

Get Your ACT Together! Raise ACT Scores Using Target Skills

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Time Frame 50-60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- What instructional strategies and resources might enhance a student's ACT performance when rooted in instruction?
- How might embedding research-based instructional strategies and resources impact a student's ACT composite score?
- How might embedding rigor and relevance into daily instruction impact students' ACT scores?
- How might targeting and engaging students in specific ACT skills during daily instruction help students raise their ACT scores?
- How might understanding and identifying specific weaknesses on the ACT CCR Standards worksheets help increase a student's ACT composite score?

Summary

This session is designed to engage teachers in using researched-based strategies to explore ACT data and identify specific skills that can be implemented in daily instruction. The goal of this session is to raise ACT scores by targeting skills within a composite score range provided by available ACT data.

Learning Goals

- Describe elements of rigor and relevance in each core content area.
- Compare the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards to site-specific ACT data.
- Raise ACT scores by identifying research-based instructional strategies and resources that will enhance classroom instruction.

Attachments

- ACT Data Worksheet—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Data Worksheet—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT English CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT English CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Math CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Math CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Reading CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Reading CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT School Report—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT School Report—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Science CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Science CCR Standards—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Test Prep - More Is Not Better—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Content Area Table Tents—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Content Area Table Tents—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- My Pledge—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- My Pledge—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Presentation Slides—Get Your ACT Together.pptx
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Place Mat—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Place Mat—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Sort Answers—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Sort Answers—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Cards—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Cards—Get Your ACT Together.pdf

Materials

- Content Area Table Tents (attached, one per table)
- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Cards (attached, one per group)
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Place Mat (attached, one per group)
- Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Sort Answers (attached)
- ACT English CCR Standards (attached, one per participant)
- ACT Math CCR Standards (attached, one per participant)
- ACT Reading CCR Standards (attached, one per participant)
- ACT Science CCR Standards (attached, one per participant)
- ACT Test Prep - More Is Not Better handout (attached, one per participant)
- ACT School Report handout (attached, one per participant)
- ACT Data Worksheet handout (attached, one per participant)
- My Pledge handout (attached, one per participant)
- Highlighters in green, pink, and yellow

15 minutes

Engage

Presenter's Note: Session Preparation

Prior to the session, print the attached handouts and have all materials available on a table for participants to pick up. All participants should receive a copy of the following handouts:

- **ACT CCR Standards (varies by content area subtest)**
- **ACT School Report**
- **ACT Data Worksheet**
- **ACT Test Prep - More Is Not Better**
- **My Pledge**

Organize tables into small groups. Place a **Content Area Table Tent** at each table so participants know to sit in their content area.

Presenter's Note: Card Sort Materials

Prior to the session, print the attached **Rigorous vs. Relevant Cards** on blue paper and cut out the cards. Each group of content area participants will need a set of cards corresponding to the content area they teach.

As participants enter, display **slide 2** of the attached **Presentation Slides**. Direct participants to sit at a table that is labeled with their content area. Have participants sit in groups of three to four, with one representative from each grade level per group if possible. If there are participants who do not teach in one of the four labeled content areas, have them sit where they may best support one of the other content areas.

Presenter's Note: Reading Subtest

Because social studies does not have a subtest and is instead assessed with the reading subtest, have social studies teachers review ACT reading data. Make sure you are familiar with how the ACT subtests are broken down and scored (i.e., social studies, science, art, and literature are all scored within the reading subtest). Being familiar with these categories will help you place teachers who teach outside the four content areas that are specifically identified by the table tents.

Move to **slide 3** and welcome participants. Briefly introduce yourself and the professional development session. Pass out the attached **Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Place Mat** to each group, as well as a set of **Rigorous vs. Relevant Cards**.

Move to **slide 4**. Using the Card Sort strategy, ask participants to work as a group to sort the cards into the categories of rigorous and relevant. Explain that there are two types of cards, those describing rigorous vs. relevant instruction (the blue cards) and those describing rigorous vs. relevant assignments. Both card types should be sorted in their respective areas on the Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Place Mat. Additionally, the blue instruction cards should be sorted under the subheadings of personal (individual) elements and social (classroom) components.

Presenter's Note: Guiding the Activity

Participants might need further individualized instruction during the card sort. Circulate the room and help participants as needed, but do not provide answers. Instead, encourage participants to sort the cards themselves.

Bring the whole group back together. Move to **slide 5** and display the answers for the card sort. Inform participants that the research categorizes the cards as shown on slide 5. Pass out the attached **Rigorous vs. Relevant Card Sort Answers** to each group based on content area. Ask participants: *How do your beliefs of rigor and relevance connect to the statements and ideas from research?*

Allow participants to share what they found to be similar and different. If presentation time allows, you may ask groups to share out where and why they placed the blue instruction cards. Others might have placed them in different locations, and that is okay because this discussion will allow participants who struggled to make connections and gain a firmer understanding of the differences between rigor and relevance.

