

# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, August 19, 2009  
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DPI-NR 2009-14 B

## Sixty-seven percent of Wisconsin graduates take ACT, scores stable

MADISON — Wisconsin’s 22.3 composite score on the 2009 ACT college admissions exam report places the state third in the nation among 27 ACT-taking states. Nationally, the composite score held at 21.1 for a second year.

2009 ACT Composite Scores	
Wisconsin	22.3
Nation	21.1

Minnesota had a composite score of 22.7 with 68 percent of its graduates tested. It placed first in the nation followed by Iowa, which had a composite score of 22.4 with 59 percent of its graduates taking the ACT. Wisconsin had 46,658 public and private school graduates who took the ACT at some time during their high school career. They represent 67 percent of the state’s 2009 graduates. Nationally, 1.48 million 2009 graduates (45 percent) took the ACT.

“Overall Wisconsin students did well on this national test,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “However, the results show areas for improvement.”

As a measure of college readiness, ACT has established benchmark scores that predict success on credit-bearing college coursework. Students who earn a score of 18 or higher on the English test have a 75 percent chance of earning a C in college-level English. Wisconsin had 77 percent of its graduates earning the English benchmark score compared to 67 percent nationally. For math, 53 percent of state students earned the benchmark score (22) compared to 42 percent nationally. In reading, which measures preparedness for college-level social science courses, 62 percent of Wisconsin graduates earned the benchmark score of 21. Nationally, 53 percent of students reached the reading benchmark score. In science, which relates to college-level biology, 37 percent of state students earned the benchmark score of 24.

Percentage of 2009 Graduates Meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks		
ACT Benchmark*	Wisconsin	Nation
<b>English (18)</b>	77	67
<b>Math (22)</b>	53	42
<b>Reading (Social Sciences) (21)</b>	62	53
<b>Science (Biology) (24)</b>	37	28

\*A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding credit-bearing college course.

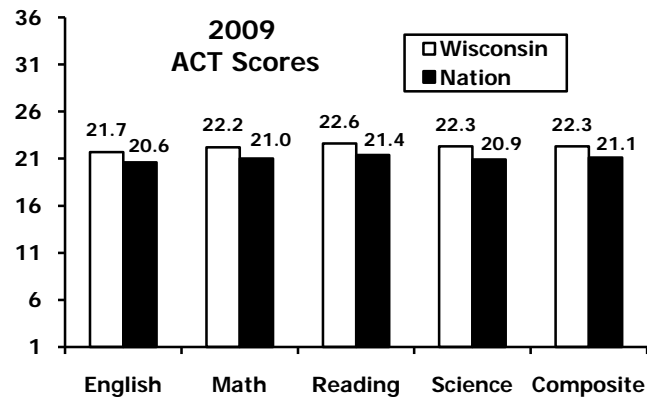
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Nationally, 28 percent of students earned the science benchmark score. Thirty percent of Wisconsin students earned all four benchmark scores compared to 23 percent who did so nationally.

“ACT’s college preparedness benchmarks are part of an emerging trend for transforming education, which focuses on the knowledge and career-readiness skills colleges and employers expect from a high school graduate,” Evers said. “While our graduates out-performed their peers nationally on the ACT, achievement gaps are quite apparent. We can and must do better for our children.”

On ACT subject-area tests, Wisconsin students scored 21.7 points in English compared to 20.6 nationally. Both scores were the same as last year. In mathematics, Wisconsin students earned a 22.2, down one-tenth of a point from last year.

Nationally, the mathematics score held the same at 21.0. Wisconsin’s reading score was 22.6, the national reading score was 21.4, and both were the same last year. The state’s science score was 22.3, the same as last year. The national science score was up one-tenth of a point from the previous year to 20.9. The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36.



