

THE CONDITION OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS NATIONAL 2018



ACT[®]

National

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2018

This report looks at the progress of the ACT®-tested 2018 US high school graduating class relative to college and career readiness. The data in this report are based on more than 1.9 million graduates—55% of the students in the 2018 national graduating class—who took the ACT at some time from grade 10 to 12. The ACT was taken by the majority of 2018 graduates in 28 US states. In 19 of those states, the ACT was taken by all or virtually all graduates, typically as part of a state-funded assessment program.

As a mission-driven, research-based nonprofit organization, ACT is committed to providing meaningful data to help individuals and institutions succeed. ACT's goal is to provide relevant data on readiness to students, parents, educators, schools, districts, and states so that all can make informed decisions that will improve outcomes. We accomplish this goal by taking a holistic view and using consistent and reliable historical information so that individuals and institutions have better context to make critical decisions about the journey they have undertaken.

Performance of 2018 Graduates

- Slightly fewer ACT-tested graduates were ready for college coursework this year than last year. The percentage of students meeting at least three of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in the four core subject areas was 38% for the 2018 US high school graduating class, down from 39% last year but the same as in 2016.
- A higher percentage of students this year than in recent years fell to the bottom of the preparedness scale, showing little or no readiness for college coursework. Thirty-five percent of 2018 graduates met none of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, up from 31% in 2014 and from 33% last year.
- The national average ACT Composite score for the 2018 graduating class was 20.8, down from 21.0 last year but the same as in 2016. Average scores in English, mathematics, reading, and science all dropped between 0.1 and 0.3 point compared to last year.
- Readiness levels in math and English have steadily declined since 2014.
- Readiness levels in reading and science have varied over the past five years, with no clear upward or downward trends.
- The average Composite score for Asian students rose this year compared to last year. Average scores for students in all other racial/ethnic groups, however, were down.
- College readiness levels remain dismal for underserved learners (low-income, minority, and/or first-generation college students—who make up 43% of all ACT-tested graduates). Once again, fewer than a fourth of underserved graduates showed overall readiness for college coursework.

2018 Graduates Tested

- More than 1.9 million US high school graduates (1,914,817)—55 percent of the 2018 graduating class nationally—took the ACT test. Those numbers are down slightly from last year, primarily due to changes in statewide testing.
- The distribution of examinees by race/ethnicity changed little between 2017 and 2018. Slightly more than half (52%) of ACT-tested 2018 graduates identified themselves as White. The next largest group was Hispanic/Latino students (16%), followed by Black/African American students (13%).

STEM

- 45% of 2018 graduates—approximately 853,000 students—were interested in STEM majors or occupations, down from 48% in 2017.
- The average national STEM score was 20.9 in 2018, down from 21.1 in 2017.
- 20% of 2018 graduates met the ACT STEM Readiness Benchmark, down from 21% last year but steady with the three previous years.
- Underserved students lag far behind their peers in the area of STEM. Consistent with last year, only 2% of students meeting all three underserved criteria achieved the STEM benchmark.

Workforce/Career Readiness

- Just 26% of ACT-tested 2018 graduates likely have the foundational work readiness skills needed for more than nine out of 10 jobs recently profiled in the ACT JobPro® database. Those students earned an ACT Composite score of 25 or higher, which corresponds with the Gold level of the ACT WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®).
- Another 47% of 2018 graduates would be likely to earn a Silver-level NCRC based on their ACT Composite score, while 23% would be likely to earn a Bronze-level certificate. Only 4% are unlikely to earn an NCRC at all.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- 44% of 2018 ACT-tested graduates took the ACT more than once. More than half of graduates who retest see their Composite scores go up on their second testing, with the average Composite score growth being nearly 1 point.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of 2018 ACT-tested graduates participated in the ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS). This service helps link postsecondary opportunities and programs to students, allowing students to receive information from colleges and scholarship agencies across the country.
- During the 2017–2018 academic year, more than a half million (542,506) fee waivers were awarded to low-income high school students across the nation, allowing them to take the ACT for free. Unfortunately, more than a fourth (28%) of these fee waivers were not used, suggesting that more than 150,000 eligible students missed out on an opportunity to take the ACT for free during the past year alone. (Note: These numbers are based on the past academic year, not specifically the 2018 graduating class.)
- Among 2018 ACT-tested graduates, 64% registered to send free score reports to one or more postsecondary institutions, down from 65% in 2017 and 67% in 2016. Starting this fall, students from low-income families who take the ACT with fee waivers will be allowed to send up to 20 free ACT score reports to colleges and/or scholarship agencies at any time during their college search process.

Pipeline

- Student aspirations are high. Around three-fourths (76%) of 2018 ACT-tested graduates said they aspire to postsecondary education. Most of those students said they aspire to a four-year degree or higher.
- A significant portion of students who hope to attend college don't actually enroll. While 82% of 2017 ACT-tested graduates said they aspired to attend college, only 66% actually ended up enrolling. If this "aspirations gap" was fully closed, an additional 322,526 of last year's ACT-tested graduates would have enrolled in postsecondary education.
- The most popular college major choice among ACT-tested graduates is once again Health Sciences and Technologies, favored by 16% of 2018 graduates. Business (8%) was the next-highest major. An additional 13% of students said they were undecided, while 19% did not provide an answer.
- Once again this year, only 4 percent of ACT-tested graduates indicated they plan a career as an educator. These numbers point to no relief for the US teacher shortage, which is projected to grow to more than 100,000 educators by 2021.

