

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

North Carolina Key Findings

Performance

- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 106,210 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 95,782 in 2013.
- North Carolina graduates of 2017 had an average Composite score of 19.1, compared to the national average of 21.0.
 - ~ Compared to the 2017 North Carolina graduating class math average of 19.3, North Carolina graduates in 2016 and 2013 had math averages of 19.4 and 19.6, respectively.
 - ~ Compared to the 2017 North Carolina graduating class science average of 19.3, North Carolina graduates in 2016 and 2013 had science averages of 19.2 and 18.7, respectively.
- In 2017, 18 percent of North Carolina graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 18 and 17 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
 - ~ In 2017, 47 percent of North Carolina graduates met zero ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 46 and 49 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
 - ~ In 2017, 28 percent of North Carolina graduates met three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 28 and 26 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

STEM

- In 2017, 54,261 North Carolina graduates (51 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- Compared to a 2017 North Carolina graduating class STEM average of 19.6, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM averages of 19.5 and 19.4, respectively.
- In North Carolina, 36 percent of graduates taking physics met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark, compared to 22 for students not taking physics.
 - ~ For years 2013 and 2017, North Carolina graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark had average math scores of 28.5 and 28.4, respectively.
- Early College at Guilford is ranked No. 62 in the national rankings and earned a gold medal. Schools are ranked based on their performance on state-required tests and how well they prepare students for college.

Career Readiness

- In 2017, 66,539 North Carolina graduates (62 percent) were likely to attain a Silver level or higher ACT WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate®, based upon ACT Composite score, compared to 1.5 million (75 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 North Carolina 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:
 - ~ 227 more students enrolling in college.
 - ~ 270 more students persisting to year two.
 - ~ 226 fewer students needing remedial English.
 - ~ 427 fewer students needing remedial math.
 - ~ 300 more students persisting to year four.
 - ~ 318 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- In North Carolina, 2017 graduates taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 23.0, compared to 18.1 for single-time testers.
- For North Carolina's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were North Carolina State University at Raleigh, East Carolina University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Appalachian State University.
 - ~ For North Carolina's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were Clemson University, University of South Carolina-Columbia, and Virginia Tech.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 83 percent of North Carolina graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 85 percent of African American students nationally, 88 percent of North Carolina African American 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 69 percent of White students nationally, 81 percent of North Carolina White 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 83 percent of Hispanic students nationally, 89 percent of North Carolina Hispanic 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 76 percent of American Indian students nationally, 88 percent of North Carolina American Indian 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 76 percent of Asian students nationally, 84 percent of North Carolina Asian 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
 - ~ Compared to 77 percent of Pacific Islander students nationally, 80 percent of North Carolina Pacific Islander 2017 graduates opted into EOS.
- ACT issued 8,913 ACT fee waivers to qualified North Carolina students. However, 2,836 students (32 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.
 - ~ ACT test prep products are free for students with fee waivers.

Pipeline

- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 24,190 (23 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 21,779 (21 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 21.5.
- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 14,458 (14 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 22.4.
- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 44,768 (42 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 18.7.
- In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 8,419 (8 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 15.3.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 North Carolina graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Biology, General.
 - ~ In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 7,006 (7 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 20.9.
 - ~ In the North Carolina graduating class of 2017, 3,410 (3 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 19.1.

ACT Footprint

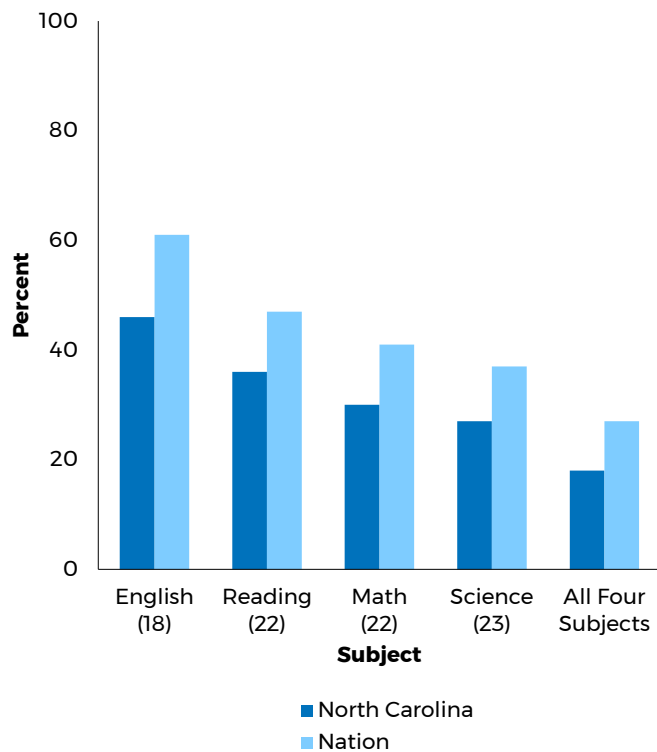
- Number of administrations:
 - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 3,665
 - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 191
 - ~ ACT Engage®: 502
 - ~ PreACT®: 115,000
 - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 174,164

