

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

Interventions for students struggling with reading are more successful when implemented before third grade than after third grade. When intervention is delayed until after third grade, most children never catch up to their grade-level peers.^{2,3}

Literacy begins long before children encounter school instruction in writing and reading. Supportive, literacy-rich home environments (including telling stories) and parents who provide early cognitive development activities contribute to literacy development, reading achievement, and success in school.⁴

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.⁵ 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.^{6,7}

Policy-makers can increase third-grade reading proficiency by increasing access to high-quality child care, Pre-K, and Head Start; providing parents with supports to create enriched language and literacy opportunities beginning at birth; expanding access to high-quality summer learning programs; and addressing chronic early absence.^{8,9}

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. 2017 NAEP data are not yet available.

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

SUBGROUP	2015	2016	2017	% CHANGE 2015-2017*
Male Students	33%	35%	35%	+3%
Female Students	43%	45%	45%	+3%
English Learners	8%	13%	12%	+3%
Non-English Learners	40%	43%	44%	+3%
Students with Disabilities	11%	10%	16%	+5%
Students without Disabilities	42%	44%	45%	+3%
Low-Income Students	21%	25%	25%	+4%
Higher-Income Students	53%	56%	57%	+4%
White Students	48%	49%	50%	+3%
Asian Students	48%	49%	54%	+6%
Black Students	22%	26%	27%	+6%
Hispanic Students	18%	24%	24%	+6%
Native American Students	17%	15%	16%	-1%
ALL STUDENTS	37%	40%	40%	+3%

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.

◆ In 2017, 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 to 37% of students in 2015.^{10,11}

◆ In Rhode Island in 2017, 25% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 57% of higher-income third graders. There were also large achievement gaps by race and ethnicity as well as by English learner and disability status.¹²

◆ 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.¹³

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Table 46.

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

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# THIRD GRADERS TESTED 2017	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2015	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2016	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS 2017
Barrington	230	63%	61%	65%
Bristol Warren	268	43%	48%	58%
Burrillville	166	32%	26%	23%
Central Falls	237	13%	16%	15%
Chariho	246	59%	68%	65%
Coventry	330	46%	55%	55%
Cranston	766	52%	41%	47%
Cumberland	324	50%	55%	53%
East Greenwich	168	57%	56%	54%
East Providence	403	42%	35%	35%
Exeter-West Greenwich	102	41%	40%	54%
Foster	49	36%	44%	35%
Glocester	88	47%	49%	68%
Jamestown	45	60%	66%	87%
Johnston	231	49%	48%	34%
Lincoln	224	56%	67%	55%
Little Compton	24	64%	45%	33%
Middletown	141	46%	41%	44%
Narragansett	84	61%	38%	75%
Newport	160	37%	33%	36%
North Kingstown	247	60%	50%	55%
North Providence	263	27%	39%	42%
North Smithfield	122	29%	51%	43%
Pawtucket	754	22%	31%	34%
Portsmouth	157	53%	50%	48%
Providence	1,992	14%	23%	19%
Scituate	73	49%	61%	64%
Smithfield	168	44%	48%	52%
South Kingstown	192	80%	69%	71%
Tiverton	129	66%	70%	57%
Warwick	681	37%	42%	47%
West Warwick	263	23%	31%	33%
Westerly	207	40%	37%	52%
Woonsocket	478	24%	23%	25%
Charter Schools	525	40%	40%	41%
Four Core Cities	3,461	17%	25%	23%
Remainder of State	6,551	47%	49%	50%
Rhode Island	10,539	37%	40%	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, 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 Learners in the U.S. less than one year are exempt from the English language arts assessment.

In Rhode Island, 97% of students were tested. Response rates vary by district.

2017 *PARCC* data for independent charter schools include Achievement First Rhode Island, 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.

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

See Methodology Section for more information.

No data is available for New Shoreham.

References

- ¹² Hernandez, D. J. (2012). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ³ Lesnick, J., Goerge, R. M., Smithgall, C., & Gwynne, J. (2010). *Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

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