

# English Learners

## DEFINITION

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

## SIGNIFICANCE

The population of English Learner (EL) students in the U.S. has been growing over the last two decades. English Learners must acquire English language proficiency while also learning academic content at the appropriate level.<sup>1,2</sup> Nationally, and in Rhode Island, there are large achievement gaps between EL and non-EL students, with EL students having lower rates of math and reading achievement than non-EL students.<sup>3,4</sup>

Children in immigrant families and the children of parents with limited English proficiency are much more likely to live in low-income households.<sup>5</sup> EL students are more likely to attend high-poverty schools that have low-test scores, have larger proportions of EL students, and are more racially and geographically isolated.<sup>6,7</sup> They may also experience discrimination, stigma, and stress related to different cultural expectations and English language proficiency status.<sup>8,9</sup> Students in families with limited English proficiency also have a harder time accessing health care, mental health care, and other social services.<sup>10</sup>

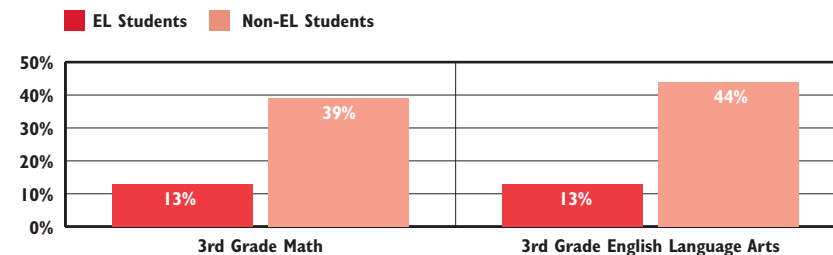
In the 2017-2018 school year in

Rhode Island, EL students were 9% (12,464) of total students, and 34% of all EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. Of all EL students, 84% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 72% lived in the four core cities.<sup>11,12</sup> In the 2017-2018 school year, EL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 94 different languages. The majority (79%) spoke Spanish, 5% spoke a creole language, 2% spoke Portuguese, 2% spoke Arabic, 2% spoke Chinese, and 10% spoke other or multiple languages.<sup>13</sup>

Bilingual education in the early grades can significantly improve English reading proficiency and bilingualism can support long-term academic and economic outcomes.<sup>14,15</sup> During the 2017-2018 school year, bilingual and two-way/dual language programs were offered in the Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and South Kingstown school districts, and at the International Charter School.<sup>16</sup> Younger EL students benefit from high-quality early learning opportunities.<sup>17</sup>

Successful EL programs have highly qualified and culturally competent teachers.<sup>18</sup> Schools that foster relationships with students, parents, and the community and offer dynamic, personalized instruction guided by ongoing assessments by effective teachers can help EL students succeed.<sup>19,20</sup>

## Current English Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, October 2018.

◆ In 2018, 13% of third-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations in the *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)* math assessment, compared to 39% of non-EL students.<sup>21</sup>

◆ In 2018, 13% of third-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations on the *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)* English language arts assessment, compared to 44% of non-EL students.<sup>22</sup>

## Funding to Support English Learners

◆ In 2016, the Rhode Island General Assembly established a pilot categorical program to provide additional support for the costs associated with educating English Learners.<sup>23</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>24</sup>

## Early English Language Learning

◆ As of September 1, 2018, there were 5,908 (12%) Rhode Island children under age five who were born to a mother who did not speak English.<sup>25</sup> For young children growing up in homes where English is not the first language, the quality, type, and amount of early childhood education can help boost English language development and kindergarten readiness of EL students.<sup>26</sup>

Table 44.

## English Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2017-2018

SCHOOL DISTRICT	NUMBER OF ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS			TOTAL # OF EL STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT	
	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	ELEMENTARY (GRADES PRE-K-5)	MIDDLE (GRADES 6-8)			HIGH (GRADES 9-12)
Barrington	3,359	59	13	*	80	2%
Bristol Warren	3,195	67	*	*	81	3%
Burrillville	2,250	*	*	*	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,705	454	170	271	895	33%
Chariho	3,159	*	*	*	13	<1%
Coventry	4,686	15	*	10	27	1%
Cranston	10,362	394	99	115	608	6%
Cumberland	4,613	95	17	24	136	3%
East Greenwich	2,462	76	0	*	79	3%
East Providence	5,255	125	30	46	201	4%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,634	*	*	*	14	1%
Foster	277	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,255	NA	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	535	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Jamestown	483	0	0	NA	0	0%
Johnston	3,251	125	25	36	186	6%
Lincoln	3,064	27	*	*	35	1%
Little Compton	243	0	*	NA	*	<1%
Middletown	2,169	47	17	19	83	4%
Narragansett	1,296	*	*	0	*	1%
New Shoreham	119	*	*	10	18	1%
Newport	2,194	141	42	51	234	11%
North Kingstown	3,891	51	17	*	74	2%
North Providence	3,587	69	14	13	96	3%
North Smithfield	1,705	*	*	*	17	1%
Pawtucket	8,814	688	229	281	1,198	14%
Portsmouth	2,407	12	*	*	20	1%
Providence	24,201	3,307	1,173	1,871	6,351	26%
Scituate	1,275	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,380	10	*	*	13	1%
South Kingstown	3,042	47	*	*	59	2%
Tiverton	1,820	*	0	*	10	1%
Warwick	8,879	83	17	24	124	1%
West Warwick	3,562	56	*	14	76	3%
Westerly	2,740	36	*	12	54	2%
Woonsocket	5,956	312	128	113	553	9%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>7,776</i>	<i>825</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>887</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,733</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,676</i>	<i>4,761</i>	<i>1,700</i>	<i>2,536</i>	<i>8,997</i>	<i>22%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>91,149</i>	<i>1,580</i>	<i>345</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>2,355</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>142,469</i>	<i>7,171</i>	<i>2,143</i>	<i>3,209</i>	<i>12,523</i>	<i>9%</i>

### Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2017-2018 school year. Total number of English Learner students is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English Learner programs in the 2017-2018 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.

Due to a change in methodology, the percentage of English Learner students by district cannot be compared with percentages before the 2004 Factbook. The “% of Total District” is based on the total number of 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, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, 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 6, 2019, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coel/indicator\\_cgf.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coel/indicator_cgf.asp)

(continued on page 187)