

# The ACT

## Changes in 11th Grade Testing: Information for Students and Families

This school year marks the beginning of important changes in state testing for all 11th graders in South Carolina. The High School Assessment Program (HSAP) will no longer be given. Instead, students in 11th grade will take two assessments: The ACT, a college and career readiness assessment and WorkKeys®, which measures essential workforce skills.

### What is The ACT?

The ACT test is a college entrance exam covering English, reading, math, and science, and writing. It measures what students have learned in high school coursework. The ACT includes 215 multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 4 hours to complete, including a short break. Actual testing time is 3 hours and 25 minutes. The Writing portion of the test, which is included in the testing time total, is 30 minutes.

### Who will take the ACT in 2015 and when will it be administered?

Students who entered ninth grade in school year 2012-13 will take the ACT this year. The English, Math, Reading, and Science tests will be administered on Tuesday, April 28, 2015.

### Why is every 11th grader taking the test this year?

The S.C. General Assembly passed legislation in 2014 requiring that all 11th grade students take WorkKeys® as well as an assessment that measures college readiness. The ACT was chosen as a result of a state procurement. These assessments measure how well prepared students are for coursework in two- and four year colleges as well for the jobs available in today's workforce. If your child has documented disabilities requiring testing accommodations, you should be in communication with your child's school about testing options.

One of the benefits of the legislation is that the state now covers the cost of the administration of the ACT assessment in 11th grade, a current savings of \$54.50.

### What are the benefits of taking the ACT and should students not planning on going to college do their best on the ACT?

There are many benefits to taking the ACT! The ACT is accepted by all four-year colleges and universities in the United States as well as all of South Carolina's two-year colleges. By taking the ACT, students make themselves visible to colleges and scholarship agencies. Scores can also be used to qualify for SC's Life and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships. Students can send their scores to up to four colleges if they choose to do so.

And, a student needs to do his or her best on the ACT because the results may provide more choices for the future. A student may discover that he or she has the skills and knowledge to pursue a certificate, associate's or four-year degree. Just having the information will help plan for the future. Once a person starts working, they may decide that they want or need a four-year degree, associate's degree or industry credential to move up. Even if a student does not immediately enter college upon graduation, their ACT score is valid for up to five years.

## **How can my child prepare for the ACT?**

All 11th graders will have free access to ACT Online Prep through their high school and ACT offers several free prep resources online at <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/> including the document “Preparing for the ACT” that is available in English and Spanish. Taking challenging coursework in high school is the best way to prepare for the ACT. Check with your student’s school to see if other test preparation options are available to them.

## **Should my child still take the SAT?**

Yes, students are encouraged to continue to take the SAT if they choose to do so or if it meets their future goals. The SAT will continue to be offered in SC by the College Board to students at their own personal expense.

## **How is the ACT scored and what do the scores mean?**

ACT scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly; points are not deducted for wrong answers. Scores range from 1 (low) to 36 (high) for each of the four tests and the Composite. The Composite score is the average of the English, Math, Reading and Science scores, rounded to the nearest whole number. The Writing assessment is scored separately.

## **How will the results of these assessments be used?**

The results of the test will help 11th graders plan for the senior year and beyond as well as plan during their Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) conferences. A student may use their ACT results to make decisions about coursework their senior year to better prepare them for college or entering a career. Scores on the ACT do not currently impact a student’s ability to graduate.

### **Additional Resources**

#### **For Parents and Families:**

<http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/215/>

#### **For Counselors and Educators:**

<http://www.act.org/aap/resources/index.html>

<http://actaspire.pearson.com>

<http://www.discoveractaspire.org>