

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.

SIGNIFICANCE

Strong reading skills are essential for a student's academic success in high school and college. Reading skills are also a powerful indicator of a student's ability to contribute to and succeed in the workforce and their community.¹ Literacy demands intensify dramatically upon entry into high school as students are expected to comprehend, synthesize and analyze increasingly complex texts across academic disciplines. Advanced literacy skills diverge from elementary literacy skills as early as 4th grade, along with the instructional needs associated with building these skills.^{2,3}

Reading difficulties can persist over time with long-term consequences for youth.⁴ Problems faced by struggling readers are exacerbated when they are English Language Learners, recent immigrants or have learning disabilities.⁵ Adolescents who are poor readers have difficulty succeeding in other core subjects and are more likely to drop out than their peers.⁶

At-risk adolescent students rarely receive intensive reading instruction.⁷

When literacy-specific instruction is used as remedial support for struggling adolescent students, the programs typically serve only a small proportion of students who need assistance.⁸ Additionally, these supplementary programs are generally insufficient for dealing with the pervasive low levels of adolescent literacy in many schools and communities.⁹

Integrating literacy strategies with traditional content-area instruction, and providing intervention support for struggling readers are key to improving adolescent literacy among all students.¹⁰ Schools with successful adolescent literacy programs have strong leadership, incorporate interdisciplinary teaching teams, target professional development, implement comprehensive literacy instruction strategies, and use student assessments effectively.^{11,12}

8th Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	1998	2009
RI	32%	28%
US	30%	30%
National Rank*		37th
New England Rank**		6th

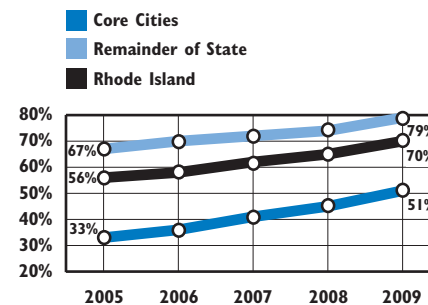
*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

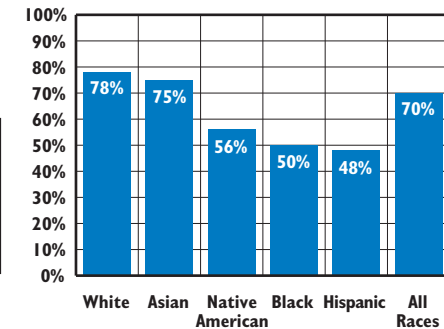
Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *National Assessment of Educational Progress state profiles: Grade 8, reading 2009*. Retrieved on March 25, 2010 from www.nces.ed.gov

Rhode Island Public School 8th Grade NECAP Reading Proficiency

By District Type, 2005-2009



By Race/Ethnicity, 2009



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP), October 2005 - October 2009.

- ◆ In October 2009, 70% of Rhode Island eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency in reading, an increase from 56% in 2005. Proficiency levels increased between 2005 and 2009 for students across the state. The greatest gains were made in the core cities, where 8th grade reading proficiency rates increased from 33% to 51% between 2005 and 2009.¹³
- ◆ Sixteen percent of eighth-grade English Language Learners in Rhode Island scored at or above proficiency in reading in 2009.¹⁴
- ◆ Black, Hispanic and Native American students scored significantly lower than their White and Asian counterparts in Rhode Island.¹⁵
- ◆ Fifty-three percent of low-income eighth-grade students (determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program) were proficient in reading in 2009, compared with 82% of higher-income eighth graders.¹⁶
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2009, 29% of eighth-grade students receiving special education services were proficient in reading, compared with 79% of eighth graders in regular education programs.¹⁷

Table 44.

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

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			OCTOBER 2005		OCTOBER 2009	
	% ADULTS COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL	% LOW-INCOME CHILDREN	% 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
Barrington	92%	4%	1%	275	92%	269	92%
Bristol Warren	75%	31%	3%	291	63%	272	78%
Burrillville	80%	29%	0%	230	67%	179	61%
Central Falls	49%	76%	21%	279	27%	233	43%
Chariho	88%	20%	1%	302	58%	283	84%
Coventry	83%	22%	0%	479	66%	414	80%
Cranston	79%	32%	5%	926	57%	856	78%
Cumberland	81%	20%	2%	409	72%	372	82%
East Greenwich	93%	7%	1%	214	87%	206	94%
East Providence	71%	41%	4%	499	57%	416	65%
Exeter-West Greenwich	89%	13%	1%	161	72%	164	80%
Foster-Glocester	87%	14%	0%	217	57%	190	82%
Jamestown	93%	5%	1%	74	86%	51	90%
Johnston	78%	37%	3%	288	58%	285	71%
Lincoln	82%	22%	1%	261	74%	304	83%
Little Compton	91%	3%	0%	41	83%	33	94%
Middletown	90%	26%	3%	185	64%	187	74%
Narragansett	91%	14%	0%	123	81%	125	88%
New Shoreham	95%	12%	3%	9	NA	12	100%
Newport	87%	57%	3%	177	50%	146	76%
North Kingstown	92%	18%	1%	349	73%	337	84%
North Providence	77%	27%	2%	307	70%	280	65%
North Smithfield	82%	13%	1%	161	72%	140	87%
Pawtucket	66%	75%	11%	795	44%	706	55%
Portsmouth	91%	11%	0%	223	81%	238	84%
Providence	66%	85%	15%	1,935	25%	1,615	45%
Scituate	87%	12%	0%	156	89%	147	91%
Smithfield	85%	14%	0%	227	78%	235	85%
South Kingstown	91%	16%	1%	348	76%	274	89%
Tiverton	80%	21%	0%	203	67%	150	75%
Warwick	85%	29%	1%	955	59%	859	76%
West Warwick	76%	45%	1%	319	56%	255	71%
Westerly	82%	31%	2%	266	59%	240	73%
Woonsocket	64%	68%	4%	494	28%	423	51%
Charter Schools	NA	61%	13%	22	55%	94	62%
Urban Collaborative	NA	86%	NA	67	6%	60	48%
Core Cities	67%	76%	12%	3,999	33%	3,378	51%
Remainder of State	83%	23%	2%	8,179	67%	7,534	79%
Rhode Island	78%	42%	5%	12,270	56%	11,066	70%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)*, October 2005 and October 2009..

% at or above the proficiency level are the eighth 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 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.

% of adults completing high school or higher data are from Census 2000. % low-income children are the percentage of students eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program in October 2009, from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008-2009 school year. % English Language Learners data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008-2009 school year.

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

NECAP data for independent charter schools include: Highlander Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School and Compass Charter School. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program. Core city and remainder of state calculations do not include charter schools or UCAP.

See the Methodology section for more information.

References

- ^{1,6,8} Ayers, J. & Miller, M. (2009). *Informing Adolescent Literacy Policy and Practice: Lessons learned from the Striving Readers Program*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- ^{2,11} Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to Act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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