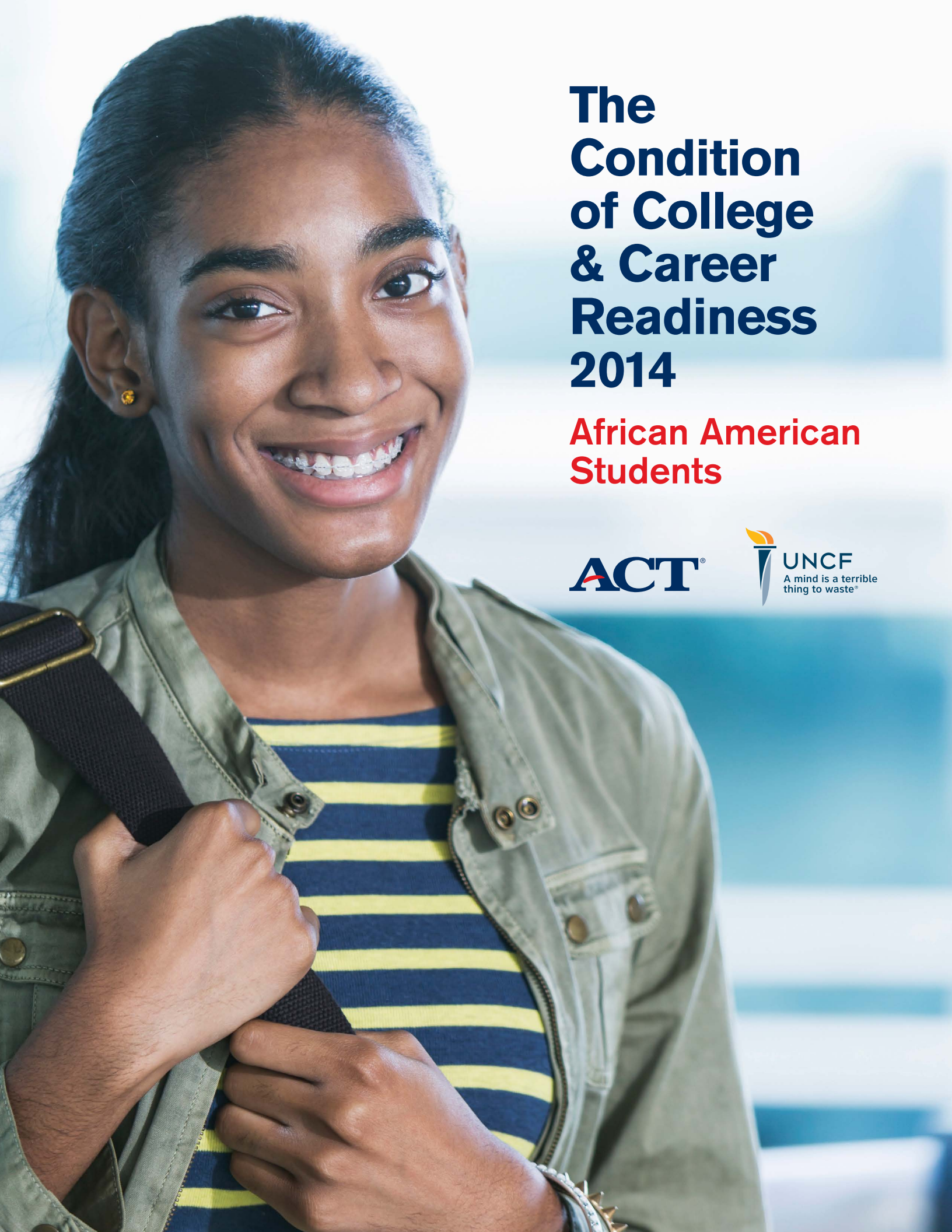


The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014

African American Students

ACT®

UNCF
A mind is a terrible thing to waste®

July 2015

Dear colleagues,

ACT and UNCF are united in our desire to help all people succeed in education and the workplace. We share a commitment to the effective use of data and analysis to support the continuous improvement of individuals, organizations, and systems.

ACT and UNCF are proud to collaborate on this report, which is an extension of the annual ACT *Condition of College & Career Readiness* report series. This report provides a national snapshot of academic performance among African American students in the high school graduating class who took the ACT® college readiness assessment and addresses questions of critical importance to our nation. Are African American high school students prepared for college and career? Are younger black students on target for college and career? Are enough black students taking core courses that will prepare them for college and career? Are African American students who are ready for college and career actually succeeding?

According to the US Census Bureau, there are more than 45 million African American people in the United States, comprising about 15% of the total US population. By 2050, the population is projected to grow to roughly 75 million (18% of the population). While a large proportion of the black population continues to be concentrated in the South (55%), the African American population grew in every region of the country between 2000 and 2010. The 10 states with the largest African American populations were New York, Florida, Texas, Georgia, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, and Ohio. Considered together, these 10 states accounted for 60% of the total African American population. This population growth has implications for education as the 2014–15 school year marked the first time students of color constituted the majority of students in public schools. As demographics shift, it is imperative that we examine, promote, and invest in college readiness among African American students.

As the data in this report indicate, many African American students do well in school and important progress has been made in increasing educational attainment over the last several decades. But significant gaps remain between current levels of achievement and the more equitable levels of college and career readiness needed.

Progress will require that we look to the evidence of what works for African American students. To that end, this report offers several recommendations for improving readiness among African American students and all students by establishing clear, high, and common academic standards in the classroom; increasing the rigor of high school core courses; monitoring student performance beginning in the early grades; and making academic interventions with students who are off target as soon as possible, based on timely and reliable performance data.

ACT and UNCF worked together to share this rigorous data analysis with you, and it is our hope to work with you to increase college and career readiness among African American students so they are prepared for success on their educational pathways after high school. We hope that the information in this report will assist states, districts, schools, and educators who play such important and interdependent roles in preparing African American students, and all students, to thrive in education, career, and life.

Jon Whitmore
CEO, ACT

Michael Lomax, PhD
President and CEO, UNCF

African American Students

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014 is ACT's annual report on the progress of the graduating class relative to college readiness. This year, 57% of the graduating class took the ACT® college readiness assessment. The increased number of test takers over the past several years enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current graduating class in the context of readiness levels as well as offering a glimpse of the emerging educational pipeline.

Our Commitment to College and Career Readiness

As a research-based nonprofit, ACT is committed to providing a wider range of solutions across a wider range of life decision points in an increasingly individualized manner so everyone can benefit. This commitment has led ACT to a mode of continuous improvement in an ever-changing educational and workplace landscape. Over the last year, ACT has made several key announcements, including:

- **Release of ACT Aspire™.** In spring 2014, ACT released an assessment system that spans grades 3–10. It aligns to the ACT College Readiness Standards, which allows monitoring and intervening to take place much earlier and helps prepare students to succeed at college-level work, culminating with the ACT college readiness assessment. To date, more than 1 million assessments have been taken.
- **Enhancements to the ACT college readiness assessment.** Several key modifications to the ACT were announced. These include:
  - Online, computer-based administration of the ACT, with more than 4,000 students tested in spring 2014
  - Optional constructed-response computer-based testing tasks in mathematics, reading, and science—offered alongside the existing optional Writing Test—assessing whether students can justify, explain, and use evidence to support claims
  - Additional questions on the Reading Test that address whether students can integrate knowledge and ideas across multiple texts
  - Additional statistics and probability items on the Mathematics Test to allow for reporting of student achievement in this area
  - Additional reporting to include a STEM score, career readiness indicator, English language arts score, text complexity indicator, and reporting categories consistent with college and career readiness language
  - Enhanced Writing Test based on the newly developed ACT writing competency framework that provides results in four domains

While the evolution of the ACT continues and additional scores will be provided, it will remain a curriculum-based achievement exam, and the 1–36 score scale will not change.

