



NEWS RELEASE

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JUNE 17, 2026

Gov. Pillen, Nebraska Department of Education Recognize 52 Students for Top ACT Scores

Governor Jim Pillen and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) hosted a ceremony in the State Capitol Rotunda to recognize graduates from the class of 2026 who achieved a top score on their ACT college entrance exam.

“Earning a perfect score of 36 on the ACT is an extraordinary accomplishment. These students represent the very best of Nebraska,” said Gov. Pillen. “Setting a new record of 53 perfect ACT scores reflects the strength of our schools, the dedication of our educators and families, and the remarkable talent of Nebraska’s young people. I hope each of these students know that Nebraska needs their leadership, innovation, and determination. Our state is full of opportunity, and we want them to build their futures right here at home.”

NDE Commissioner Dr. Brian Maher joined the Governor to recognize the students for their outstanding accomplishments.

“Achieving a perfect ACT score is a testament to both the exceptional academic dedication of these students and the strength of our Nebraska school communities,” said Commissioner Maher. “This milestone is a gateway to boundless opportunities. I am incredibly proud of these scholars not only for their academic mastery but for the bright futures they are building. We look forward to seeing the positive impact they will undoubtedly make as they move into their next chapters.”

Historically, on average, less than one-tenth of one percent of students score 36 on the ACT. This year 52 Nebraskans in the high school graduating class of 2026 achieved that accomplishment. One student earned a perfect score twice. This is a significant increase from 33 students in 2025.

The University of Nebraska offers the Nebraska Presidential Scholars Program that will cover tuition, fees, books, housing and all other costs of attendance, plus a \$5,000 annual stipend, for any Nebraska student who scores a perfect 36 on the ACT.

Elkhorn South had the most students with top scores in this year’s graduating class (7).

The graduating students who earned a top score are:

- Hamzah Alsalem, Creighton Preparatory School
- Lucas Askew, Millard West High School
- Ava Benner, Kearney High School
- Will Berryman, Elkhorn South High School
- Frank Bomberger, Lincoln High School

- Carter Buell, Rock County High School
- Sue Chong, Lincoln North Star High School
- Kolby Coon, Fremont Senior High School
- Emerson Depew, Elkhorn North High School
- Carson Deprez, Elkhorn High School
- Ryan Dong, Millard North High School
- Stephen Fisher Iii, Elkhorn High School
- Gideon Fox, Millard West High School
- Adelan Gholami, Central High School
- Isaac Hamilton, Southern Valley Junior Senior High School
- Gary Hao, Millard West High School
- Given Hatch, Gretna High School (Earned 36 on two separate exams)
- Jack Hayes, Auburn High School
- Jinyee Huang, Elkhorn South High School
- Thanishka Inti, Elkhorn South High School
- Arnav Jain, Millard North High School
- Cameron Johnson, Millard North High School
- Gopika Kalisetti, Millard North High School
- Rhana Kang, Elkhorn South High School
- Abby Kruse, Lincoln High School
- Annabelle Kumm, Home School.
- Marc Louthan, Millard North High School
- Mason Mercer, Elkhorn North High School
- Alexander Morrison, Elkhorn High School
- Miles Pensick, Roncalli Catholic High School
- Collin Pierce, Skutt Catholic High School
- Jaxson Pigg, Mount Michael Benedictine High School
- Jaxon Powell, Ashland-Greenwood High School
- Dylan Rapp, Bennington High School
- Noah Robb, Lincoln East High School
- Jihye Seo, Lincoln East High School
- Jackson Skaggs-Rowser, Ralston High School
- Alexander Stoy, Home School.
- Sam Stracke, Elkhorn South High School
- Stewart Umberger, Randolph High School
- John Paul Uptmor, Creighton Preparatory School
- Anagha Vemmelessiril, Millard North High School
- Bingyi Wang, Westside High School
- Verity Wegener, Lincoln High School
- Jonathan Wiesenfeld, Elkhorn South High School
- Roosevelt Wilken, Millard South High School
- Adah Wisnicki, Lincoln High School
- Jackson Wondercheck, Norris High School
- Johnathan Wu, Elkhorn South High School
- Violet Yuill, Westside High School
- Grace Zhang, Auburn High School
- Xavier Zimmerman, Mount Michael Benedictine High School

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