The Condition of College & Career Readiness

This report looks at the achievement of the ACT®-tested 2017 graduating class relative to college and career readiness. A total of 60% of students in the 2017 US graduating class took the ACT® test, compared to 64% last year, 54% in 2013, and 42% in 2007. The growing percentage of the nation's graduates taking the ACT over the past decade has enhanced the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current graduating class in the context of college readiness.

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

- **Holistic view of readiness.** The ACT report, *Broadening the Definition of College and Career Readiness: A Holistic Approach*, shows academic readiness is only one of multiple domains critical in determining an individual's readiness for success in college and career. Social and emotional learning skills (SEL) are also vital. Behavioral skills, cross-cutting capabilities, and navigational skills should be measured and addressed. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive picture of student readiness for success after high school.

- **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 educational 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.

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2017

Texas Key Findings

Performance

- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 146,608 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 109,841 in 2013.
  - ~ In 2017, there were 60,142 Hispanic graduates from Texas who took the ACT (41 percent). This compares to 57,960 (41 percent) and 41,877 (38 percent) for 2016 and 2013 graduating classes, respectively.
- Compared to the 2017 Texas graduating class Composite average of 20.7, Texas graduates in 2016 and 2013 had Composite averages of 20.6 and 20.9, respectively.
  - ~ Hispanic students' average score increased to 18.6, compared to 18.9 nationally.
  - ~ White students' average score remained unchanged at 23.2, compared to 22.4 nationally.
  - ~ African American students' average score increased to 17.8, compared to 17.1 nationally.
- In 2017, 26 percent of Texas graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 26 and 26 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 57 percent of Texas graduates met the ACT English College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 57 and 61 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 40 percent of Texas graduates met the ACT Math College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 42 and 48 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 45 percent of Texas graduates met the ACT Reading College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 43 and 43 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 35 percent of Texas graduates met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 35 and 36 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

STEM

- In 2017, 75,077 Texas graduates (51 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- Compared to a 2017 Texas graduating class STEM average of 21.0, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM averages of 21.0 and 21.4, respectively.
- In Texas, 2017 graduates taking physics had an average science score of 21.1, compared to the average science score of 18.5 for students not taking physics.

Career Readiness

- In 2017, 35,679 Texas graduates (24 percent) were likely to attain the Gold ACT WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® or higher, based upon ACT Composite score, compared to 538,392 (27 percent) nationally.
  - ~ The ACT Composite scores associated with a 50% chance of earning each ACT WorkKeys NCRC® level or higher are: 13 for Bronze, 17 for Silver, 25 for Gold, and 35 for Platinum. Based on those cut scores, students who earned an ACT Composite score of less than 13 would be classified as "Needs Improvement," 13 to 16 as "Bronze," 17 to 24 as "Silver," and 25 or above as "Gold or Higher." For comparison, individual student score reports classify those who scored 12 to 13, 14 to 17, and 18 and higher as making progress toward Bronze, Silver, and Gold certificates.

Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2016 ACT-tested Texas high school graduates, ACT research estimates that an increase of 0.1 in state average ACT Composite score for the 2017 graduating class would result in:
  - ~ 298 more students enrolling in college.
  - ~ 358 more students persisting to year two.
  - ~ 296 fewer students needing remedial English.
  - ~ 519 fewer students needing remedial math.
  - ~ 408 more students persisting to year four.
  - ~ 445 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- In Texas, 2017 graduates taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 22.7, compared to 19.5 for single-time testers.
  - ~ In comparison to students nationwide, a higher percentage of Texas students tend to wait until their senior year to take the ACT.
  - ~ African American students are less likely to test as juniors and less likely to retest. This may limit some postsecondary opportunities.
  - ~ 54.6 percent of White students, 70.3 percent of Hispanic students, and 67.9 percent of African American students tested only once.
  - ~ 45.4 percent of White students, 29.7 percent of Hispanic students, and 32.1 percent of African American students tested more than once.
  - ~ 22.6 percent of White students, 34.5 percent of Hispanic students, and 40.3 percent of African American students took their first and only test as a senior.
- Of Texas's 2017 graduating class, there were 60,142 (41 percent) Hispanic students taking the ACT. This compares to 347,906 (17 percent) nationally.
- Of Texas's 2017 graduating class, there were 50,119 (34 percent) White students taking the ACT. This compares to 1,062,439 (52 percent) nationally.
- Of Texas's 2017 graduating class, there were 15,021 (10 percent) African American students taking the ACT. This compares to 256,756 (13 percent) nationally.
- Of Texas's 2017 graduating class, there were 7,690 (5 percent) Asian students taking the ACT. This compares to 96,097 (5 percent) nationally.
- For Texas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were Texas A&M University-Main Campus, University of Texas at Austin, Texas State University, Texas Tech University, and Baylor University.
  - ~ For Texas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were University of Arkansas, University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma State University.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 77 percent of Texas graduates opted into EOS.

