

## 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

## Wisconsin Key Findings

### Performance

- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 66,734 graduates took the ACT® test, compared to 46,574 in 2013.
- Wisconsin graduates of 2017 had an average Composite score of 20.5, compared to the national average of 21.0.
  - ~ Compared to the 2017 Wisconsin graduating class English average of 19.7, Wisconsin graduates in 2016 and 2013 had English averages of 19.7 and 21.5, respectively.
  - ~ Compared to the 2017 Wisconsin graduating class math average of 20.4, Wisconsin graduates in 2016 and 2013 had math averages of 20.4 and 22.0, respectively.
  - ~ Compared to the 2017 Wisconsin graduating class reading average of 20.6, Wisconsin graduates in 2016 and 2013 had reading averages of 20.7 and 22.3, respectively.
  - ~ Compared to the 2017 Wisconsin graduating class science average of 20.9, Wisconsin graduates in 2016 and 2013 had science averages of 20.7 and 22.2, respectively.
- In 2017, 25 percent of Wisconsin graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 25 and 33 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 37 percent of Wisconsin graduates met three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 38 and 50 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.
  - ~ In 2017, 35 percent of Wisconsin graduates met zero ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This compares to 34 and 20 percent of 2016 and 2013 graduates, respectively.

### STEM

- In 2017, 29,685 Wisconsin graduates (44 percent) indicated having an interest in STEM majors and/or careers.
- Compared to a 2017 Wisconsin graduating class STEM average of 20.9, graduates in 2016 and 2013 had STEM averages of 20.8 and 22.4, respectively.
- In 2017, 29,834 Wisconsin graduates (45 percent) indicated taking physics. This compares to 46 and 59 percent for 2016 and 2013 graduating classes, respectively.
  - ~ In Wisconsin, 2017 graduates taking physics had an average science score of 22.7, compared to the average science score of 19.6 for students not taking physics.
  - ~ In Wisconsin, 52 percent of graduates taking physics met the ACT Science College Readiness Benchmark, compared to 26 for students not taking physics.
- In Wisconsin, 2017 graduates taking three or more years of math had an average math score of 21.4 compared to the average math score of 16.2 for students taking less than three years of math.
  - ~ For years 2013 and 2017, Wisconsin graduates meeting the ACT STEM College Readiness Benchmark had average math scores of 28.2 and 28.3, respectively.

### Career Readiness

- Wisconsin tests all 11th-grade students with ACT WorkKeys®, which allows students to earn the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate®. 91.8% of the Wisconsin tested population (56,271 students) in the 2017 graduating class earned an ACT NCRC®. Bronze: 8,812. Silver: 30,084. Gold: 17,073. Platinum: 302. 5,005 students did not qualify for a certificate.

## Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2016 ACT-tested Wisconsin 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:
  - ~ 137 more students enrolling in college.
  - ~ 164 more students persisting to year two.
  - ~ 132 fewer students needing remedial English.
  - ~ 237 fewer students needing remedial math.
  - ~ 187 more students persisting to year four.
  - ~ 205 more students earning a postsecondary degree within six years.

## Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- In Wisconsin, 2017 graduates taking the ACT two or more times had an average Composite score of 23.1, compared to 19.1 for single-time testers.
  - ~ 36 percent (23,897) of 2017 Wisconsin graduates took the ACT more than once, compared to 45 percent nationally.
  - ~ Among White students who tested at least twice, 93 percent first tested in their junior year, increased their score by 1.1 point(s), and scored 3.7 point(s) higher than 11th-grade White students who tested only once.
  - ~ Among Hispanic students who tested at least twice, 97 percent first tested in their junior year, increased their score by 0.6 point(s), and scored 3.3 point(s) higher than 11th-grade Hispanic students who tested only once.
  - ~ Among African American students who tested at least twice, 98 percent first tested in their junior year, increased their score by 0.6 point(s) and scored 2.5 point(s) higher than 11th-grade African American students who tested only once.
- For Wisconsin's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top five schools to which scores were sent were University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.
  - ~ For Wisconsin's 2017 ACT-tested graduates, the top three out-of-state schools to which scores were sent were University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Winona State University, and University of Minnesota-Duluth.
- Compared to 73 percent of 2017 graduates nationally, 72 percent of Wisconsin graduates opted into EOS.
- ACT issued 5,661 ACT fee waivers to Wisconsin students who qualify. However, 1,635 students (29 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.
  - ~ Unused fee waivers varied with ethnicity. 25 percent of White students did not use their fee waiver, compared to 48 percent of American Indian students, 18 percent of Asian students, 35 percent of African American students, and 25 percent of Hispanic students.

