PREACT

Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

Boosting ACT Scores with Embedded Curriculum
The Power Up Program

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Introduction

This intervention brief explores the research article titled "Power Up ACT: Evaluating the Efficacy of an Embedded ACT Curriculum on Test Score Improvement Using a Repeated Measures Model" by Morrissey et al.. The study addresses the critical issue of preparing students for standardized college entrance exams, specifically the ACT, which significantly impacts students' post-secondary opportunities. The authors highlight the importance of effective test preparation strategies, especially for students from underserved backgrounds. The Power Up ACT Prep program was developed to provide a comprehensive, research-based approach to improve ACT scores and increase college readiness. The program integrates test preparation into the regular high school curriculum, making it accessible to all students and ensuring equitable access to test prep resources.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study employed a general linear model for repeated measures (GLM-RM) to evaluate the impact of the Power Up ACT Prep program on student test scores. The intervention was conducted in an urban school district in a southwestern state, focusing on 11th-grade students.

Sample:

The sample consisted of 1,496 11th-grade students from nine high schools in the urban district. The students represented a diverse demographic, with a majority identifying as Hispanic (67.1%), followed by Black (19.5%), White (5.3%), and other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Data Analysis:

Data were collected through pre- and post-tests of the ACT administered in the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, respectively. The analysis focused on comparing the test scores before and after the intervention, considering the total number of prep sessions attended by students.

Results

The study found that students who participated in the Power Up ACT Prep program showed significant improvements in their composite ACT scores, as well as in the English and reading subtests. The results indicated a positive, significant effect of the total number of prep sessions attended on these scores. However, the improvements in math and science scores were not significant, suggesting the need for more targeted interventions in these areas. The findings underscore the importance of embedding test preparation within the classroom curriculum to provide equitable access to all students and improve their college readiness.

Application into Practice

To replicate this intervention in a school context, the following steps can be taken:

1. **Preparation:** Develop a comprehensive, research-based test prep program like Power Up, focusing on the four ACT subtest areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science.
2. **Implementation:** Integrate the test prep activities into the regular instructional time during the school day, ensuring that all students have access to the program.
3. **Monitoring:** Collect data on student participation and engagement, as well as pre- and post-test scores, to evaluate the program's effectiveness.
4. **Support:** Provide professional development for educators to ensure the program is implemented with fidelity and to help them support students effectively.

Work Cited

Morrissey, B. S., Wilson, S. N., McDaniels-Gomez, P., Willems, K., Goodin, A. S., Williams, L. A., & Williams, L. A. (2025). *Power up ACT: Evaluating the efficacy of an embedded ACT curriculum on test score improvement using a repeated measures model* [Unpublished manuscript].