



2021 Year in Review

# Bringing Our North Star to Life

**ACT**<sup>®</sup>



## CONTENTS

• Rising to the Occasion	1
• ACT's North Star	2
• Renewed Commitments	3
• Equity in Action	4
• Engaging Our Allies	8
• On the Learning Journey Together	11
• Looking Ahead	14



# RISING TO THE OCCASION



**“We are working now from a position of strength, and we are excited about the future.”**

–Janet Godwin, ACT CEO

For more than **six decades**, ACT has advanced its mission of helping people achieve education and workplace success. The pandemic dramatically upended business as usual – for everyone. Now, ACT is emerging from this extraordinary time with an unwavering commitment and strengthened capacity to fight for fairness in education and create a world where everyone can discover and fulfill their potential.

I’m most proud of how ACT rose to the occasion in support of a world and an education system in crisis. In a highly disruptive time, ACT team members showed up with care and empathy and delivered quality programs and services for the millions of learners we serve. ACT responded nimbly to shifting needs in districts, states, and nations as schools moved to virtual and hybrid learning.

Despite all the challenges, more than **1 million students** – a record high – took the ACT during state and district school-day testing in the U.S. in the 2020-21 school year. There is significant interest in ACT’s report with data on the 2021 high school graduating class, which informs leaders with the most representative dataset of its kind.

At the same time, we leaned into ACT’s ambitious agenda to move education forward. We renewed ACT’s commitments for 2021. We vowed to:

- ◆ redouble our efforts to be intentional, deliberate, and committed to education equity;
- ◆ work across the education and workforce ecosystem, alongside partners, allies, and accomplices, to engage in “good trouble” to solve some of today’s most complex and challenging problems;
- ◆ build on our long history of data and research, which give the education ecosystem deep insights into critical issues of student success;
- ◆ show up for students at every stage of the learning journey; and
- ◆ remain future-focused, ready to learn and prepared to grow.

In my first year as CEO, I took a listening tour to hear from stakeholders – higher education leaders; federal, state, and local policymakers; and the students we champion – and to share ACT’s progress on helping students succeed. ACT is eager to work alongside partners to improve educational equity and outcomes. We know that we cannot do this work alone. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan education organization with an aspirational mission and high-quality research and data, ACT is your trusted partner and convener.

Behind the scenes, ACT has also dramatically improved our financial performance. After multiple years ending with an operating loss, we ended Fiscal Year 2021 with positive operating income of **\$10 million**. Our state and district programs are in unprecedented demand. Our international business in **86 countries** is thriving. ACT is financially healthy and sustainable. We’re well-positioned for the future.

**ACT is here to stay – and the best is yet to come.**



Janet Godwin  
CEO, ACT

## **We exist to fight for fairness in education and create a world where everyone can discover and fulfill their potential.**

Education has power – a power that changes lives forever. It creates opportunities that lift up individuals and their families and it sparks societal change that echoes through generations to come. From our grassroots, we have fought the good fight for equity in education, and we remain devoted to helping anyone who struggles to access that power. This is what matters to us, and we must do better – we've never been more sure of our purpose.

Today, too many students, families, and educators are battling to overcome systemic inequalities, such as discrimination and a lack of access to knowledge and resources. Coupled with increasing socioeconomic uncertainty, those most in need continue to be held back by widening opportunity and equity gaps. Our true strength comes from sharing our expertise in research and analytics, and then partnering to learn, adapt, and do what needs to be done.

Our mission is to help people be successful in their education and careers. We believe, more than ever before, education can deliver success on an unlimited scale. We care deeply about every learner's journey, and we strive to ensure everyone is given the opportunity to fulfill their potential and become the heroes they know they can be. For budding minds, the thinkers and the doers, we reveal the answers they can't find and widen their understanding of where learning can take them. By playing our part, we help ensure that everyone can discover and fulfill their potential.

As we develop integrated solutions, we empower educators and support learners at all stages of their journey. We help to create life-changing opportunities and remove barriers that hold back too many people. These innovations in how we enable education will be the catalysts that transform generations to come. We are all-in to create a world that values and encourages each individual's abilities and potential, and a society that is fairer and more equitable.