## Pipeline

- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 11,126 (17 percent) had parents who did not attend college.
- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 9,406 (14 percent) aspired to attain a professional degree. They had an average Composite score of 23.6.
- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 7,026 (11 percent) aspired to attain a graduate degree. They had an average Composite score of 23.8.
- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 27,526 (41 percent) aspired to attain a bachelor's degree. They had an average Composite score of 20.9.
- In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 5,967 (9 percent) aspired to attain an associate's degree. They had an average Composite score of 17.0.
- In order of prevalence, the five most commonly indicated college majors of interest for 2017 Wisconsin graduates were: Undecided; Nursing, Registered (BS/RN); Medicine (Pre-Medicine); Business Administration and Management, General; and Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General.
  - ~ In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 6,772 (10 percent) indicated being undecided about their college major. They had an average Composite score of 21.5.
  - ~ In the Wisconsin graduating class of 2017, 2,952 (4 percent) indicated planning on majoring in education. They had an average Composite score of 20.6.

## ACT Footprint

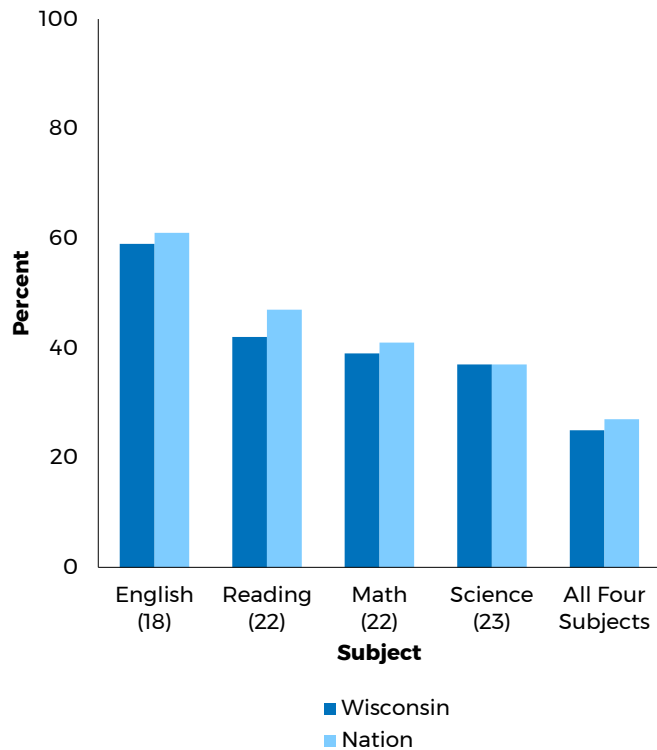
- Number of administrations:
  - ~ PreACT®: 5,798
  - ~ ACT Aspire® Summative: 666,992
  - ~ ACT Aspire Periodic: 102,049
  - ~ ACT WorkKeys: 189,577

## Additional Points

- ACT data indicate Wisconsin student academic performance varies according to ethnicity, and the overall average ACT Composite score has remained the same at 20.5, compared to the graduating class of 2016—the first year the graduating class data included statewide ACT testing for all 11th-grade students. Between 2016 and 2017, the average ACT Composite score for ethnic groups:
  - ~ Black/African American: increased from 15.9 to 16.1
  - ~ American Indian/Alaska Native: increased from 16.9 to 17.2
  - ~ White: remained the same at 21.5
  - ~ Hispanic/Latino: increased from 17.9 to 18.0
  - ~ Asian: increased from 20.4 to 20.5
  - ~ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: decreased from 19.4 to 18.4
  - ~ Two or more races: remained the same at 20.0
  - ~ Prefer not to respond/No response: increased from 18.8 to 19.3
- In 2017, 287 educators, administrators, postsecondary enrollment managers, and business professionals attended the annual Wisconsin ACT State Organization conference.
- Although optional for ACT national testing, Wisconsin requires the ACT writing test when students take the ACT through statewide testing. Of 2017 graduates who took the writing test, which is scored on a 2-12 scale, the average writing score was 6.1.

