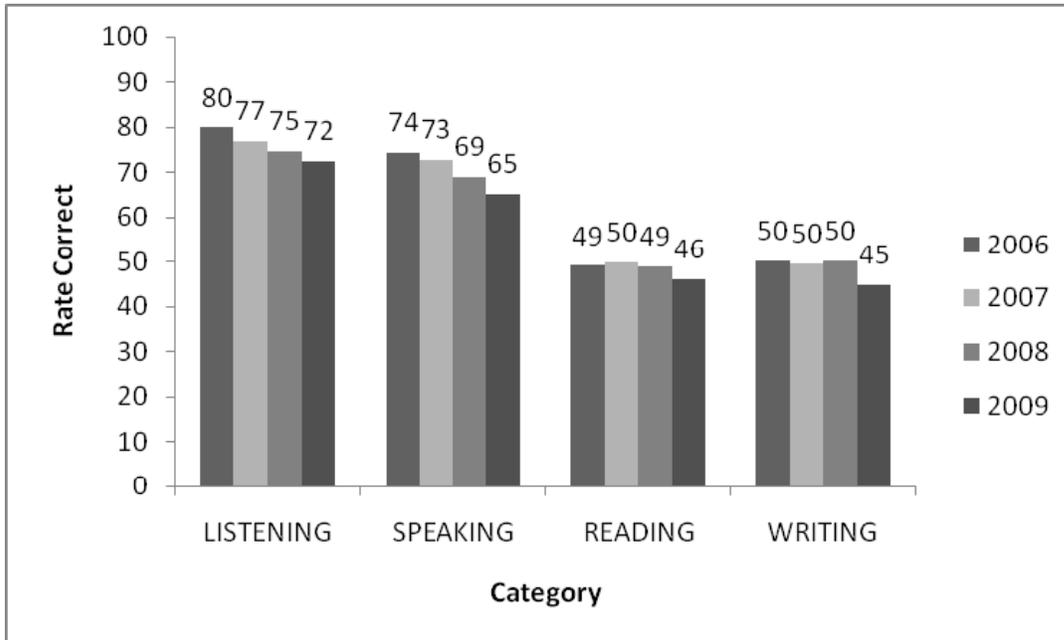
- Listening: 5 points
- Speaking: 20 points
- Reading: 30 points
- Writing: 30 points

Thus, an average sub-score of 4 points for Listening was converted to 80% correct. Student scores declined in every category from 2006 to 2009, as did the scaled score. Student sub-scores in Reading and Writing were significantly lower than in Listening and Speaking. Students achieved less than half of the points available for Reading and Writing. This disaggregation is important and the outcomes significant in terms of implications for the teaching and learning program, because students must be able to read and write English proficiently in order to make academic gains. There are several hypotheses for the steady decline in MEPA scores, including fewer students at the higher MEPA levels taking the test annually (see next section), changes in the backgrounds of LEP students, such as having little formal education or

²⁰ When there are fewer than 10 students in a group, outcomes are not shown.

being late newcomers to the US. More analysis of data, disaggregated by grade level, language background, or school is needed to understand the decline in MEPA outcomes over time.

Figure 10: MEPA Sub-scores



ANNUAL ADMINISTRATION OF MEPA

In analyzing MEPA scores, we found that each year, more students were identified as LEP than had MEPA scores for that year. In 2009, 81% of LEP students had a MEPA score. In the three years previous, the proportions of LEP students with MEPA scores were lower.

Table 13: Percent of LEP Students with MEPA Scores, AY2006-2009

	2006	2007	2008	2009
% LEP with MEPA Score	77	70	73	81
Total LEP Enrollment for Grades Tested	2371	2379	2028	3024

Understanding why MEPA participation rates are low is important to correcting the problem.²¹ While some of the nonparticipation could be due to high LEP student mobility or low student motivation to take the test or to take it seriously, another reason could be the lack of guidance or mandates from the district to have high participation rates, analogous to NCLB mandates for high participation rates in MCAS testing. Without annual MEPA participation, there is a loss of accuracy in determining which students are LEP, in SEI, or opt out; and loss of accuracy in reporting

²¹ One factor explaining part of the missing MEPA scores is that the data provided CCE was for the Spring MEPA administration. Fall MEPA administration data for each year was not available.

educational outcomes by English proficiency level. The lack of information affects SEI programming; teachers do not have access to current data about the English proficiency levels of their students or their progress in attaining proficiency.

With the data currently available, despite missing MEPA scores, it is clear that MEPA progress and attainment have not met the federal standards for multiple years, as reported by the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.²²

Implications of Findings about Annual Assessment of LEP Students

In summary, MEPA data analysis shows that annual administration of MEPA could improve in SPS. Combined with previously shown data that LEP identification has decreased and substantially separate special education placement has increased, it is important to have an accurate picture of LEP performance levels through consistent annual high participation rates in MEPA. This information should be used for instructional programming as well as for monitoring. For those LEP students who did take the MEPA, we found that Somali ELLs scored disproportionately in the lower performance levels while Vietnamese ELLs scored disproportionately in the highest performance level. Given the increase in the Somali student population over the study years, developing a plan of action for this ELL group is important.

²² AMAO report for Springfield may be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/amao/2009/>.

RECLASSIFICATION AND TRANSITION TO CORE CURRICULUM

Key Findings

- *Information on LEP students who have made the transition to core curriculum (FLEP) is not kept electronically, except in a separate file that indicates that they are FLEP.*
- *The process for transition and monitoring of students who have transitioned is not documented. Without documentation of the process, implementation happens inconsistently and is difficult to track.*
- *There is no district guidance on FLEP monitoring and what happens when a student is not making academic progress.*

When a student is deemed able to perform ordinary classwork in English, s/he may be evaluated and determined to be English proficient. Guidance on the decision to reclassify a student from LEP to EP may be found from the state.²³

Students who transition from LEP to EP are termed Formerly LEP, or FLEP. By state and federal mandate, FLEP students must be monitored for two years after transition for academic progress. Interviews with district staff indicate that this FLEP monitoring process is neither documented nor consistently implemented.

We received FLEP data in a separate file. This file listed all students who were FLEP during the study years. However, their assessment results before and after reclassification have been difficult to analyze because of the way the data is kept.