- ACT issued 75,468 ACT fee waivers to qualified Texas students. However, 23,885 students (32 percent) did not take advantage of this opportunity to test for free. This compares to 656,061 issued nationally, of which 181,092 (28 percent) did not take advantage. This represents a great opportunity for high schools within the state to increase the socio-economic diversity of their students tested. Note: This is the number of fee waivers issued for the state, not specific to this graduating class.

Pipeline

- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 28,462 (19 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 3,671 (3 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 15.6.
- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 31,740 (22 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 22.7.
- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 62,026 (42 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 19.9.
- In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 21,935 (15 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 23.6.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 Texas graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Mechanical Engineering.
  - ~ In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 16,731 (11 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 21.4.
  - ~ In the Texas graduating class of 2017, 6,326 (4 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 19.3.

ACT Footprint

- Number of administrations:
  - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 30,588
  - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 1,249
  - ~ ACT Engage®: 16,631
  - ~ PreACT®: 18,339
  - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 16,694

Additional Points

- ACT developed a Texas Alignment Report in 2016, aligning TEKS with the ACT and ACT Aspire from third grade to high school.
- ACT conducted 17 free ACT College and Career Readiness Workshops across the state.
- There are 19 members of the Texas ACT Council from K-12, higher education, and the workforce. Overall, there are 378 ACT State Organization members.
- 2017 College and Career Readiness Exemplars from Texas are: Cedar Hill Collegiate High School, Texas A&M University-Kingsville (Career Preparedness), and Jessica Diaz, Galena Park High School (Student National Semifinalist).
- This year, ACT hosted two enrollment management workshops for Texas higher education professionals. These were held on the campuses of University of Texas at San Antonio and Southern Methodist University.

# Texas College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks* by Subject
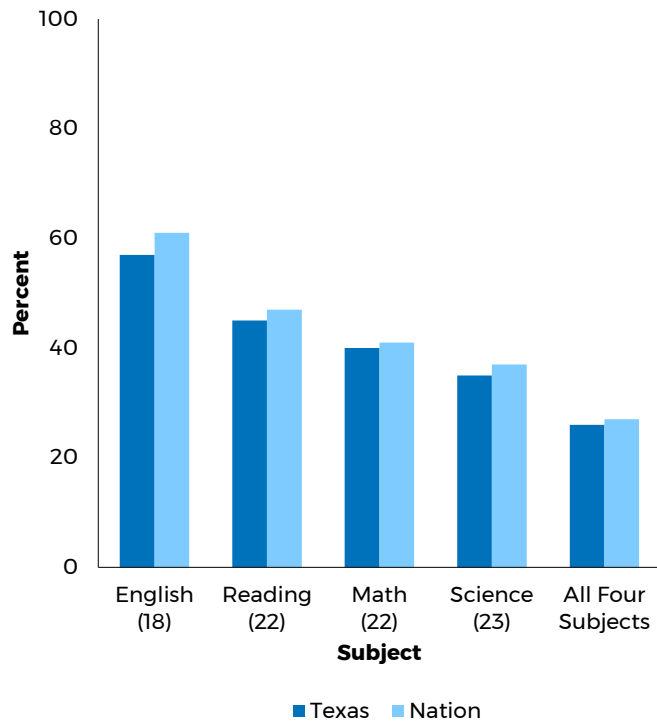
Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
Texas	57	45	40	35	26
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

