

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015

Hispanic Students

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Dear Colleagues,

The past few years of US public education have been historic. Driven largely by growth in the Latino population, the 2014–15 school year saw Latino, African American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American students comprising the majority of students in our nation's public K–12 schools for the first time in US history. Today, about one in four public school students is Hispanic—a growth trend projected to continue in the near future. Latino high school graduation and postsecondary education enrollment rates are at record levels, as are Latino postsecondary degree completion numbers.

There is historic growth in Latino numbers entering colleges and universities in the United States, and many Latino students are making progress toward college and career readiness. Yet Latino high school students demonstrate college readiness in key academic areas in 2015 at largely similar levels to previous graduating classes, which is below other groups of students. We need to do better.

Since 2011, *Excelencia* in Education and ACT have collaborated to report on the academic readiness of Latino students. This year's report—*The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015: Hispanic Students*—provides a national snapshot of academic performance among Hispanic students in the high school graduating class of 2015 who took the ACT® test.

While this report benchmarks Hispanic students' college and career readiness, it also describes how the US educational system serves this large and growing proportion of today's students and future employees.

This report includes several recommendations about improving readiness for Hispanic students and all students by involving Latino parents in the educational system, increasing Latino teacher recruitment and development, encouraging education system alignment, supporting practitioners' educationally purposeful data use, and increasing STEM curriculum development and STEM interest and career exploratory pathways.

This report coincides with the announcement from ACT to establish the ACT Center for Equity in Learning, designed to create, lead, and coordinate strategic approaches to improve equity, access, opportunity, and success for all.

Data and analysis are essential to understanding the educational condition, but change requires action. We hope this report provides insights on how states, districts, schools, colleges, universities, and educators can better understand the challenges faced by Hispanic students, and most important, what can be done to increase their educational and workplace success. ACT and *Excelencia* remain united in our commitment to continue working collaboratively to better engage and support Latino students, families, and communities, and the schools, colleges, and universities where they enroll to advance education and career success for all.



Marten Roorda
CEO, ACT



Sarita E. Brown
President, *Excelencia* in Education

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The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015 is the ACT annual report on the progress of US high school graduates relative to college readiness. This year's report shows that 59% of students in the 2015 US graduating class took the ACT® test, up from 57% last year and 49% in 2011. The increased number of test takers over the past several years enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current graduating class in the context of college readiness as well as offering a glimpse at the emerging educational pipeline.

The ACT: Now More Than Ever

ACT has a longstanding commitment to improving college and career readiness. Through our research, our thought leadership, and our solutions, we seek to raise awareness of issues and best practices aimed at helping individuals achieve education and workplace success. As the landscape of education and assessment rapidly shifts and state education and economic development agendas converge, ACT is uniquely positioned to inform decisions at the individual, institutional, system, and agency levels.

As a research-based nonprofit organization, ACT is committed to providing information and solutions to support the following:

- **Holistic View of Readiness.** Our research shows that the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards can help prepare students for college and career success. However, we understand that academic readiness is just one of several factors that contribute to educational success. One 2014 ACT report, *Broadening the Definition of College and Career Readiness: A Holistic Approach*, shows academic readiness—long the sole focus of monitoring college readiness—as one of four critical domains in determining an individual's readiness for success in college and career. Crosscutting skills, behavioral skills, and the ability to navigate future pathways are also important factors to measure and address. Together, these elements define a clear picture of student readiness for postsecondary education. To encourage progress, the educational system needs to monitor and sustain all key factors of success.
- **Stability and Validity of Data.** ACT is committed to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the 1–36 score scale, a scale that is familiar to and valued by the many stakeholders served by ACT. Leveraging the power of longitudinal data means avoiding dramatic shifts in the reporting structure.
- **Promoting Access.** Serving the needs of our many stakeholders is a focal point for ACT. We will continue to explore ways to expand college access for all students, promoting initiatives to better meet the needs of underserved learners and developing solutions and

services that make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Through new avenues such as online testing, initiating campaigns targeted at underserved students, and supporting organizations aligned with our mission, ACT is working to reach and help a greater number of individuals.

- **Continuous Improvement Without the Need for Radical Change.** ACT is committed to providing a wider range of solutions, across a broader span of life's decision points, in an increasingly individualized manner so that all can benefit. This has led us to a mode of continuous improvement. However, our goal is to avoid radical change so as to assist our users with transition. Our research agenda takes into account the changes in education and workplace practice and the demographics and evolving needs of those we serve. Accordingly, when research and evidence dictate, we will continue to make necessary changes in our recommendations and/or solutions, including discontinuing outdated programs and services, to bring clarity to the market.
- **Providing Meaningful Data for Better Decisions.** ACT is focused on providing better data to students, parents, schools, districts, and states so that *all* can make more informed decisions to improve outcomes. We accomplish this goal by taking a holistic view and using consistent and reliable historical information, so that individuals and institutions have a better context to make critical decisions about the journey they have undertaken.

Using This Report¹

This report is designed to help educators understand and answer the following questions:

- Are your students graduating from high school prepared for college and career?
- Are enough of your students taking core courses necessary to be prepared for success, and are those courses rigorous enough?
- What are the most popular majors/occupations, and what does the pipeline for each look like?
- What other dimensions of college and career readiness, outside of academic readiness, should educators measure and track?

We sincerely hope this report will serve as a call to action—or even as a wake-up call—that our nation's current policies and practices are not having the desired effect of increasing the college and career readiness levels of US high school graduates. We remain committed to providing more and better data so individuals and institutions can make better-informed decisions leading to the improved educational outcomes we all desire and help more individuals achieve education and workplace success.

