I CAME HERE TO LEARN

The Achievements and Experiences of Massachusetts Students Whose First Language Is Not English

Shannon M. Varga, Max Margolius, Catalina Tang Yan, Marissa L. Cole, & Jonathan F. Zaff
Introduction

Youth whose First Language is Not English (FLNE)—an umbrella term that includes English Learners (ELs), youth who have reached English proficiency, and other non-native English speakers who have never been enrolled in a formal EL program (see Figure 1)—represent the fastest growing segment of the United States public school population. Despite evidence that FLNE students display high levels of optimism and motivation for academic advancement, they continue to have lower achievement and lower graduation rates than the national average.

Research and theory suggest that positive school and life outcomes emerge when the needs and strengths of youth are aligned with the assets in their surrounding environments; i.e., a supportive youth system. Among these assets, supportive adults are critical for academic success. Further research suggests, however, that FLNE young people may experience complicated barriers to connection—including language gaps and the social capital required to navigate the education system. In addition, language barriers can interfere with school policies and practices designed to engage families. FLNE students face additional environmental stressors (e.g., poverty, family separations, discriminatory socio-political climates) that place them at greater risk for disconnection.

FLNE youth are demographically diverse—varying in their home language, language abilities, immigration circumstances, family situation, and socioeconomic status, among other factors related to academic success. For example, the term ‘FLNE’ could be used to describe both a native Spanish speaking student who is English proficient and doing relatively well academically and a native Spanish speaking student who is not English proficient and struggling academically. Educational approaches do not always reflect this diversity. Whether constrained by the law or limited by strained resources and capacity, schools and districts nationwide, with some exceptions, tend to provide limited educational options for FLNE youth.

One in five students in Massachusetts is classified as ‘First Language Not English (FLNE).’ Therefore, a deeper understanding of both the diversity within this population and of young people’s lived experience will help schools, districts, and the state provide the most appropriate and effective programs and policies to support them in reaching high school graduation and beyond.

Background

The Center for Promise undertook the research in I Came Here to Learn in the context of the GradNation State Activation Initiative, a three-year collaboration between America’s Promise Alliance and Pearson that aims to increase high school graduation rates by encouraging statewide innovation and collaboration, sharing knowledge to accelerate adoption of proven strategies, and developing successful models all states can replicate. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is a grantee in this national effort.
The Center for Promise takes the perspective that all young people have the potential for school and life success. This potential can be realized when the needs and strengths of a young person are aligned with the assets in a community. The role of schools, families, and the broader community and society is to ensure this alignment occurs, providing assets for all youth, removing barriers to experiencing those assets, and helping young people navigate and negotiate access to those assets; that is, that all young people grow and develop within a supportive youth system.

Drawing from this youth systems framework, the authors examine the experiences of young people in Massachusetts whose first language is not English.

In recent years, Massachusetts has increased its high school graduation rate from just below 80 percent to 86 percent. Despite these large gains, challenges remain. According to ESE data, students whose first language is not English (FLNE)—a group that includes English Learners (ELs)—account for 30 percent of all young people who leave school without a diploma in the state. While Massachusetts has engaged in considerable work to improve educational outcomes for EL students, the challenges that FLNE young people and their families face go beyond academic English acquisition and require a more comprehensive approach that reaches beyond the education system. The findings and the recommendations in *I Came Here to Learn* point Massachusetts and other states toward new ways of supporting stronger graduation outcomes for FLNE students.

**Massachusetts Demographic Context**

While ELs in Massachusetts tend to fare better than the national average for EL academic performance, ELs and FLNE students, such as former ELs, still lag behind non-ELs in the state. Data show that ELs in Massachusetts tend to be low-income, speak a wide variety of languages, and demonstrate poor academic achievement relative to their non-EL counterparts. Their lower academic achievement is reflected by their performance on the statewide assessment, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and graduation rates compared to non-EL students.

**TABLE 1. Massachusetts First Time 9th Graders in SY 2010-11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-FLNE</th>
<th>FLNE</th>
<th>Type of FLNE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Overall Student Population</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Current EL 7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other FLNE 16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year Graduation Rate (2014)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>Current EL 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other FLNE 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Year Graduation Rate (2014)</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Current EL 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other FLNE 79%</td>
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</table>
GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) reflects educational strategies to make academic content accessible to students who are not yet proficient in English.

English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to specialized instruction that works explicitly on language development. ESL programs provide systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction and prepares students for general education by focusing on academic and social language. ESL programs aim to support students in increasing English language skills and fluency often in smaller classes or pull out groupings.

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) refers to an overall academic program that seeks to support academic as well as language proficiency in the shortest time possible by combining SCI and ESL instruction. SEI program models can be language specific, grouping students who speak the same native language, or multilingual, where students from various linguistic backgrounds are organized.

Two Way Immersion (TWI) programs represent an integrated model that include ELs as well as native English speaking students in the same classroom, and provide core academic instruction in two languages in order to develop biliteracy and bilingualism in both languages. Often these models are referred to as "90/10," where in the beginning 90 percent of instruction is in the partner language and gradually shifts to a 50/50 split where instruction is split evenly in both languages.

Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) can be understood as a bridge program that seeks to develop content knowledge and skills in students’ native language, provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, while also working towards integrating students into mainstream classes with native English speaking peers.

Massachusetts Policy Context

The experience of being a student in Massachusetts identified as “English Learner (EL)” in 2017 is influenced by statutory and policy changes at both the state and local level. Fifteen years ago, a ballot referendum, the “Massachusetts English Language Education in Public Schools Initiative” (most commonly referred to as “Question 2” or the “Unz Initiative”), required that “all children in Massachusetts public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English and all children shall be placed in English language classrooms.” This led to the passage of Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002, An Act Relative to the Teaching of English in Public Schools, which amended Chapter 71A of the Massachusetts General Laws. The law mandated that, in public schools, content would be taught primarily in English, and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) became the predominant structure for educating ELs in Massachusetts. There are, however, some exceptions. Two Way Immersion (TWI) is still permitted as pedagogy, but is rarely offered. In addition, parents can advocate for another educational approach for their child apart from SEI, such as Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), but this, too, has been uncommon. Out of the 85,762 EL students in Massachusetts in 2016, 93 percent were receiving instruction in SEI.

Despite repeated attempts, Chapter 386 has yet to be overturned by the state legislature, leaving Massachusetts as one of only three states to mandate Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). While SEI programs can be effective for many students, some EL students may benefit from different types of programs. Indeed, as more robust data on academic performance and graduation rates for EL students has become available, Massachusetts has offered several new programs and implemented new policies aimed at making more diverse educational opportunities in Massachusetts more responsive to the needs of ELs. For further detail, see Appendix A.
Research Overview

The study described in this report used a mixed-methods approach to answer the research questions. The Center for Promise used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a fuller picture of the lives of FLNE students than could be gained from using only one method.

Through statistical analyses of statewide student-level data for more than 13,000 FLNE students, as well as group interviews with 24 Latinx young people in five cities throughout Massachusetts, the authors hoped to begin to answer these three questions:

1. What distinct groups within the FLNE student population exist, as defined by clusters of characteristics (e.g., grades, age and EL status)?
2. Are some groups more likely to graduate high school than others?
3. From the perspective of Latinx young people, what are the experiences and factors that contribute to their school persistence or choice to leave?

Questions one and two framed the quantitative analyses (Latent Class Analysis and multilevel logistic regression), through which the authors sought to better understand what enables and constrains academic performance among FLNE students in Massachusetts, including whether there are differing levels of academic performance among distinct groups (classes) of FLNE students and what variables are associated with variation in academic performance. Question three framed the qualitative inquiry, through which the authors sought to learn more about the lived experiences of older Latinx FLNE young people by speaking directly with them.

The goal of the quantitative analyses was to develop a deeper understanding of FLNE youth in Massachusetts. Specifically, the authors were interested in whether unique groups of FLNE young people could be distinguished by combinations of common variables (e.g., grades, age, EL status) which, in turn, might be associated with differing levels of academic performance.

i The authors use the term Latinx rather than Latina, Latino, or Latin@ because it is considered a more gender-inclusive descriptor. (See, for example, Martinez, 2017.)
The qualitative methods were designed to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experience of FLNE students, specifically what motivated them to interrupt their education and leave school before graduation or to persist to a diploma or credential. Given that there are 123 reported native languages in Massachusetts, the authors limited the qualitative aspect of the research study to a single language, Spanish—since it is the language most commonly spoken among students (54 percent), followed by Portuguese—to conduct a robust analysis. The authors conducted group interviews with young people identified by school staff as particularly at risk for leaving school. The young people were older (age 18-25), spoke Spanish as a first language, and had either left or considered leaving school.

Pursuing answers to the research questions through two distinct, robust approaches produced both lessons learned and new questions to pursue. Overall, the results offer a story that complicates the traditional narrative about FLNE youth in the United States. For instance, the research team found that:

- **There are highs and lows.** Some FLNE groups graduate at rates on par or even substantially higher than their native English-speaking peers. Others lag far behind. (See for example, the difference between Excelling Non-ELs and Low-Income, Spanish Speaking Massachusetts Newcomers in the Quantitative Findings section.)

