

# 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 in October 2008. The NECAP test measures reading, writing and math skills. Proficiency rates from the reading sub-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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> Literacy-rich home environments (including reading, singing or telling stories to children) contribute to advanced literacy development and reading achievement.<sup>3,4</sup> Participation in high-quality preschools also can boost language and literacy skills by helping children learn, think

and talk about new areas of knowledge; by integrating reading and writing into everyday activities; and offering opportunities to play in ways that build vocabulary and other language skills.<sup>5</sup>

Literacy development in the elementary grades can be enhanced through the prioritization of literacy development, varied strategies and materials to meet diverse student needs, high-quality teacher training, small classes, and parent involvement.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

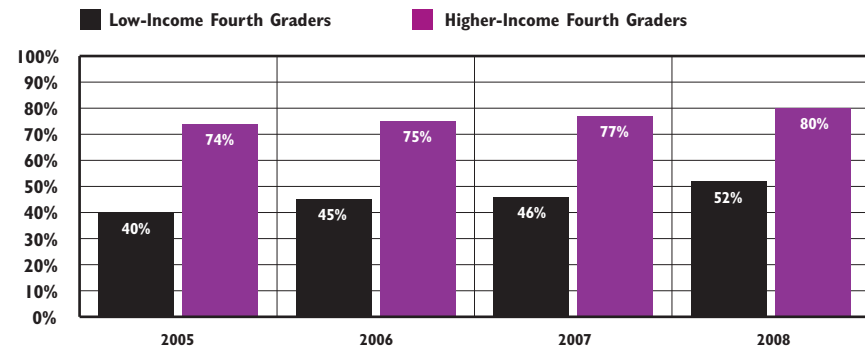
4th Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	1998	2007
RI	31%	31%
US	28%	32%
National Rank*		32nd
New England Rank**		6th

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center. (n.d.). *4th graders who scored at or above proficient reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2007*. Retrieved on February 17, 2009 from [www.kidscount.org/datacenter](http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter)

**Fourth-Grade NECAP Reading Proficiency Rates, by Income Status, Rhode Island, 2005-2008**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) Results, 2005-2008. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

- ◆ In October 2008, 68% of Rhode Island fourth graders scored at or above proficiency for reading on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), up from 60% in 2005.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ In Rhode Island between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of higher-income fourth graders achieving at or above the proficient level on the NECAP was consistently higher than that of low-income fourth graders. In 2008, 52% of low-income fourth graders scored at or above the proficient level, up from 40% in 2005. Eighty percent of higher-income fourth graders score at or above the proficient level in 2008, compared with 74% in 2005.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Students receiving special education services are much less likely to be proficient in reading than students in regular education and have seen some of the smallest improvements of any student group since the first NECAP tests were administered in 2005.<sup>10</sup> In Rhode Island in 2008, 33% of fourth graders with disabilities achieved proficiency, up from 26% in 2005. Seventy-five percent of non-disabled fourth graders were proficient in reading in 2005, compared with 68% in 2005.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Seventy-six percent of White fourth graders were proficient on the October 2008 NECAP, compared with 70% of Asian students, 54% of Black students, 47% of Hispanic students and 44% of Native American students.<sup>12</sup>

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Table 39.

Fourth-Grade Reading Proficiency, Rhode Island, 2005 & 2008

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			OCTOBER 2005		OCTOBER 2008	
	% ADULTS COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL	% CHILDREN AGES 5-17 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%	3%	1%	248	89%	232	90%
Bristol-Warren	75%	7%	4%	268	69%	220	78%
Burrillville	80%	9%	0%	164	63%	166	72%
Central Falls	49%	36%	22%	253	40%	214	48%
Chariho	88%	5%	0%	269	73%	276	73%
Coventry	83%	6%	0%	405	68%	361	75%
Cranston	79%	12%	5%	801	71%	711	80%
Cumberland	81%	6%	2%	410	74%	368	75%
East Greenwich	93%	4%	1%	201	86%	139	85%
East Providence	71%	12%	3%	415	59%	329	73%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	89%	5%	1%	162	74%	140	75%
Foster	88%	7%	0%	66	68%	36	86%
Glocester	87%	9%	0%	124	77%	95	77%
Jamestown	93%	4%	1%	42	83%	56	80%
Johnston	78%	11%	2%	276	58%	214	66%
Lincoln	82%	7%	1%	267	72%	229	77%
Little Compton	91%	7%	0%	37	73%	45	76%
Middletown	91%	6%	3%	195	68%	185	70%
Narragansett	91%	7%	0%	122	81%	85	86%
New Shoreham	95%	9%	4%	14	100%	11	91%
Newport	87%	16%	3%	178	46%	117	53%
North Kingstown	92%	7%	1%	337	79%	283	75%
North Providence	77%	11%	2%	250	64%	192	73%
North Smithfield	82%	5%	1%	128	77%	134	85%
Pawtucket	66%	22%	10%	703	48%	630	58%
Portsmouth	91%	4%	0%	236	75%	200	75%
Providence	66%	34%	15%	1,887	31%	1,477	47%
Scituate	87%	6%	0%	141	72%	121	79%
Smithfield	85%	5%	1%	219	79%	176	84%
South Kingstown	91%	5%	1%	249	76%	245	75%
Tiverton	80%	6%	0%	154	77%	129	74%
Warwick	85%	7%	1%	853	71%	719	75%
West Warwick	76%	13%	2%	295	55%	232	69%
Westerly	82%	7%	2%	255	69%	217	70%
Woonsocket	64%	25%	4%	489	46%	402	53%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>64%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>3,805</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>3,072</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>7,467</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>6,314</i>	<i>76%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>11,272</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>9,609</i>	<i>68%</i>

## 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 (RIDE), *Fourth Grade Reading Skills* cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2007.

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP), October 2005 and 2008.

% at or above the proficiency level are the fourth grade students who received proficient or proficient with distinction scores on the reading section of the NECAP. Only students who actually took the test are counted in the denominator for district and school proficiency rates. All enrolled students are eligible unless their IEP specifically exempts them or unless they are beginning English Language Learners.

The % of adults completing high school or higher is from Census 2000. The % of children in poverty is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 2007. The % of English Language Learners is from RIDE 2007-2008 school year.

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

Independent charter schools included in this indicator are the Compass School, 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.

See the Methodology section for more information.

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Reading proficiency*. (n.d.). Retrieved from the Child Trends Data Bank on February 13, 2008 from [www.childtrendsdatabank.org](http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org)

<sup>2</sup> 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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