

2021 -- H 5239

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE WORLD LANGUAGE AND DUAL LANGUAGE
IMMERSION ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Diaz, Slater, Perez, Alzate, Felix, Biah, Ajello, Shallcross
Smith, Tobon, and Batista

Date Introduced: January 29, 2021

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 54.1

4 THE WORLD LANGUAGE AND DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION ACT

5 **16-54.1-1. Findings.**

6 The general assembly finds and declares as follows:

7 (1) There is a growing body of research that suggests that world language (WL) and dual
8 language immersion (DLI) education:

9 (i) Confers unrivaled cognitive and educational advantages onto students;

10 (ii) Reduces and closes achievement gaps in traditionally underrepresented and
11 underserved student populations, particularly English learner (EL) students in the case of dual
12 language education;

13 (iii) Strengthens the local economy by developing a future bilingual workforce to attract
14 international businesses to operate in Rhode Island; and

15 (iv) Serves as an indicator of high-quality programming across the local education agency
16 (LEA), i.e. emphasis on WL/DLI programming is attractive to parents and communities, driving
17 business and investment to the district.

18 (2) The Rhode Island public has clearly called for an expansion of proficiency-based

1 [language learning opportunities, evident in the priority for Globally Competent Graduates in the](#)
2 [2015-2020 Strategic Plan for Education.](#)

3 [\(3\) There is a growing need for coordination of world language and DLI programs at the](#)
4 [state level as programs grow both horizontally and vertically in a variety of languages. Since the](#)
5 [launch of the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence in 2012, five \(5\) new DLI programs](#)
6 [have been created, adding to the four \(4\) already existing, with more programs planned.](#)

7 [\(4\) A 2017 report released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that measured the prospects](#)
8 [for children of different groups found that Rhode Island's Latino children ranked last in the nation.](#)

9 [\(5\) There is overwhelming evidence that the state of Rhode Island could expect a very high](#)
10 [return to the public by investing in high quality world language and dual language immersion](#)
11 [programming for all of our students.](#)

12 [\(6\) Dual language immersion investments targeted towards program development for](#)
13 [disadvantaged children will help to promote both efficiency and educational equality for the](#)
14 [children of our state.](#)

15 [\(7\) The expansion of funding for DLI programs that advance outcomes for English learners](#)
16 [is critical to achieving the state's goal for grade-level reading by the third grade.](#)

17 **16-54.1-2. Definitions.**

18 [For purposes of this chapter:](#)

19 [\(1\) "Dual language immersion" or "DLI" means a method of instruction that promotes a](#)
20 [student's full proficiency in all aspects of English and another language. DLI programs educate](#)
21 [students using both English and a partner language for academic instruction and may divide the](#)
22 [day by language of instruction. Dual immersion programs may further include two-way immersion](#)
23 [programs that teach English learners \(ELs\) alongside English-speakers who are learning the partner](#)
24 [language, and one-way immersion programs that serve a student population with limited to no](#)
25 [proficiency in the target language. Teachers pursuant to these programs must meet appropriate state](#)
26 [certification requirements and be highly qualified as defined by RIDE in their content area.](#)

27 [\(2\) "World language" or "WL" means any language other than English, including all](#)
28 [modern languages, classical languages, American Sign Language, and Native American languages.](#)

29 **16-54.1-3. Dual language program fund authorized.**

30 [\(a\) The Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education shall establish a](#)
31 [dual language program fund and a position of world language and dual language immersion](#)
32 [specialist within the department of elementary and secondary education \(RIDE\). For purposes of](#)
33 [funding this chapter, the general assembly shall appropriate the sum of two hundred thousand](#)
34 [dollars \(\\$200,000\) per year:](#)

1 (1) Of which, not less than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) would be allocated to carry out
2 the program to invest in high quality, evidence informed, voluntary, dual language models that
3 expand upon the current landscape of dual language programs and to allow successful existing
4 programs to serve more English learners. Recipients of funding may include local education
5 authorities.

6 (2) Of which, remaining funds shall be used for the establishment of a world language and
7 dual language education specialist position at RIDE. The purpose of programs supported by this
8 fund shall be to provide pathways to bilingualism and biliteracy for Rhode Island students and to
9 close the achievement gap that currently exists for English learners in Rhode Island schools.

10 (b) The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall designate a world
11 language and dual language immersion specialist to:

12 (1) Provide technical assistance and collaborate with LEAs in the establishment, expansion,
13 and improvement of world language and dual language courses and programs;

14 (2) Oversee implementation of dual language immersion pilot;

15 (3) Ensure the inclusion of world language and dual language immersion program data,
16 including seal of biliteracy assessment data, in ongoing surveys of Rhode Island LEAs in order to:

17 (i) Determine the types of existing world language and dual language immersion courses
18 and programs that successfully integrate technology into classroom instruction;

19 (ii) Identify exemplary model world language and dual language immersion programs; and

20 (iii) Identify and address staff development needs of current world language and dual
21 language immersion teachers, preservice teachers, paraprofessionals, and teacher preparation
22 programs.

23 (4) Perform other duties as determined by RIDE.

24 (c) The specialist shall create a competitive request for proposals process to allocate
25 funding for the pilot program for the fiscal year no later than October 1 of each year. The request
26 for proposals should fund only programs with evidence of model effectiveness, clear procedures
27 for ensuring program quality and an ongoing commitment to, and plans for, advanced evaluation
28 of results. Priority should be given to those LEAs with a high incidence of English learner students.

29 (d) The Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education shall appropriate
30 the necessary position and funding for said position prior to June 30, 2022.

31 **16-54.1-4. Reporting.**

32 On or before October 31, 2022, and annually thereafter by October 31, the Rhode Island
33 department of elementary and secondary education shall report back to the general assembly and
34 the governor on the status, progress, and feasibility of the continuation of the pilot program

1 [authorized by this chapter.](#)

2 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE WORLD LANGUAGE AND DUAL LANGUAGE
IMMERSION ACT

- 1 This act would establish and require funding for a world language and dual language
- 2 immersion program.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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