



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

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****NOTE: THIS RELEASE IS EMBARGOED UNTIL 3 A.M. EASTERN TIME ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2017 PER ACT. (Print reporters: stories may appear in Thursday morning editions.)****

****NOTE: ACT DOES NOT PROVIDE DISTRICT- OR SCHOOL-LEVEL SCORES TO THE KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS PART OF ITS GRADUATING CLASS SCORE RELEASE.****

KENTUCKY GRADUATES HOLD STEADY ON ACT

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – The percentage of Kentucky public high school graduates meeting the state’s college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT college-entrance exam in reading and mathematics increased marginally, but slightly fewer students met the state English benchmark, according to data released today by ACT.

Commissioner Stephen Pruitt said the report indicates that Kentucky still has “some serious work ahead of us” to ensure all students are prepared for the next level.

The state benchmarks represent the minimum scores that guarantee students entry into corresponding credit-bearing courses at Kentucky colleges and universities without the need for developmental education or supplemental courses. (ACT also has its own College Readiness Benchmarks, which are different than Kentucky’s benchmarks, and represent the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in credit-bearing college courses.)

Nationally, overall achievement – both the average ACT Composite Score and the percentage of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks – rose slightly in 2017, an increase ACT officials attributed largely to the reduced number of states administering the ACT to all students as compared to last year.

PERCENTAGES OF KENTUCKY PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE READINESS Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined

COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSE	BENCHMARK	2015 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK	2016 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK	2017 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK
English	18	57.2%	57%	56%
Mathematics	19	44.5%	41%	42%
Reading	20	49.5%	50%	51%

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In the past five years, Kentucky public school graduates have registered slight ups and downs in scores from year to year with nearly every subject up overall since 2014.

“This year’s results are mixed,” said Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt. “As we look to the future, we must recommit ourselves to take each and every student to higher achievement levels.”

**KENTUCKY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES’ AVERAGE ACT SCORES
Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined**

	2014	2015	2016	2017
English	19.0	19.1	19.2	19.2
Mathematics	19.1	19.3	19.1	19.1
Reading	19.9	20.0	20.2	20.2
Science	19.7	19.8	19.6	19.8
Composite	19.5	19.7	19.7	19.7
Number taking test	44,558	45,162	46,285	46,840

For the past few years, ACT has included scores for students receiving extended-time accommodations in its summary reporting. These students typically register lower test scores than students who do not receive additional time to take the test. Eight percent of Kentucky test-takers receive ACT-approved accommodations as compared with 5 percent of students nationally.

Composite scores for various groups of public school graduates are up from where they were several years ago, but the numbers illustrate that achievement gaps persist.

**2014 - 17 KENTUCKY PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATES’ ACT COMPOSITE SCORES
BY ETHNIC GROUP AND GENDER
Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined**

GROUP	2014 COMPOSITE	2015 COMPOSITE	2016 COMPOSITE	2017 COMPOSITE
All Students	19.5	19.7	19.7	19.7
African American	16.7	16.7	16.8	16.9
American Indian	16.7	17.0	17.3	16.8
White	20.1	20.3	20.3	20.3
Hispanic	18.5	18.4	18.3	18.7
Asian	22.8	22.0	22.6	22.1
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	18.2	18.8	16.6	18.6
Two or more races	19.7	19.8	19.8	19.8
Other/No Response	17.9	18.0	17.8	18.0
Males	19.2	19.4	19.5	19.5
Females	19.9	20.0	20.1	20.2
No Gender Response	15.6	16.5	17.4	17.8

(more)

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Pruitt said it is imperative that each student has an opportunity to graduate ready to take the next step in education or workforce training. The state is putting an emphasis on strategies to close achievement gaps and working with schools and districts to do so as well as rethink student learning and engagement in high school, he said.

"In Kentucky, we are working to move each child to higher levels of learning while also determining the root cause of achievement gaps, which we believe stem from opportunity gaps and access to rigorous, high-quality learning opportunities," Pruitt said. "Students excel when presented with challenging and interest-driven projects or instruction. That is true for all students, both advanced and less advanced. We must make sure that low income and minority students have the same opportunities to excel as their classmates."

Pruitt said this year's flat ACT scores reinforce that the timing is right for Kentucky to take a serious look at its graduation requirements and move forward with a new accountability system that is designed to promote and hold schools and districts accountable for student achievement and significantly reduce achievement gaps. The Kentucky Board of Education approved the regulation for the new system last month.

"The new accountability system goes beyond test scores and moves away from a compliance mentality to encourage continuous improvement for all our students," Pruitt said. "The new system is about promoting proficiency and the closure of achievement gaps for every child."

There is a strong correlation between student performance on the ACT and the rigor of the courses a student takes in high school. While Kentucky's minimum high school graduation requirements of four years of English and three years each of mathematics (including Algebra 1, Algebra 2 and geometry); science and social studies aligned with ACT's recommended core curriculum, the rigor of the courses varies widely. Generally speaking, the more rigorous the courses the student takes, the better the student performs on the ACT.

For the 2017 graduating class report, ACT, Inc. used students' scores from the last time they took the test, either as a junior or senior.

Statewide data for the junior class who took the ACT in March 2017 will be released in the School Report Card later this fall.

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