

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.

SIGNIFICANCE

Reading proficiency is fundamental to the development of academic competencies and basic life skills. Students with poor reading skills often experience difficulty completing academic coursework, graduating from high school and 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 who are read to daily.² Literacy-rich home environments (including reading and telling stories to children) contribute to literacy development and reading achievement.^{3,4} Participation in high-quality preschools also can boost language and literacy skills by providing early literacy experiences including storybook reading, discussions about books, dramatic play, listening comprehension and writing activities.⁵

When students continue to have difficulty reading beyond third grade,

they often face difficulty catching up.⁶

Research has demonstrated that reading comprehension is strongly linked to vocabulary knowledge. Beginning readers with large vocabularies can understand the main ideas in reading material, and because they understand, can learn new vocabulary from the context. Beginning readers with smaller vocabulary knowledge often struggle to understand reading material, cannot learn the meaning of new vocabulary from the context, and fall further behind.⁷

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.⁸

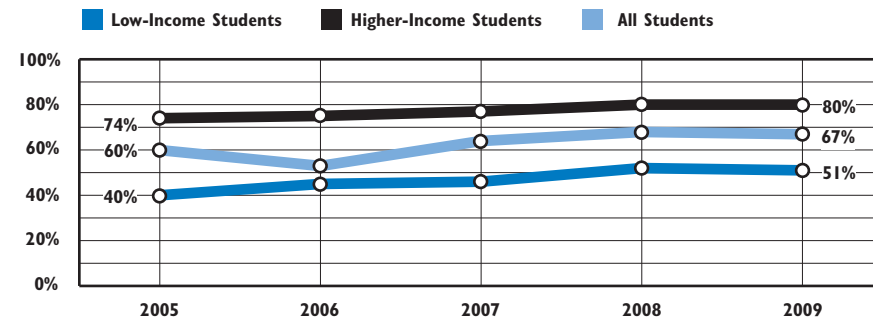
4th Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	1998	2009
RI	31%	36%
US	28%	32%
National Rank*		22nd
New England Rank**		6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *National Assessment of Educational Progress state profiles: Grade 8, reading 2009*. Retrieved on March 25, 2010 from www.nces.ed.gov

Fourth-Grade NECAP Reading Proficiency Rates, by Income Status, Rhode Island, 2005-2009



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP), October 2005 - October 2009. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

◆ In October 2009, 67% of Rhode Island fourth graders scored at or above proficiency for reading on the *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP), up from 60% in 2005.⁹

◆ In Rhode Island between 2005 and 2009, 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 2009, 51% of low-income fourth graders scored at or above the proficient level, compared with 80% of higher-income fourth graders.¹⁰

◆ In Rhode Island in 2009, 25% of fourth graders with disabilities achieved reading proficiency on the NECAP, compared with 74% of non-disabled fourth graders.¹¹

◆ National data indicate a significant gap between the reading skills of English Language Learners and their native English-speaking peers.¹² On the October 2009 NECAP, 22% of Rhode Island's fourth grade English Language Learners were proficient in reading.¹³

◆ Seventy-five percent of White fourth graders in Rhode Island were proficient in reading on the October 2009 NECAP, compared with 73% of Asian students, 49% of Black students, 47% of Hispanic students, and 43% of Native American students.¹⁴

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Table 43.

Fourth-Grade Reading Proficiency, Rhode Island, 2005 & 2009

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			OCTOBER 2005		OCTOBER 2009	
	% ADULTS COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL	% LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	% 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%	4%	1%	248	89%	285	92%
Bristol Warren	75%	31%	3%	268	69%	238	74%
Burrillville	80%	29%	0%	164	63%	187	61%
Central Falls	49%	76%	21%	253	40%	214	52%
Chariho	88%	20%	1%	269	73%	244	85%
Coventry	83%	22%	0%	405	68%	399	80%
Cranston	79%	32%	5%	801	71%	743	75%
Cumberland	81%	20%	2%	410	74%	309	71%
East Greenwich	93%	7%	1%	201	86%	182	85%
East Providence	71%	41%	4%	415	59%	411	64%
Exeter-West Greenwich	89%	13%	1%	162	74%	131	77%
Foster	88%	6%	0%	66	68%	45	78%
Glocester	87%	18%	0%	124	77%	102	82%
Jamestown	93%	5%	1%	42	83%	53	77%
Johnston	78%	37%	3%	276	58%	195	71%
Lincoln	82%	22%	1%	267	72%	216	76%
Little Compton	91%	3%	0%	37	73%	34	79%
Middletown	91%	26%	3%	195	68%	165	67%
Narragansett	91%	14%	0%	122	81%	110	77%
New Shoreham	95%	12%	3%	14	100%	6	NA
Newport	87%	57%	3%	178	46%	168	53%
North Kingstown	92%	18%	1%	337	79%	288	79%
North Providence	77%	27%	2%	250	64%	213	69%
North Smithfield	82%	13%	1%	128	77%	112	88%
Pawtucket	66%	75%	11%	703	48%	614	56%
Portsmouth	91%	11%	0%	236	75%	189	80%
Providence	66%	85%	15%	1,887	31%	1,634	44%
Scituate	87%	12%	0%	141	72%	127	86%
Smithfield	85%	14%	0%	219	79%	171	83%
South Kingstown	91%	16%	1%	249	76%	241	81%
Tiverton	80%	21%	0%	154	77%	151	75%
Warwick	85%	29%	1%	853	71%	718	76%
West Warwick	76%	45%	1%	295	55%	273	60%
Westerly	82%	31%	2%	255	69%	215	75%
Woonsocket	64%	68%	4%	489	46%	384	54%
Charter Schools	NA	61%	13%	159	43%	233	58%
Core Cities	67%	76%	12%	3,805	39%	3,287	50%
Remainder of State	83%	23%	2%	7,467	72%	6,480	76%
Rhode Island	78%	42%	5%	11,272	60%	10,000	67%

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 and October 2009.

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.

% 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 the 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 English Language Learners and the % of low-income students is from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program on October 1, 2009.

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

¹ *Reading proficiency*. (n.d.). Retrieved from the Child Trends Data Bank on February 8, 2010 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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