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Grand Island ACT scores released

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Composite ACT scores for Grand Island's high schools were down just a tad from the previous year but still very consistent when viewed over a five-year time frame for each school.

The ACT is designed to test how prepared high school seniors are for the college-level work they will encounter as freshmen. As a result, the ACT gives two sets of scores for high schools.

One set shows the scores for students who have taken the ACT-recommended core classes of at least four years of English, three years of math, three years of social studies and three years of science.

The other set shows the scores of students who took fewer than the recommended years in those four core subjects.

Students who take less than the recommended core are often those who get to their junior or senior year in high school before deciding they might want to attend a four-year college or university.

Students at all four of Grand Island's high schools did better on the ACT if they took the more rigorous course of study than if they didn't.

Failure to achieve a high ACT score does not necessarily mean a student cannot succeed in college. But lower ACT scores may indicate a student might need to take non-credit remedial courses — which still require the student to pay tuition — before they can start taking college courses for credit.

Vernon Fisher, who just started work as Grand Island's assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, said he was taking a "big-picture look" at Senior High's ACT scores on Tuesday.

Fisher said a majority of Grand Island's seniors who took the recommended core were judged as ready for college in English and reading, while slightly under a majority were judged ready in math and less than a majority were judged ready in science. He said that's the case for Nebraska as an entire state.

He also noted Nebraska consistently ranks above the national average when it comes to ACT scores. (For 2009, Nebraska scored above the national average ACT scores and first among states that use the college admission test most.)

But Fisher said he believes a national push will be coming to increase the amount of academic rigor at all American high schools to bring them in line with student achievement internationally.

"We're not where we want to be," Fisher said. "But we're going to use our assessments to plan for where we need to go."

Northwest Principal Doyle Denney was pleased with the overall consistency of his school's score. Like Fisher, he noted students who take the more rigorous recommended high school core do much better on the

ACT than those who don't. Doyle said the challenge is to get all students who think they might be going to a four-year college to take that recommended core.

Central Catholic Superintendent Greg Logsdon said 95 percent to 96 percent of that school's seniors go to a four-year college or university. Even at Central Catholic, there are some students who list themselves as not taking the ACT recommended core.

Logsdon said Central Catholic actually recommends exceeding the ACT core. For example, Central Catholic would like its students to take four years of science, not three. Logsdon said the school's 2009 class may have had fewer students take four years of science, which may have pulled down scores just slightly.

Heartland Lutheran counselor Jacquelyn Zehendner said all that school's students take the recommended ACT core, so it has only one set of numbers to report. The school has had the exact same composite score three years running.

Senior High had the most students take the ACT with 233, Northwest had 100 students take it, Central Catholic had 39 students, and Heartland Lutheran had 15.

The charts below show each high school's (with the exception of Heartland Lutheran) individual core and less-than-core scores (non-core) scores for English, math, social studies and science, as well as their core and non-core composite scores. They also show five years of composite scores for students who took the recommended high school core courses, as well as composite scores for all students who took the ACT.

2009

Senior High

English Mathematics Reading Science Composite

Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core

21.5 17.6 22.1 18.8 22.5 18.3 22.2 19.2 22.2 18.6

Northwest High School

English Mathematics Reading Science Composite

Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core

22.1 21.1 22.8 21.2 22.7 22.1 22.7 22.0 22.7 21.8

Central Catholic

English Mathematics Reading Science Composite

Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core Core Non-Core

25.0 23.0 24.0 21.2 25.2 23.8 22.9 22.0 24.3 22.7

Heartland Lutheran

English Mathematics Reading Science Composite

Core Core Core Core Core

22.7 23.5 23.4 25.5 22.5

Five-year scores

Senior High

Core All Students

2005 21.9 21.4

2006 22.3 21.7

2007 22.9 22.0

2008 22.4 21.5

2009 22.2 21.2

Northwest High School

Core All Students

2005 22.4 21.6

2006 23.8 23.1

2007 23.7 22.7

2008 23.1 22.7

2009 22.7 22.5

Central Catholic

Core All Students

2005 24.4 23.4

2006 23.8 23.0

2007 23.4 23.4

2008 25.6 24.1

2009 24.3 23.8

Heartland Lutheran

Core

2005 20.0

2006 23.0

2007 22.5

2008 22.5

2009 22.5

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