

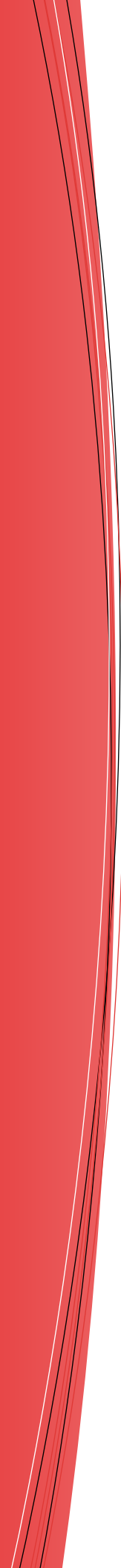


Making Readiness a Reality

Promoting Student Success through the
American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009

ACT[®]

FIFTY YEARS 1959|2009



“The source of America’s prosperity, then, has never been merely how ably we accumulate wealth, but how well we educate our people. This has never been more true than it is today. In a 21st century world where jobs can be shipped wherever there’s an internet connection; where a child born in Dallas is competing with children in Delhi; where your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know – education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it is a prerequisite.”

President Barack Obama
March 10, 2009

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Overview

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), states and school districts have a historic opportunity to fortify their economic foundations during these uncertain times and introduce a wide array of education improvement efforts. We at ACT have prepared this informational resource to assist education leaders to better understand the ARRA;

“We have to start by recognizing that our system of education is not aligned. Every state has different high school standards. If we accomplish one thing in the coming years—it should be to eliminate the extreme variation in standards across America ... A high school diploma needs to mean something—no matter where it's from. We need standards that are college-ready and career-ready, and benchmarked against challenging international standards.”

—Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, February 9, 2009

highlight selected funding opportunities that will bring about educational improvement; and identify opportunities to establish or extend a partnership with ACT as we work together to increase the college and career readiness of students nationwide.

With at least \$44.3 billion being disbursed to states by the end of March 2009, it is not only essential that states and districts develop short- and long-term plans quickly, but that these plans are developed thoughtfully to maximize economic and education outcomes. The U.S. Department of Education has made clear that the \$100 billion provided through ARRA for education should advance reform and improvement efforts that spur and sustain positive student outcomes at the early education, K–12, and postsecondary levels.

ACT stands ready to assist you in several ways. First, we invite you to use our landmark research on what it takes to prepare students for college and career. Second, we offer you solutions to increase the rigor and relevance of core secondary-school courses. Last, we can help you to meet the spirit of the ARRA by implementing ACT's longitudinal curriculum-based assessment system to monitor the college and career readiness of students as they progress through the education pipeline.

As a leading nonprofit organization working with numerous states on a wide array of educational improvement efforts across the P-20 spectrum, ACT is uniquely positioned to provide assistance as you conceive, design and implement your strategic plan for utilizing ARRA funds. To discuss how to leverage ACT research in your ARRA strategy or to learn more about ACT solutions and services, please contact Jim Morris, Director of State Programs at 319-341-2907 or jim.morris@act.org.



About ACT

ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides more than a hundred assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development.

Each year, we serve millions of people in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. ACT has offices across the United States and throughout the world.

Our Mission

Helping people achieve education and workplace success

What is the ARRA intended to accomplish?

The education provisions of the ARRA are intended to meet an array of short- and long-term goals. Immediately, the influx of ARRA funds is intended to preserve and create jobs in the education sector and ensure that essential educational services are preserved during this uncertain economic time. Simultaneously, the ARRA will introduce and support incentives for the implementation of longer-term educational reforms at the state and local levels.

Given the complexities of disbursing such large sums of education funds in such a short time, the ARRA will for the most part rely heavily on existing funding streams (such as Title I and IDEA) and require a streamlined and expedited application process for new initiatives. States are urged to consider four guiding principles when it comes to ARRA funding.

“So let’s challenge our states -- let’s challenge our states to adopt world-class standards that will bring our curriculums to the 21st century ... The solution to low test scores is not lowering standards -- it’s tougher, clearer standards.”

--President Barack Obama
March 10, 2009

1. ARRA funds should be disbursed quickly and wisely to preserve and create jobs.
2. ARRA funds should be used to improve student achievement, with an emphasis on the core reforms described next.
3. ARRA grant recipients will be expected to document and publicly report how funds are being spent.
4. ARRA grant recipients are urged to consider that ARRA funds are temporary and attention should be paid to making sustainable investments that are well aligned with current and future state priorities and funding streams.



