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Press Release
SREB News



ACT Participation Grows in SREB Region

Average scores hold steady as test-taking rate increases

Atlanta — August 26, 2015 — Nine of 16 SREB states saw an increase in average composite ACT scores for the class of 2015, and six others matched their composite score from 2014. The admission test results were released today by ACT Inc. Nationwide, the average score for the class of 2015 was 20.1, the same as it was in 2014.

SREB states with gains in their average scores, ranging from 0.1 to 0.3 points, are Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. One-tenth of one point is statistically significant for average ACT scores, making this jump a very positive sign of improvement in the region. Average scores in Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas remained the same.

From 2014 to 2015, the number of students taking the test grew significantly in SREB states — up 6 percent. States with notable increases in participation rate include Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma. The number of all graduating seniors in the United States who took the test while in high school rose 2 percent, continuing a recent upward trend in test participation.

Alabama saw a particularly steep increase in participation — jumping from 80 percent of the Class of 2014 to 100 percent of the Class of 2015. Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2013, Alabama's Plan 2020 began paying for high school students to take the ACT beginning in 2014.

It is not unusual for the average composite score in a state to decline if participation reaches 100 percent quickly, because the results reflect the full range of students in the class and are not limited to those who choose to take the test for college admission. Alabama's average composite score dropped 1.5 points to a 19.1 for the Class of 2015.

[Alabama](#) is one of six SREB states in which 100 percent of the current graduating seniors took the ACT while in high school in 2015. The others are Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and Tennessee. In 2016, South Carolina will join these states, and the following year Oklahoma will join them.

For more on the trend toward higher test-taking rates and lower scores as states use SAT and ACT to promote postsecondary readiness and participation, [see this 2014 SREB policy brief.](#)

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ACT results are particularly important in the 12 SREB states in which more than 50 percent of graduating seniors take the test while in high school. In these 12 states the test provides a

measure of the achievement of their recent high school graduates. These 12 states include all SREB states except Delaware, Maryland, Texas and Virginia.

Nationwide, 28 percent of the Class of 2015 who took the ACT while in high school met all of ACT's college readiness benchmarks, which link ACT results to [expected](#) student performance in college freshman courses. In the 12 SREB states in which a majority of seniors took the test, 21 percent met all four of the benchmarks — a 2 percent increase from 2014. While this increase kept pace with the national increase, it does not close the 7-point gap between the region and nation.

SREB states made more progress in meeting benchmarks in reading and English, with three SREB states at or above the national percentages of students meeting benchmarks, than in math and science. All SREB states trailed the nation in math and science.

“As more students take the ACT, we have a clearer picture of the work ahead to prepare all students for success in college,” said SREB Vice President Joan Lord. “SREB states have made important gains on the college-readiness benchmarks, but in the STEM areas, there is much work ahead.”

Overall, composite scores improved for black and Hispanic students in SREB states. Scores for black students improved from 2014 in 14 states and for Hispanic students in 10 states. Average scores also improved for white students in most SREB states from 2014.

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Contact

[Beth Day](#), Director, Communications
(404) 879-5544

[Joan Lord](#), Vice President
(404) 875-9211

The Southern Regional Education Board works with states to improve public education at every level, from pre-K through Ph.D. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.



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Southern Regional Education Board 592 10th St., NW Atlanta, GA 30318 USA