Percent of 2013–2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks
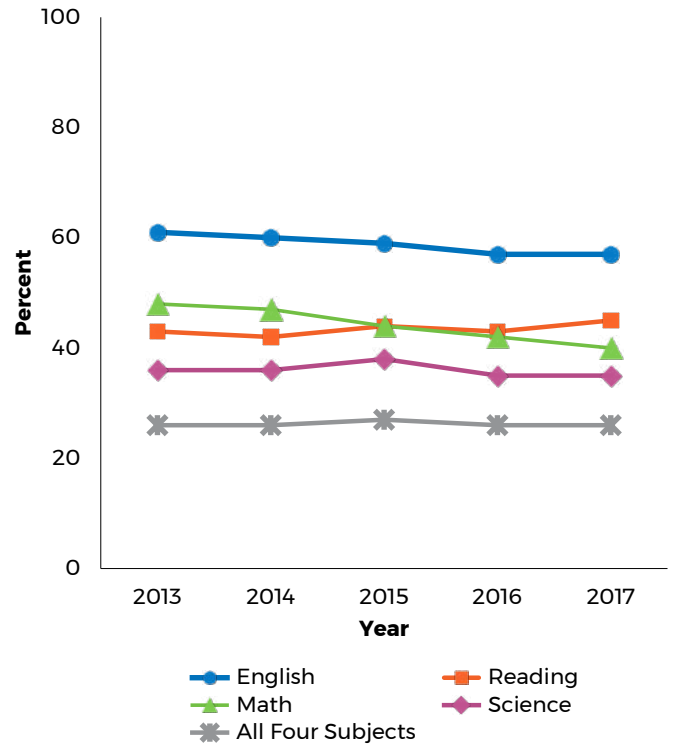
Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	61	60	59	57	57
Reading	43	42	44	43	45
Math	48	47	44	42	40
Science	36	36	38	35	35
All Four Subjects	26	26	27	26	26

* 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. Throughout this report, benchmark attainment corresponds with students meeting or exceeding score values in parentheses ( ).

