

SD ACT Council

Spring, 2008, Survey of SD High School Counselors

Participants: 49 Full-time; 15 Part-Time = 64 Counselors (Approx. 25% of all HS counselors)

Which test are students most motivated in taking: 60 – ACT / 1 – Dakota STEP

Should all students take ACT as a replacement to Dakota STEP: 45 – Yes / 15 No

Comments *(Counselors are from public high schools unless noted. Numbers in parenthesis are number of students served):*

NO – (Do Not replace DSTEP with ACT)

I am really torn. There are pros and cons to both options. -- K-12 (135 students)

The ACT is geared towards college entrance and most of my graduates do not attend a 4-year institution, rather Voc Tech. I think it would be highly unfair to the lower level students. It certainly would bring our state test average down. Not a good idea. -- K-12 (Administrator) (90)

Financial - how will that get pd for? All take - (lowers) scores on average, national comparison. -- K-12 (185)

Not all students take the course load that prepares a person for the university. Because of this, the ACT scores would be extremely low. Also, if D.STEP is measuring our state's benchmarks, the DSTEP is a better representation of the student's knowledge gain. -- 7-12 (195)

Students are more motivated taking the ACT because they are college prep students. If all students were required to take the ACT, you would have students who do not see the relevance of taking the test. -- 9-12

At our school the students who are truly interested in going to college take the ACT seriously & try their best. My concern is if a student is not interested in going to college, they will not be serious & cause less than perfect testing environments for others. -- 9-12 (310 - Tribal)

First of all is the ACT aligned with the state standards? Not all students are college bound so therefore I don't know if they would take it seriously. -- 9-12 (310 - Tribal)

The ACT is not in line with the SD standards. If we were to use the ACT then we would have to change the standards. Students are motivated to take the ACT because only the college bound take it, and they only take it if they want to. -- 7-12 (350)

DakSTEP is age appropriate. Not everyone takes the ACT. -- K-12 (129)

Not all students take a curriculum that will allow them to score well in the ACT - Not all students are College Bound. Forcing our lower functioning students to take the ACT would only be a negative experience for them and would severely drop the states overall ACT score. -- K-12 (250)

The ACT is not aligned with our content standards and consequently could not be used to measure AYP -- K-12 (20)

Not many of my students have the skills or level of advanced education for much success on the ACT; only a few take the test (even with Special Testing at our school). Also, there is the registration fee for the ACT but no charge for the D-STEP. -- K-12 Special Ed. School (30)

It would pull down the ACT scores. -- K-12 (200)

I have talked to counselors from other states where the ACT is used as an exit exam or achievement placement test. Most recent Michigan... -- 9-12 (510)

It would be difficult to mandate a test that costs at least \$30 per student. -- 9-12 (Private – 49)

YES (Replace DSTEP with ACT)

I think most every student should take the ACT. It would give everyone a pretty good idea as to student ability and academic achievement level. -- 9-12 (1,200/3)

Test would be more beneficial for motivating students and the results could be us... -- 7-12 (175)

Improve motivation. Ensure all juniors take an ACT and provide some with a reality check. -- 9-12 (865)

I believe they would be more motivated with the ACT because they know of implications of results for this test. I think we would improve their scores if we could focus on preparing them for one test their junior year. -- K-12 (350)

I believe that students are much more concerned about ACT scores than DAKOTA STEP ... -- K-12 (530)

Students are more serious about their ACT scores -- 7-12 (435)

I would be in favor of this because I think 11th graders focus should be on the ACT test and when you throw in the STEP too, I think results aren't as valid because of lack of motivation, fatigue, etc. Also, then the comparison of ACT scores between schools would be more accurate because ALL juniors would take it. Also all juniors would have the testing complete for college, if plan to pursue that route later. We could also do ACT prep activities with ALL students. -- K-12 (400)

Students are much more motivated to try their best on the ACT. Although not all students take the college prep courses necessary to do well on the ACT. -- K-12

But who would pay? Student or state? Students (in general) would try harder (in my opinion) on the ACT vs DSTEP. -- K-12 (150)

I give the ACT to juniors in April - usually about 2 days after the Dakota STEP which means they are tested out when they get to the ACT which is really high stakes personally for them. Would the ACT fit our state standards and NCLB? -- 9-12 (Tribal – 125)

They are definitely more motivated on ACT. Jrs. get overloaded w/testing - PSAT, ASVAB, D-STEP, ACT. Streamlining would be great! -- K-12 (Private – 140)