Key Findings

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015— Hispanic Students

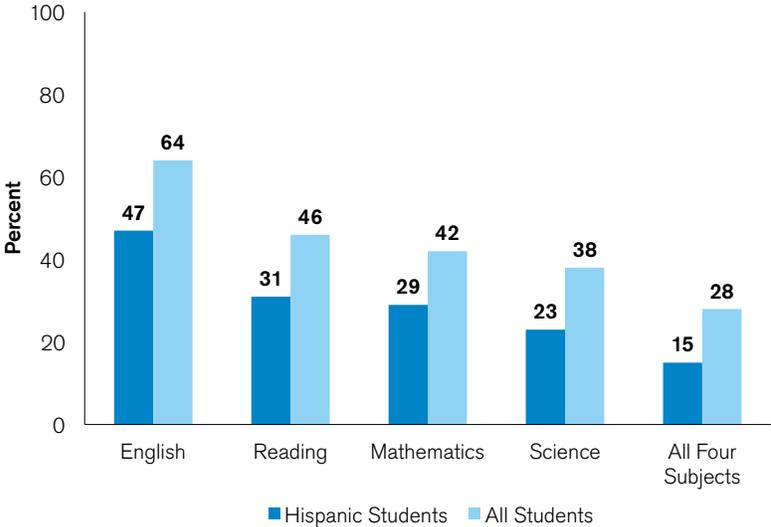
Key Findings	Recommendations
<p>Postsecondary aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latino students have high postsecondary aspirations. <p>See graph on p. 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools should partner with organizations to help educate parents about college and what it means to be college ready. Parent involvement is critical for Latino student success. Including parents allows them to support their child and provide intervention if their student falls behind.
<p>Core course taking and readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latinos who take core curriculum courses in high school are more likely to be academically ready for college. <p>See graph on p. 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States and schools should create an aligned education system in which educators provide high-quality education for Latinos. Schools should map their K–12 curriculum to college success to ensure that students receive the knowledge and skills to be college and career ready.
<p>Academic readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Latino students who took the ACT, and most students overall, did not meet all four benchmarks for college readiness. <p>See graphs on pp. 6–7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions of higher education should increase investment in educating high-quality teachers so they have the skills needed to teach rigorous coursework. Data and feedback received in teacher evaluations should be used by districts to implement teaching improvements that increase Latino students' success.
<p>Academic readiness and race/ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latino college preparedness has increased but remains lower than other groups. <p>See graphs on pp. 8–9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts should increase Latino representation among teachers through intentional, targeted recruitment efforts. Engaging with Latinos currently enrolled in college can spark an interest in teaching and lead to greater postsecondary aspirations.
<p>College enrollment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic readiness and college enrollment are related; increasing students' academic preparedness increases postsecondary education opportunities. <p>See graph on p. 16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and teachers should use student data to measure progress against a high standard of metrics. Using data to inform interventions for students who fall behind allows schools to better understand what strategies work to increase Latino student success. Data should be disaggregated so teachers can implement the practices that work best for Latinos as part of serving all students.
<p>A look at STEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latinos with an interest in STEM are more academically prepared for college. <p>See graph on p. 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools should increase support for the development of STEM-related courses to meet the coming demand for a larger STEM workforce. Outreach and STEM pathways in K–12 introduce Latinos to these subjects early, increasing preparedness and interest in STEM fields.

Hispanic Students

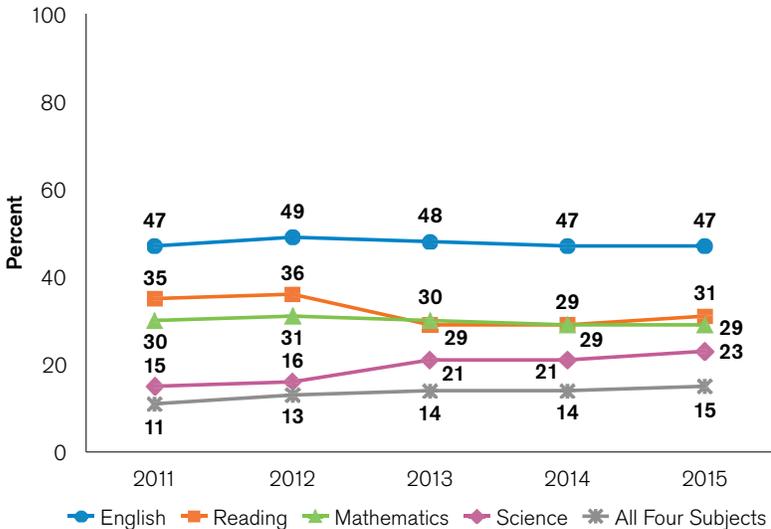
Attainment of College and Career Readiness

- 299,920 Hispanic high school 2015 graduates took the ACT.
- From 2011–2015, the number of ACT test-taking Hispanic graduates has increased by about 50%.

Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



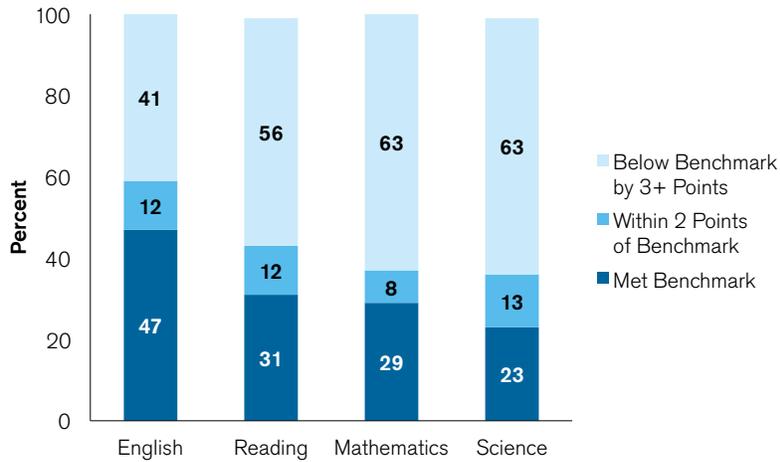
Percent of 2011–2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks



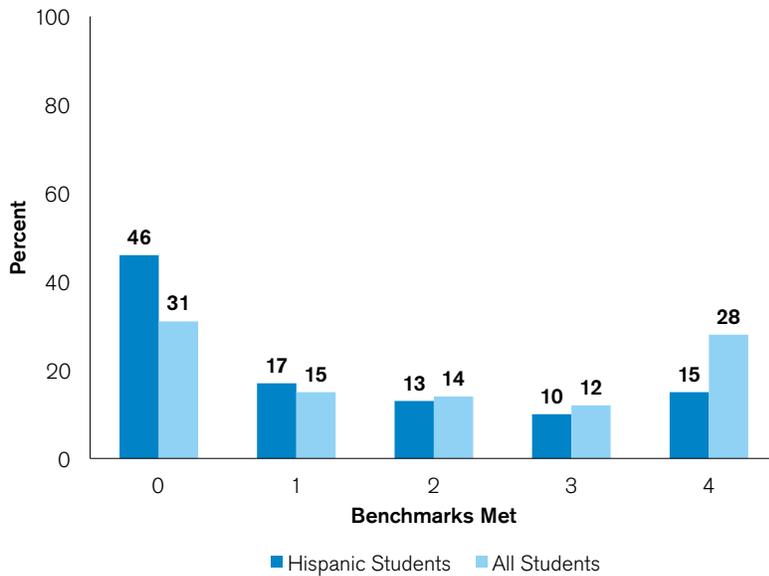
Note: Percents in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Near Attainment of College and Career Readiness

Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained

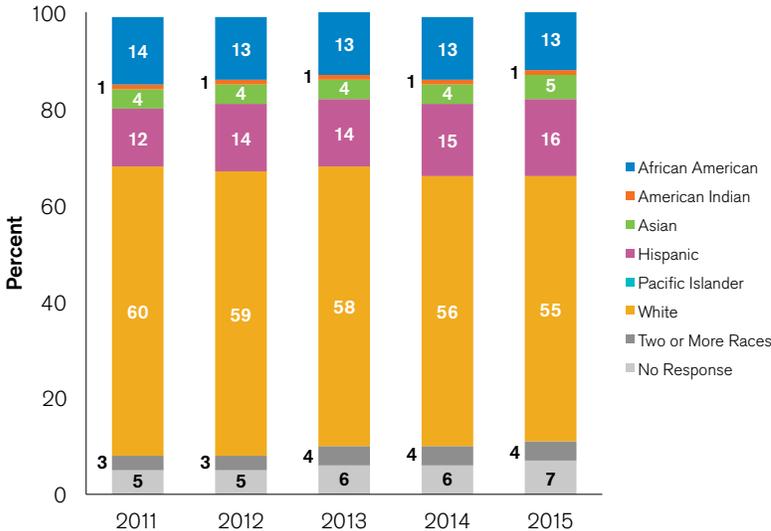


Hispanic Students

Participation and Opportunity

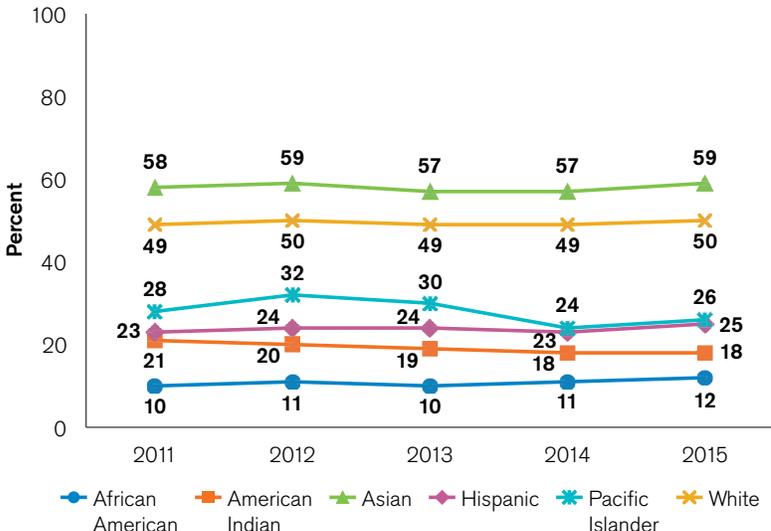
Over the past decade, ACT has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of students tested, as well as statewide partnerships in 14 states and in many districts across the country. As a result, the 2015 *Condition of College & Career Readiness* report provides a much deeper and more representative sample in comparison to a purely self-selected college-going population.

Percent of 2011–2015 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity*



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Percent of 2011–2015 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity*

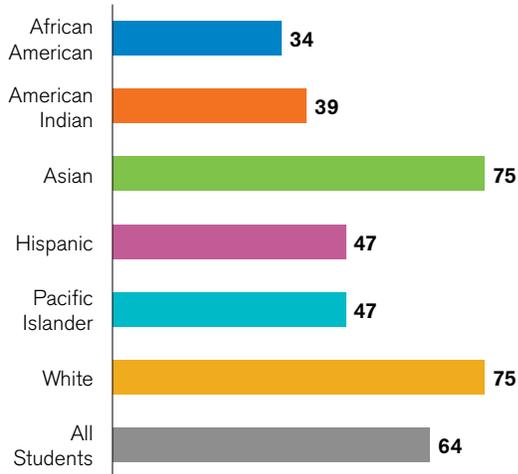


* Race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.²

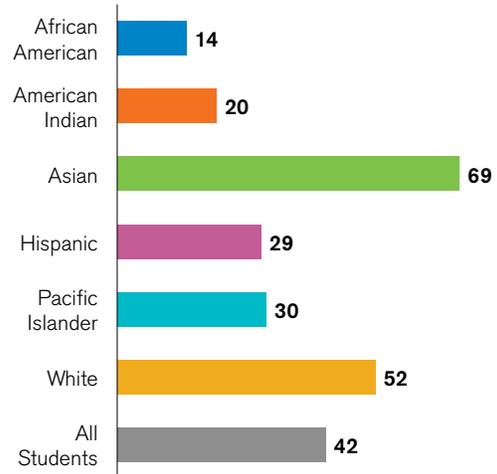
Participation and Opportunity by Subject

Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity and Subject*

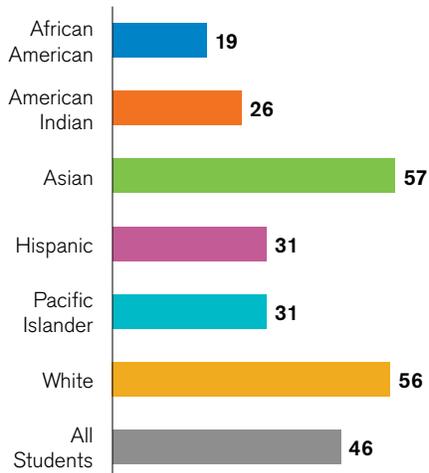
English



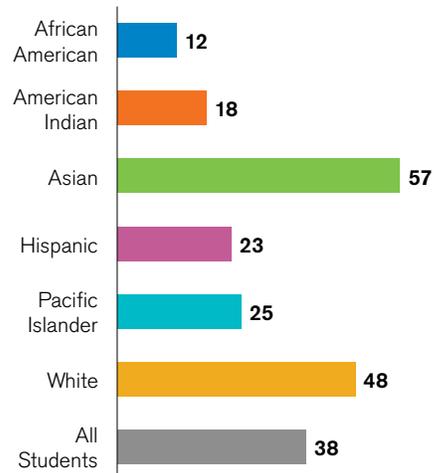
Mathematics



Reading



Science



African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	All Students
N = 252,566	N = 14,711	N = 87,499	N = 299,920	N = 6,090	N = 1,057,803	N = 1,924,436

