

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 have to acquire English language proficiency while also learning academic content at the appropriate level.¹ Nationally, and in Rhode Island, there are large achievement gaps between EL and non-EL students, with EL students having lower levels of math and reading achievement than non-EL students.^{2,3}

Children in immigrant families and the children of parents with limited English proficiency are much more likely to live in low-income households.^{4,5} Nationally, 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.^{6,7} They may also experience discrimination, stigma, and stress related to different cultural expectations and English language proficiency status.^{8,9} Students in families with limited English proficiency also have a harder time accessing health care, mental health care, and other social services.¹⁰

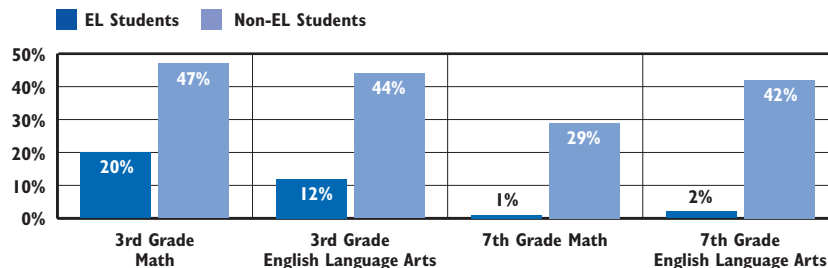
In the 2016-2017 school year in

Rhode Island, EL students were 8% (10,911) of total students, and 44% 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 73% lived in the four core cities.^{11,12} In the 2016-2017 school year, EL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 94 different languages. The majority (78%) spoke Spanish, 6% spoke a creole language, 2% spoke Portuguese, 2% spoke Arabic, 2% spoke Chinese, and 10% spoke other or multiple languages.¹³

Bilingual education in the early grades can significantly improve English reading proficiency; and bilingualism can support long-term academic and economic outcomes.^{14,15} During the 2016-2017 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.¹⁶ Younger EL students benefit from high-quality early learning opportunities and kindergarten readiness assessments that evaluate their development in addition to their English proficiency.¹⁷

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

Current English Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2017



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, October 2017.

◆ In 2017, 12% of third-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, compared to 44% of non-EL students.²¹

◆ In 2017, 1% of seventh-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations in the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* math assessment, compared to 29% of non-EL students.²²

Funding to Support English Learners

◆ In 2017, the Rhode Island General Assembly made permanent a categorical program to provide additional support for the costs associated with educating English Learners. This fund provides additional aid equal to 10% of the per pupil core instructional amount for each qualified English Learner and is designed to support high-quality, research-based services.²³

Rhode Island Biliteracy Seal

◆ Starting with the graduating class of 2021, high school students in Rhode Island will have the opportunity to earn a Seal of Biliteracy designation on their high school diplomas to indicate proficiency in a language other than English. The purpose is to encourage proficiency in more than one language.²⁴

Table 43.

English Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2016-2017

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	3,337	30	*	*	41	1%
Bristol Warren	3,172	61	15	*	82	3%
Burrillville	2,310	*	0	*	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,641	385	132	262	779	29%
Chariho	3,229	*	*	*	11	<1%
Coventry	4,652	12	*	*	19	<1%
Cranston	10,340	373	104	106	583	6%
Cumberland	4,558	97	15	17	129	3%
East Greenwich	2,484	14	*	*	18	1%
East Providence	5,208	115	30	39	184	4%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,628	*	*	*	11	1%
Foster	265	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,160	NA	*	0	*	<1%
Glocester	551	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Jamestown	474	0	0	NA	0	0%
Johnston	3,165	97	22	23	142	4%
Lincoln	2,979	18	*	*	26	1%
Little Compton	245	0	0	NA	0	0%
Middletown	2,185	51	19	21	91	4%
Narragansett	1,302	*	*	0	*	<1%
New Shoreham	115	*	*	*	17	15%
Newport	2,143	103	36	44	183	9%
North Kingstown	3,972	37	15	*	60	2%
North Providence	3,471	60	13	10	83	2%
North Smithfield	1,690	*	0	*	10	1%
Pawtucket	8,953	625	196	239	1,060	12%
Portsmouth	2,454	10	*	*	13	1%
Providence	24,092	2,994	993	1,632	5,619	23%
Scituate	1,277	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,384	16	*	0	17	1%
South Kingstown	3,120	26	*	*	39	1%
Tiverton	1,825	*	0	*	*	<1%
Warwick	9,045	69	21	23	113	1%
West Warwick	3,415	50	*	11	67	2%
Westerly	2,810	31	*	*	46	2%
Woonsocket	5,862	273	106	103	482	8%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>6,987</i>	<i>687</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>887</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,738</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>12%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,549</i>	<i>4,277</i>	<i>1,427</i>	<i>2,236</i>	<i>7,940</i>	<i>19%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>90,965</i>	<i>1,303</i>	<i>341</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>2,003</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>141,377</i>	<i>6,272</i>	<i>1,881</i>	<i>2,758</i>	<i>10,911</i>	<i>8%</i>

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2016-2017 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 2016-2017 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 with EL students are Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, The Learning Community, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. State-operated schools with EL students are William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career & 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

^{1,4,6,19} Ross, T. (2015). *The case for a two-generation approach for educating English language learners*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

^{2,17} Park, M., O’Toole, A., & Katsifas, C. (2017). *Dual language learners: A national demographic and policy profile*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

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