College and Career Readiness Workshops

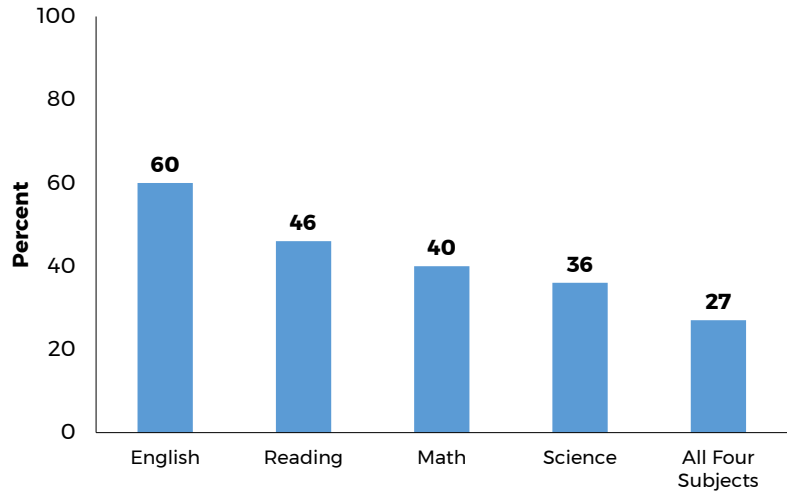
- During the 2017–18 school year, ACT offered 245 free College and Career Readiness Workshops, registering more than 11,500 educators across the country.
~ www.act.org/ccrw

National

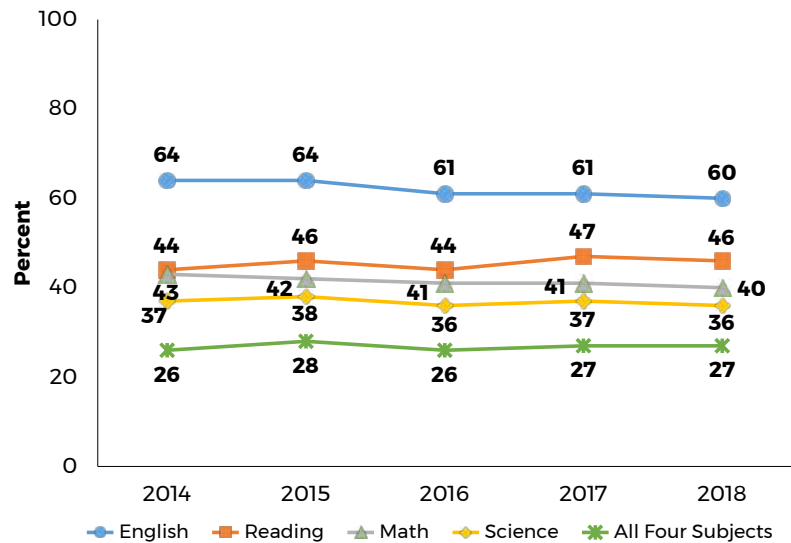
Attainment of College and Career Readiness

- 1,914,817 high school graduates, or an estimated 55% of the 2018 graduating class, took the ACT*.
- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of students taking the ACT nationally increased by 69,030 students (4 percent).

Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



Percent of 2014-2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

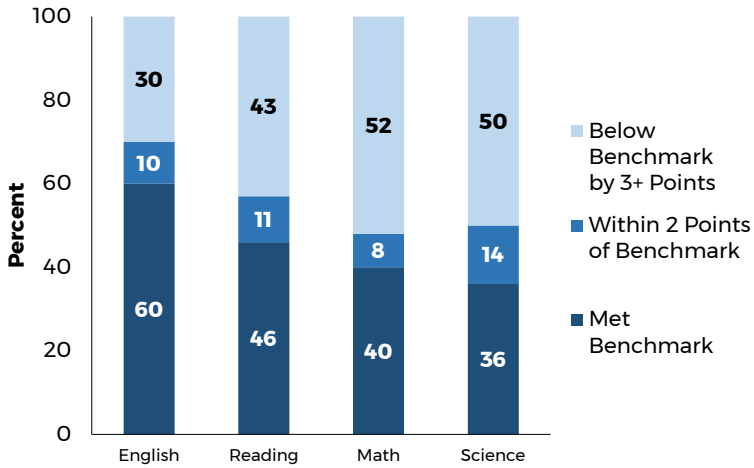


* Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from: 1) Grad 2013-2016: *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 8th edition. Copyright December 2012 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. 2) Grad 2017: *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 9th edition. Copyright December 2016 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

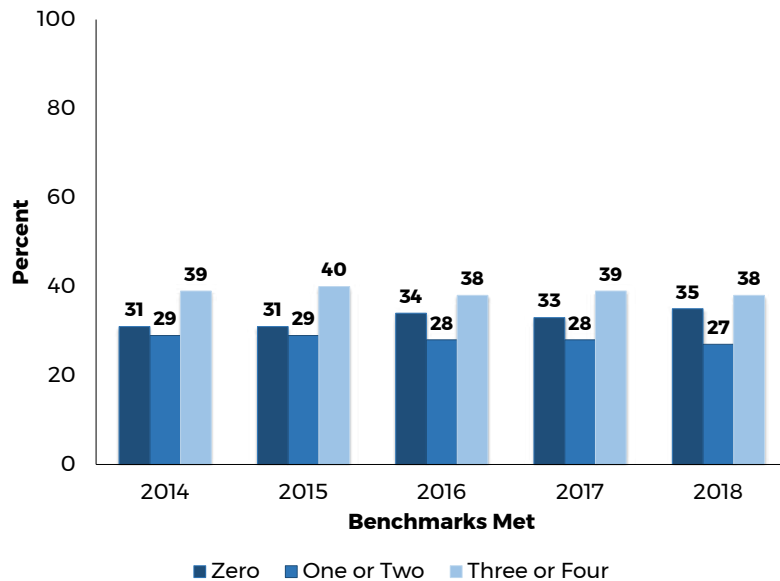
Note: Percents in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Near Attainment of College and Career Readiness

Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



Trends in Percentage of Students Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

