



ACT[®]

What are ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness Targets?

Identifying Student Learning Targets Based on Real-World Outcomes

Fact Sheet

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What is College and Career Readiness?

The National Center for Educational Achievement (ACT/NCEA), a department of ACT, Inc., defines College and Career Readiness as when a student has reached an academic achievement level that indicates they are likely to have success in postsecondary learning or training that leads to skilled careers.

What are ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness Targets?

ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness Targets are indicators of a student's college and career readiness level for Grades 3-7. These Targets are linked to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks for the EXPLORE®, PLAN® and the ACT® test and are numerical values on a state's assessment.

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum ACT test scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses—english composition, social sciences courses, college algebra or biology. In addition to the Benchmarks for the ACT® test, there are corresponding EXPLORE® and PLAN® Benchmarks for use by students who take these programs in the eighth and tenth grades respectively, to gauge their progress in becoming ready for college.*

Together, ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness Targets and ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks define a path to College and Career Readiness throughout a student's K-12 experience.

*See ACT, Inc., 2010. *What are ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks?* for more details.

Is College Ready and Career Ready the Same?

ACT's research finds that the academic standards associated with college readiness are also necessary to prepare students to take advantage of opportunities in the work place.* Thus, the level of achievement necessary to be college ready is also necessary to be career ready.

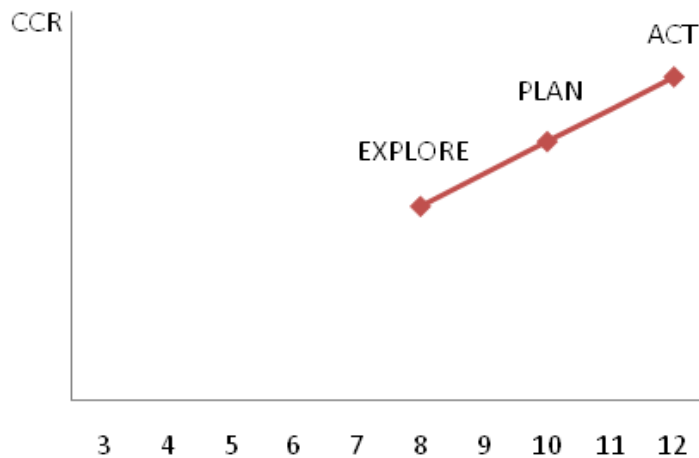
*See ACT, Inc., 2006. *Ready for College or Work: Same or Different?* for more details.

How are NCEA's College and Career Readiness Targets identified?

There are three main steps in this process.

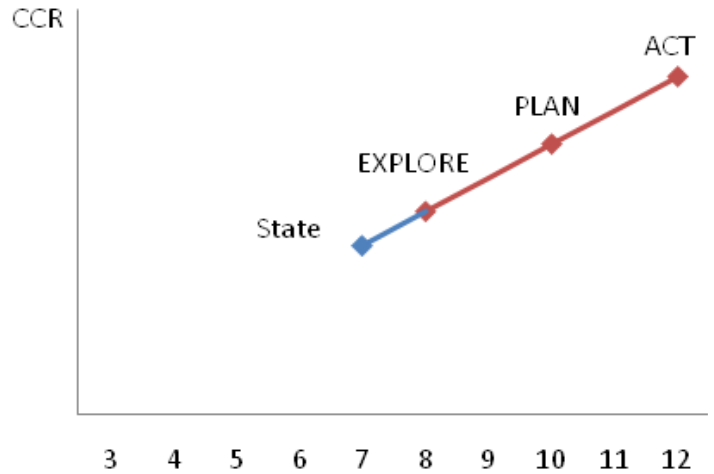
1. Linking to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks

ACT identifies College Readiness Benchmarks for Grades 8-12 on the EXPLORE, PLAN and the ACT test. This provides a path to College and Career Readiness for the upper grades.



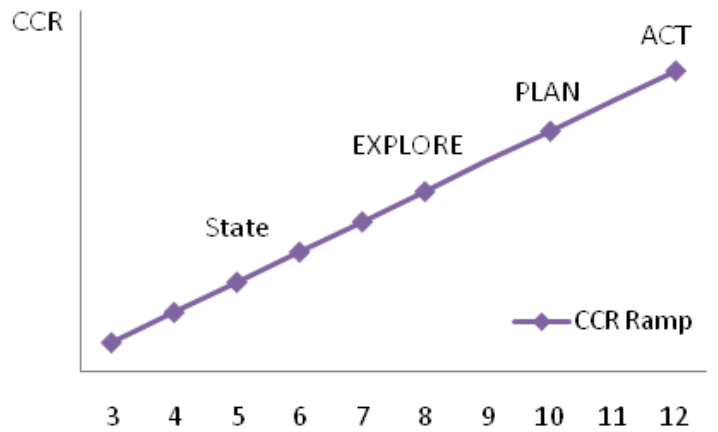
We then calculate a comparable score on a state's Grade 7 assessment to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks on EXPLORE.

