

Our students compete every day for their place in the world. When we prepare them for the ACT, we ensure that each one of our high school students can choose the best fit for their lives and future in the postsecondary world.

SCS ACT Field Guide 2020



A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT ACT PLANNING



SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS OFFICE OF ACADEMICS
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IN ORDER FOR SCS TO MOVE THE NEEDLE ON THE ACT, WE HAVE TO MOVE BEYOND THE [2019-2020 ACT PLAYBOOK](#) TO A COMPREHENSIVE, ADAPTIVE SYSTEM OF STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS THAT PROVIDE A GOOD FIT FOR EVERY SCHOOL NO MATTER WHERE THAT SCHOOL MAY FIND ITSELF IN THE WORK.

Welcome





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From goal setting and team composition to incentive structures and an ACT Entry Plan, this document provides the groundwork for any school that wishes to start, expand or sustain the work of student achievement on the ACT.

Finding Your Baseline:

Foundations,
Supports &
Your Team

Before you can set goals and create a plan, you have to first evaluate where your school stands in relation to the work of the ACT and understand how each team member works to create synergy for ACT success!

Introduction

In 2018 Dr. Burt released "[Equity in Action](#)" as a strategic framework designed to ensure all students develop the knowledge and skills they need that lead to better economic and social opportunities and outcomes. In that plan was a call to boost ACT scores by broadening the reach of the ACT program to include 9th and 10th graders while deepening school-wide awareness of the importance of ACT performance.

In 2019, the Office of Academics released the [ACT Playbook](#), a collection of strategies to drive district and school level efforts around the ACT, in order to boost our district average composite score and improve equity of access to ACT preparatory classes and materials to all SCS students. Throughout the year, with the help of our ACT Liaison cohort of one representative per school to advocate for the work of the ACT we learned a lot about the ACT needs of schools, students, and teachers across SCS. Schools span a wide range of implementation levels as wide as the range of student scores, so we realized that we needed to rethink the ACT Playbook to better meet the needs of all schools.

This guide builds on the work started in the ACT Playbook.

The ACT Field Guide is an in-depth look at building an ACT program that starts with setting goals and speaks to each level of the ACT work that we hope will build knowledge and accelerate implementation.

We acknowledge the truly amazing work that schools are doing every day and encourage each school to promote postsecondary readiness in the ways that work for their students. This document should be used as a reference for school leaders who wish to grow and enhance their school's ACT program for maximum value. The Office of Academics commits to refining the solutions that work for children in the ways they need. As our ACT program grows so will the range of possibilities afforded to our graduates. Opportunity is the heart of equity. Our students deserve no less.

This field guide begins with a look at the new ACT Specialist role and how roles within the school support the ACT, then looks at the features of ACT programs at various levels of implementation, followed by a discussion of each of our high school student cohorts. Next follows a guide to ACT goal setting, and key elements of the ACT work this year such as ACT workshops, tutoring and incentives. Please note that the 2020-2021 ACT School Planning Template will be released as a separate document and that this field guide should act as a companion document to help schools craft a plan to meet the needs of all students.



A New Role for a New Year: ACT Specialists

In 2019-2020, SCS took a major step to support the work of the ACT by asking schools to designate an "ACT Liaison" for the building. This role was to serve as a conduit for information to and from the district about a school's ACT program and to act as an advocate for ACT initiatives at the school level. However, it quickly became apparent that this new and valuable role could be leveraged strategically for better results. Over the course of the school year, in listening to schools and realizing where and how work needed to be done, for the 2020-2021 school year we are excited to announce the re-scoping of this role: The ACT Specialist.

Each high school should designate two ACT specialists. In order to qualify for the role, an ACT Specialist must be assigned to teach sections of ACT Prep, one specialist assigned to teach at least one section of ACT English or Reading and another specialist assigned to teach at least one section of ACT Math or Science. Should a school not be able to meet these requirements, one English teacher and one math or science teacher should be appointed to fulfill the duties of the specialist for the school.

Each teacher will receive a stipend of \$2,000 annually (see stipend requirements below) and, through district sponsored professional development, receive the professional certification of ACT Certified Educator in either Reading or Math from ACT, Inc.

Specialists will be trained and supported to lead quarterly data meetings, report critical ACT oriented findings to faculty, head the writing of the school's ACT plan, work with leadership on ACT programs and incentives and most importantly, lead quarterly Jane Ross Tutoring licensed ACT workshops for students in their schools.

While ACT Liaisons in the 19-20 school year ranged from classroom teachers to administrators, the ACT Specialists as classroom teachers will be uniquely positioned to support the work already happening in each school, and truly grow school capacity for the work of the ACT in addition to their own personal leadership.

ACT SPECIALIST EXPECTATIONS INCLUDE:

- ✓ 7.5 hours: Participate in virtual ACT Content Area training
- ✓ 24 hours: Lead quarterly subject-area-specific Jane Ross Tutoring ACT Workshops at school site
- ✓ 8 hours: Participate in virtual ACT workshop training via the district's Canvas platform during Summer 2020
- ✓ 8 hours: Work with school data team to draft and submit school-level ACT Plan by start of Fall 2020
- ✓ 12 hours: Gather and analyze relevant school ACT, PSAT, TruScore, ACT Academy and Khan Academy Data to inform school level quarterly data team meetings
- ✓ 4 hours: Lead quarterly ACT Data Team meetings and transmit results to leaders and faculty at school sites
- ✓ 5 hours: Attend quarterly after school ACT Specialist Cohort meetings

ACT SPECIALIST POSITION REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ ACT Specialists must be full-time teachers with a valid Tennessee teaching license
- ✓ ACT Specialists must teach at least one section of ACT Prep within the master schedule of their school or school must be committed to offering this opportunity by the end of the 2020-21 school year.
- ✓ ACT Specialists must demonstrate effective communication skills and a passion for the work of college readiness and the ACT

DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP AMONG TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS IS THE KEY TO MEETING GOALS AROUND THE ACT. EVERY TEACHER IN YOUR SCHOOL REPRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP AND BUY-IN. ACT SPECIALISTS REPRESENT A COMMITMENT TO NOT ONLY BUILD CAPACITY BUT ALSO PUT THE POWER FOR LEADING THIS WORK IN THE HANDS OF THOSE MOST ABLE TO AFFECT THE NEEDED CHANGE: TEACHERS.

Setting the Stage for Success by Crafting Your ACT Team

Once you have selected your ACT Specialist, let's look at the other stakeholders essential to the successful achievement of your school's ACT goals. Each set of stakeholders has a crucial role to play in the work of the ACT, among the other roles that they perform on a day-to-day basis. Each of the people listed below should be represented on the school's ACT Data team.

Each member of the team has a role to play in student achievement, but no player is more essential to this work than the students themselves. Each student must not only take initiative to engage in opportunities for ACT growth, but also stay aware of data and how to improve as they build efficacy and agency toward college readiness.



THE PRINCIPAL

Accountability and Vision

The principal as the central leadership figure of the school is directly accountable to the work of the ACT. Not only is the accountability expressly called out in the TEAM principal evaluation rubric, it is also a key part of the school's ready graduate calculation. The principal appoints the ACT Specialists and the school's ACT testing coordinator, and confers frequently with instructional leaders at the school site to determine how programs in the school can best meet the needs of students. The principal is also responsible for ensuring that school funds are budgeted for ACT program supports such as student incentives. Success in the ACT program means that the principal is involved at every level of the ACT process.



THE ILT

Leadership and Buy-In

As content knowledge leaders in the building, the members of the ILT hold the key to the ACT: Modeling and coaching towards effective Tier 1 instruction. Preparing for the ACT is best done by providing strong first instruction for student mastery. ILT leads are very well positioned to use the ACT School Profile report and individual student scores to help teachers craft instructional plans that boost content deficit areas. ILT members are in the best position to analyze specific content area data and help teams to formulate the strategy for creating growth in those domains where the school may typically struggle. While the ACT Specialist will work quarterly at the whole school level, ILT leaders are uniquely positioned to observe content specific moves and act to incorporate ACT driven instructional strategies into the work of the school's Cycle of Professional Learning.



ESL & SPED EXPERTS

Equity and Student Voice

English Language Learners (ELs) are a highly vulnerable population when it comes to the work of the ACT. As many students will graduate from the ESL program over the course of their high school career, it is important that ESL teachers know their student needs and are able to advise and advocate for ESL within the ACT Data Team.

Similarly, understanding the needs of exceptional children and the role that SPED services plays in the college readiness process is critical to the work of the ACT. SPED teachers should be engaged to ensure that teachers know of specific issues pertaining to IEP and 504 status for individual students, and to ensure accommodations are met appropriately.



THE COUNSELOR

Coordination and Logistics

School counselors are the most familiar with student schedules and college readiness, and as such are the heartbeat of the ACT. School counselors not only work with the school's data team to ensure that the right students are scheduled for ACT Prep, but also ensure that ACT scores are delivered and translated to students in a timely fashion as part of their overall graduation readiness portfolio. Counselors direct students to resources for ACT improvement and talk to students directly about the impact of the ACT on postsecondary funding, regardless of the opportunities students pursue. Counselors work together with ACT Specialists to ensure that student performance data are delivered in a timely fashion to students and faculty; that a plan is in place for discussing data with students and for creating a forum for student-led goal-setting. Counselors should also assist with creating a high-performance ACT culture and work to build and grow school programs like ACT workshops and after school tutoring by ensuring they are attended by the correct groups.



