

## 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

## California Key Findings

### Performance

- In the California graduating class of 2017, 130,665 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 107,243 in 2013.
  - ~ In California, 31 percent of 2017 graduates took the ACT, compared to 60 percent nationally.
- California graduates of 2017 had an average Composite score of 22.8, compared to the national average of 21.0.
  - ~ California African American 2017 graduates who took the ACT had an average Composite score of 19.2. This compares to average Composite scores of 19.0 and 18.5 for graduating classes from 2016 and 2013, respectively.
  - ~ California White 2017 graduates who took the ACT had an average Composite score of 25.4. This compares to average Composite scores of 25.2 and 24.8 for graduating classes from 2016 and 2013, respectively.
  - ~ California Hispanic 2017 graduates who took the ACT had an average Composite score of 19.7. This compares to average Composite scores of 19.5 and 19.4 for graduating classes from 2016 and 2013, respectively.
  - ~ California Asian 2017 graduates who took the ACT had an average Composite score of 25.7. This compares to average Composite scores of 25.4 and 24.4 for graduating classes from 2016 and 2013, respectively.
  - ~ California Pacific Islander 2017 graduates who took the ACT had an average Composite score of 22.1. This compares to average Composite scores of 21.7 and 21.4 for graduating classes from 2016 and 2013, respectively.
- In 2017, 38 percent of California graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 37 and 33 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

### STEM

- In 2017, 68,217 California graduates (52 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- Compared to 31 percent of 2017 California graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM Benchmark percentages of 31 and 28, respectively.
  - ~ In California, 54 percent of graduates taking physics met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark, compared to 33 for students not taking physics.
  - ~ In California, 56 percent of 2017 graduates taking three or more years of math met the ACT Math College Readiness Benchmark, compared to 13 percent for students taking less than three years of math.

### Career Readiness

- In 2017, 49,687 California graduates (38 percent) were likely to attain the Gold ACT WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® or higher, based upon ACT Composite score, compared to 538,392 (27 percent) nationally.
  - ~ The ACT Composite scores associated with a 50% chance of earning each ACT WorkKeys NCRC® level or higher are: 13 for Bronze, 17 for Silver, 25 for Gold, and 35 for Platinum. Based on those cut scores, students who earned an ACT Composite score of less than 13 would be classified as "Needs Improvement," 13 to 16 as "Bronze," 17 to 24 as "Silver," and 25 or above as "Gold or Higher." For comparison, individual student score reports classify those who scored 12 to 13, 14 to 17, and 18 and higher as making progress toward Bronze, Silver, and Gold certificates.

## Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2016 ACT-tested California 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:
  - ~ 244 more students enrolling in college.
  - ~ 297 more students persisting to year two.
  - ~ 203 fewer students needing remedial English.
  - ~ 370 fewer students needing remedial math.
  - ~ 347 more students persisting to year four.
  - ~ 390 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

## Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- In California, 2017 graduates taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 24.3, compared to 21.6 for single-time testers.
- Of California's 2017 graduating class, there were 5,288 (4 percent) African American students taking the ACT. This compares to 256,756 (13 percent) nationally.
- Of California's 2017 graduating class, there were 35,756 (27 percent) White students taking the ACT. This compares to 1,062,439 (52 percent) nationally.
- Of California's 2017 graduating class, there were 51,192 (39 percent) Hispanic students taking the ACT. This compares to 347,906 (17 percent) nationally.
- Of California's 2017 graduating class, there were 19,802 (15 percent) Asian students taking the ACT. This compares to 96,097 (5 percent) nationally.
- Of California's 2017 graduating class, there were 1,048 (1 percent) Pacific Islander students taking the ACT. This compares to 6,503 (0 percent) nationally.
- For California's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were University Of California-Los Angeles, University Of California-Irvine, University Of California-Davis, California State University-Long Beach, and San Diego State University.
  - ~ For California's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were University Of Oregon, University Of Washington, and Arizona State University.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 74 percent of California graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 85 percent of African American students nationally, 84 percent of California African American 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 76 percent of American Indian students nationally, 76 percent of California American Indian 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 69 percent of White students nationally, 59 percent of California White 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 83 percent of Hispanic students nationally, 87 percent of California Hispanic 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 76 percent of Asian students nationally, 74 percent of California Asian 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
  - ~ Compared to 77 percent of Pacific Islander students nationally, 81 percent of California Pacific Islander 2017 graduates opted into EOS.

