

Family Guide to Understanding RICAS

RI Comprehensive Assessment System – Spring 2021

Office of Instruction, Assessment, & Curriculum

October 2021



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

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What is RICAS?

RICAS is an annual assessment taken by Rhode Island students in grades 3-8 for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. It is the same assessment as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) for ELA and mathematics.

Students demonstrate critical thinking abilities and application of knowledge in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, including (for ELA) their ability to make connections between reading and writing.

Student performance on the assessment gives a signal of student readiness for the next grade level based on the content standards for their current grade level.

What is the test like?

Students take two sessions each of ELA and mathematics. All sessions are untimed, so students can take the time they need to work productively.

ELA



Read passages and respond to questions about what was read



Write short and essay answers in response to reading



Students encounter both literary (e.g., fiction) and informational (e.g., nonfiction) texts

Mathematics



Interact with scenarios, math problems, and questions



Demonstrate understanding of math concepts and apply math skills



Use math tools (e.g., calculators, equation editor, gridded response)



Item and question types

Item types include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, “technology enhanced” questions like drag-and-drop, and written responses/essays. While RICAS is designed to be given on a computer, there is a paper version available for students with accommodations.

Students can gain experience with item types found on the test through the online or paper practice tests for their grade level. Practice tests also allow students with accommodations to become familiar with text-to-speech and other tools. You can access the [ELA Practice Test](#) or [Mathematics Practice Test](#) online through the [RICAS Resource Center](#).

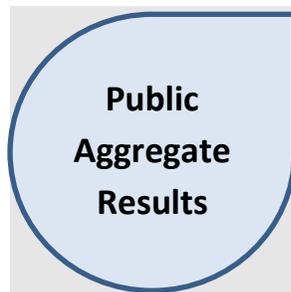


Why are RICAS results important?

RICAS gives teachers, students, and families information about student progress, school performance, and how to improve teaching and learning. The performance standards for RICAS signal students’ readiness for the next grade level.

When and how are RICAS results reported?

RICAS results are reported in the fall of the same calendar year the assessment took place. Spring 2021 assessment results were released in October 2021. State-, district-, and school-level results are made available to the general public: data that are released in aggregate form (groups) make it possible to see how schools, districts, and the state are doing while keeping individual student results confidential. Student-level information is only accessible by certain educators and an individual student’s family.



- Posted on the Rhode Island Assessment Data Portal (www.ride.ri.gov/RIADP).
- School, district, and state levels in aggregate form: reporting averages for groups of students protects student confidentiality.
- Families, community members, and educators can review this data.
- Review how schools are doing, including comparing between schools within and across districts.



Educator Access to Inform Instruction

- Educators receive access to the results of the students they teach.
- Only accessible through a confidential, secure login system.
- Educators analyze student results to help them better support the students– whether that means refining their instructional practices or adjusting curricular decisions.

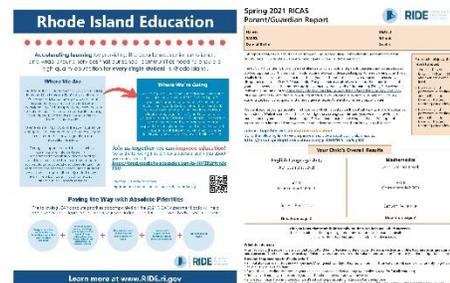
Student Results for Families

- The family of each student receives their student’s RICAS results in the form of the individual student score report (ISR).
- ISRs are provided to families from the student’s school district.
- Districts also retain a PDF copy of the student’s ISR and can securely transfer that to a student’s family or use it to re-print the ISR if a duplicate is needed.

More Information about ISRs

RIDE has created a guide to help families understand the individual student score report (ISR) they receive, which is posted at www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment-Families.

The ISR has been translated into multiple languages to support access by families whose primary language may not be English. ISRs include the following information, explained in more detail in the guide:



- general information about this year’s administration
- student scale score and achievement level for ELA and mathematics
- student past performance on previous RICAS administrations (if applicable)
- achievement comparison with the school/district/state
- student growth percentile (SGP; see next page) and average growth for the school, district, and state
- reporting category points earned and student performance on individual test questions