In understanding educational outcomes for students who have been reclassified as FLEP, analysis of data about their MEPA and MCAS outcomes before and after reclassification is important, as well as their attendance, suspension, and dropout rates. This information is not reported at the district level nor to school administrators. Without this type of reporting several times a year, appropriate interventions for FLEP students not making academic progress cannot be designed nor implemented.

Implications of Findings About Reclassification

Without FLEP criteria, transition process, and required documentation shared systematically at the district and school levels, analysis of outcomes for reclassified students is not possible. The district needs to codify and mandate a reclassification process that makes data for each FLEP student accessible to the appropriate district staff people. Through this tracking system, identification of FLEP students in need of additional academic support is possible. The district must then develop a plan of support for each FLEP student.

²³ LEP reclassification guidance may be found at:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/results.html?yr=2009>.

INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Key Findings

- *There is inconsistency in the implementation of curriculum and instructional strategies for ELLs across classrooms, with low levels of rigor and expectations observed.*
- *The district does not have a coherent framework for literacy; rather, elements of a literacy approach reside in many different documents authored by various district departments.*
- *The district Pupil Progression Plan does not contain specific information about the placement, course sequence, ESL instruction, and teacher qualifications for ELLs at each MEPA level and grade level.*

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION IN SPS

The research literature linking instructional practices for ELLs to their academic achievement discusses English acquisition as well as academic content learning. To learn English, students must be taught English directly and have the opportunity to engage in genuine communication in English. To learn academic content, ELL students need clear and well-paced instruction, vocabulary building, multiple modes of presenting new content, challenging and scaffolded curricula, and instruction which allows students to practice and apply new learning with each other and the teacher. ELL students also need modifications such as use of the native language for explanation, time for extended interactions with teacher and peers, and multiple exposures to and representations of new words.

In a 2009 report, the Equity Center reported inconsistency in the curriculum, implementation of instructional strategies, and support from consultants and coaches across the ELL Pilot schools. In some cases, there were inadequate materials and knowledge among teachers for how to teach ELLs. The report also recommended differentiated instruction as a topic for professional development.

The need for differentiated instruction training was confirmed when we visited the schools. In addition, teachers requested support for implementing specific instructional strategies through modeling, practice, observation, and debrief cycles. Some strategies they named were developing learning centers, using multiple modalities, and questioning to elicit higher order skills, all of which are important aspects of educating ELLs. While a co-teaching structure was in place in some schools, teachers noted a need for professional development in effective models of co-teaching.

Classroom observations revealed that the dominant mode of instruction across schools was whole group instruction with teacher talk and low-level questioning of students. There was little student-to-student talk, which research shows to be an important aspect of English acquisition and content learning. While most

teachers did speak slowly and repeat words and instructions, as well as use both oral and visual modes of communication, the rigor in the teaching was often low.

LITERACY BLOCK

Literacy is the foundation for English language learners to acquiring English proficiency and content learning. The ability to read and write fluently is the building block upon which all academic learning rests. Therefore, a strong literacy foundation is important for all students. Teachers must have specific strategies for literacy instruction for English language learners, who may have limited exposure to English outside of school.

In reviewing the district's literacy framework and approach as it relates to building the literacy of ELLs, we found that the district has produced a number of documents which address literacy in different ways. The origins of these documents were from different departments within SPS, including Federal Programs, English language learners, and Academics; however, they all had elements of a literacy framework and approach:

- Elementary Literacy Block description (2010)
- ELL curriculum (2004)
- Pupil Progression Plan (2009)
- Title III Application (2010)
- Coordinated Program Review (2010)
- Corrective Action Plan (2010)
- Corrective Action Plan Additional Progress Report (2010)
- English as a Second Language Instructional Guide (ESL Curriculum K-5) (2008)
- ELL department documents (2010)
- Reading department documents (2010)

While the district has clearly put significant resources into creating the documents listed above, literacy ideas and actions reside in so many documents makes it difficult to decipher what the district's approach to literacy is.

LITERACY BLOCK

Every elementary school is required to have a literacy block of 150 minutes per day. To guide the use of this time, the district has written a document entitled "Annotated Schedule: Plan for Differentiated Instruction for the 2½ Hour Literacy Block" and another one with the same title, adapted slightly for English Language Learners. Major literacy block activities include Read Aloud or Shared Reading, Fluency, Guided Reading, Word and Vocabulary Study, and Writing. Each activity is given a time allotment, purpose, focus, and materials.

While the literacy block document is activity-based, it lacks principles of reading and writing or a district framework for literacy. The document also lacks illustrations or models for teachers to follow. The writing section is focused on conventions and mechanics and does not relate at all to the reading section, the texts or themes from reading, or the idea that writing is the act of making meaning of reading and

learning. Differentiated instruction, while in the title, is not described in the document.

At the secondary grades, the literacy block does not yet have an analogous document that guides the 90 minutes per day. Through interviews, we learned that the block has common standards-based instructional segments: activator, mini lesson (whole group), learning activity (small groups), and wrap-up. The district has been conducting professional development for teachers on engaging, rigorous learning activities for each of these instructional segments.

A key aspect of literacy is writing. However, the district has not yet decided upon a writing program or process that would allow school staff to move towards a common language about writing. The district also does not have common rubrics for writing, which would allow schools to have the same understanding of what good expository writing looks like. A writing process that is used within the literacy block, aligned to the reading instruction and texts, and universally designed and supported by specific strategies for teaching writing to English language learners would assist the district in improving its educational outcomes.

TIERED APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The district is moving to adopt the Response to Intervention (RTI) model of instruction for English Language Arts. Research has shown that the type of monitoring implied by the tiered program, using multiple assessments, is important to student success.²⁴ The shift is reflected in elementary, middle, and high school “ELA Tiered Instructional Program” documents produced by the ELA department in collaboration with the ELL director. The tiered instructional approach is intended to use a number of district-wide assessments to identify students needing support beyond the core curriculum. Students are placed in Tiers progressively, with support increasing and the group size decreasing with academic need. Each Tier will likely have a suggested ELA curriculum resource and/or intervention.