How will the ARRA improve student achievement?

A unifying theme among the funding opportunities that the ARRA provides is the emphasis on increasing student achievement through the advancement of four core school improvement and reform efforts. Every state or district intending to utilize ARRA funds should consider how their strategic plans, applications, or amended applications address these core reforms through establishing, supporting, or expanding initiatives related to the goals of these reforms.

The ARRA core reforms are as follows:

1. Making progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities
2. Establishing pre-K-to-college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement
3. Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need
4. Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools

As you work with state and local education leaders to develop short- and long-term strategies to utilize ARRA funding, consider drawing upon the wide array of ACT research related to the ARRA core reforms to ensure that your plans and applications are based on effective research-based practice, connect to college and career readiness, and maximize your investment.

“Move from pockets of excellence, islands of excellence, to systems of excellence.”

—Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education
February, 2009

Making the Dream a Reality: Action Steps for States to Prepare All Students for College and Career

To increase the college and career readiness of students, ACT recommends six action steps for policymakers and education leaders. These action steps are based on rigorous research and dovetail extremely well with the goals of the ARRA.

1. Fewer — but essential — high school standards that are valued by colleges and employers;
2. Common academic expectations recognizing the reality that students need a comparable level of knowledge and skills, whether they're going to college or work;
3. Clear messages about what level of performance is “good enough” to demonstrate college readiness;
4. A rigorous curriculum that guarantees both the right number and the right kinds of courses taught by well-qualified teachers;
5. An early monitoring and intervention system that helps middle schoolers make a successful transition to high school; and
6. A longitudinal data system that helps students stay on target by monitoring their performance from the early years through college.

These six actions, if adopted by states, will create the policy framework that will ensure that any American student who earns a high school diploma truly is prepared for college and career.



For additional copies, you can find the full report of *Making the Dream a Reality: Action Steps for States to Prepare All Students for College and Career* at:

www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/MakingtheDreamReality.pdf

Highlighting Selected ARRA Funding Opportunities

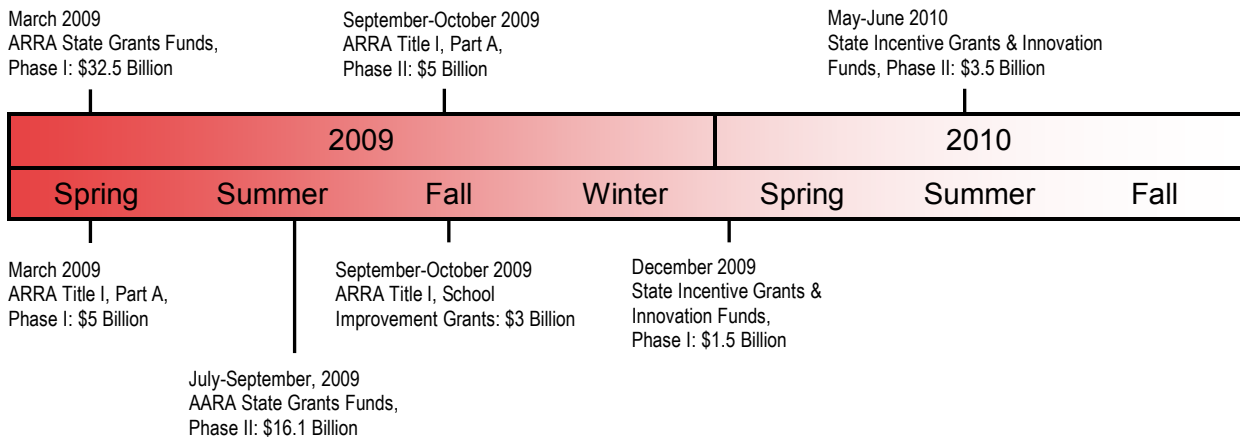
The accompanying two-page briefs highlight selected funding opportunities available through the ARRA. Given the wide array of programs offering additional funding, these materials will address key opportunities for states and districts to strengthen college and career readiness among students and communities.