- **The journey is complicated.** All young people are navigating a complex, multi-layered ecology in their daily lives. Qualitative analyses revealed how young people whose first language is not English navigate these day-to-day experiences. For example, among Latinx FLNE youth who took part in the group interviews:
  - Language proficiency is often a barrier, rather than a bridge, to connection to supportive adults and resources. (See the language section in the Qualitative Findings for specific examples.)
  - Families may provide essential emotional support, but for those who have immigrated to the U.S. without one or both parents, this support is weakened, therefore creating stress for the young person. (See the family support section in the Qualitative Findings section for more examples.)
  - Competing priorities, such as the need to work or care for family members, combined with lack of support and resources, often deter students from staying on the path to graduation. (See the ‘self’ section in the Qualitative Findings section for more examples.)

- **They came here to learn.** All the young people with whom the authors spoke expressed motivation to better themselves and were seeking supports that would enable them to reach their full potential, in school and in life. (See the motivation section in the Qualitative Findings section for more examples.)

Understanding the complexity of young people’s experiences, including the factors that appear to drive differences in academic performance for FLNE students, can aid policymakers and practitioners in designing, implementing, and dedicating resources to interventions and supports to help all FLNE students graduate. For a detailed discussion of these insights, see the Qualitative Findings section.

**Why First Language Not English (FLNE)?**

First Language Not English (FLNE) is a broad term used by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) that refers to any young person whose native language is not English. Though nearly 5 million young people are formally designated or engaged in EL programs in the U.S., there are even more young people who are not captured under the EL designation because they have reached proficiency (and, therefore, have been reclassified) or were proficient in both languages to begin with (bilingual).

According to a report by the National Academies of Sciences, nearly 25 percent of U.S. born individuals have immigrant parents, and the percentage of English-only speaking individuals has declined from 89 percent to 79 percent in the past three decades. More specifically, in Massachusetts where this research was conducted, FLNE students represent over 20 percent of the student population, with EL students making up 8.5 percent of that population. Further, according to data from ESE, the broader FLNE student population tends to demonstrate higher levels of academic performance than the EL subgroup, but lower levels of academic performance compared to native English-speaking students. Most research to date
has studied Massachusetts students in EL programs, which represent a small portion of FLNE students. Therefore, using the broader FLNE designation allowed the research team to examine data about and consider the experiences of a wider array of Massachusetts students. This new research, therefore, offers a broader view from which researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can benefit when pursuing efforts to improve student success in school.

Review of the Literature

Several bodies of existing research offer context for the findings, including studies related to supportive school relationships and climate, family support, family-school engagement, mentors and peers, and the current socio-political climate related to immigration. Many of the young people’s comments in the qualitative findings echo themes in the literature. Existing research may also offer clues to why achievement and graduation rate disparities persist.

Supportive School Relationships and Climate

Supportive relationships in school have been associated with school persistence and academic achievement. In particular, supportive relationships with teachers have been linked to higher levels of motivation, engagement, and academic self-efficacy. Supportive school relationships may be even more important for FLNE youth, especially immigrant youth, who need strong relationships to assist with academic adjustment, a safe context for learning new cultural norms and practices and accumulating information vital to their ongoing academic success. Further, previous research suggests that supportive relationships are key in creating a transcaring climate. A transcaring climate is described as an overarching school climate of caring that transcends the dichotomies around language, culture, and place to create a third space that supports young people in the fluid development of their cultural and language identities. Within this concept is authentic care from school staff, characterized by seeing youth as more than students; high expectations; rigorous standards; and teachers believing and expressing that youth are worthy and capable.

However, a roundtable report developed as a result of a collaboration between the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) and the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) indicated only 29.5 percent of teachers felt that they were trained appropriately to work with ELs in their classes, and 57 percent of teachers expressed the need to receive more training to work more effectively with ELs.

Despite the benefits of supportive school relationships for FLNE youth, there is evidence that these youth, particularly Latinx youth, experience high levels of discrimination and segregation in schools, creating additional barriers for the development of supportive school-based relationships.

Family Support

In previous studies, young people report family as providing an important source of support. Research specific to Latinx culture includes the term familismo. In general, familismo refers to close familial relationships including ties with extended family and a strong loyalty to, and responsibility for, one another. These studies have also shown that many Latinx families believe deeply in the importance of education for advancement in life. Therefore many Latinx youth see their parents as central and important sources of support and this parental support has been positively linked to Latinx youth’s academic competence and achievement.

However, immigrant youth may experience family separation, presenting a substantial barrier to experiencing sufficient support and to graduating. This physical disconnection from family may destabilize the nuclear family relationships, while threatening the youth’s socio-emotional and mental well-being and ability to build positive supportive relationships with adults. Latinx immigrant youth separated from their families at an older age demonstrate higher dropout rates than non-Latinx immigrant youth.
Socioeconomic constraints and parental education can also limit the types of support parents can provide for their children. And undocumented status limits access to high-wage jobs, social services, and educational opportunities.44

Family-School Engagement
While strong family-school engagement has consistently been identified as a strong indicator of academic success,45 there are many documented instances of poor school-family engagement amongst Latinx communities and schools. Some researchers suggest that U.S. schools are not equipped to support Latinx parental involvement.46 Often, families arrive to the U.S. with limited English proficiency themselves and are unable to communicate with their child’s schools and teachers.47 Many school employees do not have the cultural background or language skills to understand and communicate with their students’ families.48 As a result, families can feel disregarded and left out of their children’s education,49 and this can contribute to misinformed beliefs about Latinx families’ aspirations for their children’s educational attainment.50 Further, recent research estimates that more than half of all ELs have an undocumented immigrant parent51 and these parents tend not to be engaged with school due to fear of deportation. This lack of parental involvement can contribute to poor academic outcomes for young people.52

Mentors and Peers
Outside of school and home, strong relationships between young people and non-parental adults have been linked to psychosocial benefits, including increases in self-esteem,53 and academic benefits, including a higher likelihood of completing high school.54 Despite the prevalence and well-documented benefit of these relationships, there are very few studies that examine non-parental adults outside of school as resources for Latinx youth.55 Peers from the same home country can also serve as vital resources for Latinx youth, connecting them to programs, helping to orient them to school policies, and offering language support.56 Studies have shown that peers can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging at school, which in turn can facilitate academic persistence and success.57

Anti-Immigration Legislation and Perceived Discrimination
Perceived discrimination associated with anti-immigration legislation can serve as another obstacle to connection by deterring legal immigrants from seeking services and becoming involved in their communities.58 Following the passage of H.B.1070 in Arizona, similar bills targeting undocumented immigrants were introduced across the country.59 Race, ethnicity, and immigration status can be conflated so that even proposed public policies aimed at undocumented immigrants can engender a discriminatory national discourse regarding anyone perceived to be “foreign.” This, in turn, can create a hostile social context and lead to experiences of marginalization and profiling.60 Research has found that anti-immigration legislation is associated with increased levels of low self-esteem, higher levels of depressive symptoms, and decreased academic performance.61
Quantitative Study Design

Data

Student-level data were acquired from the state of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The authors included data from first-time ninth grade students who were enrolled in a Massachusetts public school by the end of the 2010-11 school year. From this total sample of 76,744 students, individuals whose first (native) language was not English (FLNE) and who were not removed from their schools due to Special Education classification (e.g., out-of-district placement; N=144), were identified (see Appendix B), resulting in a sample of 13,075 students for this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size (N)</th>
<th>Age of sample (Mean, SD)</th>
<th>% EL*</th>
<th>Multi-racial/Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>% Eligible for free/reduced price lunch</th>
<th>% in MA public school for more than two years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13,075</td>
<td>15.65, 0.87</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*EL refers to students who participated in an EL program at least once during the two years prior to entering 9th grade and/or are in an EL program in the 9th grade.

Analysis Plan

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was used to examine whether frequently occurring clusters of FLNE students exist (Question 1). Eight indicators were used to identify unique clusters or classes of FLNE students (see Appendix C for full description of indicators and handling of missing data):

- whether EL program participation occurred at least once during the two years prior to entering 9th grade
- free/reduced price lunch eligibility in 9th grade
- SPED status in 9th grade
- years in Massachusetts public schools
- whether students passed all classes in ninth grade
- eighth grade ELA MCAS—proficient or advanced vs. needs improvement or warning/failing
- eighth grade Math MCAS—proficient or advanced vs. needs improvement or warning/failing
- native language

Subsequent multi-level logistic regression analyses assessed links between class membership and 4- and 5-year graduation status with fixed effects to account for school level factors (Question 2).
Quantitative Findings

Latent Classes

FLNE students in Massachusetts are not a homogenous group. The students, who speak different languages at home (e.g., Spanish, Khmer, Creole) and who have been in this country for varied lengths of time demonstrate different levels of proficiency in English and different levels of academic performance. As a result of the analysis of statewide data of FLNE students, six unique categories, or classes, emerged. These classes were predictive of 4-year and 5-year graduation rates (see Table 3).

