Investing in Multi-Lingual Learners

All are welcome here!

We want expanded bilingual programs and smaller MLL class sizes.
Half of all of Rhode Island’s Multilingual Learners attend Providence Public Schools. Nearly one-third of Providence students are Multilingual Learners, or MLLs. Much more needs to be done to ensure that Multilingual Learners have the programs, personnel, technology and resources they need to succeed, especially during and after the pandemic.

COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on families and educators. For MLLs and their families, who are particularly vulnerable and underserved, the pandemic means that even more wide-ranging improvements are called for, from updating resources to help children suffering from pandemic-related trauma, to expanding current bilingual and dual language programs, to removing language barriers and other obstacles to parent and family involvement in schools, to recruiting a more diverse and bilingual teacher and school staff workforce.

**Expand and improve the quality of MLL educational programs.**

- Expand the current transitional and developmental bilingual programs and dual language programs.
- Reduce class sizes in overcrowded MLL classrooms.
- Ensure the academic curriculum is research-based.
- Ensure that materials are culturally responsive and reflect the realities facing our community, including racial and economic marginalization and injustice.
- Implement team teaching with teachers and staff from mainstream classrooms.

**Create a teacher/staff workforce trained and empowered to support MLLs.**

- Provide the resources for educators to get MLL certification or endorsement if they don’t have it.
- Recruit and retain more MLL coordinators, MLL-certified teachers and bilingual staff, including through “Grow Your Own” and mentoring programs.
- Ensure ongoing high-quality, research-based professional development for all teachers on best practices for MLL education, including in culturally responsive instructional practices and pedagogy.
- Hire enough bilingual Specialized Instructional Support Professionals (psychologists, counselors, social workers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and nurses) to support the large proportion of MLLs in Providence schools.

**Open doors for parent, family and community involvement in our schools.**

- Build a mentoring program for parents, similar to Chicago’s Parent Mentor Program, which facilitates regular parent volunteer work at their children’s schools.
- Among the comprehensive wraparound services schools offer, include community school services geared for MLL students and families, such as evening/weekend English as a second language classes for parents and family members, food pantries and health services.
- Provide families with language translation services—including Indigenous languages—for parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organization meetings and other school-based meetings.
- Invest in supportive technology such as electronic translation devices that provide real-time language translation.
- Identify parent leaders and volunteers, and work with communities to establish a PTA or PTO in every school.
- Provide assistance to parents in accessing the background check process so that they can more easily volunteer in schools.
- Appoint a bilingual parent liaison at each school who can help coordinate efforts to keep parents and families informed of school events and opportunities to engage.
- Continue, and add to, efforts to keep parents informed about their children’s progress via Kinvolved and other communication platforms.

For more about how our community, our teachers and our union are working together to move our schools forward, go to TogetherforPVD.org.