Percent of 2013–2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity*
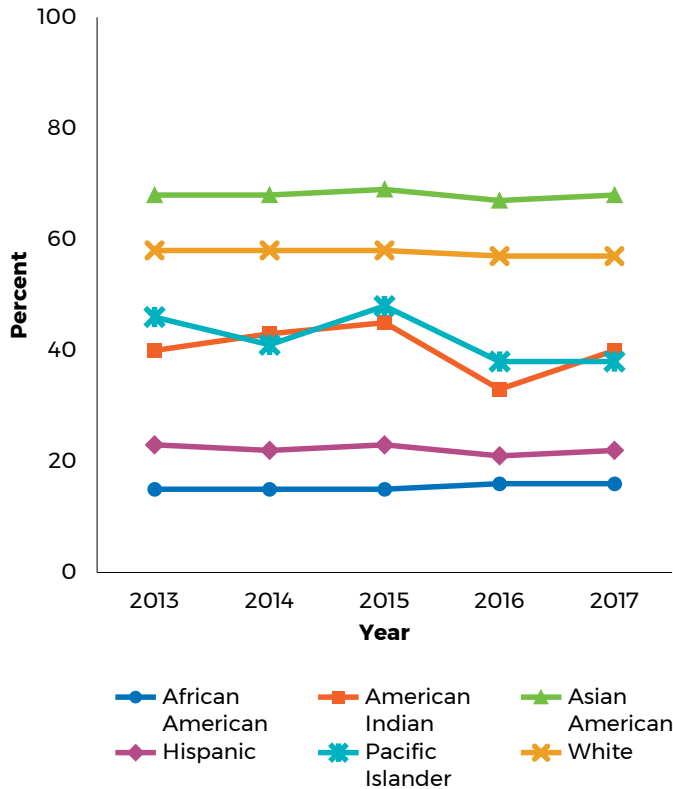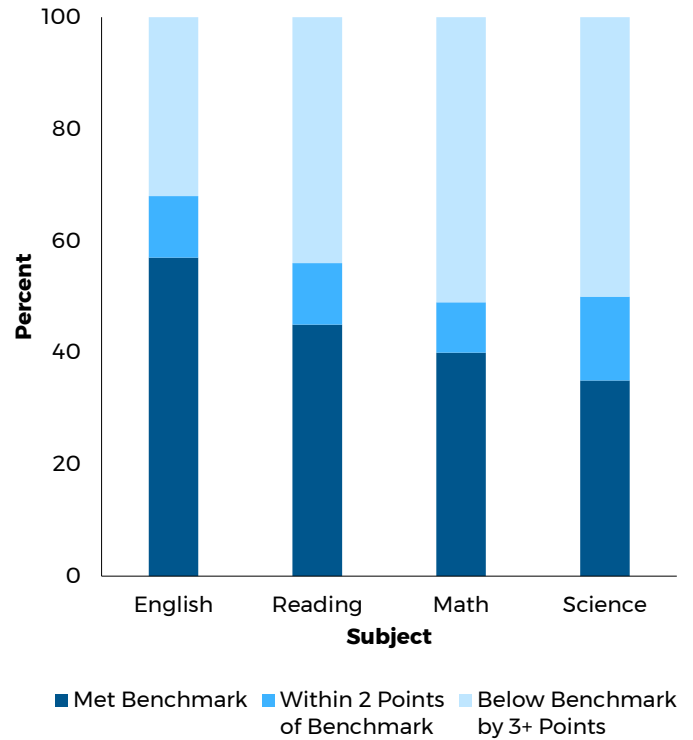
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	15	15	15	16	16
American Indian	40	43	45	33	40
Asian American	68	68	69	67	68
Hispanic	23	22	23	21	22
Pacific Islander	46	41	48	38	38
White	58	58	58	57	57

Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject
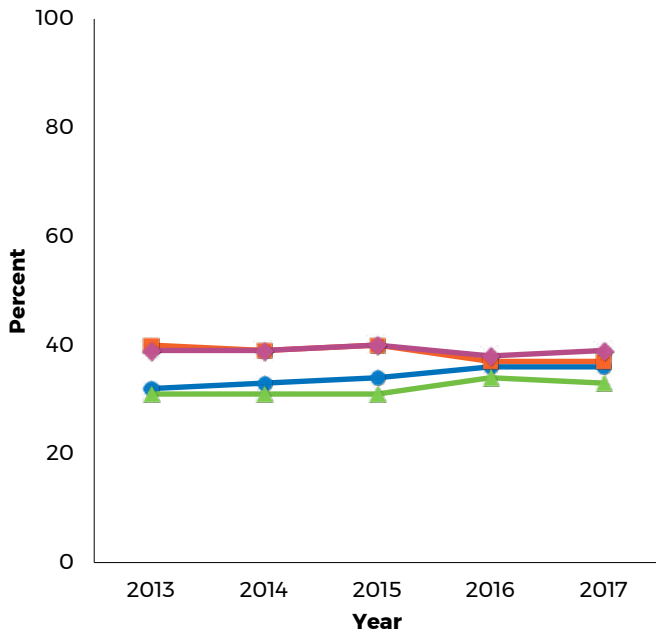
Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	57	45	40	35
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	11	11	9	15
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	32	44	51	50

* Percentages for groups with insufficient counts will be missing.

Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained

**Percent of 2013–2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Texas Students Attaining 0 CRBs	32	33	34	36	36
Texas Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	40	39	40	37	37
National Students Attaining 0 CRBs	31	31	31	34	33
National Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	39	39	40	38	39
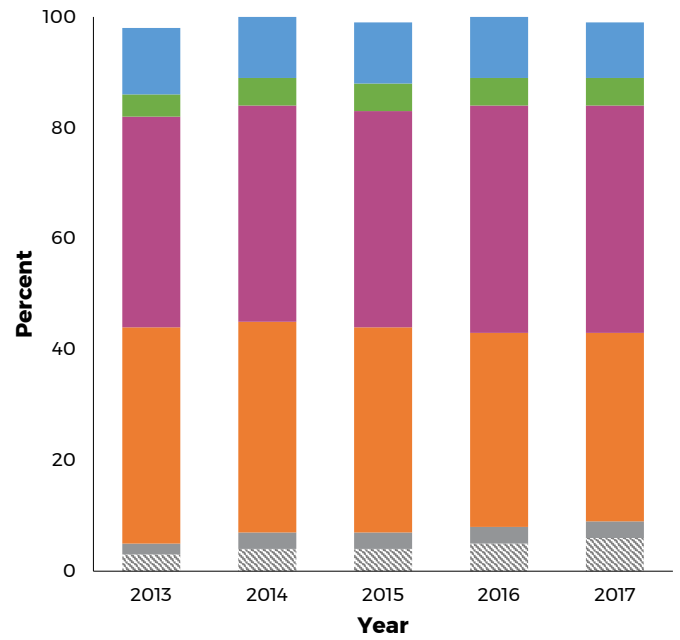
Data from graph above:

| Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	12	11	11	11	10
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0
Asian American	4	5	5	5	5
Hispanic	38	39	39	41	41
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	39	38	37	35	34
Two or More Races	2	3	3	3	3
No Response	3	4	4	5	6

Texas: Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in Texas increased by 36,767 students (34 percent).

Student Data Trends: 2013–2017, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	Texas	37	40	41	46	45
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	Texas	109,841	116,547	124,764	142,877	146,608
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	Texas	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.4	19.5
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	Texas	21.0	21.1	21.1	21.0	21.1
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	Texas	21.5	21.4	21.1	20.7	20.7
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	Texas	20.9	21.0	21.0	20.7	20.9
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	Texas	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.6	20.7
	Nation	20.9	21.0	21.0	20.8	21.0

Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations

Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
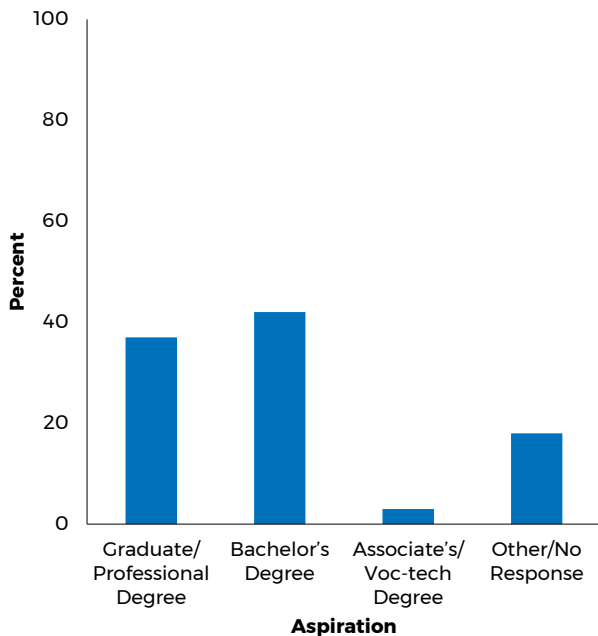
There is good news in that 82% of Texas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 84% of Texas's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 71% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 19,627 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from Texas would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

Data from graph

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	37
Bachelor's Degree	42
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	3
Other / No Response	18

Texas State Exemplar
2017 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

Jessica Diaz

Galena Park High School, Galena Park Independent School District

"My family became my motivation to keep working hard. My parents emigrated from Mexico in order that my sisters and I could have a better life. Knowing this, I refused to let society dictate my future."

Jessica's motivation to excel is displayed through her senior-year schedule, which consists entirely of Advanced Placement courses. She also volunteers and raises livestock with the Future Farmers of America.

Jessica plans to earn her bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife with a concentration in wildlife conservation, then a related master's degree, so that she can fulfill her goal of helping animals.

