

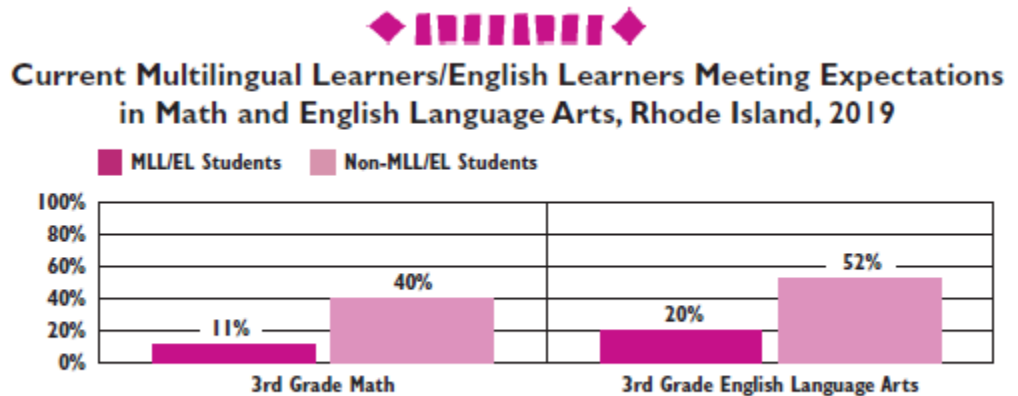


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Testimony Re: House Bill 5829 Certification of Teachers- ESL
House Education Committee
March 24, 2021
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 5829 which would require the Rhode Island Department of Education to provide regulations to streamline ESL teacher certification.

Recent reports, including a 2013 report by the Latino Policy Institute, have noted that Rhode Island’s Multilingual/English learners are among the lowest performing students in the nation as measured by the *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*, also known as the Nation’s Report Card. The 2017 *Race for Results* report also shows Rhode Island’s Latino children having the lowest opportunity index in the Nation. In 2020, Brandeis University’s Child Opportunity Index 2.0 listed Providence as having one of the widest opportunity gaps between White and Hispanic children.



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS), October 2019.

Disparities in academic outcomes by language status are well known by this committee. In Rhode Island in 2019, 20% of Multilingual Learners met expectations in reading compared to 52% of Non-Multilingual Learners and 11% of Multilingual Learners met expectations in math compared to 40% of Non-Multilingual Learners on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*.

Multilingual Learners need additional supports in order to achieve proficiency in reading and math. These supports include ensuring Multilingual Learners have access to highly qualified educators who are trained to meet their learning needs.

The financial analysis of the Providence Public School District completed by Ernst & Young LLP suggested a need for more ESL-certified teachers to meet the Department of Justice guidelines. In a sampling of five elementary schools, Ernst & Young estimated up to 50 additional ESL-certified teachers are needed.

In October 2018, 3% (381) of Rhode Island public school classroom teachers and instructional coordinators held an active bilingual, dual language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT was pleased to serve on the *Blueprint for Multilingual Learner (MLL) Success Team* alongside dedicated students, parents, educators, and community stakeholders convened by the Rhode Island Department of Education to identify, implement, and sustain more effective policies and practices for MLLs in Rhode Island. This bill is aligned with the action plans of the *Blueprint's* strategic plan which includes the creation of incentives for biliterate certification pathways for school districts with a high concentration of MLLs.

We support efforts to expand children's access to high-quality dual language and bilingual programs and to increase the capacity of the educators who serve them.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.