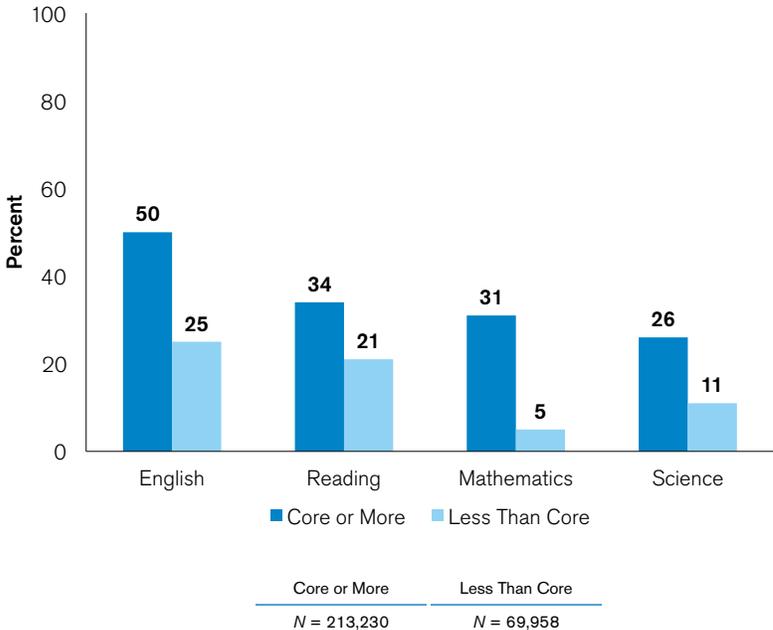
* Race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.²

Hispanic Students

Course-Taking Patterns and Benchmark Performance

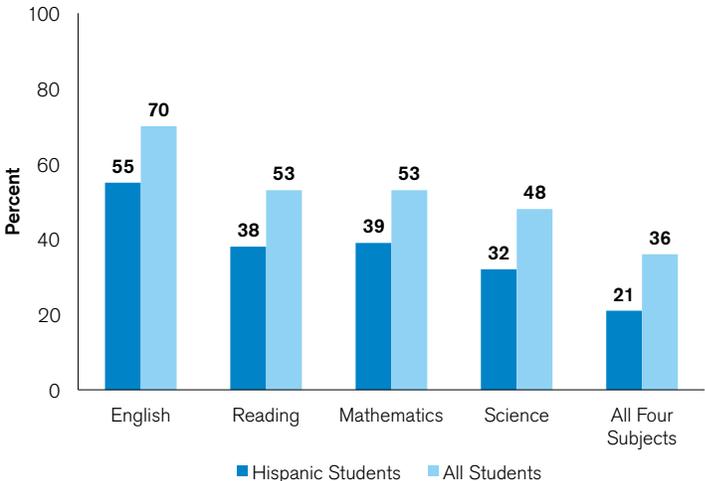
Within subjects, ACT has consistently found that students who take the recommended core curriculum are more likely to be ready for college or career than those who do not. A core curriculum is defined as four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and science.³

Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic 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 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates with an Interest in STEM Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject (N = 105,797)

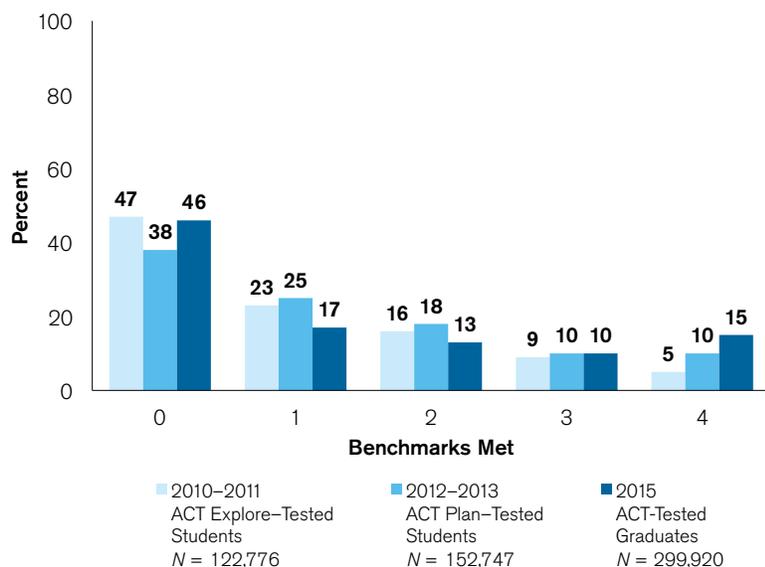


This chart compares ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment for 2015 Hispanic high school graduates nationwide who have an interest in STEM majors or occupations to STEM-interested graduates nationally. Characteristics of students with an interest in STEM were addressed in greater depth in the *Condition of STEM 2014* report.

Early Preparation

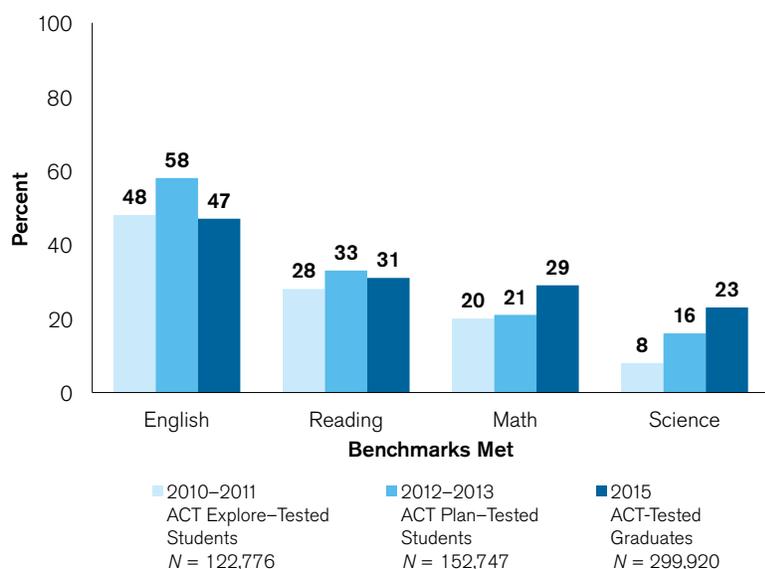
ACT research shows that younger students who take rigorous curricula are more prepared to graduate from high school ready for college or career. Moreover, our research (*The Forgotten Middle*, 2008) found that “the level of academic achievement that students attain by 8th grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.”

Percent of Students Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks at Three Stages of Academic Development



In past *Condition* reports, ACT Explore®, ACT Plan®, and ACT results all reflected data from students testing or graduating in the current year. This year, ACT Explore and ACT Plan results reflect 2015 graduating class examinees (both tested and not tested with the ACT) when they were assessed in 8th and 10th grades. The goal of this change is to describe the condition of college and career readiness for this year's graduates and their counterparts as they progressed from 8th grade to 10th grade and through graduation.

Percent of Students Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Content Area at Three Stages of Academic Development



Hispanic Students

ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment for Top Planned College Majors: 2015 Graduates

When students register for the ACT, they can select a college major—from a list of 294 majors—that they plan to pursue in college. Among recent ACT-tested high school graduates nationwide, about 80% selected a specific planned major, whereas about 20% indicated that they were undecided or did not select a major.