The briefs highlight programs supported through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The Stabilization Fund is designed to provide states with financial resources to alleviate expected shortfalls in revenues at the state and district levels and to support education improvement efforts. The \$53.6 billion Stabilization Fund is a one-time appropriation from the federal government and is comprised of State Grants, State Incentive Grants, and the Innovation Fund, each of which is addressed in detail.

“We’re not just facing an economic crisis in America. We’re facing an education crisis . . . we’re also facing a historic opportunity to remake public education—a once-in-a-lifetime chance to lift the quality of education for every child in America. I call it the perfect storm for reform.”
 —Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education
 February 19, 2009

In addition to the new programs established through the ARRA, the U.S. Department of Education will be temporarily increasing funding for many programs already authorized through federal statute. For the purposes of this informational resource, we will limit our focus to programs authorized through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Timeline of Selected ARRA Funding Opportunities



ARRA Resources

To learn more about ARRA education funding opportunities including updated application guidance, estimated state and district funding amounts, and other information, visit www.ed.gov.

Connecting the Dots: Applying ACT Resources to ARRA Strategic Planning

Over the past 50 years, ACT has been researching exactly what skills students need at the K-12 levels to succeed in college and career. Through our work, we have developed empirically-derived standards, benchmarks, assessments and applied solutions that deepen our nation's understanding of what it takes to strengthen schools and increase student achievement. Given the short timeline that education leaders have to plan for and access ARRA funding, we invite you to freely integrate ACT research to strengthen your planning process. Below are selected research reports, briefs and case studies that speak to one or more of the ARRA education reforms.

- **ACT State Policy Framework:** ACT's "Making the Dream a Reality" report outlines six action steps based on hard evidence that will help increase student achievement, close achievement gaps, and ensure that every high school graduate is prepared for college and career. You can find the full report of "Making the Dream a Reality" at: <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/MakingtheDreamReality.pdf>
- **ACT College Readiness Standards:** Drawing on our unique data set mapping student performance in K-12 and postsecondary education, we have developed learning standards that are directly aligned to the skills necessary to succeed in college and career. For many states ACT has completed a comparative analysis highlighting differences and similarities between current state standards and College Readiness Standards. You can find the State Standards Match Reports at: <http://www.act.org/education/statematch/index.html>
- **ACT High School Profile Reports:** The High School Profile Report provides each state with information about the performance of its 2008 graduating seniors who took the ACT. The report shares critical information on performance, access, course selection, course rigor, college readiness, awareness, and articulation. You can find the State High School Profile Reports at: <http://www.act.org/news/data/08/statemenu.html>
- **ACT Case Studies:** The case studies present accounts of school improvement efforts in a real-world context. Topics examined include the implementation of academic interventions, the integration of College Readiness Standards, and characteristics of high-performing schools. You can find complete ACT case studies at: <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/case.html>

To access pertinent ACT research or learn more about ACT solutions, visit www.act.org.

Helpful ACT Websites

State Services	www.act.org/stateservices
The ACT	www.act.org/aap
PLAN	www.act.org/plan
EXPLORE	www.act.org/explore
QualityCore	www.qualitycore.org

