

Portuguese as Heritage Language in Public and Private K-12 Schools In Massachusetts

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Introduction

Heritage languages have enormous significance in contemporary society and education in the United States and the US, with its rich immigrant history, is a treasure trove of heritage languages.¹ The need for students in the US to learn to speak additional languages is of paramount importance in a twenty-first century, global, interdependent world.

The case of Portuguese as heritage language in Massachusetts is one that deserves attention for three main reasons: (1) Massachusetts is the state that has the highest number of students learning Portuguese in K-12²; (2) Massachusetts has the highest number of students in private community schools. (Castanho, 2010); (3) Massachusetts has the highest number of Portuguese- speaking persons.

Definition of Terms

English Language Learners (ELLs) is the term used in this article to refer to school age students who cannot do ordinary classroom work in English.

Language Learning Education (LLE) focuses on providing instruction on the development of and additional language in K-12 and it includes a variety of program types.

¹ There is even an association called the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages (the Alliance) which is committed to advancing language development for heritage language speakers in the United States as part of a larger effort to educate members of our society who can function professionally in English and in other languages.

² Also the K-12 ELL population who has Portuguese as a first language is the second most numerous in the State. The 2009 MA Department Student Information Management System data shows that there are 4,209 Portuguese as a first language ELLs in the State.

Portuguese Heritage Language Students are students in K-12 and beyond who have an affinity with Portuguese stemming mainly from connections to their family background (Carvalho, 2010). They include anyone with roots in a Portuguese-speaking country (i.e. Angola, Brasil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe) who may understand Portuguese but may not speak it or write it well.³

Portuguese Heritage Programs consist of language-learning education opportunities in public and or private schools which are designed to meet the language-learning needs of Portuguese Heritage language students who already arrive at school with cultural knowledge but who may or may not understand Portuguese and need to learn not only to speak it but to read and write it.

Types of Language Learning Education Programs in K-12

There are three major kinds of Portuguese Language Learning Education options: (1) Community Schools (Portuguese as a Heritage Language Programs), (2) Portuguese as Foreign Language Programs and (3) Portuguese in Bilingual Education Programs. See Table 1 for an overview of the types of Portuguese Language Learning Education programs offered in MA.

Table 1. Types of Programs and Levels of Education in Portuguese Language Education in MA: Pre-school - University⁴

³ It should be noted that Portuguese heritage students do not always have access to Portuguese Heritage Language programs or classes per se and take Portuguese as a foreign language instead.

⁴ See Appendix A for the History of Bilingual Education in Massachusetts.

LEVEL	Program	Portuguese Community schools	Portuguese as a world (foreign) language	Bilingual Education	
				Additive 2000-present (OLA Program)	Subtractive 'TBE' ⁵ (1971-present)
University: Doctorate					
University: Master					
University: Bachelor					
Secondary					
	6th Grade				
Elementary					
Pre-School	Kindergarten			Kindergarten	

Source: Castanho, Serpa & Serpa (2001)

⁵ Transitional Bilingual Education- subtractive bilingual education that taught Portuguese for a period of three years.

Portuguese as a Heritage Language Program

Community Schools (Escolas Portuguesas) were established in the 1980s as private schools with the support of the Government of Portugal, which provided materials and a Coordinator paid by the Ministry of Education of Portugal. However, under this plan, parents pay students' tuition, and classes are held once or twice a week, usually in church halls, civic clubs or other community organizations after the regular school schedule, similar to Hebrew and Greek schools. The curriculum focuses all language skills—understanding, speaking, reading and writing Portuguese. Most of the teaching materials came from Portugal. Castanho (1993) carried out the first study of the Portuguese Community schools and she found that even though they had some materials for learning Portuguese, their instructional materials were not appropriate because they didn't reflect the students' experience in the US. However, the Coordinator of Portuguese for the eastern US reports that the materials now are more adequate for students learning Portuguese in the US and the access to online resources has alleviated this challenge (Dr. Joao Caixinha, personal communication April 2011).

Massachusetts has ten K-6 community schools that provide Portuguese Language Learning Education (PLLE) opportunities, mainly to Portuguese heritage students. A number of these schools were recognized by the government of Portugal as *Escolas Oficiais*. See table 2 for a listing of the current community schools in MA.