- **A continued commitment to evidence and validity monitoring.** The ACT National Curriculum Survey®, completed every three to five years, is used to build and update a valid suite of ACT assessments, empirically aligned to the ACT College Readiness Standards. The survey informs the test blueprint for the assessments. Assessment results validate the ACT College Readiness Standards and the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This evidence and the validity cycle drive the development and continuous improvement of ACT's current and future solutions, as well as the associated research agenda.
- **Release of ACT Profile™.** ACT Profile is a first-of-its-kind college and career planning community, built on 30-plus years of ACT research. Mobile, social, and *free to students* (over the age of 13), ACT Profile develops personalized insights and populates an interactive career graph to show students the best career matches based on their self-assessment results. The tool then extends those insights to help students make informed career and educational plans.

ACT is committed to being a leader in education and career success by infusing innovation into our foundation of assessment excellence. We make changes only after a thorough analysis of user need, coupled with our commitment to the highest-quality test development and helping *all* students achieve college and career success.

A Holistic View of College Readiness

ACT continues in its steadfast support of the purpose and intent of the Common Core State Standards, which focus on the key essential standards that can prepare students for college and career success. However, we also believe that academic readiness is just one of several factors that contribute to educational success. Other key factors include the academic behaviors of students and informed career planning (e.g., based on interests). Together, these elements define a clear picture of student readiness for postsecondary education. To encourage progress, the educational system needs to monitor and sustain all key factors of success.

Using This Report[1]

This report is designed to help inform the following questions driving national efforts to strengthen P–16 education.

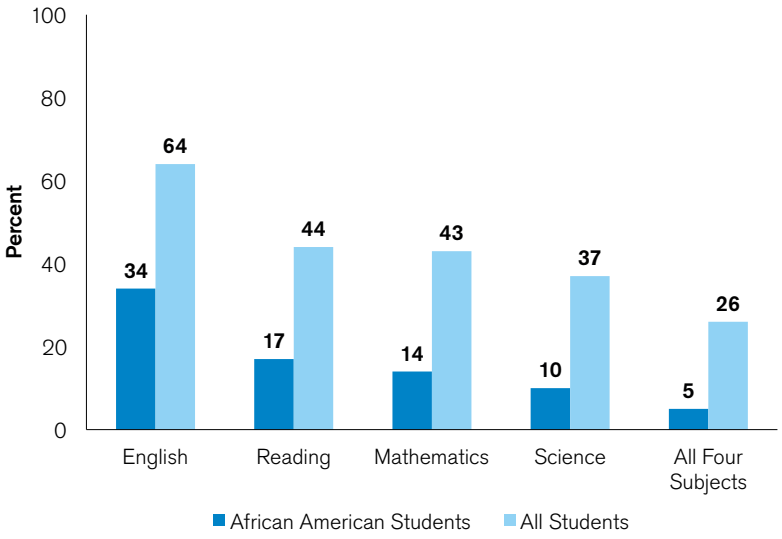
- Are African American students prepared for college and career?
- Are enough African American students taking core courses?
- Are core courses rigorous enough?
- Are younger African American students on target for college and career?
- What other dimensions of college and career readiness should we track?
- Are African American students who are ready for college and career actually succeeding?

African American Students

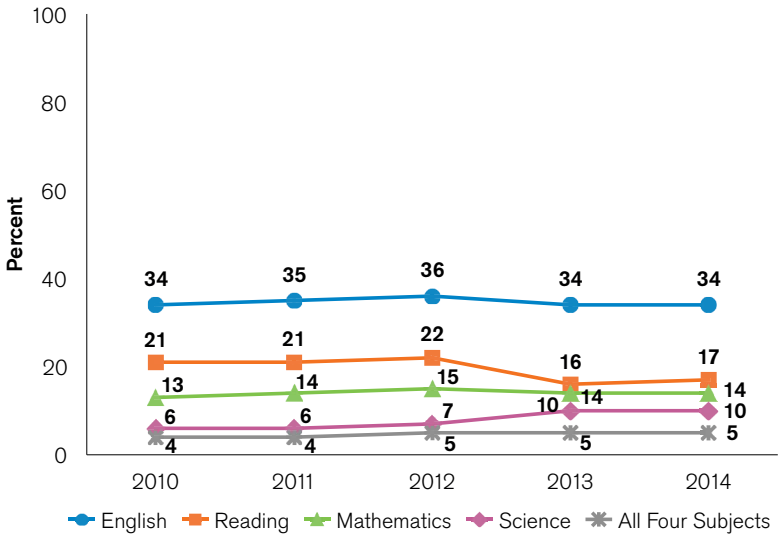
Attainment of College and Career Readiness

- 241,678 African American high school 2014 graduates took the ACT.
- From 2010–2014, the number of ACT test-taking African American graduates has increased by about 12 percent. While this is good news, African American students continue to lag behind those from other racial groups in meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks.

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



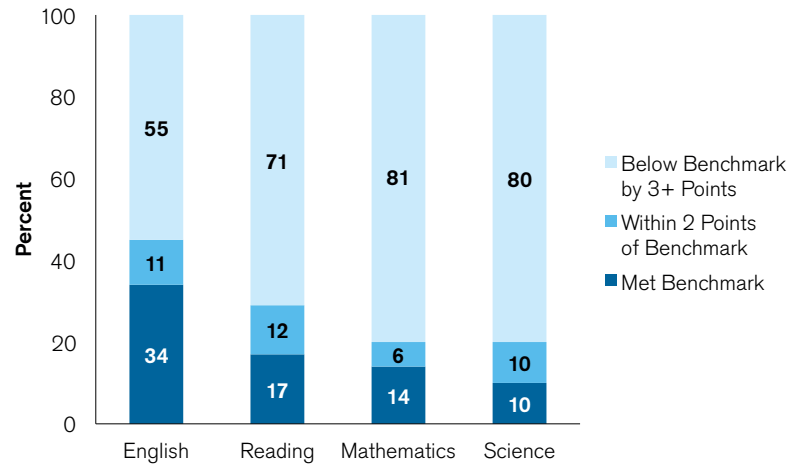
Percent of 2010–2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks



Note: Percents in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

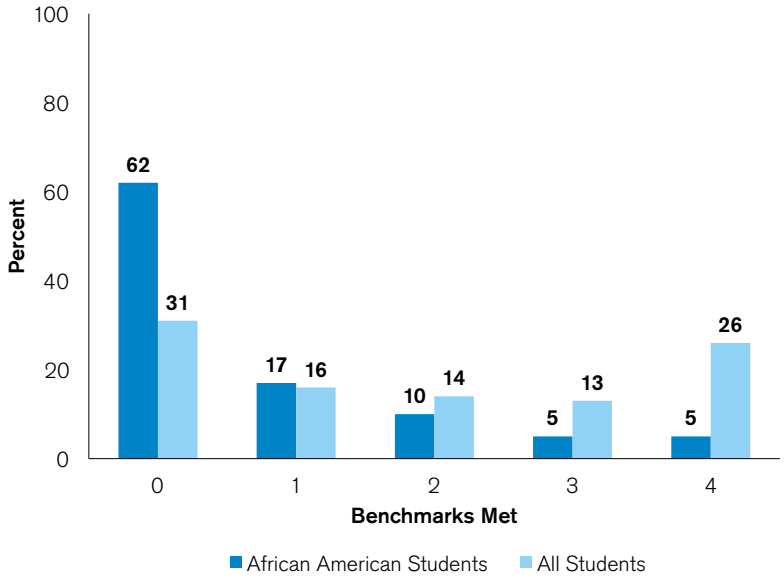
Near Attainment of College and Career Readiness

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



African American students are most likely to meet the English ACT College Readiness Benchmark and less likely to meet the Benchmarks in reading, mathematics, and science. This pattern is consistent across all student groups.

