

# Math Skills

## DEFINITION

*Math skills* is the percentage of third- and eighth-grade students who met expectations for math on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* test.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Students must rely on math to perform everyday activities, advance their education, and navigate today’s technological world. Strong math skills predict higher college attendance and success rates and increase students’ employability.<sup>1,2</sup> Improving education in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and math) can spur national innovation and competitiveness and ensure that we have qualified workers for the growing STEM industries.<sup>3</sup>

State, national, and international assessments show that U.S. students fare well with straight-forward computational procedures but tend to have a limited understanding of basic mathematical concepts, resulting in federal actions to increase the level of rigor, depth, and coherency of the mathematics content taught nationwide.<sup>4,5</sup> After two decades of improvement, math performance in the U.S. leveled off and has now begun to decline.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty and low parental education levels can impact student performance

on math assessments. Disparities in math proficiency related to race and family income persist in the U.S and worsen as students advance in grade level.<sup>7</sup> Opportunities for advanced math instruction are especially important for low-income children, who may be exposed to less complex math concepts.<sup>8</sup>

Achieving math proficiency for all students requires that improvements be made in curriculum, instructional materials, assessments, classroom practice, teacher preparation, and professional development. These are particularly important as Rhode Island continues to implement new, more rigorous math standards.<sup>9,10</sup> Teachers should expose all students to challenging and culturally relevant math concepts and curriculum and provide additional support to struggling students.<sup>11</sup>

The *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* measures proficiency in math and other subjects nationally and across states every other year.<sup>12</sup> In 2024, 38% of Rhode Island fourth graders and 40% of U.S. fourth graders performed at or above the Proficient level in math on the *NAEP*, and 26% of Rhode Island eighth graders and 27% of U.S. eighth graders performed at or above the proficient level in math on the *NAEP*. Rhode Island is one of 15 states that saw improvement in fourth grade math.<sup>13,14</sup>



## Third- & Eighth-Grade Students Meeting Expectations on the RICAS Math Assessment, Rhode Island, 2024

SUBGROUP	THIRD GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
Female Students	36%	24%
Male Students	42%	26%
*Multilingual Learners	19%	<5%
Non-English Learners	43%	29%
*Students Receiving Special Education Services	15%	<5%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	45%	29%
Low-Income Students	25%	10%
Higher-Income Students	52%	37%
American Indian or Alaska Native Students	20%	9%
Asian Students <sup>+</sup>	56%	39%
Black Students	24%	12%
Hispanic/Latino Students	26%	11%
White Students	49%	35%
Homeless Students	16%	7%
*Students in Foster Care	24%	<5%
ALL STUDENTS	39%	25%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education. (2024). *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2023–2024. 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. <sup>+</sup>Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

- ◆ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of Rhode Island third graders meeting expectations in math declined from 36% in 2019 to 25% in 2021 and then increased to 39% in 2024, while for eighth graders it declined from 25% in 2019 to 16% in 2021 and increased to 25% in 2024.<sup>15,16,17</sup>
- ◆ In Rhode Island in the 2023-2024 school year, 25% of low-income third graders met expectations in math, compared with 52% of higher-income third graders. There also were large gaps by race and ethnicity, with 56% of Asian and 49% of white third graders meeting expectations, compared with 24% of Black, 26% of Hispanic, and 20% of American Indian or Alaska Native students. This large gap is also seen in eighth-grade results.<sup>18</sup>
- ◆ In 2024, 24% of third graders in foster care met expectations in math and <5% of eighth graders who were in foster care met expectations in math.<sup>19</sup>

Table 44. Third- & Eighth-Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math, Rhode Island, 2023-2024

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF THIRD GRADERS TESTED	% OF THIRD GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS	# OF EIGHTH GRADERS TESTED	% OF EIGHTH GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	255	61%	260	65%
Bristol Warren	189	47%	212	40%
Burrillville	129	40%	154	17%
Central Falls	159	13%	188	<5%
Charlton	177	55%	197	44%
Coventry	291	58%	330	30%
Cranston	720	34%	743	20%
Cumberland	356	61%	347	51%
East Greenwich	200	62%	194	66%
East Providence	319	48%	374	23%
Exeter-West Greenwich	107	58%	129	33%
Foster	37	19%	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	146	32%
Glocester	90	61%	NA	NA
Jamestown	34	>95%	43	74%
Johnston	246	29%	265	13%
Lincoln	257	58%	257	46%
Little Compton	28	79%	22	32%
Middletown	131	40%	148	42%
Narragansett	57	83%	80	54%
New Shoreham	8	*	10	10%
Newport	131	27%	127	6%
North Kingstown	246	60%	259	59%
North Providence	241	26%	274	29%
North Smithfield	100	67%	114	55%
Pawtucket	563	32%	618	7%
Portsmouth	139	63%	166	42%
Providence	1,356	27%	1,469	7%
Scituate	91	52%	84	39%
Smithfield	185	60%	168	48%
South Kingstown	146	60%	184	38%
Tiverton	114	73%	108	30%
Warwick	603	36%	565	18%
West Warwick	232	14%	259	10%
Westerly	139	48%	156	22%
Woonsocket	427	12%	375	<5%
Charter Schools	1,070	27%	860	21%
State-Operated Schools	6	*	3	*
Collaboratives	NA	NA	72	<5%
Four Core Cities	2,505	25%	2,650	5%
Remainder of State	5,998	47%	6,375	34%
Statewide	9,579	39%	9,960	25%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2023-2024 and is rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Due to the adoption of a new assessment tool by RIDE in 2018, *Math Skills* cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2019. Due to low participation rates, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2020-2021 math scores cannot be compared to previous years.

% meeting expectations are students who met or exceeded expectations on the math section of the *RICAS*. Only students who actually took the test are counted in the denominator for the district and school proficiency rates. All students are expected to participate in the *RICAS* assessment. Students with significant disabilities may be eligible to participate in alternate assessments.

Data is reported as <5% when greater than 95% of students did not meet expectations 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 not reported because the number of students tested was less than 10. These students are still counted in the remainder of the state and state totals.

Charter schools include the Achievement First Rhode Island and Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy Networks, Beacon Charter School, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter, Providence Preparatory Charter, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, South Side Charter School, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. State-operated schools include Rhode Island School for the Deaf. Collaborative schools include the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP).

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

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# References

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## Source of Data for Table/Methodology for K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services

Charter schools include the Achievement First Rhode Island and Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy Networks, Beacon Charter School, Blackstone Academy, Charette Charter, The Compass School, Excel Academy Rhode Island, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, SouthSide Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and Village Green Virtual.

State-operated schools are William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Collaborative schools are Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP), and YouthBuild Preparatory Academy.

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## References for Student Mobility

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## Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Reading Skills

Data is not reported for The Rhode Island School for the Deaf because the number of students tested was less than 10. These students are still counted in the remainder of the state and state totals.

See Methodology Section for more information.

## References for Reading Skills

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<sup>17,18</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2024.

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## Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Math Skills

Students enrolled in state-operated schools, charter schools, and collaboratives are not counted in totals for the four core cities or for the remainder of state, but they are included in state totals.

NA indicates that the school district does not serve students at that grade level.

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## Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Science Skills

Students enrolled in state-operated schools, charter schools, and collaboratives are not counted in totals for the four core cities or for the remainder of state, but they are included in state totals.

## References for Science Skills

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## References for Chronic Early Absence

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## Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Chronic Absence, Middle School and High School

Collaboratives include Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, Urban Collaborative and YouthBuild Preparatory Academy.