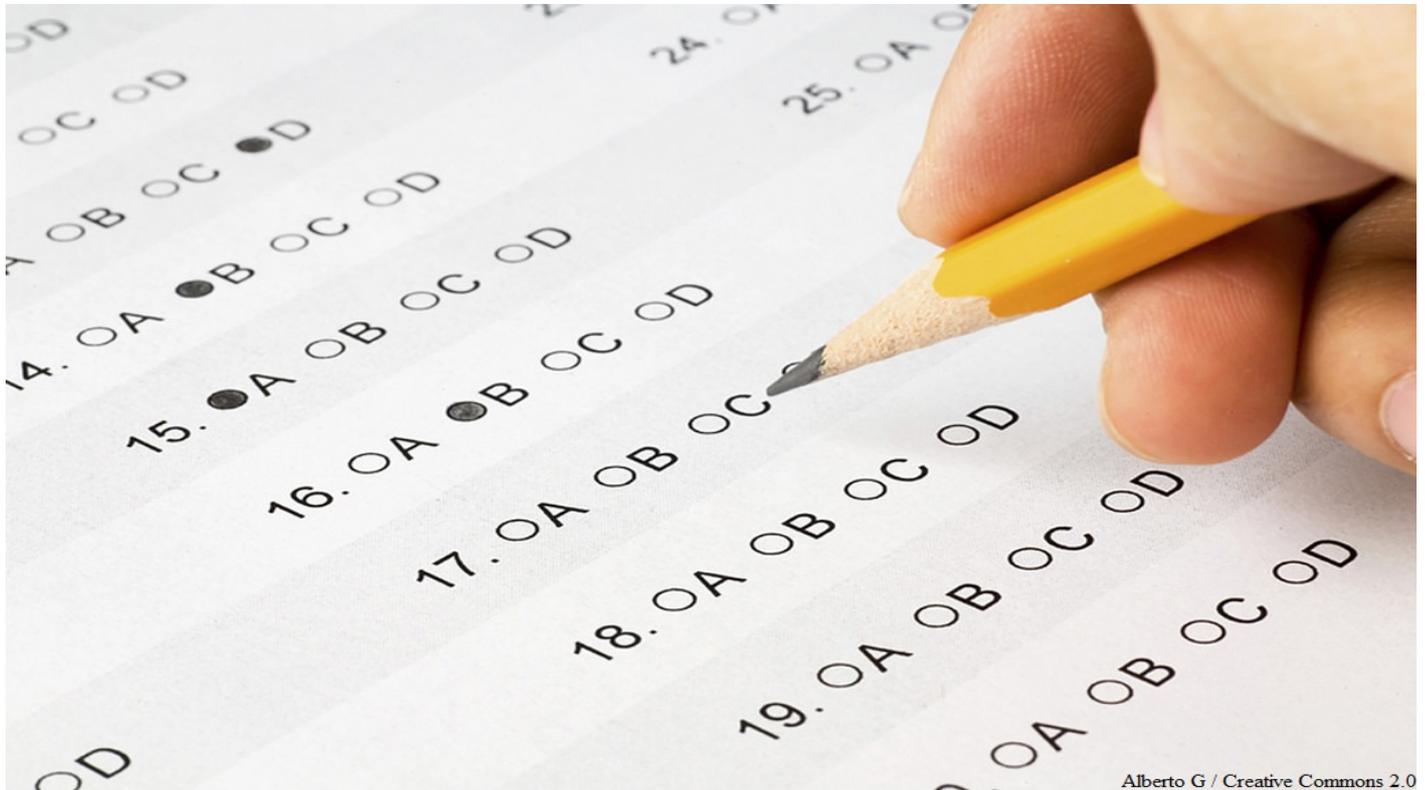




ACT Scores Show Students Aren't Ready for College

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By: Abigail Burrola

Taking the ACT or the SAT has become an important rite of passage on the path to college for most students. These tests are critical to the future of a huge number of students, so states should care how their students perform on them. Unfortunately, recent test results aren't anything to brag about.

