

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

Illinois Key Findings

Performance

- The Illinois Class of 2017 is the first class since 2002 to not receive a state-funded college entrance examination. Illinois provided students in the 2002 through 2016 graduating classes, with a free ACT as part of the state's Prairie State Achievement Examination.
- In April 2016, 156 Illinois school districts paid for ACT District Testing. These Illinois districts paid for 88,289 students to take the weekday ACT as part of that program.
- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 134,901 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 160,066 in 2013.
 - ~ In Illinois, 93 percent of 2017 graduates took the ACT, compared to 60 percent nationally.
 - ~ In 2017, 9 percent of Illinois graduates took the ACT with extended time. This compares to 10 and 10 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
- Compared to the 2017 Illinois graduating class Composite average of 21.4, Illinois graduates in 2016 and 2013 had Composite averages of 20.8 and 20.6, respectively.
- In 2017, 30 percent of Illinois graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 26 and 25 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
- In 2017, 29 percent of Illinois graduates met zero ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 33 and 33 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

STEM

- In 2017, 57,045 Illinois graduates (42 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
 - ~ This is well below the national average of 48 percent.
- Compared to a 2017 Illinois graduating class STEM average of 21.5, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM averages of 20.9 and 20.9, respectively.
- Compared to 23 percent of 2017 Illinois graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM Benchmark percentages of 20 and 20, respectively.

Career Readiness

- In 2017, 38,700 Illinois graduates (29 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 Illinois 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:
 - ~ 267 more students enrolling in college.
 - ~ 323 more students persisting to year two.
 - ~ 242 fewer students needing remedial English.
 - ~ 455 fewer students needing remedial math.
 - ~ 371 more students persisting to year four.
 - ~ 410 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- For Illinois's 2017 tested graduates, 67,012 students took the ACT once with an average Composite scale score of 19.1.
 - ~ 35,593 students took the ACT twice with an average Composite scale score of 22.6.
 - ~ 20,056 students took the ACT three times with an average Composite scale score of 24.3.
 - ~ 12,240 students took the ACT more than three times with an average Composite scale score of 25.8.
- Of Illinois's 2017 graduating class, there were 18,168 (13 percent) African American students taking the ACT. This compares to 256,756 (13 percent) nationally.
- Of Illinois's 2017 graduating class, there were 29,058 (22 percent) Hispanic students taking the ACT. This compares to 347,906 (17 percent) nationally.
- Of Illinois's 2017 graduating class, there were 64,860 (48 percent) White students taking the ACT. This compares to 1,062,439 (52 percent) nationally.
- For Illinois's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, University of Illinois at Chicago, Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, and DePaul University.
 - ~ For Illinois's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were The University of Iowa, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Purdue University.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 74 percent of Illinois graduates opted into EOS.
- ACT issued 25,611 ACT fee waivers to qualified Illinois students. However, 6,548 students (26 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.

Pipeline

- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 23,372 (17 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 23,096 (17 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 23.9.
- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 19,029 (14 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 24.7.

- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 54,251 (40 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 21.0.
- In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 5,328 (4 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 16.8.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 Illinois graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Accounting.
 - ~ In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 18,772 (14 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 22.3.
 - ~ In the Illinois graduating class of 2017, 6,003 (4 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 21.0.

ACT Footprint

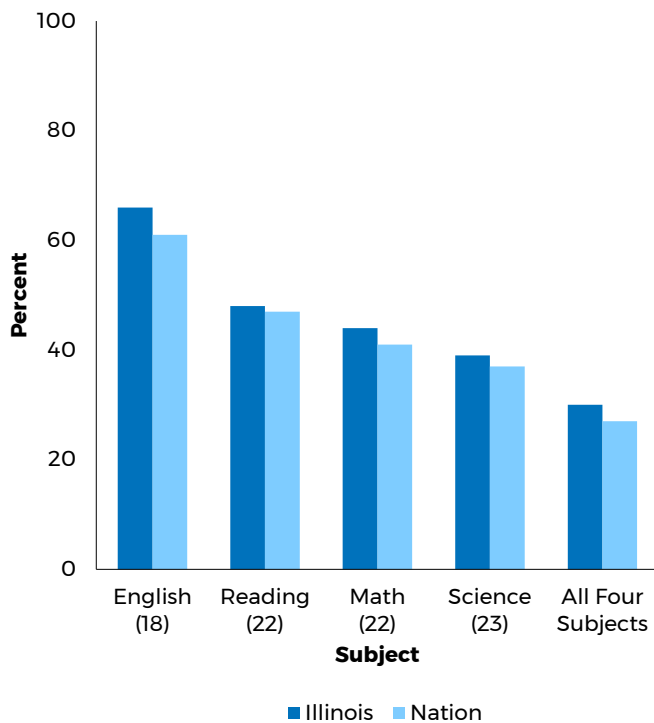
- Number of administrations:
 - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 174,283
 - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 155,813
 - ~ PreACT®: 6,258
 - ~ ACT WorkKeys®: 12,701