Additional Points

- ACT State Organization recognized Greene Early College High School as a High School State Exemplar.
- The ACT State Organization held its annual conference in March 2016 with more than 150 participants from secondary, postsecondary, and the workforce in attendance.
- ACT offered eight ACT College and Career Readiness Workshops during fall 2016, with more than 400 attendees. These workshops offer school leadership teams, school counselors and teachers from public, charter, and private schools. Six of the eight sites were top 10 colleges where students sent their ACT scores at the time of testing.
- In North Carolina, 11 of the top 20 careers for 2024 are in Health Care and Engineering. Twenty percent of ACT-tested students were interested in health sciences (more than 21,000 students).
- The North Carolina Student Personal Identifiable Information (PII) law will cause major changes in the amount of data made available, particularly course and career interest information, beginning with the 2017 junior class.
- Early College at Guilford is ranked No. 62 in the national rankings and earned a gold medal. Schools are ranked based on their performance on state-required tests and how well they prepare students for college.

North Carolina College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

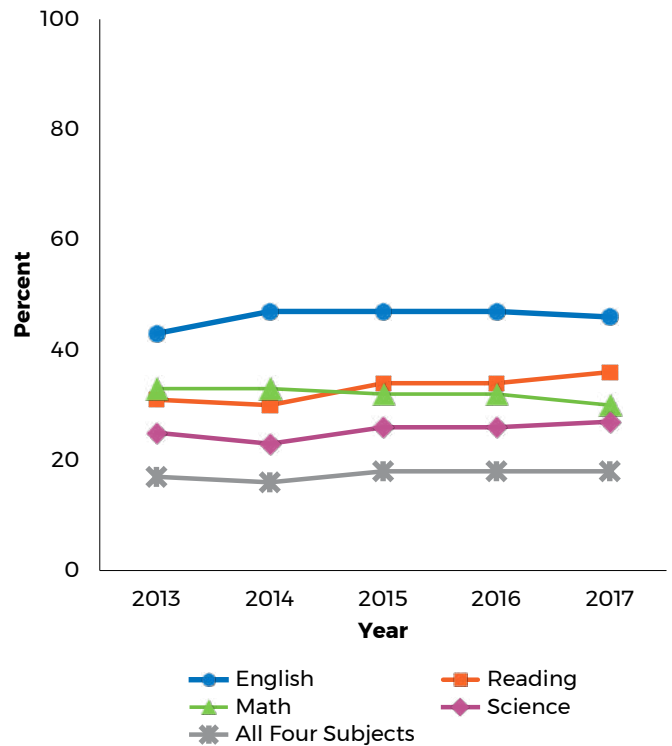
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
North Carolina	46	36	30	27	18
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

