

High School Graduation Rate

DEFINITION

High school graduation rate is the percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years of entering, calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer by the total number of first-time entering ninth graders (adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the four years).

SIGNIFICANCE

High School graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment.¹ In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are more likely to be unemployed and have lower incomes than adults with high school degrees. In 2023, 8% of Rhode Island children lived in households headed by a non-high school graduate, lower than the national average of 11%.^{2,3}

Student, family, and school level factors impact students' likelihood of graduating high school. A child's gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and disability and multilingual learner status impact graduation rates. Fewer males, LGBTQ+ students, Black and Latino students, Multilingual Learners, and students receiving special education services graduate from high school than their counterparts.^{4,5,6} Family factors including income and parental involvement can also impact graduation rates. Fewer low-income students and

more students with involved parents graduate high school.^{7,8}

Individual and family factors lead to inequitable opportunities in school.⁹ Children who have access to and attend high-quality preschool programs and those who can read proficiently by third grade are more likely to graduate high school.^{10,11} Children with behavior issues, who have poor attendance, and who fail core courses are much less likely to graduate from high school.¹² Supporting students' transition to ninth grade, adopting systems to identify struggling students (e.g., multi-tiered systems of support; early warning systems), increasing engagement through student-centered learning, and providing postsecondary and workforce experience opportunities can improve high school graduation rates.^{13,14}

To graduate, Rhode Island students must demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology, complete at least 20 courses, and complete one performance-based assessment.¹⁵ Students can also earn Council designations including a Seal of Biliteracy, Commissioner's Seal, and Pathway Endorsements.¹⁶ Starting with the Class of 2024, students must be financially literate and beginning with the Class of 2028 students must demonstrate proficiency in world languages, lab sciences, college preparation coursework, civics, and computer science.¹⁷



Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2024

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,238	6%	1%	5%	87%
Male Students	5,711	9%	2%	8%	81%
Multilingual Learners	1,329	15%	1%	10%	74%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	1,740	12%	3%	20%	65%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	9,226	7%	2%	4%	88%
Low-Income Students	6,396	11%	2%	9%	78%
Higher-Income Students	4,570	4%	1%	2%	93%
American Indian Students	79	16%	1%	11%	71%
Asian Students	332	5%	0%	7%	89%
Black Students	1,028	8%	2%	11%	79%
Hispanic Students	3,282	11%	2%	9%	79%
White Students	5,799	5%	2%	4%	88%
Students in Foster Care	178	25%	6%	26%	43%
Students Experiencing Homelessness	227	20%	4%	18%	59%
ALL STUDENTS	10,966	8%	2%	7%	84%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2024. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2024 was 84%, the same rate as the Class of 2014. The lowest graduation rates were among students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, students receiving special education services, Multilingual Learners, low-income students, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students.^{18,19}



Rhode Island Five- and Six-Year High School Graduation Rates

◆ Rhode Island calculates five- and six-year graduation rates to recognize that graduation is an accomplishment regardless of the time it takes. Of the 11,293 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in the Fall of 2019, 9,431 (84%) graduated in four years in 2022, 236 (2%) graduated in five years in 2023, and 44 (<1%) graduated in six years in 2024. Of the 236 students who graduated in five years in 2023, 71 (30%) were students receiving special education services and 46 (19%) were Multilingual Learners.²⁰

High School Graduation Rate

Table 51.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2024

SCHOOL DISTRICT	FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES				
	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	275	1%	1%	3%	95%
Bristol Warren	249	7%	0%	4%	88%
Burrillville	172	7%	3%	4%	86%
Central Falls	206	25%	3%	13%	59%
Chariho	253	2%	0%	2%	96%
Coventry	334	11%	3%	4%	82%
Cranston	826	5%	2%	5%	88%
Cumberland	349	3%	1%	4%	92%
East Greenwich	181	2%	2%	3%	93%
East Providence	438	13%	1%	7%	80%
Exeter-West Greenwich	127	1%	2%	4%	94%
Foster-Glocester	242	5%	2%	0%	93%
Johnston	188	8%	3%	6%	84%
Lincoln	249	4%	4%	4%	89%
Middletown	158	7%	4%	3%	87%
Narragansett	135	0%	1%	1%	98%
Newport	156	12%	3%	4%	81%
North Kingstown	326	3%	2%	1%	94%
North Providence	260	5%	2%	6%	87%
North Smithfield	127	3%	1%	5%	91%
Pawtucket	590	19%	1%	9%	71%
Portsmouth	197	1%	2%	3%	95%
Providence	1,819	11%	1%	8%	79%
Scituate	94	3%	0%	4%	93%
Smithfield	189	3%	1%	4%	92%
South Kingstown	201	4%	1%	2%	93%
Tiverton	107	0%	0%	4%	96%
Warwick	567	3%	3%	7%	87%
West Warwick	270	9%	2%	10%	79%
Westerly	169	4%	2%	2%	92%
Woonsocket	369	16%	3%	19%	62%
Beacon Charter School	60	10%	0%	10%	80%
Blackstone Academy	89	2%	3%	11%	83%
Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy	108	3%	2%	0%	95%
Charette Charter School	38	0%	0%	3%	97%
Paul Cuffee Charter School	67	1%	4%	10%	84%
William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical School	196	6%	1%	8%	86%
The Greene School	55	2%	0%	2%	96%
Highlander Charter School	49	10%	4%	14%	71%
Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center	188	2%	0%	1%	97%
Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy	62	27%	2%	40%	31%
RI Nurses Institute Middle College	68	6%	1%	16%	76%
Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts	27	4%	0%	4%	93%
Village Green Virtual Public Charter School	57	2%	0%	2%	96%
YouthBuild Preparatory Academy	63	3%	0%	52%	44%
Four Core Cities	2,984	14%	1%	10%	74%
Remainder of State	6,845	5%	2%	4%	89%
Rhode Island	10,966	8%	2%	7%	84%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2024.

