

## 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

## Alabama Key Findings

### Performance

- Alabama is in its fourth year of census testing all juniors, with essentially all of its graduates taking the ACT® test (57,457) in the 2017 graduating class testing, compared to 78 percent (38,122) in 2013.
- Alabama graduates of 2017 had an average Composite score of 19.2, compared to the national average of 21.0.
- Compared to the 2017 Alabama graduating class Composite average of 19.2, Alabama graduates in 2016 and 2013 had Composite averages of 19.1 and 20.4, respectively.
- In 2017, 16 percent of Alabama graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 16 and 20 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 52 percent of Alabama graduates met the ACT English College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 51 and 66 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 23 percent of Alabama graduates met the ACT Math College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 23 and 31 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 36 percent of Alabama graduates met the ACT Reading College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 34 and 41 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 25 percent of Alabama graduates met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark. This compares to 24 and 30 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

### STEM

- In 2017, 29,752 Alabama graduates (52 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- Compared to 11 percent of 2017 Alabama graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM Benchmark percentages of 11 and 13, respectively.
- Compared to a 2017 Alabama graduating class STEM average of 19.1, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM averages of 19.0 and 20.1, respectively.
  - ~ For the years 2013 and 2017, Alabama graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark had average science scores of 28.2 and 28.7, respectively.
  - ~ For the years 2013 and 2017, Alabama graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark had average math scores of 28.2 and 27.9, respectively.

### Career Readiness

- Alabama tests all 12th-grade students with ACT WorkKeys®, which allows students to earn the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate®. Nearly 86 percent of the Alabama tested population (48,462 students) in the 2017 graduating class earned an ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate—Bronze: 11,111; Silver: 23,178; Gold: 7,176.; Platinum: 94. 6,903 students did not qualify for a certificate.

## Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2016 ACT-tested Alabama 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:
  - ~ 123 more students enrolling in college.
  - ~ 147 more students persisting to year two.
  - ~ 126 fewer students needing remedial English.
  - ~ 237 fewer students needing remedial math.
  - ~ 164 more students persisting to year four.
  - ~ 174 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

## Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- Approximately 45 percent of Alabama ACT-tested graduates took the exam only one time, which is lower than the national average of 55 percent. These one-time test takers score substantially lower (16.6) than those who tested multiple times (21.4).
  - ~ Of the students who retested, those who initially tested as sophomores demonstrate the greatest gains between first and last test.
- For Alabama's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were Auburn University, University Of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Troy University, and University of South Alabama.
  - ~ For Alabama's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three in-state schools to which scores were sent were Auburn University, University of Alabama, and University of Alabama at Birmingham.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 83 percent of Alabama graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 85 percent of African American students nationally, 89 percent of Alabama African American 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 76 percent of American Indian students nationally, 79 percent of Alabama American Indian 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 69 percent of White students nationally, 81 percent of Alabama White 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 83 percent of Hispanic students nationally, 86 percent of Alabama Hispanic 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ By opting in, students allow colleges and universities to communicate with them about various academic majors, scholarships, and student life opportunities.
- ACT issued 19,139 ACT fee waivers to Alabama students who qualified. However, 4,409 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.

## Pipeline

- In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 14,527 (25 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- Aspirations matter. Students in Alabama who aspire to a higher level of postsecondary education achieve higher ACT Composite scores.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 10,851 (19 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 21.8.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 6,122 (11 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 22.6.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 26,722 (47 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 19.1.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 5,057 (9 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 15.8.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 Alabama graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Mechanical Engineering.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 6,007 (10 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 20.5.
  - ~ In the Alabama graduating class of 2017, 2,712 (5 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 19.4.

## ACT Footprint

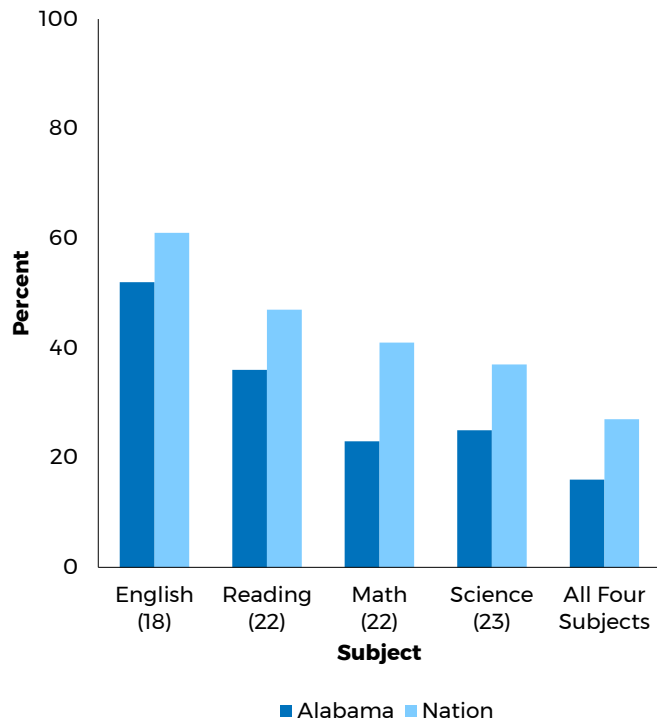
- Number of administrations:
  - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 1,402,177
  - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 1,056,665
  - ~ ACT Engage®: 540
  - ~ PreACT®: 4,450
  - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 165,030