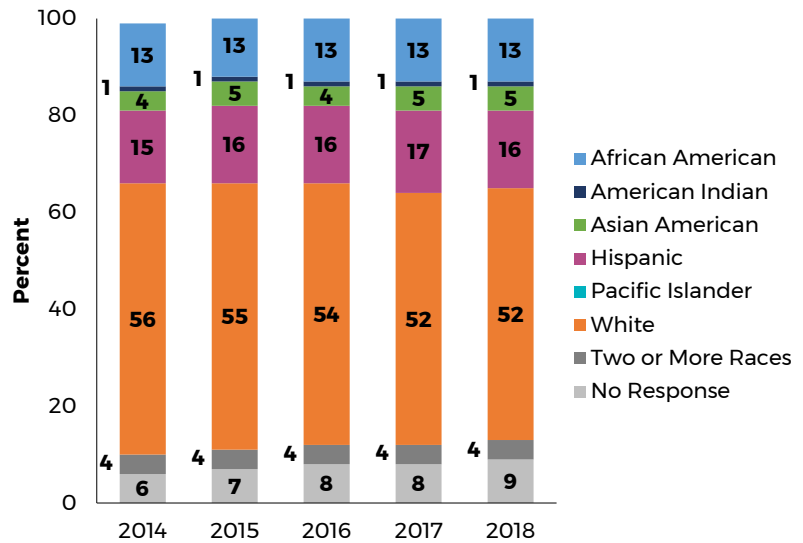


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Participation and Opportunity

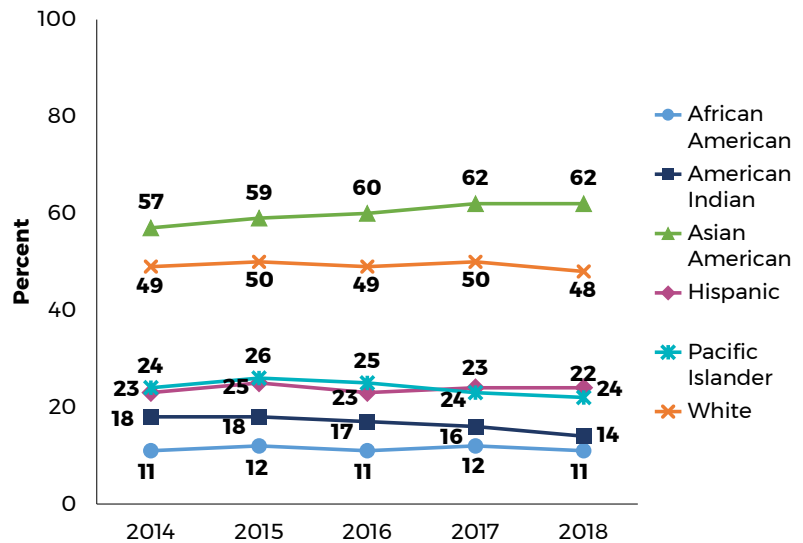
Over the past decade, ACT has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of students tested as well as growth in partnerships with states, districts, and high schools. As a result, the *Condition of College & Career Readiness 2018* report provides a much deeper and more representative sample in comparison to the more self-selected college-going population from a decade ago.

Percent of 2014-2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

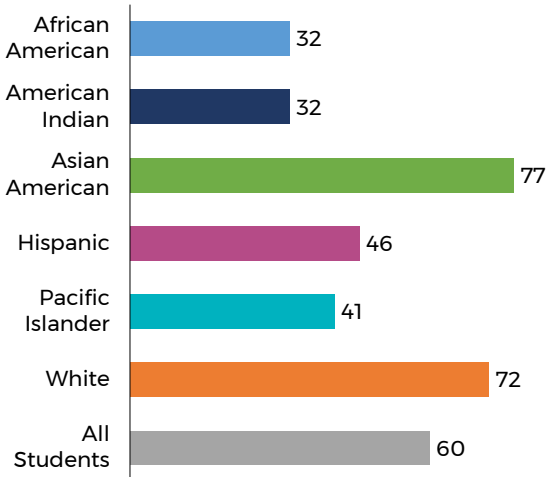
Percent of 2014-2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



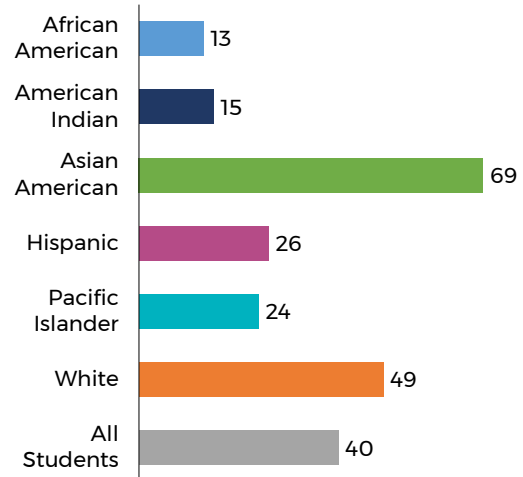
Participation and Opportunity by Subject

Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity and Subject

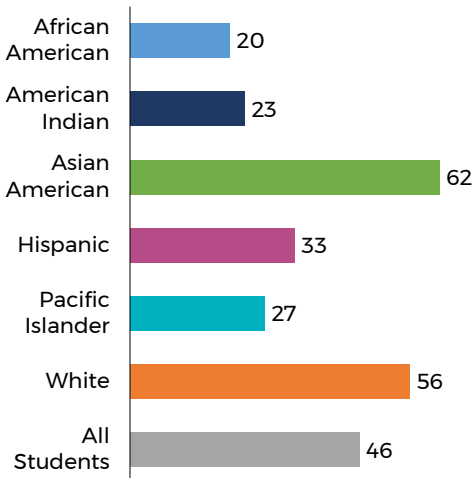
English



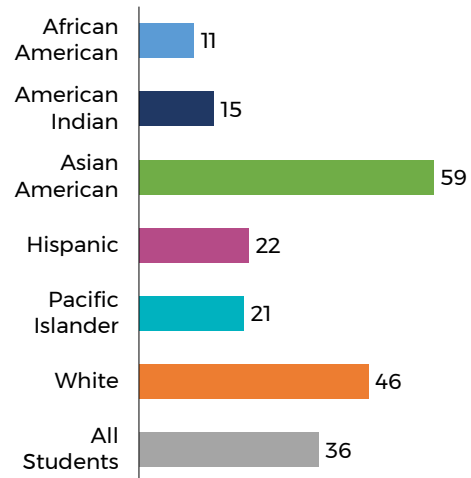
Math



Reading



Science



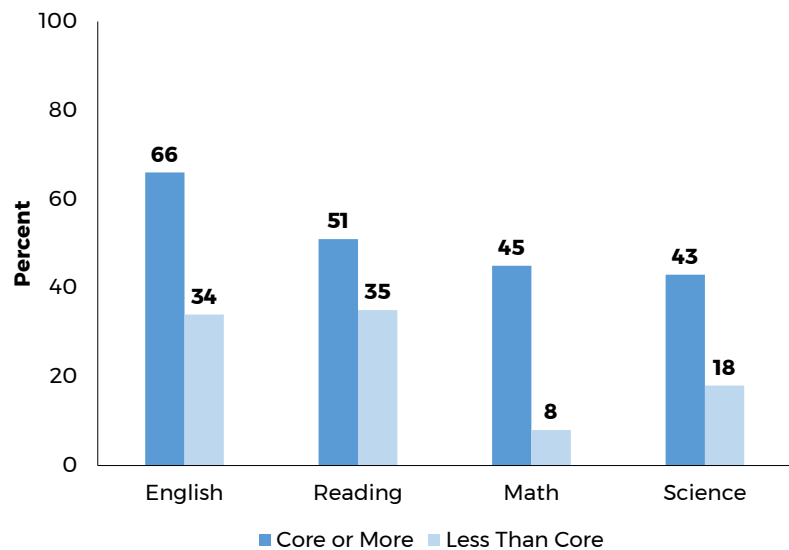
African American	American Indian	Asian American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	All Students
N = 243,080	N = 15,449	N = 91,899	N = 307,358	N = 5,753	N = 996,712	N = 1,914,817

National

Course-Taking Patterns and Benchmark Performance

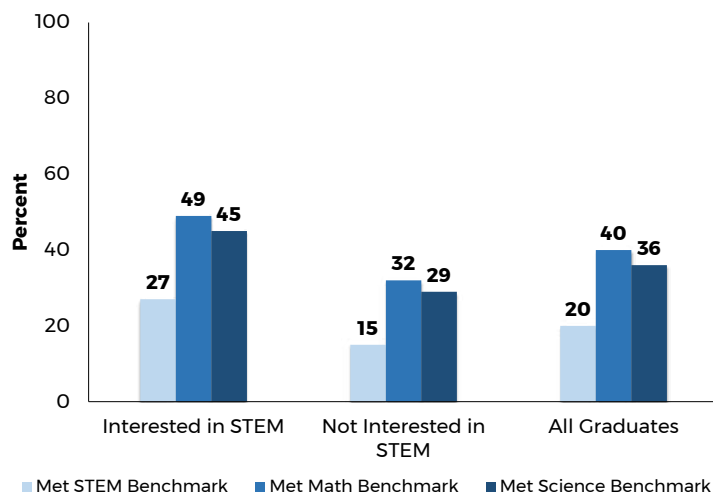
Within subjects, ACT has consistently found that students who take the recommended core curriculum are more likely to be ready for college or career than those who do not. A core curriculum is defined as four years of English and three years each of math, social studies, and science.¹

Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates in Core or More vs. Less Than Core Courses Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



A Look at STEM

Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by STEM Cohort



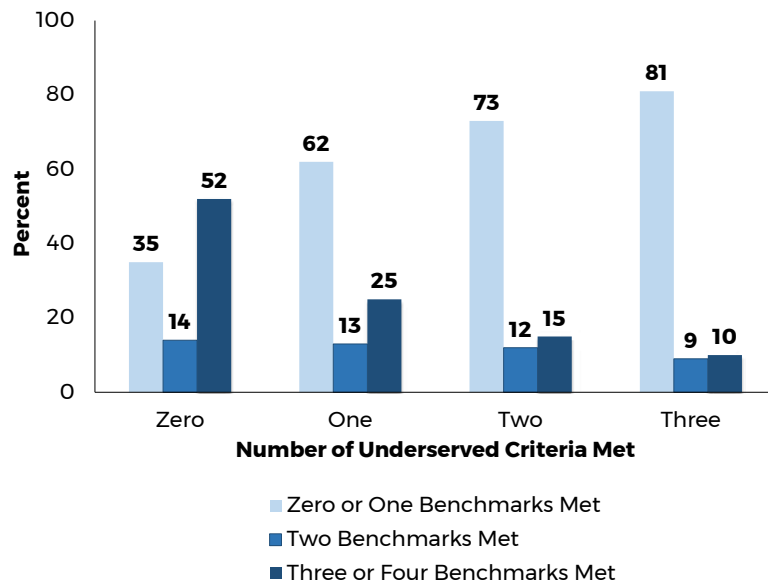
For the 2018 ACT-tested graduating class as a whole, and separately for graduates interested in STEM and non-STEM majors/occupations, this chart presents ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment percentages in STEM, math, and science. Students meeting or exceeding a STEM score of 26 (i.e., the ACT STEM Benchmark) are considered ready for first-year STEM college courses such as physics or calculus.

Interested in STEM	Not Interested in STEM	All Graduates
N = 853,657	N = 1,061,160	N = 1,914,817

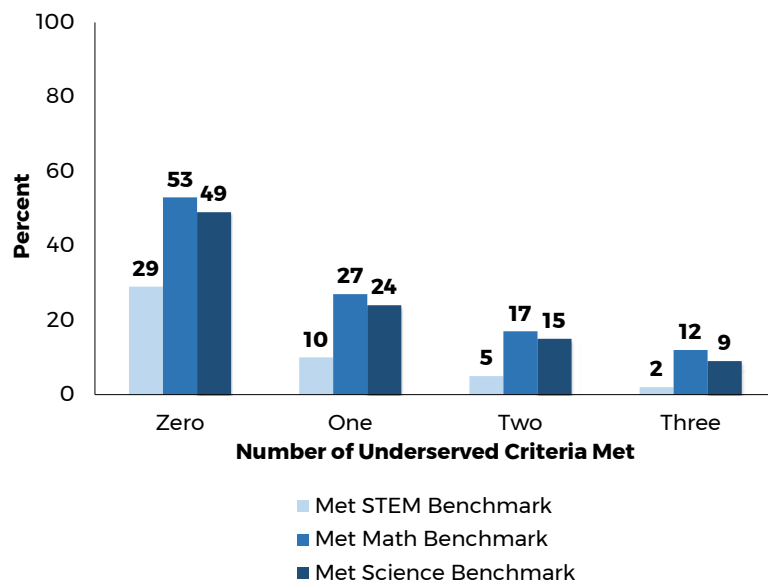
The Underserved Learner*

In recent years, approximately half of each ACT graduating class has consisted of students who could be considered underserved. That is, they would be the first generation to attend college, come from low-income families, and/or self-identify their race/ethnicity as minority. Given the enormity of this population, ACT seeks to fully understand how students' statuses relative to being underserved impacts readiness for college and careers.