The tiered instructional approach relies on assessments at least once per month, and on assessment results being available to teachers. However, the current plan for ELL students to be placed into tiers relies heavily on MEPA results, which are available once per year for those who take it. School visits revealed that teachers had inconsistent access to assessment results in a timely manner. Currently, the district does not have in place systems for multiple assessments and access to assessment data. Research suggests that districts should make the data readily accessible and provide guidance to school leaders and teachers on how to use these assessment results to make instructional decisions.²⁵

²⁴ See http://www.rti4success.org/images/stories/tieredInstruction/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf for more details.

²⁵ Gersten, R. et al (2007). *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide* (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides>.

The tiered instructional approach assumes that all students receive the “core” curriculum, and students in Tiers receive additional support to access the core on a daily basis. However, the secondary school documents suggest that students will be grouped and assigned to classes by Tier (similar to tracks), rather than remain in heterogeneous groups and receive the core with additional support based on need. ELLs in MEPA performance levels 1-3 would be in Tiers receiving different curriculum and support. Grouping students by Tier and providing them with a different curriculum than the core does not reflect the intent of the tiered instructional approach and may subject students in progressive tiers to lowered standards.

Finally, the scheduling and placement of students into Tiers is an integral part of the instruction of ELLs. While some school leaders scrutinize each child’s data and hand schedule students like ELLs, other school leaders do not. At the high school level, guidance counselors typically do the scheduling. It is unclear whether or not guidance counselors are aware of the laws and regulations, the educational theory, the teacher qualifications, and the student English proficiency levels all necessary for proper scheduling and placement.

ESL CURRICULUM MATERIALS

The district purchased ESL curriculum materials in 2009 as part of its Corrective Action Plan for English learner education. However, these materials published by National Geographic do not appear as resources in the ELA plans. Several schools indicated that they received the materials but did not receive guidance on how to use them. Some teachers commented that the ESL curriculum materials were unrelated to the core curriculum materials, which made alignment of instruction difficult and movement from ELA to ESL and difficult for students who were pulled out of ELA for ESL instruction. Given the investment in ESL materials, the lack of alignment, and the lack of systematic professional development for the use of the materials, this investment is being poorly utilized.

SHELTERING CONTENT

Outcomes on MCAS show that LEP students are not gaining proficiency in English, nor are they attaining proficiency in content standards (reported in next section). At the lower MEPA levels, achieving a passing score is also rare. While data was not gathered on the implementation of SEI in the schools, interviews suggested that many core curriculum teachers are not prepared to shelter content for their ELLs. Four-category training is meant to prepare teachers to shelter content, but most SPS teachers had not completed this training as of this writing. The system for placing LEP students, particularly at the higher MEPA levels, with content teachers who have been 4-category trained is not clear, documented, or systematic. Interviews suggested that if a secondary teacher had LEP students in his or her classroom, that class was deemed an SEI class, regardless of whether or not that teacher was 4-category trained. Content instruction has suffered with dismal results for students (next section).

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS BY GRADE SPAN

In addition to the literacy block documents and the tiered instructional plans, the district has written a Pupil Progression Plan that outlines for each grade span the core instructional plan and policies for monitoring, assessments, and associated information.²⁶ While the Pupil Progression Plan provides compliance information, it is not currently a document that principals and teachers could use to guide the placement and scheduling of their students, particularly those who are in tiers, such as English language learners and students with special needs. Interviews with principals and teachers revealed that at the school level, such guidance about the following topics is needed: instruction during the literacy block, instruction during content classes, the amount and type of ESL instruction and support, and the qualifications of teachers to provide ESL and SEI.

Implications of Findings about the Instruction of ELLs

Curriculum and instruction for ELLs in SPS lacks guidance and consistency. The development of a literacy framework, a tiered instructional plan that allows students to receive the support they need in addition to the core curriculum, and a pupil progression plan differentiated for ELLs at each MEPA level and grade level would provide the foundation for improving literacy and content learning. Close attention must be paid to avoid tracking ELLs away from the core curriculum and to proper scheduling of students with the appropriate amounts of ESL time and the placement of qualified teachers with ELLs for the learning of English and content. SPS could make great strides in codifying and implementing rigorous academic instruction across more schools with these recommended policies.

²⁶ The current Pupil Progression Plan may be found at:
<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/PupilProgressionPlan.pdf>.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF LEP STUDENTS

