

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 who 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}

Policy-makers 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, Rhode Island, 2015-2016

SUBGROUP	2015	2016	CHANGE
Male Students	33%	35%	+2%
Female Students	43%	45%	+2%
English Language Learners	8%	13%	+4%
Non-English Language Learners	40%	43%	+2%
Students With Disabilities	11%	10%	-1%
Students Without Disabilities	42%	44%	+2%
Low-Income Students	21%	25%	+4%
Higher-Income Students	53%	56%	+3%
White Students	48%	49%	+1%
Asian Students	48%	49%	+1%
Black Students	22%	26%	+4%
Hispanic Students	18%	24%	+6%
Native American Students	17%	15%	-2%
Central Falls	13%	16%	+3%
Pawtucket	22%	31%	+9%
Providence	14%	23%	+9%
Woonsocket	24%	23%	-1%
ALL STUDENTS	37%	40%	+2%

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.

◆ In 2016, 40% of Rhode Island third graders met expectations on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, compared with 37% of students in 2015.^{10,11}

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, 13% of third grade English Language Learners met proficiency, compared with 8% in 2015.^{12,13}

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, 25% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 56% of higher-income third graders.¹⁴

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, 49% of Asian and White third graders met expectations, compared with 26% of Black, 24% of Hispanic, and 15% of Native American third graders.¹⁵

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Table 47. Third Graders Meeting Expectations in English Language Arts, Rhode Island, 2016

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	259	253	98%	154	61%
Bristol Warren	242	231	95%	111	48%
Burrillville	161	155	96%	41	26%
Central Falls	240	223	93%	35	16%
Chariho	212	208	98%	141	68%
Coventry	368	361	98%	198	55%
Cranston	818	797	97%	327	41%
Cumberland	356	346	97%	190	55%
East Greenwich	178	169	95%	94	56%
East Providence	416	404	97%	143	35%
Exeter-West Greenwich	91	87	96%	35	40%
Foster	52	52	100%	23	44%
Glocester	92	88	96%	43	49%
Jamestown	60	58	97%	38	66%
Johnston	251	242	96%	116	48%
Lincoln	213	207	97%	139	67%
Little Compton	22	22	100%	10	45%
Middletown	167	162	97%	67	41%
Narragansett	89	85	96%	32	38%
New Shoreham	5	4	80%	*	*
Newport	171	159	93%	53	33%
North Kingstown	291	277	95%	139	50%
North Providence	251	241	96%	93	39%
North Smithfield	139	136	98%	69	51%
Pawtucket	857	826	96%	256	31%
Portsmouth	172	169	98%	84	50%
Providence	1,998	1,886	94%	426	23%
Scituate	109	108	99%	66	61%
Smithfield	192	184	96%	88	48%
South Kingstown	231	227	98%	156	69%
Tiverton	152	145	95%	101	70%
Warwick	648	626	97%	260	42%
West Warwick	318	304	96%	93	31%
Westerly	220	219	100%	81	37%
Woonsocket	529	507	96%	119	23%
Charter Schools	419	411	98%	164	40%
Four Core Cities	3,624	3,442	95%	836	24%
Remainder of State	6,946	6,726	97%	3,185	47%
Rhode Island	11,084	10,673	96%	4,229	40%

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, Third-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2016.

% 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.

2016 *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.

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