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



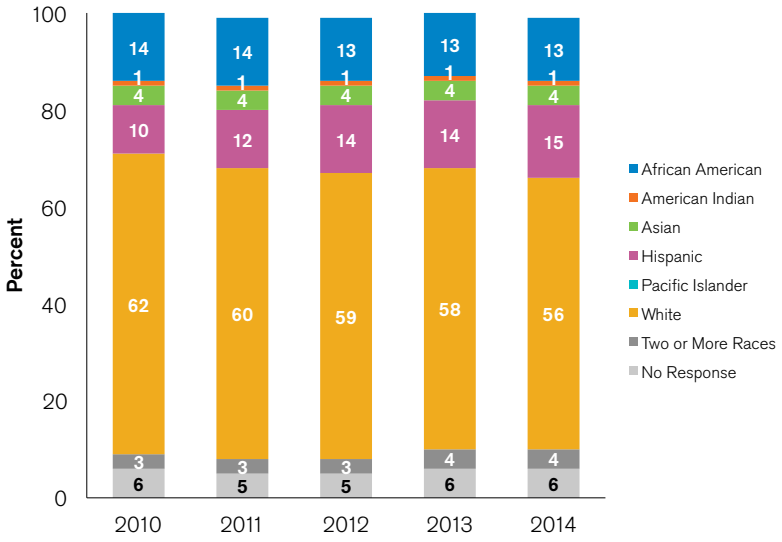
Compared to all students, African American students are twice as likely to meet zero ACT College Readiness Benchmarks.

African American Students

Participation and Opportunity

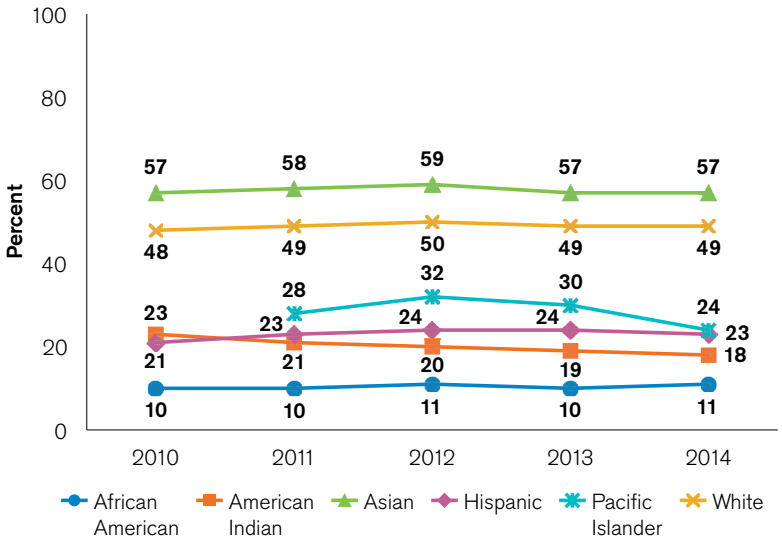
Over the past decade, ACT has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of students tested, as well as statewide partnerships in 13 states and in many districts across the country. As a result, the 2014 *Condition of College & Career Readiness* report provides a much deeper and more representative sample in comparison to a purely self-selected college-going population.

Percent of 2010–2014 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity*



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Percent of 2010–2014 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity*

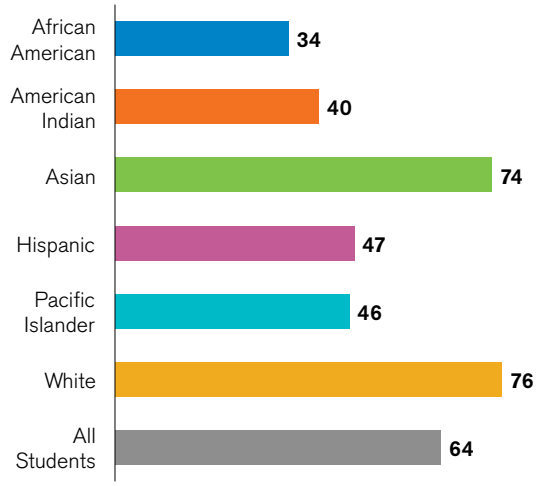


* Race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.[2]

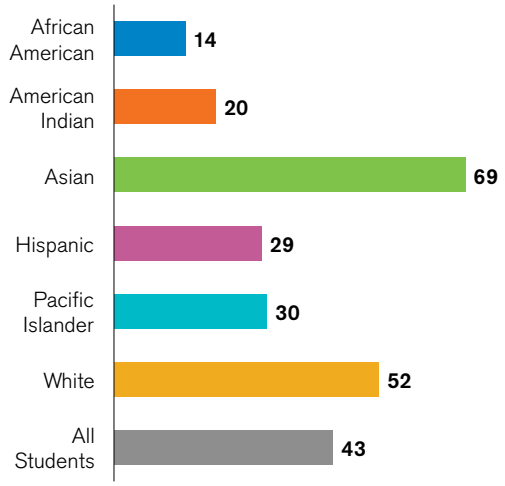
Participation and Opportunity by Subject