# RENEWED COMMITMENTS



**ACT is leading with equity throughout the educational value chain – not just on the front end with admissions to college, but on student outcomes.”**

–Charles Merritt, vice president, Marketing and External Affairs



**★ We believe that education has power – and we have power, too, when we work collaboratively to change the narrative for our students.**

ACT was born from a revolution in testing. But ACT has always been much more than a testing organization.

Before the first ACT college admissions test was administered more than 60 years ago, ACT’s co-founders, E. F. Lindquist and Ted McCarrell, conducted extensive research to develop a valid and reliable assessment of student learning and readiness for college. The test was intended to inform college admission decisions, teacher support for student success, and, equally important, students on their journey toward college and careers.

ACT’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion began with this test, which our co-founders believed would broaden access to college for student populations that have been traditionally underserved in our institutions and help diversify college campuses. Indeed, the test opened doors for many students who never imagined themselves on a college campus. This is progress, but we have a long way to go to realize education equity.

**ACT’s North Star renews this commitment.** We know that high-quality preK-12 and postsecondary learning experiences for all students matter for the health of our democracy, our economy, our communities, and our future. Nearly 40 years after *A Nation at Risk* issued a clarion call to action to counter “a rising tide of mediocrity,” student outcomes have stagnated in recent years. Long before the pandemic, systemic barriers and inequities deferred or derailed many students’ dreams of going to college.

ACT’s **testing data** confirms that the pandemic has exacerbated long-standing opportunity gaps. This is a critical indicator of student performance – and a signal that we must be more intentional, deliberate, and committed to lifting up all students so they can reach their full potential. The absence of student performance data is a signal as well – a warning sign, in fact. During the pandemic, too many students lost their way on the path from high school to college and career. We cannot afford to lose these students. They are our future.

ACT’s research findings live alongside our data analytics. Our research provides invaluable insights into the burning questions that arise from the data: Which students are struggling – and why? What barriers are holding students back? In what ways are supports for students of color and students from low-income communities actually improving results? What do secondary and postsecondary students hope to achieve through different learning experiences? What do all students need to put them – and keep them – on the path to success? Without data and evidence, too many educators and champions are flying blind as they work to accelerate progress.

ACT’s North Star keeps us laser-focused on supporting students as they navigate life’s transitions. ACT relies unapologetically on data and research to drive innovation in our products, services, and engagement with partners. Equity is the guiding light in everything we do.



Equity helps us understand the fine-grained elements of change that are needed to create opportunities for all students to succeed and achieve their goals.”

–Tina Gridiron, vice president, ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning



## 2021 EQUITY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

★ ACT conducts and contributes to robust research on urgent challenges in education to inform equitable policies, practices, and results in K-12 and postsecondary education.

**Groundbreaking research underpins recommendations to improve intergenerational mobility.** College can lift people out of poverty and change life trajectories. But a series of groundbreaking studies by Opportunity Insights, an institute based at Harvard University and directed by renowned researcher Raj Chetty, found that geography and family income limit opportunities for even highly qualified students to attend selective or elite colleges and achieve economic success. The research team analyzed anonymized ACT, SAT, and Internal Revenue Service data on more than 11 million students and made a bold recommendation: Use legacy-like preferences to increase intergenerational mobility and desegregate colleges.



**Latinx students facing COVID-19 challenges benefit from social and emotional learning.** Latinx middle school students primarily from low-income communities showed promising academic growth and gained interpersonal skills from social and emotional learning lessons and support during the pandemic. While previous research has shown that social and emotional skills are critical to academic success, ACT’s study is one of the first research initiatives to examine the effects for Latinx students. This research, which involved students, educators, and administrators in Region One Education Service Center in South Texas, was funded by a grant from NewSchools Venture Fund to ACT’s Center for Social and Emotional Learning and ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning. Learn more in a [five-part series of research briefs](#).

## 2021 EQUITY PRACTICE HIGHLIGHTS

★ **ACT is walking the walk of equity with innovations in testing that make a difference in students' lives.**

**Fee waivers expand access and opportunities.** Taking a college admission test is an important step in the college-going process. More than 1,500 U.S. colleges either require, recommend, or consider test scores as a criterion for admission and scholarship decisions. To ease the financial burden of testing for students from low-income families, ACT has waived registration fees for more than 30 years. Beyond support for taking the test, fee waivers also come with free access to online test prep products, free additional score reports to send to colleges, and college application fee waivers that ACT encourages colleges and universities to accept.