Invite participants to consider if there can be rigorous instruction without relevance or relevant instruction without rigor. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts. Then, invite participants to think about what happens when either rigor or relevance is missing and what happens when both are present. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts and have a brief discussion about the importance of rigor and relevance when delivering content to students.

After the discussion, ask participants to clean up the card sort materials and move to **slide 6**. Review the objectives for the session:

- Describe elements of rigor and relevance in each core content area.
- Compare the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards to site-specific ACT data.
- Raise ACT scores by identifying research-based instructional strategies and resources that will enhance classroom instruction.

10 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 7** and have participants look at the **ACT School Report** handout, as well as the **ACT Data Worksheet**. Ask participants to examine the school's ACT data, paying particular attention to their subject's composite score and the percentage of questions correct for each subject indicator within their subtest.

Presenter's Note: Reading Subtest

Remind social studies teachers to look at the data for the reading subtest.

Have participants fill in their ACT Data Worksheets with their subtest data. Inform them the column labeled "Target Skills to Improve Student Scores" will be completed later in the session.

25 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 8** and ask participants to refer to the **ACT CCR Standards** handout associated with their subtest. Provide time for participants to work with their groups to review the ACT CCR subject standards for all score ranges. In their groups, have participants determine if and when each standard is taught in their curriculum.

Move to **slide 9** and have participants highlight each standard according to the key on the slide:

- Pink if the standard is taught after 10th or 11th grade.
- Yellow if the standard is taught during 10th or 11th grade.
- Green if the standard is taught before 10th or 11th grade.

Remind participants that ACT skills should be practiced throughout the year to ensure that students are exposed to the content on the ACT. Suggest that participants consider reviewing the subject standards with their students so they know which skills are needed to move them to the next score range. Participants may set small goals with their students to help them take ownership of their learning.

Move to **slide 10** and ask participants to choose three standards to target during the school year. These standards are the target skills that participants will focus on as a subject area department. Have participants discuss how they will teach these skills to students throughout the year. Ask each group to share out the target skills they have chosen to implement and the strategies they plan to use to teach those skills.

10 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 11** and ask participants to refer to the **ACT Test Prep: More Is Not Better** handout. Using the Think-Pair-Share strategy, provide time for participants to read through the document and identify some strategies that might increase students' scores. Ask participants to consider what resources they already have and how those could be used to support their teaching practices. Have each participant share their thoughts with a partner and then ask for volunteers to share out.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 12** and have participants look at the **My Pledge** handout. Ask participants to write the three target skills they previously identified on the handout and write three resources or strategies they intend to use to teach the three target skills. Suggest that participants hang up the My Pledge handout in their classroom so they can see it daily. This may help them keep their goals in mind when planning and implementing instruction throughout the year.

Follow-up Activities

Use the LEARN website to find subject-specific lessons and other resources that address the ACT CCR and Oklahoma Academic Standards.

Research Rationale

According to the ACT Condition of College and Career Readiness 2019, Oklahoma composite ACT scores lag behind national averages by approximately two points. The Oklahoma composite average is 18.9, while the national average is 20.7. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that direct test preparation has little impact on ACT scores and, in some cases, can result in lower scores in schools that used rigorous test preparation in class. Dedicated class time for ACT test preparation can detract from students' development of the analytical skills needed to be successful on the ACT (Allensworth et al.).

Instead of test preparation in class, it is more beneficial to focus instructional time on college preparedness. This includes teaching lessons that incorporate higher-order problem-solving skills, data interpretation, and writing practice. The research found that ACT scores improved when students wrote at least five papers throughout all of their classes that included defending a point of view (Allensworth et al.). Encouraging students to focus on the quality of their classwork and connecting that work to their ACT score is more beneficial than giving practice ACT exams. Practice ACT exams are not designed for learning and can be confusing for students when used as instruction (Allensworth et al.).

Resources

- ACT. (2017). ACT college and career readiness standards. ACT. https://www.act.org/content/act/en/education-and-career-planning/college-and-career-readiness-standards.html
- ACT. (2019). The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2019: Delaware Key Findings. ACT. https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr-2019/Delaware-CCCR-2019.pdf
- Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S. M., & Correa, M. (n.d.). *From high school to the future.* UChicago Consortium on School Research. https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/high-school-future-act-preparation-too-much-too-late
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card Sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139
- Target Goal Aiming [Image]. (n.d.). Pixabay. https://pixabay.com/photos/target-goal-aiming-dartboard-aim-1551492/