

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 2008. The NECAP test measures reading, writing and math skills. Proficiency rates from the reading sub-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 materials presented in different ways and convey that meaning to others.¹ Challenges in reading increase for older students because literacy demands intensify in tandem with content demands.² Instructional needs for struggling readers in fourth and fifth grade have more in common with strategies for students in middle and high school than they do with students in the early elementary grades.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 Many schools that institute programs to support struggling adolescent readers serve only a small proportion of students who need assistance through special education programs.⁸

Adolescent literacy can be improved by providing direct and explicit instruction for vocabulary and comprehension strategies and making available intensive, individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists.⁹ 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.¹⁰

| 8th Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| | 1998 | 2007 |
| RI | 32% | 27% |
| US | 30% | 29% |
| National Rank* | | 35th |
| New England Rank** | | 6th |

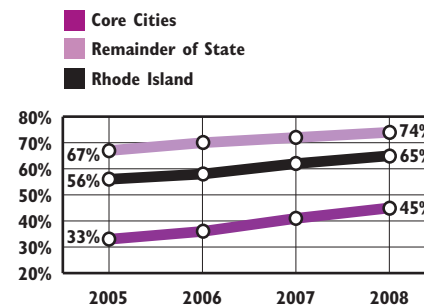
*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

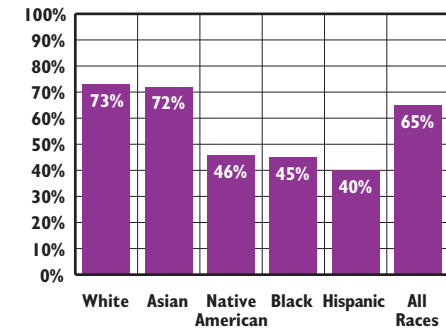
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center. (n.d.). *8th graders who scored at or above proficient reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*, 1998 and 2007. Retrieved on February 18, 2009 from www.kidscount.org/datacenter

Rhode Island Public School 8th-Grade NECAP Reading Proficiency

By District Type, 2005-2008



By Race/Ethnicity, 2008



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP), 2005 – 2008.

◆ In October 2008, 65% of Rhode Island eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency in reading, an increase from 56% in 2005. Proficiency levels increased between 2005 and 2008 for students across the state. The greatest gains have been seen in the core cities, with proficiency rates increasing from 33% to 45% between 2005 and 2008.^{11,12}

◆ Black, Hispanic and Native American students scored significantly lower than their White and Asian counterparts in Rhode Island. Fewer than 1% of eighth-grade English Language Learners in Rhode Island scored at or above proficiency in reading in 2008.¹³

◆ Forty-six percent of low-income eighth-grade students (determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program) were proficient in reading in 2008, up from 33% in 2005. Seventy-six percent of higher-income eighth graders were proficient in reading in 2008, compared with 68% in 2005.¹⁴

◆ In Rhode Island in 2008, 25% of eighth-grade students receiving special education services were proficient in reading, up from 21% in 2005. Seventy-four percent of eighth graders in regular education programs were proficient in reading in 2008, compared with 63% in 2005.¹⁵

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Table 40.

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

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | COMMUNITY CONTEXT | | | OCTOBER 2005 | | OCTOBER 2008 | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | % 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 |
| Barrington | 92% | 3% | 1% | 275 | 92% | 265 | 94% |
| Bristol Warren | 75% | 7% | 4% | 291 | 63% | 257 | 76% |
| Burrillville | 80% | 9% | 0% | 230 | 67% | 177 | 64% |
| Central Falls | 49% | 36% | 22% | 279 | 27% | 268 | 34% |
| Chariho | 88% | 5% | 0% | 302 | 58% | 282 | 85% |
| Coventry | 83% | 6% | 0% | 479 | 66% | 435 | 80% |
| Cranston | 79% | 12% | 5% | 926 | 57% | 838 | 68% |
| Cumberland | 81% | 6% | 2% | 409 | 72% | 412 | 71% |
| East Greenwich | 93% | 4% | 1% | 214 | 87% | 197 | 86% |
| East Providence | 71% | 12% | 3% | 499 | 57% | 430 | 65% |
| Exeter-W. Greenwich | 89% | 5% | 1% | 161 | 72% | 160 | 78% |
| Foster-Glocester | 87% | 6% | 0% | 217 | 57% | 202 | 67% |
| Jamestown | 93% | 4% | 1% | 74 | 86% | 61 | 87% |
| Johnston | 78% | 11% | 2% | 288 | 58% | 290 | 66% |
| Lincoln | 82% | 7% | 1% | 261 | 74% | 270 | 79% |
| Little Compton | 91% | 7% | 0% | 41 | 83% | 32 | 75% |
| Middletown | 90% | 6% | 3% | 185 | 64% | 194 | 80% |
| Narragansett | 91% | 7% | 0% | 123 | 81% | 126 | 87% |
| New Shoreham | 95% | 9% | 4% | 9 | NA | 9 | NA |
| Newport | 87% | 16% | 3% | 177 | 50% | 178 | 69% |
| North Kingstown | 92% | 7% | 1% | 349 | 73% | 359 | 73% |
| North Providence | 77% | 11% | 2% | 307 | 70% | 250 | 66% |
| North Smithfield | 82% | 5% | 1% | 161 | 72% | 161 | 58% |
| Pawtucket | 66% | 22% | 10% | 795 | 44% | 698 | 52% |
| Portsmouth | 91% | 4% | 0% | 223 | 81% | 215 | 80% |
| Providence | 66% | 34% | 15% | 1,935 | 25% | 1,636 | 41% |
| Scituate | 87% | 6% | 0% | 156 | 89% | 151 | 87% |
| Smithfield | 85% | 5% | 1% | 227 | 78% | 195 | 81% |
| South Kingstown | 91% | 5% | 1% | 348 | 76% | 288 | 82% |
| Tiverton | 80% | 6% | 0% | 203 | 67% | 163 | 68% |
| Warwick | 85% | 7% | 1% | 955 | 59% | 881 | 71% |
| West Warwick | 76% | 13% | 2% | 319 | 56% | 261 | 59% |
| Westerly | 82% | 7% | 2% | 266 | 59% | 279 | 79% |
| Woonsocket | 64% | 25% | 4% | 494 | 28% | 414 | 43% |
| Charter Schools | NA | NA | 15% | 22 | 55% | 94 | 48% |
| UCAP | NA | NA | NA | 67 | 6% | 82 | 43% |
| Core Cities | 67% | 28% | 12% | 3,999 | 33% | 3,455 | 45% |
| Remainder of State | 83% | 8% | 2% | 8,179 | 67% | 7,581 | 74% |
| Rhode Island | 78% | 15% | 5% | 12,270 | 56% | 11,212 | 65% |

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 & 2008.

% 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. % children in poverty data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 2007. % English Language Learners is from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 school year.

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 Highlander Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School and Compass Charter School. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

See the Methodology section for more information.

References

- 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.
- Snow, C. E. & Biancarosa, G. (2003). *Adolescent literacy and the achievement gap: What do we know and where do we go from here?* New York: Carnegie Corporation.

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