- ACT issued 78,352 ACT fee waivers to qualified California students. However, 19,763 students (25 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. This represents a great opportunity for high schools within the state to increase the socio-economic diversity of their students tested. Note: This is the number of fee waivers issued for the state, not specific to this graduating class.
- The ACT Get Your Name In The Game initiative allows colleges and universities access to underserved students' names free of charge.

## Pipeline

- In the California graduating class of 2017, 28,683 (22 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the California graduating class of 2017, 1,015 (1 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 16.0.
- In the California graduating class of 2017, 50,445 (39 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 21.3.
- In the California graduating class of 2017, 27,429 (21 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 24.8.
- In the California graduating class of 2017, 32,910 (25 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 24.3.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 California graduates were: Undecided; Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); and Biology, General.
  - ~ In the California graduating class of 2017, 23,862 (18 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 23.4.
  - ~ In the California graduating class of 2017, 3,619 (3 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 20.5.

## ACT Footprint

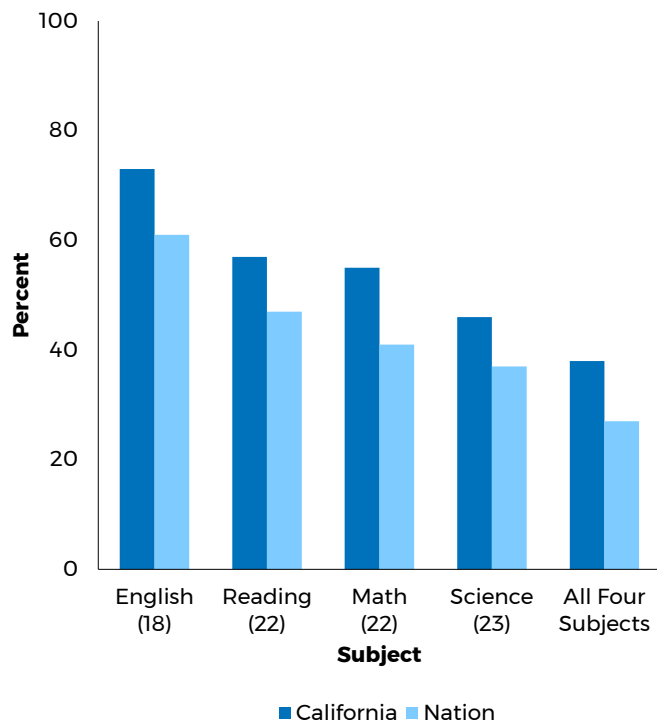
- Number of administrations:
  - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 21,448
  - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 1,942
  - ~ ACT Engage®: 1,180
  - ~ PreACT®: 19,891
  - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 14,660

## Additional Points

- In 2016, 1,136 California educators attended ACT College Readiness Workshops. In 2017, ACT will provide workshops in Downey, Fullerton, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pomona, Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Clara.
- 2017 California College & Career Readiness Campaign honorees: High School Student: Andrianna Wantt (Trinity High School); High School: Middle College High School, San Bernardino; College: Los Angeles Southwest College
- According to the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, the fastest-growing careers in California requiring education beyond high school are: Wind Turbine Service Technicians, Web Developers, and Statisticians.

