The Condition of College & Career Readiness | 2012

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The Condition of College & Career Readiness | Class of 2012

Annually, ACT provides a snapshot of the college and career readiness of ACT-tested high school graduates. We offer this report as a service to inform policymakers and practitioners about selected indicators of effectiveness and how that translates into readiness. In interpreting and using the results, keep in mind that the number and percentage of 2012 graduates who took the ACT in your state determine how representative these findings are for your state.

Our Unique Added Value

ACT has been measuring the academic achievement of 11th- and 12th-grade students since 1959, their career aspirations since 1969, and their academic preparation in high school since 1985. ACT's data system includes each of these areas for 8th and 10th graders and has been monitoring student readiness and success for nearly two decades. Since 1996, and every three to five years thereafter, ACT surveys thousands of high school and college educators to pinpoint the knowledge and skills needed for first-year college coursework. ACT is the only organization with decades of empirical data showing exactly what happens to high school graduates once they get to college or to work and how they can maximize success—based on their preparation from kindergarten through high school.

College and Career Readiness Defined

ACT has long defined college and career readiness as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation. ACT's definition of college and career readiness was adopted by the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which serves as validation of our extensive research and ACT's College Readiness Standards™.

Measuring academic performance in the context of college and career readiness—focusing on the numbers and percentages of students meeting or exceeding the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks—provides meaningful and compelling information about the academic readiness of students. *The Condition of College & Career Readiness* highlights that information.

Early Student Monitoring and Intervention

ACT research continues to show the importance of early monitoring of student achievement and appropriate interventions. In the recently released research report *Staying on Target* (ACT 2012), students who are monitored early before taking the ACT are more likely to be college and career ready than those not monitored early (i.e., who take the ACT only), regardless of the high school they attend and their level of prior achievement. In fact, students who are monitored early are more likely to meet three or all four of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks than students who are not monitored early, regardless of gender, race, or annual family income.

The ACT groundbreaking research report *The Forgotten Middle* (ACT 2008) suggests that being on target for college and career readiness by 8th grade puts students on a trajectory for success in high school and beyond. This research shows 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. This research also reveals that students' academic readiness for college and career can be further supported and improved when they acquire and demonstrate behaviors in the upper elementary grades and in middle school shown to be related to successful academic performance.

The problems are clear and very well documented. ACT research strongly supports the need for an integrated, longitudinal, data-driven system to inform and encourage coherence in school, district, and state efforts to prepare all high school graduates for college and career. Our high schools must provide rigorous courses that are aligned with college and career readiness standards, and more students must be prepared and have the opportunity to take these core courses. All students must also have systematic guidance and feedback about their progress, and get that feedback early and often.

Use of Student Growth Models in Early Monitoring

As states and districts implement college and career readiness standards, metrics aligned to those standards are needed to gauge individual and school progress toward this goal. Using these metrics, growth modeling has strong potential to help stakeholders measure progress—for individual students and for school systems. Growth model results can serve a variety of purposes. Educators and policymakers can use growth modeling results as part of accountability systems, to measure student and school improvement, to more accurately diagnose areas of strength and weakness, and to inform educator professional development initiatives. Early monitoring of academic growth toward the college and career readiness goal can help identify problems, so that interventions can be made to get the individual or school system back on track.

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A Comprehensive Framework of Best Practices

One compelling reason for undertaking early and continuous monitoring of student performance that includes student growth models and for implementing aligned, outcomes-focused education standards is that **there is strong empirical evidence for these educational practices**.[1] In addition to these, other key practices for increasing readiness can be implemented at the district, school, and classroom levels as part of a comprehensive framework of best practices. The Core Practice™ Framework is an example of this. Empirically developed and validated, the Core Practice Framework outlines the evidence-based educator practices at each level of a school system—district, school, and classroom—that will help all students master high standards. The Framework focuses on five themes: 1) Curriculum and Academic Goals, 2) Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building, 3) Instructional Tools, 4) Monitoring Performance and Progress, and 5) Intervention and Adjustment. Included in the Framework are Critical Actions—steps on how to implement the 15 core practices.

Building a System

ACT is pleased to announce that we will provide an aligned, coherent system that will now begin in the earlier grades, giving states, districts, and schools a suite of opportunities spanning grades 3–12. This new system is aligned to our College Readiness Standards, which allows monitoring and intervening to take place much earlier and will help to get more students prepared to succeed at college-level work.

The system is built on the framework of our College Readiness Standards, essentially pulling these standards down into the lower grades and defining what students need to know and when in order to be on track for college. We have created these standards, and our test blueprints, around the results of the ACT National Curriculum Survey®. This survey is given every few years to educators in postsecondary, secondary, and now in the elementary grades to determine both what is being taught in the classroom and the expectations of what is needed to succeed at the next level, be it middle school, high school, or college. It is a representative sample of educators from across the country. For the first time, this survey has been enhanced to drill into what is being taught and the specific expectations in the lower grades and how that aligns to success in college. As you may expect, there is a disconnection between what is being taught and the expectations for success at the next level. The ultimate goal of this system is to give educators assessment tools to intervene and get more students on the right track to college and career success. Arguably, this is one of the reasons the Common Core State Standards were developed. A system like this will give you a jump-start into implementation of a more robust, standards-based system centering on the right number and right types of assessments all tied to appropriate interventions.

Using This Report[2]

This report is designed to help inform the following questions driving national efforts to strengthen P–16 education.

- Are your students prepared for college and career?
- Are enough of your students taking core courses?
- Are your core courses rigorous enough?
- Are your younger students on target for college and career?
- What other dimensions of college and career readiness should we track?
- How is the 2011 graduating class doing?

How does ACT determine if students are college ready?

Empirically derived, ACT's 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. These college courses include English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and an introductory social science course. Based on a nationally representative sample, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and as such represent a *typical* set of expectations. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are:

College Course	Subject Area Test	EXPLORE® Benchmark	PLAN® Benchmark	ACT® Benchmark
English Composition	English	13	15	18
Social Sciences	Reading	15	17	21
College Algebra	Mathematics	17	19	22
Biology	Science	20	21	24

