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EDUCATION

Report: Poor English skills a hallmark of RI school districts. Who scored highest, lowest?

Only one district and two charters received strong scores in English language learning.



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The Rhode Island Department of Education has released its first-ever district accountability report, underscoring major struggles across the state in English language proficiency and a sluggish recovery from pandemic-induced learning loss.

The Local Education Agency Accountability report – required by the state Education Accountability Act of 2019 – offers scores in a range of matters, including student performance, graduation rates and school quality. Districts and charter schools are evaluated. To see the report, go to reportcard.ride.ri.gov and navigate using district report card drop down menu.

Here's what's in it:

Which districts had the lowest and highest scores

Among the districts with the lowest scores are Central Falls, Newport, Providence and Pawtucket, all of which are lacking in multiple areas including English proficiency, graduation rates and achievement, which was measured using the SATs, the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System and other tests.

Barrington was the highest-rated district in the most criteria.

Thirty-one districts and charters receive poor English proficiency scores

Overall, English proficiency among multilingual learners, or MLLs, was staggeringly low. Only one district, Barrington, earned a high score for proficiency, while RISE Prep Mayoral Academy and SouthSide Charter School were the only charters to receive a high score.

Overall, 31 districts and charters received poor scores in English proficiency. Ten fell in the middle range.

More: [Cap on class size, education as a right: How these new bills could change RI education](#)

"I'm most worried about our multilingual learner population," state education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green said in a call with reporters on Thursday. "I think it's a population that has been really impacted, that really needs the support, and in all districts across the state, they need more support."

Only two days prior, lawmakers and advocates for multilingual learners held a news conference in the State House library, where they called for more focus on students' native languages, rather than solely a focus on English.

Infante-Green said more bilingual programs need to be established, because "we do know that if the student is bilingual, they're going to learn English a lot faster."

Several charter schools underperforming

Most charters in the state received a poor-to-middling assessment.

More than half a dozen of the state's charters received generally poor scores, including Highlander and Nuestro Mundo, while several others, including Achievement First and Paul Cuffee, also received lackluster scores.

However, Infante-Green described the effects of COVID-19 as having had an "impact across the board," adding that it "depends on the students that they serve."

How is this different from existing state evaluations?

The new report differs from star ratings given to individual schools – an assessment the state launched in 2018 as part of its effort to track performance in accordance with federal law. The district-by-district report is meant to provide "in-depth snapshots" that "show more detail," the commissioner said.

"Data is central in our efforts [to] move Rhode Island's state education system forward and better serve our students," said K-12 Council Chair Patti DiCenso in a statement. "The council remains committed to ensuring students, families, and school staff and leaders have the tools and resources to improve academic achievement."

Could pandemic's toll last longer than expected?

Though the Department of Education predicts it will take three to five years for schools to recover from the pandemic's impact on education, the commissioner expressed a measure of uncertainty.

"It's hard to know," Infante-Green said. "Those are our projections. We'll see this year. This is not going to be a straight line. We're hoping that it'll be a straight line, but we don't know."