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity and Subject*

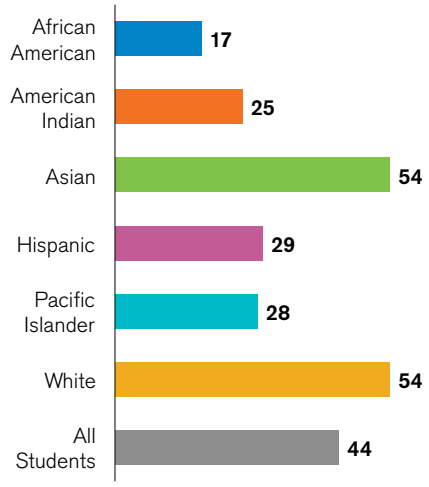
English



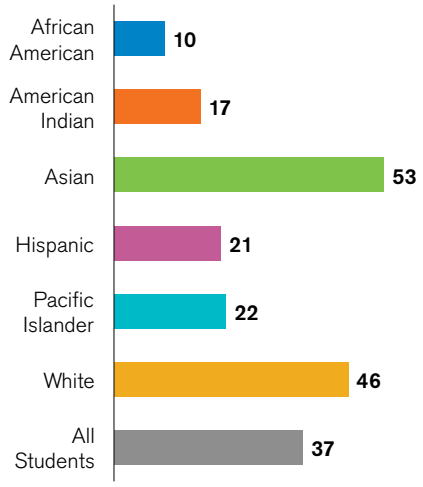
Mathematics



Reading



Science



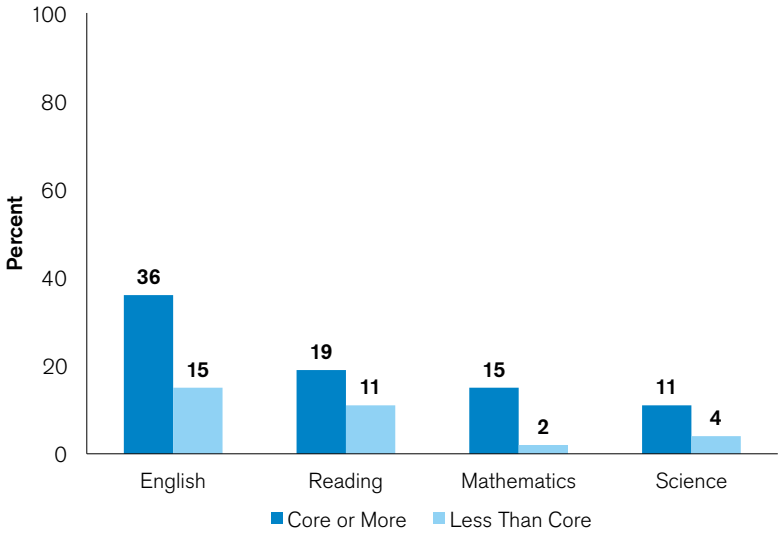
* Race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.[2]

African American Students

Course-Taking Patterns and Benchmark Performance

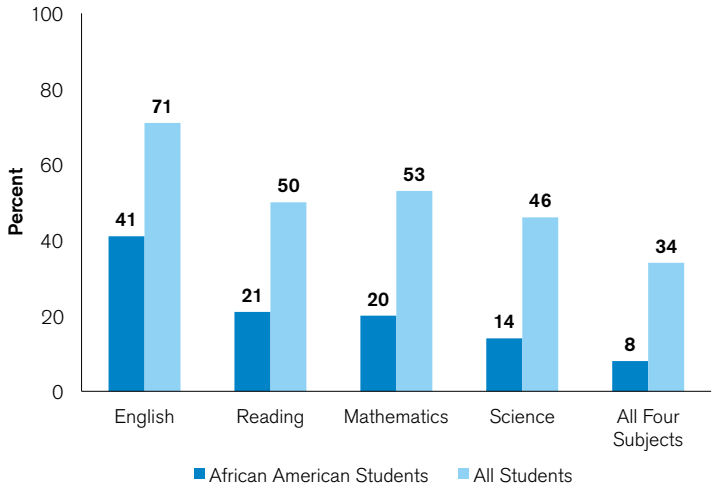
Within subjects, ACT has consistently found that students who take the recommended core curriculum are more likely to be ready for college or career than those who do not. A core curriculum is defined as four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and science.[3]

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates in Core or More vs. Less Than Core Courses Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



A First Look at STEM

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates with an Interest in STEM Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject

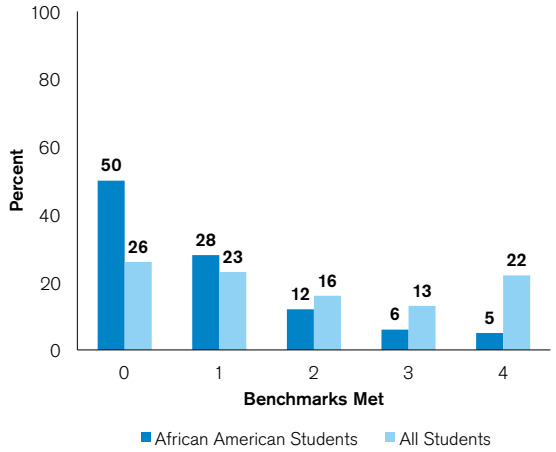


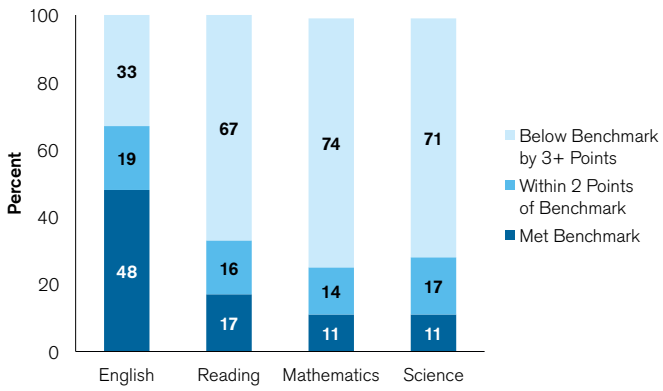
This chart describes ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment for 2014 African American high school graduates nationwide who have an interest in STEM majors or occupations. Characteristics of students with an interest in STEM were addressed in greater depth in the ACT *Condition of STEM 2014* report.

Early Preparation

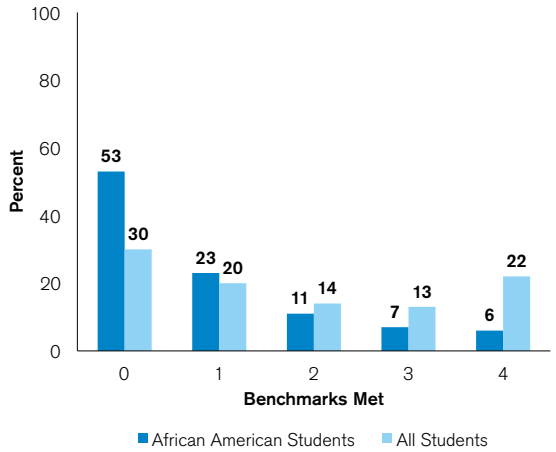
ACT research shows that younger students who take rigorous curricula are more prepared to graduate from high school ready for college or career. Moreover, our research (*The Forgotten Middle*, 2008) found that "the level of academic achievement that students attain by 8th grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school."

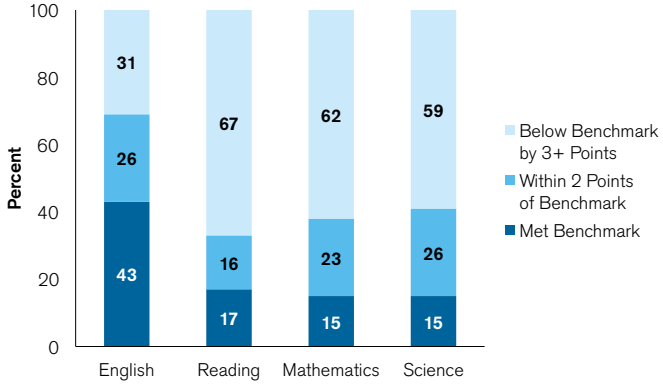
Percent of 2013–2014 ACT Plan®–Tested African American 10th Graders Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (N = 160,328)





Percent of 2013–2014 ACT Explore®–Tested African American 8th Graders Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (N = 147,228)





African American Students

ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment for Top Planned College Majors: 2014 Graduates

When students register for the ACT, they can select a college major—from a list of 294 majors—that they plan to pursue in college. Among recent ACT-tested high school graduates nationwide, about 80% selected a specific planned major, whereas about 20% indicated that they were undecided or did not select a major.

