



ACT Aspire Overview

What is ACT Aspire?

ACT Aspire is an interactive assessment system for students in grades 3–10 that provides deep and rich insights into student performance in English, reading, mathematics, science, and writing in the context of college and career readiness.

ACT Aspire is based on an articulated and sequential progression of knowledge and skills which ultimately connect to college and career readiness and success. This progression has been back-mapped to grade 3 from the non-negotiable skills assessed on The ACT at grade 11 or 12.

How do ACT Aspire and The ACT measure progress toward college and career readiness?

Both ACT Aspire and The ACT are linked to ACT's College and Career Readiness Standards and College Readiness Benchmarks. The ACT College and Career Readiness Standards are precise descriptions of the essential skills and knowledge that students need to become ready for postsecondary education and the world of work, beginning in grade 8 and continuing through grade 12, plus further standards representing higher levels of preparation.

ACT's College Readiness Benchmark scores on the subject-area tests in The ACT represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50 percent chance of obtaining a grade of B or higher, or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher, in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses (English Composition, College Algebra, introductory social science courses, and Biology). By extending these Benchmarks statistically from the first year of postsecondary education back through the third grade, ACT provides students, families, and educators with a coherent road map of what students have learned and what they are ready to learn next as they progress from the early elementary grades through high school graduation.

Together, ACT Aspire and The ACT compose a cohesive and aligned assessment system that documents student progress toward college and career readiness, a cohesion and alignment not currently possible with any other assessment system. States that currently administer The ACT to all their 11th grade students can further benefit from the additional information and guidance about their students' readiness for college and career that ACT Aspire provides.

Is ACT Aspire aligned to the Common Core State Standards?

ACT's College and Career Readiness Standards served as one of the foundations upon which the Common Core State Standards were based. Because ACT data and research informed the development of the Common Core State Standards, and

because many of the same ACT content experts who helped develop the Common Core State Standards also serve on the ACT Aspire design and development teams, ACT was able to build ACT Aspire so that its measurement of student progress toward college and career readiness aligns well with the Common Core State Standards. Statistically, this alignment is strongest in grades 3 through 7; beginning with grade 8, somewhat greater emphasis is placed on ACT's College and Career Readiness Standards so as to align more seamlessly with the content of The ACT.

In addition, ACT Aspire and The ACT go beyond the Common Core State Standards (which cover English Language Arts and mathematics) to measure performance in science. ACT Aspire also provides scores for STEM, performance on complex texts, and work readiness.

What does ACT Aspire include?

ACT Aspire includes a vertically scaled battery of achievement tests capable of measuring individual student performance and preparation for advancement to next-level coursework in a consistent, comparable fashion. In order to achieve this coherent system of measurement and provide actionable information for all students, the ACT Aspire design includes items with a range of difficulties, requiring a range of knowledge depths, and covering a progression of learning from foundational concepts to sophisticated applications. It also includes a mix of question types: constructed response, selected response, and technology enhanced. Both summative and periodic assessments are available:

- *Summative:* Administered annually in grades 3 – 8 and high school, these assessments highlight students' progress toward meeting college readiness benchmarks.
- *Periodic:* ACT Aspire's periodic assessments include three interim assessments per grade per content area in grades 3–10 (Interim assessments) and five classroom assessments per grade per content area in grades 3–8 (Classroom assessments). Both types of assessments are designed to help educators better understand students' learning needs throughout the school year.

How is ACT Aspire delivered?

ACT Aspire summative tests are offered in two formats, online and paper; periodic tests are offered online. The summative assessment takes approximately four hours to complete for all five subjects, while testing times for periodic assessments range from 20 to 45 minutes.

Is ACT Aspire operational?

ACT Aspire is fully operational and currently available for statewide administration. Alabama implemented ACT Aspire in grades 3-8 and 10 in spring 2014 and South Carolina will begin administering ACT Aspire for the same grades in the 2014–15 school year. Additionally, Wisconsin will begin using ACT Aspire for grades 9 and 10 in the 2014-15 school year.

What kind of reporting does ACT Aspire offer?

ACT Aspire reports reflect the needs of educators, students, and parents and facilitate early academic interventions to help students get or stay on target for college and career readiness. Reports display information in a clean, direct manner with both numerical and graphical representations supported by descriptive text. ACT Aspire offers reports for both students and teachers:

- *Student:* These reports indicate the student's performance on each subject and the level of college and career readiness in each subject. The reports also list improvement ideas for students performing at the lowest skill levels, and provide predicted scores on The ACT based on current performance.
- *Teacher:* User friendly and actionable, these reports group subject proficiency by student so that teachers can easily identify the range of their students' performance, from those exceeding benchmarks to those needing additional supports. Teacher reports also include student growth distributions and skill-level performance breakdowns.