

Customer Success Story

ACT® WorkKeys® Helps Rural Minnesota Students Prove Their Skills and Boost Confidence



OUTCOMES

84

% of Seniors Earning WorkKeys NCRCs

7

of Platinum NCRCs Earned

12

of Gold NCRCs Earned

12

of Silver NCRCs Earned

9

of Bronze NCRCs Earned

The Challenge: Inspiring Students About Career Opportunities Beyond the Traditional Classroom

Nestled in rural Wells, Minnesota, United South Central (USC) Schools serve a large geographic region with a small-town spirit. Typically graduating a class of around 50 students and a growing student body, the school is committed to meeting students where they are — academically, emotionally, and economically.

A lot of our students are really isolated from outside resources. Some of our towns don't even have gas stations, and many students come from families where higher education isn't always the immediate path.

Kayt Klemek

Licensed High School Counselor | United South Central School

In such an environment, preparing students for life after high school — whether that means college, a trade, or directly entering the workforce — is not just important. It's essential.

The Solution: A Holistic Approach with the ACT® Test and ACT® WorkKeys®

USC Schools have implemented a full suite of ACT assessments as a part of their readiness strategy:

- PreACT® in 10th grade gives students early exposure to college readiness testing.
- The ACT test in 11th grade is used not only as a college admissions test but also as a tool to evaluate curriculum needs.
- ACT WorkKeys in 12th grade offers students the opportunity to round out their student journey by measuring real-world, applied skills critical in the workforce.

All tests are funded by the district, ensuring equitable access.

We wanted something that reflected more than academic ability ... WorkKeys gives students who might not excel in traditional school subjects a way to show they're ready for the workforce. It's another way to say, 'You are capable. You have skills that matter.'

Kayt Klemek

The Impact: Confidence, Recognition, and Real-World Validation

Each spring, USC Schools administer WorkKeys Assessments to all seniors. The results are revealed during the schools' annual honors banquet, where students who may not typically receive academic accolades are publicly recognized for their WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC®) achievement. Nearly all students earn WorkKeys certificates. Students beam with joy and great pride from their accomplishments.

Beyond the emotional impact, the data provided by WorkKeys also informs USC's curriculum planning. USC Schools use WorkKeys scores to evaluate and guide instruction. It validates the effectiveness of academic programs in preparing students for life beyond school.

Bridging to Workforce and Postsecondary Success

Widespread adoption of the WorkKeys NCRC is still emerging in Minnesota. However, USC Schools see the value in exposure and preparedness for students. Graduating seniors often find employment in industries that train on the job, such as welding or construction. In those settings, WorkKeys serves as an extra tool in their toolbox — something tangible to showcase their competence. It informs students and employers that they are ready for the job.

Looking Ahead: Tools That Serve All Students

Though tracking long-term outcomes is a challenge, USC Schools remain committed to the ACT test and WorkKeys as part of its broader college and career readiness efforts.

USC Schools adopted WorkKeys because school leaders believe in the potential future of their students. They also understand that some students may not excel on standardized tests. However, educators foster a learning environment to inspire deserving students with the chance to showcase aptitude and ability in other paths.

And with WorkKeys, USC Schools are creating a culture where every student can be recognized, valued, and empowered for success beyond the classroom.



LEARN MORE ABOUT ACT WORKKEYS
www.act.org/workkeysforeducators

