

# Preface to NSCAS-ACT State Performance Level Descriptors

## Background

Per State Statute 79-759., a college entrance exam is administered to all third-year cohort as the statewide assessment for high school for the state of Nebraska, beginning in spring 2017. The Assessment Team at Nebraska Department of Education manages the implementation of 79-759. Based on responses to a Request for Proposal, the ACT was selected as the state test to be administered. While ACT does provide Performance Level Descriptors, administration of the ACT required that Nebraska educators in conjunction with the Assessment Team at NDE recommend cut scores for use as state reporting of ACT results for state and federal accountability purposes, a standard setting process.

## Standard Setting

- Nebraska Department of Education must report statewide summative scores in at least three levels for state accountability and on the Nebraska Education Profile (NEP). In the past, NeSA scores have been reported at Below, Meets, and Exceeds. Meets and Exceeds were combined to provide a percentage of students who were proficient.
- With the transition to ACT as the state summative test at the high school level, Nebraska educators and NDE engaged in a standard setting process to determine the three levels of performance used for state accountability. The Nebraska State Board of Education set the following performance levels for state accountability only.
  - ACT Cut Scores for ACT-English Language Arts, ACT- Mathematics, and ACT-Science.
  - The English Language Arts score includes ACT-Reading, ACT- English, and ACT-Writing.

Performance Level	Math	ELA	Science
ACT Benchmark	22-36	20-36	23-36
On Track	18-21	18-19	19-22
Developing	1-17	1-17	1-18

## Nebraska ACT Performance Definitions

### ACT Benchmark

Students that meet or exceed the ACT College Readiness Benchmark are equipped to enroll (without remediation) and succeed in a credit-bearing first-year course at a two-year or four-year institution, trade school, or technical school. Students have at least a 50% chance of getting a B or better and a 75% chance of getting C or better in a first-year related content course.

### **On Track**

On Track students are approaching the ACT College Readiness Benchmark and are likely to be able to access credit-bearing first-year related content course at some Nebraska postsecondary institutions without remediation.

### **Developing**

Students in the Developing Level are likely to need developmental courses before being able to access credit-bearing first-year courses in the majority Nebraska postsecondary institutions.

## **Additional Information to Performance Level Definitions**

In order to increase the chances of success after high school, students are encouraged to do the following.

- Engage in rigorous course work during their senior year.
- Take part in a wide range of career exploration activities.
- Build on existing strengths and address challenge areas.
- Work with adults to plan for college, career, and civic life.
- Gain work or volunteer experiences.
- Participate in activities beyond the classroom.

## **Development of Performance Level Descriptors**

- On January 29-31, 2018, a Performance Level Descriptor (PLD) Workshop was conducted by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in collaboration with ACT and EdMetric LLC (EdMetric), at the Marriott Cornhusker in Lincoln, Nebraska. The purpose of this workshop was to create Range PLDs for administration of the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science to Nebraska's Grade 11 students. Range PLDs serve to illustrate the knowledge, skills, and processes demonstrated by students within each Nebraska ACT performance level relative to the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards in ELA, Mathematics, and Science. Dr. Karla Egan, Principal of EdMetric, served Standards in ELA, Mathematics, and Science. Dr. Karla Egan, Principal of EdMetric, served as Lead Facilitator for the workshop and was assisted by NDE staff and ACT content experts.
- Nebraska educators with content-area expertise and knowledge of the state's expectations for college and career readiness were invited to serve on a panel to develop PLDs for the ACT test. The selected panels represented a geographic and demographic mix of educators with varying experience in standard-setting activities such as PLD development. A total of nine (9) Mathematics panelists, seven (7) Science panelists, and

12 ELA panelists participated in the workshop. The ELA group was divided into Reading and Writing subgroups, each consisting of six (6) panelists; each subgroup also completed the work in English.

- The results of the committee work make up the body of this document- *ACT Nebraska State Performance Level Descriptors*

#### **Additional Information**

- [ACT Nebraska Standard Setting](#)
- [ACT Standard Setting Post Committee NDE Work](#)
- [ACT College and Career Readiness Standards Performance Level Descriptors](#)
  - Click on content area

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