This table ranks the nation's top (most frequently selected) majors among 2014 graduates. The percentages of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are shown for each major. Across these planned majors, there are considerable differences in the percentage of students who are ready to succeed in college.

Major Name	N	English	Reading	Math	Science	All Four
Undecided	23,692	30	17	13	9	5
No Major Indicated	20,565	13	5	3	2	1
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	13,611	30	13	7	5	2
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	8,894	61	37	33	25	17
Business Administration and Management, General	8,596	32	15	13	8	4
Law (Pre-Law)	5,915	39	22	14	11	6
Criminology	4,549	28	14	8	6	2
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	3,885	51	27	16	13	6
Biology, General	3,779	57	33	29	22	14
Mechanical Engineering	3,755	36	18	23	15	9
Athletic Training	3,753	30	14	11	8	3
Medical Assisting	3,552	20	9	5	4	1
Accounting	3,456	40	18	23	12	6
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	3,242	39	17	13	10	4
Hospital/Facilities Administration	2,972	24	11	6	4	2
Physical Therapy Assisting	2,574	23	10	6	5	1
Pharmacy (Pre-Pharmacy)	2,534	51	26	24	17	9
Nursing, Practical/Vocational (LPN)	2,476	20	7	4	3	1
Music, Performance	2,428	31	15	9	7	3
Computer Engineering	2,212	38	19	23	16	9
Graphic Design	2,211	34	16	10	7	3
Psychology, General	2,153	55	31	22	17	10
Computer Science and Programming	2,065	49	29	29	20	13
Music, General	2,037	30	12	8	6	3
Marketing Management and Research	2,002	39	21	16	12	6
Biochemistry and Biophysics	1,991	58	34	34	25	18
Small Business Management/Operations	1,982	22	10	6	5	2
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	1,790	44	21	28	19	11
Theatre Arts/Drama	1,759	40	20	11	9	4
Fashion/Apparel Design	1,709	25	10	5	4	2

Note: *Undecided* and/or *No Major Indicated* are included in the table, if applicable. The former refers to students who selected the option *Undecided* from the list of majors. The latter refers to students who did not respond to the question.

ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment for the Top Planned College Majors with Good Fit: 2014 Graduates

Many students gravitate toward majors that align with their preferred activities and values. ACT research has shown that greater *interest-major fit* is related to important student outcomes such as persistence in a major or college. This table shows, for each planned major, the numbers and percentages of students displaying good interest-major fit[4], as well as the percentages of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. Since only students who completed the ACT Interest Inventory during ACT registration are included here, this table shows results for a subset of the students in the prior table. These planned majors vary considerably in the percentage of students displaying good interest-major fit and meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. The results highlight the importance of examining multiple predictors of college success and affirm the value of a holistic view of college readiness.

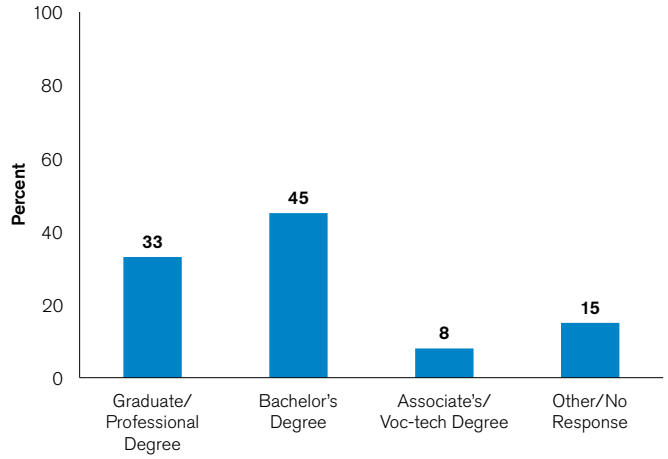
Major Name	N Fit	% Fit	English	Reading	Math	Science	All Four
Undecided			No profile available				
No Major Indicated			No profile available				
Nursing, Registered (BS/RN)	2,857	21	38	16	9	7	3
Medicine (Pre-Medicine)	2,816	32	67	41	38	29	19
Business Administration and Management, General	2,621	30	39	19	16	11	5
Law (Pre-Law)	1,934	33	49	28	19	15	8
Criminology	668	15	34	16	8	7	2
Psychology, Clinical and Counseling	466	12	63	40	20	17	10
Biology, General	1,296	34	63	38	32	26	17
Mechanical Engineering	724	19	37	19	23	17	10
Athletic Training	437	12	40	19	15	13	5
Medical Assisting	474	13	26	9	7	4	1
Accounting	1,741	50	43	20	26	14	6
Physical Therapy (Pre-Physical Therapy)	532	16	44	20	17	12	5
Hospital/Facilities Administration	748	25	24	11	6	4	2
Physical Therapy Assisting	242	9	28	13	9	8	2
Pharmacy (Pre-Pharmacy)	678	27	58	32	32	21	12
Nursing, Practical/Vocational (LPN)	305	12	29	10	6	4	2
Music, Performance	738	30	36	18	11	9	5
Computer Engineering	362	16	39	20	25	20	10
Graphic Design	722	33	40	21	11	9	3
Psychology, General	347	16	68	38	27	23	13
Computer Science and Programming	375	18	50	30	31	26	15
Music, General	550	27	41	17	10	9	5
Marketing Management and Research	567	28	49	27	21	16	9
Biochemistry and Biophysics	824	41	64	38	39	29	20
Small Business Management/Operations	307	15	22	11	6	6	1
Engineering (Pre-Engineering), General	377	21	43	22	28	23	11
Theatre Arts/Drama	566	32	48	24	12	10	4
Fashion/Apparel Design	321	19	37	13	8	6	3

Note: *Undecided* and/or *No Major Indicated* are included in the table, if applicable. The former refers to students who selected the option *Undecided* from the list of majors. The latter refers to students who did not respond to the question.

African American Students

Other College and Career Readiness Factors

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations

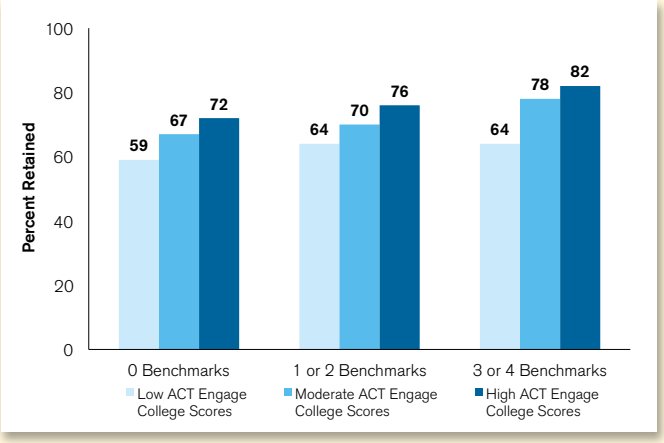


Aligning Student Behaviors, Planning, and Aspirations

Most students aspire to a post–high school credential. To help them meet those aspirations, educational planning, monitoring, and interventions must be aligned to their aspirations, begin early, and continue throughout their educational careers.

