

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.^{1,2} 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.³

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.^{4,5} After two decades of improvement, math performance in the U.S. leveled off and has now begun to decline.⁶

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.¹ Opportunities for advanced math instruction are especially important for low-income children, who may be exposed to less complex math concepts.⁷

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.^{5,8} Teachers should expose all students to challenging and culturally relevant math concepts and curriculum and provide additional support to struggling students.⁷

The *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* measures proficiency in math and other subjects nationally and across states every other year.⁶ 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*.^{9,10} Rhode Island is one of 15 states that saw improvement in fourth grade math.¹¹



Third- & Eighth-Grade Students Meeting Expectations on the RICAS Math Assessment, Rhode Island, 2025

SUBGROUP	THIRD GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
Female Students	36%	27%
Male Students	41%	26%
*Multilingual Learners	18%	<5%
Non-English Learners	43%	31%
*Students Receiving Special Education Services	15%	<5%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	44%	31%
Low-Income Students	25%	13%
Higher-Income Students	58%	44%
American Indian or Alaska Native Students	16%	12%
Asian Students+	60%	47%
Black Students	23%	12%
Hispanic/Latino Students	25%	12%
White Students	49%	37%
Homeless Students	16%	6%
Students in Foster Care	20%	7%
ALL STUDENTS	38%	26%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education. (2025). *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2024-2025. 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. +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 38% in 2025, while for eighth graders it declined from 25% in 2019 to 16% in 2021 and increased to 26% in 2025.¹²
- ◆ In Rhode Island in the 2024-2025 school year, 25% of low-income third graders met expectations in math, compared with 58% of higher-income third graders. There also were large gaps by race and ethnicity, with 60% of Asian and 49% of white third graders meeting expectations, compared with 23% of Black, 25% of Hispanic, and 16% of American Indian or Alaska Native students. This large gap is also seen in eighth-grade results.¹²
- ◆ In 2025, 20% of third graders in foster care met expectations in math and 7% of eighth graders who were in foster care met expectations in math.¹²

Table 45.

Third- & Eighth-Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math, Rhode Island, 2024-2025 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF THIRD GRADERS TESTED	% OF THIRD GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS	# OF EIGHTH GRADERS TESTED	% OF EIGHTH GRADERS MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Barrington	246	57%	267	64%
Bristol Warren	202	41%	205	28%
Burrillville	140	41%	159	13%
Central Falls	169	14%	187	<5%
Chariho	227	45%	214	41%
Coventry	313	51%	329	36%
Cranston	686	35%	785	20%
Cumberland	374	68%	375	58%
East Greenwich	193	61%	205	68%
East Providence	367	42%	387	20%
Exeter-West Greenwich	103	52%	121	48%
Foster	32	38%	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	131	30%
Glocester	101	56%	NA	NA
Jamestown	47	70%	46	80%
Johnston	219	28%	216	21%
Lincoln	239	59%	253	36%
Little Compton	19	68%	28	57%
Middletown	150	56%	152	36%
Narragansett	57	65%	77	48%
New Shoreham	14	43%	11	36%
Newport	110	24%	117	6%
North Kingstown	258	67%	265	52%
North Providence	264	29%	268	21%
North Smithfield	129	72%	120	61%
Pawtucket	634	26%	620	10%
Portsmouth	137	63%	154	47%
Providence	1,468	27%	1,333	10%
Scituate	88	49%	88	23%
Smithfield	183	56%	182	54%
South Kingstown	164	63%	183	38%
Tiverton	113	74%	146	36%
Warwick	573	30%	556	18%
West Warwick	310	16%	251	8%
Westerly	166	49%	159	28%
Woonsocket	421	13%	344	7%
Charter Schools	1,081	28%	888	23%
State-Operated Schools	*	*	*	*
Collaboratives	NA	NA	77	*
Five Core Cities	2,802	24%	2,601	9%
Remainder of State	6,114	47%	6,333	34%
Statewide	10,000	38%	9,898	26%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2024-2025 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 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 five 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).

Five core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

(References continued on page 188)

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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 five core cities or for the remainder of state, but they are included in state totals.

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