

Eighth-Grade Reading Skills

DEFINITION

Eighth-grade reading skills is the percentage of eighth-grade students who met expectations for reading in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* test.

SIGNIFICANCE

Strong reading skills are essential for a student's academic success.¹ Reading skills also are a powerful indicator of a student's ability to contribute to, participate in, and succeed in the workforce and the community.² Literacy demands change and intensify quickly in grades four through 12, as students are expected to comprehend, synthesize, and analyze increasingly complex texts across academic disciplines. Even after mastering basic literacy skills, adolescents need ongoing support and instruction to develop advanced literacy skills required to succeed in middle and high school, such as applying critical thinking skills and drawing conclusions based on evidence.³

Reading difficulties can persist over time with long-term consequences for youth. Adolescents who struggle to read are more likely to drop out of high school, to have lower wages, and to rely on public assistance than their peers with higher levels of literacy.⁴ These problems are exacerbated for Multilingual Learners/English Learners

and low-income students, who are more likely to have low English literacy skills.⁵

Nationally, there has been limited progress in improving literacy skills among middle school students.⁶ Students who are struggling with reading may have distinct difficulties and require different interventions to address them.⁷ Pervasive low levels of adolescent literacy are best addressed in the classroom through instructional changes, and not through supplementary programs.⁸

Intensive individualized instruction can help improve adolescent literacy among struggling readers.⁹ Successful adolescent literacy programs include ongoing teacher support and training in literacy strategy, incorporating culturally relevant literacy instruction in content area classes, explicit instruction in reading comprehension, collaborative learning, and using student assessments effectively.^{10,11}

8th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2011	2022
RI	33%	31%
US	32%	29%
National Rank*	28th	16th
New England Rank**	6th	5th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

The *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* measures proficiency nationally and across states every other year for grades four and eight.



Eighth Graders Meeting Expectations on the RICAS English Language Arts Assessment, Rhode Island, 2022

SUBGROUP	2022
Female Students	35%
Male Students	23%
*Multilingual Learners	<5%
Non-English Learners	33%
*Students Receiving Special Education Services	<5%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	33%
Low-Income Students	14%
Higher-Income Students	41%
Asian Students ⁺	43%
Black Students	15%
Hispanic Students	16%
Native American Students	7%
White Students	38%
Homeless Students	16%
Students in Foster Care	8%
ALL STUDENTS	29%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2021-2022. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program. *Data is reported as <5% when greater than 95% of students do not meet expectations. +Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2022, 14% of low-income eighth graders met expectations in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, compared with 41% of higher-income eighth graders. There were also large disparities by race and ethnicity.¹²

◆ Less than 5% of Multilingual Learners and students receiving special education services met expectations in English language arts.¹³

◆ In 2022, 8% of eighth graders who were in foster care met expectations in English language arts compared to 29% of students who were not in foster care. Sixteen percent of students identified as homeless met expectations in English language arts.¹⁴

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Table 47.

Eighth-Grade Reading Skills, Rhode Island, 2021 & 2022

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# EIGHTH GRADERS TESTED 2022	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS IN 2021	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS IN 2022
Barrington	275	70%	71%
Bristol Warren	233	34%	43%
Burrillville	166	26%	24%
Central Falls	197	6%	5%
Chariho	245	36%	34%
Coventry	315	33%	25%
Cranston	809	28%	30%
Cumberland	337	49%	49%
East Greenwich	184	50%	71%
East Providence	377	20%	20%
Exeter-West Greenwich	120	41%	45%
Foster-Glocester	149	33%	40%
Jamestown	47	59%	51%
Johnston	250	24%	34%
Lincoln	255	40%	49%
Little Compton	23	52%	57%
Middletown	131	23%	39%
Narragansett	78	32%	40%
New Shoreham	10	*	20%
Newport	125	17%	15%
North Kingstown	271	51%	51%
North Providence	274	41%	43%
North Smithfield	131	56%	52%
Pawtucket	688	13%	17%
Portsmouth	171	43%	46%
Providence	1,705	12%	13%
Scituate	84	46%	42%
Smithfield	187	40%	36%
South Kingstown	190	48%	40%
Tiverton	128	45%	23%
Warwick	651	21%	21%
West Warwick	249	14%	17%
Westerly	188	34%	51%
Woonsocket	364	13%	12%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	659	24%	19%
<i>Urban Collaborative</i>	77	5%	<5%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,954	12%	13%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	6,584	37%	37%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,274	29%	29%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years and are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2018, Eighth-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2018.

% meeting expectations are the eighth-grade students who met or exceeded expectations for their grade on the English language arts section of the *RICAS*. Only students who actually took the test are counted in the denominator for the district and school proficiency rates. Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may participate in alternate assessments. Multilingual Learners/English Learners in the U.S. for less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

2022 *RICAS* data for independent charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter School for the Arts, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, The Learning Community, Segue Institute for Learning, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. Charter schools included in total differ by year, depending on the schools serving that grade level on the year of the test. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program. Four core cities and remainder of state calculations do not include charter schools or UCAP.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Data is not reported for DCYF schools or The Rhode Island School for the Deaf because the number of students tested was less than 10. These students are still counted in the remainder of the state and state totals.

*Data was not reported for New Shoreham in 2021 because the number of students tested was less than 10. These students are still counted in the remainder of the state and state totals.

See Methodology Section for more information.

(References are on page 189)