College & Career Readiness in

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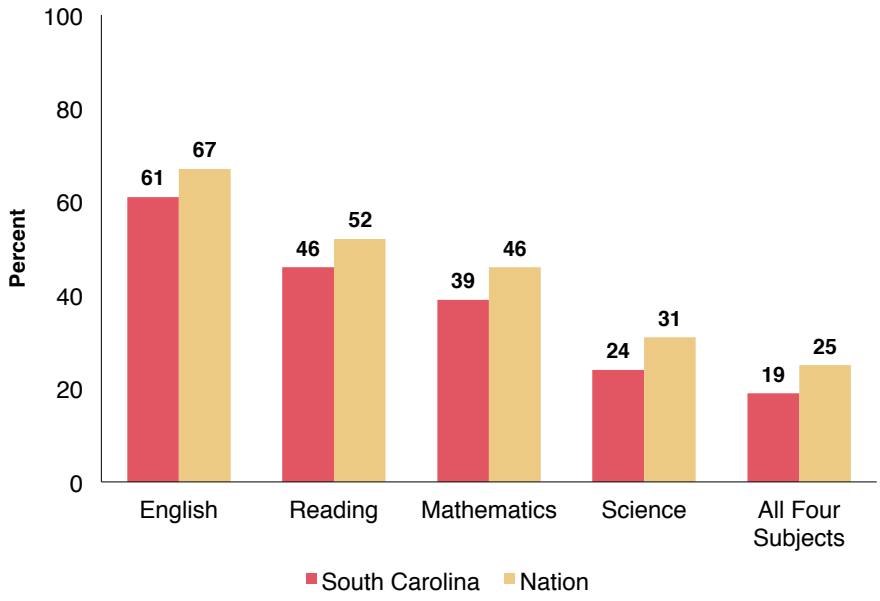
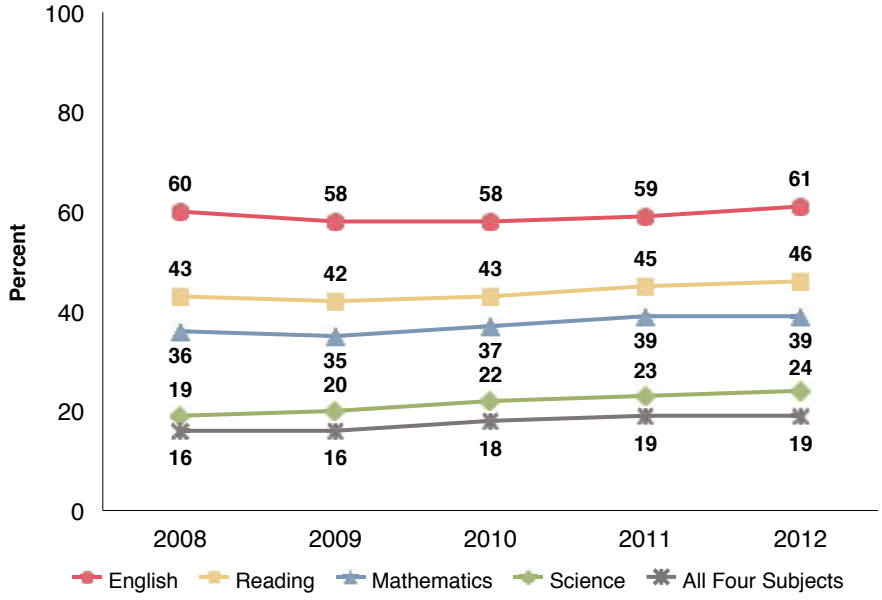
Attainment of College and Career Readiness

- 21,142 of your graduates, which is an estimated 57% of your graduating class, took the ACT.*
- From 2008–2012, the number of ACT test-taking graduates has increased by 28.0%, while the number of graduates in your state has decreased by 3.0%.

Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



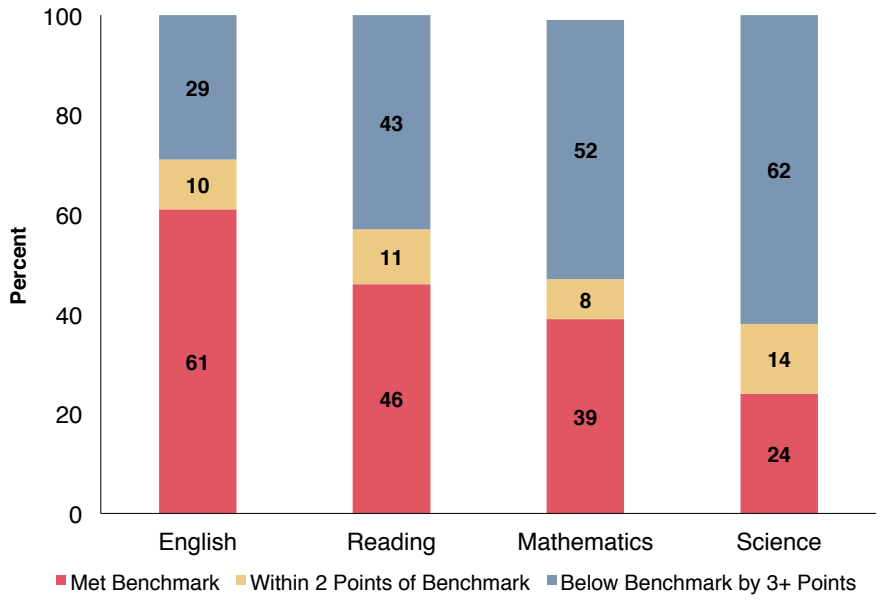
Percent of 2008–2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks



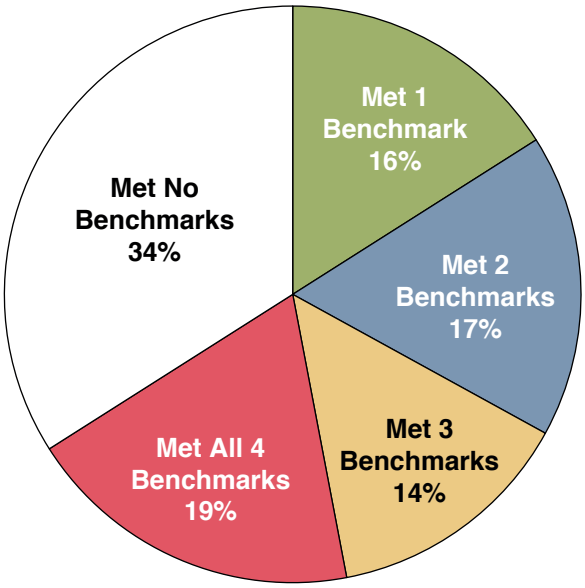
* Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992 to 2022*, 7th edition. © March 2008 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

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

Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Benchmark Attainment and Subject



Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



Near Attainment of College and Career Readiness

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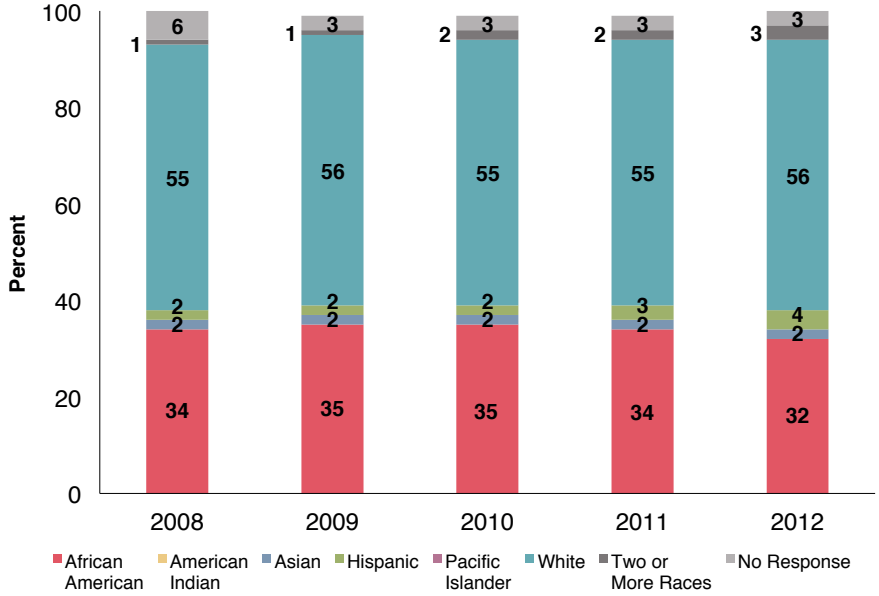
Participation and Opportunity

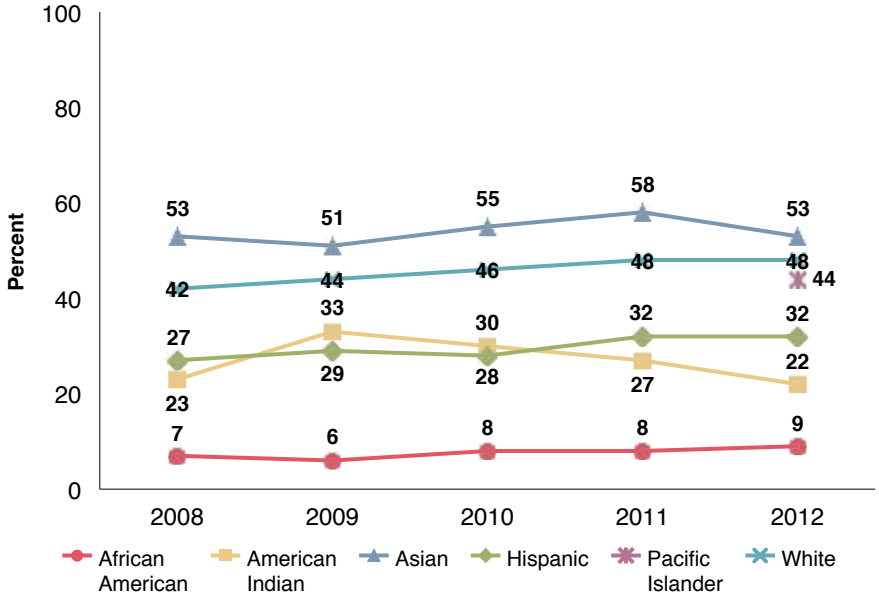
Over the past decade, ACT has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of students tested, as well as statewide partnerships in 12 different states and in many districts across the country. As a result, the 2012 *Condition of College & Career Readiness* report provides a much deeper and more representative sample in comparison to a purely self-selected college-going population.

Percent of 2008–2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity*



Note: Less than 0.5% will not appear.

Percent of 2008–2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity*

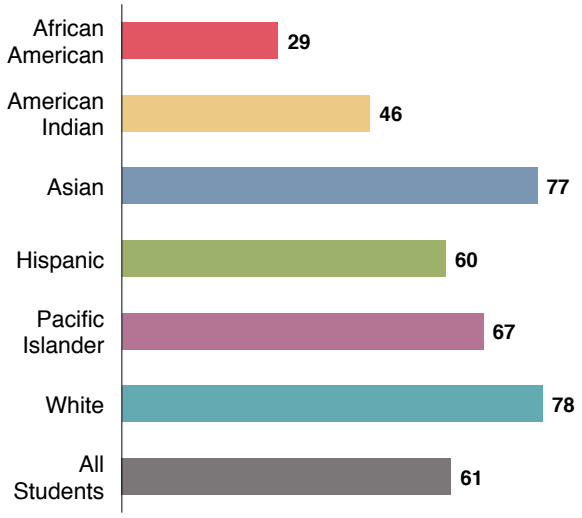


* Race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.[3]

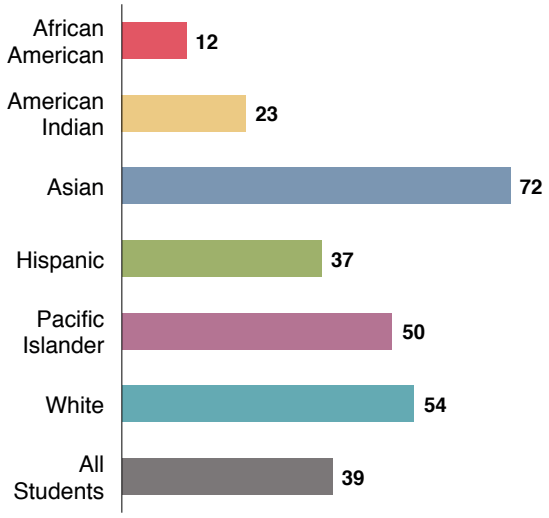
Participation and Opportunity by Subject

Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity and Subject*

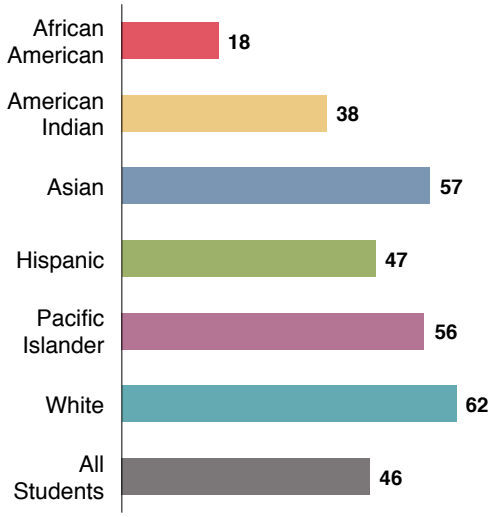
English



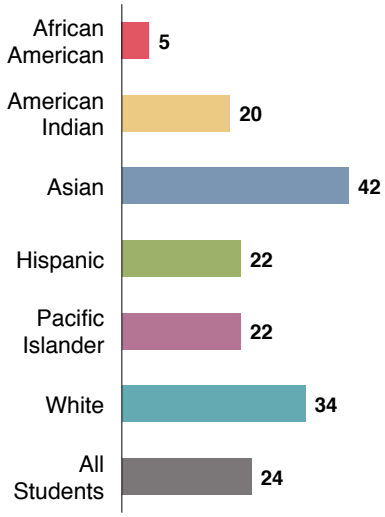
Mathematics



Reading



Science



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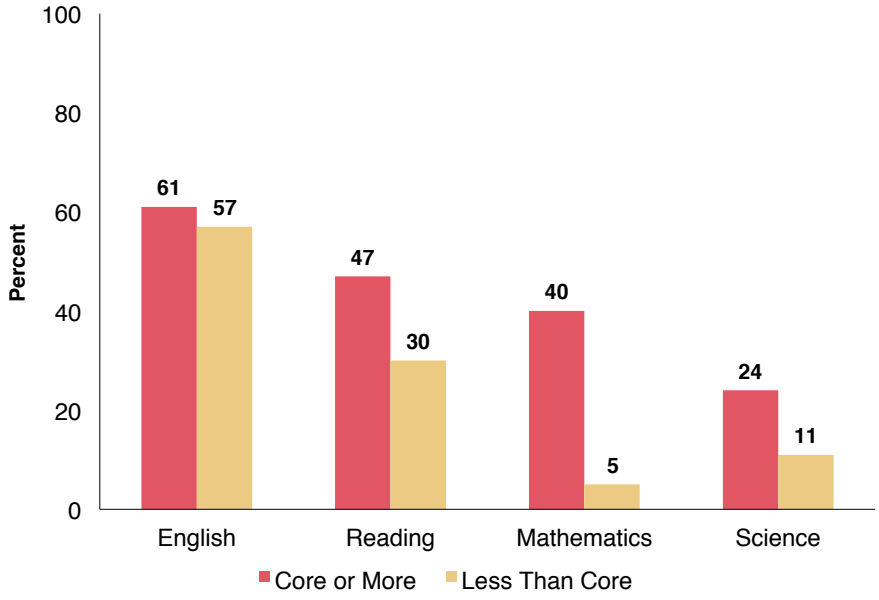
Course-Taking Patterns and Benchmark Performance

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.[4]

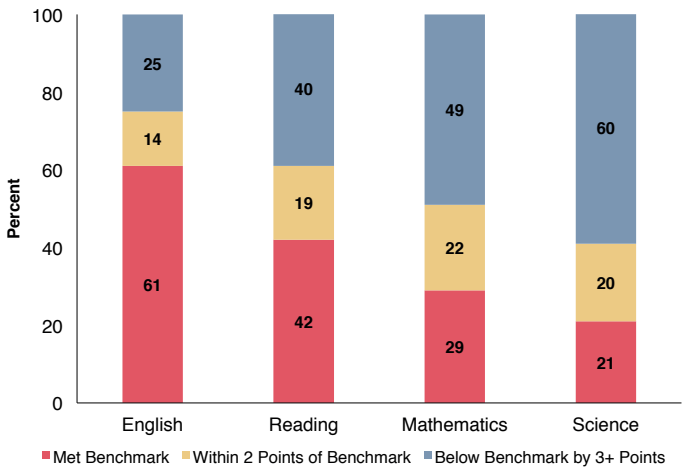
Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates in Core or More vs. Less Than Core Courses Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject

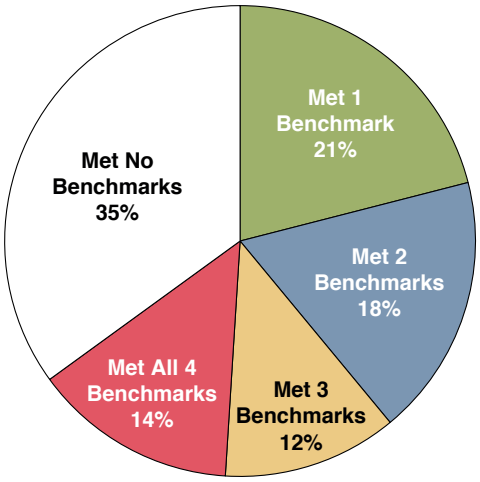


Early Preparation

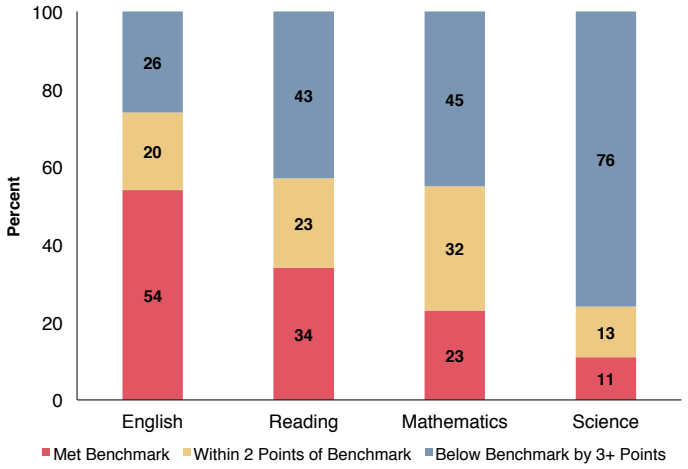
ACT research shows that younger students who take a rigorous curricula are more prepared to graduate from high school ready for college or career. Moreover, our recent research (*The Forgotten Middle*, 2008) found that "the level of academic achievement that students attain by 8th grade has a larger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

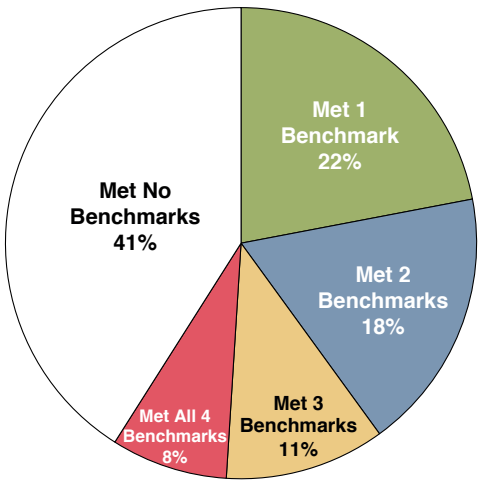
Percent of 2011–2012 PLAN-Tested 10th Graders Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks (N = 17,799)





Percent of 2011–2012 EXPLORE-Tested 8th Graders Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks (N = 44,677)





