



# WHO ARE MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN DELAWARE'S SCHOOLS?

Multilingual Learners (MLLs) are a diverse group of students representing numerous languages, cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and social, economic, and educational backgrounds.

MLLs are a vibrant and growing part of Delaware's student population, enriching classrooms with cultural and linguistic diversity. These students bring valuable perspectives and multilingual skills that enhance learning environments for all. As schools navigate changing landscapes, it is essential to ensure that MLLs are fully supported and protected in their educational journey. Recognizing their strengths and addressing their unique needs is critical to building inclusive, high-achieving schools across the state.

**18,773 MLL students statewide**

**28%**

**Low Income**

(13% of the total student population)

**41%**

**Long Term Multi Lingual Learners**

**18%**

**Special Education**

**Percentage (%) of Total MLLs by School Grade Level\***

**54%**

**Elementary  
(K-5)**

**20%**

**Middle School  
(6-8)**

**25%**

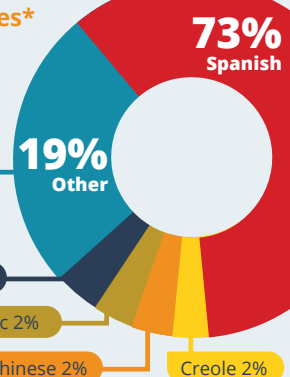
**High School  
(9-12)**

\*Values are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not add up to 100%

**Home Language**

**There are 100 native languages\* spoken by Delaware MLLs**

There are more than 95 languages spoken by less than 1 percent of MLLs



**MLL**

Multilingual learner

**EL**

English learner

**ELL**

English language learner

**LEP**

Limited English proficient

**ESL**

English as a Second Language

**There are many identical terms used to formally describe this group of students.**

**Delaware education regulations say:**

"Individuals who, among other things, have English language speaking, reading, writing, or understanding difficulties sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet challenging state academic standards as defined using Delaware's standardized entrance and exit procedures."

# Multilingual Learners are the fastest growing student population. They are enrolled in every district and charter in the state.

↑ **39%**

Growth  
since 2016

## New Castle County

- 7,942 enrolled

## Kent County

- Highest percent increase of all counties
- 2,931 enrolled

## Sussex County

- Highest numerical increase of all the counties
- 6,105 enrolled in the county

↑ **175%**

Growth  
since 2016

↑ **110%**

Growth  
since 2016

**53%**

increase  
since 2016

## State of Delaware

From 2023 to 2024  
the MLL population  
grew about 9%

## Public School Choice:

MLLs electing to attend a charter  
or vo-tech school

Approximately **10% of MLLs attended charter schools** in the 2023-2024 school year compared to **13% of all students**

During the 2023-24 school year, **La Academia Antonia Alonso (498 MLL students)** and **Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (508 MLL students)** served the **most MLLs** out of all charter schools. Both schools increased their MLL population from the previous school year (2022-23)

About **2% of high school MLL students** attended a vocational-technical high school during the 2023-2024 school year compared to **5% of all high school students**

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*Empathy happens at the intersection of cultures and peoples... Our Delaware schools are richer by far because of the MLL population we are privileged to serve.*

- Delaware Parent

“

*[MLLs'] resilience and adaptability—often demonstrated through creative problem-solving and collaborative efforts—help to model an empathetic and open-minded approach to learning that benefits the entire school community.*

- Delaware Educator

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*Teaching students from various countries adds to the joy of teaching because students have different perspectives to share.*

- Delaware Educator



# TEACHING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

In Delaware, all districts and charters are required to select a **program for multilingual learners**, then implement with resources and personnel, and evaluate and revise the program regularly **to ensure students are making progress**.

MLL programs must include daily or weekly language instruction.

Since the publication of the first fact sheets in 2018, there is significantly better reporting from the state about the types of instruction MLLs receive.

However, **the most common programs continue to be the ones with the least amount of support hours for MLLs**.



## What rights do MLLs have?

*Major requirements in federal law include:*

- (1) Schools must accept and **educate all students**, immigrants and native-born.
- (2) MLL students must be taught **English and also grade-level academic content**.
- (3) MLL students with disabilities must be provided both the language assistance and disability-related services.

## Common MLL program models in Delaware include:

**9.81%**

### No Program

Students who receive no dedicated MLL support or instruction. Usually regular classroom instruction.

**6.64%**

### Bilingual

This program, also known as early-exit bilingual education, utilizes a student's primary language in instruction. The program maintains and develops skills in the primary language and culture while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English.

**47.04%**

### Push-In/Pull-Out

The **push-in** approach has ESL teachers work with MLLs in their regular classrooms, assisting them with the content and language. With the **pull-out** approach, ESL teachers work with such students in separate classrooms, whether for one period a day or a much longer time.

