



Rhode Island Multilingual Learners

Family and Student Bill of Rights

English

June, 2022

As a parent or guardian with school-aged children, you have certain rights in the United States, and under federal law, your children have the right to a free public pre-K-12 education.

You and your children have these rights regardless of immigration status, national origin, or the language that you and your children speak. Your rights are the same if you are citizens, residents, immigrants, or undocumented.

In this document, the Rhode Island Department of Education will explain three broad categories of rights: language services, access to education, and documentation and privacy.



We hope these rights empower you to support your children's learning and advocate for them when needed.

You are your child's voice, and you have the right to communicate with school and district staff to ensure your children get access to support so they can thrive emotionally, socially and academically.

If you have any questions regarding you or your children's rights, do not hesitate to contact us at Rhode Island Department of Education
info@ride.ri.gov

1 Language Services



As a parent, **you have the right to have a qualified interpreter/translator** in your preferred language for critical interactions with the school district.

Access to a qualified interpreter, however, should not stop you from visiting your children's schools. When you wish to talk to someone at the school, **you can ask the school to provide an interpreter.** Some schools have **parent liaisons** who can do this work. If interpretation will be needed, scheduling visits in advance is recommended to maximize your time.

Critical interactions

include but are not limited to: enrollment, language programs, advanced courses, or special education, related services and teacher-parent conferences, IEP meetings, non-discriminatory student's policy and discipline notices, and complaint procedures.

You also **have the right to receive meaningful information from schools in a language you choose and understand.** Schools are legally required to notify multilingual parents of the same information that English-speaking parents receive about programs, services, or activities in the school district. Schools must try, as often as possible, to translate information they send home into the family's primary language, or provide interpretation.

Your children **have a right to receive language services if they need to learn English,** and you must legally be notified about these programs.

To get started, **schools will ask you to fill out a Home Language Survey.** This will help determine if your child needs to be tested to see if he or she qualifies for English language development instruction. Schools are legally required to identify MLL students because English development may impact MLLs' equal access to education, and if the state language screening assessment determines that your child is eligible for specialized language services, the school must provide this instruction.

If your child qualifies, your student is classified as an MLL, and **you should expect to receive information about the language program in which your child will be participating, the methods of instruction used in other available programs, and information about how the programs differ.** You must be informed every year that your child will be enrolled in a language development program, and when your child exits services. You also should be informed of your right to opt-out your child from the language development program.

2 Access to Education



Your children **have the right to equal access to all programming and services offered by the school district that are available to other students.** These programs and services should be appropriate to your child's age and grade level and include those required for graduation.

Your children **have the right to receive all core content instruction,** which includes subjects such as Reading/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, at the same academic level as all other children. Being an MLL should not affect their ability to access core content instruction.



Your children **have the right to fully access extracurricular activities** (afterschool clubs, sports, etc.) in the school district. Being an MLL should not affect their ability to take part in extracurricular activities.



Your children **have the right to support services aligned with those that the school/district provides to all students.** Special support services for children with physical, cognitive, emotional, and learning disabilities are available to all public school students. If you believe your children should receive special services but the school is not aware of their needs, please call the school and request assistance.

Intervention supports are available to all students, and they are often called MTSS. **MTSS is not special education, but is available to support students in meeting their academic, behavior, and social and emotional learning goals.**

3 Documentation and Privacy

You **have the right to enroll your children in school without being asked to provide information or paperwork that may reveal your or your children's immigration status**. Schools are not legally allowed to require documentation that prohibits or unlawfully discourages a student from enrolling in or attending school.

Schools and school districts can ask for immunization records and proof of age from a clinic or doctor, **as well as proof of residency** (such as a utility bill that reflects your current address); however, **school or district staff are not allowed to require families to provide social security numbers or immigration documents such as visas, residency cards or proof of citizenship**. You don't have to answer questions about yours or your child's immigration status, such questions about your child's birthplace.



Most **public schools offer free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch** for students who need them. You'll need to fill out a federal form, which asks you to list the members of your household, dates of birth, relationships, and household income. **You do not need a social security card to access this service.**

Schools are not allowed to share information that may reveal a student's personal information, unless permitted by law or given written permission by the student's parents. The right to privacy is protected by a law called FERPA, and this law also gives parents the legal right, to inspect their child's educational records at the school, to have them explained if necessary, to request updates and corrections, and to have their child's education records sent to another school in a timely manner if they wish to have their child transfer schools.

We appreciate your commitment to your children's success.