Introduction

Massachusetts consistently ranks at the top for school quality and the performance of its students on national and international exams. However, these results mask disparities between communities within the Commonwealth. Some school districts face a disproportionate share of challenges to the success of their students. Among the challenges districts face are the proportion of students who are English Language Learners, the proportion of students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and the educational attainment of adults in the community.

Data Sources: U.S. Census (2013); MassGIS (2014); Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Data and Methods

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines an economically disadvantaged student as one whose family participates in one or more of the following state-administered programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC); the Department of Children and Families’ foster care program; or MassHealth (Medicaid).

English Language Learners
Percentage of Students by School District

Economically Disadvantaged Students
Percentage of Students by School District

Adults Who Hold a Bachelor’s Degree
Percentage of Adults by School District

Results

The districts that face the largest combination of challenges include Holyoke, Lowell, Malden, Lynn, Revere, Taunton, and New Bedford. The districts that face the smallest number of challenges include Lincoln-Sudbury, Georgetown, North Reading, Cohasset, and Duxbury. Boston, the Commonwealth’s largest school district, faces a moderate number of challenges because it has high numbers of English Language Learners, high numbers of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and relatively high adult educational attainment.

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