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

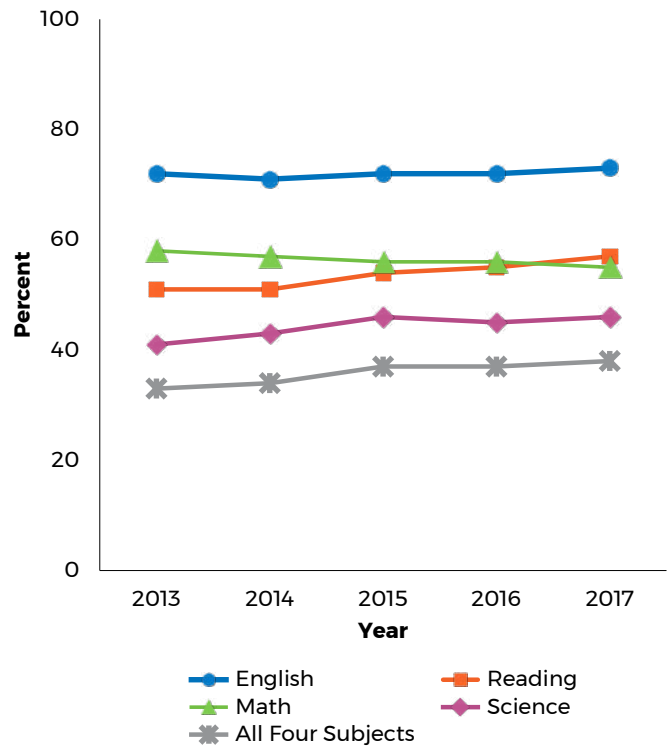
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks\* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
California	73	57	55	46	38
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

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

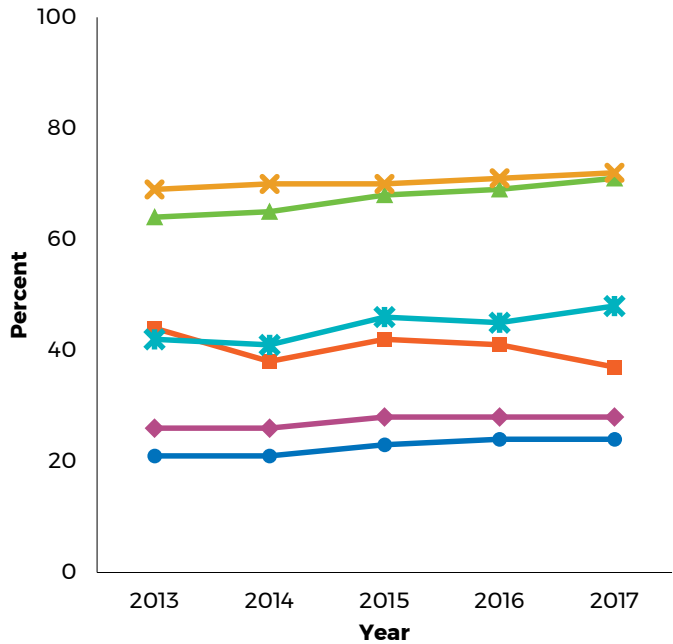


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	72	71	72	72	73
Reading	51	51	54	55	57
Math	58	57	56	56	55
Science	41	43	46	45	46
All Four Subjects	33	34	37	37	38

\* 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\***



● African American  
■ American Indian  
▲ Asian American  
◆ Hispanic  
✱ Pacific Islander  
✕ White