Latent Class Analysis is used to identify clusters of students who share a combination of common characteristics, rather than a single characteristic. Each class below is titled for the most likely combination of characteristics for students in each class, though other combinations are possible (see Table 5 and Table 6).

Class 1: Students Likely Passing. This class represents students who are likely passing all their classes. There is no extreme high performance or low performance based on ELA MCAS scores and 9th grade passing rate for this class. This is the smallest class of students. Notably, the majority of students who identified their native language as Portuguese are in this class.

Class 2: Excelling Non-EL Students. This class represents FLNE students who are doing well in all the academic indicators. All the students in this class have the highest probability of passing their ninth grade courses, reaching proficiency or higher on the ELA and Math MCAS, and have higher graduation rates than the state average. The majority of the students in this class identified a Chinese dialect or Vietnamese as their first language.

Class 3: Above Average ELs. This class represents students who have the highest probability of being enrolled in an EL program and are graduating above the state average for ELs. Many of the students in this class identified a Chinese dialect or Cape Verdean as their native language.

Class 4: Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers. This class represents primarily Spanish speaking students who are likely proficient in English, are eligible for free/reduced price lunch and have been in Massachusetts schools for longer than two years. The students in this class generally achieve proficiency or higher on their ELA MCAS. The majority of students in this class identified Spanish as their first language.

Class 5: Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers. This class represents students who are newcomers to Massachusetts public schools and who are from low-income families. They also represent the oldest students in the sample (an average age of 16 at the end of 9th grade). Students in this class are likely eligible for free/reduced price lunch. The majority of students in this class identified Spanish or Haitian Creole as their primary language.

Class 6: Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish. This class represents students who have the highest probability, relative to the other classes, of being eligible for free/reduced price lunch. These are students who have lived in Massachusetts for more than two years, but who continue to struggle academically. It is possible that high poverty or lack of resources is associated with these students' academic performance. The majority of students in this class identified Spanish as their first language.

Emerging Themes from Latent Class Analysis

EL does not equal low performing. The Above Average ELs class represents students who have all been enrolled in EL programs within the past two years. There is a high probability that these students are passing all ninth grade courses. These students are likely achieving proficiency above the state average for EL students for the Math MCAS and ELA MCAS. Further, their graduation rates are higher than the statewide average for ELs (70 percent vs. statewide 56 percent for the 2010-11 cohort).
Some FLNE students are achieving academic success. With 2,410 young people, the Excelling Non-ELs class represents 18.5 percent of the 9th grade FLNE students in Massachusetts in 2010-11. All students in this class passed all ninth grade courses, both the math and English Language Arts (ELA) portion of the grade 8 state standardized assessment (the MCAS), and are graduating at a higher average four-year rate than native English-speaking peers (92 percent vs. statewide 88 percent), further emphasizing the heterogeneity in young people characterized as FLNE students.

Not all Spanish speakers are the same. While Spanish is the most common first language among FLNE students in Massachusetts, it is notable that Spanish-speaking students were distributed across three unique classes with varying levels of performance. The Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers were in fact likely reaching proficiency as evidenced by almost all the students reaching proficiency or higher on the grade 8 ELA MCAS and having very few students enrolled in EL programs recently. While their four-year graduation rate (79 percent vs. 88 percent) is lower than the state average for non-EL students, they are likely performing much higher relative to the Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, and Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish.

Two groups of FLNE students clearly need more support. The Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, and Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish represent the two classes with the lowest four-year graduation rates. They are similar to Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers in terms of native language and the percentage who likely qualify for free or reduced lunch, but have two notable differences. First, Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, have been in Massachusetts for two years or less, and second, 44 percent of the Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish likely qualify for special education (the highest relative to any other class).

More time might lead to additional students attaining a diploma. Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, and Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish have the largest increases in graduation rates once five-year rates are considered. These classes are also predominantly Spanish speaking and include the largest number of students who are new to Massachusetts public schools.

The quantitative findings offer insights into the diversity within the FLNE population. However, the findings also raise questions about what is contributing to the difference in performance across classes, particularly for the Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers, Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, and Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish classes comprised of mostly native Spanish-speaking young people from high-adversity settings.

TABLE 3. Massachusetts 4- and 5-Year Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>% 4-year graduates</th>
<th>% 5-year graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: Students Likely Passing</td>
<td>73%**</td>
<td>75%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: Excelling Non-EL Students</td>
<td>92%*</td>
<td>92%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3: Above Average ELs</td>
<td>70%***</td>
<td>73%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4: Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers</td>
<td>79%*</td>
<td>82%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5: Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers</td>
<td>44%*</td>
<td>49%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6: Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish</td>
<td>53%*</td>
<td>58%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Probability of 4- and 5-year graduation in comparison to all other classes (p<0.01)
** Probability of 4- and 5-year graduation in comparison to all other classes (p<0.01) except High Performing ELs
*** Probability of 4- and 5-year graduation rates in comparison to all other classes (p<0.01) except Varied Group

Students in classes 1 and 3 tended to graduate high school at similar rates while comparisons between all other classes suggested significant differences in the probability of graduation.
Qualitative Study Design

Participants and Group Interview Procedures

The research team conducted group interviews in five cities—Brockton, Chelsea, Revere, Somerville, and Worcester—to hear firsthand about the lived experiences of FLNE youth.

The research team collected data in two steps. The authors conducted group interviews in four public school districts and one nonprofit community-based organization in Massachusetts. Prior to the first group interview, participants were given a survey that solicited demographic information (e.g., age, country of origin), and information about school (e.g., grade level; see Table 4). Staff, school teachers, and administrators recruited and identified students to participate in the research study through referrals, phone calls, and fliers. All of the participants identified themselves as first-generation immigrant youth, born outside of the U.S. All youth identified Spanish as their first language, and none of their parents were born in the U.S. All participants and names mentioned were replaced with pseudonyms for this report.

Sample questions for the interviews included, “If you left high school, why did you leave before graduating? If you are in high school, have you thought about leaving school? Why or why not?” and “How was your experience learning English in school?” Youth were provided with all materials in both English and Spanish. The group interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes long and began with ice breakers before delving into the group interview protocol. The group interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, allowing youth to respond however they felt most comfortable. If a young person responded in Spanish, his or her words are translated into English. If the response was in English, the words are shown only in English.

Qualitative Findings

Across the five sites, FLNE Latinx youth provided detailed descriptions of the various challenges and supports that shape their experiences living in the United States. While their lives and school experiences varied, analysis of their stories revealed several places where their descriptions converged. The young people described competing financial, academic, and familial priorities, relationships in and out of school, academic and professional goals, and the challenges they encounter. Their experiences and descriptions were intertwined and ultimately the three following contexts were important to understanding their lived experiences: the self, family, and school.

The authors cannot identify the class (as discussed in the quantitative findings) to which each young Latinx young person may belong. Therefore, the qualitative results will not be reflective of all the classes. However, some of their experiences seem to align with the classes called Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers, and Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish (e.g., time in country, performance, persistence).

The Self

Across all sites, young people discussed motivation, language, and competing priorities as integral to who they are and why they persist in and out of school. These three themes comprise “the self” and are presented first because the young people bring “the self” into every context. Therefore, the themes discussed in this section will be relevant and present in the following sections regarding family and school.
MOTIVATION
Integral to the immigrant experience is a search for something better. All the young people included in this study described in rich detail their internal motivation—to learn English, to succeed in school and graduate, and to take care of themselves and their families. Sebastián, a rising senior, explained,

“...I crossed the border for a better future. And I have the opportunity now... I want to take advantage of it, because the suffering I had to get here, I'm never going to forget it. And so, if I suffered, I have to do it for a reason, and I'm not going to take for granted this opportunity I have. So, I'm going to keep on going, I'm going to keep on studying until whenever God allows me to.

Another student, Lina, expressed her motivation to succeed:

“A mí lo que me motiva a seguir en la escuela es demostrarme a las personas que no creyeron en mí, que voy a llegar a ser alguien. En especial a mis papás, porque ellos una vez me dijeron que yo no iba a ser nadie, que yo no iba a llegar a ningún lado. Entonces yo quiero demostrarme no solo a ellos sino a que hay mucha gente afuera, ¿me entiendes? Que no lo ven uno como una persona, que ven que uno no vale nada. Primeramente quiero demostrarles que puedo tener un diploma de Norte High School, que puedo tener un buen trabajo, ¿me entiendes? Que puedo llegar a ser alguien en la vida.

Across group interviews, students described in rich detail both internal motivation and external motivation, which drives them every day.

LANGUAGE
For the young people interviewed as part of the study, however, motivation is often insufficient to help them to succeed. One of the primary identifying characteristics of this population is language ability. The young people expressed an understanding that language is key to success in the United States, as Mateo’s quote illustrates:

“Yo, parte de mi opinión, yo pienso de que el aprender inglés en este país es como una ventaja y es una puerta de que uno se abre a sí mismo, para poder tener comunicación con Americanos.

