

# Eighth-Grade Reading Skills

## DEFINITION

*Eighth-grade reading skills* is the percentage of eighth-grade students who scored at or above the proficiency level for reading on the *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* test in October 2007. The NECAP test measures reading, writing and math skills. Overall scores from the reading test are reported here.

## SIGNIFICANCE

To succeed in post-secondary education or employment, students must possess literacy skills that enable them to construct meaning from a variety of texts and convey that meaning to others.<sup>1</sup> Achieving competence in reading is a developmental, multidimensional and interactive process.<sup>2</sup> Challenges in reading increase for older students because literacy as well as content demands intensify dramatically.<sup>3</sup>

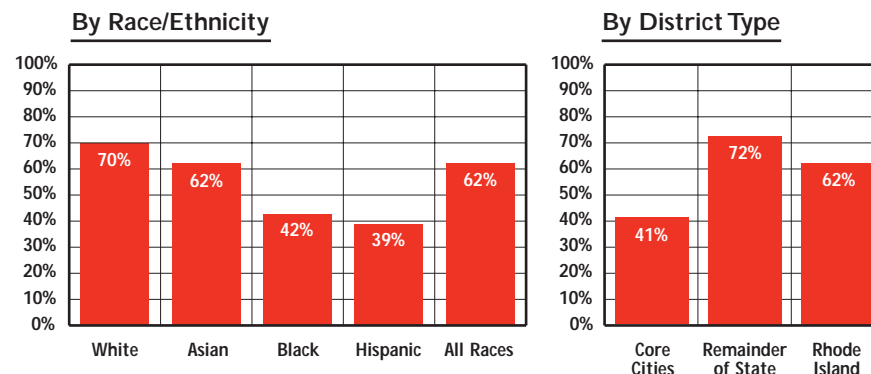
Low reading ability in eighth grade has long-term implications for students. Reading disabilities persist over time and even some successful early readers develop substantial difficulties with reading at older ages. In the U.S., the majority of incoming ninth graders in high-poverty urban schools read two to three years below grade level.<sup>4</sup> Adolescents who are poor readers have difficulty succeeding in other core subjects and are more likely to drop out

than their peers.<sup>5</sup> Problems faced by struggling readers are exacerbated when they are English Language Learners, recent immigrants or have learning disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is one measure that can be used to compare reading proficiency across states. In 2007, 69% of Rhode Island eighth graders performed at or above the Basic level on the NAEP, compared with 72% nationally.<sup>7</sup> At-risk adolescent students rarely receive the intensive reading instruction they need. Fewer than one in five high schools in the U.S. have reading specialists designated to help struggling readers.<sup>8</sup>

Older struggling readers need intensive interventions to improve their literacy. Studies show that schools with successful adolescent literacy programs have strong leadership, incorporate interdisciplinary teaching teams, target professional development, and use student assessments effectively. These schools implement comprehensive teaching strategies that include: teaching reading comprehension and subject-specific reading skills (e.g., for science or math); using diverse texts; motivating students to become independent readers; using text-based team-learning; using technology; and providing writing instruction and practice.<sup>9</sup>

Rhode Island Public School 8th-Grade Reading Proficiency, October 2007



- ◆ In October 2007, 62% of Rhode Island eighth graders scored at or above proficiency in reading. Students in the core cities scored below the state average at 41% compared with 72% in the remainder of the state. Proficiency levels increased between 2006 and 2007 for students in the core cities, students in the remainder of the state and overall in Rhode Island.
- ◆ Forty-two percent of low-income students (determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program) were proficient in reading compared to 73% of higher-income students.
- ◆ Black and Hispanic students scored significantly lower than their White and Asian counterparts. There were overall increases in proficiency levels between 2006 and 2007 for students in every racial and ethnic group in Rhode Island.
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2007, 23% of eighth-grade students receiving special education services were proficient in reading compared with 70% of students in regular education programs. In 2006, 19% of eighth-grade students in special education were proficient in reading.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)*, October 2006 and October 2007.

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Table 40.

**Eighth-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 8TH GRADE TEST TAKERS	% AT OR ABOVE THE PROFICIENCY LEVEL	# OF 8TH GRADE TEST TAKERS	% AT OR ABOVE THE PROFICIENCY LEVEL
<b>Barrington</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>Bristol Warren</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>Burrillville</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Central Falls</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Chariho</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>Cranston</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Cumberland</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>East Greenwich</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>East Providence</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Exeter-W. Greenw</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Foster-Glocester</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Jamestown</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Johnston</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Little Compton</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>Middletown</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Narragansett</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>New Shoreham</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Newport</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>North Kingstown</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>North Providence</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>North Smithfield</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Pawtucket</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Providence</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1,935</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>1,836</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Scituate</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>Smithfield</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>South Kingstown</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Tiverton</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Warwick</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>West Warwick</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Westerly</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Woonsocket</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>30%</b>
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>Urban Collaborative</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>36%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>3,999</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>3,754</i>	<i>41%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>8,179</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>7,951</i>	<i>72%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>12,270</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>11,851</i>	<i>62%</i>

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* October 2005 & 2007. The NECAP is the assessment tool used by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education beginning in 2005 and was jointly developed with Vermont and New Hampshire.

% children in poverty data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 2005. % of adults completing high school or higher data are from Census 2000. % English Language Learners is from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year. % of eighth-grade students who scored at or above the proficiency level are the students who received proficient or proficient with distinction scores on the reading section of the *New England Common Assessment Program*.

Only students who actually took the test are counted in the district's or school's proficiency rate. All enrolled students are eligible unless their Individualized Education Program (IEP) specifically exempts them or unless they are beginning English Language Learners.

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

Core city and remainder of state calculations do not include charter schools or UCAP. Independent charter schools reported for this indicator are CVS Highlander School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, and Compass Charter School.

See Methodology section for more information.

**References**

- <sup>1</sup> McCombs, J. S., Kirby, S. N., Barney, H., Darilek, H., Magee, S. J. (2005). *Achieving state and national literacy goals, a long uphill road*. New York: RAND Corporation.
- <sup>2</sup> National Institute for Literacy. (n.d.). *Adolescent literacy—Research informing practice: A series of workshops*. Retrieved January 31, 2007 from <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/adolescent.html>

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