

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

Arkansas Key Findings

Performance

- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 34,451 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 25,875 in 2013.
- The percent of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and score levels in all subject areas decreased from 2016 to 2017. This may be attributed to the increase in the number of students testing in Arkansas, which increases the diversity of the tested population.
- Arkansas graduates of 2017 had an average Composite score of 19.4, compared to the national average of 21.0.
 - ~ Compared to the 2017 Arkansas graduating class Composite average of 19.4, Arkansas graduates in 2016 and 2013 had Composite averages of 20.2 and 20.2, respectively.
- In 2017, 27 percent of Arkansas graduates met three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 32 and 32 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
 - ~ In 2017, 42 percent of Arkansas graduates met zero ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 35 and 33 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
 - ~ In 2017, 27 percent of Arkansas graduates met the ACT Math College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 32 and 35 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
 - ~ In 2017, 25 percent of Arkansas graduates met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 30 and 29 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

STEM

- In 2017, 16,421 Arkansas graduates (48 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- In Arkansas, 2017 graduates taking physics had an average science score of 20.4, compared to the average science score of 19.1 for students not taking physics.
- For the years 2013 and 2017, Arkansas graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark had average science scores of 28.0 and 28.5, respectively.

Career Readiness

- In 2017, 5,705 Arkansas graduates (17 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.
- Arkansas has 19 counties participating in the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative that uses the NCRC and business engagement to create a community-based workforce development process that links, aligns, and matches the county's workforce development efforts to the needs of business and industry.

Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2016 ACT-tested Arkansas 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:
 - ~ 74 more students enrolling in college.
 - ~ 88 more students persisting to year two.
 - ~ 74 fewer students needing remedial English.
 - ~ 143 fewer students needing remedial math.
 - ~ 98 more students persisting to year four.
 - ~ 105 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- In Arkansas, 2017 graduates taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 21.1, compared to 16.5 for single-time testers.
 - ~ 2017 graduates who took the ACT two or more times had the largest increase if they took the test for the first time in the 10th grade.
- Of Arkansas's 2017 graduating class, there were 20,132 (58 percent) White students taking the ACT. This compares to 1,062,439 (52 percent) nationally.
- Of Arkansas's 2017 graduating class, there were 5,609 (16 percent) African American students taking the ACT. This compares to 256,756 (13 percent) nationally.
- Of Arkansas's 2017 graduating class, there were 3,562 (10 percent) Hispanic students taking the ACT. This compares to 347,906 (17 percent) nationally.
- Of Arkansas's 2017 graduating class, there were 564 (2 percent) Asian students taking the ACT. This compares to 96,097 (5 percent) nationally.
- Of Arkansas's 2017 graduating class, there were 218 (1 percent) American Indian students taking the ACT. This compares to 16,135 (1 percent) nationally.
- For Arkansas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were University of Arkansas, University of Central Arkansas, Arkansas State University, Arkansas Tech University, and University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
 - ~ For Arkansas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were University of Memphis, Baylor University, and Oklahoma State University.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 80 percent of Arkansas graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ The "Get Your Name in the Game" initiative provides students an opportunity to find colleges that would be a good fit and helps students who were not thinking about postsecondary education to consider college as a possibility. This initiative supports underserved learners by providing colleges the names of high school seniors participating in EOS at no cost.
- ACT issued 14,770 ACT fee waivers to qualified Arkansas students. However, 3,451 students (23 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. Fee waivers represent a great opportunity for students with socio-economic challenges to retest without incurring any fees. Note: This is the number of fee waivers issued for the state, not specific to this graduating class.
 - ~ ACT test prep is free for students who receive fee waivers.

Pipeline

- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 9,025 (26 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 6,580 (19 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 22.2.
- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 3,291 (10 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 22.6.
- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 15,788 (46 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 19.4.
- In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 2,445 (7 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 16.1.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 Arkansas graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Mechanical Engineering.
 - ~ In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 4,322 (13 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 19.6.
 - ~ In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 1,863 (5 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 19.7.