## Additional Points

- In 2016, ACT honored exemplars in most states as a part of our College and Career Readiness Campaign. The Alabama honorees included:
  - ~ Student Readiness: Megan Moland, Lawrence County High School; College and Career Transition: Lafayette High School; Career Preparedness: Shelton State Community College, Mechatronics Program; Workplace Success: Phifer Wire Products, Inc.
- The Alabama ACT State Organization continues to grow in membership and in diversity, with more than 500 members from across the state. The membership includes educators from state agencies, K-12, access, and postsecondary institutions, as well as members involved in workforce development. Each year, ACT hosts a state conference that brings together professionals representing each of these areas, providing a unique and diverse professional development opportunity.

# Alabama College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

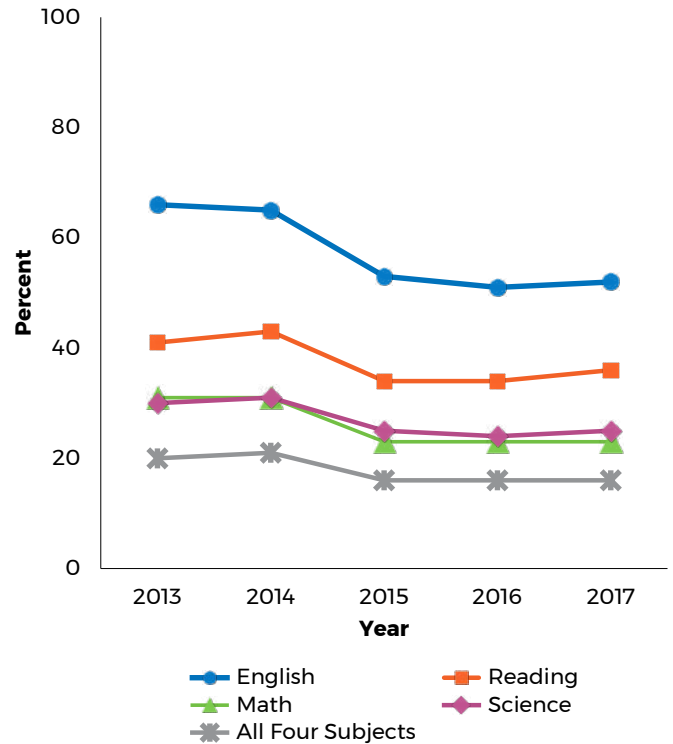
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks\* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
Alabama	52	36	23	25	16
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

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

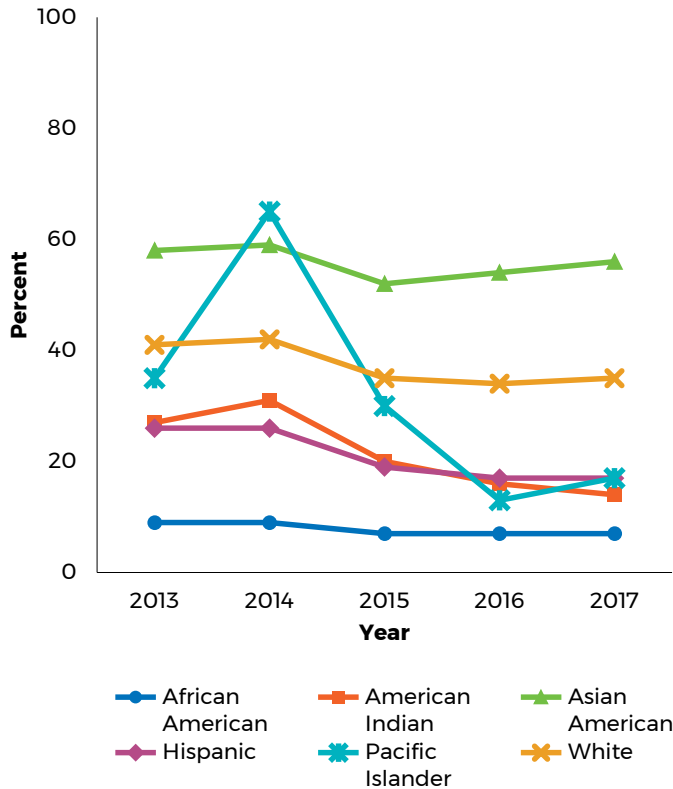


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	66	65	53	51	52
Reading	41	43	34	34	36
Math	31	31	23	23	23
Science	30	31	25	24	25
All Four Subjects	20	21	16	16	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\***