Our teachers would want to be able to connect the content standards, test results and curriculum. -- K-12 (300)

They need to take it anyway! I use these scores, as do students and colleges, extensively. -- K-12 (320)

Taking the ACT in place of the DSTEP would make college transition easier. It would ensure punctuality of score reports for college and scholarship applications. -- K-12 (128)

As juniors they could care less about the Dakota STEP test. They are much more interested in doing well on the ACT. -- K-12 (138)

I think students might take it more seriously, though I would like to see how this aligns w/SD Content Standards (is this info out there somewhere?) -- K-12 (263)

Concerns over IEP students -- K-12 (382)

Does the ACT/Dakota Step content standards match? About 75% of our students take the ACT already. Who would pay the costs if this happens? -- 9-12 (350)

Importance. By the time they are juniors - they are tested out. -- K-12 (182)

I do feel students would be more motivated, however, we cannot dismiss the fact that the Dakota STEP tests our South Dakota standards. I don't want to see SD as a state watering things and changing things to where students jump the whole process of learning, testing ...-- K-12 (375)

More importance is placed on taking ACT than the Dakota STEP for more juniors. -- K-12 (300)

This is a standard test that has been used for years with extensive research and data from across the nation which has a proven record. -- K-12 (180)

DSTEP scores have decreased from 8th grade to 11th grade. High School students are more focused on post-high training. Using the ACT would force teachers and students to pay more attention to rigor and the 4 core subjects. (More) -- K-12 (273)

I believe the ACT is a better tool to assess the post-high readiness. -- 9-12 (300)

They will be more motivated to do well and it will provide more classroom instruction time. -- K-12 (170)

The ACT has more relevance for the students for college admissions, scholarships, advance placement counsel. I think it is hard to prep students for both the ACT and Dakota STEP and ACT will always take top priority. -- 7-12 (250)

ACT has a reputation of providing personal, valuable information. The STEP exam does not have such a reputation. -- 6-12 (806)

Cost effective for state and students, students would be motivated to do well, ACT can be used for scholarships, admittance to schools. -- 9-12 (760)

You get real data that parents can relate to and students can relate to. This can be used to assist students in determining not only class placements but post-secondary plans. -- 9-12 (800)

90% of Jrs currently take ACT. I would like to know how proficiency would be determined, what would be done about makeup exams for absences, etc. -- K-12 (285)

Students know what ACT is - the results are timely. -- 9-12 (500)

Many students ask, at the start of Dak STEP testing, "Will this go on my record/transcript?" Answer is no. They see the DakSTEP as something for us; the ACT as something for them. -- 9-12 (1,500)

Students would be more motivated when taking ACT. Can compare students w/national statistics. ACT results may impact students regards to college placement. Some students who wouldn't consider college/tech may then decide to go. -- 9-12 (1,800)

Much more relevant -- 9-12 (1,800)

I believe students would be more committed to trying as the results would have more practical meaning to them. Also, I think it would encourage more students with financial difficulty to complete the test and consider post-high options. -- 9-12 (1,800)

Scores are used more by school and home. More relevant. Students more motivated to take ACT. -- 9-12 (1,800)

I think students would be more motivated and would get more accurate scoring - who would pay for testing? -- K-12

I feel our results from ACT would be more useful. -- K-12 (Special Ed. - 35)

... 95-98% of our students take the ACT. Knowing that the ACT is used for college admission, scholarships and placement, our students prepare and are motivated to do well. About 75% of our students take it more than once. -- 9-12 (Private -- 740)

I think it is easier for students to know where they stand from the results and the results are delivered in a more timely manner. This would also help students who haven't thought about post-high to be ready in the fall of their senior year. -- 9-12 (380)

We can eliminate one more test - time and expense. Schools would be judged equally on ACT scores since all students would be taking them. -- K-12 (250)

Mean more, elimin. cost barrier. Scores are more useful to students. -- 9-12 (360)

No Response on replacing

Uncertain, I think the motivation is definitely higher for the ACT because the score impacts their future decisions. I have concerns if the ACT is state standard specific, like the Dakota STEP?? -- K-12

(I asked my faculty to give me their ideas for this and so I have included their comments ... (on file) -- K-12

Not sure, I can see where it would be better than the Dakota STEP because the juniors don't take it seriously. Just wonder how that would work w/ACT being mandatory. -- 6-12

95% of kids take both. -- K-12 (Private)