**13.25%**

### English Language Development Class

A program of techniques, methodology and special curriculum designed to teach MLL students English language skills, which may include listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural orientation.

**2.73%**

### Other

- **SWD:** Students with Disabilities. MLLs who are receiving SWD services are dual-identified and are receiving accommodations to address learning disabilities and language acquisition.
- **Newcomers:** Newcomer programs are separate, relatively self-contained educational interventions designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants.

**8.36%**

### Sheltered English Instruction

An instructional approach used to make academic instruction in English understandable to MLL students. In the sheltered classroom, teachers use physical activities, visual aids, and the environment to teach vocabulary for concept development in mathematics, science, social studies, and other subjects.

**9.64%**

### Dual Language Immersion

Also known as two-way or developmental, the goal of these bilingual programs is for students to develop language proficiency in two languages by receiving instruction in English and another language in a classroom that is usually comprised of half native English speakers and half native speakers of the other language.

## MLL Funding SY 2024-2025 - Dollar Amount

*Delaware's Opportunity Funding is only 4% of total education funding (not comparable to the percentage weight other states use).*



### Delaware

Opportunity Funding Amount

**\$1,083**

Effective Weight 4%



### New Jersey

6X DE Amount

**\$6,270**

Weight 50%



### Maryland

8X DE Amount

**\$8,944**

Weight 102%



### Pennsylvania

No Consistent Base

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Weight 60%

*MD, PA and NJ all allocate a base per-pupil amount and add an additional percentage to that base in the form of a weight. Delaware does not have a base per-pupil amount, so the weighted funding in other states has been expressed as a dollar amount to allow for comparison.*



# MLLS ARE SEVERELY UNDER-RESOURCED INCLUDING A MINIMAL DEDICATED FUNDING AND CHRONIC TEACHER SHORTAGE.

For Multilingual Learners, large academic achievement gaps, limited English proficiency growth, and significantly under-resourced schools are deep-set systemic issues in desperate need of attention.

## Grade Book: MLLs in the Delaware Education System

### Academic Content

Category	Description	Multilingual Learners	Native English Speakers
3rd grade Smarter Balanced (2024)	Percentage of students proficient in third grade reading and math	Reading: <b>21%</b> Math: <b>28%</b>	Reading: <b>42%</b> Math: <b>46%</b>
8th grade Smarter Balanced (2024)	Percentage of students proficient in eighth grade reading and math	Reading: <b>10%</b> Math: <b>5%</b>	Reading: <b>42%</b> Math: <b>26%</b>

### College and Career Readiness

Category	Description	Multilingual Learners	Native English Speakers
SAT (2024)	Percentage of high school students proficient in reading, writing, and math	Reading and Writing: <b>3%</b> Math: <b>2%</b>	Reading and Writing: <b>48%</b> Math: <b>19%</b>
Category	Description	Multilingual Learners	All Students
Graduation rates (2024)	Percentage of students who graduate high school in four years	<b>79%</b>	<b>89%</b>
College remediation (Class of 2024)	Percent of students who enroll in college who may not be able to take credit bearing coursework until completing remedial courses	<b>60%</b>	<b>37%</b>

### English Language Proficiency

Category	Description	Multilingual Learners	
English language proficiency growth (Class of 2024)	Students meeting individual goal set based on their baseline proficiency and grade	<b>35%</b>	
	Amount of progress made toward individual student goal	Average: <b>63%</b>	

## Study Guide: ESL Certified Teachers in Delaware

Delaware requires that all content-area teachers (e.g. math, history) be certified in their subject, which nearly all are. The state also requires that MLL-only instructors have an MLL-specific certificate. Yet, available federal data, state data, and local anecdotes indicate that in reality, many MLLs do not have access to certified teachers:

**Sum total of ESL Certified Teachers: 237**

**Sum total of Bilingual Certified teachers: 52**

- Only 34 schools out of 227 have ESL or Bilingual certified teachers
- 40% of MLLs have potential access to an ESL/Bilingual Certified Teacher within their school (meaning there is at least one teacher within their school, regardless of whether or not the MLL student is in the class with them)
- In schools where there are certified teachers, the overall Certified Teacher: MLL student ratio is about 1:25
- In all Delaware schools, the average Certified Teacher: MLL Student ratio of each individual school is about 1:37

Visit [RodelDE.org](https://RodelDE.org) for more information on MLLs in Delaware including previous fact sheets and sources for this fact sheet. Want to learn more about Delaware's inequitable school funding system? Visit [www.DelawareSchoolFunding101.com](https://www.DelawareSchoolFunding101.com).

