



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**  
ONE UNION STATION  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903  
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

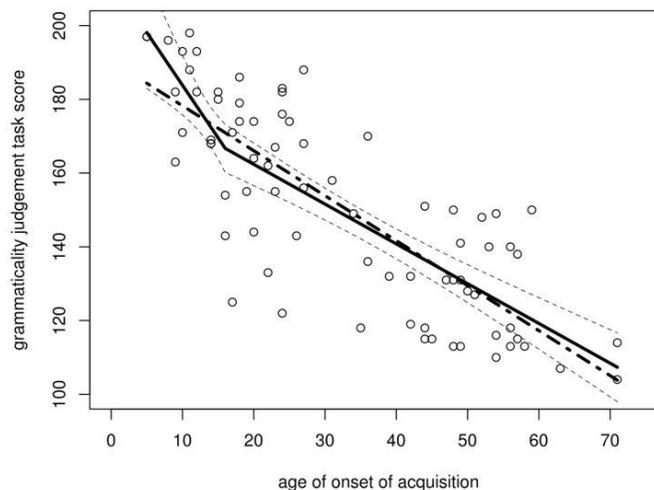
**Testimony Re: S-198 The World Language and Dual Language Immersion Act**  
**Senate Committee on Education**  
**March 20, 2019**  
**Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its **strong support for Senate Bill 198, The World Language and Dual Language Immersion Act**. This bill would provide \$200,000 in funding to the Rhode Island Department of Education to establish a dual language program fund and hire a specialist in world language and dual language instruction.

As you may know, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the United Way of Rhode Island are coordinating **Rhode Island Reads**, a statewide campaign to double the percentage of third graders who can read on grade level by 2025. Reading proficiency in third grade is a key predictor of school success and high school graduation. Research shows that children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers. Currently, only 40% of third graders in Rhode Island are meeting expectations for reading.

In order to achieve the state's goal, we need to tackle disparities in access to high-quality early learning opportunities. Bilingual and English learners need additional supports in order to achieve proficiency in reading. **As of 2018, only 13% of English learners were reading on grade level in third grade.** Language learning is most effective and efficient during the early childhood years, between birth and age eight. When provided with high-quality learning opportunities, **young children learn new languages faster** and with more competence than older children and adults.

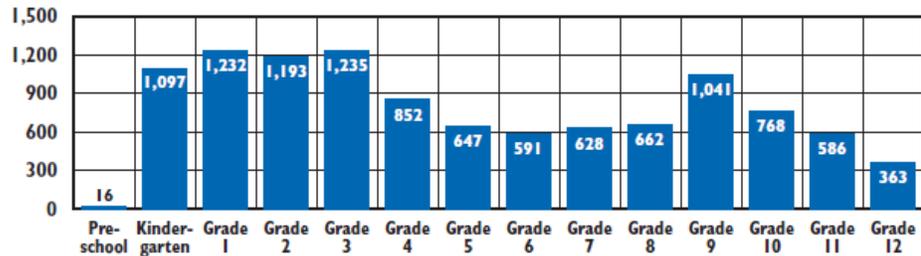
North America study



The majority of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. High-quality bilingual education, starting in the early grades or in preschool, effectively promotes English language acquisition and proficiency while also building proficiency in a child's native language. **Being bilingual is associated with increased economic and social opportunities and improved executive function skills that contribute to academic success.** Bilingualism is also associated with a delay or prevention of cognitive challenges that are connected to aging.

In the 2016-2017 school year, there were 4,757 English learners enrolled in grades K-3. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Rhode Island Reads Campaign support efforts to expand children's access to high-quality dual language or bilingual instruction, particularly in the early grades.

**English Learners by Grade Level,  
Rhode Island, 2016-2017 School Year**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2016-2017.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We urge support for this bill.