



Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

ACT Scores through Targeted Coaching: A Practical Guide for Schools

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Introduction

The research article by Moss, et al. (2012) investigates the effectiveness of a four-week, 20-hour ACT coaching class offered at a large Midwestern high school. The literature review highlights the increasing importance of ACT scores for college admissions, scholarships, and placement in remedial classes. Despite the significant investment in test preparation, objective evidence supporting the effectiveness of ACT coaching is limited. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on the impact of coaching on ACT scores, addressing a gap in the existing research.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study employed a repeated measures design, comparing the best ACT scores of students before and after participating in the coaching class. A simulated control group of students who did not participate in the coaching class was used to isolate the effects of coaching.

Sample:

The sample consisted of juniors from a large Midwestern high school. The treatment group included 52 students who participated in the coaching class, while the control group comprised 55 students who did not receive any coaching.

Data Analysis:

The data analysis involved calculating the mean and standard deviations for each subject test and composite score. The gains in scores were compared between the coached and un-coached groups using t-tests to determine statistical significance.



Results

The study found that students who participated in the coaching class achieved significant gains in their ACT scores compared to those who did not. The coached group showed an average increase of 1.5 points in their composite ACT score; the un-coached group had an average gain of 0.65 points. The gains were higher for the coached group across all subject tests, with the most substantial improvement observed in English (2.35 points) and Reading (1.77 points).

Application into Practice

To replicate this intervention:

1. Schools can implement a structured ACT coaching program similar to the one described in the study.
2. The program should include 20 hours of instruction divided equally between English/Reading and Math/Science.
3. Experienced teachers trained as test coaches should provide the instruction, focusing on content review, test-taking strategies, and practice tests.
4. Differentiated instruction based on students' prior ACT scores can help tailor the coaching to individual needs. Regular practice and homework assignments, although not mandatory, can reinforce the learning.

Work Cited

Moss, G. L., Chippendale, E. K., Mershon, C. W., & Carney, T. (2012). Effects of a coaching class on the ACT scores of students at a large Midwest high school. *Journal of College Admission*, Fall 2012, 17-23.