This table ranks the top (most frequently selected) majors among 2015 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
Undecided	39,055	47	32	28	23	15
No Major Indicated	22,927	23	12	10	8	4
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	12,745	42	24	18	15	7
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	10,772	71	52	50	43	30
Business Administration and Management, General	8,456	50	32	31	24	15
Criminology	7,909	36	22	16	13	6
Mechanical Engineering	6,150	50	36	45	35	24
Law (Pre-Law)	5,062	51	35	28	24	16
Biology, General	4,999	69	51	47	42	30
Medical Assisting	4,243	27	16	11	8	4
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	4,169	61	41	29	25	15
Accounting	3,707	49	30	40	26	16
Computer Science and Programming	3,472	66	48	53	43	30
Psychology, General	3,307	64	46	34	29	18
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	3,058	53	32	30	25	14
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	2,797	61	41	53	42	29
Hospital/Facilities Administration	2,796	30	16	12	9	4
Athletic Training	2,757	44	25	24	20	10
Biochemistry and Biophysics	2,690	73	55	56	49	37
Graphic Design	2,424	45	27	20	17	9
Civil Engineering	2,335	59	39	55	38	26
Aerospace/Aeronautical Engineering	2,304	67	49	61	49	35
Veterinary Medicine (Pre-Veterinarian)	2,224	51	33	27	25	15
Elementary Education	2,207	43	24	20	15	8
Computer Engineering	2,153	60	43	53	41	29
Health-Related Professions and Services, General	2,110	53	34	28	24	13
Nursing, Practical/Vocational (LPN)	2,101	29	16	12	10	4
Architecture, General	2,065	45	26	35	25	14
Marketing Management and Research	2,050	58	37	35	27	17
Music, General	1,995	46	26	22	20	10

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: 2015 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 fit⁴, 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
Undecided			No profile available				
No Major Indicated			No profile available				
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	3,626	28	49	28	20	18	8
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	5,011	47	76	56	54	48	34
Business Administration and Management, General	2,758	33	53	35	33	25	17
Criminology	899	11	49	30	19	18	8
Mechanical Engineering	1,647	27	54	39	49	39	27
Law (Pre-Law)	1,550	31	63	46	35	31	21
Biology, General	2,452	49	72	54	50	45	32
Medical Assisting	1,008	24	31	16	13	10	5
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	698	17	75	54	35	34	20
Accounting	1,878	51	53	31	43	27	16
Computer Science and Programming	928	27	67	48	54	44	30
Psychology, General	721	22	73	53	38	35	22
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	776	25	59	37	33	29	16
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	746	27	62	40	54	45	30
Hospital/Facilities Administration	377	13	32	15	12	10	4
Athletic Training	533	19	55	35	33	28	16
Biochemistry and Biophysics	1,448	54	75	58	58	52	40
Graphic Design	945	39	51	34	21	19	11
Civil Engineering	570	24	54	37	55	39	26
Aerospace/Aeronautical Engineering	745	32	72	51	64	52	37
Veterinary Medicine (Pre-Veterinarian)	799	36	55	39	31	31	18
Elementary Education	492	22	54	33	25	18	13
Computer Engineering	565	26	64	47	56	47	33
Health-Related Professions and Services, General			No profile available				
Nursing, Practical/Vocational (LPN)	507	24	35	19	14	13	5
Architecture, General	348	17	53	30	34	24	15
Marketing Management and Research	595	29	67	46	37	32	22
Music, General	823	41	53	29	23	21	11

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.

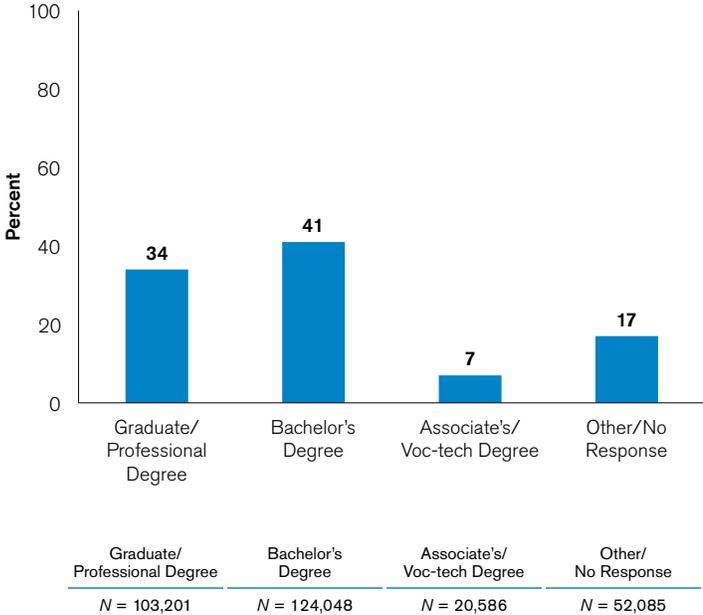
Hispanic Students

Other College and Career Readiness Factors

Aligning Student Behaviors, Planning, and Aspirations

Most students aspire to a post-high school credential. To help them meet those aspirations, educational planning, monitoring, and interventions must be aligned to their aspirations, begin early, and continue throughout their educational careers.

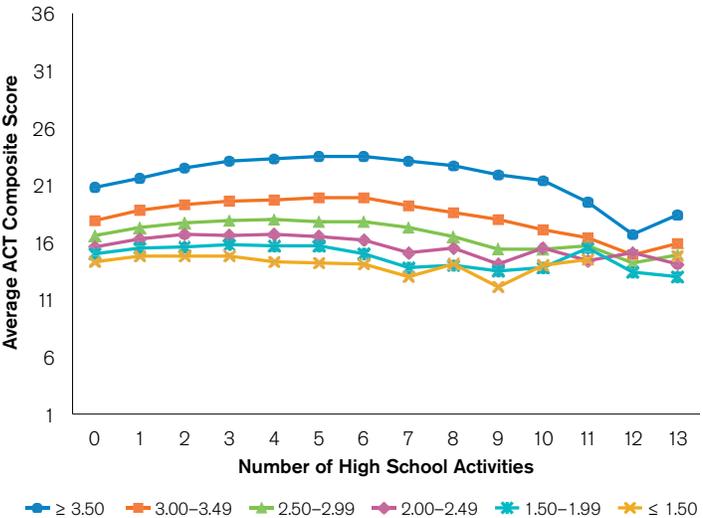
Percent of 2015 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations



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 2015 graduates.