Table 2- Portuguese Community Schools in MA Grades 1-6

Escola Portuguesa de Cambridge & Somerville	Cambridge, MA
Escola Portuguesa de Hudson	Hudson MA

Escola Portuguesa de Ludlow	Ludlow MA
Escola Portuguesa de Milford	Milford MA
Escola Oficial Portuguesa de Peabody	Peabody MA
Portuguese United for Education,	New Bedford MA
Escola Portuguesa Oficializada	New Bedford MA
Escola Portuguesa da Casa da Saudade	New Bedford, MA
Escola Oficializada Portuguesa de Fall River	Fall River, MA
Escola Portuguesa de Taunton	Taunton MA

Sources: Castanho (2010) and Portuguese Times (2011)

It should be noted that Portuguese teaching in some form of community schools dates back to early 1900's in Massachusetts. (Castanho, 2010). The Espirito Santo School in Fall River is an example of such a school.⁶ It is a Pre-K-8 private school founded by the Portuguese-speaking community one hundred years ago to address the education and language needs of the community. Students in this school learn Portuguese as both heritage language and foreign language. The curriculum requires all students to take Portuguese as a subject through all the grades.

Additive Bilingual Education Program or Two-Way Bilingual Program:⁷ The OLA Program

A Two-Way Program is one of the legal options under the current Massachusetts Chapter 71A and a waiver is not required. It is program of study in LLE that promotes

⁶ The Espirito Santo Escola is currently associated with the Diocese of Fall River

⁷ See Appendix A for the types of Programs offered to English Language Learners in the US.

high levels of proficiency in both languages, Portuguese and English. In Massachusetts there is only one, the OLA program. OLA is a developmental Portuguese-English bilingual program based on a language “immersion” approach (Lambert and Tucker, 1972). It is housed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the King Open School in East Cambridge, a predominantly Portuguese language neighborhood. The OLA Program seeks to serve native and heritage speakers of Portuguese and native speakers of English (many with Portuguese heritage ancestry) by enabling them to become fully acquainted with one another in integrated 50% Portuguese medium classes. The three major goals of the Cambridge Two-Way programs are:

(1) To promote academic instruction so that all students become bilingual and biliterate through the implementation of the state and local frameworks and standards;

(2) To provide students and staff with an environment that develops cross cultural understanding;

(3) To provide a variety of opportunities for positive interactions among families, sharing their cultural heritages. (Available at:

http://www.cpsd.us/cpsdir/Biling_2way.cfm).

Specifically, OLA’s mission is: to teach the Portuguese language and culture from the Portuguese-speaking world from grades K–8; to integrate instruction in all academic subjects with Portuguese and English language development so that all students become bilingual and biliterate; to develop children's creativity and critical thinking; and to provide students with a diverse ethnic environment that develops cross-cultural understanding and friendships. The OLA Curriculum aims at developing academic skills in both languages, and follows state and local frameworks and benchmarks. The

Portuguese Language Arts Curriculum was created jointly as Tejido/Tecido/Trenzas Extension Join/Collaboration Project in Developing Ongoing Spanish and Portuguese Language Arts (2007). This curriculum guide is based on the Cambridge, MA Step By Step Assessment to Language Dominance (SSALD), Cambridge Spanish Language Assessment-Oral (CSLA-O) and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) and it was developed with the collaboration of the two-way teachers in Cambridge. The program emphasizes the heritage, language and culture of the Portuguese-speaking world through theater, songs, dance, and literature.

OLA Program Demographic

The OLA Portuguese/English Program currently serves 89 students in K-6. See Table 3 (Aida Bairos, personal communication, April 25,2011). The program encompasses Portuguese heritage speakers, native English speakers and other backgrounds.

Table 3- Number of Students Per Grade in the OLA Program

Grade	Number of Students
K	17
1-2	22
3-4	22
5-6	29

Source: Aida Bairos, personal communication, April 24, 2011.

Table 4- Language of Instruction by Grade

Grade	Instructional Time in Portuguese	Instructional Time in English
K-2	1 week	1 week
3-6	Varies by subject	

Source: Aida Bairos, personal communication, April 24, 2011.

Cazabon, Lambert and Heise-Baigorria (2002) analyzed the achievement of OLA students in English by looking at their scores in the LAS R/W (Language Assessment Scales, Reading and Writing) and found out that they scored above the median point for both reading and writing tests, averaging in the 70s for writing and in the mid-80s for reading. When compared to other language education programs (ESL low-incident group, transitional bilingual programs) OLA and Amigos (those programs that had 50/50 the two-language of instruction) had consistently higher scores for LAS reading and writing. The combined reading/writing scores for the ESL group were generally lower than those of all other programs. Cazabon et al. (2002) concluded in their report that the OLA program has students that are bilingual and biliterate in Portuguese and English, familiar with the ways of thinking of other cultural groups, have positive views of the contribution of ethnic or linguistics groups in the US and are more comfortable and confident with themselves due to an academic program that prepares them well and values multiculturalism and bilingualism.