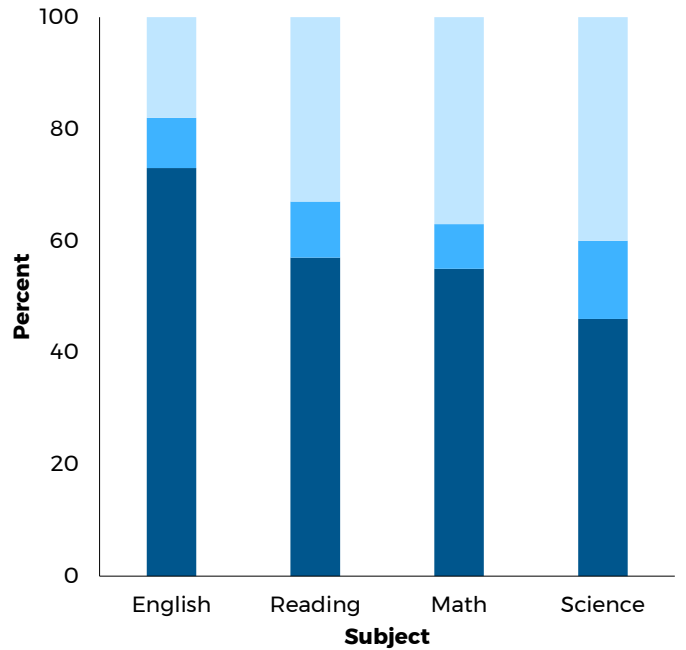
*Data from graph above:*

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	21	21	23	24	24
American Indian	44	38	42	41	37
Asian American	64	65	68	69	71
Hispanic	26	26	28	28	28
Pacific Islander	42	41	46	45	48
White	69	70	70	71	72

\* 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.

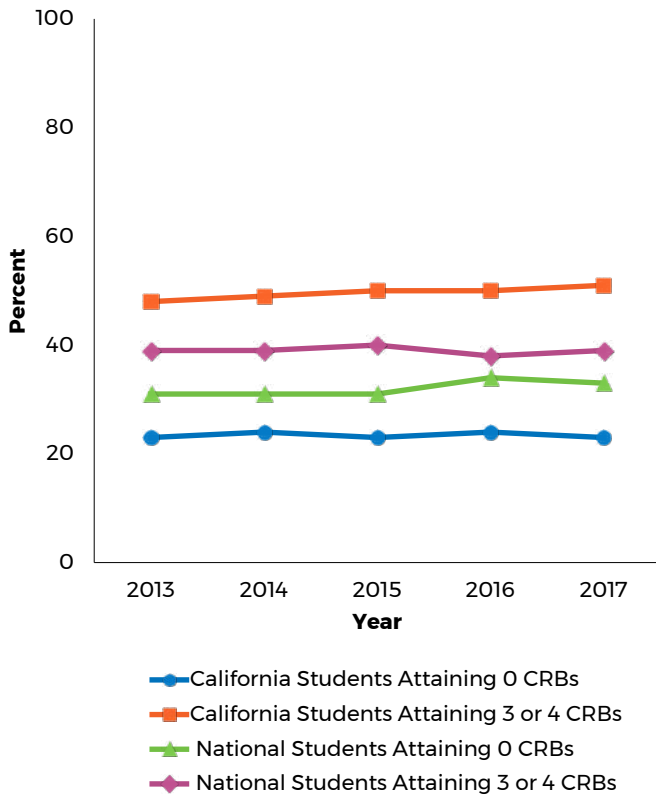


■ Met Benchmark  
■ Within 2 Points of Benchmark  
■ Below Benchmark by 3+ Points

*Data from graph above:*

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	73	57	55	46
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	9	10	8	14
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	19	33	37	40

