

Third-Grade Reading Skills

DEFINITION

Third-grade reading skills is the percentage of third-grade students who met expectations in English language arts on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC) test.

SIGNIFICANCE

Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade, when children begin to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Students who do not read proficiently by then struggle in the later grades and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their proficient peers.¹

Literacy begins long before children encounter formal school instruction in writing and reading. Supportive, literacy-rich home learning environments (including reading and telling stories to children) and parents who provide early cognitive development activities contribute to advanced literacy development, reading achievement, and success in school.^{2,3}

High-quality preschool and pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) programs can boost language and literacy skills, and have the greatest impact on children living in or near poverty.⁴ Programs targeting the development of social-emotional and behavioral skills improve children's school readiness and academic

achievement. Children who participate in high-quality Pre-K programs score higher on future reading and math assessments, are more likely to become proficient readers in the primary grades, and have higher graduation rates.^{5,6}

Students that have the most difficulty reading beyond third grade often need intensive interventions in order to read proficiently. While interventions implemented before third grade have high rates of success, interventions after third grade are much less effective. Once they fall behind, most children never catch up to their grade-level peers.^{7,8}

Policymakers can increase third-grade reading proficiency by increasing access to high-quality early care and education programs (including Pre-K and full-day kindergarten), supporting programs that engage parents as partners in their children's early language and literacy development, and encouraging cross-agency partnerships.⁹

4th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2005	2015
RI	30%	40%
US	30%	35%
National Rank*		9th
New England Rank**		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 4 and 8.

Third Graders Meeting Expectations on the PARCC English Language Arts Assessment, by Student Subgroups, 2015

Male Students	33%
Female Students	43%
English Language Learners	8%
Non-English Language Learners	41%
Students With Disabilities	10%
Students Without Disabilities	42%
Low-Income Students	21%
Higher-Income Students	53%
White Students	48%
Asian Students	47%
Black Students	22%
Hispanic Students	18%
Native American Students	17%
ALL STUDENTS	37%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, 2015. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

◆ In 2015, 37% of Rhode Island third graders met expectations on the *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment.¹⁰

◆ In Rhode Island in 2015, 21% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 53% of higher-income third graders.¹¹

Statewide Assessments of Reading and English Language Arts

◆ The *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* was Rhode Island's statewide assessment system from 2005 to 2013. Starting in the 2014-2015 school year, Rhode Island began using a new statewide assessment, the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*.¹²

◆ The *PARCC* is aligned to the *Common Core State Standards* in English language arts/literacy and assesses students' ability to read and comprehend complex texts, use different sources to compare and synthesize ideas, and write effectively.^{13,14}

Third-Grade Reading Skills

Table 45. Third Graders Meeting Expectations in English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF THIRD GRADERS ENROLLED	# OF THIRD GRADERS TESTED	% OF THIRD GRADERS TESTED	# OF THIRD GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS	% OF THIRD GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	255	251	98%	158	63%
Bristol Warren	302	284	94%	123	43%
Burrillville	173	137	79%	44	32%
Central Falls	211	201	95%	26	13%
Chariho	232	224	97%	132	59%
Coventry	352	344	98%	158	46%
Cranston	811	776	96%	405	52%
Cumberland	328	317	97%	159	50%
East Greenwich	171	168	98%	96	57%
East Providence	407	387	95%	161	42%
Exeter-West Greenwich	110	93	85%	38	41%
Foster	43	42	98%	15	36%
Glocester	100	98	98%	46	47%
Jamestown	57	55	96%	33	60%
Johnston	245	238	97%	116	49%
Lincoln	214	206	96%	115	56%
Little Compton	25	22	88%	14	64%
Middletown	201	188	94%	87	46%
Narragansett	102	99	97%	60	61%
New Shoreham	6	4	67%	*	*
Newport	151	142	94%	52	37%
North Kingstown	285	270	95%	161	60%
North Providence	271	263	97%	72	27%
North Smithfield	116	107	92%	31	29%
Pawtucket	774	742	96%	166	22%
Portsmouth	162	150	93%	80	53%
Providence	1,977	1,888	95%	264	14%
Scituate	92	87	95%	43	49%
Smithfield	172	145	84%	64	44%
South Kingstown	241	233	97%	187	80%
Tiverton	145	118	81%	78	66%
Warwick	682	653	96%	243	37%
West Warwick	253	241	95%	55	23%
Westerly	224	210	94%	83	40%
Woonsocket	488	457	94%	109	24%
Charter Schools	418	413	99%	165	40%
Four Core Cities	3,450	3,288	95%	565	17%
Remainder of State	6,946	6,557	94%	3,110	47%
Rhode Island	10,814	10,258	95%	3,840	37%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, 2015.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2015, Third-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with prior Factbooks.

% meeting expectations are the third-grade students who met or exceeded expectations for their grade on the English language arts section of the *PARCC*. 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 instead. English Language Learners in the U.S. less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

2015 *PARCC* data for independent charter schools include Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, The Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, and The Learning Community. Charter schools included in total differ by year, depending on the schools serving that grade level on the year of the test. Charter schools are not included in the four core cities and remainder of state calculations.

* Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and four core cities, remainder of state, and state totals.

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

See Methodology Section for more information.

References

¹⁸ Hernandez, D. J. (2012). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

²⁶ Fiester, L. (2013). *Early warning confirmed: A research update on third-grade reading*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

(continued on page 184)