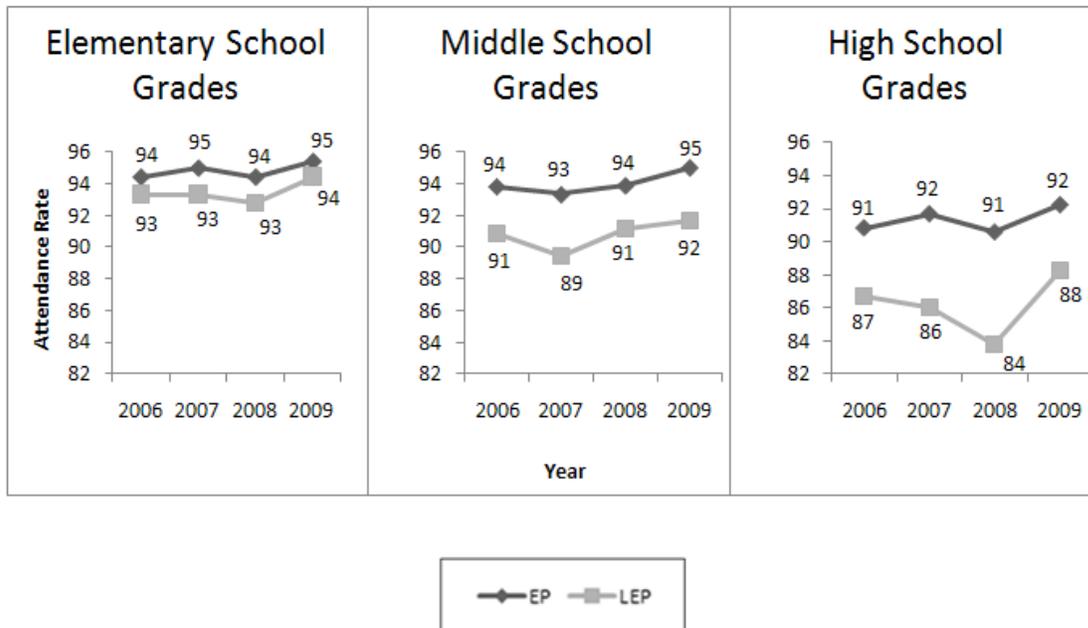
Key Findings

- LEP students at each grade span (ES, MS, HS) have lower median attendance rates than their EP counterparts. The older the students are, the lower their attendance rates and the greater the gap between LEP and EP.
- High school LEP students have attendance rates below 89% all years of the study, equivalent to missing a month of school.
- While out of school suspension rates are high in middle and high school overall, there is no difference between those of EP and LEP students.
- In ELA, LEP – EP pass and proficiency gaps are significant. Only students at the highest MEPA performance levels pass at rates that are approaching EP. They do not, however, reach proficiency at EP rates.
- In math and science, proficiency is almost non-existent for LEP students, and quite low for EP students.
- High school annual dropout rates for LEP students were higher than for EP students, at 11% in 2009.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance rates were grouped by grade span. In all analyses, LEP students had lower median attendance rates than EP students. These differences were statistically significant. As students progressed in age and grade span, their attendance rates decreased; high school students had the lowest attendance rates. In addition, the gap between EP and LEP attendance rates widened in the higher grade spans. By high school, LEP students on average were missing twenty or more days of school each year.

Figure 11: Attendance Rates by Grade Span



SUSPENSIONS

Out-of-school suspension rates were calculated at each grade level. Suspension rates were significantly higher at middle and high school than at elementary school. However, suspension rate differences were not statistically significant between EP and LEP students at middle and high school, except in 2007 in high school only. Overall, 20-25% of students were suspended in middle and high school.

Table 14: Suspension Rates by Grade Level

	2006	2007	2008	2009
ES EP	4	4	4	4
ES LEP	3	4	4	4
MS EP	22	25	23	22
MS LEP	22	27	21	25
HS EP	19	20*	19	21
HS LEP	19	23*	18	23

* means differences between LEP and EP were statistically significant

MCAS PASS AND PROFICIENCY RATES

The annual standardized testing for the content areas is the MCAS ELA, Math, and Science, except for first year LEP students for whom the MCAS ELA is optional. Native Spanish speaking LEP students in their first three years of learning English may take the Spanish version of MCAS math in grade 10.

The MCAS ELA test may be considered a test of English language proficiency. A student who is not proficient on the MEPA is likely not to be proficient on the MCAS. An LEP student who is MEPA performance level 5 (in 2009), however, may be proficient on the MCAS.

The Math and Science tests are tests of content learning. They are given in English. A student who is not yet proficient in English will likely test poorly on the MCAS Math and Science tests. On the other hand, an LEP student who is MEPA performance level 5 (in 2009) and has been learning content through SEI may be proficient on the MCAS.

We examined SPS student outcomes on the Spring administration of MCAS for four years. We report on Pass rates (the proportion of students scoring in the Needs Improvement, Proficient, and Advanced categories), because students must pass the 10 grade MCAS tests in order to earn a high school diploma. We report on Proficiency rates (the proportion of students scoring in the Proficient and Advanced categories) because proficiency is the goal in all subject areas for all students. Each table reports Pass or Proficiency rates on an MCAS test at the grade span and subject indicated.

Different groupings of students are presented for comparison. Usually, LEP student outcomes are presented as a group rather than by English proficiency level. We use MEPA performance levels to disaggregate LEP students further. Thus, we present outcomes by each MEPA performance level, all LEP students (this is usually the figure

that determines the “achievement gap”), and all EP students (native English speakers and native speakers of other languages who are English proficient).²⁷ For all MCAS outcomes presented, Chi square tests confirmed statistically significant differences among all groups shown in these disaggregations; thus, the level of a student’s English proficiency predicts the likelihood of passing and proficient outcomes on MCAS.

MCAS OUTCOMES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELEMENTARY GRADES

In the elementary grades, LEP students on average passed ELA MCAS at lower rates than English proficient students, with a gap of 24 to 33 percentage points in pass rates. At the highest MEPA performance level (level 4 in 2006-2008 and level 5 in 2009), LEP student pass rates approached those of English proficient students. At the lower MEPA performance levels (levels 1-3), far fewer than half of students were passing MCAS ELA and their pass rates were also dropping over the four years of the study.

Table 15: Elementary Grades MCAS ELA Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level²⁸

	2006	2007	2008		2009
1	–	–	–	1	–
2	31	30	21	2	19
3	40	45	37	3	34
4	83	81	76	4	73
LEP	60	58	47	5	92
EP	84	84	80	LEP	57
				EP	82

ELA proficiency in the elementary grades was low for a large proportion of students. Only 35% to 40% of students labeled English proficient scored Proficient or higher on the ELA MCAS in any year. The gap between EP and LEP proficiency rates grew during the study period. Except for 2009, the highest performance levels of LEP students (level 4) have significantly lower ELA proficiency rates than EP students, despite their MEPA outcomes, which suggest that they are close to transitioning. In 2009, MEPA level 5 students had ELA proficiency rates of 40%, compared with EP students at 37%.

²⁷ When there are fewer than 10 students in a cell, outcomes are not shown (–). Because of the low numbers of LEP students, the fewer students who have MEPA scores each year, and the low pass and proficiency rates, quite a few cells are not shown.

²⁸ For each set of MCAS outcomes, results are shown for 2009 separately, because the performance levels were different than the ones in 2006-2008 and do not equate.

Table 16: Elementary Grades MCAS ELA Proficient Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	2006	2007	2008		2009
1	–	–	–	1	–
2	–	–	–	2	–
3	5	5	4	3	6
4	23	28	18	4	10
LEP	14	16	9	5	40
EP	36	40	35	LEP	12
				EP	37

MIDDLE GRADES

In the middle grades, EP pass rates in ELA were in the 80s, while LEP pass rates in ELA were in the mid 30s consistently, corresponding to a passing gap of about 45 percentage points. Pass rates in the highest MEPA level each year were comparable to the EP pass rates except for 2006, at around 80-85%. However, students in the lowest MEPA levels were unlikely to pass the MCAS.

