

English Language Learners

DEFINITION

English Language Learners is the percentage of all public school children (pre-kindergarten through grade 12) who are receiving English as a second language services or bilingual education services in Rhode Island public schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children who are immigrants or who have immigrant parents and who do not speak English well are at risk for difficulties at school. Many of them face multiple risk factors including poverty, lack of access to health care, and low parental education levels, discrimination and racism. Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English face greater challenges progressing in school and will encounter more barriers to success in the workforce as adults than their English-speaking peers.^{1,2}

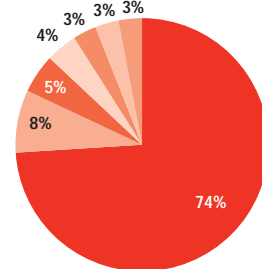
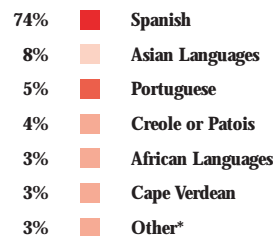
In Rhode Island in 2006, 22% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home, 86% of whom spoke English "very well."³ During the 2006-2007 school year, there were 7,920 English Language Learners (ELLs) in Rhode Island public schools.⁴

Nationally, children who live in households in which adults have

difficulty speaking English are 50% more likely to live in poverty.⁵ Children of immigrants are also more likely to be concentrated in under-resourced schools in high poverty communities.⁶ Seventy-eight percent (78%) of all ELL students in Rhode Island live in the core cities. In the 2006-2007 school year in Rhode Island, 85% (6,721) of all ELL students lived in low-income families.⁷ Given the proven link between educational attainment and family economic success, a high-quality education is the most important vehicle for upward mobility for children in immigrant families.⁸

Schools play a critical role in helping children to transition to the culture of the United States and in providing an education that supports academic success for children with a primary language other than English.^{9,10} According to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe*, all children, regardless of immigration status, are eligible for free public elementary and secondary education.¹¹ Rhode Island schools are legally mandated to provide programs to English Language Learners that are comparable in structure and content to instruction provided to English-proficient students.¹²

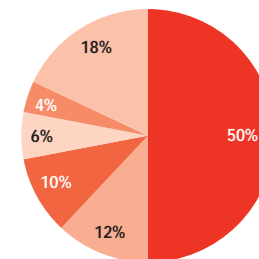
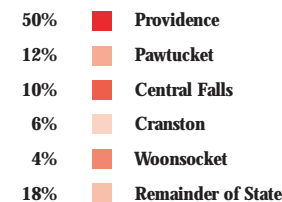
English Language Learners, by Language, Rhode Island, 2007



n=7,920

* Includes Arabic, French, German, Italian, and other languages.

English Language Learners, by Community, Rhode Island, 2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year.

◆ In the 2006-2007 school year, ELL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 77 different languages; the majority (74%) spoke Spanish. Twenty-seven percent of ELL students were enrolled in a bilingual program and 73% were enrolled in an English as a Second Language program. Providence public schools and the International Charter School were the only schools to offer bilingual programs in Rhode Island.¹³

◆ In Rhode Island, 18% of all ELL students are in high school.¹⁴ Youth who are ELL students face unique challenges to learn English, study the required material needed to graduate, and finance a college education. As a result, dropout rates are significantly higher for immigrant youth who are ELLs than for their English-speaking peers.^{15,16}

◆ Examples of promising practices to improve the achievement of older ELL students include: programs that provide intensive language development, academic and cultural orientation, and five-year high school plans for immigrant students arriving too late to complete requirements in four years or who need additional English-language training.¹⁷

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Table 36.

English Language Learners, Rhode Island, 2006-2007 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)				TOTAL ELLS	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT
		PRE K AND K	ELEMENTARY (GRADES 1-5)	MIDDLE (GRADES 6-8)	HIGH (GRADES 9-12)		
Barrington	3,410	6	10	2	3	21	1%
Bristol-Warren	3,459	15	68	24	9	116	3%
Burrillville	2,554	1	4	0	0	5	0%
Central Falls	3,481	82	334	197	214	827	24%
Charlho	3,650	1	10	3	2	16	0%
Coventry	5,442	1	4	1	2	8	0%
Cranston	10,539	47	239	134	83	503	5%
Cumberland	4,983	8	50	20	0	78	2%
East Greenwich	2,338	1	3	1	3	8	0%
East Providence	5,654	66	119	20	20	225	4%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	1,992	0	8	2	2	12	1%
Foster	279	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,566	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	646	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Jamestown	480	0	3	0	0	3	1%
Johnston	3,116	0	34	20	9	63	2%
Lincoln	3,258	3	15	4	0	22	1%
Little Compton	300	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,420	7	31	10	3	51	2%
Narragansett	1,508	0	4	1	0	5	0%
New Shoreham	140	0	3	1	1	5	4%
Newport	2,258	6	28	13	13	60	3%
North Kingstown	4,429	11	28	10	7	56	1%
North Providence	3,206	4	18	13	19	54	2%
North Smithfield	1,855	4	8	0	1	13	1%
Pawtucket	8,667	107	451	210	212	980	11%
Portsmouth	2,978	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Providence	25,012	505	2,058	673	711	3,947	16%
Scituate	1,753	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,509	1	13	0	0	14	1%
South Kingstown	3,775	2	11	6	4	23	1%
Tiverton	2,020	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Warwick	10,836	6	40	17	10	73	1%
West Warwick	3,617	17	36	13	17	83	2%
Westerly	3,430	11	25	18	11	65	2%
Woonsocket	6,286	31	172	58	39	300	5%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,748</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>176</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>248</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,815</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>49,320</i>	<i>748</i>	<i>3,079</i>	<i>1,164</i>	<i>1,206</i>	<i>6,197</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>94,524</i>	<i>195</i>	<i>748</i>	<i>307</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>1,439</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>147,407</i>	<i>999</i>	<i>4,003</i>	<i>1,483</i>	<i>1,435</i>	<i>7,920</i>	<i>5%</i>

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year. Total number of English Language Learners is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual Education programs in the 2006-2007 school year. Students who are not yet fully English proficient but have exited ESL or Bilingual Education programs to regular education are not included in these numbers.

Due to a change in methodology, the percentage of English Language Learners by district cannot be compared with percentages given in Factbooks before the 2004 Factbook. The “% of Total District” is based on the total number of English Language Learners divided by the “average daily membership.”

The State-Operated School with ELL students are Davies Career and Technical School and the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. The charter schools with ELL students include: Blackstone Academy Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, CVS Highlander Charter School, International Charter, and The Learning Community Charter School.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References

¹ Fitzsimmons, S. & Short, D. J. (2007). *Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English Language Learners – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

² Shields, M. K. & Behrman, R. E. (2004). Children of immigrant families: Analysis and recommendations. *The Future of Children: Children of Immigrant Families*, 14(2), 4-15.

³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B16004.

^{4,7,13,14} Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year.

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