THE PLC COACH

Data and Development

As a key instructional leader in the building, the PLC coach should keep the ACT high in the list of the school's academic priorities. As the primary author of the School Improvement Plan, PLC coaches have the opportunity to embed the ACT work in the basic annual planning of the school, allowing title one funds to be spent for ACT improvement as a pathway for ready graduate status. PLC coaches also frequently lead team meetings where classroom data is analyzed regularly and supplemented by ACT data. While ACT Specialists will lead data conversations at the school level, it will be up to learning coaches to work with teachers at the small team and classroom level. These teachers have the ability to use Tier 1 instruction and student performance data in ACT-related courses weekly as a lens for student growth and achievement. PLCs can also ensure that the work of the ACT Plan is happening at the school level by monitoring regular progress in common formative assessments, tracking student performance in ACT Prep, helping to leverage Title 1 to support ACT initiatives and ensure that both faculty and leadership don't lose sight of the ACT as a driver for change in the school building.



FACE SPECIALIST

Family & Community

While not a direct member of the school based faculty, the FACE specialist/advisor for your school has a crucial role to play in developing high impact family and community outreach opportunities and events specific to the needs of your school. When at all possible, this stakeholder should be engaged in the process of building awareness around graduation readiness and how families and the community can support students in preparing for the ACT as they prepare for life after high school.

EVERY SCHOOL BEGINS THE YEAR AT A DIFFERENT POINT IN THE WORK...

While each member of the school ACT team has a role to play in student achievement, no player is more essential to this work than the students themselves. Each student must not only take initiative to engage in opportunities for ACT growth, but also stay aware of data and how to improve as they build efficacy and agency toward college readiness.

More importantly, these stakeholders should be engaging frequently in conversation around the ACT as a body of work, engaging faculty, students and staff as often as

possible in conversations to raise awareness around this vital work.

To assist schools in understanding data, [ACT, Inc. has released three webinars](#) which are ideal to grow capacity around this process. While ACT, Inc. identifies the webinars for three groups (teachers, administrators and counselors), by viewing all three, any stakeholder can become instantly aware of how to use ACT data to drive instruction at the school, classroom and student level.

THE WHY

Students need to know what to do to get better. The ACT covers such a broad spectrum of material, that without understanding exactly what needs to be done, students can feel overwhelmed.

In many cases, this will require all faculty to be involved, not just guidance and core content teachers. Schools may also wish to train and engage community partners and families in having these data conversations with students, to ensure that every child has at least two meaningful interactions annually with an adult who can help guide them toward a better understanding of critical ACT data.

THE WHAT

A conversation about data with a student can make all of the difference between making the target or falling further behind. In this conversation, a student and a teacher or stakeholder look at the student's most recent data, identify the areas where students need help, pinpoint specific skills that the student needs to practice and make a plan for improvement. This includes student ACT scores (especially for 12th graders), TruScore results and the PSAT results.

THE WHO

Ideally, every student taking an assessment should have a data conversation with a school level stakeholder at least once per semester after the arrival of significant data points from PSAT, TruScore or ACT. ACT Prep teachers should also regularly provide updates on progress in ACT or Khan Academy that can be used for interim data conversations between students and stakeholders. The responsibility for these conversations should fall on every teacher in the building, in addition to counselors, administrators and community stakeholders.

MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY ACT PREP COURSEWORK, IS BUILDING DATA SENSE AND AGENCY AMONG STUDENTS TO HELP THEM ACHIEVE WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR THE ACT. HERE ARE SOME KEY ELEMENTS TO BUILDING A STRONG PLAN FOR COMMUNICATING AROUND DATA WITH STUDENTS:

Helping students understand their own data is the key to establishing meaningful personalized learning plans to help students know the steps they need to grow, leveraging student efficacy for maximum results.

THE WHEN

Data conversations should be ongoing and depend on when particular data become available for students. Ideally, data conversations should be held once in the fall and once in the spring. Schools may choose to have teachers hold these conversations during school hours, or ask students to come after school to discuss their data and subsequent plan. This meeting may also be conducted remotely using distance learning tools such as MS Teams.

THE HOW

Members of the school community that your team identifies to have these conversations should be trained on how to interpret the student data report from each major test, ACT, TruScore and PSAT. This is a responsibility for all members of the school community. These stakeholders should be made aware of the opportunities to help students grow in ACT specific areas and how to pair students to those opportunities. Ensuring that every student receives a data conversation may constitute a hardship in the first year of implementation. It is recommended that these conversations start immediately with 11th and 12th graders, working toward a solution for 9th and 10th graders as well.

THE WHERE

Student ACT data should be present at the classroom and whole school level. These conversations can be formalized and held in a classroom or office setting, but can also be built on through informal conversations in school and at home. In the coming year, the implementation of a new platform for managing student data and goals will dramatically assist in the process of holding value added data meetings with students across SCS. For this reason it is important that ACT specialists work together with other school leaders and FACE specialists to ensure that all stakeholders understand the breadth and scope of student data so that it can be leveraged for student achievement across settings.

Building a Program:

Evaluating,

Planning &

Generating Wins

Program Evaluation: Emerging

While every school in the district is engaged to some degree in the work of the ACT, many fall into the Emerging category. At this stage, schools are beginning to take action on the ACT and coalesce a plan to grow student achievement over time.

KEY CONCEPT: RAISING AWARENESS

Set the Stage

- Raise faculty buy in through professional learning, including webinars and training like Decoding the ACT.
- Host student and community awareness events to help students understand why the ACT should be important to them in any grade.
- Successfully execute four quarterly ACT workshops.
- Institute basic instructional practices that help teachers address ACT prep directly in the Tier 1 classroom, including bell-ringers and timed tests.
- Offer after school tutoring specifically based on findings from the ACT school profile.
- Display and regularly update ACT awareness bulletin boards based on test and ACT prep data from Khan/ACT Academy. Publicly acknowledge progress on college readiness exams like ACT/SAT/PSAT and TruScore.
- Enroll all ACT Prep students in Khan or ACT Academy and ask ACT Prep teachers to regularly share student progress in data/PLC meetings.
- Survey students about the incentives that would motivate them to participate in ACT Prep opportunities and grow in achievement on the ACT.
- ACT Specialist should work with data team to submit school ACT plan on time and set at least one major ACT oriented goal for the year that is tracked quarterly and reported on at each data meeting. Schools are encouraged to set more than one goal to help with targeted student cohorts and to monitor more nuanced data than end of year results, but at the Emerging level, schools should have at least one central ACT goal to drive the work for the year.



Success at this stage means that the people in your building are working to cultivate a culture of success where the ACT is something that you prepare for and work toward all year long in the same way that you work toward success in End of Course tested subjects.

Data

Core faculty are presented data annually through the school profile report. ACT Specialists share ACT webinars with faculty to help them interpret reports and begin to understand ACT data as it pertains to Tier 1 instruction. School holds annual data meeting at the start of the year to emphasize the importance of ACT as it reflects the realities of Tier 1 instruction in the school. ILT looks at ACT data annually as a reference point for planning instruction and ensures that ACT Prep strategies and questions are part of every day instruction for students. ACT Specialists have viewed the ACT webinars designated for each stakeholder group and reteach the information to faculty through PLCs or team data meetings. Emerging schools have access to data and are taking steps to raise ACT data-sense among all stakeholders. 11th graders receive at least one data conversation at the beginning of the year with counselors or ACT specialists to help them make a plan for succeeding on the ACT.

Support

ACT Specialists provide ACT Prep workshop support to select students in 11th grade. After school tutoring is offered to help support ACT skills, especially in the lowest areas identified by overall ACT benchmarks, though may still be driven by teacher discretion and not the ACT reporting category standards. Counselors ensure that students are registered for upcoming tests and that all students sit for the ACT per state requirements.

Awareness

School holds at least one major student awareness event/pep rally/information session to assist students in understanding the importance of the ACT. School hosts a large annual event for families to help them better support students in ACT prep and the college readiness process year to year. Awareness is raised among faculty members through report out at regular team and faculty meetings by ACT Specialists.

Instruction

Core content teachers in 11th and 12th grade understand that they have a role to play in the work of the ACT. ACT prep courses are provided in Reading/English and Math/Science are enrolled to maximum capacity in all sections. 11th grade English, Math and Science teachers are aware of the ACT standards and use ACT style questions as bell ringers along with timed tests to help students build stamina for the test, although the ACT standards may not have a wide-ranging impact on the content of instruction at this stage.



STUDENT INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Student achievement is celebrated publicly through posted and regularly updated bulletin boards, in class recognition and award ceremonies that highlight student awareness and participation in ACT related activities. School offers at least one major reward for students who grew their composite by 3 or more points or achieved a 21 composite or higher on the ACT.

Program Evaluation: Growing

At this stage, schools have had at least one year of measurable success against school-driven ACT SMART goals and are now on the path to greater ACT achievement for all students. With faculty and student buy-in to the work of college readiness, schools at this level focus on getting better, deepening knowledge and honing practice.