In the 2009 report, the percentage of Wisconsin’s ACT-takers who were students of color increased 1.1 points from last year to 12.8 percent. African American students had a composite score of 16.8, down two-tenths of a point from last year and one-tenth of a point lower than their peers nationally. American Indian students had a composite score of 20.7, a three-tenths of a point score gain from last year. Nationally, the composite score for American Indian students fell one-tenth of a point from last year to 18.9 points. Wisconsin’s Asian students had a composite score of 20.3, down one-tenth of a point from last year. The national score for Asian students, 23.2, was up three-tenths of a point from last year. Hispanic students from Wisconsin had a composite score of 19.7, one full point higher than their peers nationally. White students from the state had a composite score of 22.9, up one-tenth of a point from last year and seven-tenths of a point higher than white students nationally.

Students who took a college-preparatory curriculum had higher subject-area test and composite scores. The achievement gap in Wisconsin ranged from 1.8 to 2.3 points higher for

	Wisconsin			Nation		
	Core Program	Less than Core	All Students	Core Program	Less than Core	All Students
English	22.4	20.1	21.7	21.7	18.3	20.6
Math	22.9	20.6	22.2	21.9	18.9	21.0
Reading	23.3	21.2	22.6	22.3	19.4	21.4
Science	22.9	21.1	22.3	21.7	19.2	20.9
Composite	23.0	20.9	22.3	22.0	19.1	21.1

(more)

students who took more academic classes. Nationally, students with more academic preparation had scores that ranged from 2.5 to 3.4 points higher. ACT defines a core curriculum as four years of English and three or more years of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science, and social studies. Wisconsin had 73 percent of students reporting that they took a core curriculum. Nationally, 70 percent of students reported taking the ACT-recommended core curriculum.

“We are part of the national common core standards group that is aligning academic standards to postsecondary and career expectations,” Evers explained. “This benchmarking of academic standards will drive other changes in education. Our own standards for English language arts and mathematics recently received praise from the American Diploma Project as being ‘intellectually demanding and well aligned with the ADP benchmarks,’ putting us in a good position to ensure that every child graduates with the skills needed to be successful in further education and work.”

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**NOTES:** The attached table provides additional information about ACT results. This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2009\\_14.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2009_14.pdf). ACT scores for Wisconsin public schools are available from local school districts and are posted on the Department of Public Instruction Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) website <http://dpi.wi.gov/sig/index.html>. Click on “Data Analysis.”

# 2009 ACT Results

Composite Scores by Racial and Ethnic Groups, School Program, and College Readiness Benchmarks

	ACT Test-Takers	Composite Score	Percentage Taking Core	Composite Scores		Percentage Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores				
				Core or More	Less than Core	English (18)	Mathematics (22)	Reading (21)	Science (24)	All Four Benchmarks
<b>Wisconsin</b>										
African American	2,548	16.8	57	17.4	16.6	32	10	20	6	3
American Indian	350	20.7	62	21.7	19.4	67	38	53	23	17
Asian	1,681	20.3	65	21.2	18.8	54	40	39	23	19
Hispanic	1,412	19.7	66	20.4	18.9	55	31	43	18	14
White	37,801	22.9	75	23.4	21.4	82	57	67	41	33
Other/No Response	2,866	22.6	68	23.5	21.4	--	--	--	--	--
<b>All Students</b>	46,658	22.3	73	23.0	20.9	77	53	62	37	30
<b>Nation</b>										
African American	196,149	16.9	64	17.6	15.9	35	12	20	6	4
American Indian	15,773	18.9	59	20.1	17.4	50	24	39	16	11
Asian	59,093	23.2	80	23.7	21.4	76	65	61	42	36
Hispanic	133,569	18.7	67	19.6	17.3	48	27	35	13	10
White	941,206	22.2	73	23.0	20.1	77	50	62	35	28
Other/No Response	134,679	20.9	63	22.2	19.0	--	--	--	--	--
<b>All Students</b>	1,480,469	21.1	70	22.0	19.1	67	42	53	28	23

**NOTES:** An ACT core curriculum is four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science, and social studies. In 2009, about 2 percent of Wisconsin students did not identify their intended high school curriculum, and 3 percent of students nationally did not provide their high school course-taking plans during ACT registration. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course. The science benchmark is for college-level biology.