Average ACT Composite Score by Number of Activities within High School GPA Ranges for 2015 Graduates

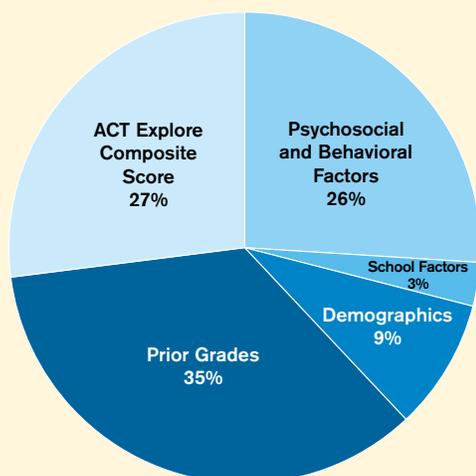


Note: In some cases, high activity counts may represent low numbers of students, giving rise to missing and outlying data points.

Other College and Career Readiness Factors

Early Prediction of High School Outcomes

Relative Importance of Predictors of 12th-Grade Cumulative High School Grade Point Average

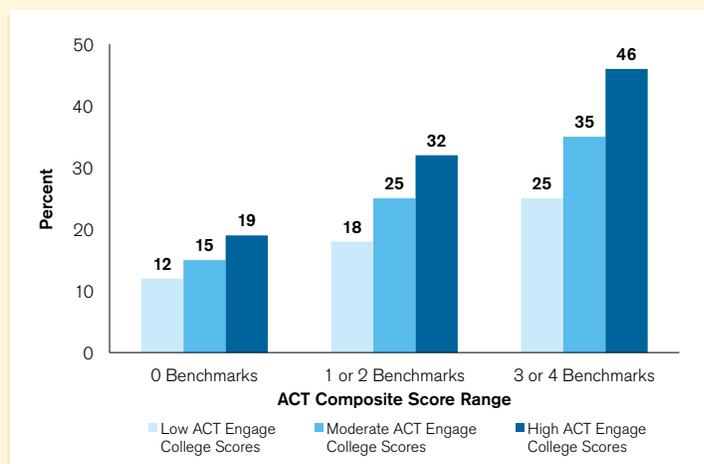


Note: The data used for this analysis came from a longitudinal sample of 3,768 students from 21 schools who took both ACT Explore and ACT Engage Grades 6–9 in 2006, when most students were in 8th grade. Additional waves of data were collected each fall, ending in 2011, when most students should have graduated from high school. The total variance explained in the model was $R^2 = 0.51$.

Understanding which student characteristics can predict future performance is essential to early identification and support for students at risk for later academic difficulties. A longitudinal research study found that, in 8th grade, the most important predictor of 12th grade GPA was student grades, followed by academic achievement (measured by ACT Explore) and psychosocial and behavioral factors (measured by ACT Engage® Grades 6–9). Demographics (gender, race/ethnicity, and parent education) and school factors (percent eligible for free/reduced lunch eligible and percent minority) were less important predictors. These findings underscore the value of using multiple measures, including academic achievement and behaviors, to provide a more holistic approach to assessment that can better assist students in developing the knowledge and skills needed for success.

Academic Achievement, Behaviors, and College Completion

Percentage Attaining a Postsecondary Degree by ACT and ACT Engage College Scores



Academic behaviors also matter for college outcomes. Across all ACT College Readiness Benchmark levels, students with higher ACT Engage College scores (based on the mean percentile scores of ACT Engage scales Academic Discipline, Commitment to College, and Social Connection) attained a postsecondary degree within four years of college at higher rates than students with lower ACT Engage College scores. For students meeting three or four Benchmarks, those with high ACT Engage College scores attained a timely postsecondary degree at nearly twice the rate as those with low ACT Engage College scores.

Note: Based on a longitudinal sample of 9,446 ACT-tested students from 48 postsecondary institutions who took ACT Engage College during their first semester of college in 2003. Additional waves of data were collected each semester through 2008. Students with a mean percentile score of less than 25 were classified as low, those with scores between 25 and 75 were classified as moderate, and those with scores greater than 75 were classified as high.

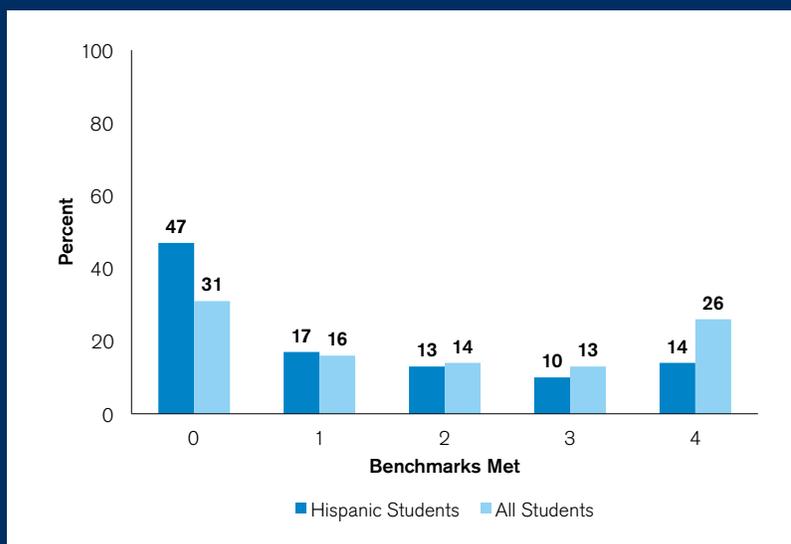
Looking Back at the Class of 2014

Hispanic Students

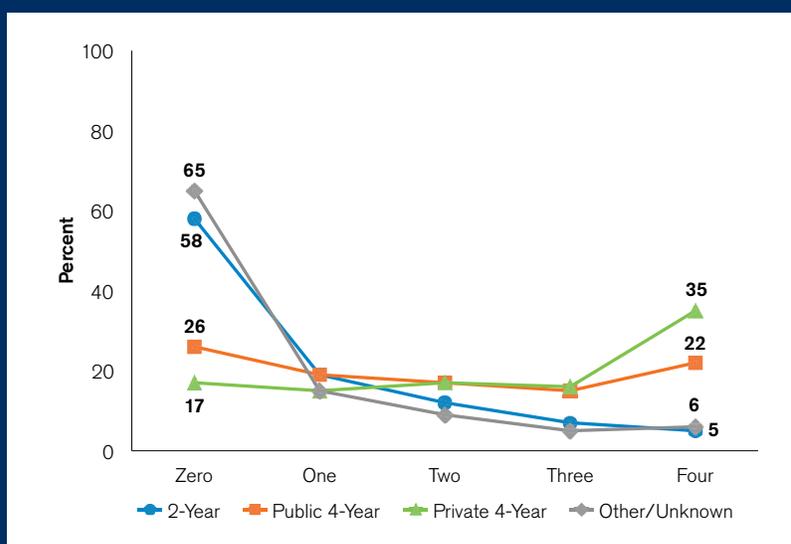
ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and Fall 2014 College Enrollment

