

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.¹ Reading skills also are a powerful indicator of a student's ability to contribute to, participate in, and succeed in the workforce and the community.² 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.³

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.⁴ These problems are exacerbated for English

Learners and low-income students, who are more likely to have low literacy skills.⁵

Nationally, there has been limited progress in improving literacy skills among secondary students.⁶ Students who are struggling with reading may have distinct difficulties and require different interventions to address them.⁷ Many supplementary programs are generally insufficient for dealing with the pervasive low levels of adolescent literacy in many schools and communities.⁸

Intensive individualized instruction can help improve adolescent literacy among struggling readers.⁹ Successful adolescent literacy programs include ongoing teacher support and training in the literacy strategy, incorporating literacy instruction in content area classes, explicit reading instruction in reading comprehension, collaborative learning and using student assessments effectively.^{10,11}

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

The *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* measures proficiency nationally and across states every other year for grades 4 and 8. 2017 NAEP data are not yet available.

Seventh Graders Meeting Expectations on the PARCC English Language Arts Assessment, Rhode Island, 2015-2017

SUBGROUP	2015	2016	2017	% CHANGE 2015-2017
Male Students	31%	30%	32%	+1%
Female Students	47%	47%	49%	+2%
English Learners	5%	1%	2%	-3%
Non-English Learners	41%	41%	42%	+2%
Students With Disabilities	6%	4%	12%	+6%
Students Without Disabilities	44%	44%	46%	+2%
Low-Income Students	22%	21%	22%	-<1%
Higher-Income Students	53%	54%	56%	+3%
White Students	48%	48%	51%	+3%
Asian Students	46%	45%	48%	+2%
Black Students	18%	19%	18%	-1%
Hispanic Students	20%	20%	21%	+1%
Native American Students	24%	28%	18%	-7%
ALL STUDENTS	38%	38%	40%	+2%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)*, 2015-2017. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Change calculations may reflect rounding.

- ◆ Between 2015 and 2017, the percentage of seventh graders meeting expectations on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment increased from 38% to 40%, and the percentage of third graders meeting expectations also increased.^{12,13} Although the majority of subgroups saw some increase from 2015 to 2017, the most vulnerable groups are still falling behind.^{14,15}
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2017, 22% of low-income seventh graders met expectations, compared with 56% of higher-income seventh graders. There were also large achievement gaps by race and ethnicity as well as by English learner and disability status.¹⁶
- ◆ Starting in the 2017-2018 school year, Rhode Island will use the *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)* for assessments in grades three through eight and the *PSAT* and *SAT* in high school.¹⁷

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Table 47.

Seventh-Grade Reading Skills, Rhode Island, 2015-2017

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# SEVENTH GRADERS TESTED 2017	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2015	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2016	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2017
Barrington	243	75%	87%	82%
Bristol Warren	216	42%	52%	40%
Burrillville	169	28%	30%	41%
Central Falls	165	7%	12%	4%
Chariho	260	69%	70%	66%
Coventry	356	35%	38%	55%
Cranston	822	49%	39%	43%
Cumberland	370	44%	41%	64%
East Greenwich	207	81%	77%	71%
East Providence	366	30%	26%	28%
Exeter-West Greenwich	131	57%	55%	57%
Foster-Glocester	150	47%	45%	59%
Jamestown	56	65%	69%	82%
Johnston	247	51%	41%	37%
Lincoln	265	51%	41%	43%
Little Compton	25	61%	41%	92%
Middletown	172	42%	50%	46%
Narragansett	113	62%	48%	66%
New Shoreham	9	*	33%	*
Newport	155	37%	44%	35%
North Kingstown	311	67%	70%	76%
North Providence	280	36%	42%	40%
North Smithfield	145	51%	51%	51%
Pawtucket	718	17%	20%	23%
Portsmouth	175	54%	66%	62%
Providence	1,706	19%	17%	14%
Scituate	121	26%	45%	38%
Smithfield	159	52%	38%	52%
South Kingstown	263	58%	57%	51%
Tiverton	150	48%	40%	45%
Warwick	720	31%	38%	40%
West Warwick	215	36%	47%	45%
Westerly	227	32%	49%	43%
Woonsocket	413	14%	13%	14%
Charter Schools	439	34%	35%	46%
UCAP	53	5%	11%	17%
Four Core Cities	3,002	17%	17%	15%
Remainder of State	7,098	48%	48%	49%
Rhode Island	10,598	38%	38%	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)*, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

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 Learners in the U.S. less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

2015, 2016, and 2017 PARCC data for independent charter schools include: Beacon Charter School for the Arts, 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.

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

See Methodology Section for more information.

References

- ^{1,6,10} Hervey, S. (2013). *Adolescent readers in middle school*. New York, NY: Generation Ready.
- ²⁴ 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.
- ³ Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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