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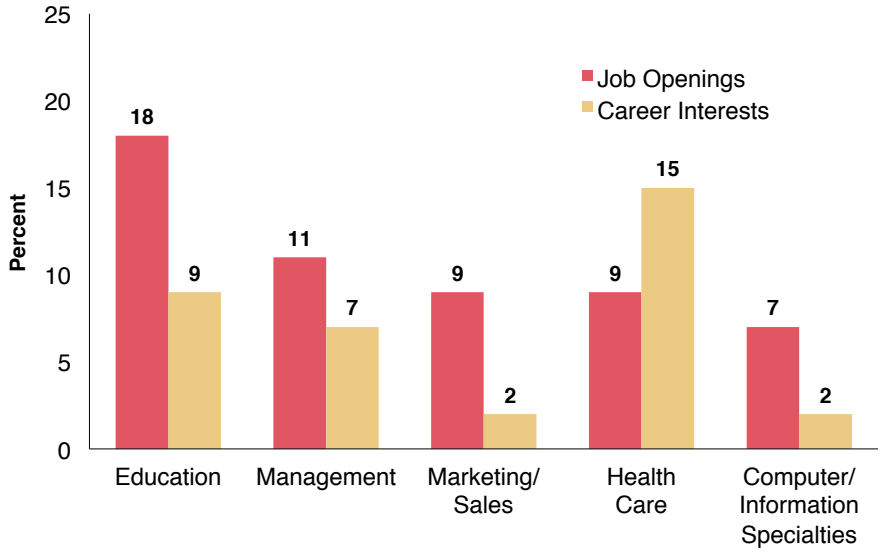
Other College and Career Readiness Factors

ACT has found several other substantial factors that impact college and career readiness for students. They include career and educational planning and the academic behaviors of students.

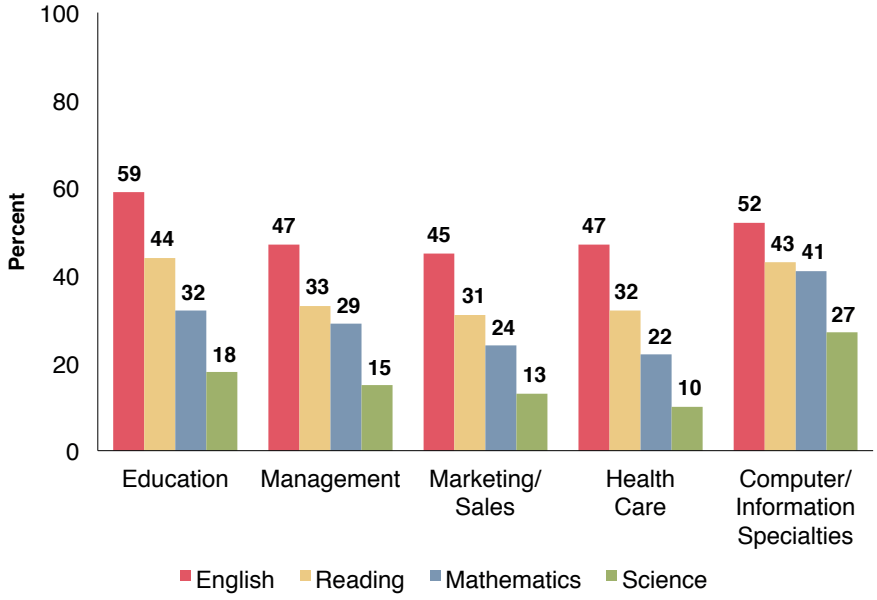
Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates with Career Interests in Jobs Calling for a Two-Year Degree or More in the State's Five Fastest-Growing Career Fields[5]



Preparation for Careers in High-Growth Fields

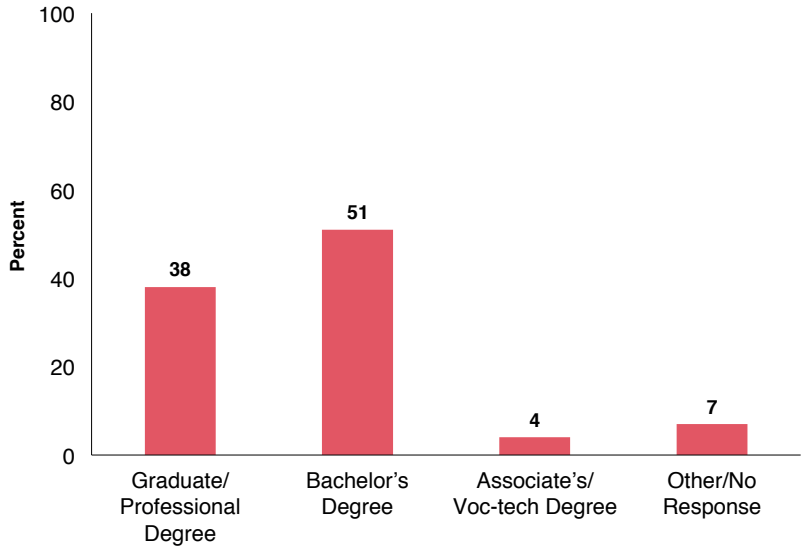
Many students who are interested in these career areas fall short of meeting ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks, suggesting that they are not on the right path to take advantage of career opportunities in these high-growth fields.

Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Interested in High-Growth Careers Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



Other College and Career Readiness Factors

Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations

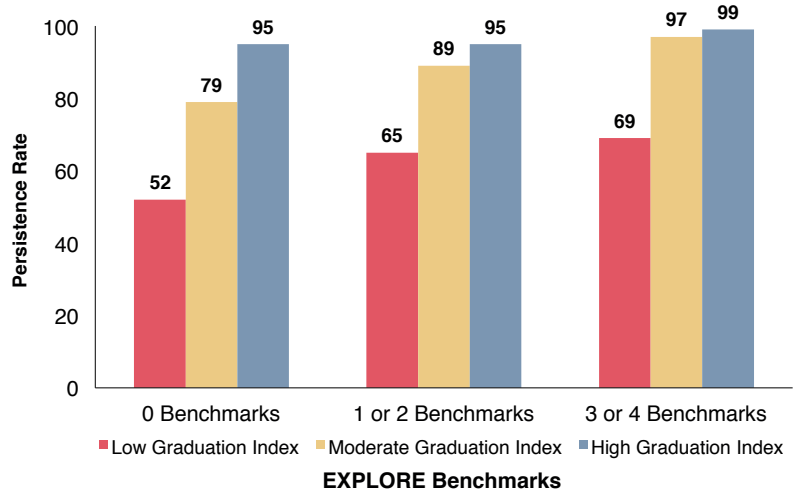


Aligning Student Behaviors, Planning, and Aspirations

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.