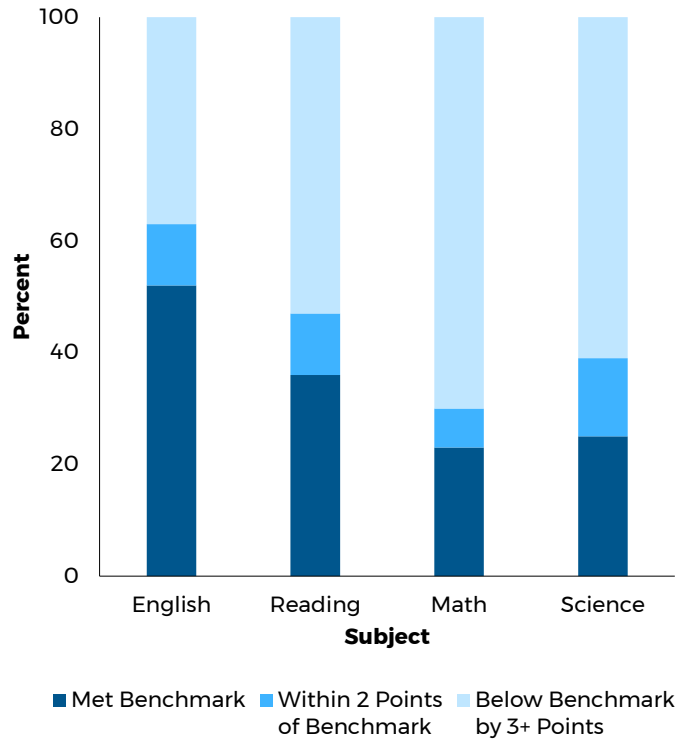
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	9	9	7	7	7
American Indian	27	31	20	16	14
Asian American	58	59	52	54	56
Hispanic	26	26	19	17	17
Pacific Islander	35	65	30	13	17
White	41	42	35	34	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**

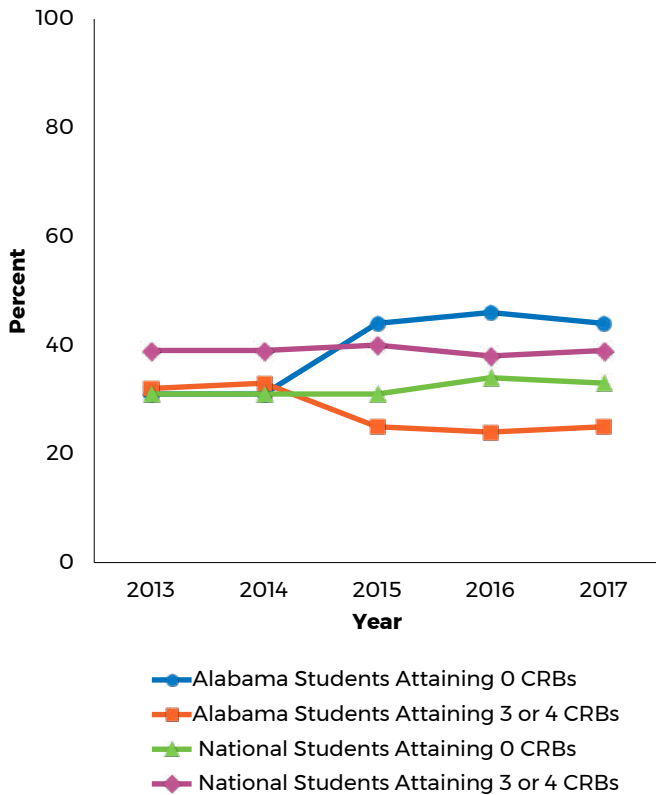
Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.



Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	52	36	23	25
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	11	11	7	14
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	37	53	70	62

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

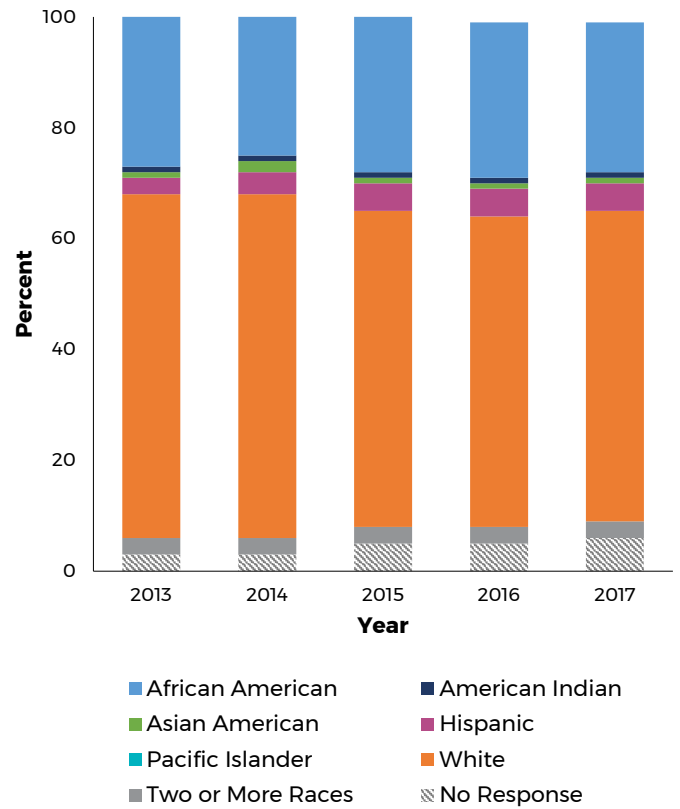


Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Alabama Students Attaining 0 CRBs	31	31	44	46	44
Alabama Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	32	33	25	24	25
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	28	27	28	28	27
American Indian	1	1	1	1	1
Asian American	1	2	1	1	1
Hispanic	3	4	5	5	5
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	62	62	57	56	56
Two or More Races	3	3	3	3	3
No Response	3	3	5	5	6

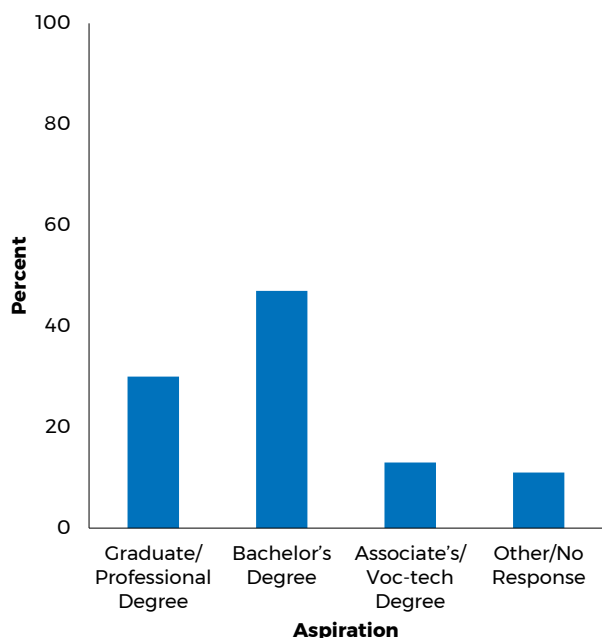
**Alabama:** Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in Alabama increased by 19,335 students (51 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	Alabama	78	80	100	100	100
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	Alabama	38,122	37,985	55,427	56,178	57,457
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	Alabama	20.5	20.7	18.8	18.7	18.9
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	Alabama	21.0	21.3	19.7	19.7	19.7
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	Alabama	19.5	19.5	18.4	18.3	18.4
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	Alabama	20.2	20.4	19.1	19.1	19.4
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	Alabama	20.4	20.6	19.1	19.1	19.2
	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 89% of Alabama's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 90% of Alabama's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 54% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 20,307 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from Alabama would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

*Data from graph*

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	30
Bachelor's Degree	47
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	13
Other / No Response	11



## Alabama State Exemplar 2017 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

### Megan Moland

Lawrence County High School, Lawrence County Schools

*“While I did focus a large majority of time to my academics, I also added a majority of my time to volunteer work.”*

Despite family struggles and being in a painful car accident, Megan has excelled throughout high school, both academically and in her Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps battalion. Her activities in high school reflect her goal of majoring in business marketing in college, a dream that she has prepared for by practicing public speaking, communications, and leadership.

Megan is looking forward to interning with a marketing center and continuing her academic and extracurricular excellence as she moves on to college and earns her degree.

## Information and products for further review

	Knowledge & Skills	Social & Emotional
<b>Assessments</b>	ACT Aspire®	ACT Tessera™
	PreACT®	ACT Engage®
	The ACT® Test	
	ACT WorkKeys®	
<b>Research</b>	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™	
<b>Resources</b>	PLDs Learning Description Review	Tessera Teacher Playbook
	Curriculum Review Worksheets	
	OpenEd Learning Resources	
	Test Prep	
<b>Training</b>	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](http://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](http://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.