In **a series of four studies**, ACT researchers investigated how fee waivers are used – or not. Test-day absenteeism is especially concerning for students of color, students from low-income families, and students who are the first in their families to go to college. The research captures student voices on the many reasons for test-day absenteeism, which can inform policy and practice changes at the national, state, and local levels to remove barriers to completing the test.

**\$32 million**

Average worth of fee waivers ACT provides every year

**2.3 million+**

Number of eligible students who used fee waivers to register for 3.1 million ACT tests, 2014-19

**1 in 5**

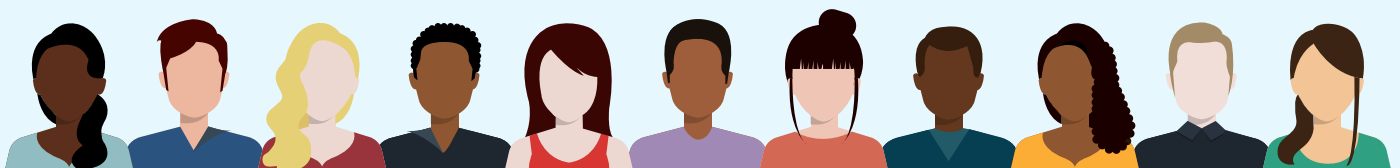
Across the country, more than one in five registrations for the national ACT test, administered on a Saturday, are completed using a fee waiver.



**State and district school-day testing broadens access and representation.** Some states and districts administer the ACT on a school day to every 11<sup>th</sup> grader – regardless of whether they consider themselves college-bound. This strategy benefits many students, who realize that they are, in fact, ready for college when they see their test scores. School-day testing may also reduce scheduling conflicts and absenteeism for Saturday test administration. School-day testing exemplifies how ACT listened to stakeholders and responded with an equitable access model of testing, which also produces a much more representative set of data about all students on the cusp of transitioning out of high school. This is particularly important for driving policy, regulations, and curriculum adjustments to help students recover from disrupted learning during the pandemic.

**1 million+**

More than 1 million students – a record high – took the ACT during the pandemic as part of state and district school-day testing in the 2020-21 school year.



**ACT promotes a college-going culture nationwide.** ACT's [American College Application Campaign](#) is a national effort to increase the number of first-generation college students and students from low-income families pursuing a college degree or other higher education credential. This campaign breaks down the college application process for high school seniors and helps them submit at least one application in school, during the school day. Since the campaign's inception in 2005, more than 3.69 million students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia have submitted almost 6 million college applications.

**New policy and resources increase support for students with disabilities and English learners.** ACT has long offered accommodations to the hundreds of thousands of students who need extra support to prepare for and take the test every year – **5% to 7%** of the total testing population. But it used to be a time-consuming operation: Students would ask for accommodations, school officials would gather evidence of need, and ACT staff would review the evidence and then make sure any approved accommodations were in place on test day.

In keeping with ACT's renewed commitments for 2021, we updated our Policy for Requesting Accommodations to align with the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. ACT now follows the determinations made by valued school partners and families and approves requests documented in Individualized Education Program and 504 plans. As a result, and in response to stakeholder insights, ACT has streamlined the process for requesting accommodations and significantly shortened the wait time for receiving accommodations decisions.

ACT also merged its accommodations, accessibility, and digital product teams for [a more coherent and deliberate approach](#) to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and the school staff and families who support them.

- ✦ ACT developed a partnership with [Fable](#), a company that advances accessibility, to develop **digitally accessible resources** that help blind or visually impaired people navigate the journey to college, access test prep resources, and take the test independently.
- ✦ **ACT provides testing supports for English learners that increase access to and performance on the ACT.** In 2017, ACT began offering supports to English learners in the U.S. taking the ACT, including extended testing time; approved word-to-word bilingual dictionaries; test directions in 18 native languages; and testing in familiar, small-group environments.

**Two studies** by ACT researchers found that these testing supports have a positive effect on score gains, especially in reading. English learners' test scores also were more closely aligned to their high school GPAs, suggesting that offering supports results in scores that more accurately reflect their learning. ACT is also translating more testing resources into languages other than English.