Additional Points

- Illinois and other states have used a traditional definition of college and career readiness: ensuring that students and adults are ready for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses in English, math, social studies, and science without remediation. Currently, the state is moving toward a definition that is about more than scores on academic assessments. The new model is focusing on a multidimensional dimension of readiness.
 - ~ The ACT Holistic Framework is a model for college and career readiness that provides the state with a framework that assists students and adults in navigating potential barriers at key transition points throughout the K-Career continuum. This framework has been empirically tested and includes knowledge and skills related to success in education and in the workplace. This framework includes skills in at least four domains: Core Academic Skills, Cross-Cutting Capabilities, Behavioral Skills, Education and Career Navigation Skills.
 - ~ Illinois is one of the few states in the nation that has developed and implemented social and emotional learning (SEL) standards. Research is clear: noncognitive skills and character strengths strongly predict academic achievement, career success, and lifelong well-being. Strengthening these noncognitive skills contribute to readiness and success in education and the workplace. Highly effective noncognitive skills and character strength-building efforts depend on reliable assessments. ACT provides programs that can be used by schools and districts, in their development and implementation of programs to impact student SEL skills (ACT Engage and ACT Tessera™).

Illinois College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

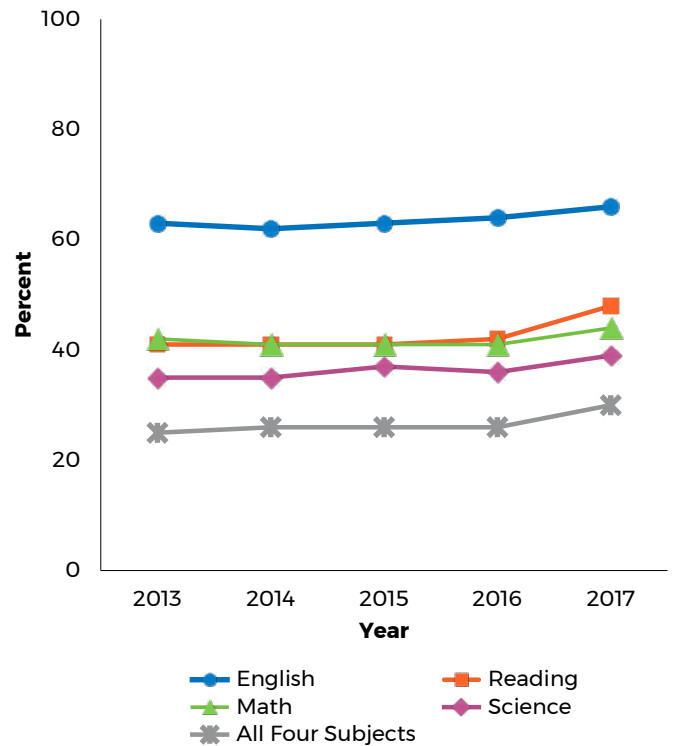
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
Illinois	66	48	44	39	30
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

