

Coventry making strides in ELL prog.

District counts 21 students on rolls who aren't primary English speakers

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER
kmiller@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — The school district in Coventry has developed a language program to support students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and according to Teresa Medeiros, program director, the program supports students both in and out of the classroom with ESL teachers and mainstream teachers collaborating to ensure student success.

“We wanted to highlight the success of the program and show the need for the program given we have newcomers to the district,” she said.

Medeiros explained the program works with students from countries including, in part, the Ukraine, China, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Guatemala.

ELLs are those students whose primary or native language is one other than English or who live in a home where a second language is spoken.

Federal and state regulations mandate that local school districts provide appropriate services and equitable and effective learning opportunities for English language learners that ensure ELLs receive the language support needed for success in school.

There are 21 students in the program attending Coventry schools.

“The first step is identifying a child who may qualify for ELL resources is at the time of registration,” Medeiros said.

“The school district determines the primary language of all public school children through the Home Language Survey developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education. If any response on the survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the child’s home, the child must be referred to the ESL program office for assessment of their English language proficiency.”

From there, she explained, the parents or guardians are notified to gather additional information to complete the report.

Coventry ESL/ELL program praised

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"This state-generated report provides information regarding the child's language proficiency in English and any other languages. The ELL staff member also explains the resources that are available for ELLs," said

the Director.

Students are scored on a number of criteria such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The program was also described as an effective way to show educators where the gaps may be and the teachers can take a whole approach to not only educate the students with learning a new language, but using those language skills throughout their academic classes.

From there, Medeiros explained that parents can use the scores to advocate for their child. Teachers can use the scores to plan instruction and assessments.

"Districts use the scores to evaluate their language support programs, to monitor student

progress in acquiring English and to determine if a student is eligible to exit an English language support program," she said.

Medeiros also explained the exit criteria includes, in part, passing grades in all core content classes, ESL/bilingual education teacher recommendation, at least two general education core content teacher recommendations, at least three writing samples demonstrating skill not more than one year below grade level and a score on a district reading assessment not more than one year below grade level.

"In some cases, students in the program are more advanced than those not in the program," she said. "I can say one student has made excellent progress in just two years."

Coventry School Assistant Superintendent Craig Levis asked Medeiros to share what the program is about and what it involves because he wants the community to see the work the district does with the students.

"It's always about the kids and how we can continue to improve and bring our best resources to the table," Levis said. "I just thought we should highlight this program and the teachers here are always rising to the challenges."

Coventry School Committee Chairwoman Kathy Patenaude applauded the program.

"We've done some great work and I think it helps that we don't have many students so we're able to really make the fullest use of our resources," she said.

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