ACT's College Readiness System

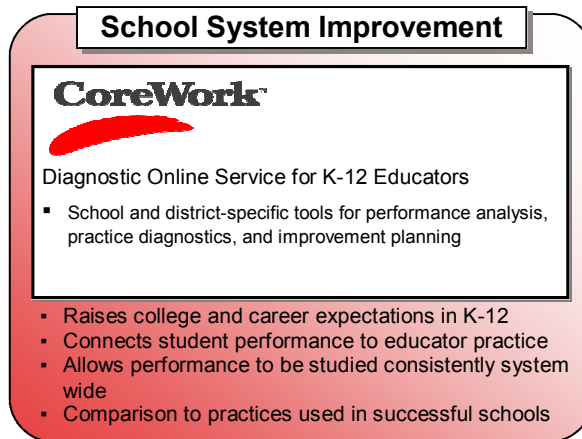
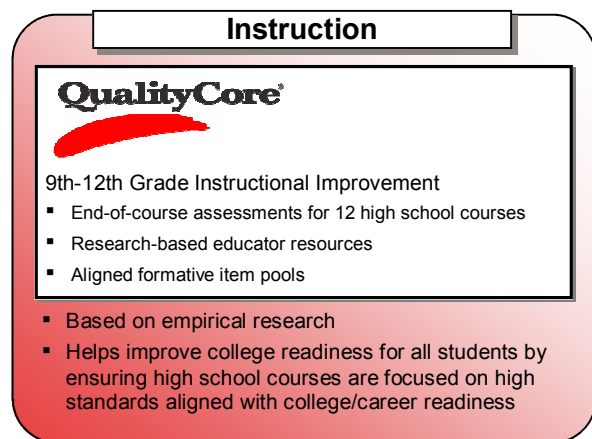
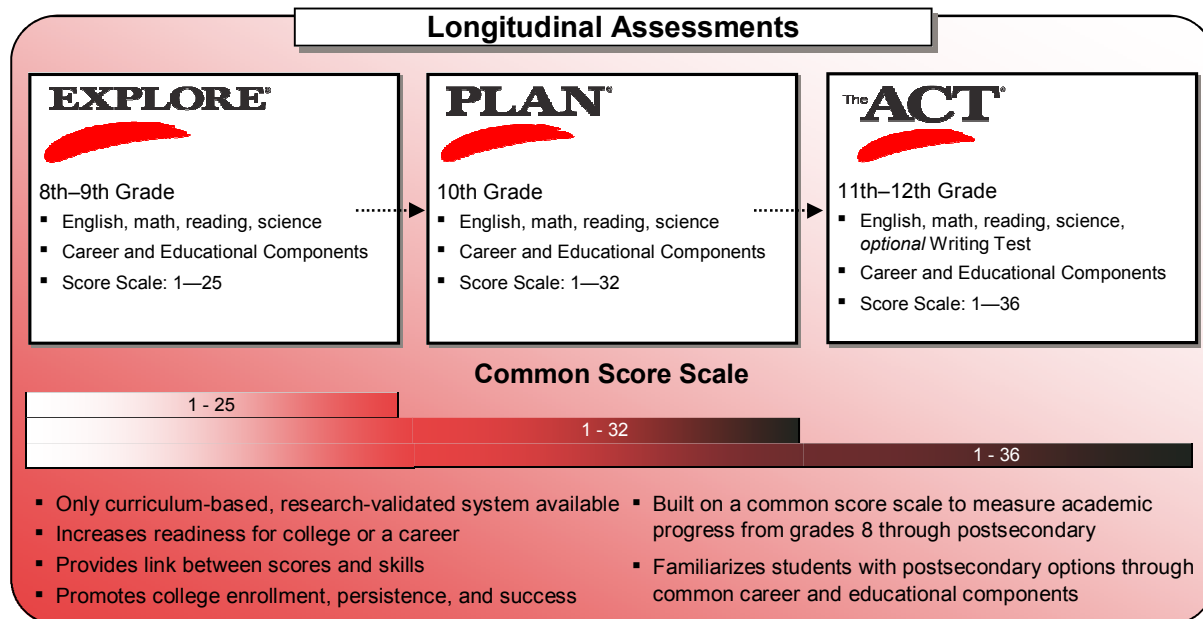
Longitudinal Assessment, Instruction & School System Improvement

ACT provides a fully aligned, research-based system of solutions that helps states and districts prepare every student for college and work. Our College Readiness Standards™ and College Readiness Benchmarks define college readiness based on what postsecondary educators indicate is important for students to know and based on actual student success in credit-bearing college-entry courses. The Standards and Benchmarks together represent a single academic expectation for all students, regardless of whether they go on to college or the workplace after high school.

The longitudinal assessment component of the system—EXPLORE®, PLAN®, and the ACT®—is directly tied to and aligned with the Standards and Benchmarks. These assessments allow states to monitor students' college readiness beginning in eighth grade so that necessary interventions can be made.

QualityCore®, the instructional improvement component, offers rigorous model high school courses. QualityCore course objectives focus on the course-level knowledge and skills needed for college readiness. As such, they are tied to the ACT College Readiness Standards measured by EXPLORE, PLAN, and the ACT.

For school systems, ACT and the National Center for Educational Achievement offer CoreWork Diagnostics—a school system improvement service designed to help K-12 educators set and attain higher standards as they work to improve college and career readiness.



ACT's College Readiness Standards

The **College Readiness Standards™** statements describe what students are likely to know and likely to do in various score ranges on EXPLORE®, PLAN®, and the ACT®.