**We brought our accommodations, accessibility, and digital teams together – and now we have a coalition of champions for students with disabilities.”**

–Katie Featherston, senior director for accessibility





## COLLABORATIONS FOR EQUITY IN ACTION

One way that we deliver on ACT's mission is by showing up and working alongside allies. For more than a decade, ACT has collaborated with three stellar organizations – the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, *Excelencia in Education*, and *Univision* – to identify and address key challenges to Latinx student success in education.

Together, we are using and generating evidence as we work to ensure that all Latinx students have equitable opportunities to thrive. Learn more about our joint accomplishments in this 2021 brief, *Championing Latino Success: When Latino Students Succeed, We All Succeed*.



**ACT**  
**Championing Latino Success**  
**When Latino Students Succeed, We All Succeed**

Today, more than one in four students in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools and more than one in five college students are Latino, making them one of the largest groups on school and college campuses nationwide. Already, the Latino student population in elementary and secondary schools tops 50 percent in California (54.9 percent) and Texas (52.9 percent). In Florida, Latino students constitute 34.9 percent of the school-age population. The Latino student population is projected to rise in this decade and beyond.

State	Percentage
California	54.9%
Texas	52.9%
Florida	34.9%

**Latino Students Constitute Significant Shares of K-12 And Postsecondary Education Populations**

- 27%** More than one in four student in public elementary and secondary schools are Latino.
- 20.3%** More than one in five students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions are Latino.

**Excelencia in Education**

ACT has supported *Excelencia in Education* since its earliest years as a two-person startup by its co-founders, President *Sarita Brown* and CEO *Deborah Santiago*. Today, *Excelencia* is a trusted advisor on Latino students in higher education—a reputation well-earned through its research, advocacy for institutional and policy change, and its role as a national leader and convener of higher education institutions that serve Latino students well.

Excelencia has an ambitious goal: For the U.S. to regain the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment, Latino students will need to earn 6.2 million degrees by 2030.

As part of this commitment, *Excelencia* created the Seal of *Excelencia*, a national certification for higher education institutions that go beyond enrollment to intentionally serve Latino students.

As of 2020, 14 institutions from across the country have earned the Seal of *Excelencia*.

**6.2 Million Degrees by 2030**

**14 Institutions** have earned the Seal of *Excelencia*

**Excelencia's Network of Higher Education Institutions Deliver for Latino Students**

- Of All of the US Colleges and Universities, **4%** are P4LSS\* (Preparatory for Latino Student Success).
- They Enroll **24%** of All Latino Students.
- They Graduate **35%** of All Latino Graduates Nationwide.

**Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), 2019-20**

- 569** Number of HSIs
- 18%** of all higher education institutions meet HSI definition
- 67%** of all Latino college students attend an HSI

**ALAS**  
Association of Latino Administrators & Superintendents

ALAS's signature program, the Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA), identifies, recruits, develops, and advances talented administrators in districts where at least 20 percent of students are Latino. Now in its tenth year, this intensive, year-long program is highly competitive, with fewer than twenty candidates selected each year.

ALAS also supports aspiring and novice principals with a National Principal Leadership Academy, a collaboration with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). A new Women Superintendents Policy Leadership Academy supports novice leaders in policymaking and advocacy on behalf of Latino students.

**UNIVISION**

The collaboration between ACT and Univision is mutually beneficial. Univision works closely with ACT on both its in-person and virtual engagement with Latino students, parents, and communities. Univision also encouraged ACT to make more resources for students and parents available in Spanish—a wise recommendation upon which ACT has acted.

In 2019, ACT and Univision also collaborated on a research report that explored Hispanic students' perceptions on the transition to college. The findings and recommendations in this report inform both ACT's and Univision's messages and support for Latino students, families, and communities.

# ENGAGING OUR ALLIES



**Bipartisanship is rare these days. But both sides can agree and come together to improve education and career outcomes.”**

–John Clark, senior director, State Government Relations and State and Federal Programs



## 2021 COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS

★ **ACT engages local, state, and national leaders who are as passionate as we are about reinventing education and workforce systems that empower everyone to compete, succeed, and thrive.**

**ACT forges new collaboration with The Hunt Institute.** The Hunt Institute is the only organization in the nation exclusively dedicated to empowering governors, policymakers, and other education leaders in developing and implementing nonpartisan, comprehensive strategies to transform public education. Like ACT, The Hunt Institute is laser-focused on advancing equitable public education. One of its signature programs is the Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellows program, which provides senior, state-level policymakers across the country with the knowledge they need to cultivate smart and effective education agendas. As a supporting organization, ACT now has a place at the table to inform and learn from current and future governors, state legislators, and state secretaries of education.