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

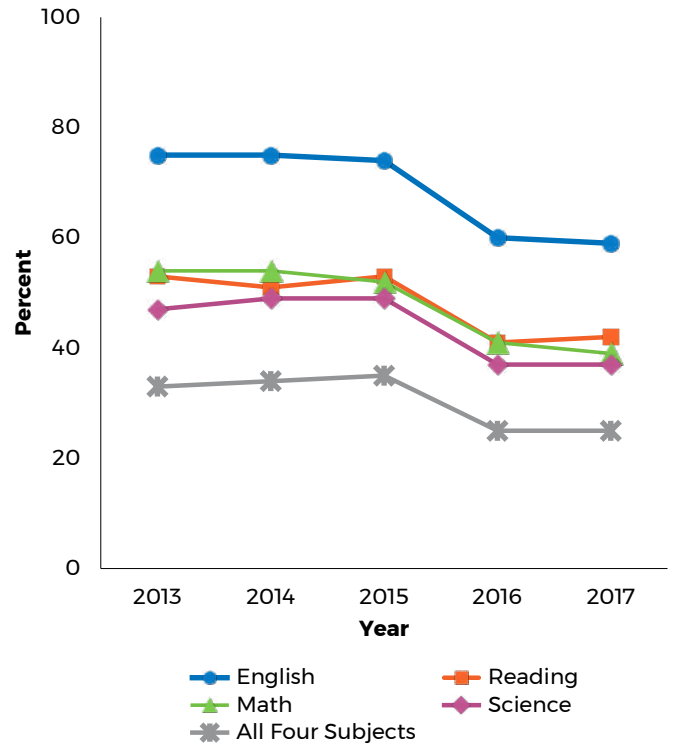
Percent of 2017 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks\* by Subject



Data from graph above:

State / Nation	English (18)	Reading (22)	Math (22)	Science (23)	All Four
Wisconsin	59	42	39	37	25
Nation	61	47	41	37	27

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

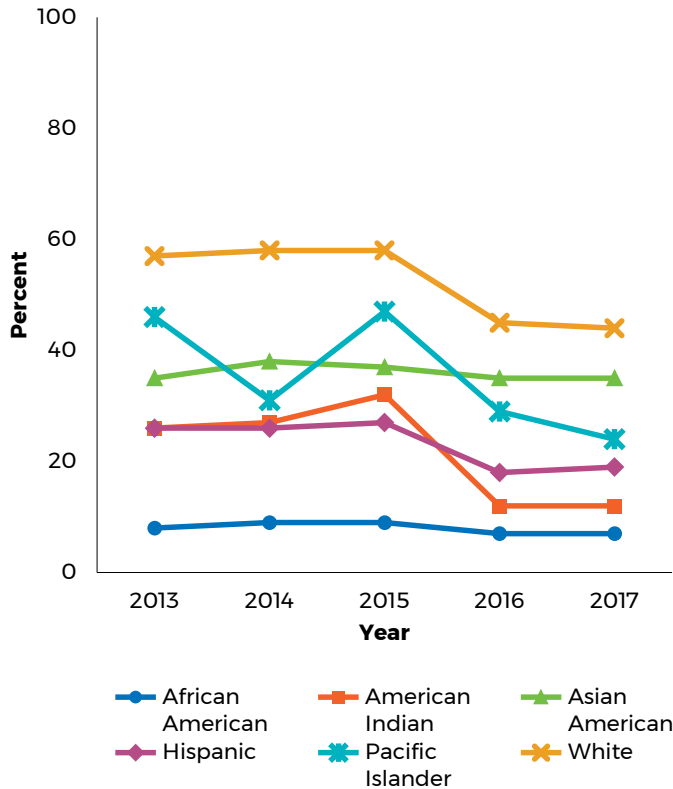


Data from graph above:

Subject	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	75	75	74	60	59
Reading	53	51	53	41	42
Math	54	54	52	41	39
Science	47	49	49	37	37
All Four Subjects	33	34	35	25	25