2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Number of Underserved Criteria Met



Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness and STEM Benchmarks by Number of Underserved Criteria Met



ACT research has shown that students meeting at least one underserved criterion tend to realize lower college and career readiness levels than students meeting none of the criteria. However, that relationship comes into tighter focus when we take into account how many criteria are met. In many instances, the impact of meeting underserved criteria is additive: Students who meet increasingly more underserved criteria tend to demonstrate progressively lower college and career readiness rates. The adjacent graphs reflect the relationship between number of underserved criteria and readiness levels for 2018 graduates.

Underserved Criteria N Counts apply to both adjacent charts:

Zero N = 1,082,774	One N = 522,054
Two N = 218,523	Three N = 91,466

* Underserved learners self-report: Highest parental education level excluding college; family income less than \$36,000 per year; or race/ethnicity of African American, American Indian, Hispanic, or Pacific Islander.

National

ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment for Top Planned College Majors: 2018 Graduates

When students register for the ACT, they can select a college major—from a list of 294 majors—that they plan to pursue. Among recent ACT-tested high school graduates nationwide, roughly three out of every four selected a specific planned major, whereas the remaining one in four indicated that they were undecided or did not select a major.

This table ranks the nation’s top (most frequently selected) majors among 2018 graduates. The percentages of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are shown for each major. Across these planned majors, there are considerable differences in the percentage of students who are ready to succeed in college.

Major Name	N	English	Reading	Math	Science	All Four
No Major Indicated	368,828	36	26	20	18	12
Undecided	247,060	67	52	46	42	32
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	74,428	58	39	28	27	16
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	63,007	84	69	64	60	49
Business Administration and Management, General	49,555	63	46	43	37	26
Biology, General	37,426	82	67	60	57	45
Mechanical Engineering	32,238	68	54	61	53	42
Computer Science and Programming	29,334	79	66	67	61	50
Criminology	25,870	54	38	25	25	14
Law (Pre-Law)	22,286	66	54	41	39	29
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	19,939	67	47	41	38	25
Accounting	19,650	68	49	55	44	32
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	19,315	74	60	67	60	48
Biochemistry and Biophysics	18,839	85	71	70	65	55
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	17,892	72	55	37	36	25
Psychology, General	15,430	78	62	46	45	33
Aerospace/Aeronautical Engineering	15,099	84	71	76	69	58
Athletic Training	15,098	52	33	28	26	15
Elementary Education	14,195	65	44	33	30	19
Marketing Management and Research	13,564	72	53	48	41	30
Veterinary Medicine (Pre-Veterinarian)	13,456	65	49	36	37	24
Computer Engineering	12,856	74	59	64	57	46
Graphic Design	12,572	59	43	30	29	18
Medical Assisting	12,164	43	28	20	18	10
Health-Related Professions and Services, General	11,769	69	50	42	39	26
Finance, General	11,468	85	69	74	65	54
Pharmacy (Pre-Pharmacy)	11,042	76	57	55	50	37
Civil Engineering	10,985	73	56	65	54	42
Biomedical Engineering	10,845	91	81	84	78	69
Political Science and Government	10,556	88	79	64	61	51

Note: *Undecided* and/or *No Major Indicated* are included in the table, if applicable. The former refers to students who selected the option *Undecided* from the list of majors. The latter refers to students who did not respond to the question.

ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment for the Top Planned College Majors with Good Fit: 2018 Graduates

Many students gravitate toward majors that align with their preferred activities and values. ACT research has shown that greater *interest-major fit* is related to important student outcomes such as persistence in a major or college. This table shows, for each planned major, the numbers and percentages of students displaying good interest-major fit,² as well as the percentages of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. Since only students who completed the ACT Interest Inventory during ACT registration are included here, this table shows results for a subset of the students in the prior table. These planned majors vary considerably in the percentage of students displaying good interest-major fit and meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. The results highlight the importance of examining multiple predictors of college success and affirm the value of a holistic view of college readiness.

Major Name	N Fit	% Fit	English	Reading	Math	Science	All Four
No Major Indicated			No profile available				
Undecided			No profile available				
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	23,673	32	68	46	34	33	20
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	30,737	49	87	73	68	64	52
Business Administration and Management, General	16,432	33	68	50	48	42	30
Biology, General	18,641	50	85	71	63	61	48
Mechanical Engineering	10,825	34	70	56	63	56	44
Computer Science and Programming	7,818	27	80	67	67	63	51
Criminology	3,493	14	65	48	31	30	20
Law (Pre-Law)	7,805	35	77	64	49	46	36
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	5,604	28	76	55	49	47	31
Accounting	10,176	52	72	52	60	48	35
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	6,346	33	75	61	68	61	49
Biochemistry and Biophysics	10,189	54	88	75	73	69	58
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	3,023	17	85	71	45	46	33
Psychology, General	3,581	23	88	73	52	54	41
Aerospace/Aeronautical Engineering	5,512	37	87	75	79	73	62
Athletic Training	2,863	19	63	42	34	34	20
Elementary Education	3,314	23	73	50	36	32	21
Marketing Management and Research	3,887	29	80	62	53	47	34
Veterinary Medicine (Pre-Veterinarian)	5,495	41	72	55	41	44	29
Computer Engineering	3,658	28	77	64	67	62	50
Graphic Design	5,267	42	65	49	31	31	20
Medical Assisting	3,350	28	50	32	25	23	14
Health-Related Professions and Services, General	3,967	34	75	56	47	45	31
Finance, General	5,097	44	88	72	77	69	56
Pharmacy (Pre-Pharmacy)	4,692	42	82	63	63	58	44
Civil Engineering	3,676	33	72	55	66	55	42
Biomedical Engineering	4,750	44	93	84	86	81	72
Political Science and Government	4,729	45	92	82	65	63	53

Note: *Undecided* and/or *No Major Indicated* are included in the table, if applicable. The former refers to students who selected the option *Undecided* from the list of majors. The latter refers to students who did not respond to the question.