KEY CONCEPT: BUILDING CAPACITY

Find Your Wins

- Consistently host ACT data team, student and family awareness meetings once per quarter to build a culture of ACT planning.
- Leverage ACT trained teachers who have viewed webinars and participated in ACT related training, along with ACT Specialists, to help teachers see how essential skills from Tier 1 instruction can support the work of the ACT.
- Build a sense of shared responsibility by celebrating those teachers who regularly support the ACT through data driven classroom instruction and tutoring.
- Help teachers breakdown their classes by ACT benchmark and composite scores to help them form instructional groups for skills that can be enhanced through small group work.
- Train all faculty on procedures for talking to students about data regularly to move the responsibility of data conversations to a more manageable level, dispersing it among multiple stakeholders.
- Work with social studies teachers and supporting faculty to integrate ACT style informational text and elements identified in the English and Reading reporting categories of the ACT School Profile report into daily instruction.
- Review individual student benchmark data to determine which students could achieve a composite of 21+ by achieving two or fewer benchmarks.
- Budget for annual incentives and ACT achievement/growth recognition to show students your school's material commitment to engaging them on the work of the ACT.
- Reach out to community members to establish how outside organizations and individuals could support the work of the ACT in your school.
- ACT Data team should collaborate with core faculty to create and submit the school ACT plan and set 3-5 goals specific to the ACT for the school that can be reported quarterly.
- Expand offerings of ACT Prep and ensure that they are fully enrolled.

Wins at this stage mean that you are gaining ground with teachers, students and stakeholders in the belief that the ACT is something that doesn't just "happen to you" but that you can prepare and prepare successfully for. As teachers build knowledge, students build success.

Data

Core faculty are aware of ACT data pertaining to their content area. School holds four quarterly data meetings where pertinent college readiness testing data is reported and an emphasis is placed on growing an understanding of the impact of that data on instruction schoolwide. ILT and PLC meetings look at ACT data annually as a reference point for planning instruction. Teachers have viewed the ACT webinar designated for classroom teachers and understand how regular classroom instruction can incorporate best practices for ACT. Counselors and ACT Specialists ensure that 11th and 12th graders have one goal setting data meeting annually to help establish a trajectory for achievement on the ACT for the year.

Support

ACT Specialists provide ACT Prep workshop support to all students in 11th and 12th grade and build capacity among faculty in how to integrate ACT based practices into instruction. After school tutoring is offered based on school level ACT trends as identified in the ACT student profile. Counselors ensure that students are registered for upcoming tests and that seniors are encouraged to re-take subject area tests in which they scored below the ACT Benchmark.

Instruction

Core content teachers in all grade levels understand that they have a role to play in the work of the ACT. ACT Prep courses are offered in all four ACT disciplines. Mostly students with a 16 to 20 ACT composite or equivalent are enrolled in ACT Prep courses, and the school ensures that all 11th and 12th grade students are given the opportunity to participate in an ACT Specialist-led workshop. 11th and 12th grade English, Math and Science teachers are aware of the ACT standards and use them to help drive planning for daily instruction.

Awareness

School holds at least two student awareness events/pep rallies/information sessions to assist students in understanding the importance of the ACT. School hosts two annual events for families to help them better support students in ACT prep and the college readiness process year to year.



STUDENT INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Student achievement is celebrated publicly through posted and regularly updated bulletin boards, in class recognition and award ceremonies that highlight both student growth and student achievement. School offers incentives for students scoring a 21 ACT Composite or higher.

Program Evaluation: Sustaining

While there can never be a true finish line in the work of the ACT, sustained growth is the mark of a successful program. Schools who have met their school-set ACT SMART Goals for more than two years and who have a plan in place that is working for the students in their school rise into this level.

KEY CONCEPT: MAINTAINING TRAJECTORY

Push the Envelope

- Work with all faculty to collaboratively craft the school ACT plan and integrate school ACT goals into the strategies present in the annual School Improvement Plan. Have each content area team craft ACT goals for each grade to ensure that all disciplines are working to provide support for college readiness at all times.
- Celebrate student growth and achievement through a predictable system of tangible and intangible incentives that let students know it is possible for anyone to earn rewards for ACT related performance that can be as granular as completing ACT Academy modules to scoring higher on the test itself.
- Leverage your ACT specialist to deliver the ACT workshop to all students over the course of the year by using the master schedule to allow students to experience the ACT workshop during the school day.
- Allow students who have succeed in earning a 21 or higher composite to tutor and assist students who are still working toward the composite goal.
- Engage community organizations and families regularly to celebrate student achievement.



Wins at this stage look like continued progress and success. The more involvement that you can generate from your community stakeholders and by leveraging district offerings the more you will achieve as a school. Students in your building know that being a student at your school comes with a near guarantee of their success on the ACT.

Data

All faculty are aware of school's college readiness testing data, including ACT/SAT/PSAT/TruScore. All students receive at least two annual data conversations from school stakeholders and have a concrete method for tracking individual goals over time. ACT Data is discussed regularly as part of PLC and ILT meetings as a means to drive change in Tier 1 instruction. School holds four quarterly data meetings that end with actionable takeaways for improving student results. All faculty have been trained using the three ACT webinars for teachers, counselors and administrators and feel conversant in ACT data driven practices.

Support

ACT Specialists are leveraged to provide ACT Prep workshop support to all students in the school regardless of grade. After school tutoring based on the needs identified in the ACT reporting category is a responsibility shared by all faculty at the school and is offered to students every week. Counselors ensure that all 100% of students take required assessments (PSAT for 9th, TruScore for 10th, ACT for 11th and 12th) and retake full or subject area tests as needed.

Awareness

School holds regular student awareness events, pep rallies and information sessions to assist students in understanding the importance of the ACT. School hosts quarterly events for families to help them better support students in ACT prep and the college readiness process year to year. School engages community members to help support students through one on one tutoring, ACT Prep materials and accountability through data conversations.

Instruction

Every faculty member in the school understands and demonstrates buy-in to the idea that supporting students in the ACT is the work of every teacher in every subject in every grade. All students earning an ACT or equivalent assessment composite between 16 and 20 are enrolled in ACT Prep Courses aligned to the needs of each student's benchmark scores. All core content teachers are aware of the ACT standards and know where their students fall within ACT reporting categories. ACT practice questions and ACT standards are emphasized as part of daily Tier 1 instruction.



STUDENT INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Incentives are consistent, clearly defined, budgeted for annually and driven by student feedback. Student achievement is celebrated publicly through posted and regularly updated bulletin boards, in class recognition and award ceremonies that highlight both student growth and student achievement. Incentives reward composite tiers 21-24, 25-29, 30+ and incentives exist for students who make the ACT benchmarks.

Chart Your Course:

Cohort Framing,

Goal Setting &

Opportunities for

Growth

While 11th and 12th graders constitute the bulk of SCS ACT scores, there are opportunities at every grade level to prepare students for this critical assessment. Setting ambitious goals for every student is critical to achieving growth on the ACT.

Understanding ACT Opportunities for Every Grade Level

9th

9th Graders have the highest opportunity for growth and are currently enrolled in key content for the ACT. Much of the ACT Math for example comes from Algebra and Geometry as evidenced in the [TN ACT standards crosswalk which can be found here](#). Additionally, 9th graders who may struggle with reading and English have two years in which to shore up those deficit areas with robust instruction and academic support. Engaging with quality Tier 1 instruction is critical for 9th grade students who [statewide are more chronically absent and frequently disciplined than any other high school grade](#). The results of the PSAT 9 when combined with Khan Academy modules can provide a tailored program of instruction for students. 9th graders' awareness of the value of participating and doing well on the ACT is essential. In setting goals for the PSAT 9, while schools should monitor the number of students achieving a 1060 (equivalent to an ACT composite of 21), schools should also set goals for the number of 9th graders receiving a PSAT composite of 880 or higher. This score is representative of roughly the 50th percentile of score for 9th graders just as an SAT 1060/ACT 21 is representative of the 50th percentile for 11th grade test-takers.

10th

10th graders enter the school year with the PSAT 9 score, English 1 and Algebra 1 EOC tests and some awareness of the ACT itself, depending on school-wide efforts and/or socialized awareness. 10th graders while working to master Geometry have a greater knowledge of the subject matter necessary to achieve a higher composite on the ACT. They can benefit from enrollment in ACT Prep classes, independent ACT prep practice through platforms like ACT Academy or GradeResults and thanks to knowledge of their EOCs, can be targeted for after school support. 10th graders may also benefit from some direct parent engagement as 10th grade parents may not yet be thinking as directly about graduation, but can start making gains with students early, once the importance of the assessment and the connection to early preparation is made clear. As a benchmark assessment, the school should look to set goals not only for the number of students scoring a composite of 21, but also for identifying and ensuring that students making between an 18 and a 20 are prioritized for ACT Prep courses, digital assistance and ACT workshops.

11th

11th graders enter the school year with a MasteryPrep TruScore composite, with 24 weeks of instruction to make any gains needed before they sit for the spring ACT. Additionally, 11th graders have completed the key Algebra 1 and Geometry content and as a result may lose math skills absent daily application of those skills. 11th graders may benefit from increased exposure to ACT style questions across disciplines and exposure to the test itself, along with testing environments that help them practice timed test-taking. All 11th grade students should, if possible, be given the opportunity to participate in an independent ACT workshop, and tutoring opportunities aimed at increasing individual ACT benchmark scores. 11th graders are also ideally the majority of students enrolled in ACT Prep through the school's master schedule. The most important element for 11th graders is data awareness, so that students over the course of the year understand where they are and what they need to do to accomplish their goals. Additionally, an effective program of data conversations shows students that adults and stakeholders in the building care about them and their progress on the ACT!

