

Fourth-Grade Reading Skills

DEFINITION

Fourth-grade reading skills is the percentage of fourth-grade students who scored at or above the proficiency level for reading on the *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP) test. The NECAP test measures reading, writing and math skills. Overall scores from the reading test are reported here.

SIGNIFICANCE

Reading proficiency is fundamental to the development of academic competencies and basic life skills. Students with poor reading skills will experience difficulty completing academic coursework, graduating from high school and can experience difficulty finding and maintaining employment later in life.¹

Literacy begins long before children encounter formal school instruction in writing and reading. Enhanced vocabulary, comprehension and cognitive development can be seen in children under three years of age by starting to read to children from infancy.² Literacy-rich home environments (including reading, singing or telling stories to children) contribute to advanced literacy development and reading achievement.^{3,4} Participation in high-quality pre-schools can also boost language and literacy skills by helping children learn, think and talk about new areas of knowledge;

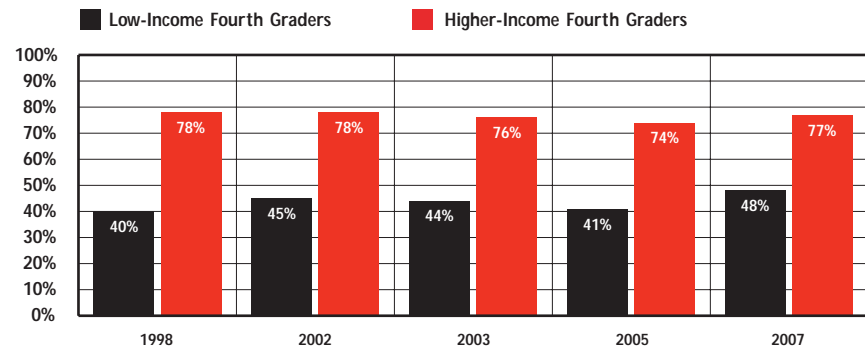
by integrating reading, letters, sounds and storytelling into everyday activities; and offering opportunities to play in ways that build awareness of the sounds and structure of language.⁵

When students continue to have difficulty reading beyond third grade, they often face tremendous difficulty catching up. Older students can learn to read when schools identify reading difficulties early and intervene quickly in order to teach foundational skills that students have missed by providing many opportunities to practice reading with meaningful, age-appropriate books.⁶

In October 2007, 64% of Rhode Island fourth graders scored at or above proficiency for reading on the NECAP up from 60% in 2005. The NECAP was jointly created by New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island, the only testing collaborative in the nation. While Rhode Island students have shown improved proficiency levels over the past 3 years, they have consistently performed less well than students in New Hampshire and Vermont in reading and mathematics.⁷

Students receiving special education services are much less likely to be proficient in reading than students in regular education. In Rhode Island, 28% of fourth graders with disabilities achieved proficiency compared with 71% of their non-disabled peers.⁸

Rhode Island Public School 4th Grade Reading Proficiency, Percentage at or Above Basic Understanding by Income Status



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment. Income status is determined by eligibility for the National School Lunch Program.

- ◆ **The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment is a nationally representative assessment of students' achievement. The NAEP has three reading achievement levels: Basic, Proficient and Advanced. Fourth graders performing at the Basic level should have a general understanding of the meaning of what they read, make obvious associations between text and their own experiences, and expand ideas in the text by making simple inferences.⁹**
- ◆ **In Rhode Island between 1998 and 2007, the percentage of higher-income fourth graders achieving at or above the Basic level on the NAEP was consistently higher than that of low-income fourth graders.¹⁰ In 2007, 48% of low-income fourth graders scored at or above the Basic level compared to 77% of higher-income fourth graders.¹¹**
- ◆ **The level and content of students' knowledge, as well as their ability to think, learn and communicate, influence their capacity to thrive in the labor market as adults. Students with high test scores are more likely to succeed in school, be employed and earn more as adults than students with lower test scores.¹²**

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Table 39.