Subtractive Bilingual Education: Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Programs in Massachusetts⁸

TBE is a program of study under the current Massachusetts Chapter 71A and a waiver must be requested. The program has a duration of three years, using Portuguese as a language of instruction until the students have learned English to transition to English Only education. The primary goal of this type of LLE is English proficiency and it uses the native language of students to teach the academic content while they learn enough English to be able to access the content in English. An example is the Portuguese-English TBE Program in Framingham that is offered at the Elementary and secondary levels to a total of 186 students.

Table 5- Transitional Bilingual Portuguese-English Program in Framingham

School	Grade	Number of Students
Potter Road School	K-2	52
Woodrow Wilson School	K-5	114
Fuller Middle School	3-4	14
Framingham High School	5-6	6
Total		186

Source: Carmen Padilla, personal communication, May 4, 2011.

Portuguese as World/Foreign Language

⁸ See Appendix for the history of bilingual Education in MA

This Portuguese language learning education program is for students who want to learn Portuguese and are not necessarily from a Portuguese Heritage background. Portuguese is offered as a school subject starting in elementary or secondary school or college and usually follows the standards established by ACTFL⁹. Examples of Portuguese as a foreign language include the foreign language classes offered in many public schools throughout Massachusetts (i.e. Hudson¹⁰, Cambridge, Somerville, Framingham, etc.)¹¹

Conclusion

Portuguese heritage speakers in Massachusetts are served in different types of Language Learning Education programs, which are not necessarily designed as Heritage language classes. The state offers three major types of Portuguese Language Learning education programs for students who want to enhance or learn Portuguese as a first or second/heritage language: community schools, bilingual education and Portuguese as a world/foreign language. There is only one two-way bilingual Portuguese program in the Cambridge Public schools and Portuguese Transitional Bilingual Education is implemented in the Framingham Public schools. The language and academic benefits of students becoming proficient in two languages is of paramount importance in the global world of the 21st century.

⁹ ACTFL (2004). *National Standards for Foreign Language Education*. It includes the standards for Portuguese as a foreign/world language.

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3392>

¹⁰ The Hudson Public Schools benefits from a Memorandum of Understanding established by the Ministry of Education of Portugal and the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education established in 2001 and signed by Professor Domingues Fernandes, the Portuguese Education Councilor.

¹¹ It should be noted that many students who take Portuguese as a world or foreign language are from Portuguese language heritage families.

Appendix A - The History of Portuguese in Bilingual Education Programs in MA Public Schools

In 1971, Massachusetts became the first state in the United States to enact a law mandating Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) for a period of up to three years. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71A then required that when there were twenty or more English language learners of any language classification, the school committee should establish a Transitional Bilingual Program (TBE). The primary goal was to teach English while the students were learning the required grade level academic content through their primary language, to avoid academic retardation. All schools that had Portuguese speakers had all academic subjects initially in Portuguese and ESL.

In addition to TBE, Massachusetts offered a variety of instructional program models to English Language Learners (ELLs): two-way or dual language bilingual education, full time ESL classes, ESL pull-out services and no ESL support . (See Brisk (1998), Linqunti (1999) and Thomas and Collier (1995 and 2004) for detailed reviews of these program models.) Table A I provides an overview of the characteristics of popular programs serving ELLs in the US.

Table A I: General Overview of Instructional Program Types Serving the ELL K-12 Population

Program Type	Characteristics
Early-Exit Transitional Bilingual Education	Goal is to develop English skills as fast as possible. Students are ELLs from same language background. Academic instruction is done through English and native language, with transition to English-only usually within 2-3 years.
Late-Exit Transitional/ Developmental or Maintenance Bilingual Education	Goal is to develop academic proficiency in English and student's primary language. The transitional programs generally have more emphasis on English language development. The developmental programs generally put equal emphasis on developing and maintaining students' primary language and developing English skills. Students are ELLs from same language background. Usually most students in these programs are transitioned into English-only after 5-6 years.
Dual language Immersion (Two- Way Bilingual Education)	Goal is to develop high levels of proficiency in two languages: the student's primary language and in a second language. Students are native speakers of English and ELLs from the same language group. Curriculum frameworks Instruction is provided in both languages.
(Sheltered)Structure d Immersion/Sheltered English Immersion	Goal is to develop English skills. All students in program are ELLs. Content instruction in English with Sheltered English instructional methods to make content comprehensible. ¹² Typically no primary language support or development.
English Language Development (ELD) or English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Learning (ELL)	Goal is to develop English skills. ELL students are placed in English-only classrooms in other subjects with no ESL help. Students are pulled-out for instruction aimed at developing English grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. Content-ESL includes vocabulary related to other academic subjects in the school curriculum but the aim is still developing English skills.
Submersion Sink or Swim	ELL students are placed in mainstream English only classrooms with no instructional support provided by a trained specialist.