12th

12th graders may opt to take the ACT multiple times during the school year. The state mandated ACT in the fall means that 12th graders who have below a 21 composite have barely 9 weeks once school starts to make necessary gains. Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, students will be able to retake ACT subject area tests rather than sit for the entire exam at once. This means that we now have a unique opportunity to provide students with targeted support in only those areas where they most need to improve. Additionally, after the December ACT, students may struggle to raise their score in time to meet crucial college application deadlines. Early conversations with students who have not yet scored a 21 are critical as are the creation of after school opportunities to target benchmark test areas and enabling access to online tools like Khan/ACT Academy. 12th graders also have the richest available data, which makes tailoring supports easier than in other grades. Ensure that 12th graders receive as much academic support as possible during the first quarter, including essential ACT workshop attendance.

ACT Goal Setting

EACH YEAR HIGH SCHOOLS DEVELOP COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS GOALS WHILE DEVELOPING THE ANNUAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN. FREQUENTLY THESE GOALS ARE WORDED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OR PERCENT OF TNDOE RECOGNIZED “READY GRADUATES.” TO RAISE THIS NUMBER, SCHOOLS MAY FOCUS ON DIVERSIFYING AND/OR INCREASING CURRENTLY OFFERED EARLY POST-SECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES (EPSOS), INCREASE SCORES ON THE ASVAB EXAM, INCREASE CTE CERTIFICATIONS, AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING A COMPOSITE OF 21 OR HIGHER ON THE ACT.

The most frequent path in 2018-19 to Ready Graduate status in SCS is the ACT 21, but in some cases, schools have not yet aligned an ACT strategy to the College and Career goal present in their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). We want to recognize that your school may have an explicit strategy, but it is not identified in the SIP. Regardless, we hope that your ACT data team can use this section to generate a strong set of strategies and action steps that will support your SIP and/or a stand-alone ACT strategy within the College and Career Readiness goal for the year.

What Kinds of ACT Goals Make the Most Sense for Your School?

First, consider your graduation cohorts. Each cohort grade represents an opportunity for support in particular areas. Some supports are appropriate for all grade levels, while others are grade specific.

Types of ACT SMART* Goals

Every school should set at least one strong SMART goal to drive the work and development of the school level ACT plan. In order to create a culture where participation and performing well on the ACT is not only a one time goal for Juniors, we recommend that the ACT team should set ambitious-and-attainable goals for the school year for each cohort. Understanding the available data will be essential to setting realistic and achievable goals. The following represent sample goals that your team could use to shape the work of the ACT in your building.

* SMART Goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented and Time-Bound

Cohort Percentage Increase Goals

As the indicator in our district most closely associated with Ready Graduate and college readiness in general, the ACT Composite Score of 21 indicates that a student has a higher likelihood of earning grades of C or higher in introductory college coursework. As a baseline, most schools will want to set at least some type of percentage increase goal relative to the number of students who score 21 or more. Schools may also wish to set stretch goals for the number of students achieving at 25+ and even 30+ which represent those students who would enter college at a more competitive rate of readiness.

Your team should also consider 9th and 10th graders who take formative ACT assessments such as the PSAT and the MasteryPrep TruScore. A program of work to target these students could have significant long-term payoffs

in terms of growing the number of 21+ composites as students progress through high school.

Finally, related directly to testing, schools should consider setting an overall average composite goal to show growth year to year as a whole. This type of goal is more about forecasting overall, and understanding exactly how many students fall within a certain score range to move students across individual bands. The only way to increase a school's overall average composite is to strategically apply programmatic steps aimed to move students at all bands to higher levels of growth and achievement. Please keep in mind that all of the numbers below are provided as examples. All goals should be based on robust and realistic growth as determined by school leaders.



By May 2021 the percentage of students in this year's (COHORT) receiving a composite score of 21/25/30 or higher will increase from X% in 2020 to Y%. This represents a change from X# of (COHORT) in 2020 to Y# of (COHORT) in 2021.

Example: By May 2021 the percentage of students in the 11th grade cohort receiving a composite score of 21 or higher will increase from 10% in 2020 to 40%. This represents a change from 20 11th graders in 2020 to 80 11th graders in 2021.



By May 2021, the percentage of (9th/10th GRADE) students attaining a benchmark composite score at the 50th percentile or higher on ASSESSMENT/PLATFORM will increase from X% in 2020 to Y%. This represents a change from X# in 2020, to Y# in 2021.

Example: By May 2021, the percentage of 10th grade students attaining a benchmark composite score at the 50th percentile or higher on the MasteryPrep TruScore will increase from 5% in 2020 to 20%. This represents a change from 25 in 2020, to 100 in 2021.



By May 2021, our school's average ACT Composite score for all ACT test takers will increase # points from X to Y. On the 2019-2020 Senior Retake our 12th grade students fell into the following composite score bands: # <15 ; #15-17 ; #17-20 ; #21-25 ; #26-30 ; >30. On the 2019-2020 Spring ACT our 11th grade students fell into the following composite score bands: # <15 ; #16-17 ; #18-20 ; #21-25 ; #26-30 ; >30.

Example: By May 2021, our school's average ACT Composite score for all ACT test takers will increase 3 points from 16 to 19. On the 2019-2020 Senior Retake our 12th grade students fell into the following composite score bands: 130 <15 ; 50 15-17 ; 32 17-20 ; 12 21-25 ; 6 25-30 ; 1 >30. On the 2019-2020 Spring ACT our 11th grade students fell into the following composite score bands: 110 <15 ; 60 15-17 ; 30 18-20 ; 5 21-25 ; 2 26-30 ; 0 >30.

ACT Benchmark Percentage Increase Goals

The ACT college readiness benchmarks for each subject are as follows: English 18, Reading 22, Math 22 and Science 23. A goal that aims to raise a single subject area can provide focus for school level teams, and is especially appropriate when your school report shows that many of your students are making some benchmarks but not others. Additionally, a strong benchmark goal (with the help of good data analysis to learn where your team's efforts can be best applied) will ultimately also help boost the drive toward higher composite scores and help build confidence and efficacy among students with specific focus goals and support. Because a benchmark goal deals only with one subject and can be linked to discrete ACT standards, once challenge area standards are identified it is possible to create more robust goals that will help amplify the instructional focus for growth on the ACT.



By May 2021 the percentage of students in this year's (COHORT) receiving a benchmark (SUBJECT) score of X or higher will increase from X% in 2020 to Y%. This represents a change from X# of (COHORT) in 2020 to Y# of (COHORT) in 2021.

Example: By May 2021 the percentage of students in this year's 12th grade cohort receiving a benchmark Math score of 22 or higher will increase from 20% in 2020 to 70%. This represents a change from 40 Seniors in 2020 to 140 Seniors in 2021.



By May 2021 the percentage of students in this year's (COHORT) who meet at least two ACT benchmarks will increase from X% in 2020 to Y%. This represents a change from X# of (COHORT) in 2020 to Y# of (COHORT) in 2021.

Example: By May 2021 the percentage of students in this year's 11th graders who meet at least two ACT benchmarks will increase from 50% in 2020 to 80%. This represents a change from 200 11th graders in 2020 to 320 11th graders in 2021.

ACT Prep Participation Goals

While SMART goals driven by scores provide a focus for instruction, you may also create operational goals related directly to how you choose to provide access, encouragement and incentive for student participation in ACT preparation through classes, workshops and online instruction. These goals will focus on creating a particular “state of play” that represents a strong school culture around ACT.

ACT Awareness and Outreach Goals

Awareness goals may represent a concerted effort at your school to engage students, families and community members in the conversation around the ACT. Awareness drives composite growth by helping students and families understand why the ACT is important and what they can do to increase student performance. Awareness may include information on resources for improvement and personal data awareness.

- ✓ By May 2021, X% of students scoring between 16-20 on the ACT/TruScore/PSAT9 Equivalent will participate in ACT Prep as part of their scheduled coursework during the year according to their area of highest need.
- ✓ In the 2020-2021 School Year our school will offer ACT Prep Classes in each benchmark sub-tested area, and each class will be enrolled at capacity with those students who have received an ACT composite (or equivalent) of 16-20.
- ✓ By May 2021, X% of COHORT will participate in ACT Workshops held on the following dates: Date Q1, Date Q2, Date Q3, Date Q4.
- ✓ By the end of December 2020, X% of students at our school will demonstrate ACT benchmark score growth in Khan Academy/ACT Academy.
- ✓ By the end of each quarter, our school will offer X after school tutoring sessions targeting students for subject specific ACT support.

- ✓ By May 2021, our school will host X number of ACT family nights to share current ACT/PSAT data, explain the importance of ACT for post-secondary opportunities and to provide resources for improving scores. These meetings will be held on the following dates: _____.
- ✓ By the end of each quarter our school will host X school based ACT student awareness events (pep rallies, assemblies, etc) on the following dates:_____.
- ✓ By the end of the first quarter of the school year, each teacher in our school will view the [ACT Webinar on Connecting Curriculum to ACT](#) and work with their content PLC to present a plan for engaging students in additional support.
- ✓ Each month, every core content teacher in our school will offer X# of extracurricular support opportunities to students based on identified ACT reporting category needs.
- ✓ By X date, every enrolled student will receive an individual PSAT/ACT consultation to review his or her most recent score report with a guidance counselor or teacher to discuss necessary steps for improvement including Khan/ACT Academy, tutoring, ACT Workshops, and ACT Prep classes.
- ✓ By X date, our school will hold ACT celebrations for students falling into the following cohorts: Met one ACT benchmark, Met 2-3 ACT Benchmarks, ACT Composite 21-24, ACT Composite 25-36. These celebrations will consist of _____.

