

# News Release

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
 Wednesday, August 24, 2016  
 Contact: Tom McCarthy, DPI Communications Director, (608) 266-3559

DPI-NR 2016-81 B

## ACT participation jumps to 100 percent for 2016 graduates

MADISON — Wisconsin’s participation in ACT testing jumped to 100 percent for the 2016 graduating class as the state joined 19 others that administer the college admissions exam to all public school graduates. Wisconsin’s composite score is 20.5, ranking fourth in the nation for “census testing” states.

“These results are a solid starting place,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “By administering the ACT as part of our statewide testing program, we are assessing for college and career readiness. That’s a high bar, but it’s what employers and postsecondary schools tell us is required for high school graduates to be successful. These results represent achievement for all students, not just those headed to college who took the ACT in prior years.”

The “Condition of College and Career Readiness” report from ACT for the 2016 graduating class includes 66,564 public and private school students in Wisconsin who took the ACT during their sophomore, junior, or senior year of high school, a 42 percent increase in participation from the prior year. For the 2015 graduating class, 46,738 students, or 73 percent of graduates, took the ACT with a composite score of 22.2. Nationally, 2,090,342 of 2016 graduates took the ACT; they represent 64 percent of graduating seniors compared to 2015 when 59 percent of graduates took the ACT. The national composite score for the class of 2016 was 20.8, down from 21.0 for the prior year’s graduates.

ACT predicted a 1.3 to 1.8 score decline for the seven additional states that funded ACT testing for all 11th-graders in 2015 as part of their statewide assessments. The

2016 ACT Composite Scores		
(For States Testing All Public School Graduates)		
State	Score	% Tested
Minnesota	21.1	100
Illinois	20.8	100
Colorado	20.6	100
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>100</b>
Michigan	20.3	100
Montana	20.3	100
North Dakota	20.3	100
Missouri	20.2	100
Utah	20.2	100
Arkansas	20.2	96
Kentucky	20.0	100
Wyoming	20.0	100
Tennessee	19.9	100
Louisiana	19.5	100
Alabama	19.1	100
North Carolina	19.1	100
Hawaii	18.7	94
South Carolina	18.5	100
Mississippi	18.4	100
Nevada	17.7	100
<b>NATION</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>64</b>

(more)

testing company also indicated that the addition of more states with census rather than voluntary testing contributed to the drop in the national score, representing not a decline in student achievement, but results for a more representative student population. ACT research also shows that scores initially decrease when states adopt the ACT for all students, but the increase in access and opportunity supports continuing progress.

The “Condition of College and Career Readiness 2016” report differs from the January 2016 results for the state’s 11th-grade students who took the ACT Plus Writing in March of 2015. Those students were the first to take the college admissions exam as part of Wisconsin’s more rigorous statewide testing program. Comparisons of the two groups are inaccurate, in part because a significant portion of the class of 2016 took the ACT more than once.

ACT reports that 63.4 percent of Wisconsin’s 2016 graduates took the ACT just once in high school with an average composite score of 19.0. With each re-take of the ACT, 2016 graduates’ average composite score improved. Those repeating the ACT a second time had an average composite score of 22.8. The 9.5 percent of 2016 state graduates took the ACT a third time had an average composite score of 23.7. Four-time takers had an average composite score of 24.5, and the 609 state students who took the ACT more than four times had an average composite score of 24.9.

ACT has established college-readiness benchmark scores, which if attained for the particular subject test represent a 75 percent chance or better of a student earning a “C” or better in credit-bearing college coursework. Overall, 60 percent of 2016 graduates earned the benchmark score of 18 or better in English. For both mathematics and reading, 41 percent of graduates earned benchmark scores of 22. In science, 37 percent of the state’s 2016 graduates earned the benchmark score of 23. Overall, 25 percent of graduates earned benchmark scores in all four subjects. Wisconsin had 19 percent of graduates earning a STEM benchmark of 26, a combined science and mathematics result that measure college readiness for coursework in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Census testing drew significant increases in participation for all subgroups of students by race and ethnicity. Students of color made up 23.1 percent of the tested population for 2016 graduates. The largest percentage increases were for American Indian and Hispanic students.

“We have made a commitment to access and opportunity for all students,” Evers said. “Our schools must ensure that our graduates are ready to seize those opportunities.”

