



Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance

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NEWS

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State Students Score Well on ACT, But Many Still Unprepared for College Rigor Needed in Core Curriculum to Ensure College Readiness

MADISON—Wisconsin students have some of the nation’s highest average ACT scores (22.3 vs. 21.2, U.S.), yet only 29 percent of the state’s 46,430 students tested in 2007 met ACT college-readiness benchmarks in core subjects, according to new information from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX).

The national percentage was even lower (23%), according to the ACT testing service, which defines college readiness as having a 50% chance of earning a B or higher in a subject, or a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher. The testing firm sets benchmarks for each subject at a score-level that ensures those chances.

More than three-fourths of the Badger State students were prepared for a college English composition course (77% vs. 69% nationally), but results were lower in social science (60% vs. 53% nationally), college algebra (53% vs. 43%), and college biology (37% vs. 28%). Combining all four subjects, only 29% of 2007 Wisconsin high school graduates were likely to succeed in all four subjects.

Results varied by gender and ethnicity as well. Overall, four-course readiness was higher for men (34%) than for women (26%), mainly due to male scores in math and science. Men had a 61%-48% edge over women in math, and a 43%-32% edge in science. Women scored higher than men in English composition (79%-76%) and in social sciences (61%-60%).

By ethnic group, the share of students deemed college-ready in all four subject areas included 32% of Caucasians tested; 15-19% of Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans; and 4% of African-Americans.

ACT found that the “quality and intensity—or, *rigor*—of the high school curriculum” is not adequate to prepare students for college, unless they take courses beyond the core, and recommended improving the quality of core courses.

Between one- and two-fifths of Wisconsin’s most advanced students—those taking classes well beyond the core, i. e., four or more years of classes in all areas, including calculus—were not college ready: English (18%), math (22%), social studies (35%), and science (43%).

WISTAX is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public-policy research firm celebrating 76 years of service to Wisconsin citizens.

For a copy of the WISTAX report “State test scores show college-readiness ‘gap,’” write: WISTAX, 401 North Lawn Ave., Madison, Wisconsin 53704; e-mail, wistax@wistax.org; or call 608.241.9789. □

(Editors’ Note: An electronic version of this release is available at www.wistax.org.)

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, founded in 1932, is the state’s oldest and most respected private government-research organization. Through its research, publications, civic lectures, and school talks, WISTAX aims to improve Wisconsin government through citizen education. Nonprofit, nonpartisan, and independently funded, WISTAX is not affiliated with any group—national, state, or local—and receives no government support.