The 2024 four-year cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer, divided by the total number of students in the cohort. The cohort is calculated as the number of first-time entering ninth graders in the 2020-2021 school year, adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the course of the four years. The cohort dropout rate is calculated the same way as the graduation rate, but the numerator is the number of students who drop out or whose status is unknown at the end of four years. Separate rates are calculated for the percentage of students who are retained in high school and therefore are taking more than four years to graduate and for the percentage of students who received their GED within four years instead of graduating with a traditional diploma.

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth, and Jamestown students can choose to attend high school in Narragansett or North Kingstown. DCYF includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

Achievement First Rhode Island, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, DCYF, and New Shoreham are not reported because there are fewer than 10 students in this cohort. These students are included in the state total.

References

^{1,5,8} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Healthy people 2030: High school graduation*. Retrieved March 18, 2025, from <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation>

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023. Table S2301.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023. Table S2001.

^{4,12} Zheng, Y., Gao, X., Shen, J., Johnson, M.R., Krenn, H.Y. (2023). A meta-analysis of the predictors of on-time high school graduation in the United States. *NASSP Bulletin*, 107(2), 130-155.

(continued on page 190)

References

NA indicates that the school district does not serve students at that grade level. *Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These numbers are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state total.

References for Chronic Absence, Middle School and High School

- ^{1,3} Humm Patnode, A., Gibbons, K., & Edmunds, R. (2018). *Attendance and chronic absenteeism: Literature review*. University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.
- ^{2,6} Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools*. Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.
- ³ Attendance Works. (2014). *The attendance imperative: How states can advance achievement by reducing chronic absence*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://www.attendanceworks.org/state-policy-brief-attendance-imperative/>
- ⁴ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2016). *The relationship between school attendance and health: Health policy snapshot*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED592870.pdf>
- ⁷ Humm Brundage, A., Castillo, J. M., & Batsche, G. M. (2017). *Reasons for chronic absenteeism among secondary students*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Aggregate-RCA-Report-Final-4.pdf>
- ^{8,10,11} Rhode Island Department of Education, 2023-2024 school year.
- ⁹ Rhode Island Judiciary. (n.d.). *About the Family Court*. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.courts.ri.gov/Courts/familycourt/Documents/AbouttheFamilyCourt.pdf>
- ¹² Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates Center. (2021). *Chronic absence to map interrupted schooling, instructional loss, and educational inequity: Insights from school year 2017-18 data*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://www.attendanceworks.org/using-chronic-absence-to-map-interrupted-schooling-instructional-loss-and-educational-inequity/>
- ¹³ Rhode Island Department of Education. (2019). *2019 RI school accountability technical report*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://reportcard.ride.ri.gov/2019AccountabilityTechnicalManual.pdf>

- ¹⁴ Miller, R. (2012). *Teacher absence as a leading indicator of student achievement*. Retrieved March 28, 2025, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/teacher-absence-as-a-leading-indicator-of-student-achievement/>

- ¹⁵ Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021-2022, and 2023-2024 school year.

(continued from page 157)

Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Suspensions

State-operated includes Wm. M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Collaboratives include Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy and Urban Collaborative (UCAP).

