

Virginia Students Increase Achievement on the ACT *Gains on College-Admissions Test Seen as Significant*

The performance of Virginia high school seniors on the ACT college-admissions examination improved significantly this year as students increased their achievement on all four components of the test.

The number of Virginia high school students taking the ACT jumped by 15 percent. During 2008, 16,896 Virginia students took the ACT, compared with 14,653 in 2007 and 10,172 in 2004.

Virginia's average composite score of 21.8 was higher than the national average of 21.1 and represented a 0.4-percent increase over the 21.4 average score achieved by Virginia high school graduates in 2007, and a 1.1 point increase in achievement since 2004, when the average composite score for Virginia students was 20.9.

"Virginia students have established a clear trend of increasing achievement on the ACT," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy Cannaday Jr. "Their performance and the growing number of Virginia students taking the test illustrate the link between rigorous standards and higher achievement."

Virginia Average ACT Scores										
Year	English		Mathematics		Reading		Science		Composite	
	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US
2007	21.0	20.7	21.2	21.0	21.7	21.5	21.1	21.0	21.4	21.2
2008	21.5	20.6	21.8	21.0	22.2	21.4	21.3	20.8	21.8	21.1

ACT results are reported on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest possible score. ACT describes increases in achievement of 0.3 points or greater as statistically significant. Virginia students made statistically significant gains on the English, mathematics and reading components of the ACT and also improved in science.

The percentage of Virginia students who demonstrated "college readiness" in all subject areas increased three points to 26 percent. Since 2004, the percentage of Virginia participants meeting all ACT college-readiness benchmarks has increased by six points. Nationwide, the percentage of college-ready tested students dropped by one point to 22 percent and has been relatively flat since 2004.

The ACT benchmarks are designed to identify students who are prepared for specific first-year college subjects, including English composition, algebra and biology. Virginia graduates showed a higher level of college readiness in all subject areas than students nationwide.

Percentage Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks										
Year	English		Mathematics		Reading		Science		Meeting all 4	
	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US	VA	US
2004	69	68	41	40	51	52	25	26	20	21
2005	69	68	40	41	51	51	24	26	19	21
2006	70	69	44	42	53	53	26	27	21	21
2007	72	69	45	43	54	53	29	28	23	23
2008	74	68	50	43	58	53	32	28	26	22

While the number of Virginia students taking the ACT has increased significantly since 1998, when 2,846 took the test, the SAT remains the dominant college-admissions test in the commonwealth with 51,677 students taking the SAT in 2007. SAT results for 2008 will be released by the College Board and the Virginia Department of Education later this summer.