

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONTACT: Lisa Y. Gross
Office - (502) 564-2015
1555
Cellular - (502) 330-5063
lisa.gross@education.ky.gov

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KENTUCKY COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

CONTACT: Sue Patrick
Office - (502) 573-

Sue.Patrick@ky.gov

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****NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS: ACT DOES NOT PROVIDE
DISTRICT- OR SCHOOL-LEVEL SCORES.****

KENTUCKY ACT SCORES MOVE UP FOR 6TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) -- The average composite ACT score for Kentucky's year 2008 college-bound high school seniors gained slightly over the 2007 composite score, the Kentucky Department of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education announced today.

The 2008 composite is 20.9, compared to 2007's composite of 20.7. Nationally, the 2008 composite score was 21.1, a loss of 0.1 from 2007.

In 2008, 31,728 (72 percent) Kentucky public and nonpublic high school graduates took the test, compared to 1990, when 24,942 Kentucky graduates (62 percent) did.

"Kentucky's ACT gains have outpaced the nation's over the past five years," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Jon E. Draud. "This is a reflection of the commitment shown by educators, legislators, parents and students to improving the high school experience. We must continue this momentum, closing achievement gaps and provide the support all students need to be successful in this critical measure."

"Increasingly, Kentucky is making progress. More Kentucky high school students took the ACT this year than ever before, and still our state average scores rose. We're also pleased that more students are electing to take the ACT recommended core courses," said Richard Crofts, interim president of the Council on Postsecondary Education.

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“Our colleges and faculty will continue to work with schools, districts and teachers to help all students across the commonwealth prepare for the level of education they desire and deserve,” he added.

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ACT asks test-takers to report the courses they took in high school. Over the past 18 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Kentucky students reporting that they are taking ACT's recommended core courses, with an increase of more than 12,000 students since 1990. In 2008, 65 percent of Kentucky high schoolers who took the ACT noted on surveys that they also took the recommended core courses. However, that percentage is likely higher due to differences in course names and non-completion of surveys.

	1990	---	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number Tested	24,942	---	30,084	29,532	29,877	29,581	29,943	29,786	30,929	31,728
Number Taking Core Courses	7,088 (28%)	---	14,506 (48%)	17,274 (58%)	17,557 (59%)	17,738 (60%)	18,114 (60%)	17,705 (59%)	17,449 (58%)	20,486 (65%)

The overall ACT Assessment consists of tests in four areas: English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. ACT recommends that college-bound students take four or more years of English; three or more years of mathematics (including algebra 1, algebra 2 and geometry); three or more years of social studies; and three or more years of natural sciences. ACT defines specific courses in these areas. Kentucky's graduation requirements define four credits in English; three in mathematics; three in social studies; three in science; one in history and appreciation of visual and performing arts; and one-half each in health and physical education.

ACT developed College Readiness Benchmarks in English, mathematics, science and reading, with research indicating that students who reach the levels have a high probability of earning a C grade or higher in certain credit-bearing first-year college courses. The benchmark scores are:

- 18 or higher on the ACT English Test
- 22 or higher on the ACT Math Test
- 21 or higher on the ACT Reading Test
- 24 or higher on the ACT Science Test

Percentages of Kentucky Students Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

	English		Mathematics		Reading		Science		Meeting All Four	
	KY	US	KY	US	KY	US	KY	US	KY	US
2004	64	68	32	40	48	52	22	26	16	21
2005	65	68	32	41	48	51	22	26	16	21
2006	67	69	34	42	50	53	23	27	18	21
2007	67	69	35	43	50	53	24	28	18	23
2008	68	68	35	43	53	53	25	28	19	22

(more)

Many Kentucky colleges and universities use ACT scores to inform admissions decisions and to place students in appropriate college courses. ACT scores also are used, along with high school grade point averages, to determine the amount of money high school graduates are eligible to receive through the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship program.

In comparing Kentucky with the nation, the widest gap in performance among students was in overall mathematics scores (1.1 points) and the smallest was in reading (0 point).

African-American students in Kentucky who took the college-bound curriculum performed similarly to African-American students at the national level, but Kentucky's African-American students' average composite score was 0.4 points higher than the national average. At both the national and state levels, the gap between the performance of African-American and white students persisted.

Over the past few years, the numbers of non-white students taking the ACT in Kentucky have risen. According to ACT, increases in student populations taking the test can lead to a drop in scores; however, all ethnic groups in Kentucky have seen score increases since 2004.

AVERAGE KENTUCKY ACT COMPOSITE SCORES BY ETHNICITY -- 2004 - 2008

	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008	
	#	Score	#	Score	#	Score	#	Score	#	Score
African American	2,173	16.9	2,176	16.8	2,248	17.1	2,358	17.0	2,496	17.3
American Indian	97	18.4	110	19.7	83	19.4	92	19.5	99	19.3
Asian	360	21.7	402	22.3	381	22.3	426	21.8	402	22.3
Hispanic	307	18.9	324	19.2	398	19.5	416	19.1	455	19.9
White	25,033	20.6	25,327	20.6	24,611	20.9	24,830	21.0	26,499	21.2
Other/No Response	1,611	20.5	1,604	20.4	2,065	20.7	2,807	21.2	1,777	21.4

The composite score gaps between males and females of all ethnic groups in Kentucky were minimal in most subjects, with males posting a composite score of 21.1 and females a score of 20.6. On ACT, which offers only multiple-choice questions, males tend to outscore females in mathematics and science, and females tend to outscore males in English and reading.

Kentucky is unique in the nation because it has implemented the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) from ACT and, through 2006's Senate Bill 130, administers the ACT to all public school juniors. The state assesses public school 8th graders using the EXPLORE test and assesses public school 10th graders with the PLAN test through EPAS.

All of Kentucky's public school juniors took the ACT for the first time in the spring of 2008. Data from those assessments likely will be available in September.

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