Table 17: Middle Grades (MS) MCAS ELA Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	2006	2007	2008		2009
1	–	–	–	1	–
2	11	15	–	2	–
3	30	31	30	3	25
4	68	80	81	4	53
LEP	35	34	34	5	89
EP	81	82	81	LEP	35
				EP	84

Middle grades students in SPS who were EP scored in the Proficient and Advanced categories of ELA MCAS at low rates, although they rose over the time period from 38% to 45%. Middle grades LEP students in the aggregate did not score proficient on the ELA MCAS at all. Disaggregated, the data showed that only up to a quarter of LEP level 4 or 5 students scored in the proficient category. These are the students whose MEPA scores place them in the “transitioning” category.

Table 18: Middle Grades MCAS ELA Proficient Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	2006	2007	2008		2009
1	–	–	–	1	–
2	–	–	–	2	–
3	–	–	–	3	–
4	13	18	17	4	–
LEP	5	5	5	5	24
EP	38	39	39	LEP	3
				EP	44

HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

In the high school grades, passing the ELA MCAS is required for a high school diploma. While high and increasing proportions of EP students pass the ELA MCAS, LEP students pass at lower, though increasing rates. In 2009, there was a 30 percentage point difference in pass rates between EP and LEP students in high school. Students at the highest MEPA levels had ELA pass rates closer to the EP rate; they were increasing as well over time. There were not enough test takers at the lowest MEPA levels to report their pass rates.

Table 19: High School Grades MCAS ELA Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	2006	2007	2008		2009
1	–	–	–	1	–
2	–	–	–	2	–
3	–	48	80	3	65
4	74	69	–	4	77
LEP	37	34	55	5	87
EP	85	85	90	LEP	61
				EP	91

Analysis of ELA Proficient and Advanced rates revealed that virtually no LEP students were proficient in ELA (less than ten students at each performance level). However, the EP student proficiency rates are shown below. These rates increased steadily over time. However, these are low rates of scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS for students who are EP. Not only do LEP students lack proficiency, even at the highest performance levels, but most of EP students do, too, suggesting that at the middle school level, ELA curriculum and instruction lack the rigor necessary for students to gain proficiency.

Table 20: High School Grades EP Student MCAS ELA Proficient Rates

	2006	2007	2008	2009
EP	37	41	47	53

MCAS OUTCOMES IN MATH AND SCIENCE

Analysis of MCAS outcomes in math and science is one way to determine the status of content knowledge in students, disaggregated by language proficiency. We must keep in mind that most LEP students are not English proficient, and the MCAS math and science test is given in English. However, disaggregation by MEPA level might reveal information about how students learn content while learning English.

ELEMENTARY GRADES

In the subject area of math, English proficient students had steadily improving pass rates, while in science, pass rates were stable. LEP students has pass rate gaps with EP students of 20 to 30 percentage points. Their pass rates were not improving in the aggregate. LEP students with the highest MEPA performance levels had pass

rates approaching those of EP students, and in 2009, surpassing EP students in math and science. However, students in MEPA levels 1-3 had very low pass rates in math and science.

Table 21: Elementary Grades MCAS Math and Science Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	Math			Science				Math	Science
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		2009	2009
1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
2	23	26	27	–	–	–	2	23	–
3	30	37	38	45	42	29	3	32	24
4	65	72	65	71	75	70	4	58	64
LEP	47	50	44	55	51	41	5	86	86
EP	67	72	74	81	78	78	LEP	49	50
							EP	74	78

Since content learning is defined by proficiency, not passing, we examined proficiency rates on MCAS in math and science. This table shows that rates of proficiency among EP students were about 35% in math and 21% in science in 2009. In science, proficiency rates dropped over time. Even with the low EP proficiency rates, the gap between EP and LEP students was still at least 20 percentage points in math. In science, LEP proficiency rates were 6% in the most recent year. Elementary grades LEP students in levels 1-3 of MEPA were almost never proficient in math and science MCAS.

Table 22: Elementary Grades MCAS Math and Science Proficient Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	Math			Science				Math	Science
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		2009	2009
1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
3	5	11	13	–	–	–	3	5	–
4	18	28	29	19	–	–	4	17	–
LEP	12	18	17	11	–	6	5	33	–
EP	25	34	37	27	27	24	LEP	14	6
							EP	35	21

MIDDLE GRADES

Analysis of middle grades content learning as measured by MCAS math and science pass rates showed that less than 50% of English proficient students pass the exam any year. Pass rates in both exams increased steadily during the study years. LEP students overall had improving math and science pass rates, but their pass rates were again 20 to 30 percentage points lower than EP students. Students in the highest MEPA performance levels showed improving math pass rates approaching EP

levels by the end of the study period. However, in science, there were not enough students passing the exam to report.

Table 23: Middle Grades MCAS Math and Science Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	Math			Science				Math	Science
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		2009	2009
1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
3	5	9	10	–	–	15	3	7	–
4	19	34	41	21	25	–	4	19	–
LEP	9	13	15	10	8	10	5	50	–
EP	38	41	44	45	45	47	LEP	14	14
							EP	49	49

Analysis of middle grades proficiency rates in math and science showed results analogous to those found in ELA in middle school. EP students were rarely proficient in math and science. Their proficiency rates improved steadily to 18% in 2009. In science, proficiency rates were about 9% for EP students. For LEP students in both math and science, virtually no students scored in the proficient category. These results suggest that middle grades content learning is lacking not only for EP students but also LEP students.

Table 24: Middle Grades MCAS Math and Science Proficient Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	Math			Science				Math	Science
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		2009	2009
1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
3	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	–
4	–	9	10	–	–	–	4	–	–
LEP	–	1	1	–	–	–	5	–	–
EP	11	13	17	9	8	10	LEP	–	–
							EP	18	9

HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

In the high school grades, passing the math MCAS has been a requirement for high school diploma, and passing the science MCAS became a requirement in 2009. EP students had steadily increasing math MCAS pass rates, 78% in 2009. They had lower science pass rates, at 60% in 2009. The gaps between EP and LEP student pass rates were again large, 37 and 40 percentage points, respective, for 2009 math and science. When there were more than 10 students passing an exam,

disaggregation showed some MEPA level 3 and 4 students passing the math MCAS each year. However, the rates of passing were very low.