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

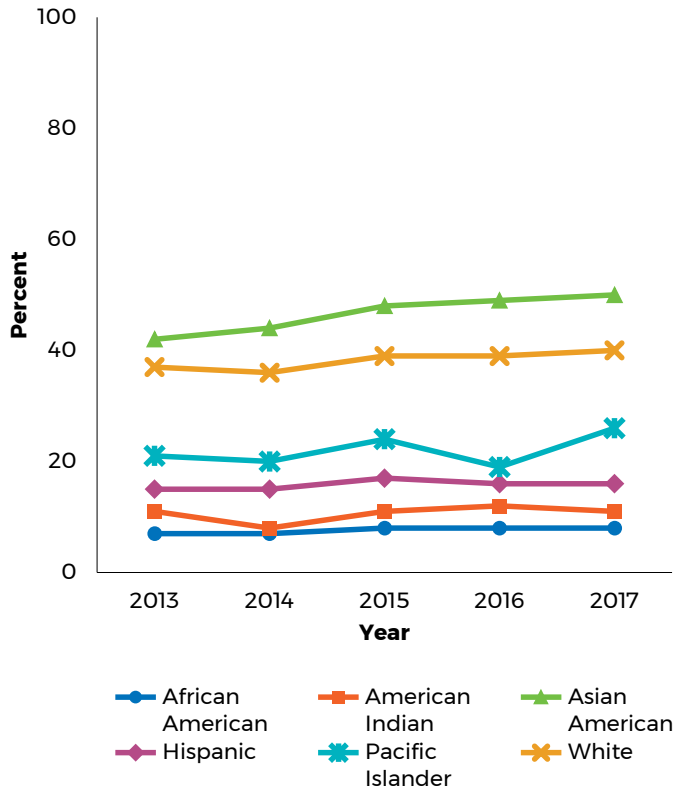


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	43	47	47	47	46
Reading	31	30	34	34	36
Math	33	33	32	32	30
Science	25	23	26	26	27
All Four Subjects	17	16	18	18	18

* 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*



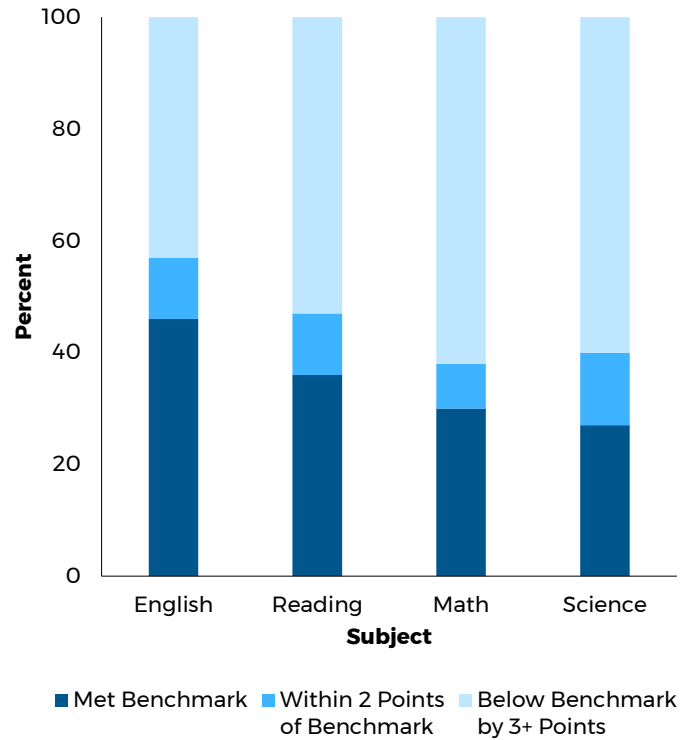
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	7	7	8	8	8
American Indian	11	8	11	12	11
Asian American	42	44	48	49	50
Hispanic	15	15	17	16	16
Pacific Islander	21	20	24	19	26
White	37	36	39	39	40

* 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

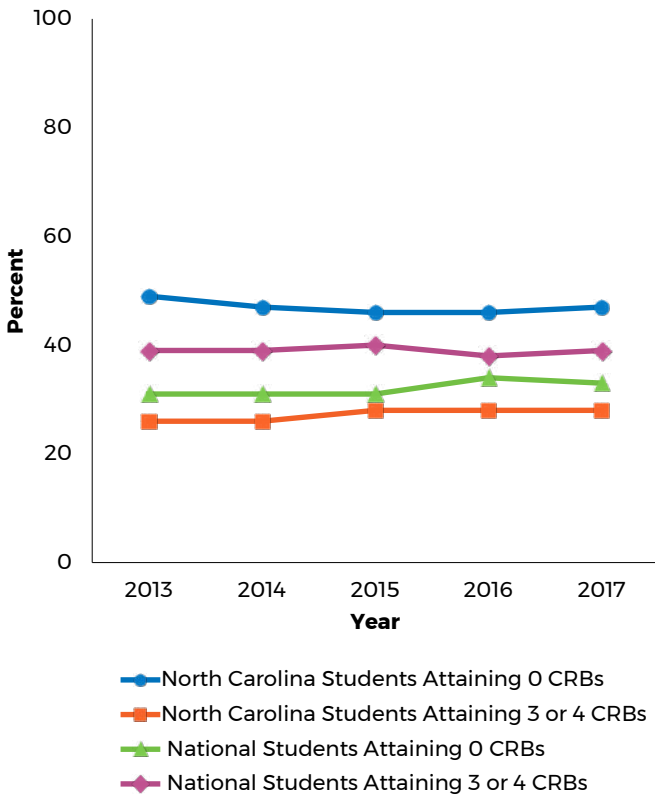
Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.



Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	46	36	30	27
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	11	11	8	13
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	43	53	62	61

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

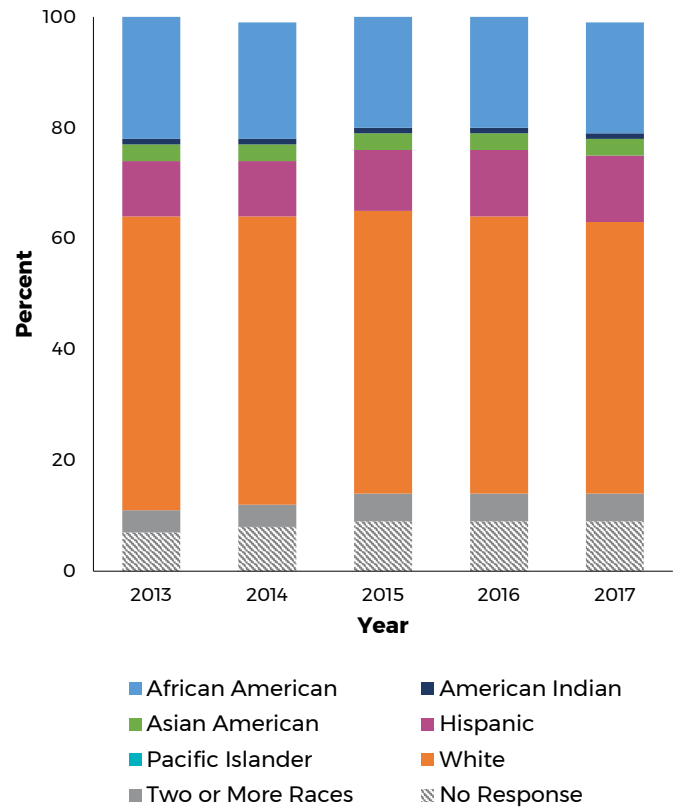


Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Carolina Students Attaining 0 CRBs	49	47	46	46	47
North Carolina Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	26	26	28	28	28
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	22	21	21	20	20
American Indian	1	1	1	1	1
Asian American	3	3	3	3	3
Hispanic	10	10	11	12	12
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	53	52	51	50	49
Two or More Races	4	4	5	5	5
No Response	7	8	9	9	9

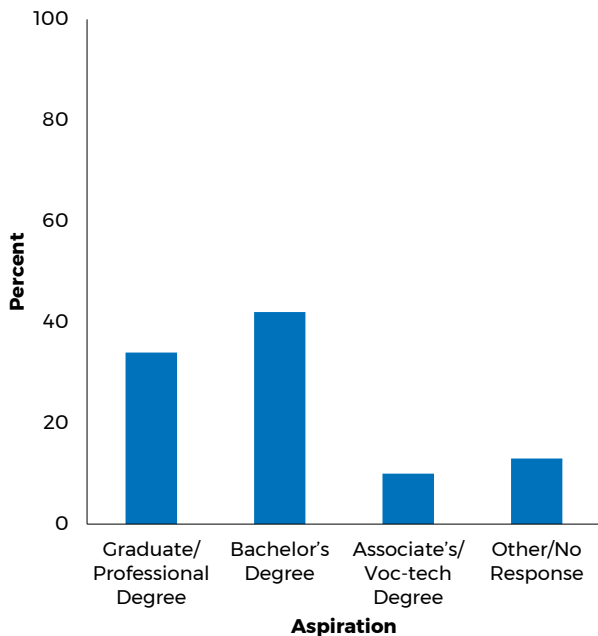
North Carolina: Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in North Carolina increased by 10,428 students (11 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	North Carolina	100	100	100	100	100
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	North Carolina	95,782	97,443	100,557	103,902	106,210
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	North Carolina	17.1	17.5	17.6	17.8	17.8
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	North Carolina	18.8	19.0	19.2	19.5	19.6
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	North Carolina	19.6	19.6	19.5	19.4	19.3
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	North Carolina	18.7	18.9	19.0	19.2	19.3
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	North Carolina	18.7	18.9	19.0	19.1	19.1
	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 87% of North Carolina's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 85% of North Carolina's 2016 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 56% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 29,696 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from North Carolina would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

Data from graph

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	34
Bachelor's Degree	42
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	10
Other / No Response	13



North Carolina State Exemplar 2017 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

Bryan Mejia

Northern High School, Durham Public Schools

“Always look for the opportunity out of any bad situation.”

When his school’s poetry club advisor was unable to continue, Bryan took it upon himself to build a new club, including designing poetry workshops for his classmates.

After he graduates from college, Bryan plans to be a therapist, helping people work through their problems.

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.