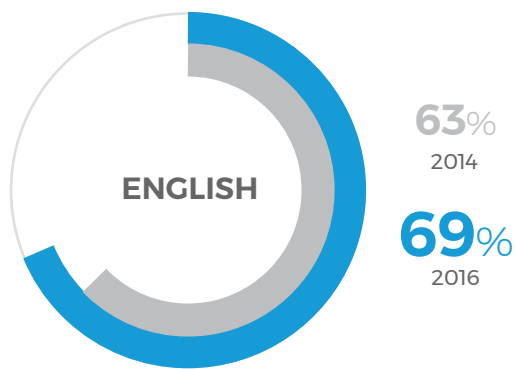


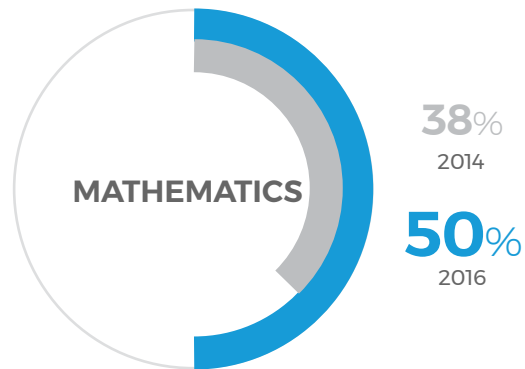
# ASSESS, ANALYZE, ACHIEVE

## Aligning Curriculum for District and Student Success

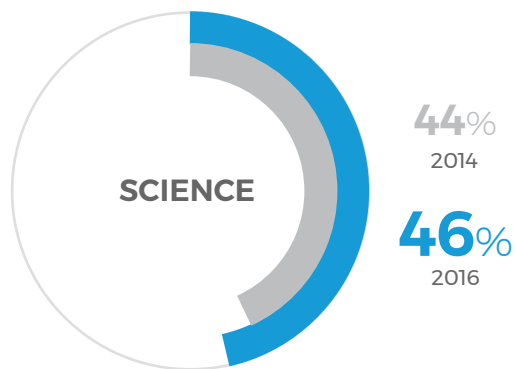
Helena Public School District in Montana began to follow the ACT-recommended course patterns<sup>1</sup> in 2014. Since then, Helena has experienced the following growth in the percentage of students meeting the ACT<sup>®</sup> College Readiness Benchmarks:<sup>2</sup>



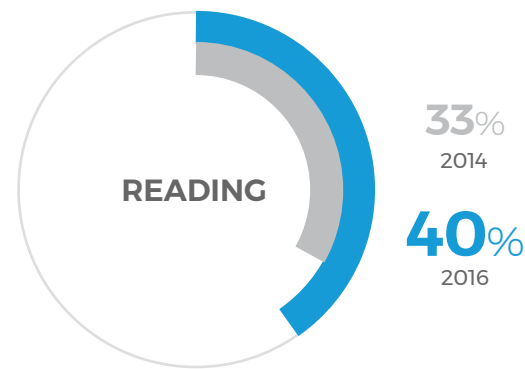
ACT College Readiness Benchmark-18



ACT College Readiness Benchmark-22



ACT College Readiness Benchmark-23



ACT College Readiness Benchmark-22

Using the ACT and an aligned course pattern, Helena public high schools have a much higher percentage of students meeting each benchmark than the percentage of students overall in Montana.

Greg Upham, Assistant Superintendent of the Helena Public School District in Montana, faced two challenges: measuring student readiness and developing student growth. Without a proven and detailed course pattern, teacher topic preference and bias produced problems of practice among district schools. Lacking a tool that could supply concrete data or results, Upham found it difficult to drive conversations about adjusting curriculum to get everyone to speak the same language and correct these problems.

**“Before the ACT, different methods to foster student growth and readiness for college were just shots in the dark.”**

**Greg Upham**, Assistant Superintendent,  
Helena Public School District, Montana

In 2014, the state of Montana implemented a grant that allowed the Helena Public School District to administer the ACT to all high school juniors. Upham quickly discovered that achievement on the test was closely correlated to course rigor. Over the span of four years, using the ACT-recommended course patterns as a guideline, Upham was able to triangulate the course combinations students should take to achieve higher scores on the ACT and therefore be more prepared for college.

**“The test is relevant to our students. It means something. It has clout.”**

**Greg Upham**

By offering a broad and robust curriculum, Helena Public School District has experienced the following growth in the percentage of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks:

<sup>1</sup>In order to be prepared for college coursework, ACT recommends students take a rigorous course combination of 4 or more English classes and 3 or more mathematics, natural science, and social science classes in high school.

**ENGLISH** (ACT College Readiness Benchmark-18)  
Percent at or above the benchmark

- 2014: 63%
- **2016: 69%**

**MATHEMATICS** (ACT College Readiness Benchmark-22)  
Percent at or above the benchmark

- 2014: 38%
- **2016: 50%**

**SCIENCE** (ACT College Readiness Benchmark-23)  
Percent at or above the benchmark

- 2014: 44%
- **2016: 46%**

**READING** (ACT College Readiness Benchmark-22)  
Percent at or above the benchmark

- 2014: 33%
- **2016: 40%**

The ACT course combination system, coupled with the test, allows all educators (counselors, teachers, principals, etc.) to use a common language for student readiness and curriculum planning. Once Helena Public Schools receive their ACT results, they share that information among staff and departments. Now, staff can see room for improvement among students, classrooms, and schools and adjust curriculum accordingly.

**“The school’s staff are all speaking the same language. For students not meeting benchmark, an intense review of students’ results assists us in informing instruction.”**

**Greg Upham**

To find out more about how you can administer the ACT to your students and fine-tune your curriculum, visit: [act.org/theact](http://act.org/theact).

<sup>2</sup>Students who meet an ACT College Readiness Benchmark have approximately a 50% chance of earning a B or better and approximately a 75% chance of earning a C or better in the corresponding college course or courses.