Table 25: High School Grades MCAS Math and Science Pass Rates by MEPA Performance Level

	Math			Science				Math	Science
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		2009	2009
1	–	–	–	NA	NA	–	1	–	–
2	–	–	–	NA	NA	–	2	–	–
3	–	44	68	NA	NA	–	3	38	25
4	44	–	–	NA	NA	–	4	55	–
LEP	30	32	51	NA	NA	20	5	–	–
EP	68	73	75	NA	NA	64	LEP	41	20
							EP	78	60

The proficiency rates in high school math and science reflected those in the middle school. For English proficient students, proficiency rates were in the 30s and improving for math and in the 20s for science. Virtually no LEP students were proficient in math and science (not shown). Without proficiency in ELA, math, or science, SPS LEP students have little opportunity to fulfill the SPS mission of becoming life-long learners and leaders.

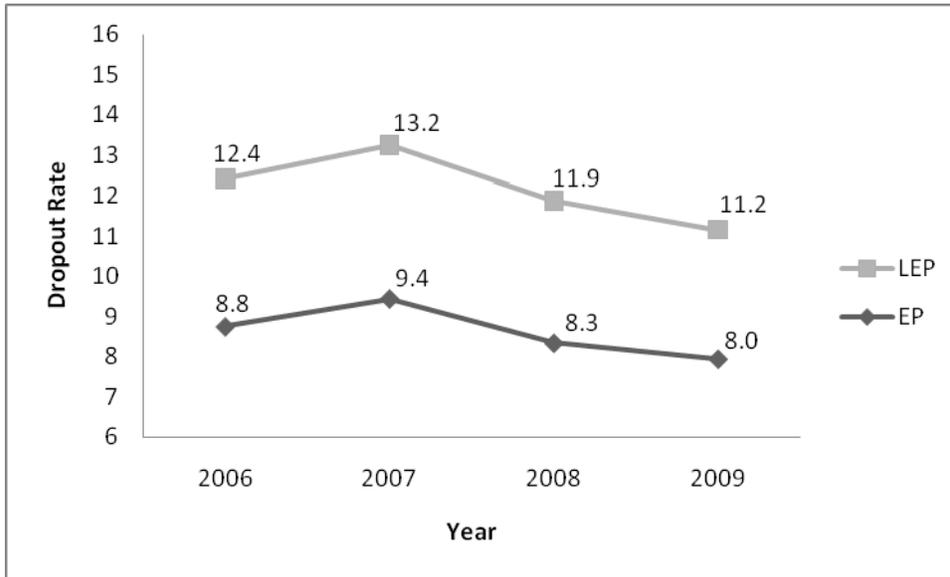
Table 26: High School Grades EP Student MCAS Math and Science Proficient Rates

	Math				Science			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
EP	32	34	37	38	NA	NA	24	20

DROPOUTS

Annual dropout rates were calculated by grade span. Dropouts were computed from the enrollment variable and thus rely on accurate reporting by families and schools. In middle school, there was no difference between EP and LEP dropout rates, which were less than 1% each year of the study. In high school grades, annual dropout rates were higher for LEP students than for EP students. These differences were statistically significant. There was a three percentage point difference in dropout rates between the two groups, and both groups showed declining dropout rates in the last three years.

Figure 12: Annual High School Drop Out Rates



Implications of Findings About ELL Educational Outcomes

In summary, the educational outcomes of LEP students were significantly lower than for EP students in attendance rates, MCAS pass and proficiency rates, and high school persistence. These gaps were particularly true for students at the lower MEPA levels. The MCAS outcomes showed that at the highest levels of English proficiency, LEP students scored in the passing categories at rates approaching EP students, but that virtually no LEP students reached proficiency in ELA, math, and science in middle and high school. These educational outcomes confirm that codification of ELL programs and policies, developing the instructional plan for ELLs, improving the assessment and reporting of ELLs, and providing appropriate staffing and professional development in schools are all urgent actions that are likely to turn these outcomes around.

STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- *The system of logging and tracking teacher certifications is not adequate; designations are confusing, inaccurate, and not readily available.*
- *The total number of ESL certified teachers in the district is 128, not all of whom teach ESL. Some schools have more than they need and others have too few.*
- *Not enough teachers have participated in 4-category training, particularly in the Reading and Writing course.*
- *Data on the native languages of teachers was not available. School visits and interviews suggested that Vietnamese and Somali speaking school staff are necessary.*
- *There is no comprehensive plan for professional development for teaching ELLs, but research suggests the development of professional learning communities would address the needs for more instructional models and greater cultural competence.*

ESL LICENSURE

The federal and state laws require that LEP students be taught by qualified instructors for adequate amounts of time per week. They must learn English from English as a Second Language (ESL) licensed teachers. They must learn content from content licensed teachers who have participated in training for sheltering English for content instruction. A content certified teacher with SEI training may teach LEP students in their content area. This approach is called SEI. SEI is not a licensure or certification.

Ideally, at the lower levels of English proficiency, LEP students are grouped together and they are co-taught by a standard curriculum teacher and an ESL teacher. At the higher levels of English proficiency, LEP students are placed in standard curriculum classes with teachers who have completed training in SEI.

For LEP students who speak non-English languages other than Spanish, students are instructed in English by ESL teachers who are dual-certified in elementary or content.

Understanding the current SPS teacher pool is important to evaluating whether or not staffing is adequate to serve the LEP students in the district. We received data files from the Human Resources department for this purpose. While all of the student level data in this report is from four school years ending in 2008-2009, the teacher level data that we analyzed for this section is from school year 2009-2010. We present this data because it is the most recent data about teacher certification. However, we do not link it to student level data.

The data from the Human Resources department of SPS was difficult to interpret, even by the HR staff. Teachers were listed by school with each of their licensures.

