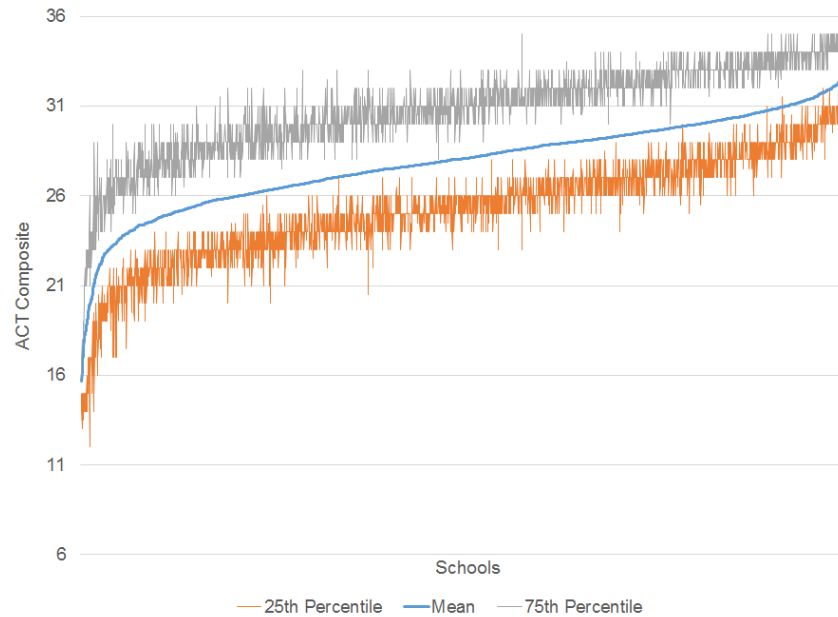


Does a 4.0 Indicate Academic Excellence? Investigating the School-Level Relationship Between ACT® Scores and High School GPA

JOANN MOORE, PHD

School-Level Average and Middle 50% of ACT Scores of Students with HSGPAs of 4.0



This analysis compares school-level ACT performance of a national sample of 2016 ACT-tested high school graduates reporting a high school grade point average (HSGPA) of 4.0. While self-reported, previous research has shown self-reported HSGPA to be highly accurate.¹

Across all schools in the sample, the average school-level ACT Composite score of students earning a 4.0 HSGPA was 28. However, the average ACT Composite score varied considerably from school to school, ranging between 16 and 25 among the lowest 25% of schools, and 30 to 35 among the highest 25%. These results underscore the importance of using multiple measures of academic achievement when making admissions and course placement decisions and of holding all students to the expectation of college and career readiness. Awarding high course grades that do not reflect rigorous academic preparation does students a disservice, and it may mislead students into believing they are college ready when in fact they are likely to require remedial coursework or otherwise struggle to be successful in college. ■

Not all students with a high school GPA of 4.0 have a high level of academic preparation. The average ACT Composite scores of 4.0 students in the highest scoring schools were between 30 and 35, whereas the average ACT Composite scores of 4.0 students in the lowest scoring schools were between 16 and 25.

Joann Moore is a research scientist in Statistical and Applied Research specializing in prediction of secondary and postsecondary outcomes from academic and non-cognitive factors.

¹ Sanchez, E. & Buddin, R. (2015). *How Accurate Are Self-Reported High School Courses, Course Grades, and Grade Point Average?* Iowa City, IA: ACT; Shaw, E. J., & Mattern, K. D. (2009). *Examining the Accuracy of Self-Reported High School Grade Point Average*. New York, NY: The College Board.