References for Suspensions

- ^{1,3,4} U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2019). *Beyond suspensions: Examining school discipline policies and connections to the school-to-prison pipeline for students of color with disabilities*. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from [usccr.gov](https://www.usccr.gov)
- ² Losen, D. J. (2011). *Discipline policies, successful schools, and racial justice*. National Education Policy Center.
- ⁵ Losen, D. J. & Martinez, T. E. (2013). *Out of school & off track: The overuse of suspensions in American middle and high schools*. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.
- ⁶ Liu, J., Hayes, M. S., & Gershenson, S. (2024, May). *JUE Insight: From referrals to suspensions: New evidence on racial disparities in exclusionary discipline*. Science Direct. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0094119022000304>
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Guiding principles: A resource guide for improving school climate and discipline*.
- ⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018). *K-12 education: Discipline disparities for Black students, boys, and students with disabilities* GAO-18-258.
- ⁹ U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice. (2023). *Resource on confronting racial discrimination in student discipline*. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights & U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. <https://www.ed.gov/>

- ^{10,13,14} Rhode Island Department of Education, 2023-2024 school year.

- ¹¹ Rhode Island General Law 16-2-17. Enacted by the General Assembly as H-7056 Sub A in 2016.

- ¹² Rhode Island Department of Education, 2018-2019 school year.

(continued from page 159)

References for High School Graduation Rate

- ^{6,9} Yoder, C.M., Cantrel, M., Hinkle, J.L. (2024). Disparities in high school graduation by identity and disability using intermediate and long-term educational outcomes. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 40(3), 266-274.
- ⁷ Ritter, B. (2015). *Factors influencing high school graduation: Issue brief prepared for the Washington state student achievement council*.
- ¹⁰ Schanzenbach, D.W., Nunn, R., Bauer, L. (2016). *Early childhood investments are vital*. Brookings Institute.
- ¹¹ Fiester, L. (2013). *Early warning confirmed: a research update on third-grade reading*. The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ¹³ Flannery, K.B., Kato, M.M., Kittleman, A., McIntosh, K., Triplett, D. (2020). A tier 1 intervention to increase ninth grade engagement and success: Results from a randomized controlled trial. *School Psychology*, 30(1), 88-98.
- ¹⁴ DePaoli, J. L., Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Atwell, M., & Ingram, E. S. (2017). *Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in raising high school graduation rates*.
- ^{15,17} Council on Elementary and Secondary Education: *Secondary Regulations: Academic Standards, Programs, and Operations*, 200-RICR-20-10-2 (2022).
- ¹⁶ Rhode Island Department of Education. (n.d.). *The Rhode Island diploma system and graduation requirements*. Retrieved March 18, 2025, from <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/diploma-system>
- ¹⁸ Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2024 four-year cohort graduation rates.
- ¹⁹ Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2014 four-year cohort graduation rates.
- ²⁰ Rhode Island Department of Education, 2019 cohort five- and six-year cohort graduation rates.

(continued from page 161)

References for College Preparation and Access

- ⁴ Miller, A., Valle, K., Engle, J., & Cooper, M. (2014). *Access to attainment: An access agenda for 21st century college students*. Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- ⁵ Rhode Island Department of Education. (2022). *The Rhode Island diploma system & graduation requirements*. Retrieved April 2, 2025, from <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/diploma-system>
- ⁶ Zinth, J. (2016). *Advanced Placement: Model policy components*. Education Commission of the States.
- ⁷ College Board. (n.d.). AP program results: Class of 2024. Retrieved, March 5, 2025, from <https://reports.collegeboard.org/ap-program-results/class-of-2023>
- ⁸ Rhode Island Department of Education. (n.d.). *PSAT 10 and SAT school day*. Retrieved April 2, 2025, from <https://ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/assessment/psat-and-sat#:~:text=Starting%20in%20the%202017%2D18,are%20college%20and%20career%20ready.>
- ⁹ Rhode Island Department of Education (n.d.). *Assessment data portal: SAT, 2023-2024 school year*. Retrieved, March 5, 2025, from <https://www3.ride.ri.gov/ADP>
- ¹⁰ Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., Coca, V., Moeller, E., Roddie, K., Gilliam, J. & Patton, D. (2008). *From high school to the future: Potholes on the road to college*. Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago.
- ¹¹ Rhode Island Department of Education. (2024). *Rhode Island FAESA Initiative*. Retrieved March 5, 2025, from <https://www.prepare-ri.org/fafsa>
- ¹² Rhode Island Department of Education. (2018). Rhode Island's *Every Student Succeeds Act* state plan. Retrieved April 3, 2023, from www.ride.ri.gov
- ¹³ Rhode Island Department of Education, 2024.
- ¹⁴ State of Rhode Island General Assembly. (2023). Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act becomes state law. [Press release]. Retrieved April 2, 2025, from https://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease/_layouts/RI.L.PressRelease.ListStructure/Forms/DisplayForm.aspx?List=c8baae31%2D3c10%2D431c9%2D8dcd%2D9dbbe21ce3e9&ID=373833&Web=2bab1515%2D0d0cc%2D4176%2D2af8%2D8d4becbdf488