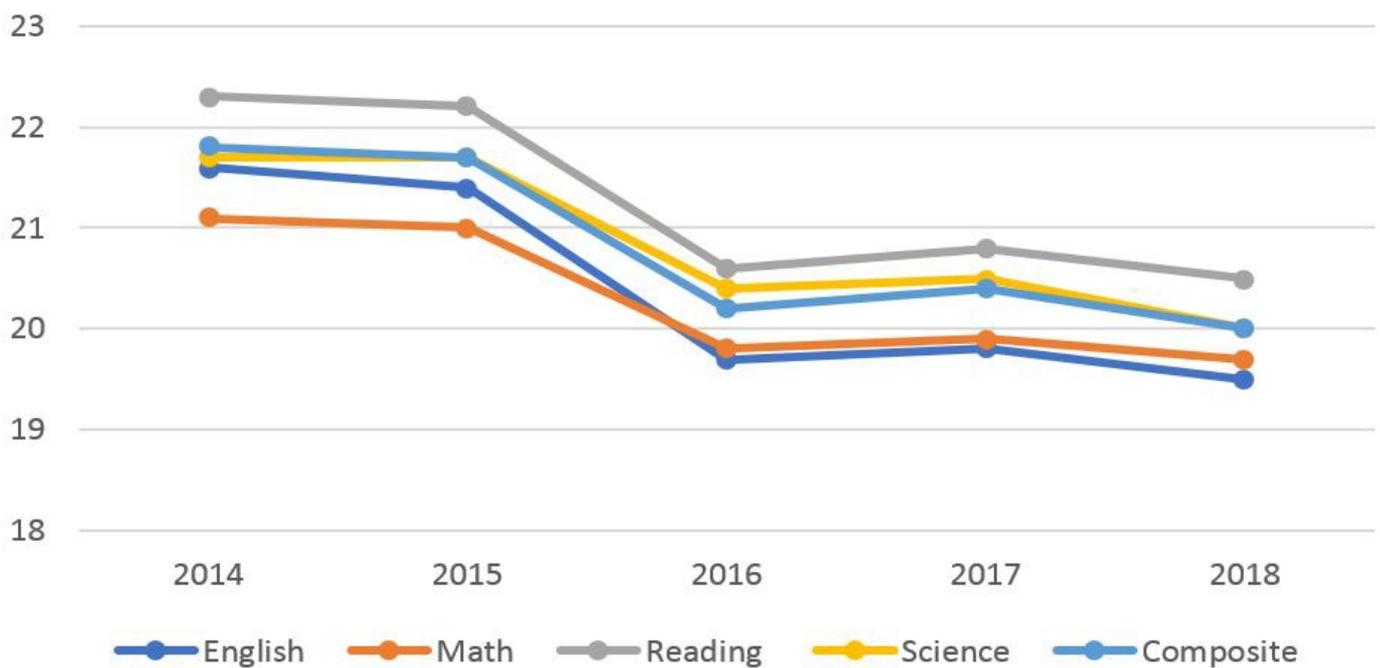
A few weeks ago, ACT released [Missouri's 2018 graduating class state report](#). It reports that a dismal 22 percent of the class of 2018 graduates were college-ready in English, math, reading and science. The test results from the last three years provide a some insight into how well our students are prepared for life after high school.

