

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 Learners/English Learners (MLLs/ELs) in the U.S. has been growing over the last two decades. MLLs/ELs must acquire English language proficiency while acquiring content area knowledge in a second language.¹² Nationally and in Rhode Island, MLLs/ELs have lower rates of math and reading achievement than non-MLLs/ELs.^{3,4}

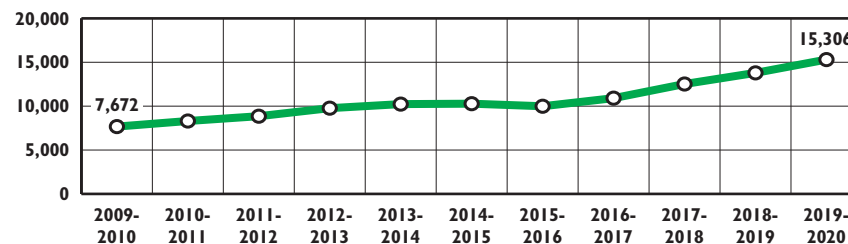
Nationally, the majority of MLLs/ELs are born in the U.S., are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse and have at least one immigrant parent. Students who are MLLs/ELs are more likely to live in low-income households and are more likely to attend high-poverty schools and have limited access to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

In the 2019-2020 school year in Rhode Island, MLLs/ELs were 11% (15,306) of total students, and 37% of all MLLs/ELs in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. Of all MLLs/ELs, 85% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 72% lived in the four core cities.^{9,10} MLLs/ELs spoke 98 different languages. The majority (79%) spoke Spanish, 5% spoke a creole language, 3% spoke Portuguese, 1% spoke Arabic, 1% spoke Chinese, and 10% spoke other or multiple languages.¹¹

Dual language programs can improve English reading proficiency, decrease dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for MLLs/ELs.¹² During the 2019-2020 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 Rhode Island School for the Deaf and International Charter School.¹³

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


**Multilingual Learners/English Learners,
Rhode Island, 2009-2010 Through 2019-2020 School Years**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2009-2010 through 2019-2020 school years.

◆ The number of MLLs/ELs in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 99%) from the 2009-2010 to 2019-2020 school years.¹⁶

◆ Successful MLL/EL programs have highly-qualified and culturally competent teachers.¹⁷ Schools that foster relationships with students, parents, and the community, encourage positive school culture and offer dynamic, personalized instruction guided by ongoing assessments by effective teachers can help MLLs/ELs succeed.^{18,19,20} In October 2019, 4% (436) of Rhode Island public school teachers and instructional coordinators held an active Bilingual, Dual Language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification.²¹


Blueprint for Multilingual Learners Success

◆ In December 2020, the Rhode Island Department of Education released a draft of the *Blueprint for Multilingual Learners Success* and a strategic plan to guide continuous improvement for MLL students. The plan focuses on developing an asset-oriented education system that includes high-quality and student-centered instruction; uses research and data to hold systems accountable; and aligns policies, resources, and practices to support students who are MLLs.²²

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Table 44.

Multilingual Learners/English Learners, Rhode Island, 2019-2020

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	3,403	57	15	10	82	2%
Bristol Warren	3,130	46	15	*	67	2%
Burrillville	2,230	*	*	*	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,836	607	258	415	1,280	45%
Charlho	3,179	*	*	*	11	<1%
Coventry	4,501	23	*	*	29	1%
Cranston	10,423	451	126	146	723	7%
Cumberland	4,627	97	20	15	132	3%
East Greenwich	2,563	17	*	10	36	1%
East Providence	5,045	147	43	46	236	5%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,620	*	*	*	13	1%
Foster	226	0	0	0	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,347	0	0	*	*	<1%
Glocester	557	0	0	0	0	0%
Jamestown	478	0	*	0	*	<1%
Johnston	3,192	132	45	38	215	7%
Lincoln	3,189	37	15	11	63	2%
Little Compton	230	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,144	86	29	26	141	7%
Narragansett	1,276	*	0	0	*	<1%
New Shoreham	133	*	*	*	15	11%
Newport	2,139	191	69	110	370	17%
North Kingstown	3,780	46	16	*	67	2%
North Providence	3,598	133	53	36	222	6%
North Smithfield	1,649	*	*	*	10	1%
Pawtucket	8,718	738	312	355	1,405	16%
Portsmouth	2,413	13	*	*	17	1%
Providence	23,818	3,875	1,570	2,150	7,596	32%
Scituate	1,184	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,375	15	*	*	24	1%
South Kingstown	2,853	43	*	*	56	2%
Tiverton	1,751	0	*	*	13	1%
Warwick	8,500	108	23	25	156	2%
West Warwick	3,581	48	23	10	81	2%
Westerly	2,593	40	*	*	56	2%
Woonsocket	5,997	348	155	164	667	11%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>8,514</i>	<i>1,069</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>214</i>	<i>1,397</i>	<i>16%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,751</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>5%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,369</i>	<i>5,568</i>	<i>2,295</i>	<i>3,084</i>	<i>10,948</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>89,908</i>	<i>1,767</i>	<i>544</i>	<i>536</i>	<i>2,847</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>141,677</i>	<i>8,410</i>	<i>2,977</i>	<i>3,918</i>	<i>15,306</i>	<i>11%</i>

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2019-2020 school year. Total number of Multilingual Learners/English Learners is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English Learner programs in the 2019-2020 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, Charette Charter School, 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

¹ 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 March 21, 2021, from <https://nces.ed.gov>

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