

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 2010 and 2014 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 \$30,757, compared to \$52,493 for adults with bachelor's degrees.³

Many students, low-income students in particular, face barriers to college enrollment and success, such as insufficient academic preparation, difficulty navigating the application and financial aid processes, and the high cost of college. States can help address these barriers and improve college access by ensuring that all students have access to advanced coursework (including AP courses), take college entrance exams, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), get adequate counseling to

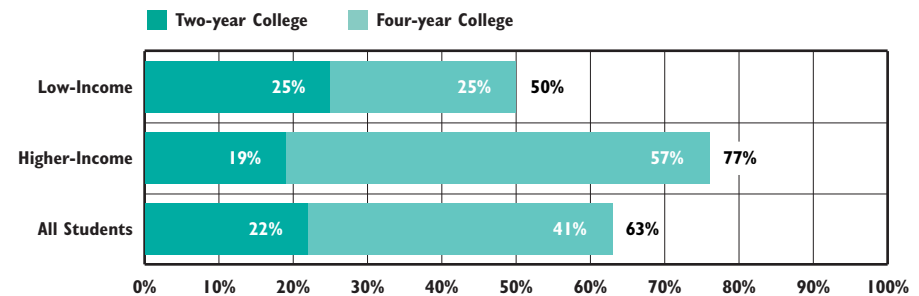
enroll in college and access financial aid, and that financial aid is targeted strategically to those students with the greatest needs.⁴

Students who participate in upper-level honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses are likely to attend and succeed in college.⁵ During the 2014-2015 school year, 4,675 Rhode Island public school students took an AP course exam, 7% more than the previous year.⁶

Among students in the Class of 2015, 59% took the SAT exam. Average SAT scores for Rhode Island public school students were 480 in critical reading, 481 in math, and 468 in writing.⁷ Students with scores of 500 or better in each section are more likely to enroll in and succeed in college.⁸

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.⁹ Among Rhode Island seniors due to graduate in 2015, 55% completed a FAFSA by June 2015.¹⁰

Immediate College Enrollment by District Type and Type of College, Class of 2014, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2014. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

◆ Sixty-three percent of Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in the Class of 2014 immediately enrolled in college. However, there are large gaps in college access, particularly four-year college enrollment, between low- and higher-income students. Among Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in 2014, 25% of low-income students immediately enrolled in a four-year college, compared to 57% of higher-income students.¹¹

◆ 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.^{12,13,14}

◆ Many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree. 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, making college affordable, and providing student support programs that increase college completion rates.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

Table 53.

College Preparation and Access, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL 12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT OCT. 2014	4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE, 2015	% OF 12TH GRADERS WHO FILLED OUT THE FAFSA, 2015	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN CRITICAL READING, 2015	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN MATH, 2015	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN WRITING, 2015	% OF 12TH GRADERS TAKING THE SATS, 2015
Barrington	299	95%	62%	573	588	562	87%
Bristol Warren	226	86%	58%	537	527	542	48%
Burrillville	190	89%	49%	494	503	483	49%
Central Falls	226	81%	45%	365	398	357	46%
Chariho	298	90%	56%	514	499	501	57%
Coventry	399	91%	56%	473	481	459	59%
Cranston	838	85%	51%	477	475	466	50%
Cumberland	355	88%	61%	496	508	482	76%
East Greenwich	202	94%	50%	568	572	556	79%
East Providence	381	82%	56%	468	468	446	52%
Exeter-West Greenwich	140	83%	51%	525	512	509	64%
Foster-Glocester	161	92%	61%	499	493	483	64%
Johnston	206	84%	49%	460	450	449	55%
Lincoln	262	93%	63%	521	527	508	69%
Middletown	173	82%	53%	509	531	494	65%
Narragansett	125	93%	66%	527	543	522	74%
New Shoreham	13	85%	54%	517	492	489	77%
Newport	122	79%	58%	468	460	460	65%
North Kingstown	360	89%	59%	543	540	525	70%
North Providence	252	95%	55%	468	460	463	55%
North Smithfield	143	89%	62%	523	539	511	69%
Pawtucket	503	81%	47%	405	406	395	61%
Portsmouth	233	96%	65%	536	538	526	74%
Providence	1,435	75%	60%	407	406	394	68%
Scituate	116	94%	63%	540	534	522	74%
Smithfield	167	96%	65%	494	504	480	69%
South Kingstown	261	88%	56%	551	572	543	70%
Tiverton	133	93%	58%	467	464	450	48%
Warwick	718	81%	49%	502	484	487	46%
West Warwick	202	85%	52%	473	458	464	54%
Westerly	271	91%	51%	502	517	487	56%
Woonsocket	394	63%	45%	449	448	431	38%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	53	91%	75%	459	426	454	66%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	39	83%	82%	408	430	409	97%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	61	94%	62%	380	394	375	84%
<i>Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	32	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>The Greene School</i>	30	76%	67%	550	478	515	77%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	100	NA	11%	408	388	406	47%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	205	87%	52%	443	455	426	47%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	17	10%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	222	90%	56%	463	443	435	5%
<i>RI School for the Deaf</i>	14	0%	NA	NA	NA	NA	7%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,558	75%	54%	NA	NA	NA	60%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,247	88%	56%	NA	NA	NA	61%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,578	83%	55%	480	481	468	59%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

12th grade enrollment data (October 1, 2014) and high school graduation rates are from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

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 2011-2012, 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. (2015). *FAFSA completion by high school*. Retrieved March 6, 2016, from studentaid.ed.gov.

SAT scores and number of students taking the SAT are from the College Board. % of 12th graders taking the SAT is calculated using data from the College Board in combination with 12th grade enrollment data from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

High school graduation rate and % of 12th graders taking the SAT include all district students, including students who are placed out of district, so district high school graduation rate and SAT participation data may differ from data reported by high school even in districts with only one high school.

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

- Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020 (State report)*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table S2301.
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table B20004.

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