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

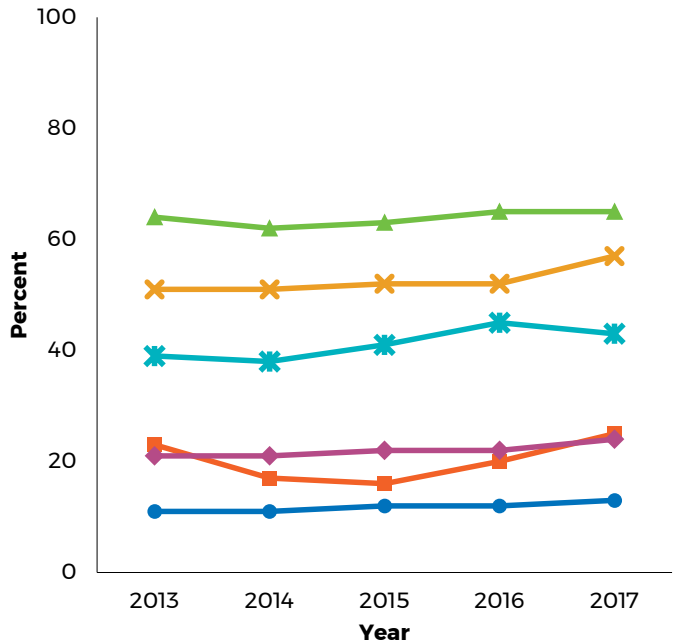


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	63	62	63	64	66
Reading	41	41	41	42	48
Math	42	41	41	41	44
Science	35	35	37	36	39
All Four Subjects	25	26	26	26	30

* 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

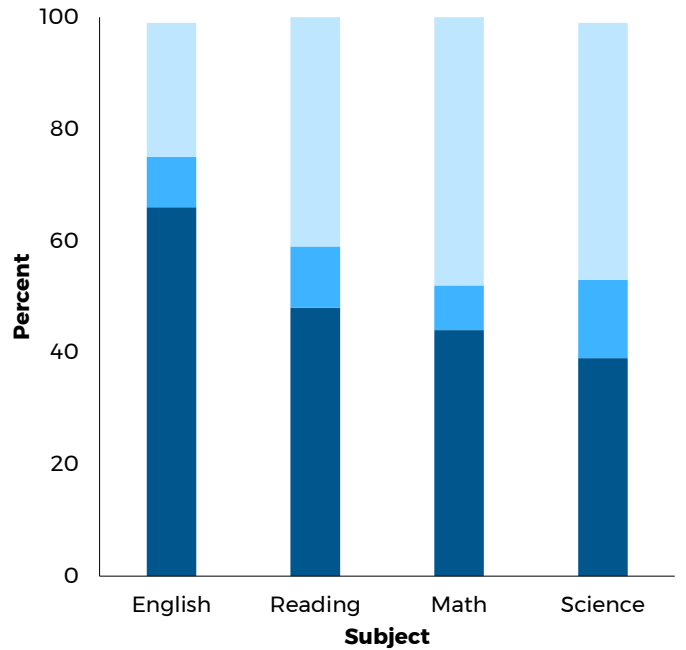
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	11	11	12	12	13
American Indian	23	17	16	20	25
Asian American	64	62	63	65	65
Hispanic	21	21	22	22	24
Pacific Islander	39	38	41	45	43
White	51	51	52	52	57

* 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.

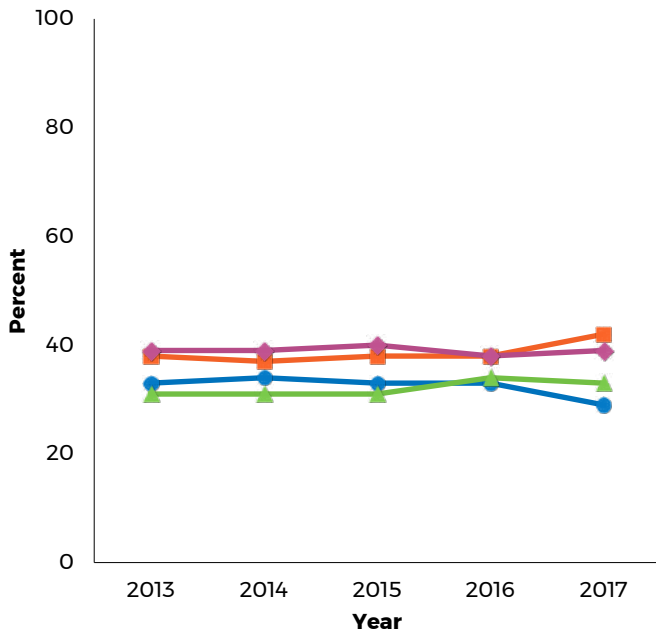


■ Met Benchmark ■ Within 2 Points of Benchmark ■ Below Benchmark by 3+ Points

Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	66	48	44	39
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	9	11	8	14
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	24	41	48	46

