

# Multilingual Learners/English Learners

## DEFINITION

*Multilingual Learners/English Learners* is the percentage of all public-school children (preschool through grade 12) who are receiving Multilingual Learner/English Learner services in Rhode Island public schools.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The population of Multilingual Learner/English Learner (MLL/EL) students in the U.S. has been growing over the last two decades. MLL/EL students must acquire English language proficiency while acquiring content area knowledge in a second language.<sup>1,2</sup> Nationally and in Rhode Island, MLL/EL students have lower rates of math and reading achievement than non-MLL/EL students.<sup>3,4</sup>

Nationally, the majority of MLL/EL students are born in the U.S., are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, and have at least one immigrant parent. MLL/EL students are more likely to live in low-income households and are more likely to attend high-poverty schools and have limited access to services needed to improve English proficiency.<sup>5</sup> They may also experience discrimination, stigma, and stress related to different cultural expectations and English language proficiency status.<sup>6,7</sup> Students in families with limited English proficiency also have a harder time accessing health care and other social services.<sup>8</sup>

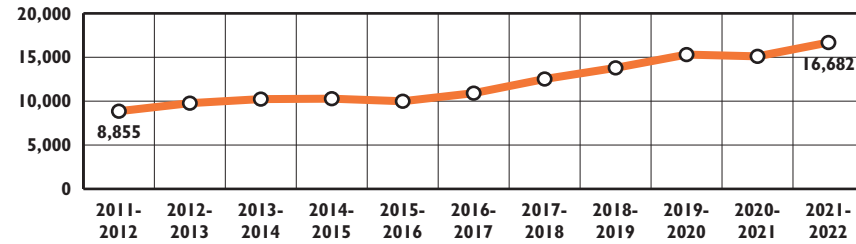
In the 2021-2022 school year in Rhode Island, MLL/EL students were 12% (16,682) of total students, and 35% (5,861) of all MLL/EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. Of all MLL/EL students, 76% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 66% lived in the four core cities.<sup>9,10</sup> MLL/EL students spoke 111 different languages. The majority (81%) spoke Spanish, 5% spoke a creole language, 2% spoke Portuguese, 1% spoke Arabic, 1% spoke Chinese, and 9% spoke other or multiple languages.<sup>11</sup>

Dual language programs can improve English reading proficiency, decrease dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for MLL/EL students.<sup>12</sup> During the 2021-2022 school year, bilingual and two-way/dual language programs were offered in the Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence school districts and at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf and International Charter School.<sup>13</sup>

In 2016, the Rhode Island General Assembly established a pilot categorical program to provide additional support for the costs associated with educating MLL/EL students.<sup>14</sup> In 2017, the Rhode Island General Assembly made this categorical fund permanent. This fund is designed to support high-quality, research-based services.<sup>15</sup>



**Multilingual Learners/English Learners, Rhode Island, 2011-2012 Through 2021-2022 School Years**

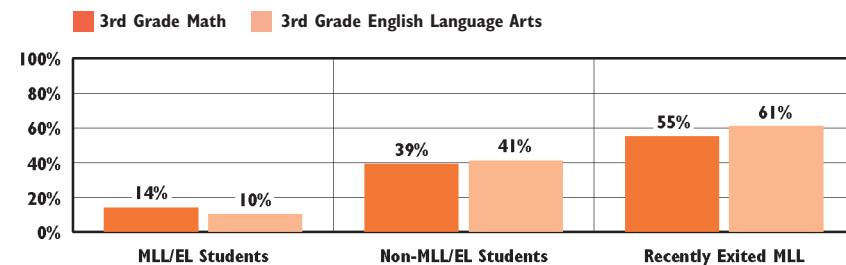


Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2011-2012 through 2021-2022 school years.

◆ The number of MLL/EL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 88%) from the 2011-2012 to 2021-2022 school years.<sup>16</sup>



**Multilingual/English Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2022**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, October 2022.

◆ In Rhode Island, MLL/EL students who have not attended U.S. schools for at least 12 months are exempt from the English language arts assessment, but not from the math assessment, and are required to take both assessments in future years, regardless of their level of English proficiency.<sup>17</sup>

◆ Successful MLL/EL programs have highly-qualified and culturally competent teachers.<sup>18</sup> In October 2022, 3% (361) of Rhode Island public school teachers and instructional coordinators held an active Bilingual, Dual Language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification.<sup>19</sup>

# Multilingual Learners/English Learners

Table 43.

Multilingual/English Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2021-2022

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNER/ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS			TOTAL # OF MLL/EL STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT
		ELEMENTARY (GRADES PRE-K-5)	MIDDLE (GRADES 6-8)	HIGH (GRADES 9-12)		
Barrington	3,366	56	*	11	76	2%
Bristol Warren	2,909	35	14	11	60	2%
Burrillville	2,099	*	*	*	11	1%
Central Falls	2,690	540	294	413	1,247	46%
Charlho	3,128	12	*	*	14	<1%
Coventry	4,280	16	*	*	28	1%
Cranston	10,253	537	212	228	977	10%
Cumberland	4,676	134	26	27	188	4%
East Greenwich	2,534	16	*	*	27	1%
East Providence	4,951	127	52	70	249	5%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,521	*	*	*	12	1%
Foster	215	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,381	NA	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	560	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Jamestown	435	*	*	0	*	1%
Johnston	3,063	146	52	40	238	8%
Lincoln	3,239	30	17	16	63	2%
Little Compton	198	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,042	121	30	39	191	9%
Narragansett	1,212	*	*	0	*	<1%
New Shoreham	129	*	*	*	16	12%
Newport	1,963	166	56	116	339	17%
North Kingstown	3,845	47	17	20	84	2%
North Providence	3,458	185	71	54	310	9%
North Smithfield	1,592	16	*	*	21	1%
Pawtucket	8,099	705	341	395	1,441	18%
Portsmouth	2,218	12	*	*	19	1%
Providence	21,774	3,576	1,797	2,230	7,603	35%
Scituate	1,190	*	0	*	*	<1%
Smithfield	2,405	13	*	*	25	1%
South Kingstown	2,589	26	*	*	41	2%
Tiverton	1,666	*	*	*	*	<1%
Warwick	8,099	123	34	36	193	2%
West Warwick	3,502	46	29	25	100	3%
Westerly	2,345	46	11	13	70	3%
Woonsocket	5,606	387	174	225	786	14%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>10,519</i>	<i>1,459</i>	<i>326</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>2,082</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,821</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>7%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>38,169</i>	<i>5,208</i>	<i>2,606</i>	<i>3,264</i>	<i>11,078</i>	<i>29%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>87,062</i>	<i>1,938</i>	<i>676</i>	<i>754</i>	<i>3,369</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>137,697</i>	<i>8,608</i>	<i>3,632</i>	<i>4,442</i>	<i>16,682</i>	<i>12%</i>

### Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2021-2022 school year. Total number of Multilingual Learner/English Learner students is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English Learner programs in the 2021-2022 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.

\* Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

NA indicates that the school district does not serve students at that grade level.

The “% of Total District” is based on the total number of Multilingual Learners/English Learners divided by the “Total # of Students,” which is the average daily membership in the districts of instruction.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter School, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

<sup>1</sup> McFarland, J., et al. (2018). *The condition of education 2018 (NCES 2018-144)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved February 13, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov>

(continued on page 188)