

English Language Learners

DEFINITION

English Language Learners is the percentage of all public school children (preschool through grade 12) who are receiving English as a Second Language services or bilingual education services in Rhode Island public schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

English Language Learner (ELL) students are the fastest growing student population in the U.S.¹ Nationally and in Rhode Island, there are large achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL students, with ELL students having lower rates of math and reading achievement than non-ELL students.² Many children of immigrants face challenges to succeeding in school, including poverty, limited access to health care, and low parental education levels, which may contribute to these achievement gaps.³

ELL students enter school without the English skills necessary for full participation in and access to the education system. They face diverse challenges based on their home language, immigration status, academic background, and socioeconomic status.^{4,5} Successful ELL programs use ongoing assessments of student progress, have highly qualified teachers trained to teach ELL students, and address students' learning, language, and cultural needs.^{6,7,8}

Additionally, ELL students and children in immigrant families are more

likely to attend schools that are under-resourced, urban, large, serve high proportions of minority students, and are located in high-poverty communities.^{9,10}

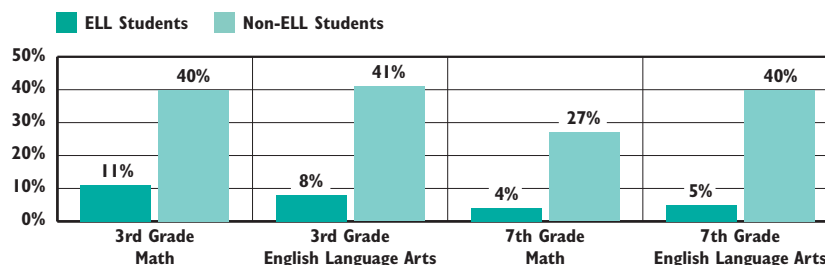
In the 2014-2015 school year in Rhode Island, ELL students were 7% of total students (10,281). Of these, 87% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs and 75% lived in the four core cities.¹¹

Children of immigrants believe that school prepares them to get ahead and most hope to go to college. Schools that foster relationships and offer personalized instruction by effective teachers can help ELL students succeed.^{12,13}

In the 2014-2015 school year, ELL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 90 different languages. The majority (79%) spoke Spanish, 6% spoke Asian languages, 5% spoke Creole, 2% spoke Portuguese, 2% spoke Arabic, and 6% spoke other or multiple languages.¹⁴

Bilingual education in the early grades can significantly improve English reading proficiency and support long-term academic and economic outcomes.^{15,16} During the 2014-2015 school year, 13% percent of ELL students were enrolled in a bilingual program, and 87% were enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program with bilingual programs offered in the Central Falls and Providence school districts and at the International Charter School.¹⁷

Current English Language Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2015



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, October 2015.

◆ In 2015, 8% of third-grade ELL students met or exceeded expectations on the *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, compared to 41% of non-ELL students.¹⁸

◆ In 2015, 4% of seventh-grade ELL students met or exceeded expectations on the *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* math assessment, compared to 27% of non-ELL students.¹⁹

Early English Language Learning

◆ As of September 1, 2015, there were 4,970 Rhode Island children under age five who were born to a mother who did not speak English.²⁰ In the 2014-2015 school year, 49% of all ELL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three.²¹

◆ 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 ELL students.²² A consistent approach to language development, common curriculum, and aligned assessment from preschool to third grade can help young ELL students gain English skills and reading proficiency and set the stage for future academic success.²³

◆ In the 2015-2016 school year, kindergarten-immersion bilingual programs were added in the South Kingstown and Pawtucket school districts.²⁴

Table 42.

English Language Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2014-2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS			TOTAL # OF ELL STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT
		ELEMENTARY (GRADES PRE-K-5)	MIDDLE (GRADES 6-8)	HIGH (GRADES 9-12)		
Barrington	3,271	31	*	*	37	1%
Bristol Warren	3,322	60	20	0	80	2%
Burrillville	2,350	*	*	*	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,720	336	113	154	603	22%
Charlho	3,283	*	0	*	*	<1%
Coventry	4,649	*	*	*	12	<1%
Cranston	10,067	378	97	84	559	6%
Cumberland	4,503	93	16	*	118	3%
East Greenwich	2,355	10	*	0	11	<1%
East Providence	5,217	132	33	21	186	4%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,619	*	*	*	12	1%
Foster	282	0	0	0	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,110	0	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	524	0	0	0	0	0%
Jamestown	488	*	*	0	*	1%
Johnston	3,030	100	21	10	131	4%
Lincoln	3,019	17	*	*	25	1%
Little Compton	250	0	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	2,279	57	28	17	102	4%
Narragansett	1,316	*	*	*	*	<1%
New Shoreham	116	*	*	*	10	9%
Newport	2,052	61	15	30	106	5%
North Kingstown	3,957	39	*	10	57	1%
North Providence	3,516	45	14	*	66	2%
North Smithfield	1,750	*	*	*	*	<1%
Pawtucket	9,011	465	144	170	779	9%
Portsmouth	2,549	*	*	*	11	<1%
Providence	24,040	3,549	1,072	1,163	5,784	24%
Scituate	1,373	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,368	*	0	*	10	<1%
South Kingstown	3,275	23	*	*	29	1%
Tiverton	1,765	*	0	*	*	<1%
Warwick	8,953	78	17	12	107	1%
West Warwick	3,395	51	12	12	75	2%
Westerly	3,018	44	*	*	53	2%
Woonsocket	5,996	333	106	119	558	9%
Charter Schools	5,397	533	97	57	687	13%
State-Operated Schools	1,764	*	*	34	38	2%
UCAP	137	0	0	0	0	0%
Four Core Cities	41,767	4,683	1,435	1,606	7,724	18%
Remainder of State	91,021	1,275	309	248	1,832	2%
Rhode Island	140,086	6,494	1,842	1,945	10,281	7%

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2014-2015 school year. Total number of English Language Learner students is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education programs in the 2014-2015 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.

Due to a change in methodology, the percentage of English Language 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 Language Learners divided by the “Total # of Students,” which is the average daily membership in the districts of instruction.

Charter schools with ELL students are 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, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools with ELL students are William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, 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 Calderón, M., Slavin, R., & Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective instruction for English learners. *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 103-119.

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