**ACT sponsors science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) scholarships.** ACT collaborated with the National Lieutenant Governors Association to sponsor its STEM Scholarship Program, which awards **12** scholarships to **12** schools for **12** STEM-related projects and supports young people from underserved populations.

**ACT celebrates Joplin’s road to economic recovery and Work Ready Community.** In 2011, a tornado whirled through Joplin, Mo. destroying nearly one-third of the city. ACT became an integral collaborator in the road to recovery when the community prioritized its workforce. Two years after the devastating tornado, Joplin became the nation’s first ACT Work Ready Community, which is a community-based framework that links workforce development to education; aligns the economic development needs of communities, regions, and states; and matches individuals to jobs based on skill levels.

Prior to the tornado, ACT WorkKeys and the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate had been gaining momentum in Joplin and in the state, which provided a foundation on which to build. Now, 10 years after the tornado, Missouri has an **89%** participation rate in Work Ready Communities, with **102 of the 114** counties in the state participating. More than **5,300** employers in the state support Work Ready Communities and residents have earned nearly **142,000** ACT career readiness credentials, demonstrating a strong talent pipeline for future growth.



The roots of a cohesive, national workforce development program were growing across the nation, and in Joplin, when the tornado hit. But the tornado fast-tracked this national need, which ACT cultivated and grew into Work Ready Communities.”

–Jasen Jones, director of Workforce Strategies and National Partnerships and former executive director of the Workforce Innovation Board of Southwest Missouri



**ACT celebrated a milestone in 2021:**

Nationwide, current employees, high school students, work based learners, the unemployed, and job seekers have earned more than **5.1 million** nationally recognized ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificates since 2006.



**STATE AND DISTRICT SUCCESSES**

**All-hands-on-deck pandemic response leads to lasting support and flexibility for state and district collaborations.** COVID-19 affected everything about administering the standardized ACT test, with strict protocols and security on established days in **23** states and more than **3,900** districts nationwide. ACT improvised to create a whole new playbook for a distinctly nonstandard testing environment. We did everything possible to help students take advantage of the testing experience and keep moving forward on their journeys toward college. For example, ACT:

- ✦ increased testing capacity in response to social distancing requirements;
- ✦ allowed flexibility for must-have customizations, such as shifting test dates during school closures, adding an extra testing date to the typical three testing dates per year, offering vouchers to students to take the test on national rather than state or district testing days, and moving spring test days for juniors to fall test days for seniors;
- ✦ met monthly rather than quarterly with state leaders to work collaboratively to solve problems, and established office hours three days a week for states to get answers to their questions;
- ✦ addressed tremendous call volume at ACT’s customer care center by consolidating this function in house, reducing call wait times from more than two hours to an average of 18 seconds; and
- ✦ made late-night trips to overnight shipping facilities to get testing materials into customers’ hands in time for test days when delivery services were overwhelmed with volume.

Some solutions for our state and district colleagues in a time of need surfaced opportunities for flexibility in the future.



ACT responded with a huge, concerted effort, with 100 people doing just what was right for the customer during an extremely critical moment.”

–Catherine Hofmann, vice president, State and Federal Programs



## Informing Our Stakeholders: The Most Representative Data on the 2021 High School Graduating Class

“We are seeing a number of year-over-year trends that suggest the emergence of a ‘lost generation’ that is less likely to succeed academically and in the workplace. These trends have all been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is not the single cause nor excuse for them.”

–Janet Godwin, ACT CEO

ACT’s annual snapshot of the ACT tested graduating class of 2021 provides policymakers and education leaders with the best evidence of the effects of the pandemic on learning experiences. Policymakers and education leaders at the national and state levels are keenly interested in this data. ACT has briefed The Hunt Institute and the National College Attainment Network, an organization that builds, strengthens, and empowers communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students.

