

College Preparation and Access

DEFINITION

College preparation and access is the percentage of Rhode Island high school seniors who graduate and go on to college (i.e., enroll in a two-year or four-year college) immediately or within six months of graduation.

SIGNIFICANCE

By 2020, 71% of jobs in Rhode Island will require post-secondary education beyond high school.¹ Between 2011 and 2013 in Rhode Island, adults with high school diplomas were almost three times more likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or higher.² During that same period, the median annual income for adults with high school diplomas was \$30,298, compared to \$52,184 for adults with bachelor's degrees.³

During the 2013-2014 school year, 87% of Rhode Island high school seniors reported planning to attend a two- or four-year college.⁴ However, many students, and low-income students in particular, face barriers, including insufficient academic preparation, difficulty navigating the application and financial aid process, and the high cost of college.⁵

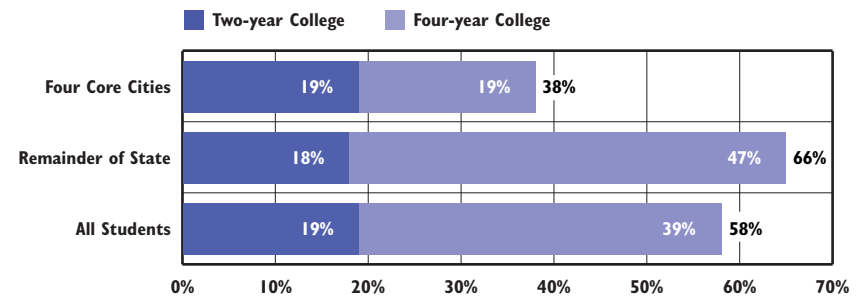
Many students arrive at college unprepared for the work. In 2014, 58% of Rhode Island public school seniors

took the SATs. Average scores were 483 in critical reading, 484 in math, and 471 in writing.⁶ Students with scores of 500 or better in each section are more likely to enroll in and succeed in college.⁷ Students who participate in upper-level honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses are likely to attend and succeed in college.⁸ Among Rhode Island's 2013 high school graduates, 26% took at least one AP exam, compared with 33% nationally.⁹

Students need information, support, and encouragement to plan, prepare for, and attend college. Without support, low-income and first-generation college students are particularly likely to “undermatch” (enroll in a college for which they are academically overqualified) or not enroll at all.¹⁰ Seniors who have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by May and been accepted to a four-year college are 50% more likely to enroll than students who have not completed their FAFSA.¹¹

Many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree. Low-income students, minority students, and first-generation students are less likely to enroll in and complete college. Academic, financial, and social supports can increase college enrollment and completion rates, especially among these groups.^{12,13,14}

Immediate College Enrollment by District Type and Type of College, Class of 2012, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2012. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

◆ Fifty-eight percent of Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in the Class of 2012 immediately enrolled in college. However, there are large gaps in college access between students who graduate from high schools in the four core cities and the remainder of the state. Among Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in 2012, 19% of students from the four core cities immediately enrolled in a four-year college, compared to 47% of students from the remainder of the state.¹⁵

◆ Low-income and first-generation college students are more likely to go to college when they attend high schools with strong college-going cultures, in which teachers encourage students to attend college, help them with the application process, and make sure that students are academically prepared. High schools that offer rigorous coursework, set high expectations for students, offer dual enrollment in college classes, and increase access to financial aid counseling can improve their students' enrollment and completion rates.^{16,17,18}

◆ Improving college access and success will require improvements at all points in the early education to college education system, including increasing access to high-quality preschool, implementing research-driven dropout prevention programs, aligning the K-12 education system with college and career expectations, simplifying the college admission process, keeping college affordable, and providing student support programs that increase college completion rates.¹⁹ State policies that reward colleges for meeting performance goals, transform remediation practices, encourage full-time college attendance, help students balance work and school, and support on-time graduation could further increase college completion rates.²⁰

Table 54.