Student-Set ACT Goals



HELP YOUR STUDENTS STAY MINDFUL OF KEY ACT INFORMATION THAT PERTAINS TO THEM INDIVIDUALLY. ASK YOUR 11TH AND 12TH GRADERS:

WHICH SKILLS ARE THEY WORKING TO IMPROVE BASED ON THEIR STUDENT REPORT AND BENCHMARK AREAS?

ON WHAT DATE WILL THEY NEXT TAKE THE ACT?

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE ACT SCORE FOR ANY COLLEGE TO WHICH THEY PLAN TO APPLY?

It's important for school stakeholders to set strong goals; however, students should be setting their own goals as well. As part of regular conversations around data adults in the school, along with students should be encouraged to set goals for ACT achievement and to track them through regular benchmarking. Students should use language that makes sense to them that helps them focus on the specific target skills to get better. Students who have only broad, end of year goals may have difficulty improving their outcomes as the year progresses. This may mean helping students set concrete numerical goals, augmented by simple "I Can" statements that they can use as checkpoints for growth throughout the year. Schools are also encouraged to share the [TN ACT Toolkit](#) with students, to help them pace their preparation as they move forward through the year.

- ✓ By the end of the school year, I will earn a composite of 21 on the ACT. My current ACT composite is X.
- ✓ By the end of the school year, I will raise my ACT composite by 3 points.
- ✓ By the end of the school year, I will make the ACT benchmark in Math/Reading/English/Science. My current score for this subject is X.
- ✓ By the end of the first nine weeks, I will talk to my parent or guardian about the importance of the ACT and bring them to attend a school level meeting.
- ✓ By the end of each month I will attend X number of after school ACT tutoring sessions. This month I attended Y sessions on the following dates: _____.
- ✓ Each week I will log in to Khan/ACT Academy for X number of minutes. Last week I logged on for Y minutes.
- ✓ I can tell you my current ACT/PSAT/SAT/TruScore Composite and my score on all benchmark subtests.
- ✓ I can tell you which benchmark scores I need to improve to earn a 21 on the ACT and by how many points I need to improve in each.

Grade-Specific Goal Opportunities



In addition to school wide goals, each grade presents an opportunity to choose measurable outcomes to track over the course of the year. This can range from goals around student performance, to simple student efficacy around data. When working on your ACT plan, consider the current level of implementation in your building. Emerging programs may have more operational goals, whereas programs hoping to sustain strong practice may have more achievement goals.

9th

- # of 9th Grader Awareness Focus Events emphasizing the opportunities of starting early as 9th graders in preparing for the ACT (events, posters, bulletin boards, pep rallies, etc)
- # of Parent and Community Meetings – “College is Not Far Away”
- % of students with demonstrated self-set goals and plans
- % of parents who commit in writing to student set plans
- Average PSAT Composite Scores (if using Khan Academy with 9th graders starting in August)
- % 9th Graders with PSAT Score
- % of 9th graders scoring an 880 composite or above on the PSAT
- % 9th grade Khan/ACT Academy Participation
- % of 9th graders who participate in Khan or ACT Academy who score an 18 or higher on an ACT by the end of the school year
- # of total PSAT Data Conversations
- # Sessions 9th Grade Targeted Tutoring – Algebra 1 based on overall ACT reporting categories from the ACT School Profile Report

10th

- % of students with demonstrated self-set goals and plans
- % of parents who commit in writing to student set plans
- # of 10th Grader Awareness Focus Events emphasizing using data to help students prepare themselves (events, posters, bulletin boards, pep rallies, etc)
- # of Parent and Community Meetings – “The ACT is Coming – What is it, what is on it?”
- Average TruScore Composite Scores (If using ACT Academy with 10th graders starting in August)
- % 10th Grade Khan/ACT Academy Participation
- % of 10th graders who participate in Khan or ACT Academy who score an 18 or higher on an ACT by the end of the school year
- # of total PSAT Data Conversations
- # TruScore Data Conversations in Spring
- # Sessions 10th Grade Targeted Tutoring – Algebra 1 and Geometry based on overall ACT reporting categories from the ACT School Profile Report

Grade-Specific Goal Opportunities Continued

11th

- % of students with demonstrated self-set goals and plans
- % of parents who commit in writing to student set plans
- # of 11th Grader Awareness Focus Events emphasizing step by step ACT preparedness (events, posters, bulletin boards, pep rallies, etc)
- # of Parent and Community Meetings – “How to Help Students Prepare for ACT Content”
- Average ACT Composites Spring ACT
- # of Composite 21+ Spring ACT
- # of Benchmarks Met Spring ACT
- % 11th graders with ACT Score by End of Year
- % 11th Grade Khan/ACT Academy Participation
- # Target Students in ACT Prep Classes
- # 11th Graders Attending School Based ACT Workshops
- # ACT Data Conversations in Spring
- # Sessions 11th Grade Targeted Tutoring – All ACT Reporting Categories

12th

- % of students with demonstrated self-set goals and plans
- % of parents who commit in writing to student set plans
- # of 12th Grader Awareness Focus Events emphasizing college application, scholarship opportunities and ACT (events, posters, bulletin boards, pep rallies, etc)
- # of Parent and Community Meetings – College readiness and ACT Needs
- Average ACT Composites Fall ACT
- # of Composite 21+ Fall ACT
- # of Students moving from below 21 to 21+ Composite Spring to Fall
- # of Benchmarks Met Increase Spring to Fall
- 100% of 12th graders with ACT Score by Graduation
- % 12th Grade Khan/ACT Academy Participation
- # Target Students in ACT Prep Classes
- # of 12th graders with below 21 composite in fall registered for ACT subject area retake
- # 12th Graders Attending Q1 School Based ACT Workshops
- # 12th Graders ACT Data Conversations in Spring
- # Sessions 12th Grade Targeted Tutoring – All ACT Reporting Categories

More important than any goal is developing a culture of buy-in from students, faculty, families and stakeholders. To succeed, the work of the ACT must be the work of everyone in the school community. In the same way, the ACT can't just be a milestone for juniors and seniors, but a long-term goal for freshmen and sophomores as well. Helping students establish their own goals, especially as they see how they can build on them each year, is the first step on the road to equity with efficacy for every child.

Vision Into Action:

Preparing Students,
Raising Awareness,
Incentives &
Timeline

Preparing Students: Master Schedule ACT Prep Courses

ACT Prep fulfills two functions for students. The first is to provide exposure to the test and the strategies necessary to increase scores, and the second is to provide content remediation for students who may require remediation or assistance in the disciplinary content of the ACT.

The ACT covers content aligned to a broad spectrum of TN State Standards across four subtests: English, Reading, Math and Science. More important than the composite score for the test are the individual test benchmarks, which indicate readiness for college courses in those disciplines.

PowerSchool provides course codes for a Prep course in each of these disciplines. While schools may vary in the number of courses that they may be able to offer, all schools should be prepared to schedule a course offering in English/Reading and a course offering in Math/Science.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN ENCOURAGING OR DIRECTLY PLACING STUDENTS INTO SECTIONS OF CLASSROOM ACT PREP. ALSO CONSIDER THAT A STRONG IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT ACADEMY OR KHAN ACADEMY IS CRITICAL TO ANY ACT PREP COURSE IN ANY SCHOOL:

- ✓ ACT Prep is intended for students who have not yet demonstrated the ability to reach a composite of 21 or SAT/PSAT percentile equivalent on either the PSAT, Mastery Prep TruScore or the ACT itself.
- ✓ ACT Prep should be designed to enhance Tier 1 content and testing strategies, it is not a substitute for RTI2 or other academic interventions.
- ✓ Only those students with an existing ACT/TruScore composite between 16-20 or a SAT/PSAT score equivalent percentile score should be enrolled in ACT Prep. This covers those students who fall between the 25th and 50th percentile of ACT test takers. Enough sections of the course should be available to enroll all students in this score range into ACT Prep.
- ✓ Frequently students score above one ACT benchmark and below another. When placing a student into an ACT prep course, they should be placed according to their lowest ACT benchmark area, or at the discretion of the scheduling team in the case of a tie.
- ✓ 12th graders will have less than 9 weeks in the course between the time school begins and the fall ACT Senior Retake. If a 12th grade student is scheduled into an ACT Prep course, the guidance counselor and ACT Prep teacher should ensure that the student is also scheduled to take the December ACT.

ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS WHO WINDS UP IN AN ACT PREP COURSE IS THE CONTENT OF THE COURSE ITSELF. AS WITH RTI², ACT PREP IS ALL ABOUT CONNECTING INSTRUCTION TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NEEDS. THE ACT IS A CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT, MEANING THAT THE BEST WAY A STUDENT CAN PREPARE FOR THE TEST IS BY PERFORMING WELL IN TIER 1 INSTRUCTION. HOWEVER, ACT PREP CLASSES CAN HELP TO IMPART TESTING STRATEGIES AND TO FILL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE GAPS FOR STUDENTS. AS WITH RTI₂, WE RECOMMEND A COMBINATION OF INDIVIDUALIZED DIGITAL SUPPORT AND FACE TO FACE INSTRUCTION BASED ON STUDENT NEEDS.

Preparing Students: Digital ACT Prep

Given the SCS commitment to close the digital divide, now is the perfect opportunity to leverage digital tools for ACT growth. Two free platforms, ACT Academy and Khan Academy, are available to students free of charge and allow teachers to oversee student progress toward personalized goals. While neither platform offers a school level view of student achievement, by regularly pulling and sharing classroom level data, ACT Prep teachers can pin-point areas of student need and transmit them to other core content teachers. With this information, schools can tailor instruction to more strategically meet the needs of students in every grade.