This is called a College and Career Readiness Target.



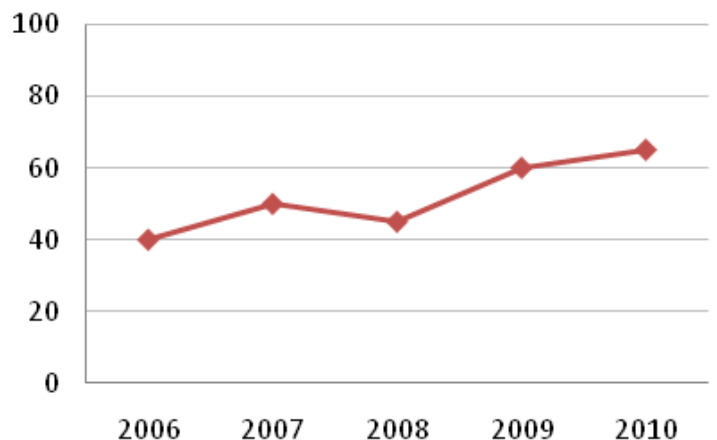
2. Backwards-Mapping the College and Career Readiness Targets

We continue this process down to the lowest tested grade—typically Grade 3. We now have College and Career Readiness Targets from Grades 3-7 and ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks from Grades 8-12. This trajectory is known as the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Ramp.



At the district- and school-level, the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Targets allow educators to monitor the percentage of students on track to being college and career ready by graduation.

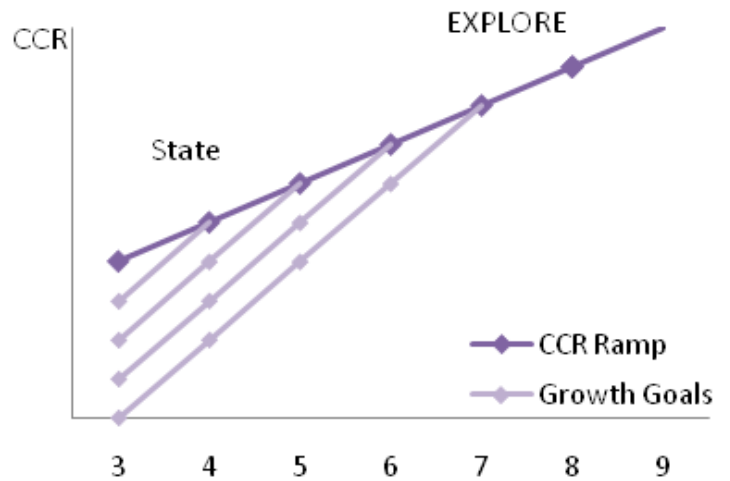
**Grade 3 Mathematics
Percentage CCR**



3. Establishing Students' Yearly Growth Goals

At the student-level, the CCR Targets determine who is and who is not on track to being college and career ready.

We then identify yearly growth goals that a student must achieve in order to get themselves onto the Ramp. These yearly goals are known as NCEA's Growth Goals, and they define a path for a student to reach the CCR Ramp in no more than four years.



Why use ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness (CCR) Targets?

- By using ACT/NCEA CCR Targets, educators can advocate for higher standards which will greatly increase the likelihood that a student will be prepared for college-level course work or skilled career training by the end of high school.
- ACT/NCEA CCR Targets are research-based and linked to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are empirically derived, based on the actual performance of students in college.
- ACT/NCEA CCR Targets help educators shift the focus to early intervention. As ACT's research finds, if a student is not on track to being college and career ready by Grade 8, then the likelihood of the student reaching College and Career Readiness by graduation is minimal.*

*See ACT, Inc., 2008. *The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring that All Students are on Target for College and Career Readiness by High School* for more details.

- ACT/NCEA CCR Targets are identified on a state's assessments and provide educators with a higher standard based on their state's accountability measures. In many states, Passing/Proficient is not enough to prepare students for college or skilled career training.

Notes:

- The charts represented are conceptual and are not based on actual numbers. Students can take EXPLORE in either Grade 8 or Grade 9, and PLAN in either Grade 10 or Grade 11.
- ACT/NCEA College and Career Readiness Targets are unique to individual states and dependent on the state's assessments.

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The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a department of ACT, Inc., a not-for-profit organization committed to helping people achieve education and workplace success. NCEA builds the capacity of educators and leaders to create educational systems of excellence for all students. We accomplish this by providing research-based solutions and expertise in higher performing schools, school improvement, and best-practice research that lead to increased levels of college and career readiness.