



The Future Workforce of Ohio

Ohio's labor force and economy are strengthened when the state's high school graduates are prepared for college and are interested in pursuing available jobs in Ohio. Academic preparation is critical, given that many of the projected high growth job openings in Ohio will require a 2-year college degree or more. In Ohio, five of the expected highest growth career fields will be management, education, health care, computer specialties, and community services. Do Ohio's future workers have the necessary skills to fill positions in these high-growth careers? Are Ohio's future workers interested in jobs in these fields?

Using 2008 ACT results for 57,728 Ohio high school graduates with career interest information, and 2004-2014 Ohio state long-term occupational projections (based on job growth and job replacement), here is what we know so far.

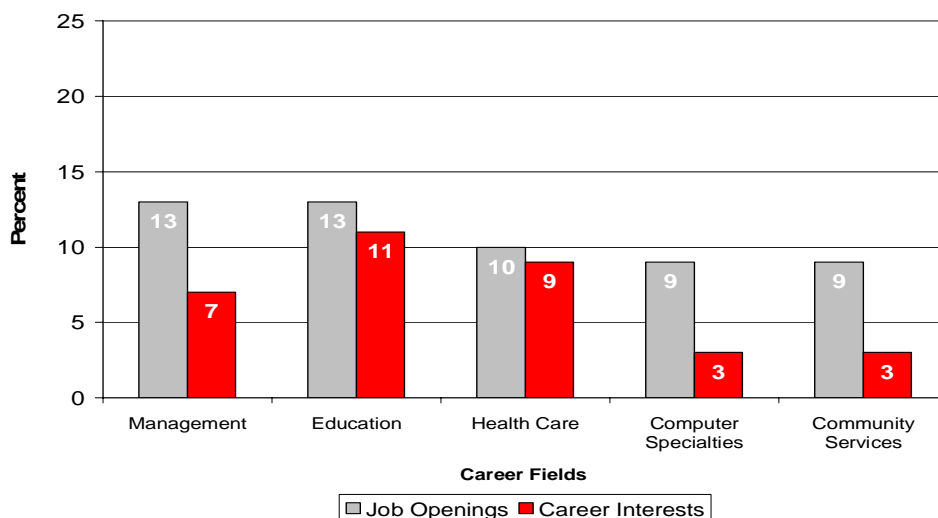
- There is some interest among Ohio high school students in pursuing these high-growth career fields, but not enough to meet the demand.
- Of Ohio students expressing interest in many of these high-growth career fields, more than two-thirds are ready for first-year college English courses, while less than two-thirds are prepared for college-level social science courses.
- Of Ohio students expressing interest in most of these high-growth career fields, less than one-half are ready for college-level math or science courses.

Ohio educators should continue to encourage their students to pursue high-growth Ohio career fields.

Students' Interests

- Gaps between expected jobs and interested students are apparent for careers in management (convention planners, hotel/restaurant managers, etc.), education (secondary teachers, administrators, etc.), computer specialties (computer programmers, database administrators, etc.), and community services (social workers, school counselors, etc.), with more jobs expected than students interested in jobs in these fields (Figure 1). Ohio may be faced with potential labor shortfalls in fields where skilled individuals are most needed.

Figure 1: Projected Annual Job Openings and Ohio High School Students' Interests in High Growth Ohio Career Fields^{1, 2}

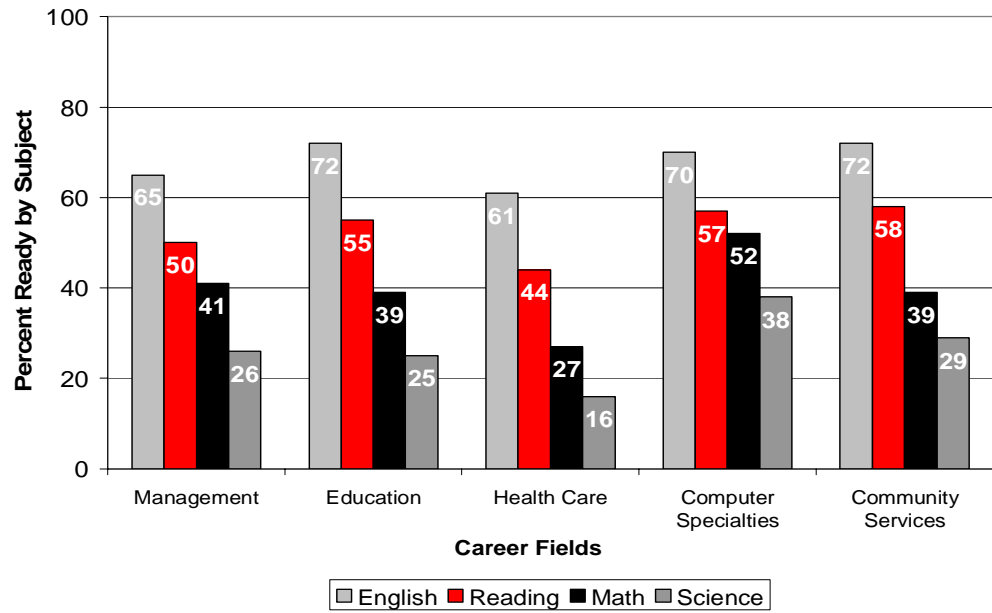


¹State projections 2004-2014 provided by Ohio Job & Family Services, Office of Workforce Development.

²Based on 2008 ACT-tested Ohio students ($n = 57,728$) with valid career information.

- Although the gap between students interested in the health care field (nurses, occupational therapists, etc.), and the jobs that will be available in this field is more narrow, many of these students are not ready to meet or exceed one or more of ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks in English, reading, mathematics, or science, as shown in Figure 2. Students who are interested and college ready are more likely to be successful in the coursework needed to enter this high-growth career field.

Figure 2: ACT College Readiness Benchmark Performance of Ohio High School Students Interested in High Growth Ohio Career Fields by Subject³



³Based on 2008 ACT-tested Ohio students ($n = 57,728$) with valid subject scores and career information.

Ohio educators should continue to encourage their students to achieve the highest level of preparation for college, in order to meet Ohio Workforce demands.

Students' Skills

- Students are ready to succeed in entry-level college courses if they meet ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. In Ohio, more than two-thirds of students are prepared for first-year college coursework in English for three of the five high-growth career fields. Fewer students interested in these high-growth fields are prepared to succeed in college-level social science courses (indicated by ACT Reading Benchmark), with students pursuing health care careers being the least prepared and students pursuing community services careers being the most prepared.
- Over one-half of students wanting to enter computer specialties are ready for college-level math courses, while less than one-half are ready for college-level science. Less than one-half of students pursuing careers in management, education, health care, and community services are ready for college-level math, while less than one-third of students pursuing these careers are ready for college-level science courses.
- Overall, the pattern of readiness for college coursework is similar across the five high-growth career fields: Student preparation is highest for English and social sciences, and much lower for math and science. The lower levels of preparation among graduating high school students is alarming, given the high demand for science- and math-intensive careers such as computer programming, nursing, and teaching.