

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 elementary and secondary schools. The term “Limited English Proficient students” has been replaced by the term “English language learners” in the education community.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children of recent immigrants are at very high risk for difficulties at school. They face multiple risk factors including poverty, low educational level of parents, and discrimination based on race, ethnic background, culture, or language.¹ Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English face greater challenges progressing in school and face barriers in the workforce as adults.²

Adults who report that they have some difficulty with English are twelve times as likely to have completed less than five years of schooling and half as likely to have graduated from high school. Children who live in these households are 50% more likely to live in poverty.³ These children are also most likely to be concentrated in under-

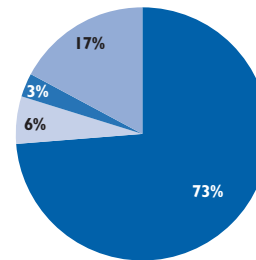
resourced schools in high poverty communities.⁴

Immigrant students may enter school after extended absences from formal education and with difficulty in basic language and literacy skills. 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.⁵ Rhode Island schools are legally mandated to provide programs to English language learners that are comparable in structure and content to instruction provided to their English proficient peers. Programs must focus on full English language literacy and all programs must have a process for evaluating the adequate yearly progress of each English language learner including those who have left the English as a Second Language (ESL) system.⁶

For Rhode Island as a whole, the number of English language learners decreased from 10,677 students in 2001-2002 to 9,723 students in 2002-2003. In the core cities, there was a slight increase in the number of Bilingual and English as a Second Language students in Central Falls, Newport, West Warwick and Woonsocket.⁷

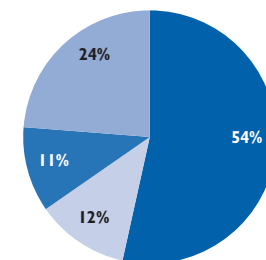
English Language Learners, by Language, Rhode Island, 2003

73% Spanish
6% Portuguese
3% Cape Verdean
17% Other*



English Language Learners, by Community, Rhode Island, 2003

54% Providence
12% Pawtucket
11% Central Falls
24% Remainder of State



n = 9,723

* Includes Cambodian, Laotian, French, Chinese, Arabic, Hmong, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole and others.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002-2003. All data are for public school students in Rhode Island.

- ◆ Research shows having the ability to speak English and obtaining education credentials is essential for achieving economic self-sufficiency. Without literacy in English and a higher education level, immigrant workers are often forced into low-wage jobs and poverty.⁸
- ◆ Spanish is the most commonly spoken language of Rhode Island’s English language learners. This is consistent with the increase in the Latino child population in Rhode Island, from 16,000 in 1990 to 35,000 in 2000. In the last decade, the increase in the Latino population of Rhode Island accounted for all of the state’s population increase.⁹
- ◆ Providence serves the largest percentage of the English Language Learners student population in Rhode Island at 54%. One in five students in Providence is an English Language Learner.¹⁰

Table 29.

English Language Learners, Rhode Island, 2002-2003

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)				TOTAL ELL	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT
		PRE K AND K	ELEMENTARY GRADES 1-5	MIDDLE GRADES 6-8	HIGH GRADES 9-12		
Barrington	3,241	0	13	1	2	16	<1%
Bristol-Warren	3,658	25	86	10	15	136	4%
Burrillville	2,557	1	0	1	1	3	<1%
Central Falls	3,596	120	498	234	221	1,073	30%
Charlho	3,688	3	4	1	8	16	<1%
Coventry	5,663	1	7	1	2	11	<1%
Cranston	10,798	25	235	108	62	430	4%
Cumberland	5,220	10	78	24	11	123	2%
East Greenwich	2,363	5	10	3	5	23	1%
East Providence	6,200	70	156	39	36	301	5%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	2,111	0	4	1	1	6	<1%
Foster	364	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,687	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	722	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Jamestown	552	5	6	0	0	11	2%
Johnston	3,194	0	16	15	7	38	1%
Lincoln	3,576	14	10	6	5	35	1%
Little Compton	324	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,787	0	23	9	20	52	2%
Narragansett	1,702	1	8	0	2	11	1%
New Shoreham	135	0	2	0	1	3	2%
Newport	2,886	23	69	14	9	115	4%
North Kingstown	4,476	7	35	9	10	61	1%
North Providence	3,347	8	29	17	25	79	2%
North Smithfield	1,837	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Pawtucket	9,480	101	448	285	284	1,118	12%
Portsmouth	2,902	0	5	0	2	7	<1%
Providence	27,481	623	3,063	826	692	5,204	19%
Scituate	1,728	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,642	2	6	0	0	8	0%
South Kingstown	4,103	4	20	5	10	39	1%
Tiverton	2,160	0	0	0	0	0	<1%
Warwick	11,677	9	51	17	14	91	1%
West Warwick	3,701	22	35	14	16	87	2%
Westerly	3,659	18	31	9	6	64	2%
Woonsocket	6,569	68	227	58	44	397	6%
State Run Schools	1,184	0	0	0	100	100	8%
Charter Schools	649	28	37	0	0	65	10%
Core Cities	53,713	957	4,340	1,431	1,266	7,994	15%
Remainder of State	99,073	208	835	276	245	1,564	2%
Rhode Island	154,619	1,193	5,212	1,707	1,611	9,723	6%

Note to Table

Because of a change in methodology, the percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) by district can not be compared with previous factbooks. This year's percentage of ELL is based on the total number of ELL divided by the "average daily membership," as of June 2003. Past percentages were based on the total number of ELL divided by total enrollment as of October of the given year. This calculation did not account for the mobility of students throughout the academic year. Using "average daily membership" is a more accurate reflection of this mobility.

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002-2003 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 2002-2003 school year. Students who are not yet fully English proficient but have exited the ESL or bilingual program to regular education are not included in these numbers.

The denominator (number of students) is the "average daily membership" as calculated by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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

See Methodology page 134 for a list of state run and charter schools.

References

- ¹ *Information Works!* (2000). Providence RI: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and University of Rhode Island, National Center on Public Education and Social Policy.
- ² *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2002*. (2002). Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- ³ Crawford, James (1997). *Best Evidence: Research Foundations for the Bilingual Education*. Washington DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- ⁴ Ruiz-de-Velasco, J. and Fix, M. (2001). *Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in U.S. Secondary Schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

continued on page 136