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 4-year institutions. Graduates who enrolled in 2-year colleges or pursued other options after high school were more likely to have met fewer Benchmarks. For the sizable number of 2014 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 2014 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested Hispanic High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained and Fall 2014 College Enrollment Status



Policies and Practices

Call to Action

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015 points to the need for federal, state, and local policymakers and education agency heads to support the readiness of *all* students for college and career. Over the last several years, the average national ACT Composite score and ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment of students taking the ACT has remained relatively constant. This is commendable given the increase in the number of students taking the ACT but little comfort to the students, teachers, and administrators working every day to increase student achievement. Because the current direction and aim of our education system is to prepare all students for postsecondary and career success, this year's results continue to signal the need for increased wholesale systemic supports and reforms. In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), calling for the advancement of equity for all students through a curriculum held up by high academic standards. ESSA calls upon states to be more involved in the success of students through the creation of interventions for those who fall behind and providing assessments to measure student progress annually.⁵

As a research-based nonprofit organization, ACT is committed to identifying solutions that are informed by data and that reinforce the need for students to meet appropriate achievement benchmarks at every point along the continuum from kindergarten through career. As part of this commitment, ACT released a series of policy platforms (www.act.org/policyplatforms) in 2014 containing extensive recommendations in three areas: K–12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce development. *Excelencia* in Education is also a nonprofit organization and is using research to inform policy and practice to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.

In this same spirit, ACT and *Excelencia* in Education offer the following recommendations as a call to action for the entire education community: students; parents; educators; and policymakers at the district, state, and federal levels.

Parent Involvement

Involve Latino parents in their child's education to increase Latino student success. Latino parents highly value the education of their children. In a 2012 survey, about 90% reported they expected their student to achieve some level of higher education.⁶ Including parents in their student's education increases likelihood of success, as they can provide support and early interventions if their student falls behind. Schools should partner with organizations, such as the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) in California, to increase parent involvement in their child's education. PIQE's Nine-Week Parent Engagement Program provides parents with fundamental information and tools to make sure their child is prepared for college.⁷

Teacher Support and Development

Increase Latino teacher recruitment and professional development. High-quality teachers are important in achieving Latino student success. Latinos represent only 8% of elementary and secondary teachers in public schools⁸ but represent 25% of all students in public schools, with projections showing an increase in student representation.⁹ Districts should increase the recruitment of Latino teachers to better balance the representation of Latinos between teachers and students. For example, the Cumbres Teacher Preparation Program in Colorado recruits, supports, and mentors undergraduate students majoring in education and emphasizes English as a second language as a way to support the diversity of Latinos in K–12.¹⁰ Intentional, targeted recruitment of Latinos through increased engagement with the community can spark an interest in teaching for Latinos currently enrolled in college. Once in the classroom, Latino teachers must have the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities that enhance their work, such as mentoring programs with seasoned Latino teachers, allowing new Latino teachers to learn from their peers.

Develop robust teacher evaluation systems. As stated in our K–12 education platform, ACT applauds states' and districts' development and use of robust teacher evaluation systems that include multiple measures of performance to identify effective teaching and focus on professional development. All teacher evaluations should include classroom observations, Latino parent and student surveys, and measures of student growth on assessments, and teachers should be involved in the creation and rollout of these systems. School districts should measure data gathered from teacher evaluations using set metrics to show the impact teachers have on the progress of their students. These data can inform schools and teachers on what practices work best to increase Latino student success.

Strengthen admissions criteria for teacher education programs and offer professional development to new teachers. We must ensure that the admissions criteria for teacher education programs are rigorous and produce high-quality candidates armed with the tools—sound instructional methods, content mastery, and data literacy—to teach effectively. Latinos represent one quarter of all K–12 students, and the student body overall is becoming more diverse.¹¹ Institutions of higher education should provide cultural competency training and bilingual programs for new teachers to give them the skills needed to serve a diverse student body. For example, Boise State University's Department of Bilingual Education in Idaho prepares educators to serve linguistically and culturally diverse students through the promotion of pedagogical innovations to increase the academic development of all students.¹²

Policies and Practices (continued)

In addition, it is critical that teachers receive professional development around cultural competency to increase awareness and understanding of their students' backgrounds and thus increase student success so that they know how to best serve their Latino students, English language learners, students of color, and low-income students.

System Alignment

Encourage education system alignment so that all components work together. It is critical that Latino students have access to and enroll in rigorous courses with high-quality instruction to make sure they are academically prepared for college and career. The recently signed ESSA requires that states and schools provide students with high-quality preschool and K–12 curriculum to increase career and college readiness. “Back mapping” to college success through the K–12 curriculum ensures that students receive the skills and knowledge needed to be college ready. Through ESSA, states must also advance equity for all students and provide evidence-based and place-based interventions for students who fall behind. State and federal policymakers must prioritize funding to ensure that the necessary pieces are in place to help Latino students meet college and career readiness standards.

Data Use

Support practitioners' use of data to improve education. Schools and teachers should use student data to inform practices within classrooms. It is critical that schools be intentional with disaggregating their data to help inform teachers about the practices that help increase Latino student success. Student data should create a feedback loop in which it is used to improve interventions for any students who fall behind.

Ensure that student data collected are appropriately safeguarded and used responsibly, balancing data's potential to help students achieve education and workplace success with the responsibility to ensure students' privacy and confidentiality. ACT takes steps to protect the privacy of student data and encourages others to do so, as well. The science behind the ACT assessments—the evidence base and ongoing research—relies on our ability to collect and analyze student assessment data and is critical in answering the key question of what matters most

in helping people to succeed in education and work. Further, some student data are used for the ACT Educational Opportunity Service, an opt-in program that provides students—including many underserved and first-generation college students—with information about educational, scholarship, career, and financial aid opportunities. We call on policymakers to seek innovative solutions that secure student data and at the same time provide expanded opportunities for Latino students and advance educational research.

