

Student Mobility

DEFINITION

Student mobility is the number of students who enrolled in school after September 30 or withdrew from school before June 1 divided by the total enrollment for that school district.

SIGNIFICANCE

Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, behavior difficulties, lower levels of school engagement, and increased risk of dropping out of high school. Changing schools can disrupt learning, can negatively impact a student's achievement, and can cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.^{1,2}

Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to be suspended, and less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers.^{3,4}

Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income and children of color are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement, than higher-income and White students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.^{5,6}

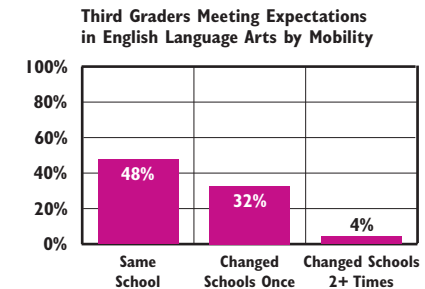
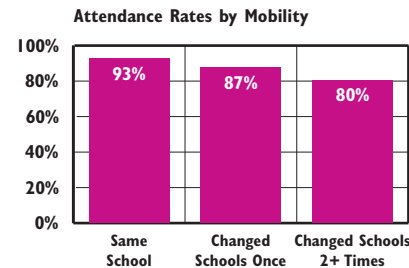
High mobility rates in schools can negatively impact all students because teachers must slow curriculum progress, repeat lessons, and adjust to changing classroom dynamics and student needs. Within-year moves are particularly disruptive for students, teachers and schools.^{7,8}

Families may move their children to a different school because they are dissatisfied with the school, concerned about their child's safety, or because they are moving due to changes in family circumstances. Changes in family circumstances can be either positive or negative factors, including eviction or foreclosure, divorce or marriage, job loss or job changes, death in the family, or a desire to improve quality of life. Mobile students in low-income and Black families are more likely to change schools due to family reasons than mobile students in higher-income and White families.^{9,10}

Between 2014 and 2018 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 76% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 24% of whom moved from another state or abroad.¹¹ Nationally and in Rhode Island, people with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to move than higher-income residents. Between 2014 and 2018, 22% of Rhode Islanders living below the poverty line moved, compared with 10% of higher-income residents.¹²



School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island, 2018-2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2018-2019 school year.

◆ Rhode Island students who change schools mid-year are absent more often than students who do not change schools. Rhode Island students who did not change schools had a 93% attendance rate, compared with 87% for those who changed schools once and 80% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2018-2019 school year.¹³

◆ Children who change schools mid-year also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced school mobility. During the 2018-2019 school year in Rhode Island, 48% of third-grade children who did not experience mobility met expectations in reading/writing on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* state assessment, compared with 32% of students who moved once and 4% of students who moved two or more times.¹⁴

◆ School districts with high mobility rates can reduce the negative effects of mobility on students by providing immediate and comprehensive screening of entering students to ensure that students are properly placed. Districts also can identify other districts where students most frequently transfer to and from and align their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce learning disruption.¹⁵

◆ One-third of children in foster care will experience five or more school changes before they turn age 18, and such changes often result in lost academic progress. The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* includes provisions to give children in foster care more educational stability by allowing students to stay in their school of origin if it is in their best interest and providing transportation to that school.¹⁶

Table 46. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2018-2019 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2018-2019	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,393	3,285	63	48	97%	3%
Bristol Warren	3,346	3,069	115	177	92%	9%
Burrillville	2,357	2,163	106	99	92%	9%
Central Falls	3,057	2,330	429	342	76%	25%
Charlho	3,225	3,041	91	100	94%	6%
Coventry	4,740	4,422	147	183	93%	7%
Cranston	11,039	9,847	561	675	89%	11%
Cumberland	4,893	4,412	176	319	90%	10%
East Greenwich	2,540	2,439	51	52	96%	4%
East Providence	5,321	4,840	216	288	91%	9%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,635	1,533	43	64	94%	7%
Foster	247	235	*	*	95%	5%
Foster-Glocester	1,326	1,265	21	41	95%	5%
Glocester	542	510	21	13	94%	6%
Jamestown	502	473	15	15	94%	6%
Johnston	3,319	3,002	143	193	90%	10%
Lincoln	3,175	2,950	106	128	93%	7%
Little Compton	224	221	*	*	99%	2%
Middletown	2,302	2,021	140	158	88%	13%
Narragansett	1,265	1,176	41	56	93%	8%
New Shoreham	2,354	1,920	237	236	82%	20%
Newport	142	128	*	*	90%	11%
North Kingstown	4,043	3,738	131	183	92%	8%
North Providence	3,704	3,304	179	237	89%	11%
North Smithfield	1,674	1,592	34	50	95%	5%
Pawtucket	9,575	7,943	835	916	83%	18%
Portsmouth	2,491	2,324	76	96	93%	7%
Providence	27,218	21,547	2,814	3,371	79%	23%
Scituate	1,250	1,190	28	35	95%	5%
Smithfield	2,442	2,332	46	65	95%	5%
South Kingstown	2,995	2,824	62	111	94%	6%
Tiverton	1,844	1,688	52	109	92%	9%
Warwick	9,017	8,169	392	500	91%	10%
West Warwick	3,949	3,269	302	424	83%	18%
Westerly	2,738	2,529	94	131	92%	8%
Woonsocket	6,774	5,495	505	863	81%	20%
Charter Schools	8,838	8,096	307	464	92%	9%
State-Operated Schools	1,972	1,660	153	227	84%	19%
UCAP	152	122	12	18	80%	20%
Four Core Cities	55,554	45,787	4,866	5,684	82%	19%
Remainder of State	85,104	77,439	3,423	4,608	91%	9%
Rhode Island	151,620	133,104	8,761	11,001	88%	13%



Student Mobility and Stability Rates

◆ Mobility rates are calculated by adding all children who enrolled after September 30 to all those who withdrew before June 1 and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.¹⁷

◆ Stability rates measure the number of children who attended the same school the entire school year in a school district. The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled the whole year at the same school in the school district by total enrollment for that school district. The stability rate for the four core cities was 82% in the 2018-2019 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.¹⁸

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.¹⁹

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 13% in the 2018-2019 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (19%) than districts in the remainder of the state (9%).²⁰

◆ During the 2018-2019 school year, Rhode Island high schools had higher mobility rates (16%) than elementary schools (12%) and middle schools (12%).²¹

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2018-2019 school year.

*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 in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Charter Schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Charette Charter School, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical High School, and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

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

References

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- ⁶¹⁰ Sparks, S. (2016). Student mobility: How it affects learning. *Education Week*. Retrieved February 04, 2020, from www.edweek.org
- ⁷⁹ Fiel J.E., Haskins A.R., López Turley, RN. (2013) *Reducing school mobility: A randomized trial of a relationship-building intervention*. Retrieved data, from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

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