



One-third of North Carolina students who took the ACT tested at the college-ready level in 2011.

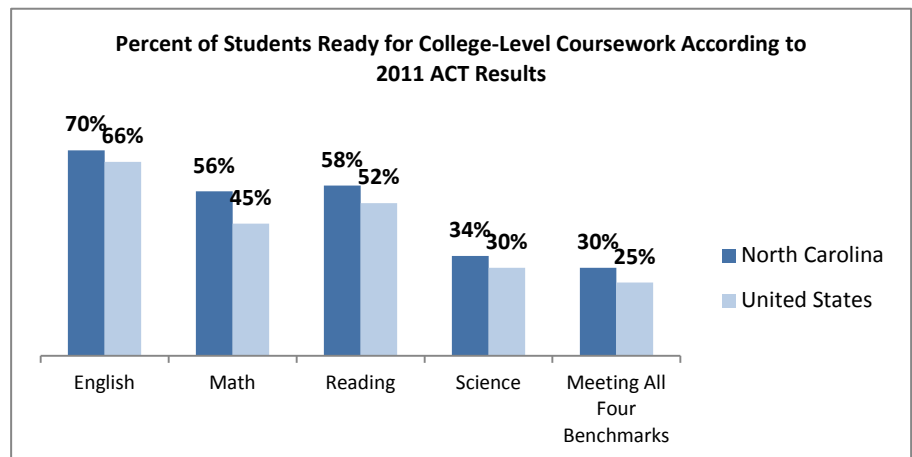
North Carolina high school students' aspirations for postsecondary education are high. In 2003-2004, 69 percent of North Carolina's high school seniors expected to attain a bachelor's degree or higher, and another 18 percent expected to complete some postsecondary education.¹ Unfortunately, many of these students are unprepared for the demands of college coursework and must enroll in remedial courses. In 2008, nearly one in ten (9.5 percent) of first-year students at the University of North Carolina enrolled in at least one remedial course in their first semester.

ACT as a Measure of College Readiness

The ACT college admissions test is one tool that can be used to gauge a student's academic readiness for college coursework. Both the ACT and SAT are used by postsecondary institutions for admissions, but these two tests measure different knowledge and skills. The SAT is an aptitude test that assesses a student's reasoning and verbal abilities. The ACT tests a student's content knowledge in the areas of English, mathematics, reading, and science. Because the ACT is a content-based test, it can be used to diagnose whether a student has enough knowledge in these subjects to succeed in introductory college courses. A student who meets the ACT "college readiness benchmark score" in one of the tested subjects has a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in a corresponding college course.

The ACT in North Carolina

Approximately 18 percent of public and non-public high school students took the ACT in 2011 and earned an average ACT score of 21.9 (out of 36 possible points). Although North Carolina's average on the ACT outpaced the national average for a fourth consecutive year, **only one-third of the students who took the ACT scored at the college-ready level in each of the four content areas.**



During its 2011 session, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation to support the administration of the ACT to all students in the 11th grade. The Department of Public Instruction is currently planning to use \$5.5 million in reversions to administer the pre-ACT PLAN assessment to all 10th graders and the ACT to all 11th graders free-of-charge in the 2011-2012 school year. The state is also in the process of developing a new accountability model that uses ACT results to measure students' postsecondary readiness.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The condition of education 2004, indicator 23: Postsecondary Expectations of 12th-Graders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.