In my opinion, I think that learning English in this country is like an advantage and it’s like a door that you open to yourself to be able to communicate with Americans.

Youth from across the group interviews remarked that language operated as a gateway to academic success, interpersonal connection, and successful communication of their needs.

ii All participant names were replaced with pseudonyms.
However, young people also described how language acted as a barrier to social understanding, creating situations in which they could not explain or advocate for themselves.

“Yo me acuerdo cuando mi primer día, cuando fue mi primer día, tuve mi primera detención. Por mi mentor... yo llegué al [ELL program name] y me dijeron ‘Bueno, hoy empiezas’... ya estaba contento y llamaron a un muchacho... y me dijeron ‘él va a ser tu mentor’... escuché que dijo la profesora, ‘lo llevaba hasta la clase que tú estás ahorita y después le muestras todo lo que es la high school’... y yo veía que nunca entrábamos a la clase, pasó media hora, una hora y nosotros estuvimos caminando y él saludando a todos, iba al baño, se iba a lavar la cara, ‘espérate en el baño’ me decía ‘que toquen’ y yo ‘what the fuck ¿qué hacemos? Se supone que tengo que ir a la clase’ y poom nos agarró en el segundo piso un security ‘Ey, vengan aquí’ dijeron ‘¿Qué hacen?’ y yo como no hablaba inglés ni nada trate de decirles hasta ‘yo nuevo’ le decía, y aún así me pusieron detención y me cambiaron al mentor.

“I remember my first day of school. In my first day, I had my first detention. Because of my [peer] mentor. At that time... I came to [EL program name] and they said to me ‘Ok, today you start school’... I was feeling happy and they called a guy... And they said to me ‘he’s going to be your mentor’... I heard the teacher said to him ‘take him to the class you’re going now and give him a tour of the high school after your class’... I noticed that we never entered a classroom. Half an hour and an hour passed by and we were walking and he was saying hi to everyone. He went to the bathroom to wash his face and he said to me, ‘Wait for me in the bathroom until the bell rings,’ and I was like, ‘What the fuck? What are we doing? I’m supposed to go to class.’ And boom, the security guard caught us in the second floor. ‘Hey, come over here’ they said. ‘What are you doing?’ And like I didn’t speak English at all, but I tried to tell them even saying ‘me new.’ And even then, they put me in detention and they changed my mentor.

There were many examples like Marcos’, in which youth were penalized because they lacked the English language skills to explain themselves. David described an interaction where he and his friends (also FLNE youth) were questioned about using disrespectful language in school hallways. David tried to explain that his English-speaking peers were responsible for the disrespectful language, but he and his friends were punished instead:

“Todo lo que nosotros hablamos y decimos, nosotros hablamos con la verdad pero nosotros no nos creen, les creen más a ellos, por eso yo no he dicho nada y bueno por nada lo castigan porque me dan dos horas y media de castigo por haberle dicho eso y quien iba hablando mal era él y no nosotros.

“Everything we talk and say, everything we speak with the truth, but nobody believes us. They believe more to them [native English speakers]. That’s why I haven’t said anything, and, well, they punish you for nothing, because they punished me for two hours and a half for having said that to them, and the person who was talking bad was him, not us.

In addition to feeling as if he was incapable of communicating to make the case for his own innocence, David believed that even if he did speak English, he would not truly be heard by school personnel. Multiple youth brought up this same belief, which stems from language ability but is compounded by other factors such as perceived discrimination and the sociopolitical climate. As a result, initial limited language proficiency could ultimately discourage youth from reaching out to school personnel or other adults for assistance.

Overall, Latinx youth saw language as both a bridge and a barrier in their lives in the United States. As FLNE youth, they felt their English proficiency followed them throughout different contexts and colored their experiences. This will be further discussed in a subsequent section regarding school climate.
COMPETING PRIORITIES

Repeatedly, the researchers heard stories of competing priorities in the lives of young people whose first language is not English. Having to choose between attending school, maintaining steady employment, and caring for family caused many to leave school at one point in time; many others considered interrupting their education. Those interviewed, including Julio, Dario and Daniel, reported feeling tension between school attendance and other demands at home.

“Algunos estudiantes trabajan de tres a doce de la noche y llegan a la una de la mañana a la casa y a las 6:30 o 6:00 tienen que estar despertados para venir acá, so siento de que tal vez es mucha presión, por lo cual algunas personas mayores no entienden. Unos dicen, ‘Oh, ellos están en la escuela, qué preocupación tienen, solo hacer tarea?’ pero no saben que muchas veces uno de joven sufre más que un adulto.”

“La escuela y el trabajo, no es para cualquier persona. A veces uno toma decisiones que ‘No. Voy a dejar la escuela y voy a trabajar mejor’ y se queda con el poco de inglés que sabe.”

“¿Quién me va a pagar los bills? Nadie. Entonces, uno tiene que salir adelante o sobrevivir por uno mismo y ellos a veces son cosas que uno no... piensan que a lo mejor porque estamos en la escuela estamos pequeños, no tenemos responsabilidades de nada y a veces nosotros tenemos más responsabilidades que ellos. Tenemos gente que darle de comer en nuestros países, hermanos que pasan adelante también, que estudian, cosas así...”

“Some students work from 3:00 to 12:00 at night and they get home around one in the morning, and around 6:30 or 6:00 they have to be awake to come here [school]. So I feel that maybe there’s a lot of pressure, which some adults don’t understand. Some say ‘Oh, they’re in school, what worries do they have? Just homework?’, but they don’t know that a lot of times one who’s young suffers more than an adult.”

“School and work it’s not for anybody. Sometimes I make decisions where ‘No, I’m gonna leave school and I’m gonna work instead,’ and I stay with the little English that I know.”

“Who’s gonna pay my bills? Nobody. So, I have to keep on going or survive by myself, and sometimes there are things that they... they think that because we’re at school we’re little ones, we don’t have responsibilities with anything and sometimes we have more responsibilities than they do. We have people to feed in our countries, brothers that are trying to move on, going to school, things like that...”

Young people across sites clearly articulated major challenges they face when balancing academics and work priorities. Julio and Dario highlight not only the level of exhaustion that young people experience working extended hours after school, but also frustration when these multiple responsibilities are not acknowledged by school personnel. As Daniel describes, students also have major responsibilities as adults, particularly when supporting not only themselves, but also their family members.
Family

Close ties with family were frequently discussed as relevant to youth’s academic persistence, engagement, and performance. Youth talked about the close ties and various supports they received from family members that contributed positively to their academic achievement and general well-being, as well as the emotional toll of being separated from family members due to immigration.

FAMILISMO

Familismo refers to the unique interconnected relationships that characterize many Latínx families and communities. Young people in the group interviews demonstrated how familismo operated in their lives, describing a strong sense of unity and loyalty to family and often choosing to prioritize family over personal needs. When asked whether they had an adult at school they felt connected to, many youth instead described their relationships with their families. María offers one example.

Como si yo tengo un problema en mi casa o con alguien y esto se lo puedo contar a mis papás y si yo quiero contárselo a alguien mejor le llamo a mis papás y les cuento todo pero no me siento como para irle a decir a un maestro… mis papás saben lo que es de mi vida ellos tienden a saber cómo darme un consejo.

It’s like, if I have a problem at home or with somebody, I can tell my parents, and if I want to tell someone else, I rather call my parents and tell them all about it..., but I don’t feel like going to a teacher… My parents know my life and they know how to advise me.
FAMILY SUPPORT
Along with the emphasis the Latinx FLNE students place on family ties, they described how their families’ encouragement impacted their academic persistence and engagement. Beatriz, a high school senior, describes her relationship with her mom:

“I would say I have a good relationship with my mom. My mom, when it’s school wise, she does help me a lot. She motivates me. Even when I’m feeling down or like I’m not—like I don’t wanna do homework sometimes, ‘cause you get lazy sometimes, but she’s like, “Oh, you gotta do this, and you gotta do that. I want you to graduate. I want you to go to college.” She has like a future for me planned out, and it’s like I understand what she wants. Like, she expects a lot from me, and that for me is like—it gives me motivation, but at the same time, it’s like a weight on me, ‘cause it’s like you have to do good, ‘cause not only do you have to prove yourself, that you can be better and that you can be someone, but also your family, so she helps me a lot.” —Beatriz

Young people in all five cities spoke about parents and extended family members’ deep interest in fostering their academic success, and the essential care and socio-emotional support their families provided to them. Though youth described family members as providing deep emotional support and setting high academic expectations, they often described family members or caregivers’ lack of physical participation in school meetings. Sometimes this was due to time conflicts and other responsibilities, but other times, parents’ lack of participation in school meetings raised questions about the disconnect between the emotional support that families were able to provide and the tangible academic support that was often elusive.