Similar briefings are planned with U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, U.S. House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R NC), U.S. Senate President Pro Tempore Emeritus Chuck Grassley (R IA), U.S. Rep. Mariannette Miller Meeks (R IA), U.S. Sen. Chris Coons (D DE), and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R SC). The annual snapshot has been provided to more than 40 members of Congress.

The data includes ACT score results from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including 16 states that required all students to take the ACT as part of their statewide testing programs, and another seven states that funded ACT testing on an optional basis. This makes ACT’s data the most representative of the 2021 high school graduating class.

The academic portrait of U.S. students is sobering. Of the **1.3 million** high school seniors tested, only one quarter met all four ACT College Readiness benchmarks. The national average Composite score was 20.3, the lowest average score in more than a decade.

**Learn more** about the data and explore **state and national trends** for more than **18 million** ACT tested graduating seniors from 2012 through 2021 – across multiple dimensions and outcomes – using ACT’s interactive data visualization tools.

# ON THE LEARNING JOURNEY TOGETHER



**The pandemic has surfaced a higher demand for data that helps educators and administrators understand where students really are and the need for products to get data that's meaningful for informing instruction."**

—Julie Murphy, vice president, Product and Services Division



## 2021 PRODUCT AND SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

★ **The pandemic showcased ACT's capacity to meet the market in the moment, respond to urgent needs, and position our organization for the future – all while serving ACT's mission.**

**ACT sees a rise in demand for products to get students back on track.** School closings and transitions to virtual and hybrid schooling left families, teachers, and administrators worried about students' social and emotional health. School leaders turned to the Mosaic by ACT social and emotional learning (SEL) assessment for grades 3-5 and 6-12, which is an accurate, valid, and reliable formative assessment of SEL skills critically important to student learning and lifelong success.

Mosaic by ACT lets educators know where students are now and provides actionable insights, resources, and strategies to support them. This newer ACT product is fully online and easy to administer, which made it ideal when schooling moved online, and flexible for students and teachers when they returned to school.

New for the 2021-22 school year is the Mosaic by ACT SEL Screener, which responds to a growing need for quick and frequent pulse checks on students. This shorter assessment can be completed in five to seven minutes or less. Administered up to four times over the course of a year, it can quickly pinpoint areas of strength, improvement, and perception of school climate.

Learn how the Region One Education Service Center used SEL to support students in this [SEL success story](#).

Schooling disruptions and strong interest in helping students recover from disrupted learning also spurred demand for the PreACT assessment for grades 8-9 and 10. This assessment, which predicts student performance on the ACT, helps educators, students, and families make informed decisions to ensure that students take the best classes to prepare for college and plan for the future.

**ACT moves nimbly to support international students' learning journeys.** Historically, **1 million** students come to the U.S. every year to complete their college learning. Up to **35%** of these students come from China, the country with the largest proportion of international students in the U.S. Hundreds of thousands more go to other English-speaking countries. When travel restrictions were implemented during the pandemic, these students' path to college could have been blocked.

In addition to the international administration of the ACT, ACT already offered the ACT **Global Assessment Certificate** (GAC), a university preparation program accredited by the American Council on Education that provides students with the academic knowledge, skills, and confidence to thrive in an English-language bachelor's degree program. In response to the pandemic and travel difficulties, the local ACT team designed condensed 240- and 360-hour versions of the standard GAC, which culminate in the ACT test and college credit. Using this formula, ACT had the capacity to deploy its resources and deliver the program in mainland China to a whole new audience.

"This is a learning experience taught in a classroom by a teacher that bridges the gap between a traditional high school experience and what students would expect in an English-speaking college program," said Andy Taylor, vice president, Workforce and International. "It builds on existing English skills; it's taught and assessed in English. It also teaches skills that students require when moving from the high school into the college level." Many international students have experienced schooling under traditional models, with the teacher in the front of the class delivering content and hours of exams to demonstrate knowledge. The GAC program prepares students to take charge of their own learning, with a broader range of assessments, such as group work, presentations, and essays.

