



ACT composite mean scores showed Nebraska students scoring nearly two percentage points higher than the national average in 1975.

Nebraskans scored 25 points higher than the national average in SAT verbal categories, while topping the national SAT math average

by 35 points in 1974-75. The ACT is divided into four parts, English, mathematics, social studies and natural sciences.

Lewis Fowles, UNL associate dean of academic services, said UNL has followed the national trend of rising grades.

There are many reasons college grades are rising despite falling test scores, Fowles said.

Many colleges have started using a plus system which allows a student to get a 3.5 or B+ average (4.0 being top) without ever receiving an A, he said.

Allowing students to retake classes in which they receive a D or F also lifts grades, Fowles said.

Braskamp said economics play a big part in rising college grades.

When college enrollment grew in the 1960s, grades also went up, Braskamp said, and the enrollment rise can be partially attributed to avoiding the draft.

Colleges are now interested in maintaining their schools, he said, and not in flunking out students because they need their tuition. Some of the elite schools are still selective, but most schools want to keep their enrollment high, he said.

Admission requirements in the College Handbook, which describes more than 2,000 colleges, showed that out of the 50 states' universities requiring SAT or ACT for admission, only one requires a minimum score for admission.

NU requires either ACT or SAT for admission but requires no minimum score, said Al Papik, UNL admissions director.

Any Nebraskan who has graduated from an accredited high school will be admitted regardless of test scores and nonresidents are admitted on a combined basis of class rank, quality of high school transcript and

test scores, Papik said.

Nebraska Wesleyan University also requires either test and no minimum score, said Admissions Director Ron Johnson.

Both NU and Wesleyan use ACT to award scholarships, place students in honor programs and advise and place students in classes.

Nebraska's other state colleges (Chadron, Kearney, Wayne and Peru) also use ACT scores to award scholarships and do not require minimum scores for admission.

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5. High schools should consider test scores: (a) as an indicator of how they should change their curriculum; (b) as an indicator of how their students have performed but nothing more; (c) as an indicator of how their students have performed and as one consideration of curriculum.

According to five Nebraska high school administrators interviewed, (c) is the best answer.

Ron Houston, director of college placement at Omaha Westside High School, said, "Schools need to examine where they fit in with the scores and see if there is any need for change, but curriculum shouldn't be changed just because of the scores.

What we really need is to get some accurate evaluation of the scores done with figures, not just opinion."

Bill Spellman, college counselor at Bellevue High School, said test scores probably shouldn't dictate curriculum, but added that Bellevue has adjusted its English program to help test performance.

Three weeks before the test date emphasis is put on grammar and other English skills in English classes, Spellman said. Last year was the first time it was done, he said, so it is too early to see any difference.

Kenneth Conner, guidance director at Ogallala High School, said their curriculum is not based on test scores and added that a student's college performance is what really matters.

Don Darnell, assistant principal of Lincoln Southeast High School, said not too much stock is placed on the tests at Southeast, but added that they shouldn't be eliminated.

Dick O'Neal, Scottsbluff High School guidance director, said that since the tests do not reflect the whole student body (about one-third of high school seniors take the test both statewide and nationally), using them to evaluate curriculum probably wouldn't reflect the whole situation.

6. Scholastic aptitude tests should: (a) be eliminated since they don't mean anything; (b) continue and serve as the prime indicator of student performance; (c) continue as an indicator of student performance when considered with other factors; (d) change to conform with what is being taught.

Selection of (c) is probably the best choice for this question.

"SAT is not intended to reflect what is being taught in high schools, but to predict performance in college," said SAT's Abernathy.

"There's always someone around saying secondary schools aren't teaching what they're supposed to. Now people are saying if you don't believe me look at the scores," he said, adding that many people misinterpret the scores.

Munday of ACT said a decline is always harder to explain than an increase and the year-to-year decrease bothers people.

ACT and SAT are reputable organizations that try to assess students' ability to learn, grasp concepts and apply them to other situations, said Hudson, from the education department.

"They do a pretty good job, but society and schools are changing and they can't do a 100 per cent job of assessing changes," he said.

"SAT and ACT are to education what a thermometer is to medicine," Hudson said. They indicate things you already suspect, but they don't tell the whole story.

"If the temperature keeps getting higher or the test scores keep getting lower it is probably an indication that some assessment should be done," Hudson said.

Some of the people holler, "back to the basics," are looking at the scores from a limited frame of reference, he said.

They can only compare numbers and often aren't considering reasons that can cause a decrease.

"I think testing is essential, but it is only as good as its user," he said.

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