



NEWS RELEASE
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Iowa Second in the Nation for the Highest Average ACT Composite Score

DES MOINES, Iowa – Iowa students earned the second highest average ACT score in the nation in 2008, according to results released today by ACT.

The average ACT score for Iowa students rose slightly by a 0.1 percentage point this year, for an average composite score of 22.4. Iowa has the second highest average composite score for states testing the majority of their graduating seniors. Last year, both Iowa and Wisconsin were second in the nation. Minnesota is again first with a score this year of 22.6. The national average score for the college admission and placement exam is 21.1 out of a possible 36.

"These results clearly show one thing: Iowa students are among the best in the nation. Iowa graduates are even more ready and well-prepared for higher education," Governor Chet Culver said. "There is no better time than now for students and graduates to take advantage of all the opportunities for students related to higher education. From universal preschool through Senior Year Plus — and beyond — I am committed to the success of our students."

ACT results also showed increases in most subject area scores (please see chart below).

This year, 22,950 students took the test, which is 60 percent of the 2008 graduating class. This is slightly less than last year when 23,016 students took the test.

Results also indicate that students who report taking at least three years each of math, science and social studies and four years of English in high school perform better on the test. In Iowa, those who reported taking core courses achieved an average composite score of 23.1. Those that reported taking lighter loads in core areas had an average composite score of 20.6. This compares to the nationwide score of 22.0 and 19.5, respectively.

While ACT reports 69 percent of the graduating class took core courses, more Iowa students are doing so. This past school year, ninth graders across Iowa began meeting the statewide graduation

requirement for all students to take at least four years of English and three years each of math, science and social science. In addition, Iowa school districts will soon be implementing the Iowa Core Curriculum, which requires students learn identified essential concepts and skill sets for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills).

Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey said, "The intent of the Core Curriculum is to enhance student engagement by involving students in interesting, relevant learning experiences in order for them to succeed into the 21st century. I'm proud of Iowa's standing in ACT, but believe that full implementation of the core will give our students the skills to achieve at even higher rates."

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test designed to measure the skills and knowledge that are taught in schools and deemed important for first-year college students to possess. The ACT is made up of four separate exams in English, reading, mathematics and science, plus an optional writing test. The ACT is administered in all 50 states.

The Iowa Department of Education works with the State of Iowa Board of Education to provide oversight, supervision and support for the state education system, which includes public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges and teacher preparation programs. The department is committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.

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**Iowa and National Average ACT Composite and Subject Area Scores,
5-Year Trends**

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
English	State	21.4	21.5	21.6	21.6	21.9
	National	20.4	20.4	20.6	20.7	20.6
Math	State	21.8	21.7	21.8	21.9	22.0
	National	20.7	20.7	20.8	21.0	21.0
Reading	State	22.4	22.4	22.5	22.6	22.9
	National	21.3	21.3	21.4	21.5	21.4
Science	State	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.3	22.3
	National	20.9	20.9	20.9	21.0	20.8
Composite	State	22.0	22.0	22.1	22.3	22.4
	National	20.9	20.9	21.1	21.2	21.1