

# 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 in high school and college.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Literacy demands intensify dramatically 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> These problems are exacerbated for Multilingual Learners/English Learners

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

Nationally, there has been limited progress in improving literacy skills among secondary students.<sup>6</sup> Students who are struggling with reading may have distinct difficulties and require different interventions to address them.<sup>7</sup> Many supplementary programs are generally insufficient for dealing with the pervasive low levels of adolescent literacy in many schools and communities.<sup>8</sup>

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

8th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2009	2019
RI	28%	35%
US	30%	32%
National Rank*	35th	15th
New England Rank**	6th	6th

\*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](http://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, 2021

SUBGROUP	2021
Female Students	36%
Male Students	22%
*Multilingual Learners/English Learners	<5%
Non-English Learners	32%
*Students Receiving Special Education Services	<5%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	33%
Low-Income Students	13%
Higher-Income Students	40%
Asian Students+	44%
Black Students	15%
Hispanic Students	14%
Native American Students	8%
White Students	38%
Homeless Students	11%
Students in Foster Care	11%
ALL STUDENTS	29%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2020-2021. 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 2021, 13% of low-income eighth graders met expectations in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, compared with 40% of higher-income eighth graders. There were also large disparities by race and ethnicity.<sup>12</sup>

◆ Less than 5% of Multilingual Learners/English Learners and students receiving special education services met expectations.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In 2021, 11% 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. Eleven percent of students identified as homeless met expectations in English language arts.<sup>14</sup>

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Table 48.

## Eighth-Grade Reading Skills, Rhode Island, 2019 & 2021

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# EIGHTH GRADERS TESTED 2021	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS IN 2019	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS IN 2021
Barrington	298	80%	70%
Bristol Warren	201	48%	34%
Burrillville	141	29%	26%
Central Falls	189	6%	6%
Chariho	229	60%	36%
Coventry	270	51%	33%
Cranston	584	37%	28%
Cumberland	367	60%	49%
East Greenwich	204	69%	50%
East Providence	309	23%	20%
Exeter-West Greenwich	94	74%	41%
Foster-Glocester	128	46%	33%
Jamestown	49	54%	59%
Johnston	181	43%	24%
Lincoln	212	30%	40%
Little Compton	25	37%	52%
Middletown	146	35%	23%
Narragansett	75	54%	32%
Newport	127	24%	17%
North Kingstown	269	54%	51%
North Providence	260	47%	41%
North Smithfield	143	61%	56%
Pawtucket	671	19%	13%
Portsmouth	164	62%	43%
Providence	1,452	15%	12%
Scituate	83	50%	46%
Smithfield	200	60%	40%
South Kingstown	180	61%	48%
Tiverton	137	37%	45%
Warwick	493	32%	21%
West Warwick	180	27%	14%
Westerly	193	39%	34%
Woonsocket	233	12%	13%
Charter Schools	546	34%	24%
Urban Collaborative	63	<5%	5%
Four Core Cities	2,545	15%	12%
Remainder of State	5,951	46%	37%
Rhode Island	9,105	36%	29%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS), 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 school years and are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

The RICAS was not administered in 2020 due to COVID-19.

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. In Rhode Island in 2021, 83% of students were tested. Response rates vary by district. Due to low participation rates, Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS), 2020-2021 reading scores cannot be compared to previous years.

% 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.

2021 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, New Shoreham, 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.

See Methodology Section for more information.

(References are on page 189)