



Department of
Education

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity

2016 Implementation Guide

Tennessee Department of Education | July 2016

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Intent of this Guide

The Tennessee Department of Education (the department) is excited to provide this implementation guide to assist districts and schools in implementing the 2016 *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* provided through funding appropriated in the Governor’s fiscal year 2017 budget. This guide is meant to provide specific logistical information for the opportunity for the 2016-17 school year only. Future implementation of a senior retake opportunity will be subject to annual appropriations and may be facilitated differently, based on continuing improvements made in partnership with ACT.

Overview

The Tennessee department of education believes that all students must be prepared **for their chosen path in life**. The ACT¹ is a powerful national measure of readiness in terms of the cumulative academic knowledge and critical thinking skills valued by both employers and postsecondary educators. By increasing the success of students on the ACT, we can expand the opportunities that students have for success in high-quality employment in Tennessee.

National data indicate that retaking the ACT typically leads to composite score improvement of 1-2 points.² In Tennessee, our state data indicate that students who retake the ACT typically increase 1-3 points. Based on the typical growth of those in Tennessee who took the ACT a second time, **we anticipate that thousands of students could avoid high school and postsecondary remediation and meet the ACT requirement for the HOPE scholarship by participating in this retake opportunity**. Decreasing the percentage of students who graduate high school with low ACT composite and benchmark scores increases the number of students who will start their next phase in life with the learning and skills necessary for success.

Our Vision

Given the potential benefits of retaking the ACT, the department seeks to offer every senior the opportunity to retake it at no cost to them. A significant portion of Tennessee students already choose to retake the ACT. However, in order to make the greatest impact for our students and our state, we know that we must build the capacity of every district to support all students who wish to retake the ACT.

The General Assembly, as part of the of the Tennessee Student Assessment Transparency Act of 2016, voted to allow each student who took a postsecondary readiness assessment—like the ACT—as a junior to be provided the opportunity to retake it as a senior. Increasing our students' results on the ACT directly supports the goals of the department's strategic plan, [Tennessee Succeeds](#), and supports the goal of the Governor in his *Drive to 55*, to ensure a majority of Tennessee residents go on to obtain a postsecondary credential, certificate, or degree. To increase the overall rate of eligible students retaking the ACT, we must first increase the participation rate of our first-time test takers. District

¹ The ACT® is a leading postsecondary readiness assessment developed and administered by [ACT, Inc.](#) While the ACT is not the only postsecondary readiness assessment allowed by law, all districts in the state chose to administer the ACT as their required postsecondary readiness assessment in the 2015-16 school year. Because of this, the department will only offer an ACT retake opportunity for the 2016-17 school year. If districts choose to administer the SAT® (an alternate postsecondary readiness assessment, developed and administered by [The College Board](#)) in future years, future retake opportunities may also include the SAT.

² ACT, Inc. research finds that 57 percent of students who take the test more than once improved their composite score.

accountability measures will require an 85 percent participation rate in 2016-17 and a 95 percent participation rate in 2017-18 and thereafter.³ As our statewide ACT participation rates grow, more students will have the opportunity to retake the ACT in their senior year, increasing our overall student outcomes as a state.

Definitions

The ACT: The ACT® is a nationally recognized benchmark assessment for college and career readiness. By taking the ACT, students can gain valuable information on their readiness for college and career. The ACT (or SAT) is required for admission and/or placement into many technical school programs, two year colleges, and four year colleges and universities.

ACT National Test Date: A Saturday test administration of the ACT that is organized and managed by ACT, Inc., **not** the department or local school districts.

ACT National Test Center: A school or other test site that is approved to administer the ACT test on a national test date. A school that administers the ACT on the statewide test date **is not necessarily** a national test center. For a list of national test centers, please visit <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/taking-the-test/test-center-locator.html>.

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity: As part of the 2016 Tennessee Student Assessment Transparency Act, the General Assembly legislated that each student taking the ACT as a junior shall have the opportunity to retake it one additional time ([PC 844](#)). Appropriations were set aside in the Governor's fiscal year 2017 budget for these assessments. The department is paying for these assessments with a one-year contract with ACT, Inc. under the title of the program "*ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*."

District Point of Contact: Each district's director of schools will indicate a specific point of contact to receive detailed information and ongoing updates about the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*. If you have not already done so, please indicate your district's point of contact using this [online survey](#).

