

GENERATING EXCITEMENT FOR THE ACT THE ARKANSAS 'NO LIMITS' CAMPAIGN



In spring 2017, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) started paying for all high school juniors in the state to take the ACT® test. One year later, the ADE launched a new campaign—called **“No Limits”**—to encourage students to use test prep resources and to take the assessment more than once.

“Since the state has decided to invest in the ACT for all of our juniors, we really need to get information out to our schools to make sure they realize that this is an opportunity. This isn’t just another test,” said Stacy Smith, Assistant Commissioner of Learning Services.

Many underrepresented students lack the resources, information, and family and peer support they need to prepare for success after high school. In the Arkansas graduating class of 2017, 9,025 students (or 26 percent) had parents who did not attend college. Special efforts, like the “No Limits” campaign, must be made to level the playing field for these students to have equal opportunity to succeed.

Smith says the campaign is an opportunity to prepare students, especially first-generation college students, for the possibility of navigating college on their own. “If you’re a first-generation college graduate, there is a huge gap between what you know and what your parents know about [the college process]. I experienced that personally.”

The “No Limits” campaign launched in January with a song written and performed by an Arkansas student and a video starring Arkansas students highlighting five important points about the ACT:

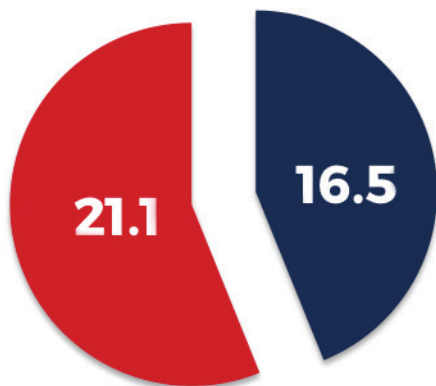
1. It measures what you know and if you are ready for college
2. You can prepare for the ACT
3. Take the ACT more than once
4. Arkansas high school juniors take the ACT for free
5. Complete the student inventory and check “YES” to EOS (ACT Educational Opportunity Service)

All Arkansas public high schools were encouraged to show the video to their juniors prior to taking the exam in February, and students were encouraged to share the video on social media using the hashtag **#NoLimitsAR**. Additionally, every high school received a mailer the first week in February with informational posters, banners, and a checklist of each step school staff take leading up to testing. The ADE also prepared a presentation and lesson plans for teachers to help students understand and prepare for the test, identify schools they may be interested in, and complete the ACT Interest Inventory.

“Students who take advantage of the chance to take the ACT test multiple times will broaden the array of educational opportunities after high school,” said Gov. Asa Hutchinson. “The ‘No Limits’ campaign encourages high schoolers to aim higher, perhaps, than they had imagined possible. I commend the Department of Education for this program, which is good for Arkansans and for our entire state. I hope students will act on the opportunity to improve their ACT scores.”

With higher scores leading to more scholarship opportunities, an increase in ACT Composite scores can be a game changer for students in Arkansas. Earning a 19 on the ACT qualifies students for an Academic Challenge Scholarship, which provides gift aid to Arkansas residents pursuing a higher education. Students in the graduating class of 2017 taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 21.1, compared to 16.5 for single-time testers. Institutions like the University of Central Arkansas begin offering scholarships to students who earn a 21 or higher.

Graduating Class of 2017 (Average ACT Composite Score)

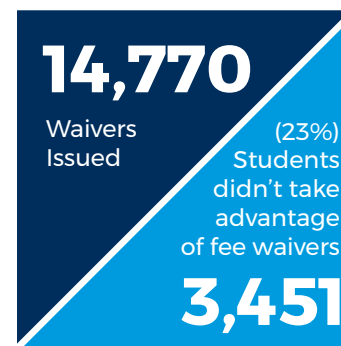


- Single-Time Tested
- Two or More Times Tested

“If you only take this one time, you may limit your opportunities. And there are so many opportunities of what your career could be, where you could go, what school you could attend,” said Smith.

For low-income students who qualify and may not be able to afford a second test, ACT provides up to two fee waivers. In 2017, ACT issued 14,770 fee waivers to qualified Arkansas students. However, 3,451 students who registered for the ACT test (23 percent) did not take advantage of this opportunity to test for free.

2017 Arkansas Fee Waivers



The ADE has worked diligently to ensure students take advantage of every opportunity given to them, and the “No Limits” campaign is another step forward. “We picked up the phone to call every superintendent in the state of Arkansas to ask if they knew there are fee waivers out there for kids in their school who are low-income that could qualify. We literally picked up the phone and called every district in the state, and there are almost 300,” said Smith. With a strong commitment to equity, the ADE and ACT are working together to ensure every student has the opportunity to improve their scores.

Communicating with students in positive and fun ways can redefine their attitudes about college readiness testing and the opportunities it provides. For Arkansas, this campaign has had a positive reception and has shown students that by taking and retaking the ACT test, their future has no limits.

For ready-made communication tools from ACT visit the product pages on act.org.