“Mi papá nunca tiene tiempo y mi mamá nunca ha venido a una reunión... yo le decía, ‘Mamá te mandaron esto’, una nota que decía a qué hora se iba a hacer la reunión. ‘Yo a esa hora no puedo, yo no puedo ir.’ Y entonces yo decía, ellos me dicen que vaya a la escuela pero yo no veo el apoyo de ellos.” –Ana

Competing priorities and lack of shared language are also described in the literature as significant barriers for caregivers in building relationships with school personnel, but also to their participation in school-based activities. Mario describes how both he and his mother have sacrificed family time to make ends meet:

“She’s really good with me, I guess. She loves me and all that. She’s a normal mom, but we haven’t spent that time as a mother and son. Instead, she works, I work. When I come back from work, I go to sleep, or sometimes I do homework... And I don’t want to wake her up, I rather let her sleep and rest. I don’t see her... until the next weekend in the morning... And sometimes I’ve wanted to, I don’t know, like go out with her, take her out to eat somewhere. She’s spent her birthdays working. My birthdays—I’ve spent my past three birthdays here, working. All of them. Sometimes I say to myself ‘happy birthday’ in the mirror when I’m in the bathroom—and I replied to myself, ‘thank you.’
In listening to Mario, it was evident that although he appreciates his mom and expresses interest in spending time with her as a “mother and son,” they are both constrained by work. These responses reflect various challenges that Latinx immigrant families experience while trying to support young people’s academic engagement and foster their well-being.

FAMILY SEPARATION
Youth spoke consistently about the importance of family members in their lives as sources of great strength, but one reality of the immigration experience is that family members can be separated from one another, and many youth described being separated from one or both parents before or after immigrating to the U.S. Sometimes, youth spoke about remaining connected from afar using technology, but the theme of separation was prevalent throughout. Across all five sites, youth shared the adverse effects this separation had on their socio-emotional wellbeing and academic engagement, and also on family relationships. Luisa spoke about all these emotions converging while she was trying to text her mother on Mother’s Day.

“Es que yo tenía el teléfono, pero yo le estaba escribiendo a mi mamá, era el día de la madre, por cierto. Yo le estaba escribiendo algo y ella me regañó... y yo como que me andaba sensible, me puse a llorar. Y luego ella llegó y me dice ‘estás bien?’ ‘sí’ le digo yo. Y ella me pidió disculpas, me dijo ‘discúlpame si yo te hablé fuerte o algo. No era mi intención hacerte sentir mal’ pero yo no estaba llorando por eso, estaba llorando por mi mamá que la extraño.”

Research suggests Latinx immigrant youth may experience higher levels of depression associated with family separation. While Luisa may not be depressed, here she describes the act of holding in the emotions and feelings that she experiences while living separated from her mother. Despite the teacher’s good intentions and efforts, Luisa keeps the true reason for her tears from her teacher. The feelings of loss and yearning for family connection Luisa experiences, as well as her decision to keep the details of her family situation private, may further impact her level of engagement in class.

School Climate
One of the most powerful, consistent themes that emerged from conversations with young people about their experiences in school relates to school climate. Some young people described unsupportive and discriminatory actions and messages they received from school personnel and peers. Others described school climates that supported each young person, with teachers, administrators, and peers demonstrating authentic care for young people and appreciation for their individual backgrounds. Young people consistently spoke about the impact that these different messages had on their school experiences and levels of engagement.

UNSUPPORTIVE/DISCRIMINATORY CLIMATE
Young people in all five cities spoke about repeated experiences of discrimination in school that contributed to their perceptions of an unsupportive school climate. The young people expressed a desire to learn English and a desire for connection, but often felt ignored, unheard, and perceived as having lower competence because of their lack of language proficiency. Mario described the cumulative internalizing effect of these experiences.
Some youth described how school policies that label and categorize students can foster unwelcoming climates. David spoke of his experience with an ID card unique for EL students:

“Cuando vine aquí a la escuela me lo dieron... Cuando vamos por el pasillo todos dicen ‘son los inmigrantes, el grupo de inmigrantes’, y yo no he querido tener problemas yo los escucho y me quedo callado porque yo no quiero problemas y acá yo vengo a aprender.”

Language barriers also interfered with students’ ability to advocate for themselves or communicate with school staff, which led to feelings of disconnection from the school and even, on occasion, the desire to leave school. Clara described how her discomfort with speaking English and fear of being ostracized not only contributed to her reluctance to participate in class, but also affected how she approached her teacher. Clara did not ask for help because she does not believe she will be supported.

Clara:

“The only challenge that I’ve had at school is speaking English. I don’t like to stand up in front of the class and talk... I always get grades that are not very good because I don’t like to do presentations. I don’t like reading and it’s just difficult. Because teachers want all the students to stand up in front of class and participate to get good grades, but the other ones laugh because we say something wrong or because of the accent.”

Interviewer:

“And that has made you think to want to leave school sometimes?

Clara:

“Yeah... I wanted to complain with the teacher, because there’s a guy that speaks Spanish, he’s Puerto Rican, and he has an accent, he’s learning English now, and every time that he answers a question out loud or something, [students] laugh... They just don’t understand what we feel. That’s why they do it. I’ve thought about talking to the teacher, but...I don’t think she will do anything about it.”
Other times, young people perceived lower academic expectations as discriminatory. David explains what he is learning in his EL program as compared to the mainstream classrooms next door:

“El programa donde estamos hemos aprendido porque la verdad tenemos un poquito duro la cabeza y nos ha costado, pero a los demás estudiantes aparte de [nombre del programa de ELL] todos los demás no están en esto, sí les enseñan, les dejan trabajos. Le exige en clases y ellos aprende mucho pero nosotros no... porque estamos viendo lo mismo, casi lo mismo todo el día.

“The program in which we are, we’ve learned... but the rest of the students aside from [ELL program name], those who are not in it, they do teach them and assign them homework. They set expectations for their students in class and they learn a lot, but we don’t...we’re learning the same, almost the same thing all day.

David went on to explain that in his school, all the students learning English are separated from the mainstream students. He and other students in his program described having a single worksheet to work on for the entire day. As he described above, he interprets this as school staff having lower expectations of FLNE students. Students with similar experiences shared that lower academic expectations from school staff limited their ability to learn English quickly and discouraged them from having high expectations for themselves. Below, Mateo’s thoughts on the English Language Arts standardized state assessment are an example of how these perceived low expectations can breed internal doubt and be detrimental to a student’s academic performance and persistence.
...[Y]o pienso que nosotros todavía no estamos preparados en el inglés para recibir un examen de esos y pues nosotros tenemos que hacer ese examen para pasar el año de escuela, so, yo el año pasado, no me sentía preparado para hacerlo, porque no sabía—sabía algo de inglés, pero no me sentía capacitado para—so, entonces eso me bajaba el ánimo para seguir adelante.

I think that we’re still not ready, at an English level to take that exam (MCAS). And well, we have to take that exam to transition to the next year’s school grade, so, last year, I didn’t feel prepared to do it. Because I didn’t know—I knew some English, but I didn’t feel prepared to do so. So that brought me down and didn’t motivate me to keep on going.

David and Mateo described their desire for relevant, challenging content and high quality academic instruction as well as additional scaffolding and academic supports. These examples demonstrate that curriculum and academic expectations also send powerful messages to students about how they are perceived and what they can achieve.

Despite the experiences of discrimination, the young people included in this study were often resolute in their goals. José describes how he finds inspiration and strength in response to the racism he experiences at school.

Sí pertenezco por el motivo que a uno lo ven de menos y es donde uno agarra más fuerza y para demostrar que uno no es menos que otro sino que todos somos iguales... Yo he tenido muchos problemas en esta escuela desde que comencé a estudiar siempre he tenido problemas y entonces no me pareció y varias veces he querido dejar la escuela. Por ejemplo del bullying de la forma de como uno se viste, la forma en que uno habla, la forma en que uno camina... La verdad al ver ese racismo que nos tienen ellos uno agarra como más coraje para aprenderlo, para aprender el inglés y demostrar que tú puedes.

I do belong for the reason that people look down on me and that’s where I gain more strength to show that I’m not less than others, instead we’re all equal... I’ve had so many problems in this school ever since I started school, I’ve always had problems, so I didn’t like it and sometimes I’ve wanted to leave school. For example, bullying from the way one dresses, the way one speaks, the way one walks... The truth is that seeing that racism that they have on us, one gains like more courage to learn, to learn English and show that you can.

SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE
While unsupportive relationships can promote a discriminatory and negative school climate, some youth described how supportive relationships can mitigate the negative climate and create a lasting positive effect on their school experience.

While many of the youth described having negative experiences, they persisted in school because of relationships with supportive adults. For instance, Marcos described how the support he receives from his school social worker and another teacher outweigh some of his negative school experiences and keep him engaged in school.

Siempre solo dos personas me han apoyado mucho. Que son Ms. Gómez y Ms. Brown. Siempre me han apoyado en mis estudios, en mí. Me han ayudado a dar ánimos, porque si no fuera por ellas, quizás yo no estuviera aquí en la escuela todavía.

