Power Up: ACT Prep

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Time Frame 45 minutes

Essential Question(s)

What strategies and resources can educators use to effectively prepare students for success in the ACT exam?

Summary

This professional learning session introduces some of the more effective strategies for preparing for the ACT. The goals of this learning experience are to access prior knowledge of the ACT and use the "Power Up: ACT Prep" activities already prepared to assist students in increasing their scores.

Learning Goals

- Assess prior knowledge of the ACT.
- Explore a “Power Up: ACT Prep” activity.
- Analyze how the “Power Up: ACT Prep” curriculum can be implemented within existing classes or school structures.

Attachments

- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—Power Up ACT Prep.docx
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—Power Up ACT Prep.pdf
- LEARN Scavenger Hunt—Power Up ACT Prep.docx
- LEARN Scavenger Hunt—Power Up ACT Prep.pdf
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.docx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.pdf
- Presentation Slides—Power Up ACT Prep.pptx
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.docx
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.pdf

Materials

- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet (attached; one per participant)
- Passage handout (attached; one per participant)
- Questions handout (attached; one per participant)
- LEARN Scavenger Hunt handout (attached; one per participant)
- Highlighters or colored pencils (three colors per participant)
- Sticky Notes (optional)

5 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Presentation Slides**. Display **slide 2**. Introduce yourself and welcome participants to the session.

Facilitator's Note: Purpose

Included as part of this professional learning session is an **Instructional Strategy Note Sheet**. This enables participants, particularly those who are not going to be engaged in ACT preparation directly, to gain beneficial instructional strategies from this session.

Hand out and introduce the **Instructional Strategy Note Sheet**. Let participants know that even if they do not teach ACT Prep, then they can at least walk away with strategies that can be used with students in any content area. When participants see a strategy in use, they should record how it is used and how they might use it in their own content areas.

Display **slide 3** and introduce participants to the Fiction in the Facts strategy. Give participants time to view the statements and decide which are fact and which are fiction. Then, have participants share their answers for each statement. Click the slide to animate the answer for the first statement. Repeat this for the remaining statements, clicking again each time to display the answer to each statement.

Move to **slide 4** and ask participants to reflect on the strategy, including how it was used in this session and how they might use it. Let participants know they will do this for each strategy throughout the session.

On **slide 5** share the essential question, followed by the learning goals on **slide 6**.

15 minutes

Explore

Facilitator's Note

You can choose any model ACT activity that will best meet your participants' needs based on content area.

- English
- Mathematics
- Reading
- Science

Introduce the model activity participants will be going through, "Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 2" using **slide 7**. Transition to **slide 8** and share the topic for this model activity: finding main ideas and supporting details.

Share the essential question on **slide 9** and the learning objectives from **slide 10**.

Move to **slide 11** and introduce the Always, Sometimes, or Never True strategy to participants. On **slide 12,** read the statement on the slide: *The ACT reading test is divided into four passages.* Ask participants to think for a moment. Then ask for a volunteer to share whether they believe the statement is always true, sometimes true, or never true. Move to **slide 13**, which reveals that there are always four passages on the reading portion of the ACT. The slide also provides additional information about the exam: the test takes 35 minutes, and there are 40 questions on the reading test.

Repeat this process with the additional statements on **slides 14–17**.

Move to **slide 18** and introduce the strategies that will be used in this next section, Fist to Five and Categorical Highlighting.

Give each participant a copy of the attached **Passage** handout, which is a student-material for week 2 of the Reading ACT Prep. Move to **slide 19**. Ask participants to look at the information provided at the top of the handout. Ask participants to consider whether the passage is fiction or nonfiction and use their hands to indicate their answer. Direct participants to hold up one finger for fiction or two fingers for nonfiction. Confirm that the passage is *nonfiction*.

Move to **slide 20** and review the four types of passages that are on the ACT reading test: literary narrative, social science, humanities, and natural science.

- **Literary Narrative:** often excerpts from short stories, novels, memoirs, or personal essays
- **Social Science:** often a straightforward discussion of a topic from psychology, history, political science, etc.
- **Humanities:** often a nonfiction, informational passage about a topic from art, philosophy, theater, etc.
- **Natural Science:** often a detailed nonfiction passage about a science topic

Ask participants to hold up one, two, three, or four fingers (as indicated on the slide) to represent which type of passage is on their handout. Confirm with participants that the passage type is *Social Science*.

