



At a Glance

What do the 2013 ACT and SAT results mean for students in SC and the nation?

October 2013

In August and September, the results of the 2013 administration of the SAT and ACT were released. While these national college admission examinations are not used in the federal or state accountability systems as indicators of academic performance, the results have implications for the students, parents, educators, taxpayers and businesses of our state. Most importantly, the results have implications for the future economy of our state.

By 2020 the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that 62 percent of the jobs in South Carolina will require postsecondary education.¹ Postsecondary includes an associate’s degree or some postsecondary vocational certificate. As of 2011 the United States Census Bureau reports that only 34 percent of the working-age population in South Carolina had at least an associate degree. The relationship between public and higher education has never been so critical to the economy of our state and to the future of our citizens.

SAT

The SAT, which was developed by the College Board, measures what students know and how well they can apply that knowledge in critical reading, mathematics, and writing.

The College Board has established College and Career Readiness Benchmarks to help educators, higher education institutions, and policymakers know if students are prepared for the next step, whether it is a two or four-year college. The College Board has established a benchmark score of 1550

out of a total possible score of 2400 on all three sections of the tests as representing a 65 percent probability of a student obtaining a first-year grade point average of B- or higher, which in turn, is associated with a high likelihood of college success. Documented by research, students who meet the benchmark are more likely to:

- Enroll in a four-year college (78 percent as compared to 46 percent of those who did not meet the benchmark)
- Complete a bachelor’s degree within four years (54% as compared to 27%).²
- Have taken an AP or honors course (79 percent took an AP or honors course).³

Mean Composite SAT Scores for SC, US, NC and GA, 2006-2013				
	SC	NC	GA	US
2006	1465	1493	1477	1518
2007	1459	1486	1472	1511
2008	1461	1489	1466	1511
2009	1452	1486	1460	1509
2010	1447	1485	1453	1509
2011	1436	1475	1445	1500
2012	1431	1469	1452	1498
2013	1436	1479	1452	1498

¹ *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*. State Report. Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University. June 2013. <http://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020/states/>

² “2013 SAT Report on College & Career Readiness.” The College Board. 2013.

<<http://media.collegeboard.com/homeOrg/content/pdf/sat-report-college-career-readiness-2013.pdf>>.

³ Ibid.

Nationally, 43 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2013 met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark.⁴ ***In South Carolina 34% of all SAT test takers met the benchmark.***

The following analysis breaks down the data by groups nationally and in South Carolina. Nationally, half of the students taking the SAT in 2013 were white. In 2013, 46 percent of the SAT takers were from minority groups, up from 40 percent in 2009. Looking at the performance of these subgroups on the benchmarks, the state data reveal that although 26% of the SC test-takers are African American, only 8% of those students met the benchmark.

% of students taking test and meeting College and Career Readiness Benchmark on 2013 SAT, US and SC				
Ethnicity	US: % of Test Takers	US: % Meeting Benchmark	SC: % of Test Takers	SC: % Meeting Benchmark
White	50%	NR	63%	45.1%
African American	13%	15.6%	26%	8.4%
Hispanic	17%	23.5%	4%	28.7%
Asian	12%	NR	3%	50.8%
ALL		43.0%		34.0%

NR: Not reported

Looking at the mean SAT scores by district, the following chart shows that individual school districts and high schools in South Carolina with an average SAT score of 1500 or greater. In the districts or schools listed in red, the average performance of students met or exceeded the benchmark score of 1550.

District	# Test Takers in 2013	% of 2013 Senior Class	2013	2012	Change
Anderson 3	20	13%	1650	1459	191
York 4	549	78%	1563	1568	-5
Horry	1,012	45%	1512	1482	30
Lexington 5	941	82%	1517	1506	11
Lexington 1	817	56%	1503	1490	13

Source: SC Department of Education, Office of Data Management and Analysis, 9/17/2013

A list of schools by district where the average performance of students met or exceeded the benchmark score of 1550, can be found online at

<http://www.eoc.sc.gov/IntheNews/AtaGlance/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴ Ibid.

ACT

Similarly, the ACT measures college and career readiness. Act defines “college and career readiness” as the “acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a 2- or 4-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation.”⁵ Empirically, ACT defines the College Readiness Benchmarks as “the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding credit-bearing college courses,” which include English Composition, Algebra, Social Science and Biology.⁶

In 2013, nationally 54 percent of all 2013 high school graduates took the ACT but of these students 26 percent met the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in all four subjects while 31 percent met none of the benchmarks.⁷

Mean Composite ACT Scores for SC, US, NC and GA, 2006-2013				
	SC	NC	GA	US
2007	19.6	21.0	20.3	21.2
2008	19.9	21.3	20.6	21.1
2009	19.8	21.6	20.6	21.1
2010	20.0	21.9	20.7	21.0
2011	20.1	21.9	20.6	21.1
2012	20.2	21.9	20.7	21.1
2013	20.4	18.7	20.7	20.9

In South Carolina, 22 percent met the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in all four subject areas.⁸

ACT Test	Benchmark Score	% Met in US	% Met in SC
English	18	64%	62%
Mathematics	22	44%	39%
Reading	22	44%	41%
Science	23	36%	32%
ALL FOUR		26%	22%

Looking at the achievement across ethnicities, the information for the nation and South Carolina appear below. South Carolina mirrors the achievement nationally of white students; however, achievement among African American students in South Carolina lags the nation.

% of students taking test and meeting all 4 benchmarks, 2013 ACT, US and SC				
Ethnicity	US: % of Test Takers	US: % Meeting All Four Benchmarks	SC: % of Test Takers	SC: % Meeting All Four Benchmarks
White	58%	33%	57%	32%
African American	13%	5%	30%	3%
Hispanic	14%	14%	4%	18%
Asian	4%	43%	2%	36%
ALL STUDENTS		26%		22%

Source: ACT Profile Report – National, 2013.
<http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/pdf/profile/National2013.pdf>

⁵ “The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2013 – National.” ACT. 2013. www.act.org/readiness/2013.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸

"ACT Profile Report, South Carolina, 2013."

<<http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/pdf/profile/SouthCarolina.pdf>>.

Conclusion

The relationship between public and higher education is critical to the economy of our state and to the future of our citizens. Both the SAT and ACT have established college and career readiness benchmarks as a predictor of success in postsecondary institutions and beyond. For 2013 in South Carolina 34 percent of all SAT test takers met the benchmark, compared to 43 percent of test-takers nationally. In South Carolina, 22 percent met the ACT College Readiness benchmarks in all four subject areas in 2013 compared to 26 percent nationally. Also, the performance of African American students in South Carolina is of particular concern since a lower percentage of students are meeting college and career benchmarks on both the SAT and ACT.

Additional Information

For additional information, contact the EOC at (803) 734-6148 or go online at www.eoc.sc.gov.