

# Eighth-Grade Reading Skills

## DEFINITION

*Eighth-grade reading skills* is the percentage of eighth-grade students who met expectations for reading in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)* test.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Strong reading skills are essential for a student's academic success in high school and college.<sup>1</sup> 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.<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 learners and low-income students, who are more likely to have low literacy skills.<sup>5</sup>

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

Intensive individualized instruction can help improve adolescent literacy among struggling readers.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10,11</sup>

8th-Grade NAEP Reading Proficiency		
	2007	2017
<b>RI</b>	27%	37%
<b>US</b>	29%	35%
<b>National Rank*</b>	<b>31st</b>	<b>19th</b>
<b>New England Rank**</b>	<b>6th</b>	<b>6th</b>

\*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 four and eight.

## Eighth Graders Meeting Expectations on the RICAS English Language Arts Assessment, Rhode Island, 2018

SUBGROUP	2018
Male Students	22%
Female Students	35%
*English Learners	<5%
Non-English Learners	30%
*Students With Disabilities	<5%
Students Without Disabilities	32%
Low-Income Students	13%
Higher-Income Students	41%
White Students	38%
Asian Students	37%
Black Students	11%
Hispanic Students	12%
Native American Students	9%
<b>ALL STUDENTS</b>	<b>28%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2018. Low-income status is determined by eligibility for the free or reduced-price lunch program. \*Data is reported as <5% when more than 95% of students did not meet expectations.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2018, 28% of all eighth-grade students met expectations in English language arts on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*. Thirteen percent of low-income eighth graders met expectations, compared with 41% of higher-income eighth graders. There were also large achievement gaps by race and ethnicity.<sup>12</sup>

◆ Less than 5% of English learners and students with disabilities met expectations.<sup>13</sup>

◆ Starting in the 2017-2018 school year, Rhode Island adopted the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* for assessments in grades three through eight. The *RICAS* assessments are aligned to the Common Core Standards and are comparable to the *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System*.<sup>14</sup>

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Table 48.

## Eighth-Grade Reading Skills, Rhode Island, 2018

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# EIGHTH GRADERS TESTED	# MEETING EXPECTATIONS	% MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	245	172	70%
Bristol Warren	201	78	39%
Burrillville	178	40	22%
Central Falls	169	*	<5%
Charlho	262	130	50%
Coventry	371	151	41%
Cranston	841	230	27%
Cumberland	378	199	53%
East Greenwich	206	127	62%
East Providence	367	88	24%
Exeter-West Greenwich	130	51	39%
Foster-Glocester	165	89	54%
Jamestown	52	33	63%
Johnston	252	43	17%
Lincoln	274	71	26%
Little Compton	31	17	55%
Middletown	174	49	28%
Narragansett	117	54	46%
Newport	145	32	22%
North Kingstown	317	189	60%
North Providence	294	59	20%
North Smithfield	146	81	55%
Pawtucket	688	68	10%
Portsmouth	183	83	45%
Providence	1,703	144	8%
Scituate	118	22	19%
Smithfield	178	90	51%
South Kingstown	265	119	45%
Tiverton	155	38	25%
Warwick	706	178	25%
West Warwick	223	64	29%
Westerly	229	65	28%
Woonsocket	401	41	10%
Charter Schools	437	99	23%
Urban Collaborative	80	*	5%
Four Core Cities	2,623	257	10%
Remainder of State	7,555	2,650	35%
Rhode Island	10,695	3,010	28%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Rhode Island Common Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2018.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2018, Eighth-Grade Reading Skills cannot be compared with prior Factbooks.

% meeting expectations are the eighth-grade students who met or exceeded expectations for their grade on the English language arts section of the *RICAS*. 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 students who first enrolled in a U.S. school after April 1, 2018 are not required to take the English language arts assessment.

\* Indicates 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 the state, and state totals. Data is reported as <5% when more than 95% of students did not meet expectations.

2018 *RICAS* 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.

Data is not reported for New Shoreham or The Rhode Island School for the Deaf because the number of students tested was less than 10.

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.

(continued on page 188)