ACT Footprint

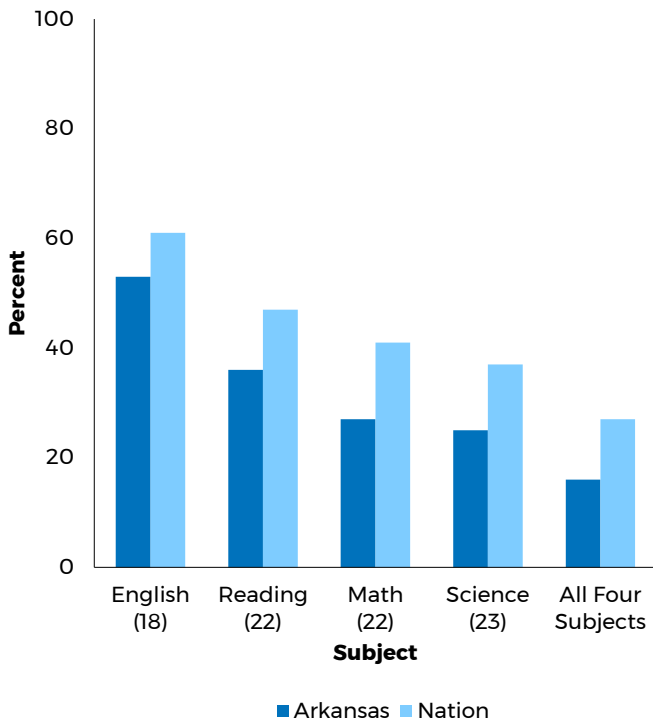
- Number of administrations:
 - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 1,448,705
 - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 2,191,194
 - ~ ACT Engage®: 519
 - ~ PreACT®: 83
 - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 12,716

Additional Points

- In fall 2017, ACT will hold College and Career Readiness Workshops in Fayetteville, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Magnolia, and Monticello.
- The ACT State Organization hosted a statewide conference in March 2017, attracting more than 200 educators from around the state.
 - ~ The 2018 Arkansas ACT State Organization conference will be held on March 5th at Arkansas State University-Beebe.
- Governor Asa Hutchinson's computer science initiative is a major initiative within the state. This initiative is intended to help students learn how to create the technology that will drive the economy and jobs for the 21st century and beyond.

Arkansas College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

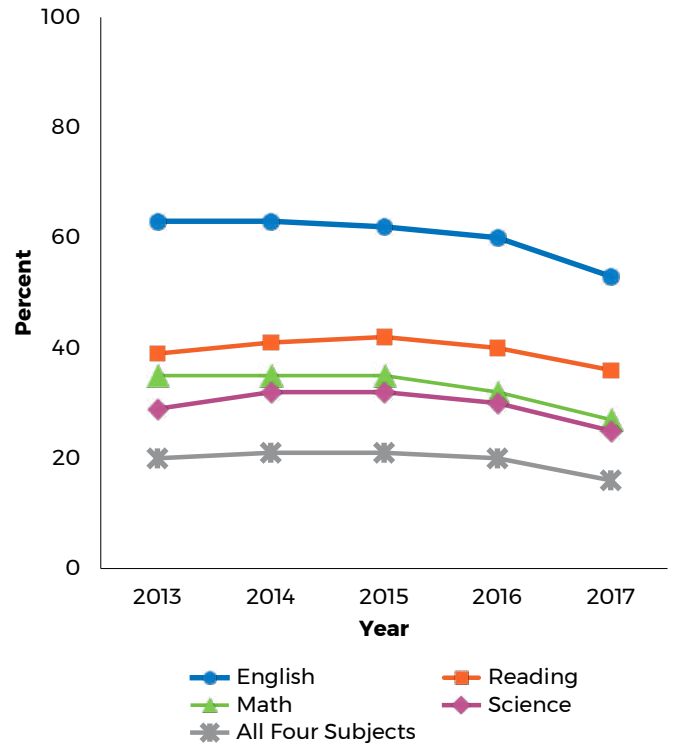
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
Arkansas	53	36	27	25	16
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

Percent of 2013–2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

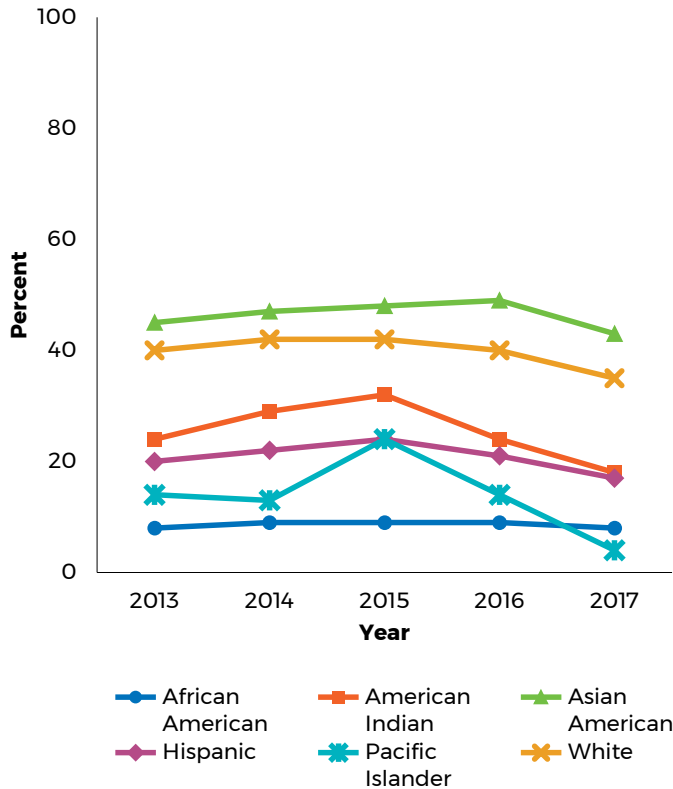


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	63	63	62	60	53
Reading	39	41	42	40	36
Math	35	35	35	32	27
Science	29	32	32	30	25
All Four Subjects	20	21	21	20	16

