



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

OCTOBER 15, 2020

# NEBRASKA STUDENTS CONTINUE TO OUT-PERFORM PEER STATES ON ACT

Nebraska achievement levels remained steady and on pace with the national average on the ACT entrance exam that measures college readiness in English, reading, mathematics, and science.

For the third year, nearly 100 percent of Nebraska graduates took the ACT as part of the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS). Nebraska's average 2020 ACT composite score is 19.9, down one tenth of a point from last year. The national average is also down one tenth of a point to 20.6 and only 49 percent of students take the ACT nationwide. The highest possible ACT score is 36.

Nebraska started offering the ACT for free to all juniors in 2017 and continues to score well compared to the 15 states with 100 percent of graduates taking the ACT. Only Utah at 20.2 and Wisconsin at 20.1 scored better. This is significant as states that test a high percentage of graduates tend to have lower averages as the scores include more students who are not on a college course-taking track.

Since 2017 scores have remained stable while the number of graduating seniors who take the ACT has risen by 5,980. This year, 24,973 graduates took the ACT, up more than 200 students from the previous year.

The following are among the other key findings from this year's Nebraska ACT data:

- Nebraska students scored an average of 19.2 in English compared to 19.4 in 2019 and 19.9 nationally. In reading, Nebraska students scored an average of 20.2 compared to 20.3 in 2019 and 21.2 nationally. In math, Nebraska students scored an average of 19.7 compared to 19.7 in 2019 and 20.2 nationally. And in science Nebraska students scored an average of 20.0 compared to 20.2 in 2019 and 20.6 nationally.
- Compared to the 15 states where 100 percent of graduates took the ACT, Nebraska tied for the second highest percent of students meeting the English benchmark, the third highest percent meeting the math benchmark, the fourth highest percent meeting the science benchmark and tied for fifth highest percent meeting the reading benchmark.
- Nebraska's STEM score—a combined measure of math and science designed to predict readiness for success in STEM majors in college—was down one tenth of a point at 20.1 compared to 20.2 in 2019.
- There has been an increase in the total number of students and the number of minority students taking the ACT. However, achievement gaps between Hispanic, African American, and Native American students and their white and Asian American counterparts remain substantial. While white students had an average composite score of 21.3 and Asian students scored 20.7, the averages fell considerably for Hispanic students at 16.9, Native American students at 16.2, and African American students at 16.1.

The national and state ACT press release and reports can be viewed and downloaded on the ACT website at:  
<https://leadershipblog.act.org/2020/10/act-grad-class-2020-achievement-data.html>.

####

*David Jespersen*  
*Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education*  
402-471-4537  
*david.jespersen@nebraska.gov*  
*@NDE\_News*