

# Seventh-Grade Reading Skills

## DEFINITION

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

## SIGNIFICANCE

Strong reading skills are essential for a student's academic success in high school and college.<sup>1</sup> Reading skills are also 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 are poor readers 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 English Language Learners and low-income

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

There has been limited progress in improving literacy skills among secondary students.<sup>6</sup> When literacy-specific instruction is used as remedial support for struggling adolescents, these programs typically serve only a small proportion of students who need assistance.<sup>7</sup> These supplementary programs are generally insufficient for dealing with the pervasive low levels of adolescent literacy in many schools.<sup>8</sup>

Intensive individualized instruction can help improve adolescent literacy among struggling readers.<sup>9</sup> Successful adolescent literacy programs include comprehensive professional development for teachers and principals in literacy instruction strategies, incorporating literacy instruction in content area classes, providing opportunities for student discussion, and using student assessments effectively.<sup>10,11</sup>

8th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2005	2015
RI	29%	35%
US	29%	33%
National Rank*		25th
New England Rank**		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 4 and 8.

## Seventh Graders Meeting Expectations on the PARCC English Language Arts Assessment, Rhode Island, 2015-2016

SUBGROUP	2015	2016	CHANGE
Male Students	31%	30%	-1%
Female Students	47%	47%	+1%
English Language Learners	5%	1%	-4%
Non-English Language Learners	41%	41%	<1%
Students With Disabilities	6%	4%	-2%
Students Without Disabilities	44%	44%	<1%
Low-Income Students	22%	21%	-1%
Higher-Income Students	53%	54%	+2%
White Students	48%	48%	<1%
Asian Students	46%	45%	-1%
Black Students	18%	19%	+1%
Hispanic Students	20%	20%	<1%
Native American Students	24%	28%	+4%
Central Falls	7%	12%	+5%
Pawtucket	17%	20%	+4%
Providence	19%	17%	-2%
Woonsocket	14%	13%	-1%
<b>ALL STUDENTS</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>+&lt;1%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, 2015-2016. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Change calculations may reflect rounding.

◆ Between 2015 and 2016, the percentage of seventh graders meeting expectations on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment remained steady at 38%, while the percentage of third graders meeting expectations increased.<sup>12,13</sup> Although some Rhode Island school districts saw substantial increases in the percentage of seventh graders meeting expectations from 2015 to 2016, most seventh grade subgroups saw little or no increase.<sup>14,15</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, 21% of low-income seventh graders met expectations, compared with 54% of higher-income seventh graders.<sup>16</sup> In Rhode Island in 2016, 48% of White and 45% of Asian seventh graders met expectations, compared to 28% of Native American, 20% of Hispanic, and 19% of Black seventh graders.<sup>17</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, 1% of seventh-grade English Language Learners met expectations, compared with 41% of students who are not English Language Learners.<sup>18</sup>

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Table 48. Seventh Graders Meeting Expectations in English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2016

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF SEVENTH GRADERS ENROLLED	# OF SEVENTH GRADERS TESTED	% OF SEVENTH GRADERS TESTED	# OF SEVENTH GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS	% OF SEVENTH GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	279	275	99%	240	87%
Bristol Warren	285	246	86%	128	52%
Burrillville	199	179	90%	54	30%
Central Falls	132	120	91%	14	12%
Chariho	256	246	96%	171	70%
Coventry	371	364	98%	139	38%
Cranston	830	800	96%	309	39%
Cumberland	375	332	89%	135	41%
East Greenwich	229	211	92%	162	77%
East Providence	413	302	73%	79	26%
Exeter-West Greenwich	156	150	96%	82	55%
Foster-Glocester	157	147	94%	66	45%
Jamestown	51	51	100%	35	69%
Johnston	259	258	100%	106	41%
Lincoln	261	244	93%	101	41%
Little Compton	34	27	79%	11	41%
Middletown	153	147	96%	74	50%
Narragansett	97	96	99%	46	48%
New Shoreham	13	12	92%	*	33%
Newport	157	137	87%	60	44%
North Kingstown	310	302	97%	212	70%
North Providence	289	286	99%	120	42%
North Smithfield	154	148	96%	75	51%
Pawtucket	712	688	97%	141	20%
Portsmouth	186	158	85%	104	66%
Providence	1,817	1,634	90%	275	17%
Scituate	107	104	97%	47	45%
Smithfield	180	169	94%	64	38%
South Kingstown	248	239	96%	137	57%
Tiverton	134	131	98%	52	40%
Warwick	690	668	97%	253	38%
West Warwick	270	253	94%	118	47%
Westerly	209	198	95%	97	49%
Woonsocket	452	417	92%	56	13%
Charter Schools	395	389	98%	138	35%
UCAP	37	37	100%	*	11%
Four Core Cities	3,113	2,859	92%	486	17%
Remainder of State	7,352	6,880	94%	3,281	48%
Rhode Island	10,911	10,179	93%	3,910	38%

### 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)*, 2016.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2015, Seventh-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2016.

% meeting expectations are the seventh-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. English Language Learners in the U.S. less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

2015 and 2016 *PARCC* data for independent charter schools include: 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.

\*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

- <sup>1,6,10</sup> Hervey, S. (2013). *Adolescent readers in middle school*. New York, NY: Generation Ready.
- <sup>2,4</sup> Salinger, T. (2011). *Addressing the "crisis" in adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Smaller Learning Communities Program.

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