ACT's College Readiness Standards can help:

- communicate widely shared learning goals and educational expectations
- relate the test scores to the types of skills needed for success in high school and beyond
- understand the increasing complexity of skills across the score ranges in English, mathematics, reading, and science

The College Readiness Standards are complemented by suggested learning experiences for students wishing to further develop their knowledge and skills.

The College Readiness Standards serve as a direct link between what students have learned and what they are ready to learn next. The suggested learning experiences, in turn, provide links between the Standards in one score range and those in the next higher score range. The ideas for progressing to the next score range demonstrate ways that information learned from standardized test results can be used to inform classroom instruction. The College Readiness Standards are also linked to college instruction. Fifty years of research has shown that performance on the ACT is directly related to first-year college grade point average.

**For more information on ACT's College Readiness Standards, visit:
<http://www.act.org/standard>**

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks, given in the table below, are empirically derived early indicators of likely college success based on student EXPLORE, PLAN, or ACT test scores.

Test	College Course(s)	EXPLORE®	PLAN™	The ACT™
English	English Composition	13	15	18
Math	Algebra	17	19	22
Reading	Social Sciences	15	17	21
Science	Biology	20	21	24

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks can be used in a variety of ways.

Junior high and high schools can use the Benchmarks for EXPLORE and PLAN as:

- A means of evaluating students' early progress toward college readiness so that timely interventions can be made when necessary
- As an educational counseling or career planning tool

Colleges can use the Benchmarks:

- As one of among several criteria for admission
- As a foundation for determining course placement scores

States can use the Benchmarks as a tool for:

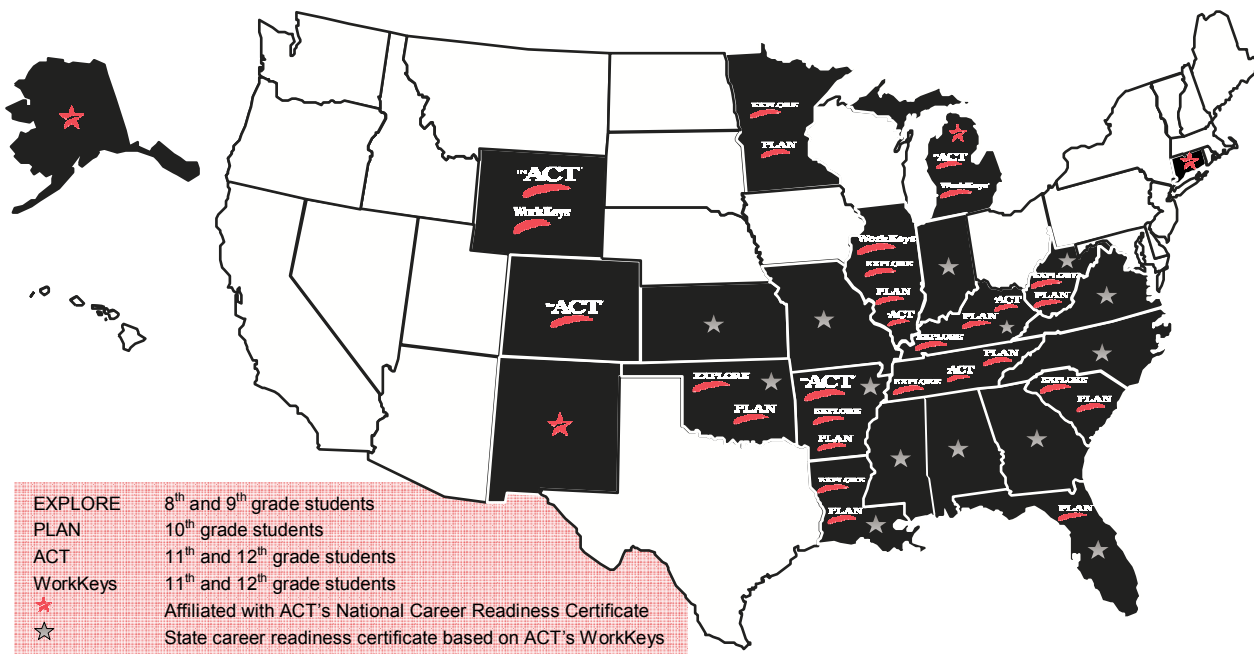
- Establishing minimum standards for high school graduation in statewide assessment contexts that are aimed at preparing high school graduates for postsecondary education

In all of the above cases, the Benchmarks offer users a concise, reliable method of articulating postsecondary expectations to middle and high schools so that timely interventions can be made.