\* 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\***



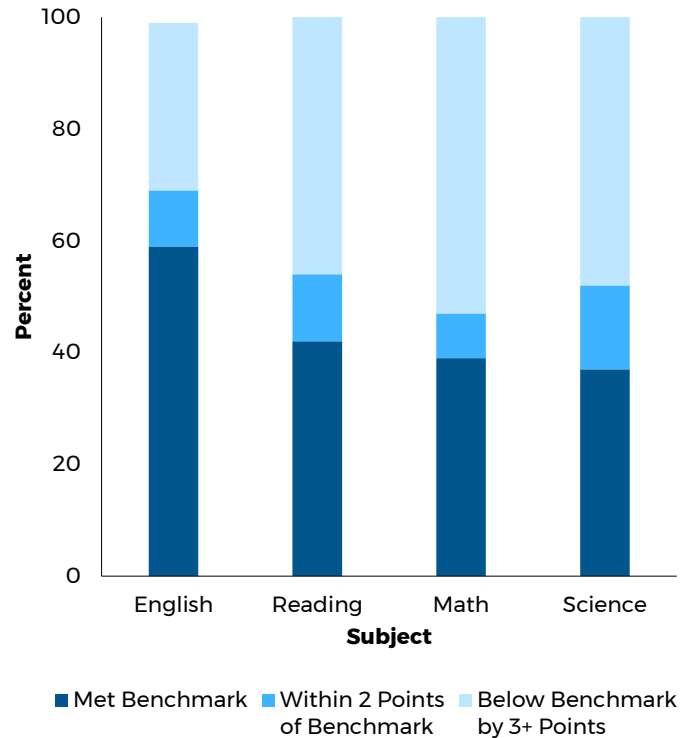
Data from graph above:

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
African American	8	9	9	7	7
American Indian	26	27	32	12	12
Asian American	35	38	37	35	35
Hispanic	26	26	27	18	19
Pacific Islander	46	31	47	29	24
White	57	58	58	45	44

\* 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**

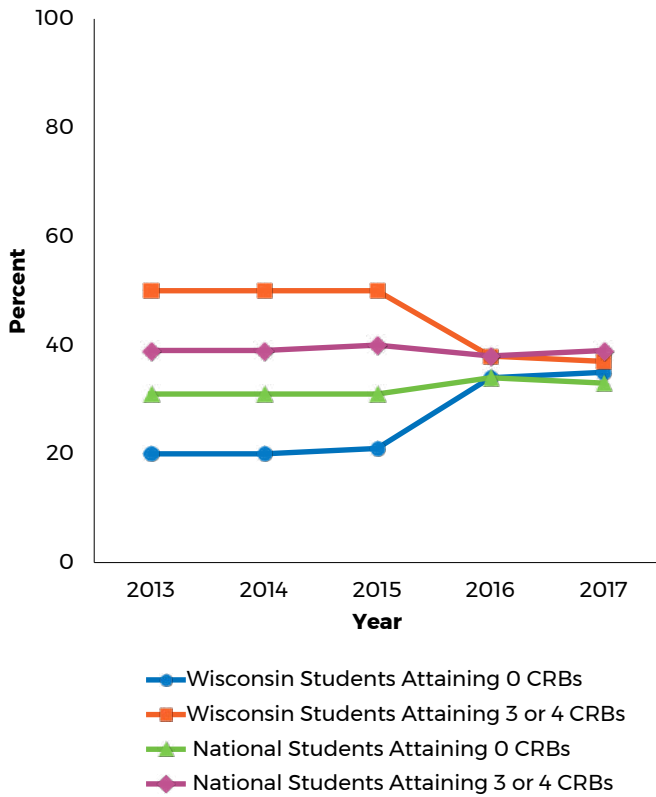
Note: Percents in this graph may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Values less than 0.5% will not appear.



Data from graph above:

Attainment	English	Reading	Math	Science
Met Benchmark	59	42	39	37
Within 2 Points of Benchmark	10	12	8	15
Below Benchmark by 3+ Points	30	46	53	48

