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Minnesota Students Lead Again on ACT Scores

Participation increases to 70 percent of all high school grads

Roseville – For the sixth straight year, Minnesota's high school graduates posted the highest average ACT score among states where a majority of graduates took the college entrance exam. The average score for Minnesota's 2010 high school graduates was 22.9 on a 0 to 36 scale. Minnesota's average score has increased each of the last four years, with the average score in 2009 at 22.7. The average ACT score for 2010 high school graduates nationally was 21.1.

"The steadily increasing scores demonstrate that Minnesota students are recognizing they will need some type of education beyond high school, and they need to be ready," said David Metzen, director of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. "Nearly every occupation that pays a decent wage is going to require completion of some postsecondary education."

Minnesota's success can be attributed to increasing the rigor of Minnesota's K-12 academic standards, increasing access for students to rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Post Secondary Enrollment Options and concurrent enrollment. ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) provides counselors from approximately 200 districts with training on how to analyze and utilize EPAS data to help guide students into more rigorous courses.

"Minnesota's commitment to college and career readiness has made a significant difference, especially over the past five years," said Education Commissioner Alice Seagren. "This is a reflection of the work Minnesota is doing to prepare students for college and career readiness."

Minnesota's revised K-12 academic standards are anchored in college and career readiness skills. Since the math academic standards were revised in 2007, schools have changed curriculum, instruction and local graduation requirements to meet the more rigorous demands of the revised standards. The revised standards reflect the new statewide requirement for all students to complete Algebra I by eighth grade. Students must also earn three math credits including an Algebra II credit or its equivalent in order to graduate.

Five years ago 52 percent of Minnesota students met the benchmark for algebra. This year 61 percent of Minnesota students met the algebra benchmark. "This is a meaningful accomplishment for Minnesota and its students," Seagren said. "This will open up more career opportunities to students as they begin to prepare for their future."

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test designed to measure the skills and knowledge deemed important for college success. The ACT is comprised of four separate exams in English, reading, mathematics and science, plus an optional writing test introduced in February 2005.

Top 10 States (Where majority take ACT)	Average Composite Score	Percent of Graduates Tested
Minnesota	22.9	70%
Iowa	22.2	60%
Wisconsin	22.1	69%
Nebraska	22.1	73%
Montana	22.0	58%
Kansas	22.0	75%
South Dakota	21.8	79%
Utah	21.8	71%
Ohio	21.8	66%
Idaho	21.8	60%

Note: A majority of students in many east- and west-coast states take the SAT rather than the ACT, and therefore cannot be included in this comparison. The ACT is administered in all 50 states and is taken by the majority of graduates in 27 states, including Minnesota. Seven states not listed have all their high school graduates take the ACT.

The data collected by ACT indicates a strong correlation between taking a rigorous high school curriculum and higher scores on the ACT. Minnesota's results show consistently higher scores in math and science for students who reported taking high-level courses in those subject areas.

Governor Tim Pawlenty proposed and the Minnesota Legislature approved measures to increase participation in challenging courses including funding for Advanced Placement courses and assessments, a state scholarship awarded to students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum and a state requirement for students to take algebra I by eighth grade and algebra II and chemistry or physics in order to graduate from high school. (The new course requirements go into effect for students in the graduating class of 2015.)

For more information on national and Minnesota ACT results for the high school class of 2010, visit the Office of Higher Education Website at www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=792 or ACT at www.act.org.

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