Display **slide 21**. Ask participants to consider what the purpose of the passage is. Ask participants to hold up one, two, or three fingers (as indicated on the slide) to represent the purpose. Confirm with participants that the purpose of the passage is to *inform*.

Reinforce to participants that it is helpful to determine whether the passage is fiction or nonfiction, the type, and the purpose of the passages before answering questions.

Move to **slide 22** and give each participant three highlighters or colored pencils. Direct participants to read the passage silently and to highlight in different colors as they read the main idea of the passage, supporting details of the passage, and evidence that supports the details highlighted. After providing about ten minutes for participants to complete this, have participants partner together and review the items they chose to highlight. Have a brief group discussion about what the main idea, supporting details, and evidence of supporting details are for the passage.

Display **slide 23** and pass out the attached **Questions** handout to each participant. Have participants answer the multiple-choice ACT-style questions about the passage. Review the correct answers with participants using **slide 24**.

Move to **slide 25** and continue to model the ACT Prep activity: congratulate participants on working to increase their ACT scores. Suggest that participants spend twenty minutes weekly reading a text to prepare further for the ACT reading section.

5 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 26** and introduce participants to the How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking? strategy. Give participants some time to reflect on the questions before inviting a few to share out responses, especially about how they might work this curriculum into their class.

Move to **slide 27** and share the general information about K20's Power Up: ACT Prep curriculum.

Facilitator's Note: Student Resources

Let participants know that if students qualify for free or reduced lunch, they can get up to four ACT fee waivers.

15 minutes

Extend

Transition to **slide 28** and introduce the Scavenger Hunt Notes strategy. Distribute a copy of the attached **LEARN Scavenger Hunt** handout to each participant and let them know that they will be exploring the K20 LEARN site.

Show **slide 29** and have participants use the QR codes to navigate to the curriculum in LEARN. Give participants 10–15 minutes to explore the ACT prep curriculum collections on LEARN using the directions on their handout.

Facilitator's Note: Tech Tip

For those participants accessing LEARN through their phone, you might let them know that they will need to click on the title of the resource to access the the resource (each title is hyperlinked text).

5 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 30** and introduce the What? So What? Now What? strategy. Allow participants time to reflect on each prompt. Encourage participants to share out some of their responses. You might also have participants respond to the question, “Now, what will you do to support students in preparing for the ACT?” on sticky notes, which can be placed in a central location for all participants to view.

Display **slide 31** and review the LEARN strategies used during this session. Give participants time to reflect on these strategies and fill in their Instructional Strategy Note Sheet.

Research Rationale

Standardized testing in high schools has long stood as a metric for assessing college readiness and school accountability (McMann, 1994). While there has been debate surrounding the accuracy of such metrics, as well as concerns regarding fair access and representation, many institutions of higher education continue to make these scores part of the admissions process (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Black et al., 2016; Buckley et al., 2020). Aside from admissions, it is also important to keep in mind that standardized test scores can also provide students with scholarship opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have (Klasik, 2013). Though the topic of standardized testing continues to be debated, effective test prep can ensure that our students are set up for success.

With several benefits to doing well on college admissions tests, it is important to consider how best to prepare students for this type of high-stakes test. Those students from groups that may historically struggle to find success, such as those in poverty or first-generation college students, especially stand to benefit from effective test preparation (Moore & San Pedro, 2021). The American College Test (ACT) is one option students have for college admissions testing that is provided both at national centers and school sites. Taking time to understand this test including the timing, question types, rigor, and strategies for approaching specific questions can help to prepare students to do their best work on test day and ensure their score is a more accurate representation of what they know (Bishop & Davis-Becker, 2016).

Resources

- ACT. (n.d.). ACT college and career readiness standards. ACT. https://www.act.org/content/act/en/college-and-career-readiness/standards.html
- ACT. (2022). Average ACT scores by state: Graduating class of 2023. ACT. https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2023-Average-ACT-Scores-by-State.pdf
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Always, Sometimes, or Never True. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fiction in the facts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/60
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fist to five. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/68
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Scavenger hunt notes. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3113
- K20 Center. (n.d.) What? So what? Now what?. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/95
- Kaplan Test Prep. (n.d.). What is the ACT®?. Kaplan Test Prep. https://www.kaptest.com/act/what-is-the-act
- The Princeton Review. (n.d.). 4 ACT myths and misconceptions. The Princeton Review. https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/4-act-myths