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

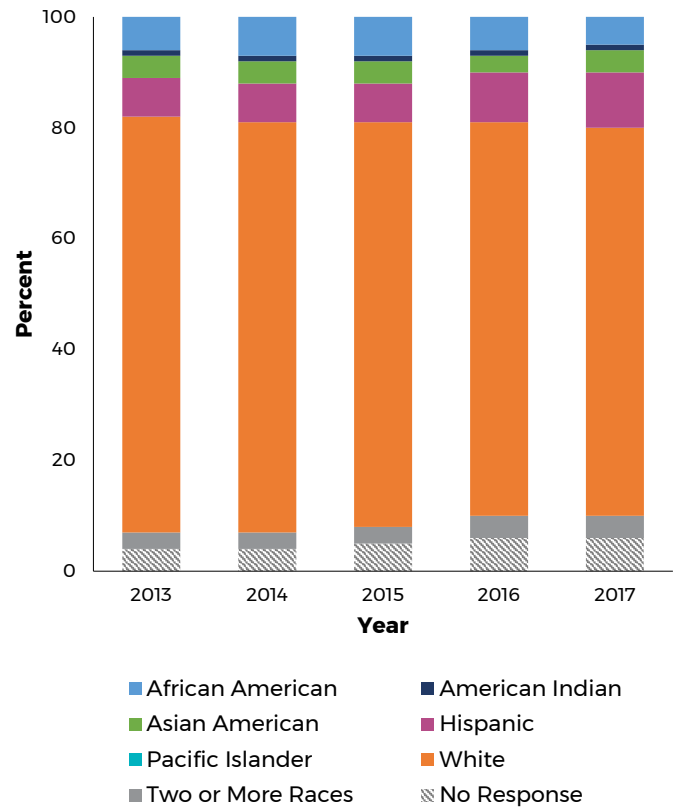


Data from graph above:

Attainment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Wisconsin Students Attaining 0 CRBs	20	20	21	34	35
Wisconsin Students Attaining 3 or 4 CRBs	50	50	50	38	37
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	7	7	7	6	6
American Indian	1	1	1	1	1
Asian American	4	4	4	3	4
Hispanic	7	7	7	9	10
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White	75	74	73	71	70
Two or More Races	3	3	3	4	4
No Response	4	4	5	6	6

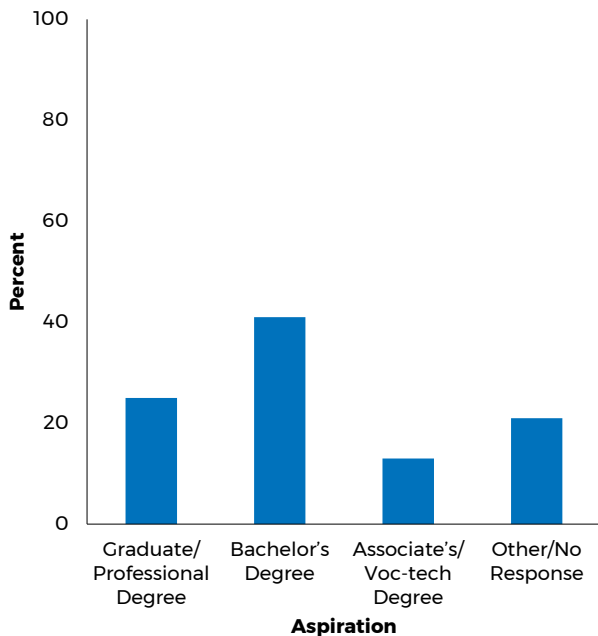
**Wisconsin:** Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students taking the ACT in Wisconsin increased by 20,160 students (43 percent).

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

Outcome	Cohort	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percent Tested	Wisconsin	71	73	73	100	100
	Nation	54	57	59	64	60
N Tested	Wisconsin	46,574	46,870	46,738	66,564	66,734
	Nation	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342	2,030,038
Average English Score	Wisconsin	21.5	21.6	21.6	19.7	19.7
	Nation	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1	20.3
Average Reading Score	Wisconsin	22.3	22.4	22.5	20.7	20.6
	Nation	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3	21.4
Average Math Score	Wisconsin	22.0	22.0	22.0	20.4	20.4
	Nation	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6	20.7
Average Science Score	Wisconsin	22.2	22.3	22.3	20.7	20.9
	Nation	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8	21.0
Average Composite Score	Wisconsin	22.1	22.2	22.2	20.5	20.5
	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 79% of Wisconsin's 2017 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 84% of Wisconsin'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 19,617 of the 2016 ACT-tested graduates from Wisconsin would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

*Data from graph*

Aspiration	Percent
Graduate / Professional Degree	25
Bachelor's Degree	41
Associate's / Voc-tech Degree	13
Other / No Response	21



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

### Linnea Dahmen

Middleton High School, Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

*“Once I realized that this was the problem—that there are not enough prominent female role models involved in the STEM community for young women—I found new motivation. I want to be that woman for the girls that are questioning themselves, the one that I never had. . . . Not only do I want to succeed for myself, but I want to succeed for the girls who don’t believe they can.”*

Throughout high school, Linnea has embraced her wide array of interests, from playing with her high school jazz band to interning with the local university’s astronomy department.

In college, Linnea hopes to major in physics or astrophysics with a minor in computer science, and participate in research opportunities in her field. She then plans to move on to graduate school and eventually to a career in science.

## 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.