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



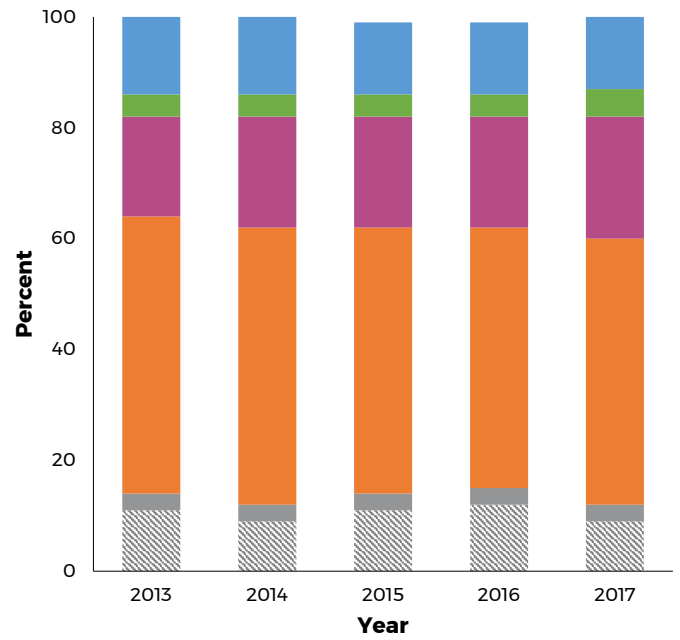
- Illinois Students Attaining 0 CRBs
- Illinois Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs
- ▲— National Students Attaining 0 CRBs
- ◆— National Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs

Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Illinois Students Attaining 0 CRBs	33	34	33	33	29
Illinois Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	38	37	38	38	42
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.



- African American
- American Indian
- Asian American
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or More Races
- No Response

Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	14	14	13	13	13
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0
Asian American	4	4	4	4	5
Hispanic	18	20	20	20	22
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	50	50	48	47	48
Two or More Races	3	3	3	3	3
No Response	11	9	11	12	9

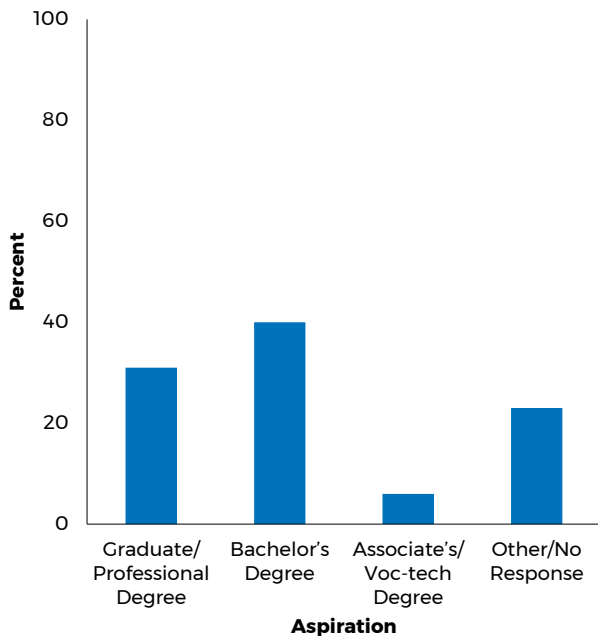
Illinois: Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in Illinois decreased by 25,165 students (-16 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	Illinois	100	100	100	100	93
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	Illinois	160,066	158,037	157,047	156,403	134,901
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	Illinois	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.5	21.0
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	Illinois	20.4	20.8	20.8	21.0	21.6
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	Illinois	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6	21.2
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	Illinois	20.5	20.5	20.6	20.6	21.3
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	Illinois	20.6	20.7	20.7	20.8	21.4
	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 77% of Illinois's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 75% of Illinois's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 60% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 23,081 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from Illinois would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

Data from graph

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	31
Bachelor's Degree	40
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	6
Other / No Response	23



Illinois State Exemplar

2017 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

Gina Dudek

John F Kennedy High School, Chicago Public Schools

“I am determined to go to college, obtain the education my mother never did, and establish a successful future for myself, even if it means I have to push myself farther than I ever have before.”

Despite a difficult home life without parental support, Gina has persevered to succeed in her high school classes and get to college.

Gina plans to major in biology in college and then obtain a postgraduate degree in order to become a geneticist or a neonatal surgeon. Though she will need to work throughout college, she also plans to volunteer in a dog shelter.

Information and products for further review

	Knowledge & Skills	Social & Emotional
Assessments	ACT Aspire®	ACT Tessera™
	PreACT®	ACT Engage®
	The ACT® Test	
	ACT WorkKeys®	
Research	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™	
Resources	PLDs Learning Description Review	Tessera Teacher Playbook
	Curriculum Review Worksheets	
	OpenEd Learning Resources	
	Test Prep	
Training	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.

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 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.