Academic Achievement, Behaviors, and College Retention

College Retention Rates by Number of ACT Benchmarks Met and ACT Engage® College Scores*



Across all ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment levels, students with higher ACT Engage College scores (based on the mean percentile scores of ACT Engage scales Academic Discipline, Commitment to College, and Social Connection) remain enrolled in a postsecondary institution after the first year of college at substantially higher rates than students with lower ACT Engage College scores.

* Based on N = 13,697 ACT-tested graduates of 2011 and 2012 who also took the ACT Engage College assessment and enrolled in college. Students with a mean percentile score of less than 25 were classified as low, those with scores between 25 and 75 were classified as moderate, and those with scores greater than 75 were classified as high.

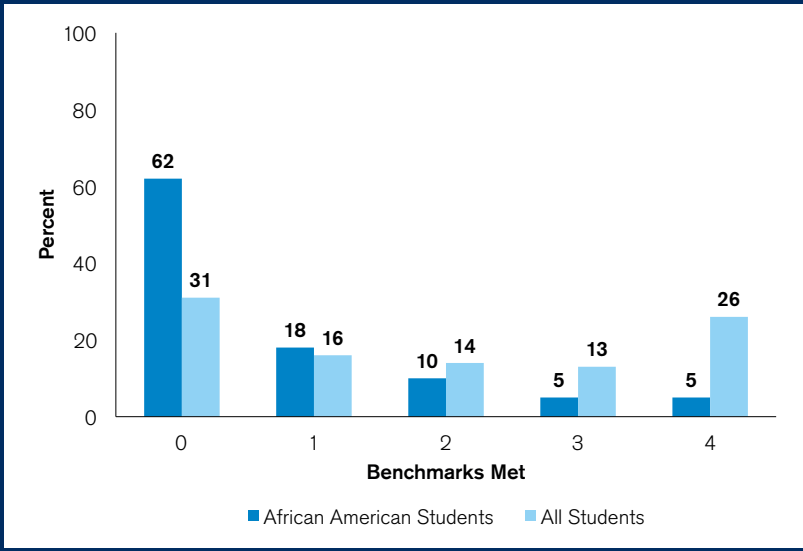
Looking Back at the Class of 2013

African American Students

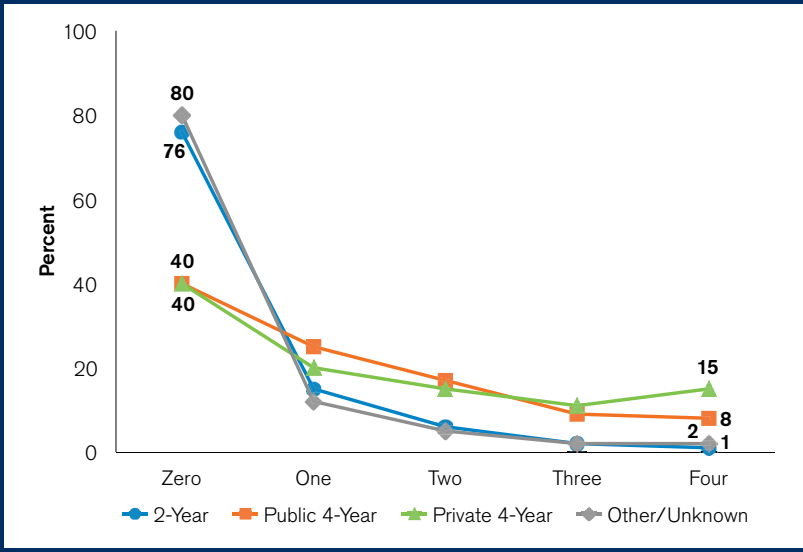
ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and Fall 2013 College Enrollment

Academic achievement, as measured by ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment, has a clear and distinctive relationship with the path taken by high school graduates. Those who were more academically ready were more likely to enroll in 4-year institutions. Graduates who enrolled in 2-year colleges or pursued other options after high school were more likely to have met fewer Benchmarks. For the sizable number of 2013 graduates who did not meet any Benchmarks, their post–high school opportunities appear to have been limited compared to their college-ready peers.

Percent of 2013 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained



Percent of 2013 ACT-Tested African American High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained and Fall 2013 College Enrollment Status



Policies and Practices

How to Increase Readiness

Approximately 5% of all 2014 ACT-tested African American high school graduates met all four of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks indicating academic readiness for credit-bearing first-year college courses in English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and the social sciences. At the same time, 17% of all 2014 ACT-tested African American high school graduates met only one Benchmark, and 62% met none. Based on decades of ACT research, the following recommendations include steps that states, districts, schools, and classrooms can take to increase student readiness for college-level work.

Advance college and career readiness through a renewed focus on teaching and learning. With the majority of states and the District of Columbia having adopted more rigorous college and career readiness standards—and assessments to measure student progress toward those standards—it is more important than ever for state and local systems to align other educational elements to these standards. These elements include curriculum alignment to standards; experiential learning opportunities; and teacher professional development, especially as it relates to integrating the standards into current teaching practices and increasing assessment literacy. Research shows that systemic alignment of key policies and school activities empowers educators to support students in making notable gains in student achievement.

Set clear performance standards to evaluate college and career readiness. States must define performance standards so that everyone knows "how good is good enough" for students to have a reasonable chance of success at college or on the job. ACT defines college readiness in English, reading, math, and science using decades of student performance data. For each area, students who are considered college ready have a 50% chance of earning a B or higher or about a 75% chance of earning a C or higher in the corresponding first-year English Composition, introductory social science, College Algebra, or Biology course. Longitudinal, real-world data and research on what constitutes student success are now available to every state and district, as are standards and benchmarks against which the performance of students and schools can be measured and state progress noted.

Implement a high-quality student assessment system. As states adopt and implement new high-quality assessment systems, they should ensure that those systems measure and provide timely and actionable information about student performance aligned to college and career readiness. High-quality assessments must:

- Monitor growth over a student's educational experience, starting in elementary school and through high school, so that educators can make timely instructional decisions and interventions based on reliable information.
- Be aligned, linked, and longitudinal in nature to be an effective tool for students, teachers, administrators, and parents in monitoring student progress.
- Be mindful of and incorporate the unique accessibility needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, and the tests must be constructed in deep consultation with experts on these populations.
- Vary according to the type of standards that need to be measured. These multiple measures can be used to offer more comprehensive evaluations of student achievement, from multiple-choice and constructed-response assessments to performance tasks and project-based learning.
- Be offered through multiple platforms. While computer-based testing is highly applicable to formative assessments that can be conducted on an on-demand basis, paper-and-pencil testing may be a reality for states and districts with less technological capacity. Until computer and broadband access for such large groups of students are sufficiently widespread in schools, both platforms must be available.
- Offer multiple stakeholders—especially teachers—ongoing, real-time, interactive reporting and access to assessment results and other related data.

These principles are consistent with the goals of other principles for high-quality college and career readiness assessments set forth by experts in the field.[5]

Support programs targeted at developing behaviors that aid students' academic success. Monitoring students' academic performance is critical, but certain academically related behaviors also contribute to student persistence and success. If students are to be successful in meeting a core set of academic standards, they need to be sufficiently motivated to persist at their work. The behavioral habits that contribute most directly to student postsecondary success include motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation.[6] Measuring these and other academically related factors is possible, and doing so can assess risk at important points in students' academic trajectories and identify areas of need and support.[7] Cultivating behavioral habits that contribute to postsecondary and workforce achievement can have a noticeable impact on students' achievement and persistence levels.