National

2018 State Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates, Average Composite Score, and Percent Meeting Benchmarks by Subject

State	Percent of Graduates Tested*	Average Composite Score	Percent Meeting English Benchmark	Percent Meeting Reading Benchmark	Percent Meeting Math Benchmark	Percent Meeting Science Benchmark
Alabama	100	19.1	51	35	23	24
Arkansas	100	19.4	53	36	27	26
Kentucky	100	20.2	59	43	33	32
Louisiana	100	19.2	53	35	24	25
Mississippi	100	18.6	47	29	21	20
Missouri	100	20	56	41	33	32
Montana	100	20	52	41	35	32
Nebraska	100	20.1	56	40	35	33
Nevada	100	17.7	38	27	21	18
North Carolina	100	19.1	46	35	31	25
Ohio	100	20.3	55	43	38	35
Oklahoma	100	19.3	50	39	26	26
South Carolina	100	18.3	42	30	24	20
Tennessee	100	19.6	54	38	28	28
Utah	100	20.4	58	43	36	34
Wisconsin	100	20.5	59	42	40	36
Wyoming	100	20	55	41	33	33
Minnesota	99	21.3	60	48	47	42
North Dakota	98	20.3	57	43	39	34
Hawaii	89	18.9	48	32	28	24
South Dakota	77	21.9	68	54	49	46
Kansas	71	21.6	67	52	44	41
Iowa	68	21.8	70	54	44	45
New Mexico	67	19.4	48	37	28	27
Arizona	66	19.2	47	35	32	27
Florida	66	19.9	53	43	32	29

2018 State Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates, Average Composite Score, and Percent Meeting Benchmarks by Subject

State	Percent of Graduates Tested*	Average Composite Score	Percent Meeting English Benchmark	Percent Meeting Reading Benchmark	Percent Meeting Math Benchmark	Percent Meeting Science Benchmark
West Virginia	65	20.3	61	46	30	32
Georgia	53	21.4	65	49	40	38
Illinois	43	23.9	82	64	61	55
Oregon	42	21.3	63	49	43	40
Texas	41	20.6	56	44	39	35
Idaho	36	22.3	73	58	49	46
Alaska	33	20.8	60	49	42	36
District of Columbia	32	23.6	70	60	54	51
Indiana	32	22.5	73	57	53	47
Maryland	31	22.5	69	57	50	47
New Jersey	31	23.7	79	63	62	53
Colorado	30	23.9	82	65	61	57
California	27	22.7	72	56	53	46
New York	27	24.5	83	68	67	62
Connecticut	26	25.6	90	75	71	67
Massachusetts	25	25.5	88	74	74	66
Vermont	24	24.1	83	69	63	60
Virginia	24	23.9	80	66	60	57
Washington	24	22.2	65	54	52	47
Michigan	22	24.4	84	67	65	60
Pennsylvania	20	23.5	80	64	60	55
Delaware	17	23.8	79	64	59	56
New Hampshire	16	25.1	88	73	72	64
Rhode Island	15	24.2	85	69	64	58
Maine	7	24	84	69	64	56
National	55	20.8	60	46	40	36

* Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 9th edition. Copyright December 2016 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

National

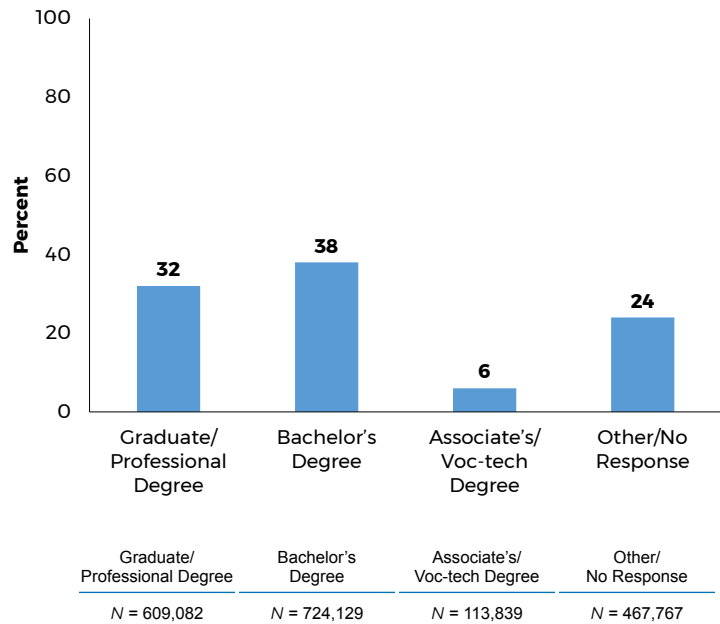
Other College and Career Readiness Factors

Aligning Student Behaviors, Planning, and Aspirations

ACT research shows most students aspire to a post-high school credential, which can be facilitated through educational planning, monitoring, and interventions. These efforts must begin early, be aligned to their aspirations, and continue throughout their educational careers.