GradeResults ACT Prep

This year, Academics partnered with Memphis Virtual School to offer ACT Prep through the district's GradeResults grade repair and credit recovery platform. By offering diagnostics in all subject areas, GradeResults provides students with access to lessons and content that are unlocked as the student progresses. A plus side to grade results is that every SCS high school student has access to the course by logging in to Clever online. This means that any student can log in and work at their own pace as long as they have access to the Internet to do so. However, while the program will read the content on the screen to students in a computerized voice, sometimes the content is not as deep or engaging as a teacher might hope from an online platform. This is important to note when choosing this tool for daily use.

Additionally, within the context of classroom ACT Prep, GradeResults is a great solution for students who may have passed particular courses but may need content refreshing in a specific subject area. ACT Prep teachers may have students work through modules to provide remediation or deliver missing learning for the first time.

ACT Academy

Formerly OpenEd, ACT Academy is the only ACT preparation platform officially endorsed by ACT. Including a multitude of resources, including Khan Academy modules, ACT academy allows students to input existing ACT scores, or to take a full-length ACT as a diagnostic. It then recommends daily lessons in each reporting category of the ACT and subject mastery lessons tailored to student needs. Teachers may make a class in the platform and add students to the class to monitor their progress. Step by step instructions may be found at: <https://actacademy.act.org/profile/onboarding/create-profile?role=teacher>. This data should then become part of any instructional conversation involving these students in PLCs.

ACT academy is a strong resource for our district as it is free, puts power in the hands of teachers and a multitude of resources in the hands of students. While an ACT Prep class is a perfect opportunity to oversee student progress, we strongly encourage schools to consider ways to get all enrolled students engaged in ACT academy work that could be completed during or after school. The work is appropriate for grades 9-12 and provides any opportunity for any student to fill gaps in learning. Please note that ACT Academy is NOT a district approved platform for RTI2.

Khan Academy

Similar to ACT Academy, Khan Academy is extremely versatile for students who take the time to set up both a Khan Academy Account and link it to a College Board account. A student's existing PSAT or SAT score is automatically used to determine a progression of lessons to build student understanding. This is especially useful for 9th graders who can not only use Khan Academy through a laptop, but also on the mobile app, allowing them to prepare quickly on the go.



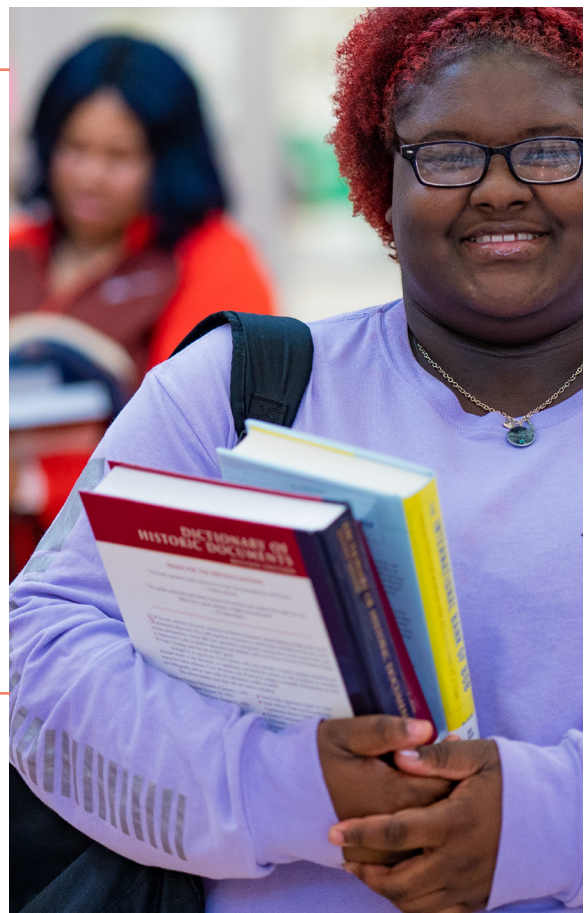
Preparing Students: ACT Workshops

In 2019-20 SCS conducted quarterly, teacher-led, ACT workshops with licensed content from Jane Ross Tutoring to boost student awareness of the ACT and prepare students to perform well on the assessment. These workshops were conducted on Saturdays and while strong in terms of content, in many cases did not reach as many students as could have been accommodated due to competing weekend priorities. To build equity of access and empower schools, in the 2020-21 school year the capacity for hosting ACT workshops will be moved to the school level, with school-based ACT Specialists taking on the role of workshop facilitators. By agreeing to the stipended roll, Specialists will present at least four quarterly workshops to give students an opportunity to engage with the content. However, empowering schools with the workshop content comes with the flexibility to ensure that students have access to the ACT workshop in a number of different ways. Additionally, in the 2020-2021 school year, Jane Ross Tutoring will be providing digital versions of key workshop materials, reducing the need to purchase additional materials. Regardless of which model a school chooses to pursue for workshops, it is expected that ACT Specialists keep track of workshop attendance to submit quarterly to the Office of Academics as a data point for the school. Schools may wish to consider the following options when scheduling these student supports:

SATURDAY SESSIONS

As in the 2019-20 school year, schools may choose to host workshops on Saturdays. As each school has a Specialist for English/Reading and Math/Science, schools may conduct the workshop with as large or small a group with as much or as little support as deemed appropriate. Each subject area workshop (Math, Science, English and Reading) is timed to roughly an hour and twenty minutes, making it possible to host the workshops as a half day on Saturday. If a school chooses this route it is recommended that the school offer incentives to students to encourage attendance and ensure that the atmosphere of a Saturday workshop is relaxed, fun and engaging.

SATURDAY SESSIONS SHOULD BE SCHEDULED IN AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE PROXIMITY TO AN ACT ADMINISTRATION DATE. ENROLLMENT SHOULD PRIORITIZE ANY STUDENT WHO IS REGISTERED TO SIT FOR THE TEST.



AFTER SCHOOL

As each subject area workshop is timed to an hour and twenty minutes it makes it very easy to regularly offer the full workshop over the course of a school week. School leaders may work with specialists to host workshops beyond the requisite 4 quarterly sessions, which may stand in lieu of other after-school duties that might otherwise be assigned. Administering the workshop in this fashion also allows students additional processing time between workshops. If your school chooses to administer workshops after school, ensure that sessions begin with an activity to help raise student alertness as engaging in highly demanding activity after a full day of school may inhibit student participation. As with Saturday sessions, it is recommended that schools offer incentives for attending the workshops, and if offering all four subject area workshops individually, adding individual workshop incentives to bolster attendance.



SCHOOL DAY WORKSHOPS

To ensure attendance, some schools may choose to administer the workshops through the course of the school day. Doing so not only allows greater access to students who may not be able to stay after school or come to a weekend session, but also allows leaders to more easily leverage ACT Specialists to deliver the workshop more than the requisite once per quarter. To administer the workshop, schools may choose one of two approaches.

LARGE GROUP WORKSHOPS

Schools may wish to deploy multiple teachers to supervise large group grade-wide sessions that may be held in gathering spaces such as the school library or auditorium. Because the workshops are largely teacher led, students primarily need a working surface for materials and writing. In this set up, the Specialists lead students through each of the subject areas, while other members of the team help monitor student behavior and redirect student questions. Groups may be divided into two parts and both workshops may be conducted simultaneously with a natural break for lunch at the normal student lunch time.

MASTER-SCHEDULE-DRIVEN WORKSHOPS

In this model, ACT Specialists take over the class of and exchange places for coverage with another teacher for one or more days, administering the workshop to students through the use of natural instructional time. While the average instructional period at a school that does not utilize block scheduling is only 55 minutes, ACT Specialists have been trained in the material and may use their discretion to shorten the workshop as needed for students. While this represents a drawback to this approach, administering the workshop to students in this way can maximize the overall impact, and allow the greatest amount of flexibility. Similar to the large group approach, it also allows for natural breaks and lunch to occur within the scope of the workshop. This approach is especially effective at schools with lower student population where this shift does not represent a lengthy departure from day to day classroom instruction.

Preparing Students: Tutoring

ACT SPECIALISTS ALSO SERVE AS A STARTING POINT FOR A BUILDING'S ACT TUTORING PLAN. AS ACT CERTIFIED EDUCATORS, THEY ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS AS WELL AS OTHER FACULTY MEMBERS. WHILE ALL MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY SHOULD BE CONTENT SPECIALISTS, THE ACT SPECIALIST IN YOUR BUILDING CAN PROVIDE CONSULTATION AND GUIDANCE AROUND HOW TO BEST STRUCTURE ACT TUTORING TO YIELD THE BEST RESULTS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS.

Frequently, ACT tutoring takes the form of helping students complete a range of practice questions in the style of classical test preparation. However, frequently this may yield a false sense of security as the student may still lack the critical content necessary to succeed. If a student requires content knowledge about algebraic functions, a session where they successfully work through geometry problems may feel beneficial but doesn't help them master the content needed to close knowledge gaps.

To help identify these concrete conceptual areas, teachers will need access to data. Tutoring for the ACT requires the teacher to understand how the ACT score ranges within each subject area test correspond to skills within our existing curriculum. While there are many sources for this, the free ACT data webinars are a great starting point. Teachers offering ACT tutoring will need access to student-level ACT data and the school profile report to determine the areas of highest need. Two approaches to ACT tutoring may be used in conjunction for maximum results:

Targeted Tutoring Cohorts

By looking at the individual student data and learning where each student falls in terms of the skills that are most likely to challenge them, teachers can group students into small groups for tutoring. This method of instruction works much in the way that students might be grouped for traditional intervention. This approach, while challenging, provides a high yield as teachers "surgically" correct student knowledge deficits, while minimizing time spent on less immediately urgent instruction. In this model, teacher teams might even divide the work into covering [each of the reporting categories](#), becoming specialized tutors for particular content. As students then master one aspect of the content, they can move to a different tutoring cohort to receive instruction in their next greatest area of need.