Provide all students with access to a rigorous high school core curriculum. While in recent years, most states have increased course requirements for high school graduation, too often those requirements have not specified the particular courses that prepare students for postsecondary success. In the absence of such specific and

Policies and Practices

rigorous high school graduation requirements, too many students are not taking either the right number or the right kinds of courses they need to be ready for college and career. Access to rigorous coursework is especially salient for African American students, as they are less likely than many white students to have access to college-ready courses.[8] All states, therefore, should specify the number and kinds of courses that students need to take to graduate academically ready for life after high school. At minimum, ACT recommends the following:

- Four years of English
- Three years of mathematics, including rigorous courses in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II
- Three years of science, including rigorous courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics
- Three years of social studies

Invest in early childhood education programs so that more children are ready to learn. Improving college and career readiness for all students begins as early as kindergarten—where gaps between low-income students and their more advantaged peers already exist.[9] Large numbers of underserved students enter kindergarten behind academically in early reading and mathematics skills, oral language development, vocabulary, and general knowledge. Gaps also exist in the development of academic and social behaviors such as listening, following instructions, and resolving conflicts. States should not only continue to invest in, but also expand access to, high-quality, research-based early learning opportunities for *all* students from prekindergarten to third grade to address learning gaps well before eighth grade, by which time these gaps become much more difficult to reverse.

Continue to implement monitoring and early warning systems that help educators identify and intervene with at-risk students. An effective monitoring system should provide an evolving picture of students over time and identify their unique learning needs at various points along their educational careers. Adoption of such systems in states where they do not yet exist—as well as expansion of system capabilities in states where they currently exist—will support earlier and more effective interventions by providing teachers with information to implement the necessary interventions to maximize student potential. Teachers, who have been consistently identified as the most important school-based factor in student achievement, should be equipped with as much relevant data as possible to inform and supplement their efforts.[10] The data should help to identify students in need of intervention and model student growth toward college and career readiness.

Continue development of thoughtful and fair teacher evaluation and support systems that include multiple measures of performance—including student growth data. To help ensure that teachers and administrators have access to relevant feedback about their effectiveness at preparing all students for college and career, it is critical to offer continued support for developing and implementing robust teacher evaluation systems that include multiple measures of performance. Such development and implementation must proceed thoughtfully and be accompanied by education and communication about the appropriate use of student growth data in these systems.

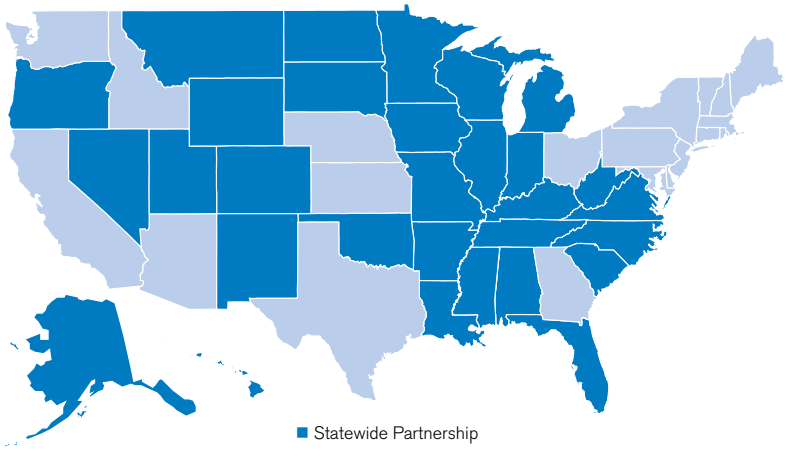
Increase support for the development of STEM-related courses to meet the coming demand for a larger STEM workforce. Education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is vital to the ability of the United States to maintain its position of global leadership and economic competitiveness. With more than 8.6 million STEM-related jobs anticipated by the year 2018, preparing and encouraging students to pursue STEM majors and careers becomes even more important. To identify new programs that will better attract students to and retain them in STEM-related careers, states should seek opportunities to collaborate with multiple entities, including business; national workforce and job readiness groups; local chambers of commerce; and universities, community colleges, and technical schools.

Implement policies for data-driven decision making. Teachers must have access to high-quality, actionable data that can be used to improve instruction. Without such data, opinion can overly influence key instructional decisions. To address this challenge, states have been hard at work developing longitudinal P–16 data systems. This work should continue, but more must be done. To ensure that students are prepared for the 21st century, states must have systems that allow schools and districts to closely monitor student performance at every stage of the learning pipeline, from preschool through college. Policies governing teacher and administrator preparation and professional development must include an emphasis on developing skills to use data appropriately to improve the practices of teaching and learning for all students in the pipeline.

Resources

Statewide Partnerships in College and Career Readiness

States that incorporate ACT college and career readiness solutions as part of their statewide assessments provide greater access to higher education and increase the likelihood of student success in postsecondary education. Educators also have the ability to establish a longitudinal plan using ACT assessments, which provide high schools, districts, and states with unique student-level data that can be used for effective student intervention plans.



State administration of ACT programs and services:

- Increases opportunities for minority and middle- to low-income students.
- Promotes student educational and career planning.
- Reduces the need for remediation.
- Correlates with increases in college enrollment, persistence, and student success.
- Aligns with state standards.

ACT Aspire 3rd- through 8th-grade students	ACT Explore 8th- and 9th-grade students	ACT Plan 10th-grade students	The ACT 11th- and 12th-grade students	ACT QualityCore 8th- through 12th-grade students	ACT WorkKeys 11th- and 12th-grade students	ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™	
Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alaska	Alabama	Oklahoma
South Carolina	Arkansas	Arkansas	Arkansas	Kentucky	Illinois	Alaska	Oregon
	Hawaii	Florida	Colorado		Hawaii	Arkansas	South Carolina
	Illinois	Hawaii	Hawaii		Michigan	Indiana	South Dakota
	Kentucky	Illinois	Illinois		North Carolina	Iowa	Tennessee
	Louisiana	Kentucky	Kentucky		North Dakota	Kentucky	Utah
	Michigan	Louisiana	Louisiana		Wyoming	Minnesota	Virginia
	Minnesota	Michigan	Michigan			Missouri	Wisconsin
	North Carolina	Minnesota	Minnesota			New Mexico	
	Oklahoma	New Mexico	Mississippi			North Carolina	
	South Carolina	North Carolina	Missouri				
	Tennessee	Oklahoma	Montana				
	Utah	Tennessee	Nevada				
	West Virginia	Utah	North Carolina				
	Wyoming	West Virginia	North Dakota				
		Wyoming	South Carolina				
			Tennessee				
			Utah				
			Wisconsin				
			Wyoming				

All listed partnerships are effective as of December 31, 2014.

