

# 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>

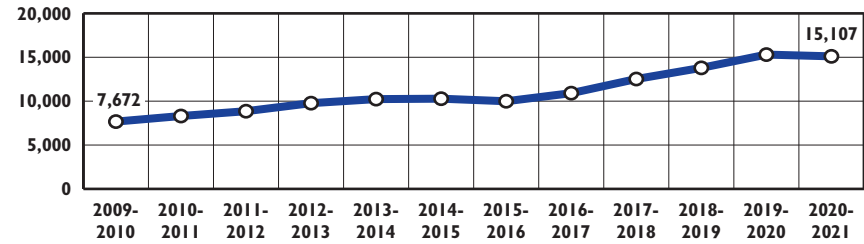
Nationally, the majority of MLL/EL students are born in the U.S., are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, and have at least one immigrant parent. MLL/EL students are more likely to live in low-income households and are more likely to attend high-poverty schools and have limited access to services 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 2020-2021 school year in Rhode Island, MLL/EL students were 11% (15,107) of total students, and 36% (5,424) of all MLL/EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. Of all MLL/EL students, 79% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 70% lived in the four core cities.<sup>9,10</sup> MLL/EL students spoke 92 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 2020-2021 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.<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>

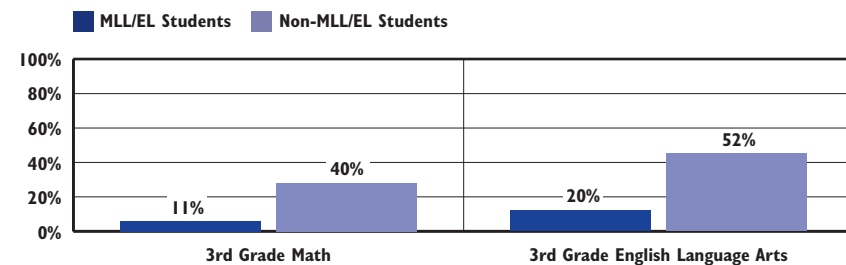
**Multilingual Learners/English Learners, Rhode Island, 2009-2010 Through 2020-2021 School Years**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2009-2010 through 2020-2021 school years.

◆ The number of MLL/EL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 97%) from the 2009-2010 to 2020-2021 school years.<sup>16</sup>

**Current Multilingual/English Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2021**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, October 2021.

◆ Successful MLL/EL programs have highly-qualified and culturally competent teachers.<sup>17</sup> 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 MLL/EL students succeed.<sup>18,19,20</sup> In October 2020, 5% (510) of Rhode Island public school teachers and instructional coordinators held an active Bilingual, Dual Language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification.<sup>21</sup>

# Multilingual Learners/English Learners

Table 44.

Multilingual/English Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2020-2021

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	3,361	54	10	*	69	2%
Bristol Warren	3,041	43	16	*	65	2%
Burrillville	2,088	*	*	0	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,751	567	291	390	1,248	45%
Charlho	3,100	*	*	*	12	<1%
Coventry	4,321	13	*	*	22	1%
Cranston	10,288	472	143	172	787	8%
Cumberland	4,590	97	17	16	130	3%
East Greenwich	2,514	17	*	*	33	1%
East Providence	4,883	123	53	39	215	4%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,548	*	*	*	*	1%
Foster	210	0	0	0	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,375	0	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	516	0	0	0	0	0%
Jamestown	462	0	0	*	*	<1%
Johnston	3,032	138	40	31	209	7%
Lincoln	3,194	32	11	12	55	2%
Little Compton	212	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,005	59	19	20	98	5%
Narragansett	1,215	*	*	*	*	<1%
New Shoreham	147	*	*	*	13	9%
Newport	1,976	154	63	96	313	16%
North Kingstown	3,853	38	15	10	63	2%
North Providence	3,513	139	53	35	227	6%
North Smithfield	1,614	14	*	*	21	1%
Pawtucket	8,441	677	313	366	1,356	16%
Portsmouth	2,292	15	*	0	17	1%
Providence	22,516	3,658	1,645	2,052	7,355	33%
Scituate	1,196	*	0	0	*	<1%
Smithfield	2,358	17	*	*	24	1%
South Kingstown	2,704	27	*	*	40	1%
Tiverton	1,656	*	*	0	*	1%
Warwick	8,081	106	28	23	157	2%
West Warwick	3,517	47	24	17	88	3%
Westerly	2,411	39	11	*	59	2%
Woonsocket	5,711	310	164	163	637	11%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>9,681</i>	<i>1,185</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>236</i>	<i>1,632</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,810</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>39,419</i>	<i>5,212</i>	<i>2,413</i>	<i>2,971</i>	<i>10,596</i>	<i>27%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>87,268</i>	<i>1,673</i>	<i>545</i>	<i>529</i>	<i>2,747</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>138,303</i>	<i>8,074</i>	<i>3,197</i>	<i>3,836</i>	<i>15,107</i>	<i>11%</i>

## Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2020-2021 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 2020-2021 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

<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>

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