Academic Achievement and Academic Behaviors

High School Persistence Rates by 8th-Grade EXPLORE Benchmarks and ENGAGE™ Graduation Index Levels



Impact of Academic Behaviors on High School Persistence

ACT research illustrates how the combination of academic achievement and behavior yields more information than either measure alone when differentiating students for high school persistence.[6] Most importantly, this information is available in 8th grade—allowing for early identification of students at risk of not completing high school.[7]

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2012 State Percent of High School Graduates Tested, 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	86	20.3	65	48	33	23
Alaska	35	21.2	67	56	48	30
Arizona	35	19.7	54	42	39	23
Arkansas	88	20.3	64	48	36	23
California	25	22.1	72	58	58	35
Colorado	100	20.6	62	47	41	31
Connecticut	27	23.8	86	71	68	48
Delaware	14	22.6	76	63	57	39
District of Columbia	32	19.7	51	42	37	26
Florida	70	19.8	57	46	37	22
Georgia	52	20.7	64	50	40	27
Hawaii	27	21.3	66	52	51	31
Idaho	67	21.6	72	59	47	32
Illinois	100	20.9	65	47	44	30
Indiana	32	22.3	75	62	58	37
Iowa	63	22.1	77	62	51	38
Kansas	81	21.9	73	60	52	35
Kentucky	100	19.8	59	44	31	22
Louisiana	100	20.3	68	46	35	22
Maine	9	23.4	84	70	65	43
Maryland	21	22.1	72	58	53	37
Massachusetts	23	24.1	86	72	73	48
Michigan	100	20.1	59	45	36	26
Minnesota	74	22.8	78	64	62	42
Mississippi	100	18.7	53	34	21	14
Missouri	75	21.6	73	56	46	33
Montana	61	22	74	63	54	37
Nebraska	78	22	75	59	51	36

2012 State Percent of High School Graduates Tested, 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
Nevada	34	21.3	68	55	48	30
New Hampshire	19	23.8	85	73	68	49
New Jersey	20	23.4	81	67	67	43
New Mexico	75	19.9	57	45	33	22
New York	29	23.3	80	67	67	47
North Carolina	20	21.9	69	58	56	34
North Dakota	100	20.7	64	49	45	30
Ohio	71	21.8	71	58	49	34
Oklahoma	80	20.7	67	53	37	26
Oregon	38	21.4	66	55	49	35
Pennsylvania	18	22.4	76	62	59	38
Rhode Island	13	22.9	81	68	61	42
South Carolina	57	20.2	61	46	39	24
South Dakota	81	21.8	73	58	54	37
Tennessee	100	19.7	59	43	29	21
Texas	39	20.8	61	48	48	29
Utah	97	20.7	64	54	40	29
Vermont	28	23	78	66	62	43
Virginia	25	22.4	76	63	56	38
Washington	21	22.9	76	66	62	43
West Virginia	68	20.6	70	53	33	25
Wisconsin	71	22.1	75	59	54	38
Wyoming	100	20.3	60	46	38	28
National	52	21.1	67	52	46	31

* Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992 to 2022*, 7th edition. © March 2008 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

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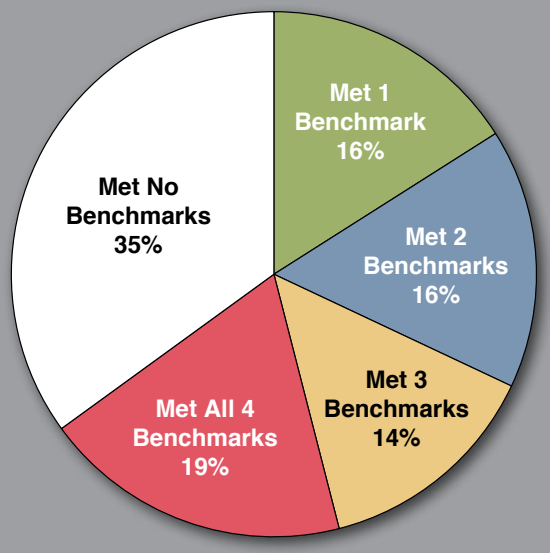
Looking Back at the Class of 2011

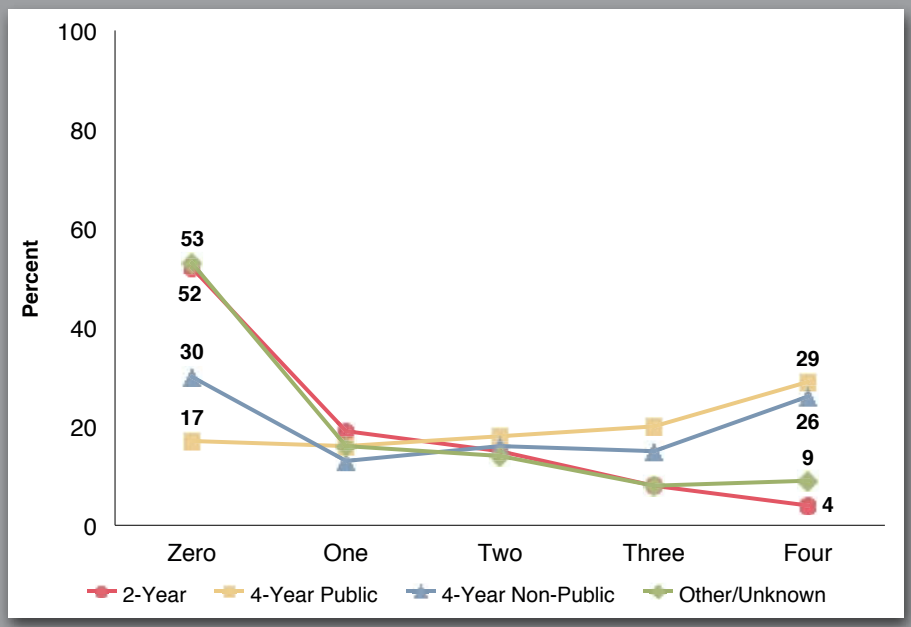
College Readiness Benchmarks and Fall 2011 College Enrollment

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 sizeable number of 2011 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 2011 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



Percent of 2011 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained and Fall 2011 College Enrollment Status



Policies and Practices

How to Increase College Readiness

Approximately 28% of all 2012 ACT-tested high school graduates did not meet any of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, meaning they were not prepared academically for first-year college courses in English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and social sciences. There are steps that states, districts, schools, and classrooms can take to increase student readiness for college-level work.

Essential Standards. Since ACT first released *Making the Dream a Reality* in 2008, we have called for states to adopt education standards that prepare all students for the rigors of college or career training programs. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards by 45 states and the District of Columbia, most states have taken that first step on the road to ensuring all students are ready for college or career. It is imperative now that policymakers and practitioners continue this process by aligning all aspects of their systems to college and career readiness.

Common Expectations. All states—especially those that have adopted the Common Core State Standards—should be aligning college and career readiness standards to a rigorous core curriculum for all high school students whether they are bound for college or work. The levels of expectation for college readiness and workforce training readiness should be comparable. To ensure students master the knowledge and skills to succeed after high school, ACT supports the core curriculum recommendations of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*—specifically that students take a core curriculum consisting of at least four years of English and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies.

Clear Performance Standards. States must define "how good is good enough" for college and career readiness. In addition to a consistent, rigorous set of essential K–12 content standards, states must define performance standards so that students, parents, and teachers know how well students must perform academically to have a reasonable chance of success at college or on the job. Based on decades of student performance data, ACT defines "college readiness" as students having a 50% chance of earning a grade of B or higher or about a 75% chance of earning a grade of C or higher in first-year college English Composition; College Algebra; Biology; or History, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, or Economics.