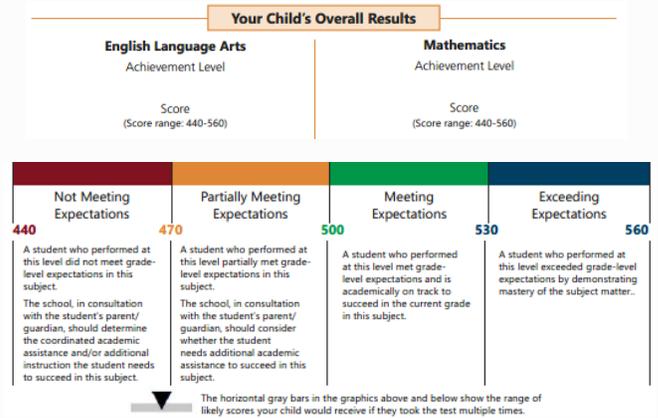
New for 2021:

- Each ISR contains a link to a personalized video that explains that student’s results. This video walks through the different parts of the ISR and explains what each means.
- Student growth for this year has only been calculated for students in grades 5-8, and if they have taken RICAS in 2019.
- The QR code on the ISR leads to www.ride.ri.gov/Families.

What do these assessment terms mean?

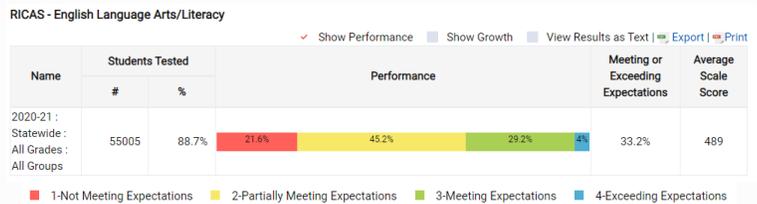
Student Scale Score

- A student receives a scale score between 440 and 560 based on their performance on the test.
- The score indicates how well the student meets the expectations for their grade level, and corresponds to a particular performance level.



Achievement Level

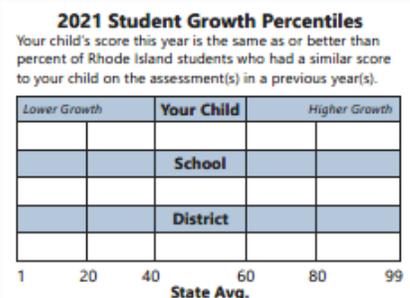
- RICAS uses four performance levels to describe how well students meet the expectations for their grade level: Not Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations, Meeting Expectations, and Exceeding Expectations.



- Meeting Expectations means that students are able to demonstrate grade level expectations; while Exceeding Expectations means that students are showing mastery of the grade level expectations in that content area.

Student Growth Percentile (SGP)

- On a scale of 1 (least growth) to 99 (most growth), the SGP describes a student's learning over time compared with their academic peers (other Rhode Island students in the same grade who had similar scores on previous state level tests).
- For example, if a student has an SGP of 80, we can say that student showed more growth between state assessments than 80 percent of their academic peers.
- Students in grades 5-8 will receive a SGP for 2021 if they participated in RICAS in 2019.
- This year growth was calculated slightly differently than last year since RICAS was not administered in 2020 (for more information, review the [Family Guide to SGPs](#)).



How are reporting categories helpful?

Each content area has reporting categories that correspond to the content domains (topics) of our state’s content standards: the [RI Core Standards for ELA/Literacy](#) and [RI Core Standards for Mathematics](#).

For example, ELA has 3 reporting categories: Reading, Language, and Writing. Mathematics has 4-5 reporting categories that vary by grade level, but may include domains like Number & Operations, Measurement & Data, and Geometry.

Students received points per item out of the total for each category for their grade level.

Educators and families can then see how well a student performed in those areas in the reporting category and item-level information section of a student’s ISR.

How your child performed in each reporting category and on each individual test question

Reporting Category	Points Earned by Your Child	Total Possible Points	Average Points			Average Points Earned by Students Meeting Expectations
			School	District	State	
Reading						
Language ¹						
Writing ²						

¹ The Language reporting category includes the standard English convention scores from the essays.
² The Writing reporting category is based on the idea development essay scores.

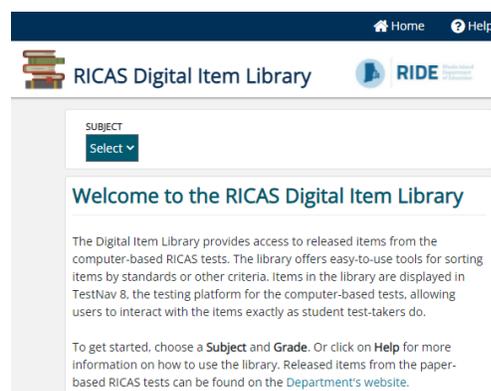
Individual Test Questions

Question Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Points Earned																														

Key: x/y = x points earned out of y possible points
 ID = Essay idea development score Blank space = no answer
 CV = Essay conventions score N/A = item not administered

How can I know how students did on particular test questions or items?