Fourth-Grade Reading Proficiency, Rhode Island, 2005 & 2007

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			OCTOBER 2005		OCTOBER 2007	
	% ADULTS COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL	% CHILDREN IN POVERTY	% ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	# OF 4TH GRADE TEST TAKERS	% AT OR ABOVE THE PROFICIENCY LEVEL	# OF 4TH GRADE TEST TAKERS	% AT OR ABOVE THE PROFICIENCY LEVEL
Barrington	92%	2%	1%	248	89%	245	91%
Bristol-Warren	75%	7%	3%	268	69%	252	79%
Burrillville	80%	8%	0%	164	63%	165	72%
Central Falls	49%	37%	24%	253	40%	263	45%
Chariho	88%	4%	0%	269	73%	263	80%
Coventry	83%	6%	0%	405	68%	411	73%
Cranston	79%	14%	5%	801	71%	785	72%
Cumberland	81%	6%	2%	410	74%	368	70%
East Greenwich	93%	3%	0%	201	86%	200	82%
East Providence	71%	13%	4%	415	59%	446	58%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	89%	4%	1%	162	74%	140	71%
Foster	88%	8%	0%	66	68%	58	69%
Glocester	87%	9%	0%	124	77%	132	76%
Jamestown	93%	3%	1%	42	83%	44	82%
Johnston	78%	12%	2%	276	58%	269	65%
Lincoln	82%	7%	1%	267	72%	262	78%
Little Compton	91%	7%	0%	37	73%	33	79%
Middletown	91%	6%	2%	195	68%	165	73%
Narragansett	91%	6%	0%	122	81%	78	71%
New Shoreham	95%	8%	4%	14	100%	10	90%
Newport	87%	15%	3%	178	46%	168	50%
North Kingstown	92%	6%	1%	337	79%	322	78%
North Providence	77%	13%	2%	250	64%	223	69%
North Smithfield	82%	5%	1%	128	77%	138	83%
Pawtucket	66%	24%	11%	703	48%	647	55%
Portsmouth	91%	3%	0%	236	75%	197	80%
Providence	66%	37%	16%	1887	31%	1,833	36%
Scituate	87%	7%	0%	141	72%	157	75%
Smithfield	85%	6%	1%	219	79%	195	81%
South Kingstown	91%	4%	1%	249	76%	262	75%
Tiverton	80%	5%	0%	154	77%	155	74%
Warwick	85%	7%	1%	853	71%	820	75%
West Warwick	76%	12%	2%	295	55%	252	58%
Westerly	82%	6%	2%	255	69%	245	78%
Woonsocket	64%	27%	5%	489	46%	513	50%
Charter Schools	NA	NA	14%	159	43%	212	58%
Core Cities	67%	30%	13%	3805	39%	3,676	44%
Remainder of State	83%	8%	2%	7467	72%	7,040	74%
Rhode Island	78%	16%	5%	11272	60%	10,928	64%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Fourth Grade Reading Skills* cannot be compared with Factbooks previous to 2007.

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), October 2005 & 2007. The NECAP is a new assessment tool used by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The % of children in poverty is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 2005. The % of adults completing high school or higher is from Census 2000. The % of English Language Learners is from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year.

Only students who actually took the test are counted in district and school proficiency rates. All enrolled students are eligible unless their IEP specifically exempts them or unless they are beginning English Language Learners.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Independent charter schools reported for this indicator are the Compass School, CVS Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, and Paul Cuffee Charter School. Charter schools are not included in the core city and remainder of state calculations.

References

¹ *Reading proficiency*. (n.d.). Retrieved from the Child Trends Data Bank on February 13, 2008 from www.childtrendsdatabank.org

² Raikes, H., et al. (2006). Mother-child bookreading in low-income families: Correlates and outcomes during the first three years of life. *Child Development*, 77(4), 924-953.

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