Rigorous High School Courses. Having appropriate and aligned standards, coupled with a core curriculum, will adequately prepare high school students only if the courses are truly challenging. That is, taking the right kinds of courses matters more than taking the right number of courses. Students who take a rigorous core curriculum should be ready for credit-bearing first-year college courses without remediation.

Early Monitoring and Intervention. We know from our empirical data that students who take challenging curricula are much better prepared to graduate high school ready for college or career training opportunities. If students are to be ready for college or career when they graduate, their progress must be monitored closely so that deficiencies in foundational skills can be identified and remediated early, in upper elementary and middle school. In addition, age-appropriate career assessment, exploration, and planning activities that encourage students to consider and focus on personally relevant career options should be a part of this process so that students can plan their high school coursework accordingly.

Data-Driven Decisions. States have been hard at work developing longitudinal P–16 data systems—this work must continue and accelerate. If states are serious about ensuring more of their students are prepared for college and work in the 21st century, they must develop systems that allow schools and districts to closely monitor student performance at every stage of the learning pipeline, from preschool through the elementary, middle, and high school grades, all the way through college. Use of a longitudinal data system enables educators to identify students who are in need of academic interventions at an early stage, thus giving teachers and students more time to strengthen these skills before graduation. Longitudinal data systems provide a tool to schools to ensure all their students take and complete the right number and kinds of courses before graduation. Using a longitudinal assessment system also permits schools to evaluate the value added by each core course in helping students to become ready for college and career. Such systems allow colleges to offer feedback reports to high schools that examine how well prepared each high school's graduates are for college. These reports can be used to strengthen high school curricula.

Policies and Practices

District, School, and Classroom Practices

The Path to Readiness: It Takes a System

Research by the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA)—a department of ACT—shows that no single program or isolated reform can be a substitute for a coherent, long-term, systemwide approach to improving teaching and learning. We all want our students to graduate prepared to take on future opportunities with success. So, what are consistently higher performing schools doing to place more students on the path to college and career readiness?

The **Core Practice Framework**, built upon the study of more than 550 schools across 20 states, identifies the core practices that distinguish a higher performing school from its average performing counterparts. NCEA studies the practices of those schools and school systems that have more success in preparing their students for college and careers than their peers who serve similar student populations. Our ongoing research supports the Framework and adds content and information to each of the core practices below.

The 15 Practices of Higher Performing School Systems

The Core Practice Framework outlines the evidence-based educator practices at each level of a school system—district, school, and classroom—that will help all students master high standards. The Framework focuses on five themes:

Theme 1: Curriculum and Academic Goals

District Practice: Provide clear, prioritized learning objectives by grade and subject that all students are expected to master.

School Practice: Set expectations and goals for teaching and learning based on the district's written curriculum.

Classroom Practice: Study and use the district's written curriculum to plan all instruction.

Theme 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

District Practice: Provide strong principals, a talented teacher pool, and layered professional development.

School Practice: Select and develop teachers to ensure high-quality instruction.

Classroom Practice: Collaborate as a primary means for improving instruction.

Theme 3: Instructional Tools: Programs and Strategies

District Practice: Provide evidence- and standards-based instructional tools that support academic rigor for all students.

School Practice: Promote strategies and build structures and schedules to support academic rigor.

Classroom Practice: Use proven instructional tools to support rigorous learning for students.

Theme 4: Monitoring Performance and Progress

District Practice: Develop and use student assessment and data management systems to monitor student learning.

School Practice: Monitor teacher performance and student learning.

Classroom Practice: Analyze and discuss student performance data.

Theme 5: Intervention and Adjustment

District Practice: Respond to data through targeted interventions or curricular/instructional adjustments.

School Practice: Use targeted interventions to address learning needs of teachers and students.

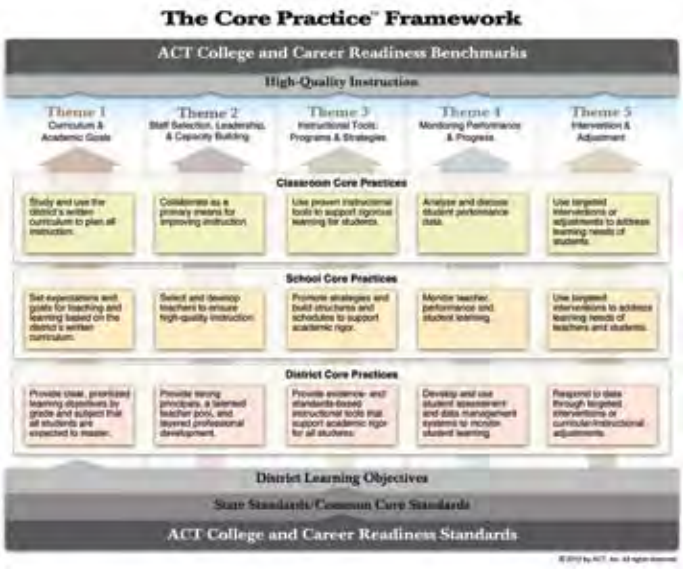
Classroom Practice: Use targeted interventions or adjustments to address learning needs of students.

Another layer behind the Framework, the Critical Actions, provides additional support for educators by outlining how to successfully implement the key components of each core practice.

The Core Practice Framework

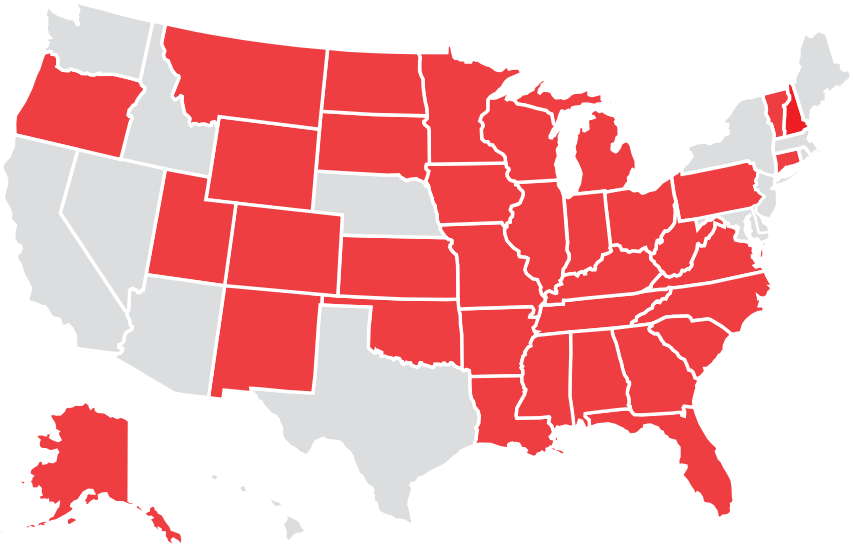
Reading from bottom to top, the path to readiness begins with ACT's College and Career Readiness Standards, Common Core State Standards, and district learning objectives. Applying the 15 core practices of teaching and learning leads to high-quality instruction, which in turn creates the opportunity for all students to reach ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks.