- Each item has a total number of points possible for a student to earn.
- The points possible are based on item complexity: items such as essays or items with multiple parts have more points possible because there are more elements (knowledge, skills) that a student is asked to demonstrate.
- On items with multiple points, students can earn partial credit based on performance (e.g., raw score 2 on a 3-point item).
- Every year, RIDE releases some of the items from the test for public viewing and use. Computer-based released items may be found on the [RICAS Resource Center](#) or in the [RICAS Digital Item Library](#). Paper-based testing released items can be found at www.ride.ri.gov/RICAS-Released-Items.



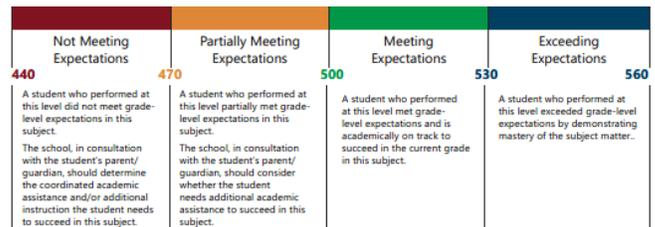
How can RICAS results be used?

RICAS is a valid and reliable measure of student performance and can help us understand how our schools are doing in preparing our students with the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in postsecondary education and careers.

The aggregate results displayed on the [Assessment Data Portal](#) and in the [Item Analysis Tool](#) provide an indicator of each school's or district's performance.

This can support discussions about where the school or district is doing well and where there is a need for improvement.

When reviewing your student's ISR, look closely at where your student's score falls within the achievement level. If your student's score is not close to Meeting Expectations, talk with your student's teacher for that content area (ELA or mathematics) about how you can work together to help your student catch up.



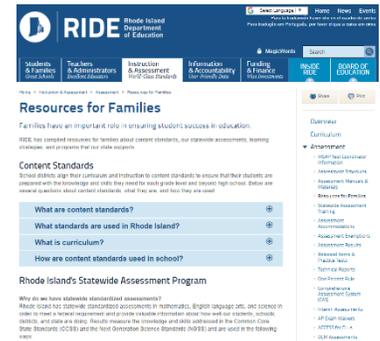
The horizontal gray bars in the graphics above and below show the range of likely scores your child would receive if they took the test multiple times.

Item-level information can be used – in conjunction with released items, item descriptions, and other materials – to see where a student is succeeding and where they may need additional support to enhance specific content area skills needed to master grade-level standards.

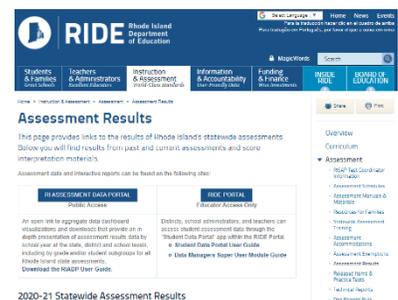
Assessment reporting is a different calculation than school and district accountability, though accountability does include measures based on students' proficiency in ELA and mathematics on Rhode Island's state assessments. School and district accountability for 2021 will look different than in previous years. For more information, please go to www.ride.ri.gov/Accountability.

Where can I learn more about RICAS results?

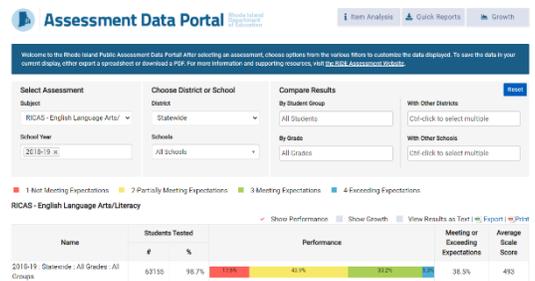
Scanning the QR code on your student's ISR will bring you to RIDE's Resources for Families page at www.ride.ri.gov/Families. This page provides answers to frequently asked questions about content standards, curriculum, and RI's statewide assessments. It also includes resources about student growth percentiles, the RICAS ISRs translated into multiple languages, and the RICAS ISR Guide for Families in the www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment-Families section.



RIDE's Assessment Results page includes links to the Assessment Data Portal, as well as supporting materials for current and past assessment results (www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment-Results).



The Assessment Data Portal (www.ride.ri.gov/RIADP) displays school and district performance for all state assessments.



The RICAS Resource Center provides access to released items and practice tests on their student resources page at <http://ricas.pearsonsupport.com/student/>.