Challenge Area Tutoring

A look at the School Profile Report can quickly reveal the areas where the school year-over-year, faces the greatest gaps in student knowledge. Using this information in combination with a look at the [ACT College and Career Readiness standards](#) which break down key skills by score range, school teams can decide which areas are most in need of support, both through classroom instruction and after school tutoring. In this way, schools can focus effort on a few key, high leverage standards with an aim to lift students by shoring up key deficit skills. This in combination with more discrete tutoring as described above can help students make valuable connections to ACT content, especially among 11th and 12th graders who may be two to three instructional years away from original first teaching.

Raising Awareness: A Best Practice for Growth

The way that schools choose to engage stakeholders must be an inside-out process. Without building commitment at all levels of the school, we can never hope to raise our ACT achievement. Please keep in mind, that the ACT doesn't just represent the work of the 11th and 12th grade, or even of high school as a whole. The ACT is a cumulative test that relies on student knowledge learned in grades K-8. This means that in a way, the ACT acts as a referendum on the entire K-12 experience for an SCS student.

Leadership Awareness

While the principal is the only stakeholder in the building whose evaluation is directly tied to the ACT every administrator in the building should feel responsibility toward ensuring that students are succeeding. This includes oversight of the master schedule to ensure that the correct students are in ACT prep courses, supporting a building culture and climate that boosts ACT awareness and overseeing the successful administration of the test. Administrators, especially instructional coaches, should be engaging with each other and teacher colleagues in discussions around data, and ensuring that the ACT remains a visible part of the program of work in the school. Administrators projecting awareness and knowledge about the ACT will ensure that all stakeholders know that the ACT is something your school takes seriously.

Faculty Awareness

Similarly, all faculty should be trained and knowledgeable about the work of the ACT. From understanding of the structure of the test itself to broader instructional strategies that connect curriculum to ACT standards, faculty has the largest role to play in supporting an instructional culture to build ACT competency. Strong first teaching provides students with the knowledge needed to pass the test and being able to provide support for students who demonstrate the *need* for support through tutoring and supplemental instruction will be critical to student success in the long run. More than anything though, while faculty have the highest level of opportunity to learn about the ACT and transmit knowledge and data-sense to students, the most critical role that faculty play is to communicate something more important: belief. Students who know that the adults in the building believe in and celebrate their success will be bolstered to achieve through authentic, intrinsic motivation.

Student Awareness

Amid (possibly) daily messages about testing from End of Course to Advanced Placement, the ACT cannot get lost in the shuffle. Students must be made aware of the importance of the test not only for their future after high school, but as a referendum on the quality of their K-12 education. The ACT is something at which they deserve to be able to achieve success. Students should be aware not only of the scores needed to exit school as a ready graduate, but to attain enrollment at specific post-secondary institutions. Students should also be knowledgeable of any college readiness score report associated with their testing history, including EOC, ACT, TruScore, PSAT and SAT. As a hallmark of data literacy, students should be able to discuss their data, know what it means and know what they need to do to improve it, regardless of grade or achievement level.

Stakeholder Awareness

Frequently a challenging connection to make is with families and members of the community, especially when it comes time to talk about high stakes testing. However, building the awareness with family and community stakeholders that the ACT is important and achievable for students is key to fostering a supportive environment for students at home and within the community. To help track goals around family and community engagement, we recommend that schools administer an awareness benchmark assessment with parents at the first annual meeting, before they are given information regarding the ACT. Pre-test and Post-test scores can be used as a basis for raising family awareness overall.

Raising Awareness Continued

Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the following facts about your ACT program:

- THE ACT IS A TEST THAT ALL STUDENTS MUST TAKE BEFORE THEY ARE ABLE TO GRADUATE.
- THE ACT IS A COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE TEST THAT IS BUILT MOSTLY FROM STUDENT LEARNING IN THE 7TH-11TH GRADE BUT CONTAINS SOME SKILLS THAT GO BACK AS FAR AS 3RD GRADE.
- THE TEST IS MADE UP OF FOUR SUBTESTS: READING, ENGLISH, MATH AND SCIENCE.
- THE AVERAGE OF THE SUBTEST SCORES IS CALLED THE COMPOSITE SCORE.
- AN ACT COMPOSITE SCORE OF 21 IS THE STATE BENCHMARK FOR GRADUATION READINESS. A 21 COMPOSITE MEANS THAT A STUDENT IS HIGHLY LIKELY TO MAKE AT LEAST A C IN REQUIRED FIRST YEAR COLLEGE COURSES.
- A COMPOSITE SCORE OF 21 OR ABOVE ON THE ACT MEANS STUDENTS CAN RECEIVE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF STATE AND PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIP MONEY TO ATTEND COLLEGE.
- A SCORE OF 21 IS REQUIRED TO EARN THE TN HOPE SCHOLARSHIP.
- THE STATE PAYS FOR STUDENTS TO TAKE THE ACT TWO TIMES, ONCE AS A JUNIOR AND ONCE AS A SENIOR
- STUDENTS CAN TAKE THE TEST BEFORE AND AFTER THE STATE PAID DAYS AND CAN EVEN GET A FEE WAIVER FROM GUIDANCE COUNSELORS TO TAKE IT FOR FREE.
- STUDENTS CAN RETAKE INDIVIDUAL SUBTESTS (READING, ENGLISH, MATH AND SCIENCE) IF NEEDED - THIS MUST BE DONE ONLINE.
- THE SCHOOL OFFERS THE FOLLOWING ACT PREP SUPPORTS – ACT PREP CLASSES, ACT WORKSHOPS, AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING, ETC.
- ANY ACT INCENTIVES THAT THE SCHOOL OFFERS FOR STUDENTS AND HOW STUDENTS CAN EARN THEM.
- STUDENTS CAN PRACTICE FOR THE ACT ONLINE AT HOME FOR FREE ON A COMPUTER, TABLET OR SMART PHONE USING EITHER ACT OR KHAN ACADEMY.
- FAMILIES CAN SUPPORT STUDENTS SIMPLY BY MAKING SURE THEY ARE ATTENDING WORKSHOPS OR AFTER SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES AND ENSURING THAT ONLINE PRACTICE WITH ACT ACADEMY OR KHAN ACADEMY BECOMES PART OF THEIR EXISTING DAILY STUDY ROUTINE AT HOME.

Assessment Roundup

OUR DISTRICT UTILIZES A NUMBER OF ASSESSMENT PLATFORMS THAT CAN ASSIST IN YOUR ACT PLAN.

MASTERY CONNECT FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Many major achievement tests are administered annually, and so may still not provide enough up-to-the-moment information about student ACT readiness for schools to innovate with flexibility. Our district CFAs and the Mastery Connect platform are strong tools for understanding where students might stand in terms of overall standards mastery. Beyond quarterly district assessments (which many 11th and 12th grade ACT takers may not experience once they have completed all EOC tested subjects), schools may use the ACT Standards for College and Career Readiness to find those areas where students - according to existing ACT or other college readiness assessment data - may need additional support. Using these standards, teacher teams may construct assessments driven by ACT style questions in the areas where students may be receiving re-teaching, tutoring or other ACT Prep driven strategies. The Mastery Connect community contains many practice assessments aligned to the ACT Standards, which may be imported as a separate curriculum map for use by ACT Prep instructors.

PSAT-9

The Pre SAT has long been a tool that schools use to determine readiness for upper level course work and that students use as the first step to the esteemed National Merit Scholarship. Since 2018-2019 SCS has committed to using the PSAT-9 with all of our 9th grade students for two reasons. The first is to give students an experience with a college entrance test, to let them experience the assessment and experience a high stakes environment before they have to sit for the ACT as 11th graders. The second is that the PSAT-9 comes with an [ACT Concordance](#) that provides equivalent scores for SAT and ACT, along with a comprehensive data sheet for each test-taker. Understanding where students may already need support, and which students may already be demonstrating readiness gives schools an advantage as they work to ensure that correct students receive the correct levels of ACT support. Once again, the PSAT like the ACT as a whole gives us a universal baseline for students, giving schools key data for instructional programming and the offering of discipline specific supports that can help boost students up through high school and into a bright postsecondary future.

TRUSCORE

Like the PSAT-9 the [Mastery Prep TruScore](#) is a practice ACT that mirrors the official test. In SCS we've chosen to administer this test to all 10th grade students to ensure that as students move into their junior year, schools have a clear picture of their ACT trajectory. The TruScore also comes with on-demand professional development for teachers to assist with interpreting scores and talking to students about individual results. The TruScore is a robust proxy for ACT achievement and above all, provides continuity as schools look to manage ACT Prep opportunities before students are required to sit for the ACT.



Rethinking Student Incentives

INCENTIVIZING STUDENTS TO DO ANYTHING CAN BE A CHALLENGE. INCENTIVIZING STUDENTS TO PERFORM WELL ON AN END OF YEAR COMPREHENSIVE EXAM, WHICH CAN FEEL TOO BIG TO EVEN COMPREHEND, NO MATTER HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO THAT STUDENT'S FUTURE CAN BE A MONUMENTAL CHALLENGE FOR A HOST OF REASONS.