* 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*



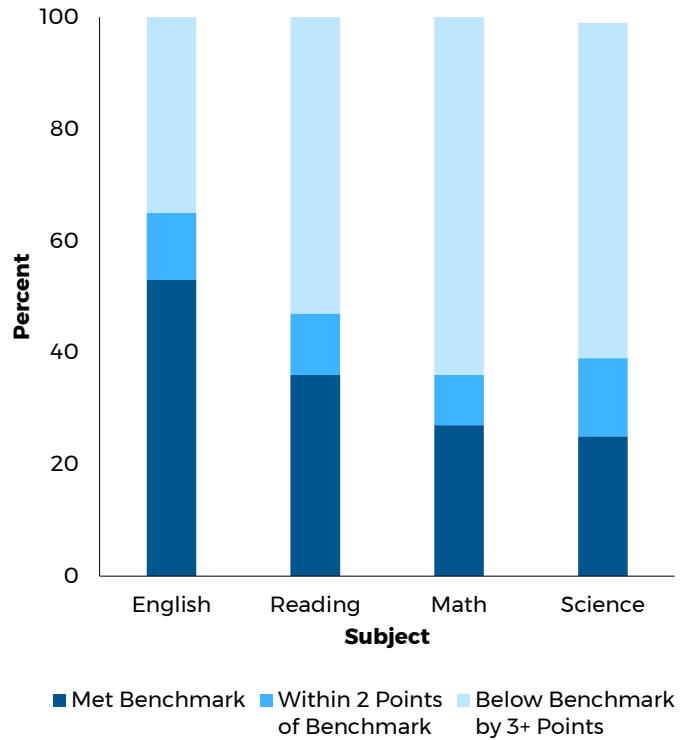
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	8	9	9	9	8
American Indian	24	29	32	24	18
Asian American	45	47	48	49	43
Hispanic	20	22	24	21	17
Pacific Islander	14	13	24	14	4
White	40	42	42	40	35

* Percentages for groups with insufficient counts will be missing.

Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject

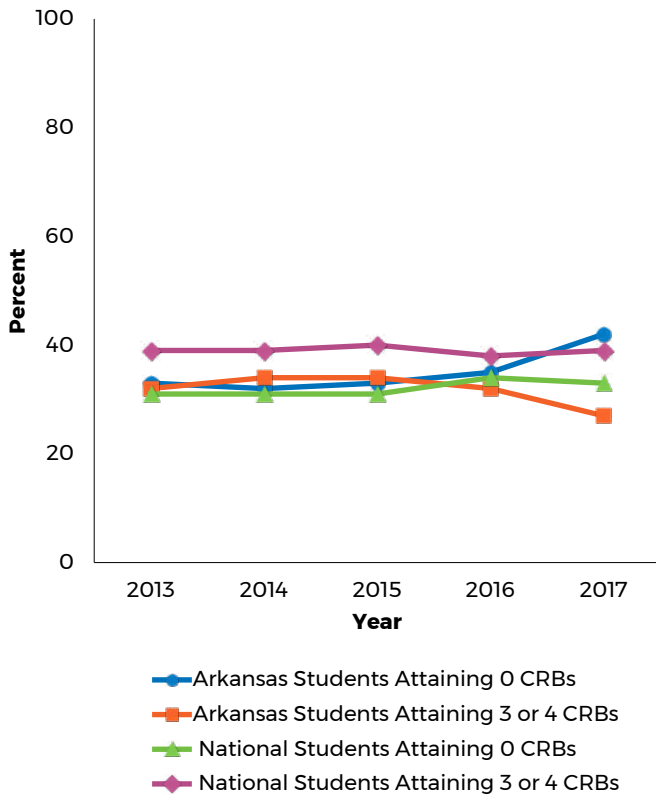
Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.



Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	53	36	27	25
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	12	11	9	14
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	35	53	64	60

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

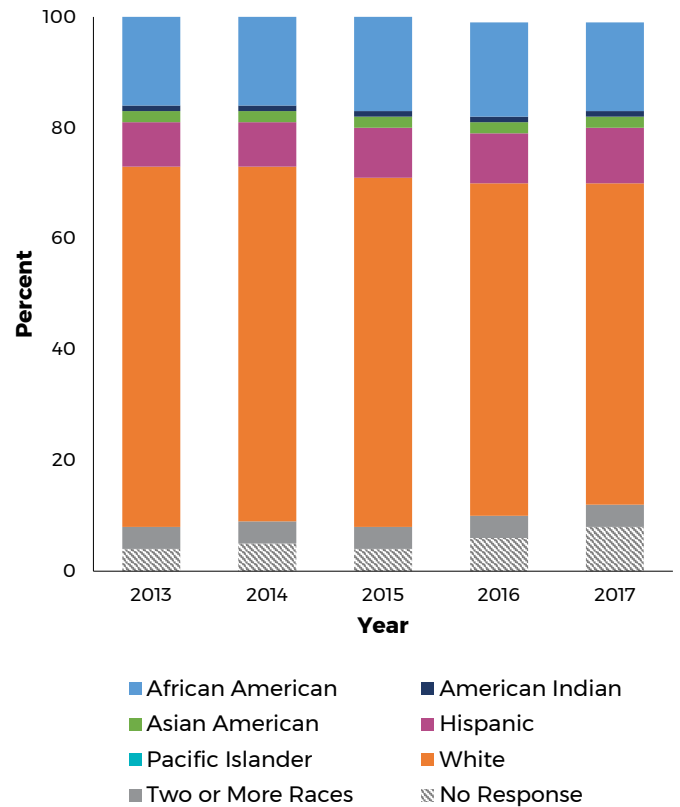


Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Arkansas Students Attaining 0 CRBs	33	32	33	35	42
Arkansas Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	32	34	34	32	27
National Students Attaining 0 CRBs	31	31	31	34	33
National Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	39	39	40	38	39

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:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	17	17	17	17	16
American Indian	1	1	1	1	1
Asian American	2	2	2	2	2
Hispanic	8	8	9	9	10
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	65	64	63	60	58
Two or More Races	4	4	4	4	4
No Response	4	5	4	6	8

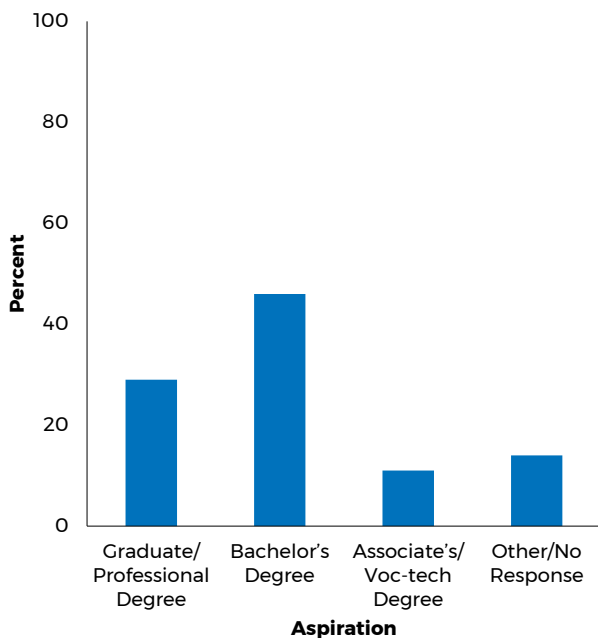
Arkansas: Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in Arkansas increased by 8,576 students (33 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	Arkansas	90	93	93	96	100
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	Arkansas	25,875	26,821	26,955	28,120	34,451
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	Arkansas	19.9	20.1	20.0	19.8	18.9
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	Arkansas	20.5	20.8	20.9	20.7	19.7
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	Arkansas	19.9	19.9	20.0	19.6	19.0
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	Arkansas	20.1	20.3	20.3	20.2	19.5
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	Arkansas	20.2	20.4	20.4	20.2	19.4
	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 86% of Arkansas's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 89% of Arkansas's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 64% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 7,029 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from Arkansas would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

Data from graph

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	29
Bachelor's Degree	46
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	11
Other / No Response	14



Arkansas State Exemplar 2017 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

Kristen Trinh

Southside High School, Fort Smith Public Schools

“There are many obstacles I will come across on the path toward college, but I’ll give myself time to breathe, keeping me from being overwhelmed and allowing me to be successful.”

Kristen is a problem-solver who enjoys a challenge. For instance, she reprogrammed her brother’s food truck cash register to more easily reflect custom orders and better serve his customers while easing the work of the kitchen.

In college, Kristen plans to earn her BA in political science before attending law school. She will enter her postsecondary education with college credit thanks to her success in Advanced Placement classes, and plans to intern at local law firms and study abroad for a semester.

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.

