

Multilingual Learners

DEFINITION

Multilingual Learners is the percentage of all public-school children (preschool through grade 12) who are receiving Multilingual Learner services in Rhode Island public schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

The population of Multilingual Learner (MLL) students in the U.S. has been growing over the last two decades. In fact, MLLs are the fastest growing group of students, not only in large urban districts but also in many smaller cities and suburban districts. MLL students face additional educational challenges because they must acquire English language proficiency while acquiring content area knowledge in a second language.^{1,2,3}

Nationally, the majority of MLL students are born in the U.S., are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, and have at least one immigrant parent. MLL students are more likely to live in low-income households, attend high-poverty schools and have limited access to services needed to improve English proficiency.⁴ They may also experience discrimination, stigma, and stress related to different cultural expectations and English language proficiency status.^{5,6} Students in families with limited English proficiency also have a harder time accessing health care and other social services.⁷

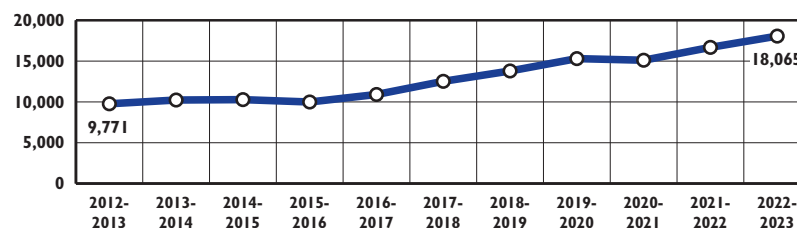
In the 2022-2023 school year in Rhode Island, MLL students were 13%

(18,065) of the total student population, and 35% (6,314) of all MLL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to three. Of all MLL students, 78% were enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs. Almost two-thirds (64%) of MLLs attended school in the four core cities and 43% in Providence.^{8,9} MLL students spoke 112 different languages. The majority (81%) spoke Spanish, 5% spoke a creole language, 3% spoke Portuguese, 1% spoke Arabic, 1% spoke Chinese, and 9% spoke other or multiple languages.¹⁰

Dual language programs can improve reading proficiency, decrease dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for MLL students.¹¹ During the 2022-2023 school year, bilingual and dual language programs were offered in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence school and at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf and International Charter School.¹²

In 2016, the Rhode Island General Assembly established a pilot categorical program to provide additional support for the costs associated with educating MLL students.¹³ In 2017, they made this categorical fund permanent. This fund is designed to support high-quality, research-based services.¹⁴ Despite this funding, Rhode Island continues to lag behind other states when it comes to funding for MLLs.¹⁵

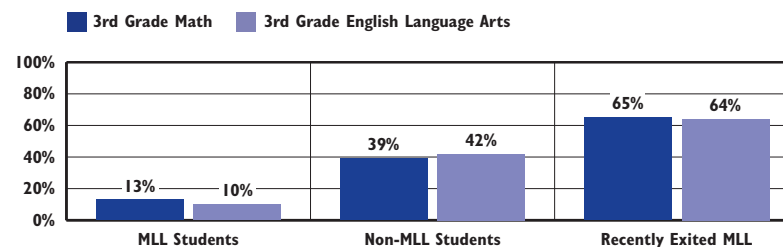
Multilingual Learners, Rhode Island, 2012-2013 Through 2022-2023 School Years



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2012-2013 through 2022-2023 school years.

★ The number of MLL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 85%) from the 2012-2013 to 2022-2023 school years.¹⁶

Multilingual Learners Meeting Expectations in Math and English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, October 2023.

★ In Rhode Island, MLL students who have not attended U.S. schools for at least 12 months are exempt from the English language arts assessment, but not from the math assessment, and are required to take both assessments in future years, regardless of their level of English proficiency. Recently exited MLL students outperformed non-English learners on the *RICAS*.¹⁷ Successful MLL programs have highly-qualified and culturally competent teachers.¹⁸ In October 2023, 2% (227) of Rhode Island public school teachers and instructional coordinators held an active Bilingual, Dual Language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification.¹⁹

Table 43.

Multilingual Learner Students, Rhode Island, 2022-2023

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNER STUDENTS			TOTAL # OF MLL STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL DISTRICT
		ELEMENTARY (GRADES PRE-K-5)	MIDDLE (GRADES 6-8)	HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9-12)		
Barrington	3,366	64	*	14	85	3%
Bristol Warren	2,882	35	13	13	61	2%
Burrillville	2,031	*	*	*	14	1%
Central Falls	2,619	522	307	439	1,268	48%
Chariho	3,026	12	0	*	15	<1%
Coventry	4,172	13	*	*	26	1%
Cranston	10,216	573	247	285	1,104	11%
Cumberland	4,742	166	36	40	241	5%
East Greenwich	2,525	18	*	*	35	1%
East Providence	5,123	120	64	83	268	5%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,507	*	*	*	14	1%
Foster	212	*	NA	NA	*	1%
Foster-Glocester	1,351	NA	*	0	*	<1%
Glocester	577	0	NA	NA	0	<1%
Jamestown	407	*	0	NA	*	<1%
Johnston	3,092	155	53	62	270	9%
Lincoln	3,269	42	17	24	83	3%
Little Compton	205	0	0	NA	0	0%
Middletown	1,969	97	25	42	164	8%
Narragansett	1,135	*	*	0	*	<1%
New Shoreham	132	*	*	*	18	13%
Newport	1,885	179	68	118	365	19%
North Kingstown	3,777	56	17	18	91	2%
North Providence	3,494	212	103	88	403	12%
North Smithfield	1,608	21	*	*	27	2%
Pawtucket	7,955	737	379	451	1,567	20%
Portsmouth	2,168	21	*	*	30	1%
Providence	21,023	3,653	1,660	2,490	7,803	37%
Scituate	1,183	*	0	*	*	<1%
Smithfield	2,440	17	*	*	31	1%
South Kingstown	2,491	28	17	*	51	2%
Tiverton	1,629	*	*	*	11	1%
Warwick	7,974	134	41	45	220	3%
West Warwick	3,476	52	34	37	123	4%
Westerly	2,262	46	12	12	70	3%
Woonsocket	5,612	469	184	245	897	16%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>11,286</i>	<i>1,632</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>2,491</i>	<i>22%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,772</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>27%</i>
<i>YouthBuild</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>37,209</i>	<i>5,381</i>	<i>2,529</i>	<i>3,625</i>	<i>11,535</i>	<i>31%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>86,325</i>	<i>2,095</i>	<i>796</i>	<i>937</i>	<i>3,828</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>136,797</i>	<i>9,115</i>	<i>3,818</i>	<i>5,133</i>	<i>18,065</i>	<i>13%</i>

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department Education, 2022-2023 school year. Total number of Multilingual Learner students is the number of students in each district who were actively enrolled in English Learner programs in the 2022-2023 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 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 School, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, A RI Mayoral Academy, Charette Charter, Excel Academy Rhode Island, Highlander, International Charter, Kingston Hill Academy, Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Charter School, The Greene School, The Hope Academy, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and Village Green Virtual.

State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

YouthBuild is the YouthBuild Preparatory Academy.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

(References are on page 188)