Frequently when a school designs incentives, they come in the form of a large, end of year reward whether material to recognize an individual's achievement, or an event to recognize the achievement of a group. The assumption in choosing this incentive comes from the idea that the persistent thought of the reward will continue to drive student motivation. Furthermore, it allows adult stakeholders an opportunity to point to a culminating moment that they can use to demonstrate how the school has chosen to recognize achievement and move on. However, while this might indeed reward students who have achieved, it is very difficult to show that the prize ultimately incentivized and motivated students to perform.

First, when thinking about incentives, people, especially young people, are prone to an economic principal known as [hyperbolic discounting](#), where the further away a reward is, the less valuable it is to the recipient. This contributed to a phenomenon researchers call [present bias](#), where people are likely to think less of a reward, even a large one, the further away it is in time, especially when offered the opportunity to receive a smaller reward immediately. Many schools program rewards and incentives

to occur only at the end of the year, which dramatically lengthens the amount of time between the needed action (in this case, preparation for the ACT and a seriousness about college readiness) and the perceived "incentive."

As such, when a school creates an incentive system, it is important to think of rewards along a continuum that allows students at all levels of achievement to begin receiving rewards against easily measurable results, early in the year. Allowing students to receive beneficial rewards as an incentive early on utilizes another classic cognitive science concept: [loss aversion](#). Stated simply, people are much more likely to value a loss of something they have, over the opportunity of gaining something in the future. As such, awarding an incentive that must be maintained by a student can have far stronger impact than relying on a reward given further down the line.

Keep in mind as well, what we are asking students to do as they prepare for the ACT is not at all straightforward. As with any plan for intervention, students have to become experts in understanding their own data, they have to seek out opportunities and learn how to work independently to close gaps in their knowledge that they

may not know they even have. On top of that, we are asking them to think about taking a test, whose outcome is extremely important, but the outcome of which won't be felt in many cases for up to three years.

When faced with these hurdles, if we choose to offer incentives, we must do so seriously and consistently. Moreover, while a school may lean very heavily on this incentive driven theory of motivation, we also must ask ourselves, is the program we are offering appealing? Fun? Accessible? Interesting? Does the work that we do and provide for students to prepare them give cause for curiosity and opportunity for conceptual and self-discovery? Beyond simple, quantifiable incentives, we have to consider additional modes of motivational work that while harder to provide to students than gift cards, tickets or parties, can have much longer lasting effects.

Regardless of when, how or to whom your school chooses to reward and incentivize, remember that consistency is the key to a successful program. No matter how appealing an incentive, if it is enforced unfairly or without clear intentionality, students and stakeholders will lose faith in the entire process and cause programmatic setbacks. Even a simple bulletin board, made visible, striking and updated regularly can boost student morale and self-confidence.



WHAT IS OUR CAPACITY FOR OFFERING INCENTIVES

Knowing the kinds of incentives that your school is prepared to offer is key to the process of setting up a good incentive system. This may include determining whether you are going to set aside funds for incentives in the annual budget, or if you intend to offer intangible rewards as well. Will you be involving parents, community partners and local businesses, or will rewards and incentives be contained to the school? Are you offering any support to teachers to help them provide more meaningful and motivating instruction to students? Understanding the capacity your school has for giving incentives helps create a real plan that will be easy to execute. If you know that an incentive may constitute a hardship for your school, focus instead on things that you know you can deliver to students that build consistency and trust. Remember, that to be an incentive, instead of just a reward, students will need to know about it, be reminded of it, and feel that it is attainable through work. Part of your capacity check needs to be whether your school and staff have the energy not only to offer the incentive, but to promote it to keep students excited and working toward the end goal.



WHO SHOULD RECEIVE THEM?

Key to knowing your capacity and determining the scope of incentives is knowing who in your school will receive them. Typically, we designate rewards for specific achievement outcomes and so at the very least, each school should offer incentives for students who earn a 21 or higher composite on the ACT. Additional such incentives may be tied to students who earn composites between 25-29, composites of 30+ and composite growth of 3 or more points. However, will these be the only incentives that your school chooses to offer? Will students be incentivized to participate in ACT Prep, to work on digital ACT platforms, to seek out tutoring, to take practice tests or official tests outside of the state mandated days? Will your school offer incentives for students who bring family to key meetings, or who seek out other opportunities to improve on the ACT? At schools with emerging programs, it may be possible to only select one or two key groups to incentivize and reward, but over time programs should seek to evolve to supply ongoing incentives to students for a wide array of achievement.

POSSIBLE INCENTIVES

For Individuals

- Certificates and Trophies
- Bulletin Board Recognition
- Individual acknowledgment in Class or at School Level
- Post a Student's Success on school social media
- School Event/Game Tickets
- Out of Uniform Waivers
- Hall Pass Privileges
- Principal for a Day
- Permitted Cell Phone/Screen Time
- Lunch Line Privileges – Early Dismissal to and From Lunch
- Exemption from Exams
- College Application Fee Assistance
- Student "VIP Area" Access for School Events
- Gift Cards
- Services – Food/Wellness/Auto/Etc.
- Subscriptions
- Concert/Event/Game Tickets

For Cohorts

- Field Trips
- Parties and Evening Events
- School Field Days
- School Rec-Room Days (Party/Video/Board Games/Karaoke/Trivia/Socializing at end of school day)
- Reward Cohort "Out to Lunch"
- Involvement in Faculty/Instructional Planning Process
- Student Focus Groups to Determine School Programming
- Guest Speakers
- Student Leadership and Teambuilding Opportunities
- Cohort symbol, flare or "swag"

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF AND YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT WHAT INCENTIVES YOU CAN REALISTICALLY OFFER AND SUSTAIN OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR. YOU WILL GAIN MORE THROUGH BUILDING TRUST THAN BY VOLUME OF REWARDS!

Annual Planning Month by Month

While every school's ACT specialist will support the development of a school level ACT plan as part of their annual scope of work, to pace this ACT work, you may wish to work with your team to set up a calendar and designate

the parties responsible for the activities required to make the plan a reality. The calendar below gives an outline of key actions that should take place by the end of each month to keep the work of the ACT on track.



June

By June of a typical school year, ACT test data should be in the hands of school leaders. In the 2020-2021 school year the absence of a Spring ACT means that schools should use existing formative assessment data to examine student achievement for ACT planning.



July

By the end of July, schools should have ACT Specialists selected for the year. Additionally, school leaders and ACT specialists should work together to draft the school's formal ACT plan and review the College and Career Readiness goals in the school's School Improvement Plan.



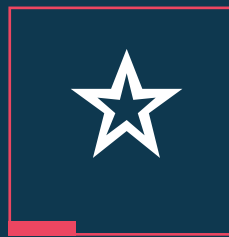
August

By the end of August, ACT specialists should complete all necessary training for the first quarterly ACT workshop. ACT events for the school year should be planned and the master schedule should reflect students enrolled in ACT prep courses in all four tested subjects.



September

By the end of September, schools should administer and review at least one formative/mock ACT assessment for 11th graders such as the MasteryPrep TruScore, GradeResults Benchmark assessment, retired ACT tests or ACT Academy benchmark.



October

By the end of October, all schools should conduct their first quarterly ACT Workshop, ACT data meeting and 12th graders should participate in the Fall ACT. Furthermore, all ACT specialists should participate in a quarterly meeting to discuss progress and program results.



November

By the end of November, 12th grade students enrolled in ACT Prep courses should be registered for the December ACT with the help of fee waivers as needed. Schools should hold at least one parent-facing and one student-facing ACT awareness event.

THE WORK OF THE ACT SHOULD BE DIVIDED ACCORDING TO AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM, GUIDANCE COUNSELORS, ACT COORDINATOR, ACT SPECIALIST, ILT MEMBERS, PLC COACH AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS.



December

By the end of December, Specialists should lead the ACT Team in analyzing the results, and to make plans to adjust instruction in the spring semester based on ACT reporting categories. Second Quarter ACT workshops should be completed.



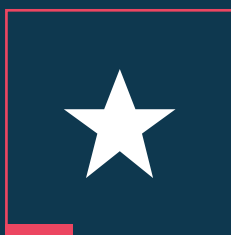
January

By the end of January, all schools should have completed the second quarterly ACT Data Meeting and make any necessary adjustments to instruction for 11th graders based on midterm grades and formative assessments.



February

By the end of February, all schools should complete a second ACT parent meeting and an additional student meeting for 11th graders focusing on ACT preparation. Tutoring should be under-way based on ACT reporting categories for students based on school or individual needs.



March

By the middle of March, all schools should conduct the third quarterly ACT workshop. ACT Specialists should attend the third quarter district-wide meeting. All 11th graders should sit for the Spring ACT.



April

By the end of April, all ACT Specialists and school leaders should participate in check-in meetings with Academic Office to determine the status of the ACT Plan at each school.



May

By the end of May, schools should complete all quarterly workshops and data meetings and should receive results from the Spring ACT. Any incentives based on ACT performance should be awarded at this time.

A Final Word from the Chief Academic Officer



Dear Dedicated Educators,

To make this work possible, it takes every stakeholder working together, every day for every student. The ACT tells us so much about the work of the district that we must do everything that we can to ensure that when students finally sit for this crucial assessment, they know that we in SCS have done our part to prepare them for the future that awaits them after graduation.

I salute you all for your tireless efforts and for agreeing to be part of this work as we propel forward into the next phase of success and achievement on the ACT.

DR. ANTONIO BURT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Burt".

SCS, Chief Academic Officer

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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