

New measures for student success in South Carolina



Dear Parents and Students:

South Carolina is introducing new assessments this spring to measure academic performance for students across the state from the elementary grades through high school.

Three tests—ACT Aspire®, The ACT® Plus Writing, and ACT WorkKeys®—will help students prepare for future life success. The assessments form a connected system to monitor the educational progress of students from grades 3 through 8 and in grade 11. The tests are developed by ACT, the company best known for The ACT, the nation's leading college entrance exam.

How do these assessments prepare students for the future?

When college and career readiness is measured at an early age, students have more time to make course adjustments throughout their academic years. In high school, test results can guide students as they make future education and career decisions and show them where improvements can increase their chances for success. The assessments give parents, students, educators, and administrators valuable information to help students reach their full potential.

Why are the new assessments important?

- Parents, students, and educators will be able to track student progress using comparable measures from one grade to the next.
- Easy-to-use data will help students and families better understand academic performance, improve graduation rates, and ultimately build a stronger, better-equipped workforce.
- High school students will have ACT scores at the end of their junior year, increasing possibilities to go to college and to apply for scholarships and financial aid.
- Students can earn a work-ready certificate, recognized by employers nationwide and linked to the South Carolina Work Ready Communities initiative.

DID YOU KNOW?

By 2018, 56% of jobs in South Carolina will require a postsecondary degree or industry credential.

South Carolina students in grades 3 through 8 will be required to take ACT Aspire English, Math, Reading, and Writing.

What makes ACT Aspire unique?

- Connects academic progress from one grade to the next to determine if students are on track for college and career
- Highlights gaps between what students have learned and what they need to learn
- Gives parents and students easy-to-understand reports on student achievement
- Predicts how students will perform across grades and on The ACT
- Gives students in grade 8 and above an indicator of Progress Toward Career Readiness

ACT Aspire will help South Carolina parents, students, and educators understand student strengths, areas for improvement, and most importantly—potential. Timely, relevant progress reports ensure that students get the support and services they need. Learn more about ACT Aspire at www.discoveractaspire.org.



South Carolina students in grade 11 will take The ACT Plus Writing and ACT WorkKeys.

Why is The ACT the nation's leading college readiness assessment?

- Taken by more than 1.8 million students each year
- Accepted by all two-year and four-year US colleges and universities, including Ivy League and other highly selective schools
- Covers what students are learning in high school courses
- Measures knowledge in English, math, reading, science, and writing
- Offers education and career planning sections
- Shows a student's readiness for college and career
- Accepted for numerous scholarship opportunities, including the South Carolina Life and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship programs

Research shows that the earlier we measure progress toward meeting educational standards, the more we can strengthen a student's chances to stay on target to succeed and, ultimately, be ready for college and work after high school.

Every year across states where The ACT is administered, students who were not planning to attend college discover they are "college ready" and have more choices for the future. Starting this year, all South Carolina 11th graders will now have an ACT college readiness score that can help when applying for college and making future plans. Learn more about The ACT and free test prep options at www.actstudent.org.

What benefits does ACT WorkKeys offer students?

- Gives students a clear way to demonstrate their abilities to future employers
- Measures skills critical to job success in reading, math, and locating information
- Offers a skills certificate recognized by employers across the United States
- Helps students stand out from other job applicants who do not have credentials
- Shows students where they can improve skills for increased earning power



ACT WorkKeys is being used in South Carolina high schools and throughout the country to document essential workplace skills. An ACT WorkKeys score can earn a South Carolina 11th grader an ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™, which can help in finding summer or part-time jobs and internships. In South Carolina alone, more than 1,400 employers recognize the certificate.

Learn more about ACT WorkKeys at www.act.org/workkeys and the South Carolina Work Ready Communities at www.workreadycommunities.org/SC.

How can we help students to succeed?

Getting the best education possible is an important key to future success. Encourage students to put forth their best effort on the tests. Help them understand their test results so they know their strengths and areas where they need to improve. When students are prepared for the future, they will have greater education and career opportunities and higher earning potential.

Find resources for students and families at www.act.org/education/family.html.