There are always two people that have supported me a lot, which are, Ms. Gómez and Ms. Brown. They’ve always supported my education and myself. They’ve supported me to motivate me, because if it weren’t because of them, maybe I wouldn’t be here at school still.
The young people described many ways that teachers, administrators, or other school-based personnel supported them. Sometimes that was through general encouragement around academic support. Sebastián describes:

“Y, mis maestras en la escuela, ellos son muy buenos, y siempre están ahí conmigo… Siempre me dicen: ‘Siempre tú enfócate en lo que tú quieres cumplir, y nunca te des por vencido. Sé que tú puedes.’ Y, eso me ha ayudado bastante a, a aprender el inglés, y también en otras cosas, de poder seguir, para llegar a mis metas.

And also my teachers, they are really good and they're always there for me... They always tell me, ‘Always focus on what you want to accomplish and never give up. I know you can do it.’ And that has helped me a lot to learn English and also other things, to keep on going and achieve my goals.

Other times young people experienced support through more general expressions of care, such as a teacher noticing a young person’s affect, asking how the young person was doing, or making a phone call home when a young person was absent or late. Lina described how those phone messages inspired her to return to school.

“Mi maestros me pasaban dejando mensajes, tenía mil mensajes en el teléfono. ‘Tienes que regresar, hazlo por tu futuro.’ Y no sé, personas que me motivaron a venir acá. Y más porque te digo, me puse a pensar, dije, ‘Ya fui dos años, me faltan otros dos. ¿Cómo no voy a pasar? O sea, tengo que ir.

My teachers spent time leaving me (voice) messages, I had about a thousand messages in my phone. ‘You have to come back (to school), do it for your future.’ And I don’t know, people that motivated me to come here. And more because I started thinking, I said ‘I already went to school for two years and I have two years left. How am I not going to pass? I mean, I have to go.

**TRANSCARING CLIMATE**

Some youth described their experiences of school climate in ways that appeared to align with a transcaring climate. A transcaring climate is more than a supportive school climate; instead, it is an atmosphere where students feel recognized and valued as people and for the diversity in their languages, cultures, and personal histories. In transcaring school climates, curriculum, programs, and interpersonal interaction reflect that value.

Young people described several instances where teachers or school staff helped to foster transcaring climate.

“Sí, me siento que soy parte de aquí porque... me han ayudado bastante, no programas, sino que como Ms Gómez que ella siempre manda llamar a uno, so ella sabe siempre. Trata de hacerlo sentir como parte de la escuela, como que somos como una comunidad, podríamos decir, so nos sentimos como familiarizados...

I do feel like I belong here... they’ve helped me a lot, not programs, but mostly Ms. Gómez. She’s always calling us, so she always knows. She tries to make you feel like you’re part of the school. Like we’re all like a community, we could say that, so, we feel more familiar to each other... —Dario
Dario and Daniel reflected on how curriculum, in this case a particular project, communicated teachers’ authentic care for them and created a sense that their histories were valuable and respected.

Dario:
“Pues que todos los maestros hablan aquí, de cada uno como fue nuestra vida me imagino. Nuestro viaje de nuestro país hasta aquí ¿verdad? Porque el primer año, cuando yo vine, nosotros escribimos un libro con él... Escribimos un libro de inmigración. Que cada uno tenía que escribir un párrafo, y de todos los alumnos hicimos un solo libro. Que hasta ahorita, todavía tengo ese libro en la casa.”

Daniel:
“I still have it too.”

Dario:
“Y pues siento que, por esa manera, siento que las maestras también tratan de—tratan de sacarnos información, para ellas saber más de nosotros.”

Daniel:
“Entonces, yo pienso de que nadie sabe mejor nuestras historias que Ms. Gómez.”

At this school, many students said that teachers made an effort to understand the impact of their immigration experiences, creating a feeling that teachers cared about them not only as students but as people. Another young person, Ana, who left school to support her family when her parents could no longer work, describes how the transcaring climate at her school extended after she left, with the teacher encouraging her to return and asking about her family.

“I still have it too.”

Dario:
“Well, I think that all the teachers talk about how each of our lives were, I imagine, our journey from our home countries to here, right? Because in the first year, when I came here, we wrote a book with him (pointing at a classmate)... We wrote a book about immigration. That each of us had to write a paragraph and with all the classmates as well, we made it into one book. That up until now, I still have that book at home.”

Daniel:
“So I think that nobody knows our stories better than Ms. Gómez.”

Even though I left school... I went to my friend’s graduation... I arrived and when the graduation ended, I see my teacher who’s currently teaching algebra and says to me, ‘Ah Ana you’re here.’ She doesn’t speak Spanish. She even asked me to show her pictures of my little sister and she sent her a book that said, it’s called My Monkey and I, but it was in English and Spanish... And she gave me the book and I was like, ‘Wow!’ So, I saw her at the graduation and also the English teacher. She said to me, ‘Ana, you can also do it’ So, even when I don’t come here to school, they (teachers) continue to support me.”

“Yo aunque tal vez me salí de clases... yo fui a la graduación de mi amiga... Llego y este, cuando ya terminó la graduación, y veo a mi profesora que tenía actualmente de algebra—Y me dice, ‘Ah, Ana estas aquí’. Ella no habla español. Incluso... ella me decía, que le mostrara fotos de mi hermanita y ella le mandó un libro a ella que decía, ‘Mi mono y yo’. Pero estaba, venía en español y en inglés... Y me da el libro y yo me quedo, ¡guau! Entonces, igual a ella la vi en la graduación y también vi a la profesora de inglés. Me dice, ‘Ana tú lo puedes hacer también.’ Entonces ellas, aunque yo no venga acá, ellas siguen apoyándome.”

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Multiple teachers approached Ana at the graduation ceremony to encourage her to return to school, while continuing to respect her family obligations and the reasons why she left.

A transcaring climate is not only experienced through youth-adult interactions. It can also encompass peer-to-peer interactions and can be facilitated by adults who do not speak the young people’s native language as well as those who do.

“Me voy a una maestra que conozco, después de escuela, Ms. Sánchez... Ella sí se queda todos los días ayudando, ayudando en las tareas de todos los alumnos, que que van en el nivel todos de inglés, nivel 1. Se quedan todo, y yo voy ahí también. Y ahí nos apoyamos entre nosotros mismos, porque los de nivel 1 de inglés, nivel 2 saben menos, menos inglés que yo, y ahí estamos—nos ayudamos entre nosotros mismos.”

“I go after school to [see] a teacher that I know, Ms. Sánchez... She does stay after school every day helping students from all English levels, like level 1 with their homework. Everyone stays, and I stay back as well. And all of us support each other, because English level 1 students, those in English level 2 know less, less English than I do, so we’re there, helping each other out.”

When the young people reported experiencing characteristics of a transcaring climate, they also reported feeling a sense of connection and belonging to the school, which encouraged persistence in school and a desire to give back. Beatriz describes how her experience of feeling supported motivates her to create that same experience for new students who do not speak English.

“She helps me. I help her, too... When new students come in from Spanish-speaking countries, she sometimes calls me down so I can give them like a little tour around the school and just explain to them how the locker works and everything so I help her with that... I like it because it’s like you get to help these other students and it’s like you’re willing to... I want to help them because it’s like my first day here it was just crazy so I understand how they must feel, right? I mean they must feel the same way... Yeah and especially because you know they’re Spanish. We communicate better, understand each other more.”

Peers are a crucial resource for language acquisition and overall academic support. Young people interviewed for this study provided examples of feeling “seen,” heard, and cared for, and that motivated them to create that same experience for their peers who were themselves learning English. One student, Mateo, highlighted a way schools could capitalize on the importance of peer-to-peer relationships to help students feel a greater sense of belonging and acceptance.

“Debería desarrollar programas o proyectos, para desarrollar la comunicación entre todos los estudiantes. Estar todos unidos y no vernos diferentes uno hacia otro, porque esa es el gran problema de acá, eso es lo único. De ahí, lo demás pienso que está bien todo.”

“They should develop programs or projects to develop communication among all the students. To be all united and not see each other different from one another, because that’s the biggest problem here, that’s the only thing. From there, I think everything’s good.”
Conclusion

Decades after legislation and policy first gave EL youth full access to the United States education system,46 research is still finding that, on average, FLNE students lag behind their native English-speaking peers in academic performance and persistence to graduation.47 The authors of this report sought to take two approaches to understanding FLNE students' school experiences. The first approach revealed that FLNE students are not a homogenous group. Considering constellations of variables including eligibility for free/reduced price lunch, length of time in school, age, and EL status, the authors found distinct classes of FLNE students exist in Massachusetts. Further, the authors found that membership in specific groups can predict with high certainty a student's probability of graduating from high school within four or five years, in comparison to other groups. These findings suggest that a variety of factors compound one another in ways that are associated with academic performance and persistence. Knowledge of these factors can lead to stronger interventions that include specific pedagogical approaches and robust student supports.