**For more information on ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks, visit:
<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/benchmarks.pdf>**

Used together, the Standards and the Benchmark Scores provide an effective means for communicating college readiness expectations to middle and high schools and for measuring progress toward them.

ACT's Statewide Partnerships in College and Career Readiness



Challenges related to college and career readiness among high school students across America have led a number of states and districts to raise the expectations of high school graduates by incorporating a college readiness, admissions, and placement program into their high school student assessment programs. Not only can this help to prepare all students for college and career, but the assessment itself has intrinsic value to the students who take it—something that is not true of student assessments in general.

In Colorado and Illinois

Since 2001, two states, Colorado and Illinois, have administered the ACT[®] to all public high school juniors.

As a result of statewide administration, both states have experienced improvements in the following areas:

- Increased student achievement—Increases in ACT scores for *all* Illinois and Colorado students were similar to those seen for all ACT-tested *college-bound* students nationally
- Increase access and opportunity—Especially in underrepresented populations. 19,377 more African American and Hispanic and 12,167 more lower-income students in Illinois and Colorado received college-reportable ACT scores in 2007 than did before statewide ACT administration in 2001, an increase of 97% and 60% respectively
- Increased enrollment—From 2002 to 2007, 10,884 more Illinois and 3,526 Colorado graduating seniors enrolled in postsecondary education.

In the Chicago Public Schools

Beginning in 2002, the Chicago Public School System instituted citywide administrations of EXPLORE and PLAN to help all Chicago public school students start thinking and planning for higher education and to prepare them for statewide administration of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE).

As a result:

- The average ACT Composite score for the virtually 100% of Chicago Public School graduates who took the test in 2008 is *higher* than the average ACT Composite score for the *self-selected group* of college-bound Chicago Public School graduates (approximately 40%) who took the test in 1999
- Over the past 5 years, Chicago Public Schools has increased ACT scores at twice the rate of the state.

A Guide to Aligning ARRA Priorities with ACT Resources

ARRA Core Education Reform	Related Research from ACT and Other Sources Available at www.act.org/research/index.html	Related ACT Solutions Available at www.act.org/education/index.html
<p>1. Making progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.</p>	<p>Policy Reports: The Forgotten Middle; NGA/ACT Pilot Project: Increasing Course Rigor; Rigor at Risk; Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?; Courses Count: Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success; On Course for Success; College Readiness Begins in Middle School</p> <p>Issue Briefs: What Kind of Interpretations Can Be Made on the Basis of ACT Scores?; How Much Growth toward College Readiness Is Reasonable to Expect in High School?; Making the Dream a Reality: Action Steps for States To Prepare All Students for College and Career; What We Know about College Success: Using ACT Data to Inform Educational Issues; Do Current State Standards and Assessments Reflect College Readiness?: A Case Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACT College Readiness Standards and Benchmarks ▪ ACT College Readiness System (EXPLORE, PLAN, & the ACT) ▪ QualityCore ▪ Statewide Testing ▪ Teacher and Leadership Professional Development
<p>2. Establishing pre-K-to college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement.</p>	<p>ACT's National Center for Educational Achievement is the national leader of the Data Quality Campaign. For more information about longitudinal data systems, visit www.dataqualitycampaign.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data Quality Campaign ▪ ACT College Readiness Standards ▪ CoreWork Diagnostics (visit www.just4kids.org)
<p>3. Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need.</p>	<p>ACT research confirms the critical importance of effective teachers in making student success a reality. Examples of supplemental research on teacher effectiveness and distribution can be found at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ www2.edtrust.org ▪ www.tqsource.org ▪ www.teachingquality.org ▪ www.talentedteachers.org ▪ www.tnntp.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ QualityCore ▪ Teacher and Leadership Professional Development
<p>4. Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.</p>	<p>Case Studies: Readiness and Success: Statewide Implementation of EXPLORE and PLAN; Statewide Administration of the ACT: A Key Component in Improving Student Access to College and Work; Setting Students' Sights on College: Chicago Public Schools; Breaking Barriers: A Case Study of Two High-Performing Schools; Early College Planning Pays Big Dividends: Louisiana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACT's College Readiness System (EXPLORE, PLAN, & the ACT) ▪ QualityCore