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REPORT SHOWS RECORD NUMBER OF LOUISIANA STUDENTS ACHIEVING COLLEGE-LEVEL ACT SCORES

"Best Score" Average Used for Letter Grades Shows Steady Results with Increased Testers; "Most Recent Score" Average Down in First Year of Counting all Juniors

BATON ROUGE, La. - The Louisiana Department of Education today released three analyses of ACT results, indicating that in 2014 high school seniors achieved record high numbers of TOPS-eligible ACT scores. These figures complement two additional analyses of average ACT scores: a "best score" method used in the calculation of Louisiana school letter grades showing a steady average for statewide seniors in spite of a seven percent increase total test-takers counted, as well as a "most recent score" method reported by ACT showing a lower average when all juniors, including those not graduating, were required to take the test for the first time.

The "best score" method uses a student's top score achieved any time the student took the test; the "recent score" method uses only the score achieved the last time the student took the test. Colleges and TOPS use the "best score" method.

"Providing all students access to the ACT free of charge has created all-time high for college and career training opportunities in Louisiana," said State Superintendent John White. "In providing all students access to these opportunities, we stopped cherry-picking students to take the ACT. At the same time, our students' readiness for the challenges of universities and community colleges is not at the level it needs to be, especially in mathematics. Our state needs to keep raising its expectations if we expect to compete."

"Total College-level Scores" Method (public school students)

[Research from Columbia University](#) shows that many students who otherwise had not planned to take the ACT, especially those from low-income backgrounds, score unexpectedly well when given access to the test. Since Louisiana began requiring all public high school students to take the ACT series in 2013, the state has seen a dramatic increase in the number of seniors earning qualifying scores for TOPS Tech (17+), TOPS Opportunity (20+), and TOPS Honors (27+), boosting both students on the TOPS University pathway and the Jump Start TOPS Tech pathway. The number of seniors earning a TOPS-qualifying score (based on their best score) of at least 17 increased by 1,732 since 2013 and by 6,339 since 2012.

Opportunity	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Increase from 2012 to 2014
TOPS Tech (17+)	20,466	25,073	26,805	6,339
TOPS Opportunity & Regional University (20+)	14,129	16,027	16,935	2,806
TOPS Performance & Statewide University (23+)	7,429	8,433	8,834	1,405
Flagship University (25+)	4,296	5,006	5,301	1,005
TOPS Honors (27+)	2,435	2,938	3,116	681

"Average Best Score" Methodology (public school students)

When calculating public school performance scores, the Department uses all public school seniors' highest scores earned on the ACT throughout their academic career, not the most recent score. Because colleges and TOPS use the "best score" method, Louisiana encourages students to take the test more than once, funding three test administrations for low-income students free of charge. This results in variation from one test administration to another. For the class of 2014, among students who took the ACT for at least a second time in 2014, a student's most recent score is also the student's highest score only 50 percent of the time. This demonstrates the stark difference between the "best score" and "recent score" methods.

This is the second year all Louisiana public school seniors have an ACT score. For public high school seniors in the class of 2014, the use of a student's best score methodology shows steady results from 2013 to 2014 at 19.1. During that same time period, the number of seniors tested increase by 2,617, or 7 percent, from 37,088 in 2013 to 39,705 in 2014. This is due to higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates.

"Average Best Score" Methodology (Public Students Only)		
Year	Number of Students Tested	Average ACT Score
2012-2013	37,088	19.1
2013-2014	39,705	19.1

"Most Recent Score" Methodology (public and private school students)

Unlike the "best score" calculation used by colleges and for school letter grades, ACT calculates

Louisiana's average score for all public and private school students anticipating graduating in 2014 using a student's "most recent score." For the class of 2014, among students who took the ACT for at least a second time in 2014, a student's most recent score is also the student's highest score only 50 percent of the time.

For the class of 2014, Louisiana's average "most recent score" decreased from 19.5 in 2013 to 19.2 in 2014, primarily due to the methodology counting juniors not completing high school for the first time. In 2013 Louisiana required all juniors and seniors to take the ACT for the first time. Thus, in 2013, the "most recent score" method counted an additional 8,500 students anticipating graduating in 2013. In 2014, this number increased by nearly 4,000 students in great part because juniors taking the test in 2013 and then not graduating the following year were counted in the method for the first time. This brings Louisiana into line with other states that require the test for all juniors. Such students were not counted in 2013 because juniors were not required to take the test in 2012.

"Most Recent Score" Methodology (Public and Private School Students)				
Year	Number of Students Tested (Public Students Only)	Average ACT Score	Number of Students Tested (Public & Private Students)	Average ACT Score
2012	28,119	19.8	36,736	20.3
2013	37,238 (+32%)	18.9	45,305 (+23.3%)	19.5
2014	41,034 (+10%)	18.6	49,178 (+8.5%)	19.2

The following states test all seniors. Their scores are listed below using the "most recent score" method.

States Testing 100% of Students in Junior Year	2013 Average Composite Score	2014 Average Composite Score
Utah	20.7	20.8
Illinois	20.6	20.7
Colorado	20.4	20.6
North Dakota	20.5	20.6
Michigan	19.9	20.1
Wyoming	19.8	20.1
Kentucky	19.6	19.9
Tennessee	19.5	19.8
Louisiana	19.5*	19.2
Mississippi	18.9	19.0
North Carolina	18.7	18.9

*Class of 2013 was not required to test in junior year (2012).

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