

County Tops State Average for ACT, Graduation

The Anderson County School District's ACT composite score increased this year to 20.3, up from last year's 19.3, school officials reported on Friday, August 26, during its annual board of education retreat.

The ACT is designed to measure college-readiness in high school students. The test uses a scale of one to 36 to assess student ability, with one being the lowest and 36 being the highest score a student can achieve.

Data from the state shows that 19 percent of students in Anderson County who took the ACT met benchmarks in all four subject areas and are considered college ready.

According to the ACT, the benchmark for college readiness is a composite score of 21.

Benchmarks for each subject area are as follows: 18 for English, 22 for Math, 22 for Reading, and 23 for Science.

If a student scores at or above these benchmarks, research indicates students have a higher probability of college success.

Students who meet the benchmark scores are expected to have a 75 percent chance of getting a grade of C or higher in college courses, education experts say.

The national ACT average composite score is 20.8, which is a slight decrease from last year's 21.0 average.

Statewide, the score is up 19.9, a slight increase from 19.8.

"We beat the state's overall composite score. It's the first time that I'm aware of that we ever done that," said Eric Snider, Director of Anderson County Secondary Schools, on Friday, to school administrators and board members at the retreat.

"It's very hard to dramatically increase ACT scores. It takes time, and it's usually increased in small increments. This is something we're very proud of," said Snider.

Snider said the school district's composite score also surpassed the composite averages of the majority of the schools in surrounding counties.

Only Blount and Sevier Counties scored the same or higher on their composites.

Blount County has a 20.9 and Sevier County a 20.6.

By 2020, the goal set by the state is for the average ACT composite to be 21.

"I believe we will reach this goal way before then," said Snider. "It's just a matter of time."

Snider told school board members and administrators on Friday the goal is for both high schools to implement an effective ACT test prep program and have it in place by January 1, 2017.

He said the schools have already reached this goal, and are working on how to make it “value-added” so teachers can incorporate and reinforce ACT strategies and content in every subject.

School officials also commented on the district’s impressive graduation rate for the two high schools.

The high school graduation rate this year for Anderson County was 97.8 percent.

“This puts Anderson County in the top 10 percent of all Tennessee high schools,” Snider said.

Anderson County’s graduation rate exceeds both state and national averages-the state’s graduation rate is 87.8 percent and the national average is 81 percent.

- *Heather Miller, The Courier News, August 31, 2016*