Economically Disadvantaged: For the purposes of the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*, students who meet the ACT's eligibility criteria for a fee waiver are considered economically disadvantaged. To qualify for a fee waiver, students must be in the 11th or 12th grade and meet one or more indicators of economic need. The most basic of which is qualifying for federal free or reduced price lunch programs. All criteria for qualifying for an ACT fee waiver can be found at <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf>.

³ In graduating class of 2015, 83 percent of students took the ACT, while 17 percent never took the ACT.

Fee Waiver: A fee waiver is a registration code that provides free registration for the ACT exam on a national test date for eligible economically disadvantaged students.

Qualifying Student: A qualifying student is any Tennessee public school senior who took the ACT as a junior on the statewide administration date or on a national ACT test date using a voucher.

Retake Voucher: The retake voucher is a registration code that covers the cost of the ACT exam at any national test center on the October 22, 2016, national test date through the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*. The retake voucher will be provided to districts to distribute to students for individual registration and will be billed directly to the department.

Voucher: A voucher is a registration code that covers the cost of the ACT exam and allows a student to take the ACT on a national test date. Districts may have used vouchers in the past to provide an opportunity for a student to take the ACT on a national test date rather than a statewide administration date. Vouchers will also be used for the state to cover the cost of the ACT exam for non-economically disadvantaged students through the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* (see “retake voucher” above).

Logistics

Logistical requirements to implement the 2016 *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* are found below. Logistics for the 2016 implementation of this program may be different than those in future years because of existing contractual relationships at the district level with ACT, Inc. and a short timeframe for implementation of the program given the legislative calendar and appropriations. **It will be the responsibility of each individual student participating in the 2016 ACT Senior Retake Opportunity to register themselves for the ACT exam on the October 22 National Test Date using either a fee waiver or a retake voucher⁴.** It will be the responsibility of each participating school district to communicate the number of needed fee waivers and retake vouchers, based on student qualifications, to the department and distribute the fee waivers and retake vouchers directly to students.

⁴ Students who meet ACT, Inc.’s economically disadvantaged requirements qualify for up to two fee waivers to register for the ACT for free. Qualifying students who are considered economically disadvantaged must use one of their two fee waivers to register for the October 22 national test date to participate in the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity.

When and where is the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

All qualifying students will have the option of retaking the ACT on the national ACT test date of **Saturday, October 22, 2016**. The registration deadline for this national test date is Friday, September 16, 2016. Retake vouchers offered by the department will allow registration for this test date *only*.

If a student registers after Friday, September 16, 2016, the student will be responsible for paying any late registration fees. The retake voucher will expire on September 30, 2016, which is the late registration deadline, and cannot be used for any other national test date.

All qualifying students who choose to retake the ACT on October 22 must sit for the exam at a national testing site. A list of national ACT testing sites in Tennessee, as well as other states, is available online at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/taking-the-test/test-center-locator.html>.

What is included in the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

The department will cover only the cost of regular ACT registration (\$42.50) for qualifying students as part of the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*. This does not include the ACT writing section. If students wish to take the ACT with writing, they must pay separately for the writing section (\$17.00) at the time they register for the exam.

- Note: If economically disadvantaged students are participating in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* and are registering for the ACT using a fee waiver, they can register for the ACT and the writing section at no additional cost.

For students who qualify for the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* and who will utilize a retake voucher, the following applies:

- All regular ACT registration costs will be billed directly to the department.
 - The department is not responsible for any costs associated with late fees, test change fees, or any other fees or products offered by the ACT that are separate from the regular ACT test registration fee.
- Districts and schools will not be responsible for any registration costs.

Please note: All registration processes, test day procedures, and test administration will be managed by ACT, Inc. according to their standard processes for national test dates. The department does not have the authority to alter deadlines, test centers, or any other ACT procedure.

What are the responsibilities of the district and school for participation in the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

The department has partnered with ACT, Inc. to create a special process that will allow for batch ordering of retake vouchers and fee waivers for all qualifying students.

The department will provide each district's point of contact with a file that lists the number of qualifying students who may participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*. The file will indicate the total number of retake vouchers and fee waivers anticipated for the district. The district point of contact is responsible for reviewing the file and verifying the total number of needed retake vouchers and fee waivers.