College Preparation and Access, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL 12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT OCT. 2014	% OF 11TH GRADERS PROFICIENT IN READING, 2013	% OF 11TH GRADERS PROFICIENT IN MATH, 2013	% OF 12TH GRADERS WHO PLANNED TO ATTEND COLLEGE, 2013	4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE, 2014	% OF 12TH GRADERS WHO FILLED OUT THE FAFSA, 2014	% OF 12TH GRADERS TAKING THE SATS, 2014
Barrington	299	97%	78%	93%	94%	58%	78%
Bristol Warren	226	95%	41%	85%	87%	66%	65%
Burrillville	190	86%	41%	84%	74%	38%	35%
Central Falls	226	53%	13%	89%	71%	34%	31%
Charlho	298	93%	50%	83%	92%	51%	54%
Coventry	399	93%	36%	87%	85%	56%	63%
Cranston	838	85%	28%	90%	85%	59%	55%
Cumberland	355	89%	46%	86%	87%	54%	61%
East Greenwich	202	95%	70%	96%	96%	55%	77%
East Providence	381	80%	30%	88%	77%	45%	45%
Exeter-West Greenwich	140	88%	58%	90%	90%	65%	79%
Foster-Glocester	161	90%	53%	85%	94%	78%	75%
Johnston	206	81%	23%	88%	88%	48%	56%
Lincoln	262	93%	52%	90%	89%	65%	68%
Middletown	173	90%	59%	91%	85%	55%	65%
Narragansett	125	96%	66%	NA	86%	52%	70%
New Shoreham	13	100%	64%	NA	NA	NA	46%
Newport	122	78%	24%	82%	70%	55%	55%
North Kingstown	360	93%	58%	88%	87%	66%	75%
North Providence	252	90%	38%	90%	88%	54%	46%
North Smithfield	143	96%	52%	85%	90%	43%	51%
Pawtucket	503	70%	18%	88%	80%	51%	57%
Portsmouth	233	93%	63%	92%	96%	71%	81%
Providence	1,435	61%	14%	88%	71%	66%	69%
Scituate	116	94%	55%	87%	91%	67%	67%
Smithfield	167	91%	47%	89%	88%	84%	97%
South Kingstown	261	88%	59%	90%	91%	59%	71%
Tiverton	133	88%	27%	80%	91%	54%	58%
Warwick	718	86%	33%	84%	79%	36%	48%
West Warwick	202	80%	31%	79%	81%	66%	61%
Westerly	271	91%	54%	83%	85%	44%	45%
Woonsocket	394	70%	20%	80%	58%	36%	33%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	53	96%	24%	88%	93%	72%	68%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	39	90%	35%	NA	83%	79%	100%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	61	67%	12%	NA	NA	67%	95%
<i>The Greene School</i>	30	88%	44%	79%	87%	67%	77%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	100	86%	23%	NA	NA	16%	47%
<i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	32	31%	1%	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	205	93%	35%	NA	81%	32%	24%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	17	NA	NA	NA	9%	NA	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	222	67%	16%	86%	87%	62%	10%
<i>RI School for the Deaf</i>	14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,558	63%	16%	87%	71%	56%	58%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,247	89%	45%	87%	86%	51%	61%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,578	82%	36%	87%	81%	51%	58%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

12th grade enrollment data (October 1, 2014), 11th grade *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* data, % of 12th graders taking the SATs, and high school graduation rates data are all from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

11th grade *NECAP* reading and math proficiency rates are the percentage of *NECAP* test-takers who scored at the "proficient" or "proficient with distinction" levels (levels three and four) on the October 2013 *NECAP*.

% of 12th graders who planned to attend college is from the 2013-2014 administration of *SurveyWorks!*, based on responses to the question, "What are you thinking about doing after finishing high school?" and includes students who responded that they planned to go to a community college, two-year college, or four-year college. See the Methodology Section for more information on *SurveyWorks!*

The high school graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer divided by the total number of students who started 9th grade in 2010-2011, adjusted for transfers in and transfers out.

% of 12th graders who filled out the FAFSA is from U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid. (2014). *FAFSA completion by high school*. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from studentaid.ed.gov

% of 12th graders taking the SATs is the number of students who took the SATs in 2014 divided by the 12th grade enrollment. This number likely includes some 11th graders who took the SATs that year and may not be consistent with the percentage of graduating seniors who took the SATs as reported by the College Board and reported in other places in this indicator.

NA indicates that data are not available either because data were not collected or reported or because the number of students was too small to report.

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

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth and students from Jamestown attend high school in North Kingstown. DCYF includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

References are on page 185.

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