STEM

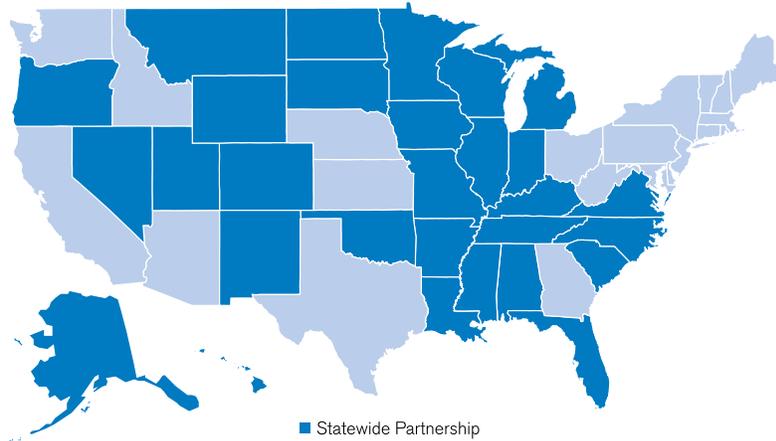
Increase curriculum development and pathways in STEM to meet the coming demand in a larger STEM workforce. Education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) is critical to the development of the future workforce. Employment in many STEM occupations is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations.¹³ In 2014, 45% of Latino freshmen indicated they had an interest in majoring in STEM.¹⁴ Schools should increase curriculum development in STEM to provide students the knowledge and skills needed for these fast-growing occupational fields. STEM pathways in K–12 should include targeted outreach to Latinos to introduce students to these subjects and spark an interest in STEM. For example, in Texas, the Dual Enrollment Academy Programs at South Texas College provide high school juniors the opportunity to earn an associate's degree in STEM fields while finishing their high school graduation requirements. This allows students to gain hands-on experiences in STEM fields and creates a college-going culture.¹⁵

It's time to take these and other meaningful steps to solve the issues hindering student success. ACT and *Excelencia* in Education sincerely hope this call to action, informed by decades of educational research, contributes to the enhancement of education and career opportunities for all students, including our nation's most underserved individuals. We stand ready to work with like-minded organizations to support systemic education reforms. Ensuring a world-class US educational system should be a responsibility shared by all of us: our future rests on the education of tomorrow's leaders. We must do better.

Resources

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[™]	ACT[®] Explore[™]	ACT[®] Plan[™]	The ACT[®]	ACT[®] QualityCore[™]	ACT[®] WorkKeys[™]		ACT National Career Readiness Certificate[™]
3rd- through 8th-grade students	8th- and 9th-grade students	10th-grade students	11th- and 12th-grade students	8th- through 12th-grade students	11th- and 12th-grade students		
Alabama	Arkansas	Arkansas	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Oklahoma
Arkansas	Louisiana	Florida	Alaska	Kentucky	Alaska	Alaska	Oregon
Hawaii	North Carolina	Louisiana	Arkansas		Hawaii	Arkansas	South Carolina
	Oklahoma	North Carolina	Colorado		Kentucky	Indiana	South Dakota
8th- through 10th-grade students	Tennessee	Oklahoma	Hawaii		Louisiana	Iowa	Tennessee
	Utah	Tennessee	Illinois		Michigan	Kentucky	Tennessee
Alabama		Utah	Kentucky		North Carolina	Louisiana	Utah
Arkansas			Louisiana		North Carolina	Minnesota	Virginia
Hawaii			Minnesota		North Dakota	Missouri	Wisconsin
Wisconsin			Mississippi		South Dakota	New Mexico	
Wyoming			Missouri		South Carolina	North Carolina	
			Montana		Wisconsin	Carolina	
			Nevada		Wyoming		
			North Carolina				
			North Dakota				
			Tennessee				
			Utah				
			Wisconsin				
			Wyoming				

All listed partnerships are effective as of July 2015.

ACT Research

The continued increase of test takers enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current college readiness levels of the graduating class as well as offering a glimpse of the emerging national educational pipeline. It also allows us to review various aspects of the ACT-tested graduating class, including the following reports:

Releasing in the 2015–2016 Academic Year

The Condition of STEM 2015

- National report
- State reports
- Underserved learners

The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015

- National report
- State reports
- African American students
- American Indian students
- Asian students

- Hispanic students
- Pacific Islander students
- First-generation students
- Linguistically diverse students
- Students from low-income families

Other ACT Research Reports

College Choice Report (for the graduating class of 2013)

- *Part 1: Preferences and Prospects*—November 2013
- *Part 2: Enrollment Patterns*—July 2014
- *Part 3: Persistence and Transfer*—April 2015

College Choice Report (for the graduating class of 2014)

- *Part 1: Expanding Opportunities: Preferences and Prospects*—November 2014
- *Part 2: Expanding Opportunities: Enrollment Patterns*—July 2015

To be notified of exact release dates, please subscribe here:

www.act.org/research/subscribe.html.

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. ACT College Readiness Benchmarks were revised for 2013 graduating class reporting. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are:

College Course	Subject Area Test	Original ACT College Readiness Benchmark	Revised ACT College Readiness Benchmark
English Composition	English	18	18
Social Sciences	Reading	21	22
College Algebra	Mathematics	22	22
Biology	Science	24	23

Notes

1. The data presented herein are based on the *ACT Profile Report—National: Graduating Class 2015 for Hispanic Students*, accessible at www.act.org/research. With the exception of the top graph on page 6, data related to students who did not provide information or who responded “Other” to questions about gender, race/ethnicity, high school curriculum, etc., are not presented explicitly.
2. The race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements; trends to previous reports may not be available for all race/ethnicity categories.
3. 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.
4. 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 4-year colleges and in the second year for students in 2-year colleges. Interest-major fit scores range from 0–99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit.
5. US Department of Education. (2015). *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. <http://www.ed.gov/essa>.
6. Noel, A., Stark, P., and Redford, J. (2015). *Parent and Family Involvement in Education, From the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012* (NCES 2013-028.REV), National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education. Washington, DC.
7. For more information on PIQE, please visit *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works Database: <http://www.edexcelencia.org/success-stories/nine-week-parent-engagement-program-parent-institute-quality-education-piqe>.
8. NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*. Table 209.10: Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987–88 through 2011–12.
9. NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*. Table 203.50: Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2024.
10. For more information on the Cumbres Teacher Preparation Program, please visit *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works Database: <http://www.edexcelencia.org/program/cumbres-teacher-preparation-program>.
11. NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*. Table 203.50: Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2024.
12. For more information on the Department of Bilingual Education, please visit *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works Database: <http://www.edexcelencia.org/program/department-bilingual-education>.
13. US Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014). *STEM 101: Intro to Tomorrow's Jobs*. <http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/subject/stem.htm>.
14. National Science Foundation. National Science Board. *Science and Engineering Indicators 2016*. Chapter 2, Appendix Table 2–16.
15. For more information on the Dual Enrollment Academy Programs, please visit *Excelencia* in Education's Growing What Works Database: <http://www.edexcelencia.org/program/dual-enrollment-academy-programs>.

ACT is an independent, 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.

For more information, visit www.act.org.



Excelencia in Education accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, conducting analysis to inform educational policies, and advancing institutional practices while collaborating with those committed and ready to meet the mission. Launched in 2004 in the nation's capital, *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the US economy's need for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leadership.

For more information, visit www.EdExcelencia.org.



A copy of this report can be found at
www.act.org/research