Information and products for further review

	Knowledge & Skills	Social & Emotional
Assessments	ACT Aspire®	ACT Tessera™
	PreACT®	ACT Engage®
	The ACT® Test	
	ACT WorkKeys®	
Research	Condition of College & Career Readiness	A Rosetta Stone for Noncognitive Skills
	ACT® National Curriculum Survey®	
	The Forgotten Middle	Tessera Comprehensive Theory of Action
	Rigor at Risk	
	ACT Holistic Framework™	
Resources	PLDs Learning Description Review	Tessera Teacher Playbook
	Curriculum Review Worksheets	
	OpenEd Learning Resources	
	Test Prep	
Training	Professional Learning Sessions	
	College & Career Readiness Workshops	
	Holistic Framework Webinars	

We are more than just the ACT test. ACT products and services encompass a variety of research- and assessment-based solutions.

As research leaders, we continue to innovate education and workforce solutions to help guide individuals to education and career success.

Find out more at www.act.org.

Key ACT Research

As students navigate their education and career journeys, it is critical for them to be ready for college and career success. College and career readiness is supported by the ACT Holistic Framework, a research-based, multidimensional model for understanding the essential knowledge and skills needed for success, and the solutions that can meet students' navigation needs. Visit **act.org/condition2017** to access key reports listed below.

- Serving students' navigation needs from kindergarten to career requires a holistic approach:
  - ~ *Beyond Academics: A Holistic Framework for Enhancing Education and Workplace Success*
  - ~ *The Importance of Behavioral Skills and Navigation Factors for Education and Workforce Success*
- The ACT Holistic Framework is supported by prolific research:
  - ~ Core Academic Skills:
    - 2017 State and National *Condition* Reports
    - *Profiles of STEM Students: Persisters, Joiners, Changers, and Departers*
    - *ACT Composite Score by Parental Education Level, 2012–2016*
    - *Comparisons of Student Achievement Levels by District Performance and Poverty*
  - ~ Behavioral Skills (also called Social and Emotional Learning):
    - *The Development of Behavioral Performance Level Descriptors*
  - ~ Cross-Cutting Capabilities:
    - *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2016*
  - ~ Student journeys continue into postsecondary education and careers:
    - *Higher Education Research Digest*
    - *Predicted Attainment of ACT National Career Readiness Certificates for the 2016 ACT-tested High School Cohort*

Recommendations

1. **Use a holistic assessment model for school accountability that measures student readiness for college and career across multiple domains.** While it is essential to measure students' academic achievement in assessing college and career readiness, it is not enough. Social and emotional learning skills are important and measurable, and they can be impacted. Assessment models should take into account core academic skills, behavioral skills, cross-cutting capabilities, and education and career navigation skills to provide an integrated picture of college and work readiness.

2. **Make special efforts to ensure that underrepresented students have equal access and opportunity to pursue postsecondary education.** According to ACT research, most underrepresented students want to continue their education after high school, but they face many barriers. Ensuring they have access to the same rigorous core curriculum as others is just one step. Many also lack the resources, information, and familial and peer support they need to prepare for success after high school. Special efforts must be made to level the playing field for underrepresented students so they have equal opportunity to succeed.

3. **Increase emphasis on STEM readiness initiatives, measures, and programs.** With technology advancing rapidly, the importance of STEM readiness is only increasing. The threat of robotic and computer-assisted technologies eliminating jobs is growing while the remaining and emerging jobs will likely require higher-level skills. ACT data continue to show that many graduates are not ready. Without improvement in STEM readiness, far too many will be ill-prepared for the future workforce.

4. **Focus on fewer, higher, and clearer learning standards in K–12 schools.** Far too many students continue to graduate from high school without all of the core skills they will need to ably succeed at the next level. Many will struggle, and many will likely fail to realize their aspirations. The push toward raising the bar on learning standards and focusing on the essential skills necessary for success must continue.

5. **Begin assessing learning and implementing intervention strategies early.** Early assessment and intervention are critical to improving educational outcomes. If students are not on track for college and career readiness by the time they reach middle school, it may be too late. Assessing learning and implementing intervention strategies to help students get on the right path for college and career readiness must begin in elementary school.