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

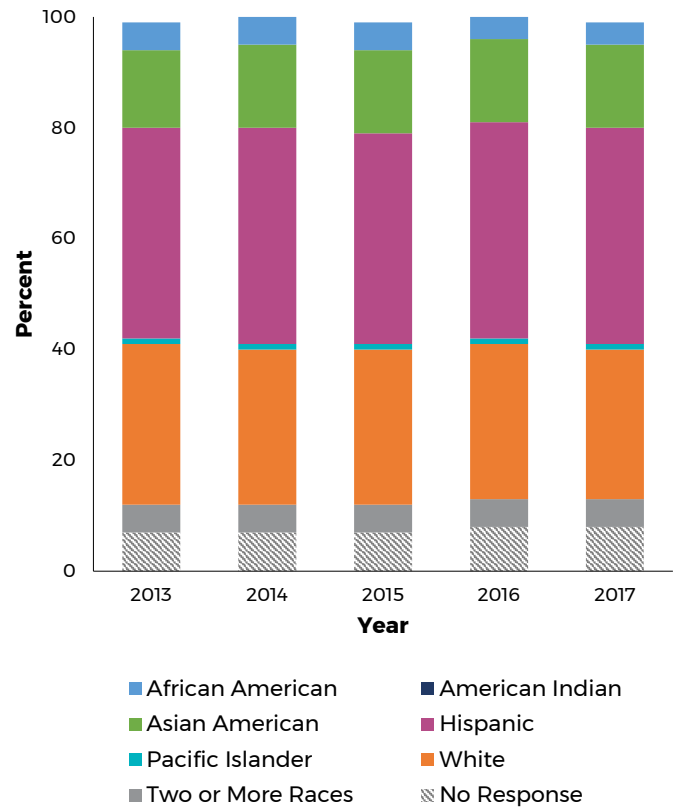


Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
California Students Attaining 0 CRBs	23	24	23	24	23
California Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	48	49	50	50	51
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	5	5	5	4	4
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0
Asian American	14	15	15	15	15
Hispanic	38	39	38	39	39
Pacific Islander	1	1	1	1	1
White	29	28	28	28	27
Two or More Races	5	5	5	5	5
No Response	7	7	7	8	8

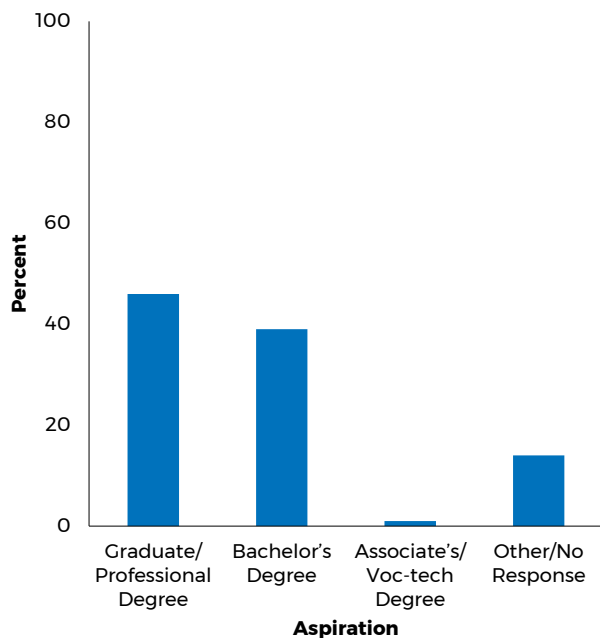
**California:** Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in California increased by 23,422 students (22 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	California	26	29	30	33	31
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	California	107,243	113,732	121,815	127,225	130,665
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	California	21.6	21.8	22.1	22.1	22.5
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	California	22.3	22.3	22.6	22.9	23.1
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	California	22.8	22.8	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	California	21.5	21.7	22.0	22.1	22.2
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	California	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.6	22.8
	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 86% of California's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 86% of California's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 82% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 5,759 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from California would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

*Data from graph*

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	46
Bachelor's Degree	39
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	1
Other / No Response	14



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

### Adrianna Wantt

Trinity High School, Trinity Alps Unified School District

*“I live in a rural area with a population of no more than five hundred . . . 50 miles away from my high school. Since I live so far from my school, travel time is . . . over ten hours a week that is taken from family time, after-school activities, study time or sleep.”*

Adrianna has not allowed distance to keep her from academic success, even after a rock slide that closed the highway and cut her off from her school. Despite being unable to stay after school, she is active in several clubs and took five college-level courses her senior year.

In college, Adrianna plans to major in business with a minor in political science, and will intern in multiple roles in her field to ensure that she is on the path that is the best fit for her.

## 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.