

SUPPORTING THE WHOLE STUDENT

Using ACT Data to Start Conversations, Remove Barriers, & Open Doors

Vicky Roller, a counselor at Newport High School in Oregon, felt that the standardized test her school used—the Smarter Balance Assessment (SBACC)—was falling short in certain areas when it came to supporting her 11th graders. Although SBACC satisfied the state’s requirement to measure students’ knowledge, it didn’t give students valuable feedback or help them with college and career planning. It also built educational and financial barriers for students, limiting their growth and opportunity.

In order to get a college reportable score and possibly qualify for more than 450 scholarships through the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC), students had to register for the ACT test independently, pay the fee, and transport themselves to the testing center on a Saturday. But, most Newport students couldn’t take the test because they were very involved at school and in the community. Many were from low-income families, participating in sports, taking care of younger siblings, or working.

Vicky and the Lincoln County School District started to look at other solutions that could satisfy the state assessment requirement while also helping students choose

classes, access scholarships, and plan for college. They decided that the best assessment was the ACT.

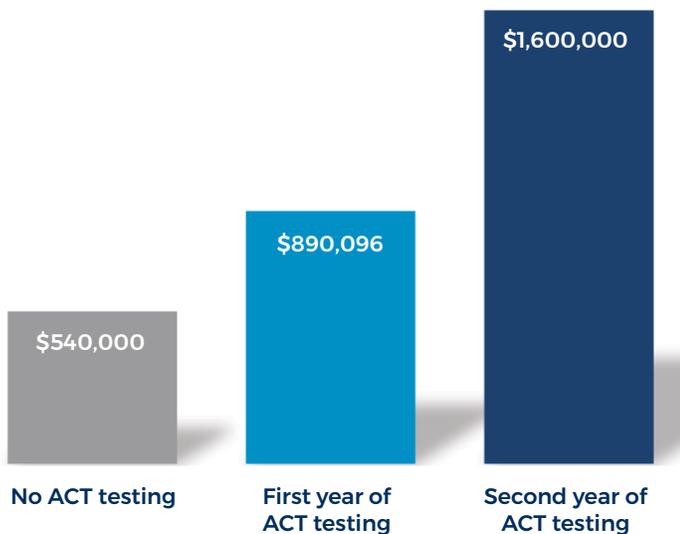
“We found that the ACT was a test that could look at the whole child; something tangible that we can use to satisfy the compliance piece while also being something helpful for our kids. All of the supports ACT offers, besides your typical Composite score, was why our Director of Secondary Ed decided to go towards the ACT.”

Vicky Roller

By offering the ACT free of charge to every 11th grader during the school day, the Newport staff feels they are

further supporting equity among all students. Many more doors are opened and many barriers are removed. With a college-reportable score, Newport students can use it to apply to colleges and qualify for scholarships through the OSAC. And the results speak for themselves:

Scholarship Earnings by Graduates Before and After Schoolwide Testing



Vicky also uses the ACT data to start meaningful conversations about academic improvement and future planning. When students receive their score reports, she can see which subject areas students are succeeding at and/or struggling in. Using that information, she helps students pick their classes based on their strengths and weaknesses. On a school level, the data Newport collects from the ACT helps with curriculum improvement.

“The ACT data is helping us have conversations about what our students need to be successful at when they leave our school—whether they’re going into career or they’re going to college. I think that we’ve just begun to scratch the surface of really how we can use the ACT data to serve our students.”

Vicky Roller

The most important advantage of using the data from the ACT score report has been getting students to dream bigger. Newport has a rigorous curriculum, but in a rural community a student’s aspirations can be limited. Vicky talks all the time with students who have a high GPA and ACT score, are taking advanced classes, and are doing dual enrollment, but who think their only option is to stay in town and attend a community college.

Vicky sits down with students and families and recommends specific college and career options with the data to validate her recommendations. She can show how a student’s ACT score and classroom work match what incoming students at a private university or large public university are achieving. So, by the time a student reaches the spring of their senior year, they’re aware of all the open doors available to them.

“I can have a student look at their transcript, at what they’ve done here at Newport, at their GPA, and at their ACT scores. I can make them realize, with the data right here, that they meet the minimum requirements for all those things, maybe even go well beyond the minimum. I think the ACT is another piece of information that can show the students they can do this—they can go to college and be successful.”

Vicky Roller

To find out more about the benefits of the ACT test and how to offer it to your students, go to: act.org/state-and-district-testing