Adapted from: Serpa, M.L., S. de A. Lira, S. and W. Stokes (2004).

¹² According to Short, Hudec and Echevarria (2002) Sheltered Instruction is "a means for making grade-level academic content (e.g. science, social studies, math) more accessible for English language learners while at the same time promoting their English language development"

On November 5, 2002, Question 2, an initiative petition passed on the ballot favoring English. As a consequence the Massachusetts Legislature passed amendments to Chapter 71A, requiring ELL students be instructed through Sheltered English Immersion, unless the students are placed in a Two-Way Bilingual Education Program or opt out and have a placement in general classrooms not specific for ELLs. Parents who want their English Language Learners to participate in a Transitional bilingual (TBE) program may not do so unless they have received a waiver. However, Two-Way Bilingual Education programs do not require a waiver and are legal in MA under the new law. In addition, research shows that high quality Two-Way is the most successful of the program types. At the same time, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* requires districts to provide English language learners with the same high-quality, standards-based curriculum they provide to all other students and the opportunity to meet the same long-term educational goals as other students¹³. Section 4 of the new law states:

Children who are English learners shall be educated through Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed *one school year*. Local schools shall be permitted, but not required, to place in the same classroom, English learners of different ages but whose degree of English proficiency is similar. Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native-language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once English learners acquire a good working knowledge of English and are able to do regular school work in English, they shall no longer be classified as English learners and shall be

¹³ See DOE document available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/03/news/FAQ> for a complete explanation of the law.

transferred to English language mainstream classrooms. *Foreign language classes for children who already know English, 2-way bilingual programs for students in Kindergarten through grade 12 and Special Education programs for physically or mentally impaired students shall be unaffected* (emphasis added).¹⁴

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71A/Section4> (Excerpts from: Serpa (2011)).

Policy Change Consequences and Achievement Results

Four percent of the state's ELLs receive bilingual education, 2% receive TBE and another 2% receive two-way education. More than 80% receive sheltered English (Serpa 2011). Results from the data driven *Halting the Race to the Bottom* show that SEI is not working when only 20% of ELLs achieve proficient in the MCAS after five years of schooling in the Commonwealth. In addition, there is an increase in the drop out rate and in the placement of ELLs in Special education. For more details see Serpa (2011).

In conclusion, Massachusetts has implemented a very language restrictive policy since 2002 with disastrous consequences for ELL students, because the achievement data shows that most of them are not achieving English Language Arts at a grade level even after five years of English instruction. This affects the Portuguese speaking ELLs who do not have access to high quality Two-Way or TBE programs. Therefore, a change in policy is highly recommended.

¹⁴ Source: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/gl-71a-toc.htm>.

Appendix B. Comparison between SEI and Two-Way Programs

Major Characteristics

	SEI	TWO-WAY
Goals	<i>Academic proficiency in English only</i>	<i>High academic language proficiency in two languages: English and the native language</i>
Teacher	<i>Does not usually speak or understand the language of the student (i.e., the teacher does not understand the student's language and thus the student is placed in an emotionally challenging position).</i>	<i>Speaks and understands the student's language. (i.e. the teacher understands the student)</i>
Components	<i>SEI has two components: English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and sheltered content instruction taught in English.</i>	<i>Two-way has two components: English and native language (e.g., English + Spanish)</i>
Language of instruction	<i>English Sometimes with an explanation for academic concepts in the student's native language</i>	<i>Native language + English</i>
Zone of proximal development (ZPD)	<i>ZPD is restricted, particularly if ELLs <u>have not already</u> achieved the academic concepts or skills being taught. Learning rate (how fast) and amount (how many concepts, skills) of learning are affected negatively.</i>	<i>The ZPD is adequate because (all factors being equal) the students have meaningful language access to achieving grade level content and their learning rate and amount are not affected.</i>
Academic achievement	<i>Only 20% achieve at grade level in MCAS ELA after five years; 80% take longer (ELL Subcommittee, 2009).</i>	<i>Most students achieve at grade level or above (Genesee, et al., 2008; Thomas & Collier, 1992, 2002).</i>
Students	<i>Only ELLs of the same language or mixed-language backgrounds</i>	<i>English-speaking students + ELLs (i.e., minority and majority language students learning to together two languages)</i>

Number of teachers per student	<i>2 (i.e. one for SEI and one for ESL)</i>	<i>1 (i.e., each of the two teachers has an average of 20 or so students)</i>
Percentage of ELLs in each of the two program type in MA	<i>Over 80%</i>	<i>2%</i>
Least to most restrictive	<i>Most restrictive</i>	<i>Least restrictive</i>
Cost	<i>Less cost effective</i>	<i>More cost effective</i>

Source: Serpa (2011)

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