Achievement gaps for students by racial and ethnic groups remained apparent in Wisconsin for ACT subject test scores, college-readiness benchmark scores, and course-taking patterns. Overall, 55 percent of the state’s 2016 graduates said they planned to take the recommended college-preparatory curriculum of four years of English

(more)

and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies. This percentage was lower for most racial and ethnic groups. (See attached table.) The overall “core curriculum” reporting is 14 percentage points lower than for 2016 graduates nationally

(69 percent) and 17 points

lower than for Wisconsin’s

2015 graduating class

(72 percent). The difference in

scores between students who

took fewer college-preparatory

courses and those who took a

core curriculum averaged 3.9 points over the four subject area tests.

	Wisconsin			Nation		
	Core Program	Less than Core	All Students	Core Program	Less than Core	All Students
English	21.9	17.5	19.7	21.3	17.8	20.1
Mathematics	22.2	18.6	20.4	21.5	18.7	20.6
Reading	22.7	18.8	20.7	22.3	19.2	21.3
Science	22.6	18.9	20.7	21.7	18.8	20.8
Composite	22.5	18.6	20.5	21.9	18.7	20.8
STEM	22.6	19.0	20.8	21.9	19.0	20.9

“ACT results for our 2016 graduates represent the most comprehensive look at college and career readiness we have ever seen,” Evers said. “By testing all public school students we are opening the doors to opportunities for college and careers.”

The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36 and consists of five subject area tests: English, reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

###

**NOTES:** Additional tables with information on ACT results for 2016 public and private school graduates follow. This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016\\_81.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_81.pdf). ACT results for public school students will be available by school and by district on the WISEdash Public Portal later this year.

### Wisconsin ACT Participation by Federal Race and Ethnicity Reporting Categories

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Black / African American	3,341	3,239	3,221	3,125	4,185
American Indian / Alaska Native	263	250	246	235	556
White	36,261	34,814	34,611	34,064	47,180
Hispanic / Latino	2,930	3,091	3,429	3,435	6,026
Asian	1,824	1,774	1,886	1,859	2,174
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	37	46	32	49	78
Two or more races	1,285	1,302	1,424	1,513	2,363
Prefer not to respond / No Response	1,647	2,058	2,021	2,458	4,002
<b>All Students</b>	<b>47,588</b>	<b>46,574</b>	<b>46,870</b>	<b>46,738</b>	<b>66,564</b>

# 2016 ACT Results

Composite Scores, School Program, and College Readiness Benchmarks by Racial and Ethnic Groups

	ACT Test-Takers	Composite Score	Composite Scores			Percentage Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores					
			Percentage Taking Core	Core or More	Less than Core	English (18)	Mathematics (22)	Reading (22)	Science (23)	All Four Benchmarks	STEM (26)
<b>Wisconsin</b>											
Black / African American	4,185	15.9	43	17.3	15.5	24	9	12	7	4	2
American Indian / Alaska Native	556	16.9	35	18.8	16.2	29	15	18	13	7	3
White	47,180	21.5	59	23.2	19.2	68	48	47	44	30	23
Hispanic / Latino	6,026	17.9	47	19.5	16.7	41	21	24	18	10	6
Asian	2,174	20.4	59	21.9	18.6	52	46	33	34	23	23
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	78	19.4	53	22.0	17.3	47	33	33	28	14	8
Two or more races	2,363	20.0	52	21.7	18.6	58	33	37	32	20	14
Prefer not to respond / No Response	4,002	18.8	34	22.6	17.8	47	29	32	26	18	14
<b>All Students</b>	<b>66,564</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Nation</b>											
Black / African American	272,363	17.0	64	17.8	15.7	33	13	19	11	6	3
American Indian / Alaska Native	16,183	17.7	57	18.9	16.3	37	18	25	16	9	6
White	1,119,398	22.2	73	23.2	20.0	73	50	55	46	34	25
Hispanic / Latino	337,280	18.7	69	19.5	17.3	46	27	30	21	14	9
Asian	93,493	24.0	78	24.7	22.1	75	70	59	56	46	44
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	6,797	18.6	61	20.1	16.6	45	29	30	23	16	11
Two or more races	85,494	21.0	70	21.9	19.0	64	40	46	36	26	19
Prefer not to respond / No Response	159,334	20.1	48	22.3	18.2	55	36	40	32	24	19
<b>All Students</b>	<b>2,090,342</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20</b>

**NOTES:** An ACT core curriculum is four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science, and social studies. In 2016, 9.5 percent of Wisconsin students did not identify their intended high school curriculum; nationally 7.9 percent of students nationally did not provide their high school course-taking plans during ACT registration. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course. The reading benchmark is for college-level social sciences and the science benchmark is for college-level biology.