

POLICIES FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS
MULTILINGUAL LEARNER PROGRAM POLICY

The school committee of Pawtucket fully recognizes the amended rules and regulations which are authorized by Rhode Island General Law 16-54-2 and promulgated in accordance with the obligation of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education to govern educational programs for English language learners in the Pawtucket school district, which is considered a high incidence district with a total of 150 or more English language learners enrolled in its schools.

With that the school committee ensures and requires that:

1. Multilingual Learners (MLLs) attain a level of proficiency in English and content knowledge that permits them to (1) succeed in their school's general-education program, (2) meet state graduation-by-proficiency requirements, (3) be prepared for post-secondary education and work, and (4) become an essential asset to Rhode Island's economic and social well-being.
2. MLLs are instructed and their English language proficiency skills assessed annually in accordance with the English Language Development Standards (ELDs) of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium.
3. MLLs meet state standards in all subject areas.
4. MLLs have access to a free, appropriate, public education equal to the education provided for all other students by ensuring that programs are: based on sound educational theory, appropriately supported with adequate and effective staff and resources, periodically evaluated and if necessary, revised.
5. MLLs become proficient in the English language.

Definition of Multilingual Learner

A Pawtucket student (1) whose first language is a language other than English or who speaks a variety of English, as used in a foreign country or U. S. possession, that is so distinct that MLL instruction is necessary, (2) who is now learning English, but (3) who has not yet attained enough proficiency in English to allow him or her to fully profit from content area instruction conducted only in English.

Program Models

In order to provide the most appropriate services for MLLs, Pawtucket maintains the following program models as defined by state regulations:

- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Sheltered Content Instruction
- Collaborative ESL & General Education
- Dual Language K-5 at Greene Elementary School

These programs shall meet the program standards as defined by RIDE in the ELL regulations afore mentioned above, and every effort is made toward meeting the expected Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives as required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

An action plan to meet these objectives is included in the District Strategic Plan (available at www.psdri.net). Additionally, schools with MLLs include action steps in their School Improvement Plans that identify goals for these learners.

To the extent possible, these programs provide students with mandated time requirements, class size recommendations, and properly certified personnel and administrators as directed in the regulations. Personnel who work with MLLs are afforded the opportunity to participate in on-going, high-quality professional development that enhances their ability to meet the needs of these unique learners.

Language/Program Identification and Placement

The district determines the home/native language(s) of all public school children upon registration into the district through the Home Language Survey developed by RIDE. The data from this survey is used to initiate an interview process with families to determine whether children require MLL programming. Once determined that students may require MLL programming, they are screened using the WIDA Screener. Based on the outcome of this screening, students are assigned a language proficiency label: Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging or Reaching. Students who are labeled as entering or emerging are placed to the extent possible in the English as a Second Language/ Sheltered Content Instruction classrooms of the district, and those labeled developing or expanding are placed in the Collaborative ESL and General Education program where they are afforded MLL support. Students who meet criteria based on the WIDA Screener and also have a significant gap in their formal education are placed in Sheltered Content Instruction classrooms of the district. Those children who score in the Bridging or Reaching range of the placement test are not provided with MLL services. The instructional program determinations of students who qualify for MLL programming are also based on their literacy level in their native language(s), number of years a student has attended school, continuity of student's schooling, student retention-information, and other student needs-including special educational services. Students are placed in settings that are appropriate for their age. At the secondary level, the district reviews the MLLs educational records to ensure that the student receives appropriate credit for prior course-work. It is the responsibility of the district to provide parents/guardians of MLLs with complete and thorough descriptions of placement decisions, and parents/guardians must give signed permission for their child/children to participate in MLL programs. Parents/Guardians have the right to waive MLL services for their child/children, however, the district continues to assess these MLLs and monitor their progress.

Reporting and Assessment of Student Progress

The same policy for reporting a student's progress in the general-education program is used in reporting a student's progress in the MLL program, however, the MLL Student Plan document is made available in the student's home language to the extent possible. All MLLs are evaluated at least once per year through the state's English-language proficiency test. They also participate in the state assessment program in accordance with state guidelines. MLLs are exempt for one year from the state English Language Arts assessment, but are required to participate in the state Mathematics and Science assessment upon arrival into Pawtucket schools. When a student fails to progress appropriately within the MLL program, other assessments are used to determine the reason for the lack of progress. Appropriate instructional interventions are provided.

Exit/Mainstreaming into General Education Programs and Monitoring of Exited Students

MLLs are eligible to participate without MLL support in any content area when there is documented evidence of the student's ability in English to be successful. The following criteria are considered when making decisions to mainstream MLLs into general education programs: the student's designated level of language proficiency on the state's English-language proficiency assessment (4.8 on WIDA ACCESS for ELLs) or attainment of grade level proficiency on the state's English language arts assessment, current reading level, student's work products, teacher recommendation(s) and parent/guardian input.

Parents/Guardians are informed in writing of any change in a MLLs program or service, including exit to general education, and a record of this notification is kept on file in the student's permanent record. This notification explains the rationale for exit from the MLL program and is provided to parents/guardians in their home language to the extent possible. Parents/Guardians have the right to appeal an exit decision.

The performance of all exited students as well as those whose parents/guardians have waived MLL services are monitored for a minimum of two years to determine their level of success in the district's general-education program. If students who are exited from the MLL programs do not make sufficient progress, and their lack of progress is deemed to be language-related, they are placed back into MLL programs for additional support.

Parent Involvement

The Pawtucket school district encourages the involvement of parents/guardians of MLLs in the development, implementation and evaluation of programs for these students through outreach and continued communication with them. Parents/guardians are informed of the many ways in which they can become involved in the education of their children including the district's programs, services and activities. When necessary, the district offers training sessions for the parents/guardians of MLLs to assist them in becoming active participants in the education of their children. The district shares plans to improve programs for their children as well as the results of their MLLs performance on state assessments and other important data. The district encourages parents/guardians to participate on their school's School Improvement Teams and to join district parent committees.

The Pawtucket School Department also maintains the state required census for all MLL students enrolled in its programs, participates in RIDE monitoring and school district evaluations.