

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 2015 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 \$31,196, compared to \$51,769 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 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and dual and concurrent enrollment; take college entrance exams, such as the SATs; 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

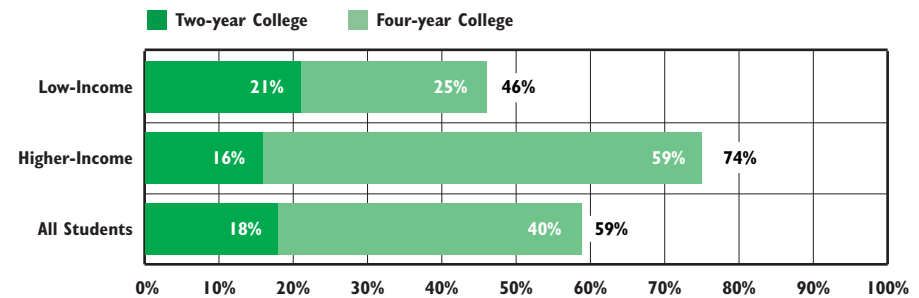
Students who participate in upper-level honors and AP courses are likely to attend and succeed in college.⁵ During the 2015-2016 school year, 5,066 Rhode Island public school students took an AP course, 8% more than the previous year.⁶

Dual and concurrent enrollment allows students to earn both high school and college credit, reduces the time and expenses required to earn a college degree, and increases high school and college achievement. During the 2015-2016 school year, 3,807 Rhode Island public high school students (9%) participated in dual or concurrent enrollment.⁷

In 2016, average SAT scores for Rhode Island public school students were 478 in critical reading, 478 in math, and 465 in writing.⁸ Students with scores of 500 or better in each section are more likely to enroll in and succeed in college.⁹

Seniors who have completed a 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.¹⁰ Across Rhode Island school districts, FAFSA completion rates range from a low of 35-40% to a high of 80% or greater.¹¹

Immediate College Enrollment by Family Income and Type of College, Class of 2015, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2015. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

- ◆ Fifty-nine percent of Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in the Class of 2015 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 2015, 25% of low-income students immediately enrolled in a four-year college, compared to 59% of higher-income students.¹²
- ◆ 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, set high expectations, make sure that students are academically prepared, and help them with the application and financial aid processes.¹³
- ◆ For states, improving college access 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, improving the quality of the K-12 education system, and aligning it with college and career expectations, simplifying the college admission process, and making college affordable.¹⁴
- ◆ While students from families in the top income quintile must pay or finance (even after grant aid) an amount equal to 17% of their family income to attend a four-year college, students from families in the lowest income quintile must pay or finance an amount equal to 76% of their families' annual income. Low-income students attend college at much lower rates, attend colleges of lower quality, and struggle to pay off the debt they accrue.¹⁵

Table 55.

College Preparation and Access, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL 12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT OCT. 2015	4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE, 2016	% OF 12TH GRADERS WHO FILLED OUT THE FAFSA, 2016	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN CRITICAL READING, 2016	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN MATH, 2016	AVERAGE SAT SCORE IN WRITING, 2016	# OF STUDENTS TAKING THE SATS, 2016
Barrington	225	95%	55-59%	586	596	572	185
Bristol Warren	230	90%	55-59%	529	534	537	119
Burrillville	174	82%	50-54%	485	497	474	82
Central Falls	183	72%	35-39%	344	370	326	101
Chariho	267	88%	50-54%	512	504	489	155
Coventry	386	93%	50-54%	493	485	479	215
Cranston	834	88%	60-64%	489	479	476	449
Cumberland	349	92%	60-64%	497	508	483	229
East Greenwich	211	96%	60-64%	552	582	559	169
East Providence	417	86%	50-54%	459	447	435	216
Exeter-West Greenwich	143	94%	60-64%	515	512	499	93
Foster-Glocester	186	90%	50-54%	505	503	473	105
Johnston	264	89%	60-64%	458	461	455	136
Lincoln	253	93%	55-59%	523	523	496	168
Middletown	149	86%	50-54%	510	528	502	107
Narragansett	102	89%	50-54%	513	509	494	68
Newport	142	85%	60-64%	448	445	431	97
North Kingstown	387	87%	70-74%	537	542	523	271
North Providence	279	93%	45-49%	470	466	462	126
North Smithfield	139	94%	60-64%	536	542	504	89
Pawtucket	573	85%	45-49%	412	409	399	290
Portsmouth	236	88%	55-59%	524	523	513	160
Providence	1,436	79%	55-59%	413	413	401	937
Scituate	133	94%	65-69%	507	517	513	95
Smithfield	189	93%	55-59%	488	501	483	138
South Kingstown	306	88%	65-69%	536	551	528	217
Tiverton	151	87%	50-54%	492	475	470	96
Warwick	734	87%	50-54%	491	478	480	357
West Warwick	219	87%	45-49%	466	470	444	115
Westerly	221	90%	55-59%	530	529	515	128
Woonsocket	382	70%	40-44%	453	453	441	122
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	58	96%	75-79%	494	459	468	44
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	47	100%	>80%	432	430	421	42
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	65	88%	60-64%	371	385	385	51
<i>The Greene School</i>	35	94%	55-59%	526	459	481	18
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	94	NA	<20%	414	389	397	35
<i>Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	44	NA	<20%	390	330	373	*
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	24	96%	>80%	358	352	360	27
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	58	80%	50-54%	420	415	412	44
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	195	95%	40-44%	442	445	422	92
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	12	7%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	197	92%	50-54%	455	409	423	17
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,574	78%	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,450
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,339	89%	NA	NA	NA	NA	4,475
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,752	85%	NA	478	478	465	6,303

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

12th grade enrollment data (October 1, 2015) 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 2012-2013, 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 8, 2017, from studentaid.ed.gov.

of students taking the SAT is from the Rhode Island Department of Education and may include 11th and 12th graders.

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. New Shoreham and Rhode Island School for the Deaf are not reported because data reported would reflect fewer than 10 students. These students are included in the remainder of state and state totals as appropriate.

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth and students from Jamestown attend high school in North Kingstown. Graduation rates for Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College and Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy are not reported because these students generally complete their course of study in more than four years. DCYF includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

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

References

¹ 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.

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Table S2301.

(continued on page 189)