Many teachers have multiple certifications, some of which make previous ones obsolete and others of which make the teacher qualified to teach in more settings. However, the database included all certifications a teacher ever earned. In the area of English language learning, the district accepts multiple licensures and certifications in grades and content areas. These designations included:

- ELL
- ESL
- ESL – Grade span
- ESL Resource Teacher
- SEI – Subject
- SEI – Grade or grade span
- TBE
- BIL – Grade span

This list of licensures was puzzling given that the only licensure recognized by the state as a qualification to teach English acquisition is ESL licensure. In order to be qualified to teach content to LEP students, a teacher must be content certified and 4-category trained. However, the database did not clearly delineate these qualifications. Our interpretations of the designations, necessary to analyzing data about the adequacy of qualified teachers in SPS, are described:

- ELL and ESL teachers are ESL licensed and may teach English to LEP students or support LEP students in core ELA classrooms.
- Teachers in the database coded as SEI were interpreted to have content area certification and to have received at least part of the 4-category training [see below].
- There is no such thing as an SEI license or certification.
- Teachers in the database coded as TBE or BIL were licensed to be bilingual education teachers before 2003. These teachers also had content area certifications for the subjects and grade levels they taught. In order to provide ESL instruction currently, these former TBE teachers must pass the MTEL communication and literacy test. In SPS, these teachers were grandfathered and could teach SEI content without 4-category training. There is no information or documentation about former TBE teachers passing the MTEL communication and literacy test.

With these interpretations of the codes in the teacher database, and without linked data regarding whether or not the teachers coded as TBE or BIL passed the MTEL, we were not able to make conclusions about the qualifications of teachers with LEP students.

The total numbers of teachers in the district with ESL/ELL licensure are shown below. There are about 2622 teachers in the database. The dual licensed tallies are a subset of teachers with ESL/ELL licensure. With a total teacher population of about 2622,

about 5% of SPS teachers are ESL licensed, and less than 3% are dual licensed.²⁹ Dual licensure in content/grade level and in English as a Second Language saves resources because fewer teachers are needed and simplifies scheduling because there is less of a need for pulling small groups of students out of class for ESL instruction.

Table 27: Total District Staffing for LEP Students

Type	Total
ESL or ELL license	128
Bilingual or TBE license	99
ESL/ELL license AND Elementary certification	53
ESL/ELL license AND Secondary (Core Content Areas only) certification	8
ESL/ELL license AND Special Education certification	6
ESL/ELL license AND Reading Specialist certification	4

SEI FOUR-CATEGORY TRAINING FOR CONTENT INSTRUCTION

In addition to licensure, it was important to understand how many standard curriculum teachers have participated in training to shelter English instruction to date. Four-category training consists of:

- Category 1: Second language learning and teaching (10-15 hours)
- Category 2: Sheltering content instruction (30-40 hours)
- Category 3: Assessing speaking and listening (10 hours)
- Category 4: Reading and writing in the sheltered content classroom (15-20 hours)

The district has made a primary goal of training its staff in SEI through 4-category training and provided multiple opportunities at different times of day and school year for teachers to participate. Categories 1, 2, and 4 have been prioritized, as not everyone needs Category 3. As of November 2009, 511 teachers (19% of SPS teachers) had completed Categories 1 and 2, and 144 (5%) had completed Categories 1, 2, and 4. We are aware that more may have been trained in the 9 months since this data was pulled. Increasing the number of teachers who have completed Category 4, Reading and Writing, will likely translate to improved student learning of ELA and academic content.

Table 28: Category Training Tallies

Type	Total
Staff Completed Category 1 and 2 Training	511
Staff Completed Category 1, 2, and 4 Training	144

²⁹ This number is higher than the figure reported by DESE (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/teacher.aspx?orgcode=02810000&orgtypecode=5&>) and includes all teachers in the database provided by HR.

These numbers suggest that the district has a strong cadre of teachers who are prepared to teach LEP students. However, it is important to also understand in what schools these teachers are teaching, as well as what grades and subjects these teachers are teaching. In our interviews, we learned that there are ESL teachers in schools with LEP students who are not teaching LEP students, but rather teaching other subjects. We also learned that there are content certified teachers without 4-category training who have been assigned LEP students; those classes were then labeled SEI classes.

When we disaggregated teacher licensure or category training by school, we found very little relationship between the number of LEP students in a school and the number of licensed or 4-category trained teachers. In other words, some schools had greater numbers of qualified teachers than their LEP enrollments suggested they needed, while other schools had too few qualified teachers for their LEP populations. These numbers are not shown because we were unable to check them at the school level.

Further analysis of teacher licensure and placement, school by school, is necessary to determine how many more ESL licensed, dual licensed, or 4-category trained teachers the district needs. In addition, an analysis of re-deploying existing teachers to high need schools has not been conducted.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ONGOING SUPPORT

All of the data and research point to improving instruction as central to closing the ELL achievement gap in Springfield. Therefore, professional development and tools for best instructional practices in differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and effective instructional strategies for ELLs are important.

Empirical research linking teachers' cultural competence and associated strategies with student outcomes shows a correlation between student performance and the use of strategies such as connecting lessons to students' lives and identities; building on prior knowledge; the use of culturally responsive curricula; and building a school climate of respect and support.

On the other hand, the Equity Center researchers noted a lack of awareness about ELL students' culture, perspectives, and challenges in the schools of study, and recommended that faculties in each school undertake professional development in this area. CCE's site visits confirmed this finding. Teachers acknowledged their lack of awareness of ELL students' cultures; in particular, faculty noted the need to know more about Somalian culture (a small but growing immigrant group). Teachers in several schools said that professional development in cultural competence would be useful, particularly for teachers who are monolingual or who are regular education teachers. Walk-throughs revealed little use of prior knowledge or references to native language and culture in instruction. In addition, both the Equity Center report and CCE's walk-throughs revealed some classrooms in which academic expectations of ELLs were not at a level that would produce high student achievement.