ACT Research

The continued increase of test takers enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current college readiness levels of the graduating class as well as offering a glimpse of the emerging national educational pipeline. It also allows us to review various aspects of the ACT-tested graduating class, including the following reports:

Releasing in the 2014–2015 Academic Year

- *The Condition of STEM 2014*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—African American Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—American Indian Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—Asian Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—Hispanic Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—Pacific Islander Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—First-Generation Students*
- *The Condition of College & Career Readiness—Students from Low-Income Families*

Other ACT Research Reports

College Choice Report **(for the graduating class of 2012)**

- *Part 1: Preferences and Prospects*—November 2012
- *Part 2: Enrollment Patterns*—July 2013
- *Part 3: Persistence and Transfer*—April 2014

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- *Part 1: Preferences and Prospects*—November 2013
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- *Part 3: Persistence and Transfer*—April 2015

To be notified of exact release dates, please subscribe here: **www.act.org/research/subscribe.html**.

How Does ACT Determine if Students Are College Ready?

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. Based on a nationally stratified sample, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and represent a typical set of expectations. ACT College Readiness Benchmarks were revised for 2013 graduating class reporting. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are:

College Course	Subject Area Test	Original ACT College Readiness Benchmark	Revised ACT College Readiness Benchmark
English Composition	English	18	18
Social Sciences	Reading	21	22
College Algebra	Mathematics	22	22
Biology	Science	24	23

Notes

1. The data presented herein are based on the *ACT Profile Report—National: Graduating Class 2014 for African American Students*, accessible at **www.act.org/readiness/2014**. With the exception of the top graph on page 6, data related to students who did not provide information or who responded "Other" to questions about gender, race/ethnicity, high school curriculum, etc., are not presented explicitly.
2. The race/ethnicity categories changed in 2011 to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements; trends to previous reports may not be available for all race/ethnicity categories.
3. Data reflect subject-specific curriculum. For example, English "Core or More" results pertain to students who took at least four years of English, regardless of courses taken in other subject areas.
4. The interest-major fit score measures the strength of the relationship between the student's profile of ACT Interest Inventory scores and the profile of students' interests in the major shown. Interest profiles for majors are based on a national sample of undergraduate students with a declared major and a GPA of at least 2.0. Major was determined in the third year for students in 4-year colleges and in the second year for students in 2-year colleges. Interest-major fit scores range from 0–99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit.
5. See, for example, Council of Chief State School Officers, *Transition to High-Quality, College- and Career-Ready Assessments: Principles to Guide State Leadership and Federal Requirements* (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, May 23, 2013), http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2013/CCSSO_State_Principles_on_Assessment_Transition_5-23-13.pdf; and Linda Darling-Hammond et al., *Criteria for High-Quality Assessment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, June 2013), https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/criteria-higher-quality-assessment_2.pdf.
6. ACT, *Enhancing College and Career Readiness and Success: The Role of Academic Behaviors* (Iowa City, IA: ACT), http://www.act.org/engage/pdf/ENGAGE_Issue_Brief.pdf.
7. ACT, *Importance of Student Self-Regulation* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, January 2013), http://www.act.org/research/researchers/briefs/pdf/2013-3.pdf.
8. Rhonda T. Bryant, College Preparation for African American Students: Gaps in the High School Educational Experience (Washington, DC, February 2015), http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/College-readiness2-2.pdf.
9. Chrys Dougherty, *College and Career Readiness: The Importance of Early Learning Success* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, February 2013), http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ImportanceofEarlyLearning.pdf.
10. Daniel F. McCaffrey, J.R. Lockwood, Daniel M. Koretz, and Laura S. Hamilton, *Evaluating Value-Added Models for Teacher Accountability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG158.pdf.

Key Findings

About the Graduating Class

Nationally, 1,845,787 students—or 57% of the 2014 US graduating class—took the ACT. This represents an 18% increase in the number of ACT-tested graduates since 2010. This report represents a subset of the entire student population, with the results reflecting the achievement of only those tested, not the entire graduating class. The diversity of the test-taking population has increased: the percentage of Hispanic ACT-tested graduates in 2014 was larger than in 2010, while the percentage of Caucasian ACT-tested graduates in 2014 was smaller. Among the national 2014 ACT-tested graduating class, 18% were potential first-generation college students whose parents did not enroll in postsecondary education.

Academic Achievement

The percent of graduates meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks remained relatively steady this year. The number of students achieving the science Benchmark increased by 1%, while the number attaining the math Benchmark dropped by 1%. The percentage of students who met the English and reading Benchmarks remained the same. The national average ACT Composite score increased by 0.1 point compared to last year. Encouragingly, in several of the states that administer the ACT to all students—Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wyoming—the average ACT Composite score improved by 0.2 to 0.3 points. This improvement is consistent with previous ACT data: gains in achievement are common in states that create an educational culture focused on college and career readiness.

Opportunity for Growth

The findings point to strong opportunities to improve college and career readiness in the areas of reading and science, where at least 10% of students earned scores only 1 or 2 points below the ACT College Readiness Benchmark. ACT research has shown those students meeting three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks—39% of the 2014 ACT-tested graduates—have a strong likelihood of experiencing success in first-year college courses. One way to improve college and career readiness is to ensure that more students take a college preparatory core curriculum in high school. Among 2014 test takers, 50% of core-taking students met the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in math, compared to 27% of non-core-taking students. Nearly one in four ACT-tested graduates did not plan to take a core curriculum, which translates to 405,073 more students who could have benefited from more rigorous coursework.

Student Aspirations

Encouragingly, 86% of 2014 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education, but a significant number of those students might not actually enroll. Among the national 2013 ACT-tested graduating class, 87% aspired to attend college but only 69% actually enrolled. If this aspirational gap were fully closed, an additional 314,831 of the nation's 2013 ACT-tested graduates would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

What's Next?

There is work to be done to improve the college and career readiness of our nation's students. Teaching to a higher set of standards, getting more students to take a core curriculum, and improving the rigor within those core courses are just a few of the ways we can begin to increase college and career readiness levels among students. Implementation of an integrated, longitudinal, data-driven system is needed to inform and encourage coherence in school, district, and state efforts to prepare all high school graduates for college and career. All students would benefit from systematic guidance and feedback regarding their academic progress starting early in their schooling. ACT research (*The Reality of College Readiness*, 2013; *Readiness Matters*, 2013) demonstrates that academically prepared students, as measured by the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, are more likely than less-prepared students to succeed in their future educational endeavors. However, ACT research also suggests that there are other factors that impact student success, including the academic behaviors of students and informed career planning. ACT strongly encourages educators in states, districts, and schools to set and monitor student interventions on all of these key student success factors.

ACT is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.

For more information, visit **www.act.org**.

ACT®

Since its founding in 1944, UNCF has raised more than $3.6 billion to help more than 400,000 students receive college degrees at UNCF member institutions and with UNCF scholarships. UNCF plays a critical role in enabling more than 60,000 students each year to attend college and get the education they need (and that the nation needs them to have) by:

- Awarding 10,000 scholarships and internships for students from low- and moderate-income families to attend more than 900 colleges and universities across the country
- Providing financial support for its 37 historically black member colleges and universities for scholarships and capacity building
- Advocating nationally for the importance of education and college readiness through its annual television program, a national public service announcement campaign, and commentary in national media
- Advocating locally at events across the country, such as governor's and mayor's luncheons, Walk for Education events, and Mayor's Masked Balls

For more information, visit **www.uncf.org**.

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A mind is a terrible thing to waste®

A copy of this report can be found at
www.act.org/readiness/2014

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