

News Release

Education Information Services ■ 125 South Webster Street ■ P.O. Box 7841 ■ Madison, WI 53707-7841 ■ (608) 266-3559

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Contact: Tom McCarthy, DPI Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Statewide ACT assessment opens opportunities

MADISON — For the first time in Wisconsin history, all public school 11th-graders had the opportunity to take the ACT college admissions exam during the 2014-15 school year as part of the more rigorous Wisconsin Student Assessment System.

Last spring, 65,065 public high school juniors had the opportunity to take either the ACT Plus Writing or Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), an alternate assessment that measures the academic progress of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Results show that 45.7 percent of students were proficient or advanced in English language arts and 35.9 percent achieved at those performance levels in mathematics.

“What an opportunity for our students,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Taking the ACT exposes young people to the expectations for college and careers and may prompt those who weren’t considering further education beyond high school to finish strong and take the leap into higher education and training.”

The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36 and consists of five subject area tests: English, reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The 2014-15 statewide composite score for public school juniors who took the ACT was 20.0.

For accountability purposes, the Department of Public Instruction worked with content experts across the state to establish cut scores along four

Wisconsin's ACT Performance Levels				
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
ELA	1-14	15-19	20-27	28-36
Math	1-16	17-21	22-27	28-36

performance categories: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Wisconsin’s English language arts scores are comprised of the English, reading, and writing subtests. While Wisconsin specific, the cut scores generally mirror college readiness benchmarks set by ACT. Wisconsin student proficiency rates showed achievement gaps for various student groups. (See attached table)

“Assessing for college and career readiness sets the bar very high, yet that is what employers and postsecondary schools tell us is required for high school graduates to be successful,” Evers noted. “The statewide

(more)

ACT assessment establishes a baseline of student performance that we can work from to improve academic achievement for all student groups.”

Of the 65,065 students enrolled in 11th grade for the 2014-15 school year, 742 juniors, or 1.1 percent, took the DLM. Parents, students, and teachers received performance reports during the summer. Administration of statewide exams in the ACT suite for the 2015-16 school year begins in March.

Historically, ACT results have been released annually for public and private school graduates who took the test during their high school career. For the 2015 graduating class, 46,738 students or approximately 73 percent of all graduating seniors, took the ACT and had a composite score of 22.2. The differences in the number of students, the multiple times graduates may have taken the ACT, and the fact that many graduates take the test during their final year of high school make comparisons between statewide and graduating class ACT results invalid and flawed.

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ATTACHMENT: Tables with additional information about statewide student performance on the ACT Plus Writing and Dynamic Learning Maps exams follow.

NOTES: Public schools and school districts have received their ACT and DLM results through the Department of Public Instruction data portal. Statewide and district-level results are not yet available in the WISEdash Public Portal. Please contact area schools or districts for local results. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_03.pdf.

2014-15 ACT and Dynamic Learning Maps Performance

Percent of 11th-Grade Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced

Student Group	Enrollment	English Language Arts	Mathematics
All Students	65,065*	45.7	35.9
American Indian	772	21.8	14.8
Asian	2,170	40.4	38.0
Black	5,985	12.6	6.2
Hispanic	5,784	24.2	15.8
Pacific Islander	59	37.3	23.7
Two or More	1,327	41.3	29.8
White	48,804	53.1	42.5
Unknown Race	164	23.2	15.2
Economically Disadvantaged	22,370	24.8	16.8
Not Economically Disadvantaged	41,648	57.6	46.8
Unknown Economic Status	1,047	16.1	10.7
English Language Learners	1,453	3.2	3.2
English Proficient	63,078	46.8	36.9
Unknown ELL Status	534	23.8	15.2
Students with Disabilities	8,324	11.7	6.5
Students without Disabilities	56,234	50.9	40.5
Unknown Disability Status	507	22.9	14.4

* Of the 65,065 11th-grade students enrolled at time of ACT testing, 742 students participated in the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These DLM students are included in the data above.

2014-15 Average ACT Performance*

Student Group	Enrollment	Average Scores		
		Composite	English Language Arts	Mathematics
All Students	64,323	20.0	19.3	20.0
American Indian	755	17.1	16.3	17.2
Asian	2,142	19.6	19.0	20.5
Black	5,846	15.6	15.1	16.0
Hispanic	5,709	17.2	16.8	17.5
Pacific Islander	58	18.6	18.1	18.6
Two or More	1,311	19.8	19.2	19.5
White	48,339	20.8	20.1	20.7
Unknown Race	163	16.4	15.8	17.0
Economically Disadvantaged	21,984	17.4	16.7	17.6
Not Economically Disadvantaged	41,303	21.3	20.6	21.3
Unknown Economic Status	1,036	16.5	15.8	16.8
English Language Learners	1,407	13.7	12.7	15.2
English Proficient	62,389	20.1	19.5	20.1
Unknown ELL Status	527	17.0	16.4	17.2
Students with Disabilities	7,597	15.0	13.8	15.7
Students without Disabilities	56,226	20.6	20.0	20.6
Unknown Disability Status	500	16.8	16.3	17.2

* These data do not include 742 students who participated in the Dynamic Learning Maps Exam instead of the ACT.