There is good news in that 76% of 2018 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 82% of the national 2017 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 66% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 322,526 of the nation's 2017 ACT-tested graduates would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

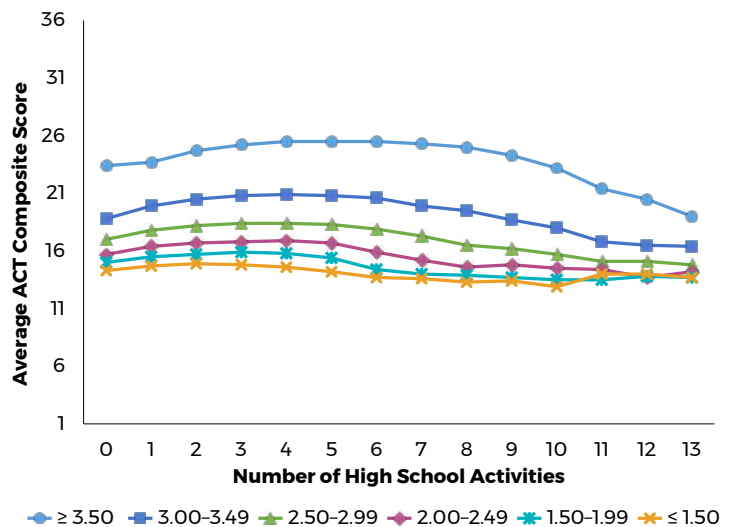
Percent of 2018 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations



Activity and Achievement: What's the Connection?

There are wide-ranging benefits to student participation in high school activities. Students can develop new skills, broaden their experiences, practice social skills, and increase their appeal to college admissions personnel. In addition, ACT data indicate that, regardless of a student's high school GPA, involvement in high school activities is often associated with higher ACT Composite scores. At the same time, results typically identify a point of diminishing returns, one where many activities are associated with a drop in ACT scores. The adjacent graph depicts the relationship between ACT scores and the number of high school activities for 2018 graduates.

Average ACT Composite Score by Number of Activities within High School GPA Ranges for 2018 Graduates



Note: In some cases, high activity counts may represent low numbers of students, giving rise to missing and outlying data points.

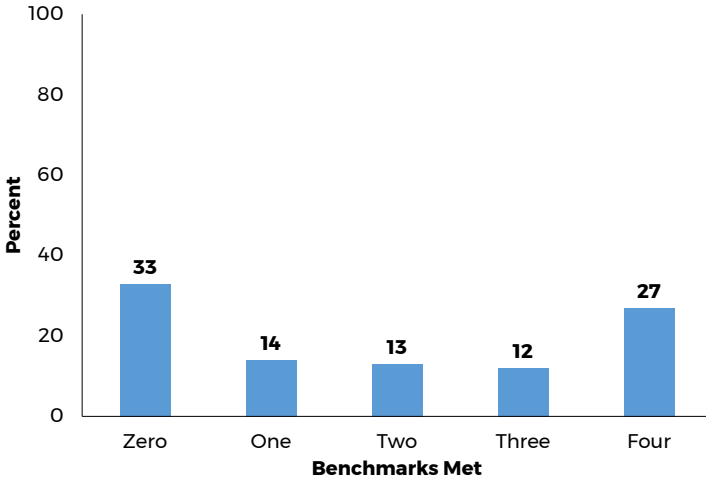
Looking Back at the Class of 2017

National

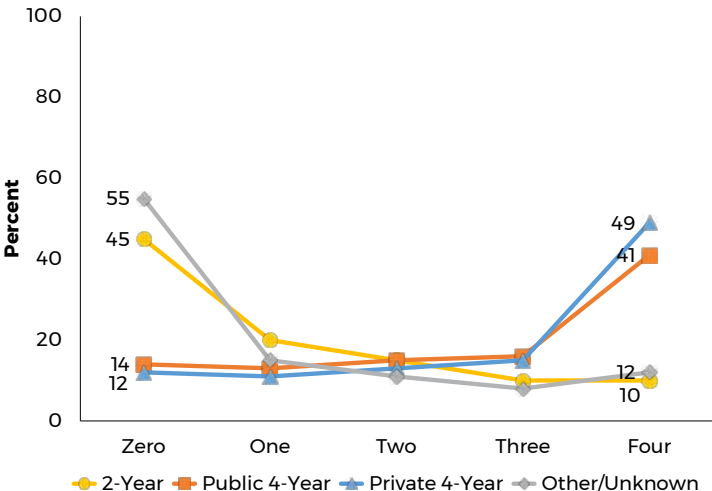
ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and Fall 2017 College Enrollment

Academic achievement, as measured by ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment, has a clear and distinctive relationship with the path taken by high school graduates. Those who were more academically ready were more likely to enroll in four-year institutions. Graduates who enrolled in two-year colleges or pursued other options after high school were more likely to have met fewer Benchmarks. For the sizable number of 2017 graduates who did not meet any Benchmarks, their post-high school opportunities appear to have been limited compared to their college-ready peers.

Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



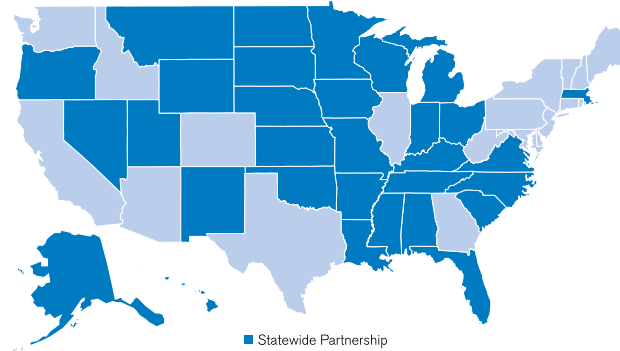
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained and Fall 2017 College Enrollment Status



Resources

K-12 Statewide Partnerships in College and Career Readiness

States that incorporate ACT college and career readiness solutions as part of their statewide assessments provide greater access to higher education and increase the likelihood of student success in postsecondary education. Educators also have the ability to establish a longitudinal plan using ACT assessments, which provide high schools, districts, and states with unique student-level data that can be used for effective student intervention plans. State administration of ACT programs and services:



- Increases opportunities for minority and middle- to low-income students
- Promotes student educational and career planning.
- Reduces the need for remediation
- Correlates with increases in college enrollment, persistence, and student success
- Aligns with state standards

ACT[®] Aspire[™]

Arkansas
Wisconsin

ACT[®] Online Prep

Alabama
Montana
Nebraska

The ACT[®]

Alabama
Arkansas
Hawaii
Kentucky
Louisiana
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
North Carolina
North Dakota
Oklahoma
Ohio
South Carolina
Tennessee
Utah
Wisconsin
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ACT[®] WorkKeys[™]

Alabama
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Arkansas
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nevada
New Mexico
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Utah
Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

ACT[®] National Career Readiness Certificate

Alabama
Alaska
Arkansas
Indiana
Iowa
Kentucky
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nevada
New Mexico
North Carolina
North Dakota
Oklahoma
Oregon
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Utah
Virginia
Wisconsin

Pre-ACT

Alabama
Florida
North Carolina
Oklahoma

All listed partnerships were in place during the 2017-2018 academic year.

