ACT – Fact Sheet

Why the ACT over the MCA/MTAS?

- **Declining MCA/MTAS Participation Rates**: Over the past decade, opt-out rates for the MCA/MTAS tests have significantly increased. In 2014, participation rates for both the MCA/MTAS Math and Reading tests exceeded 90%. However, by 2024, participation rates had dropped to 73% for math and 84% for reading.[1]
- **Increased Student Motivation**: Students are often more motivated to perform well on the ACT due to its significance for college admissions and scholarship opportunities.
- **Shorter Testing Duration**: The ACT is significantly shorter than the MCA/MTAS tests, reducing the total time spent on testing for students.
- **Minimized Spring Testing Fatigue**: Reducing the number of tests during the spring helps alleviate student burnout, allowing students to engage more meaningfully with their learning.
- **More Time for Instruction and Personal Growth**: With fewer tests, educators can dedicate more time to students' individual learning needs, fostering personal growth and the development of Personalized Growth Learning Plans, while also increasing instructional time in the classroom.
- **Reduced Administrative Burden**: Fewer tests to coordinate and administer means less administrative overhead, allowing educators and staff to focus more on teaching and less on logistics.

Career and College Success

- **College and Career Readiness**: The primary purpose of the ACT is to measure students' readiness for college and careers, based on College and Career Readiness Standards. It provides insights into whether students are prepared for college-level coursework or a work training program.
- **STEM Skills Assessment**: The ACT measures students' STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills, providing an indicator of their proficiency in these areas.
- **Scholarships and Financial Aid**: Many state and national agencies offering scholarships, loans, and financial assistance base their decisions on ACT scores.
- **Interest Inventory**: The ACT includes an Interest Inventory that helps gather information on students' educational and career aspirations, interests, and extracurricular activities to support career and education planning.
- **Opportunities for Growth**: An intended outcome of the ACT is to help students explore educational and career opportunities beyond their initial options.

BIAS

- **Rigorous Test Item Review Process**: All ACT test items undergo at least 16 independent content and fairness reviews before they are operationalized.[2]

- **Fairness in ACT Items**: A study examining the fairness of 7,740 test items from the 2015-2016 ACT administration found that only 0.01% of items were flagged for potential unfairness. Further review determined that these items were fair, with flags resulting from chance alone.[2]

- Research indicates that **differential performance on the ACT is largely attributable to differences in academic preparation** across student demographic groups, rather than inherent bias in the test.[3]

- **No Disadvantage for Minority and Lower-Income Students**: Studies suggest that African American, Hispanic, and lower-income students are not disadvantaged when test scores are used, alone or with other predictors, to predict future college performance and degree completion.[3]

- After controlling for background variables (e.g., academic preparation, socioeconomic status), mean score differences between White and minority students are minimal. For instance, the difference in Math scores between White and Hispanic students is just 1.1 points, and the difference in English scores between White and African American students is 2.3 points.[4]

Alignment with MN Standards

- A 2020 alignment study found that 100% of ACT Reading items align with the Minnesota Academic Standards.[5]

- The same study showed that 93% of ACT Math items align with the Minnesota Academic Standards, with 80% of those aligned specifically to the MN high school standards.[5]

References

[1] Minnesota Report Card
[2] ACT, 2016.
[3] Radunzel & Noble, 2013; Sanchez, 2013.
[4] Chambers, 1988; McNeish, 2015; Noble et al., 1989, 1992, 1999.
[5] Davis-Becker & Keglovits, 2020.