The second approach took an in-depth look at the lived experiences of Latinx students who seemed to have similar characteristics to two distinct classes identified in the quantitative analysis: Low-Income, Spanish Speaking Massachusetts Newcomers, and the Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish. While the prevailing narrative across the U.S. and in Massachusetts is that Latinx FLNE students are lower performing70 than their English-speaking peers, the authors’ analyses revealed the numerous and complex barriers that FLNE Latinx youth might encounter throughout their school and home lives that contribute to or hinder their academic performance and persistence. Young people also revealed supports and approaches that led them to feel accepted and supported—both academically and personally.

Ultimately, the approaches and findings in this report shed light on the diversity within the FLNE population, while challenging the prevailing narrative about Latinx FLNE student performance. While this report is an important first step, more research needs to be conducted in order to further understand the different groups of FLNE students that exist and the lived experiences of young people who speak languages other than Spanish. Given that FLNE students make up roughly one-fifth of the student population in Massachusetts, more work that seeks to understand the experiences of FLNE students is necessary to provide the most appropriate and effective support through graduation and beyond.
Implications

The Center for Promise research team went straight to the source and asked FLNE young people what improvements they would make to programs, policies, and practices to help other students learn English and persist in school through graduation. Presented here are recommendations based on their responses and experiences.

Create more opportunities for connection.

Youth described how connection with peers and adults is important for battling prejudice and fostering a sense of community in school. Peer-to-peer collaboration has been linked to increased school engagement and performance. Schools are uniquely positioned in the lives of FLNE youth to provide opportunities for connection to adults and peers within the walls of the school building and in the broader community. This might include opportunities for young people to assume leadership roles and to serve their communities.

They should develop programs or projects to develop communication among all the students. To be all united and not see each other different from one another, because that’s the biggest problem here, that’s the only thing. From there, I think everything’s good.

–Mateo

Continue to increase opportunities for teacher training and sharing of promising practices.

Many of the youth the authors spoke with expressed a desire for shared language with teachers. Highly effective educators, who are trained to serve EL students, are critically important to the state’s efforts to increase academic performance for all EL and FLNE youth and can help provide them with the supports necessary to reach graduation. Continuing to provide educators with increased opportunities to learn from one another, share promising practices, and receive input from the youth they serve will help educators to better meet the diverse needs of the FLNE student population.

I think like if some teachers that are teaching in high school, they’ll speak Spanish, it will help a lot if they speak both English and Spanish.

–Sandra

Students were encouraged to respond in either English or Spanish, depending on their preference. Responses in Spanish have been translated into English; responses in English are presented only in the original language.
Engage young people in the design of educational programs that serve FLNE students.

Young people have unique expertise and insight into the educational experiences that will lead to their academic success. Empowering youth and including their feedback in conversations about their educational experience can help educators structure more student-centered curriculum and programs for FLNE youth. When asked, young people expressed their desire for more bilingual staff, increased opportunities for employment assistance, and greater opportunities to interact with their native English-speaking peers.

“Diría yo que la mejor regla sería que nos hablan en español pues, un tiempito español para pues mientras nos acostumbramos, aprendemos lo básico y ya después puro inglés. Pues, esa es una de las reglas que está aquí, que me gusta esa regla. “

“Diría yo que la mejor regla sería que nos hablan en español pues, un tiempito español para pues mientras nos acostumbramos, aprendemos lo básico y ya después puro inglés. Pues, esa es una de las reglas que está aquí, que me gusta esa regla. “

Provide more flexible programs for older youth.

Older youth spoke about the need to earn money to take care of family and how this was often in conflict with their desire to attain a high school diploma. Providing flexibility to help these young people balance their family responsibilities and course load could lead to increased graduation rates. Superintendents and principals have accomplished this by creating flexible schedules (on a student-by-student basis), offering programs, such as internship programs, that prepare young people for the workforce, and providing opportunities for blended learning.

“Si. Yo hablé con la profesora... si podría dejar entrar... por lo menos a las nueve de la mañana para yo descansar un poco más. Pero el detalle era que la primera clase que yo tenía era necesaria para la graduación. Entonces no me la podía cambiar. “

“I talked to the teacher... to see if they could let me come in... at least 9 a.m. so I could rest a little bit more. But, I had to take the class in the first period because it was necessary for graduation. So, they couldn’t change it for me. “

Provide more comprehensive student supports.

Young people come to school with multiple needs. Recognizing this, schools can serve as hubs of resources and connection that extend beyond academics, providing supports based on the needs of their student populations. Full-service community schools, as well as nonprofit organizations, such as Beacon Centers in New York City, offer models for how schools can create partnerships to provide these supports.

“Si mi papá está operado, mi mamá no trabaja, solo yo trabajo. Entonces me tocó que dejar la escuela por eso... mi profesora me dio la tarjeta del bus gratis.. pero incluso yo sentía que no era suficiente, porque tenía que llevar dinero a la casa. “

“If my dad had surgery, my mom does not work, I only work. So, I had to leave school because of that... My teacher gave me a free bus pass, but I even felt it was not enough, because I had to bring money home. “

“ Diría yo que la mejor regla sería que nos hablan en español pues, un tiempito español para pues mientras nos acostumbramos, aprendemos lo básico y ya después puro inglés. Pues, esa es una de las reglas que está aquí, que me gusta esa regla. “

“I’d say that the best rule would be to talk to us in Spanish for some time so we get used to it and we learn the basics, and then just English. That’s one of the rules we have here and I like that rule. “

“Diría yo que la mejor regla sería que nos hablan en español pues, un tiempito español para pues mientras nos acostumbramos, aprendemos lo básico y ya después puro inglés. Pues, esa es una de las reglas que está aquí, que me gusta esa regla. “

“I’d say that the best rule would be to talk to us in Spanish for some time so we get used to it and we learn the basics, and then just English. That’s one of the rules we have here and I like that rule. “
Support the student by supporting the family.

Schools should continue to mine research and best practices to better engage and support families. One strategy might include incorporating family engagement technologies, such as Kinvolved, creating Family Centers, conducting home visits, and deliberately recruiting family and community members to be involved in the daily life of the school. Districts can support these efforts by allocating resources to a school counselor, social worker, or family engagement specialist who can serve as the link between home and school. In addition, offering opportunities for family members to learn English specifically at their child’s school could lead to an increase in the parents’ level of comfort with their child’s educational environment.

“I think if the government could create, at least, programs to study for a certain period of time in the afternoons for older people, I feel like that’d be like an extra support that they’d be giving us, Latino youth as well as parents.” –Daniel
APPENDIX A
Massachusetts Policy Context

As more robust data on academic performance and graduation rates for EL students has become available, the state has offered several new programs and implemented new policies aimed at making educational opportunities in Massachusetts more responsive to the needs of ELs:

**RETELL—Teacher Preparation and Qualification**: Partly in response to recommendations from the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2012 the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) instituted the RETELL (Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners) initiative. Part of this more comprehensive effort at improving teaching and learning conditions for ELs involved an additional 45-hour teacher endorsement in SEI for core academic content teachers with any EL students in their classes. Between September 2012 and July 2016, state-sponsored professional development was offered to help teachers earn this endorsement, and roughly 40,000 teachers and administrators were trained in SEI during that time. The endorsement was required as of July 1, 2016, and now districts, educational collaboratives, and institutions of higher education offer courses to teachers. In addition, teacher preparation programs require the coursework.72

**SLIFE—Identification and Classification of Students with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)**: After the 2002 law, many students either mistakenly opted out of SEI services or were misclassified.73 Under the 2002 law, students who had been in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs were moved into SEI settings. However, parents could opt out of EL services with their students being placed in general education settings. If a district has 20 students whose parents opt them out of education, from the same spoken language, then the parents can ask that the district establish a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program.

Recently, a new subgroup of the EL population has been identified by ESE. Recognizing the unique educational profiles of many FLNE students and the need to develop a more robust system of evaluating individual student needs, in 2015 ESE instituted the SLIFE guidance, a process to identify and provide services for EL students with limited and/or interrupted formal education. The SLIFE guidance stipulates that “when a new student enrolls in a school district, it is the district’s obligation to determine whether the student is an EL and to place that student in an appropriate instructional program.”74 SLIFE lays out classification steps and protocols so school districts can assess students’ language needs and develop an educational program to meet those academic and language needs. This classification allows for an individualized treatment plan that includes the components of SEI (ESL & SCI) but has options for more intensive sheltered instruction as well as guidance/counseling supports to help a young person gain language and academic skills.75 Districts are establishing SLIFE programs to better meet the needs of these learners.
APPENDIX B

Methods

Quantitative Participants

Student-level data were acquired from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The authors included data from first-time ninth grade students who were enrolled in a Massachusetts public school by the end of the 2011-12 school year. From this total sample of 76,744 students, individuals whose first (native) language was not English (FLNE) and were not removed from their schools due to Special Education classification (e.g., out-of-district placement; N=144), were identified (see Table 2), resulting in a sample of 13,075 students for this analysis.