Recommendations for Districts, States, and Policymakers

ACT score data over the years have consistently shown that educational outcomes among US high school graduates—in the form of academic readiness for college and career—are stagnant, and this year’s results suggest they may even be going downhill. Policymakers and educators must take strong, swift actions to reverse this course. The goal should be for all young people to have access to a high-quality, holistic education that will get them on target for college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school. To help meet this goal, ACT recommends the following:

- 1. Give educators the resources they need to help improve educational outcomes.** For educators to have the desired impact on all of the students they serve, they must be given the proper resources. Funding for schools and education must be increased, not decreased. States and districts should provide plentiful professional development opportunities so that teachers may improve their craft and increase their positive impact. And the teaching profession must be elevated, with higher salaries and greater levels of respect, to attract talented new instructors to the occupation.
- 2. Assess student learning and implement improvement strategies starting early in students’ educational careers.** ACT research suggests that if students are not on target for college and career readiness by the time they reach middle school, it may be too late for them to become ready by the time they graduate from high school. Assessing what students have learned, and implementing strategies to help them improve their skills and get on target, must begin in elementary school. Early assessment and intervention are critical to improving educational outcomes.
- 3. Provide equitable resources for underserved students.** All students should be given the opportunity to reach their potential. But many underserved students face disparities compared to other students in their access to rigorous college-preparatory curricula, high-quality educators, and support services that help create the foundation necessary for every child to succeed after high school. In particular, students whose parents did not attend college often lack the resources, information, and support from family members and peers that they need to prepare for success. These and other similar inequities must be resolved for true growth in readiness to occur across the board.
- 4. Ensure that students’ education is holistic and addresses the needs of the “whole learner.”** Mastering knowledge and skills in core subject areas is obviously essential in preparing students to succeed in college and career, but social and emotional learning (SEL) skills also play a critical role in allowing young people to reach their potential. Schools should consider assessment of students’ SEL skills as a developmental tool to ensure that all of each student’s needs are being identified and addressed. Also, to assist in SEL skills development, schools should consider scaling up nonacademic “wraparound” services from local community providers in areas such as mental health, family engagement, mentoring, afterschool programming, and career planning.
- 5. Collect, handle, and use assessment data responsibly, with special attention to maintaining its security and quality.** Student data privacy must be protected without hampering students’ ability to benefit educationally or organizations’ ability to conduct responsible research. Data literacy for teachers as well as school and district leaders should be prioritized in efforts to improve instruction. States and districts should follow the principles of high-quality assessment systems found in the ACT 2018 K-12 Education Platform when implementing the student assessment components of their state and/or federal accountability systems.

ACT Research

Key ACT Research

As students navigate their education and career journeys, it is critical for them to be ready for college and career success. College and career readiness is supported by the ACT Holistic Framework, a research-based, multidimensional model for understanding the essential knowledge and skills needed for success, and the solutions that can meet students' navigation needs. Visit act.org/condition2018 to access key reports listed below.

- Serving students' navigation needs from kindergarten to career requires a holistic approach:
 - ~ *Beyond Academics: A Holistic Framework for Enhancing Education and Workplace Success*
 - ~ *The Importance of Behavioral Skills and Navigation Factors for Education and Work Success*
- The ACT Holistic Framework is supported by prolific research:

- ~ Core Academic Skills:
 - 2018 State and National *Condition Reports*
 - *Profiles of STEM Students: Persisters, Joiners, Changers, and Departers*
 - *ACT Composite Score by Parental Education Level, 2012-2016*
 - *Comparisons of Student Achievement Levels by District Performance and Poverty*
- ~ Behavioral Skills (also called Social and Emotional Learning):
 - *The Development of Behavioral Performance Level Descriptors*
- ~ Cross-Cutting Capabilities:
 - *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2016*
- ~ Student journeys continue into postsecondary education and careers:
 - *Higher Education Research Digest*
 - *Predicted Attainment of ACT National Career Readiness Certificates for the 2016 ACT-tested High School Cohort*

How Does ACT Determine if Students Are College Ready?

The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are scores on the ACT subject area tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses. Based on a nationally stratified sample, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and represent a typical set of expectations. The STEM readiness benchmark in math and science represents the 50% probability of earning a B or better in identified STEM classes such as calculus and chemistry. The STEM benchmark was introduced in 2013 graduating class reporting. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are:

College Course/ Course Area	Subject Area Test	ACT College Readiness Benchmark
English Composition	English	18
Social Sciences	Reading	22
College Algebra	Math	22
Biology	Science	23
STEM	N/A	26

Notes

1. Data reflect subject-specific curriculum. For example, English "core or more" results pertain to students who took at least four years of English, regardless of courses taken in other subject areas.
2. The interest-major fit score measures the strength of the relationship between the student's profile of ACT Interest Inventory scores and the profile of students' interests in the major shown. Interest profiles for majors are based on a national sample of undergraduate students with a declared major and a GPA of at least 2.0. Major was determined in the third year for students in four-year colleges and in the second year for students in two-year colleges. Interest-major fit scores range from 0-99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit.

ACT is an independent, mission-driven, nonprofit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.

A copy of this report can be found at

www.act.org/condition2018

