

# Multilingual Learners/English Learners

## DEFINITION

*Multilingual Learners/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 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 also learning academic content.<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>

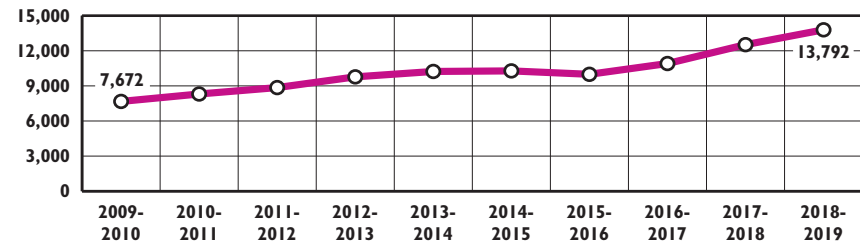
Nationally, the majority of MLL/EL students are born in the U.S., are racially, ethnically and culturally diverse and have at least one immigrant parent. MLL/EL students are more likely to live in low-income households and are the largest subgroup of homeless children. MLL/EL students are more likely 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, mental health care, and other social services.<sup>8</sup>

In the 2018-2019 school year in Rhode Island, MLL/EL students were 10% (13,792) of total students, and 39% of all MLL/EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. Of all MLL/EL students, 83% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 73% lived in the four core cities.<sup>9,10</sup> In the 2018-2019 school year, MLL/EL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 95 different languages. The majority (80%) spoke Spanish, 5% spoke a creole language, 2% spoke Portuguese, 2% spoke Arabic, 1% spoke Chinese, and 10% spoke other or multiple languages.<sup>11</sup>

Dual language bilingual programs can significantly improve English reading proficiency, decrease high school dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for MLL/EL students.<sup>12</sup> During the 2018-2019 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>

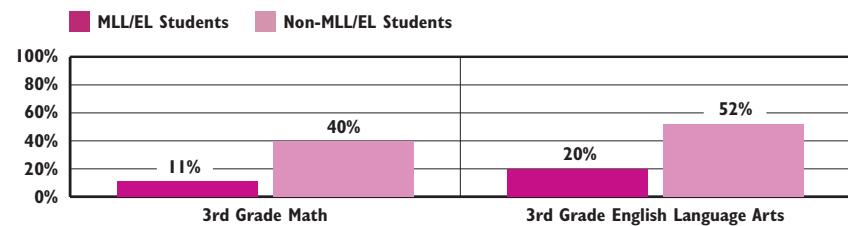
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**Multilingual Learners/English Learners,  
 Rhode Island, 2009-2010 Through 2018-2019 School Years**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2009-2010 through 2018-2019 school years.

◆ **The number of MLL/EL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 93%) from the 2009-2010 to 2018-2019 school years.**<sup>16</sup>

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**Current Multilingual Learners/English Learners Meeting Expectations  
 in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2019**



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

◆ **Successful 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 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.<sup>21</sup>

# Multilingual Learners/English Learners

Table 44.

Multilingual Learner/English Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2018-2019

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	3,339	57	14	13	84	3%
Bristol Warren	3,207	52	11	10	73	2%
Burrillville	2,270	*	*	*	*	<1%
Central Falls	2,737	682	256	375	1,313	48%
Charlho	3,174	*	*	*	10	<1%
Coventry	4,634	25	*	*	33	1%
Cranston	10,399	383	113	114	610	6%
Cumberland	4,635	92	21	12	125	3%
East Greenwich	2,522	18	*	*	23	1%
East Providence	5,262	129	38	47	214	4%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,605	*	*	*	14	1%
Foster	256	0	NA	NA	0	0%
Foster-Glocester	1,290	NA	0	*	*	<1%
Glocester	529	*	NA	NA	*	<1%
Jamestown	499	0	0	NA	0	0%
Johnston	3,210	131	23	26	180	6%
Lincoln	3,100	22	*	*	30	1%
Little Compton	234	0	0	NA	0	0%
Middletown	2,152	73	15	29	117	5%
Narragansett	1,273	*	0	*	*	<1%
New Shoreham	133	*	*	*	16	12%
Newport	2,144	156	62	75	293	14%
North Kingstown	3,939	45	13	*	61	2%
North Providence	3,524	94	23	32	149	4%
North Smithfield	1,648	*	*	*	*	<1%
Pawtucket	8,783	683	282	287	1,253	14%
Portsmouth	2,410	11	*	*	20	1%
Providence	23,981	3,574	1,285	2,024	6,883	29%
Scituate	1,221	0	0	0	0	0%
Smithfield	2,405	11	*	*	16	1%
South Kingstown	2,931	39	*	*	51	2%
Tiverton	1,755	*	0	*	*	<1%
Warwick	8,712	108	23	23	154	2%
West Warwick	3,568	56	17	*	82	2%
Westerly	2,683	43	*	*	57	2%
Woonsocket	6,027	299	136	138	573	10%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>8,428</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>1,244</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,780</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,527</i>	<i>5,238</i>	<i>1,959</i>	<i>2,824</i>	<i>10,022</i>	<i>24%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>90,665</i>	<i>1,578</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>446</i>	<i>2,441</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>142,537</i>	<i>7,775</i>	<i>2,483</i>	<i>3,533</i>	<i>13,792</i>	<i>10%</i>

### Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2018-2019 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 2018-2019 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 6, 2019, from <https://nces.ed.gov>

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