Quantitative Analysis Plan

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was used to examine whether there exist frequently occurring clusters of FLNE students (question 1). Eight indicators were used to identify unique clusters or classes of FLNE students:

- EL program participation
- free/reduced price lunch eligibility
- SPED status
- years in Massachusetts public schools
- ninth grade achievement
- eighth grade ELA MCAS
- eighth grade Math MCAS
- native language.

Subsequent multilevel logistic regression analyses assessed links between class membership and 4- and 5-year graduation status with fixed effects to account for school level factors (Question 2).

Qualitative Participants and Procedure

To understand the lived experiences of FLNE students, the research team collected data in two steps. The authors conducted group interviews in four public school districts and one nonprofit community-based organization in Massachusetts. Participants (n=24) participated in two group interviews each and were given a $40 gift card per session. Prior to the first group interview, participants were given a survey that solicited demographic information (e.g., age, country of origin), and information about school (e.g., grade level; see Table 4). Staff, school teachers, and administrators recruited and identified students to participate in the research study through referrals, phone calls, and fliers. All of the participants identified themselves as first-generation immigrant youth, born outside of the U.S. All youth identified Spanish as their first language, and none of their parents were born in the U.S. All participants and names mentioned were replaced with pseudonyms for this report.

TABLE 4. Qualitative Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size (N)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age of sample</th>
<th>Countries of origin</th>
<th>Current educational context</th>
<th>First language Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 24              | 15 Male 6 Female | 18-25 | El Salvador = 10  
Puerto Rico = 3  
Guatemala = 3  
Honduras = 5  
Dominican Republic = 2 | Attending traditional high school = 18  
Not in school = 5  
Attending 2- or 4-year college = 1 | 24 |
The group interview protocol was developed by the research team and generally covered young people’s experiences in school, at home, and outside of school. In addition, the protocol specifically covered why youth leave or persist in school. Sample questions include, “If you left high school, why did you leave before graduating? If you are in high school, have you thought about leaving school? Why or why not?” and “How was your experience learning English in school?” Youth were provided with all materials in both English and Spanish. The group interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes long and began with ice breakers before delving into the group interview protocol. The group interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, allowing youth to respond however they felt most comfortable.

Analysis

The authors took a phenomenological approach to qualitative data analysis. This method is ideal for capturing the common meaning for a group of individuals’ lived experiences of a concept or phenomena. All data were analyzed using QSR International’s NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. Transcripts were coded separately by two researchers who later met to reconcile any differences until they reached 100 percent agreement. In addition, all research team members met on a weekly basis to ensure fidelity of coding. In keeping with the phenomenological approach, the research team began their analysis by reading over the transcripts and coding for significant statements (e.g., “I want to be somebody in life”) or themes (e.g., social support) that recurred throughout the group interviews across all five sites. This was an iterative process where the authors constantly reread transcripts and allowed themes to emerge from the data until the authors no longer saw new recurring statements. Then, in keeping with a hermeneutical phenomenological approach, the researchers met and reflected on the essential themes to interpret what constituted the nature of the FLNE students’ lived experiences. This was an iterative process where the researchers consulted with colleagues unfamiliar with the data to reduce bias in interpretation.
APPENDIX C

Description of Latent Class Analysis (LCA) Indicators and Missing Data

With the exception of EL status and 8th Grade MCAS scores, all indicators were derived from the end of the 2011 academic year (i.e., June 2012) data. Age was continuously coded, and three variables—student race, native language, and school district—were coded as categorical variables. All other variables were dichotomous.

**English Learners (EL).** Students were identified as EL if they had participated in EL programing anytime between the October of 2009 (the beginning of 7th Grade) and June of 2012 (the end of 9th Grade). Students who had participated in EL programming were given a value of “1,” while non-EL students were given a value of “0.”

**Free/Reduced Price Lunch.** Students who were identified as eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch in June of 2012 were given a value of “1.” All other students were given a value of “0.”

**9th Grade Achievement.** If students were receiving passing grades in all of their 9th Grade coursework, they were given a value of “1.” If a student was failing any course, they were given a value of “0.”

**8th Grade MCAS Scores.** Students 8th Grade ELA and Math MCAS scores were coded into separate dichotomous variables with “Proficient” or “Advanced” scores given a value of “1” and “Needs Improvement” or “Warning” scores given a value of “0.”

**Special Education (SPED) Status.** Special Education status was coded as “1” if students were currently participating in SPED programming. All other students were given a value of “0.”

**Years in Massachusetts Public Schools.** Students who had been enrolled in Massachusetts public schools for more than two years as of June 2012 were given a value of “1.” Students who had been enrolled in Massachusetts public schools for two years or less were given a value of “0.”

**Language.** Eight language categories (Spanish, Portuguese, Hatian Creole, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, Khmer/Khmai, and Russian) were created based on the most predominant languages that students reported speaking. A ninth category, “Other,” was created to represent all other languages that students reported speaking. This category is not intended to represent a homogenous group, but rather was created to capture low frequency languages for which the small number of students represented in each prevents meaningful interpretation.

**Gender.** Students gender was coded as “1” (female) or “0” (male).

**Race/Ethnicity.** Students’ race/ethnicity was coded in line with procedures outlined by the Massachusetts Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE). Racial/ethnic categories included Hispanic, Black, White, Asian American, American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Multiracial Non-Hispanic.

**Age.** Age was calculated by subtracting each student’s date of birth from June 1, 2012.

**School District.** Students’ enrollment was defined as the school district where they were enrolled in June of 2012.
### TABLE 5. FLNE Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1: Students Likely Passing</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>549</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15.61</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 2: Excelling Non-EL Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2410</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15.26</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 3: Above Average ELs</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>53%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15.99</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 4: Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3632</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15.45</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 5: Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2169</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>16.13</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 6: Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% Free lunch</th>
<th>% Passing all 9th grade courses</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient math MCAS</th>
<th>% Advanced or Proficient ELA MCAS</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
<th>% Enrolled in MA public schools &gt;2 years</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3561</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>15.72</td>
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### TABLE 6. Native Languages and Class Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>Haitian Creole</th>
<th>Chinese dialect</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Cape Verdean</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: Students Likely Passing</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Class 2: Excelling Non-EL Students | 9%         | 10%            | 1%              | 23%        | 11%          | 0%    | 3%      | 7%    | 35%   |

| Class 3: Above Average ELs | 3%         | 16%            | 6%              | 25%        | 10%          | 20%   | 2%      | 3%    | 15%   |

| Class 4: Low-Income, Long-Time Residents, Non-EL Spanish Speakers | 67%        | 6%             | 5%              | 1%         | 3%           | 2%    | 4%      | 0%    | 11%   |

| Class 5: Low-Income, Spanish Speaking, Massachusetts Newcomers | 58%        | 2%             | 13%             | 1%         | 0%           | 8%    | 0%      | 0%    | 17%   |

| Class 6: Differentiated Learners Who Speak Spanish | 77%        | 4%             | 3%              | 0%         | 1%           | 2%    | 3%      | 0%    | 9%    |
Missing Data

In cases with missing data, class membership was determined by all available data, using the principle of Maximum Likelihood Estimation. For example, if students had data on six of the eight LCA indicators, their results were determined using information from those six variables. Every student had data for five of the indicators and there was very little missing data on the remaining variables. See table below.

**TABLE 7. Amount of Missing Data, by Indicator**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>% Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL Enrollment</td>
<td>13075</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Price Lunch</td>
<td>13075</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Status</td>
<td>13075</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Massachusetts Public Schools</td>
<td>13075</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language</td>
<td>13075</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing 9th Grade Courses</td>
<td>11576</td>
<td>88.54%</td>
<td>11.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Math MCAS</td>
<td>10229</td>
<td>78.23%</td>
<td>21.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade ELA MCAS</td>
<td>10150</td>
<td>77.63%</td>
<td>22.37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENDNOTES

2. Capps et al., 2015.
3. Hill & Torres, 2010; Garcia-Reid, Peterson & Reid, 2015.
15. DART, 2014.
17. Ibid.
18. Slama et al., 2015.
23. DART, 2014.
24. Ibid.
30. Garcia et al., 2012.
31. Ibid.
33. Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, & Bama, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Garcia-Reid et al., 2015.
40. Crean, 2004; Jeynes, 2007; Garcia-Reid et al., 2015.
42. Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002.
The authors used a Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to determine whether there were frequently occurring clusters of FLNE students in Massachusetts.
REFERENCES


The Center for Promise is the applied research institute for America's Promise Alliance, housed at the Boston University School of Education and dedicated to understanding what young people need to thrive and how to create the conditions of success for all young people.

America's Promise Alliance is the nation’s largest network dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations and thousands of community leaders to focus the nation’s attention on young people’s lives and voices, lead bold campaigns to expand opportunity, conduct groundbreaking research on what young people need to thrive, and accelerate the adoption of strategies that help young people succeed. GradNation, our signature campaign, mobilizes Americans to increase the nation's high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020. In the past 12 years, an additional 2 million young people have graduated from high school.

**Suggested Citation**


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