Meanwhile, ACT's testing market expanded dramatically in Egypt, with **45,000** students taking the ACT test in 2020, up from about **3,000** in 2019. U.S.-accredited American curriculum schools in the region teach curricula as they are taught in the U.S., delivered in English. To earn a high school diploma, students are required to take independent third-party exams – both a general test that assesses English, language, math, and science, and at least two of eight subject tests, including U.S. history as an option. ACT designed a new product, the ACT International Subject Test, which launched in Egypt, Jordan, and other parts of the Middle East with Egyptian and Jordanian expatriate populations.

### The growth in national and international engagements has led to two insights.

1. **There is growing demand for digitally accessible resources.** ACT is now taking a digital forward approach to developing all products and services.
2. **There is a distinct need for English speaking, qualified teachers around the world to deliver programs like the Global Assessment Certificate.** ACT is developing professional learning resources to support this teaching cohort and, ultimately, to support students.

## USING RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND PANDEMIC IMPLICATIONS

ACT research provides insights on the implications of COVID-19 learning disruptions. Helping students regain their footing on their learning journeys requires a holistic examination of where they stand. ACT has prioritized research on student voice, another way in which we stay true to our mission. Learn about the research so far in this series of student voice and experiences by ACT experts:

- ✦ [Learning Interrupted: New ACT Research Examines ACT Score Declines Amid COVID-19](#)
- ✦ [What Was It Like Learning During the Pandemic? Students Have Spoken](#)
- ✦ [First-Year College Students Report Academic Challenges from Online Learning During the Pandemic](#)

To amplify the application of this research, ACT has presented the findings to national leadership organizations in education, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, and The Hunt Institute. ACT also has collaborated with several states that are interested in taking a more granular, in-depth look at how different student groups are faring. To facilitate this research, states have provided additional demographic data, prior test scores on state accountability tests, and data on the mode of learning during the school year.



ACT also does policy research where we're able to study the effects of different educational interventions. In the case of the pandemic, we're studying a disruptor in education and addressing some of the most important questions of our time."

–Jeff Allen, principal research scientist



**200,000+**

ACT has surveyed more than 200,000 students since 2016 to elevate student voice and choice in their learning.

Students have shared their views on critical topics, such as mental health, school safety, the digital divide, learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and financial aid. These surveys capture how students experience schooling in their daily lives, which enables ACT and its stakeholders to make recommendations for actions that can improve the learning journey.

ACT has a continuing commitment to engagement – and is exploring other avenues to learn from students, parents, and advocates in education.

# LOOKING AHEAD

In 2021, we positioned ACT to be more expansive with our mission and more engaged in championing student success and equity in education. We supported millions of students, served our customers well, conducted highly relevant research, introduced innovative products and services, and collaborated with many organizations that are equity-focused inside and out. We are emerging from the pandemic strong and sure of our purpose.

As an organization, we learned that forecasts of the demise of testing have been greatly exaggerated. Measurement matters. There is a tremendous appetite for standardized, objective, comparable data on student performance as a component of well-rounded assessment and instructional programs. Policymakers, educators, families, and students themselves want to know how education systems and individuals are performing now and how they are likely to perform in the future without intervention.

This data is more important than ever, as both the education crisis of the moment and long-standing challenges made clear. Data drives decisions that are needed to accelerate and monitor student learning – and help identify next steps to support students on the learning journey. This, indeed, is the call to action everywhere because disrupted learning is an urgent threat to our future.

So, what comes next? Going forward, ACT will continue to be an assessment and information innovator in the U.S. and abroad. We will build on the research that has captured attention during the pandemic, from disrupted learning realities and intergenerational mobility challenges to social and emotional learning supports and student voice insights. We will continue to respond nimbly to new challenges that arise in the field to effectively support students and teachers nationally and internationally.

ACT also will be more active in joining forces with organizational and individual allies who have the power, expertise, and sense of responsibility to address today's demographic, historical, and systemic imperatives.

We know that we cannot do this work alone. To deepen our reach and engagement, we invite you to collaborate with ACT as we listen and learn from you.





## ABOUT ACT

ACT is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people achieve education and workplace success. Grounded in more than 60 years of research, ACT is a trusted leader in college and career readiness solutions. Each year, ACT serves millions of students, job seekers, schools, government agencies, and employers in the U.S. and around the world with learning resources, assessments, research, and credentials designed to help them succeed from elementary school through career.

For more information, visit [act.org](https://act.org)  
@ACT

**ACT**<sup>®</sup>