To learn more, please visit www.nc4ea.org.



Resources

Statewide Partnerships in College and Career Readiness



States that incorporate ACT's 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's assessments, which provide high schools, districts, and states with unique student-level data that can be used for effective student intervention plans.

EXPLORE®	PLAN®	The ACT®	QualityCore®	WorkKeys®	★	★
8th- and 9th-grade students	**10th-grade students**	**11th- and 12th-grade students**	**8th- through 12th-grade students**	**11th- and 12th-grade students**	**National Career Readiness Certificates**	**WorkKeys®-based certificates**
Alabama	Alabama	Arkansas	Alabama	Illinois	Alaska	Alabama
Arkansas	Arkansas	Colorado	Kentucky	Michigan	Connecticut	Arkansas
Illinois	Florida	Illinois		North Carolina	Indiana	Colorado
Kentucky	Illinois	Kentucky		North Dakota	Iowa	Florida
Louisiana	Kentucky	Louisiana		Wyoming	Kentucky	Georgia
Michigan	Louisiana	Michigan			Louisiana	Indiana
Minnesota	Michigan	Montana			Michigan	Kansas
Oklahoma	Minnesota	North Carolina			Minnesota	Mississippi
South Carolina	North Carolina	North Dakota			Missouri	North Carolina
Tennessee	Oklahoma	Tennessee			Montana	Oklahoma
Utah	Tennessee	Utah			New Hampshire	South Carolina
West Virginia	Utah	Wyoming			New Mexico	Virginia
Wyoming	West Virginia				North Dakota	West Virginia
	Wyoming				Ohio	Wyoming
					Oregon	
					Pennsylvania	
					South Dakota	
					Tennessee	
					Vermont	
					Wisconsin	

State administration of ACT's 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.

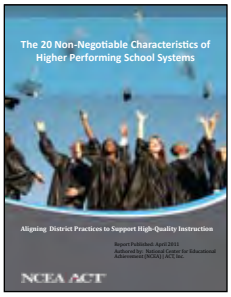
Resources

ACT Research

As a not-for-profit educational research organization, ACT is committed to producing research that focuses on key issues in education and workforce development. Our goal is to serve as a data resource. We strive to provide policymakers with the information they need to inform education and workforce development policy and to give educators the tools they need to lead more students toward college and career success. What follows are some of ACT's recent and most groundbreaking research studies. To review these studies, go to **www.act.org/research/summary**.

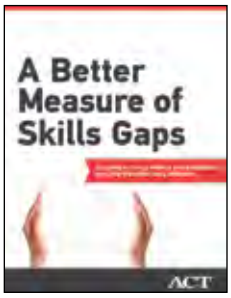
The Condition of College & Career Readiness

Using ACT test scores and the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2012* provides a series of graphics highlighting the college and career readiness of the ACT-tested high school class of 2012. This report is updated annually.



The 20 Non-Negotiable Characteristics of Higher Performing School Systems

Discover the 20 hard-hitting characteristics that make school systems successful at preparing students for college and careers.



A Better Measure of Skills Gaps

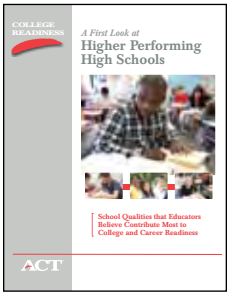
This report proposes a simple definition to describe the increasing mismatch between labor market supply and demand in America and sets forth detailed and specific measures to analyze skills gaps in four major industry sectors.

Enrollment Management Trends Report

This report provides enrollment managers and other college administrators with information about students' patterns during their college choice process for 2011 high school graduates who took the ACT test.

A First Look at the Common Core and College and Career Readiness

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Now, efforts to implement the Standards take on primary importance. ACT provides this first look at student performance relative to the Common Core State Standards and college and career readiness.



A First Look at Higher Performing High Schools

There are high schools across the country that are demonstrating strong growth toward college and career readiness. ACT provides this first look at school qualities that personnel at these high schools believe make the greatest difference in preparing students for college and careers.

The Forgotten Middle

This report examines the factors that influence college and career readiness. The percentage of 8th graders on target to be ready for college-level work by the time they graduate from high school is so small that it raises questions not only about the prospect that these students can eventually be ready for college and career but also about whether they are even ready for high school.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA), *The Core Practice Framework: A Guide to Sustained School Improvement* (Austin, TX: ACT, Inc., 2012); NCEA, *The 20 Non-Negotiable Characteristics of Higher Performing School Systems* (Austin, TX: ACT, Inc., 2011); NCEA, *Core Practices in Math and Science: An Investigation of Consistently Higher Performing School Systems in Five States* (Austin, TX: ACT, Inc., 2009); ACT, *Affirming the Goal: Is College and Career Readiness an Internationally Competitive Standard?* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc., 2011); ACT, *A First Look at the Common Core and College and Career Readiness* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc., 2010).
2. The data presented herein are based on the ACT Profile Report—State: Graduating Class 2012 for each respective state, and accessible at **www.act.org/readiness/2012**. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. State long-term occupational projections for 2008–2018 (based on job growth and job replacement provided by South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce). The occupations that are used to calculate the projected high-growth career fields are based on a combination of the following: the occupational criteria used by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics to obtain state-level occupation data, occupational shifts that reflect a state's economic situation, and the ACT Career Classification System that organizes occupations into career fields. Career interests and achievement results based on 2012 ACT-tested South Carolina students (n = 16,408) with valid career information and subject scores. Sample occupations within state high-growth career fields are Education (secondary teachers, administrators, etc.); Management (convention planners, hotel/restaurant managers, etc.); Marketing/Sales (insurance agents, buyers, etc.); Health Care (nurses, occupational therapists, etc.); Computer/Information Specialties (computer programmers, database administrators, etc.).
6. Across all EXPLORE Benchmark attainment levels, students with higher ENGAGE Graduation Index scores, which are based on a combination of ENGAGE scale scores and other self-reported student information, had higher high school persistence rates than students with lower Graduation Index scores.
7. Data are based on 2,986 8th graders in 24 middle schools across the country who took EXPLORE and ENGAGE Grades 6–9, an assessment of academic behaviors. High school persistence is defined as having graduated high school or being on track to graduate within four years of starting 9th grade. These data do not reflect the entire 2012 ACT-tested high school graduate cohort.

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ACT is an independent, not-for-profit 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/readiness/2012

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