

Third-Grade Reading Skills

DEFINITION

Third-grade reading skills is the percentage of third-grade students who met expectations in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* test.

SIGNIFICANCE

Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade, when children begin to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Students who do not successfully reach this milestone struggle in the later grades and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their proficient peers.¹

Interventions for students who struggle with reading are more successful when implemented before third grade than after third grade. When intervention is delayed until after third grade, most children never catch up to their grade-level peers.^{2,3}

Literacy begins long before children encounter school instruction in writing and reading. Physical and social-emotional health, family supports, literacy-rich home environments (including telling stories) and parents who provide early cognitive development activities contribute to literacy development, reading achievement, and success in school.^{4,5}

High-quality preschool and pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) programs can boost language and literacy skills and have the greatest impact on children living in or near poverty.⁶ Programs targeting the development of social-emotional and behavioral skills improve children's school readiness and academic achievement. Children who participate in high-quality early childhood education programs score higher on future reading and math assessments, are more likely to become proficient readers in the primary grades, and have higher graduation rates.^{7,8}

Policymakers can increase third-grade reading proficiency by increasing access to high-quality child care, Pre-K, and Head Start; providing parents with supports to create enriched language and literacy opportunities beginning at birth; expanding access to high-quality summer learning programs; and addressing chronic early absence.^{9,10}

4th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2007	2017
RI	31%	39%
US	32%	35%
National Rank*	14th	
New England Rank**	5th	

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

The *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* measures proficiency nationally and across states every other year for grades 4 and 8.

Third Graders Meeting Expectations on the RICAS English Language Arts Assessment, Rhode Island, 2018

SUBGROUP	
Male Students	36%
Female Students	45%
English Learners	13%
Non-English Learners	44%
Students with Disabilities	9%
Students without Disabilities	46%
Low-Income Students	26%
Higher-Income Students	56%
White Students	50%
Asian Students	44%
Black Students	26%
Hispanic Students	25%
Native American Students	24%
ALL STUDENTS	40%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2018. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

- ◆ In 2018, 40% of Rhode Island third graders met expectations on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, English language arts assessment.¹¹
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2018, 26% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 56% of higher-income third graders. There were also large achievement gaps by race and ethnicity as well as by English learner and disability status.¹²
- ◆ 2018 was the first year of the new *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* in grades three through eight in English language arts and mathematics. The *RICAS* assessments are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and are comparable to the *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System*.¹³

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Table 47.

Third-Grade Reading Skills, Rhode Island, 2018

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF THIRD GRADERS TESTED	# MEETING EXPECTATIONS	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	242	177	73%
Bristol Warren	225	136	60%
Burrillville	153	49	32%
Central Falls	200	24	12%
Chariho	210	123	59%
Coventry	331	173	52%
Cranston	732	330	45%
Cumberland	338	172	51%
East Greenwich	190	128	67%
East Providence	388	164	42%
Exeter-West Greenwich	114	74	65%
Foster	37	13	35%
Glocester	94	58	62%
Jamestown	40	25	63%
Johnston	258	102	40%
Lincoln	227	125	55%
Little Compton	28	18	64%
Middletown	180	66	37%
Narragansett	72	46	64%
Newport	155	40	26%
North Kingstown	234	132	56%
North Providence	249	82	33%
North Smithfield	131	93	71%
Pawtucket	750	227	30%
Portsmouth	145	89	61%
Providence	1,738	323	19%
Scituate	80	38	48%
Smithfield	148	88	59%
South Kingstown	227	108	48%
Tiverton	129	69	53%
Warwick	622	255	41%
West Warwick	272	83	31%
Westerly	204	109	53%
Woonsocket	481	84	17%
Charter Schools	670	319	48%
Four Core Cities	3,169	658	21%
Remainder of State	6,462	3,171	49%
Rhode Island	10,305	4,148	40%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2018.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2018, Third-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2018.

% meeting expectations are the third-grade students who met or exceeded expectations for their grade on the English language arts section of the *RICAS*. Only students who actually took the test are counted in the denominator for the district and school proficiency rates. Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may participate in alternate assessments instead. English Language Learners in the U.S. less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

In Rhode Island, 98% of students were tested. Response rates vary by district.

2018 *RICAS* data for independent charter schools include Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, and SouthSide Charter School. Charter schools included in total differ by year, depending on the schools serving that grade level on the year of the test. Charter schools are not included in the four core cities and remainder of state calculations.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Data is not reported for New Shoreham or The Rhode Island School for the Deaf because the number of students tested was less than 10.

See Methodology Section for more information.

References

¹² Hernandez, D. J. (2012). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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