Implications of Findings About Staffing and Professional Development

In summary, SPS has begun to build its cadre of teachers for the ELLs in the district. The district leadership needs to understand ELL teacher qualifications and track them in a way that allows simple interpretation and reporting. The district has developed a plan to have more teachers 4-category trained; completion of this training should be logged in the teacher database as well. The district needs to develop programs to recruit new ESL licensed teachers and incentive plans for current teachers to become dually licensed in order to staff its schools in a financially feasible way, since ESL instruction for students at the lower MEPA performance levels is recommended by DESE to be 1 to 2.5 hours per day. In addition, a comprehensive professional development plan for the education of ELLs that includes the building of professional learning communities in schools would be beneficial to teachers and students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report used interviews with district staff, visits to ELL Pilot schools, and analysis of documentation and student and teacher data to describe the status of English language learner education in SPS. The findings demonstrate that strong initial steps have been taken by the district to address the weak academic outcomes of ELLs as documented by NCLB reporting requirements. These accomplishments include:

- A current strategic plan developed with much district and community input that includes measurable goals and clear responsibilities for district leaders
- Restructured district leadership that places the Director of English Language Learning within the Chief Academic Officer's Teaching and Learning Department, ensuring decisions about ELL education are aligned with the district's academic goals, policies, and programming
- An explicit and urgent focus on the most underperforming schools, which educate a large proportion of ELLs in the district
- A strong commitment to SEI training for teachers, and professional development in instructional strategies and cultural competence

The challenges that remain may be broadly classified as developing and sharing the district's theory of action for ELL education, developing and codifying policies and procedures, supporting the implementation of new programming and action steps, and monitoring outcomes at the district, school, teacher, and student levels.

The recommendations that will enhance the district's efforts to improve the education of its English language learners are listed below and correspond to the major sections and findings of this report. An asterisk denotes a recommendation that is achievable within six months.

DISTRICT CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP

1. Develop a plan to share policy and programming information with district offices besides Teaching and Learning, such as Human Resources, Office of Schools, Office of Information, Technology, and Accountability, and Office of Pupil Services, since their roles and responsibilities include specific knowledge about ELL policies, procedures, data, and monitoring (Spring 2011).
2. Develop the district's educational theory, based on research about English language learning, cultural competence, and immigration. The resulting document should be the foundation from which all ELL programming and policy is built.
3. Produce a Springfield Public Schools English Language Learning Policies and Procedures Manual that codifies an English language learner's experience in SPS from entry to exit. This manual will have all documents related to English Language Learners in one place (physically as well as electronically) so that they may be accessed by district staff, school staff, and the public. The

manual will make clear to all stakeholders the procedures and policies governing the education of English Language Learners in Springfield. Principals and teachers should have one central guidebook from which to tailor their ELL instructional programs, regardless of home language, English proficiency level, or grade level.

IDENTIFICATION OF ELLS

4. *Replace the current English language proficiency intake test with a more updated one and train and deploy more intake staff to ensure the assessment, identification, and enrollment of ELLs in the most appropriate programs.
5. *Document the process for initial identification of students as LEP and make the information, including forms, notifications, and letters, accessible to all stakeholders in print and electronically. The process should include a system for monitoring the intake process.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

6. *Determine the feasibility of designating a few schools at each grade span as language specific sites for SEI programs, for students with limited formal education, and/or for secondary level newcomers.
7. Address disproportionality of LEP enrollment in Special Education programs.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

8. Create and implement a policy and system for improving the participation rate of LEP students in annual MEPA testing. Monitor, school by school, participation rates.
9. Develop and codify the process for reporting MEPA results, including subscores, to principals and teachers.

RECLASSIFICATION AND TRANSITION TO CORE CURRICULUM

10. Determine the district's criteria for reclassification, the process for monitoring students who have been reclassified, and the action steps taken when a reclassified student is having difficulty with the core curriculum. Codify this process for the ELL manual.
11. Develop an electronic tracking system for reclassified students that is accessible to district staff, principals, and teachers. FLEP should be logged in a manner that allows the district to distinguish FLEP students from NSOL EP students who were never LEP.
12. Develop a support and intervention plan for FLEP students who, through monitoring, are identified as struggling academically.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM FOR ELLS

13. *Revise the district's pupil progression plan so that it provides instructional guidance for principals and teachers of students at each MEPA level and each grade span.
14. Revise the documents guiding the curriculum and instruction for the literacy block for both elementary and secondary schools to include educational theory, the district's literacy framework, and illustrations of good practice for differentiating instruction within a classroom. Write one document that incorporates universal design principles so that all learners, including English language learners, benefit.
15. Conduct school and classroom visits to schools that use innovative methods to educate ELLs well, both within SPS and in other urban MA districts, such as Boston and Worcester, so that models of good instruction are shared with SPS teachers. Ensure that teachers know what instruction looks and feels like for ELLs. This will serve as professional development for teaching the literacy block (core and all tiers).
16. Develop and codify a district-wide universally designed writing process for use in the literacy block that is tied to the texts used.
17. *Focus on rapid English acquisition for LEP students in MEPA levels 1 and 2. Somali ELLs may be progressing through the MEPA performance levels at a slower rate than other students.

QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

18. Develop a system to annually conduct meetings with each principal to determine the school's needs and placement of ESL and category trained teachers given its LEP population. Work with administrators and guidance staff to support appropriate scheduling for LEP students. If necessary, provide incentives for ESL certified teachers to change buildings.
19. Increase the number of teachers and Instructional Leadership Specialists who have received training in SEI Categories 1, 2, and 4.
20. Support professional learning communities and coaching for teachers of ELLs focused in best instructional strategies, cultural competence, and family engagement.
21. Increase the number of ESL certified teachers in SPS
 - a. Partner with local higher education institutions to hire new teachers who are ESL certified or dual content/ESL certified
 - b. Partner with local higher education institutions to dually certify current teachers in ESL
 - c. Use underperforming schools funding to provide incentive to current teachers to become ESL certified or signing bonuses for new ESL certified hires

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

22. *Hire more teachers who speak native languages other than Spanish, place them in language specific schools

23. Create family centers in language specific schools staffed by people who speak the dominant native language
24. Ensure that all parent letters, notifications, and assessment reports are provided in the major native languages of the district.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the cooperation and collaboration of SPS district staff in providing data, information, explanations, and documentation, this report would not have been possible. We would like to thank the following people who met with us and answered many of our questions:

- Judy Alexander
- Denise Matuszczak
- Denise Pagan Vega
- Lucy Perez
- Beth Schiavino-Narvaez
- Dan Warwick
- Vida Zavala

We would also like to thank the administration, teachers, and students of the eight ELL Pilot schools who welcomed our visits and interviews and ensured efficient collection of information from many stakeholders.

We thank CCE staff members who participated in the preparation of this report.

- Dan French
- Laurie Gagnon
- Emily Kellner
- Meenakshi Khanna
- Pam Stazesky
- Dania Vazquez