The graduating classes of [2016](#), 2017, and 2018 had 100 percent test participation because of DESE's [three-year plan](#) to supply the ACT to all high school juniors. Before the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided the ACT to every student, information about test results only applied to the approximately [77 percent](#) of the 2015 class (page 3). It shouldn't be surprising that average scores declined with the addition of a large group of participants who otherwise wouldn't have taken the exam. Previously, some students would decline to take the test for financial reasons, but for others it was because they knew they weren't prepared for such a test, or because they had no intention of going to college and therefore didn't see any reason to take it. As a group, such students might reasonably be expected to score lower than students who looked at a high ACT score as an important asset in

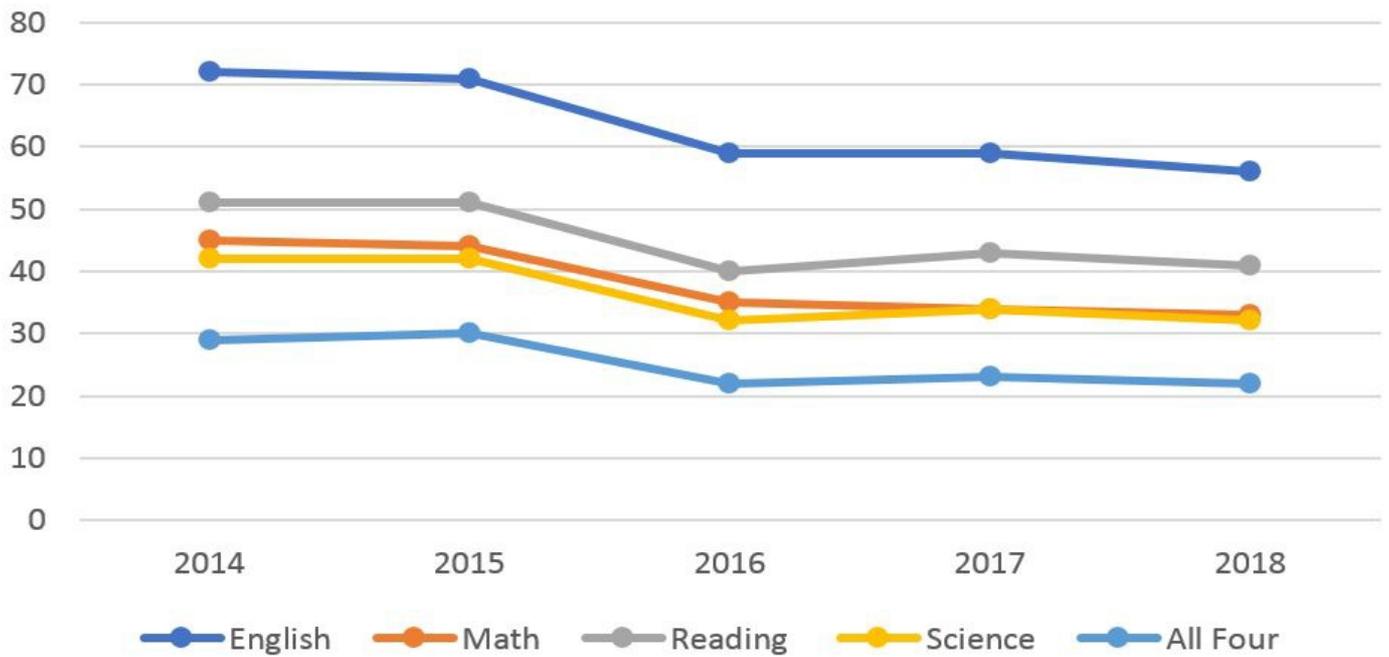
trying to get into a good college and who had the resources to prepare for the exam. But just because the decrease in overall scores can be explained doesn't mean it should be excused. The ACT still measures readiness for life after high school, and seeing low scores—even from those who don't plan on going to college—should concern all Missourians.

DESE stated the class of 2018 was the final year of the state provided ACT tests. But the three years of results revealed that when all of our students are tested, there are more students than we originally thought whom high schools are not preparing. Now that we've seen the real scope of the problem, will DESE acknowledge the issue or try to sweep it under the rug by celebrating when test scores inevitably go back up next year?

ACT scores



Missouri College Readiness Benchmark



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Abigail Burrola graduated from Azusa Pacific University with a bachelor's degree in political science in 2018.

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