- Qualifying students who are eligible to participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* but are not considered economically disadvantaged will receive a retake voucher.
- Qualifying students who are eligible to participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* and meet ACT, Inc.'s requirements to be considered economically disadvantaged will receive a fee waiver.
- If a district needs more retake vouchers and/or fee waivers than listed in the department-provided file, the district may request additional registration codes from the department at the time of file review (July) or directly from ACT, Inc. (August–September) upon receiving their retake vouchers and fee waivers.
- The ACT registration process will be identical for students regardless of whether they are using a retake voucher or a fee waiver.

Once districts have verified the number of retake vouchers and fee waivers needed for their qualifying seniors with the department, districts will receive an electronic document from ACT, Inc. via email with registration codes for all qualifying students.

- Note: Many schools already receive fee waivers for economically disadvantaged students annually from ACT, Inc. and will continue to receive these fee waivers. ACT, Inc. will subtract the number of fee waivers already in process for a given school from the district's final order number supplied by the department and will deliver only the additional requested fee waivers through the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* email above the amount already in process. If a district or school finds they need additional retake vouchers or fee waivers after receiving their registration codes from ACT, Inc., they may reach out directly to ACT, Inc. for additional retake vouchers and/or fee waivers.

Districts will be responsible for delivering the ACT registration codes (retake vouchers and fee waivers) to their students following a process that they develop. Students must register for the **October 22 national ACT date** using the regular ACT registration process, outlined online at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration-information.html>.

How do students register for the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

Qualifying students will receive their registration codes (from either a retake voucher or a fee waiver) following the process outlined by their specific school district and school. Students are responsible for registering for the ACT exam individually, using the regular ACT registration process outlined online at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration-information.html>.

In addition to the cost of the ACT which will be covered by the retake voucher or fee waiver, students may elect to pay for additional products or services (such as ACT Writing, additional college score reports, etc.) with a credit card during the registration process.

Students who wish to participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* must use their retake voucher or fee waiver to register for the October 22 national test date at any available national test site.

Additional important information about the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity

Though the deadline to register for the October 22 national ACT test date is September 16, eligible **students should register for the ACT as soon as possible after receiving their registration codes on either a retake voucher or a fee waiver.** Due to the expected increase in registrations for this test date across the state, early registration will be essential to securing a seat at the student's preferred [national test center](#).

Students will be responsible for their own transportation, materials, and documentation on the October 22 test date. For more information about preparing for a national test date, please visit <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/taking-the-test.html#testday>.

The main responsibility of districts and schools is supporting their students through the regular ACT registration process and preparation for the test date. Please see the *School-Level Recommendations & Resources* section for more information.

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity Process

July

- **Districts** assign a point of contact for the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*.
- The department sends a pre-populated file of total number of qualifying students to the district's identified point of contact.
- District **verifies student eligibility numbers** and **submits final number of needed retake vouchers and fee waivers** to the department.

August

- **ACT, Inc.** provides participating districts with retake voucher and fee waiver **registration codes for qualifying seniors** via email.
- Districts are responsible for giving students their ACT registration codes and providing guidance to students on how to register for the ACT.

Sept.

- Districts continue to promote and support student registration and preparation for the exam.
- The **regular registration deadline** for the October 22 test date is Friday, **September 16**.
- The **late registration deadline** is Friday, **September 30**.

Oct.

- The *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* test date is **October 22**.
- Students are responsible for transportation to their registered test site, as well as bringing identification and any other materials needed for testing.
- Students may add or change postsecondary institutions to receive score reports until noon on Thursday, October 27.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Which law requires students to take the ACT/SAT in the 11th grade year?

Per state law, T.C.A. § 49-6-6001, effective July 1, 2007, “every public school student shall take an examination at grade eleven (11). This assessment shall be approved by the commissioner of education and provide information to assist in developing interventions for the purpose of improving student preparation for postsecondary achievement.” The commissioner of education has designated the ACT and SAT as qualified assessments for this purpose.

2. Why is ACT/SAT being included in district accountability?

The ACT/SAT is being included in district accountability for three reasons. First, state law, T.C.A. § 49-6-6001, which took effect July 1, 2007, requires districts to administer an assessment of postsecondary readiness to all students in grade 11. Secondly, while graduation rates have increased, ACT/SAT scores have been stagnant, and the inclusion of ACT/SAT in accountability serves as a proactive strategy to ensure that Tennessee is going beyond simple credit attainment. Finally, ACT/SAT performance aligns with the department’s strategic plan of improving postsecondary outcomes for students by providing a comprehensive look at student performance throughout their academic careers.

3. Why is October 22 the only date that eligible seniors can use the retake voucher?

In order for the department to offer the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* to all eligible students and to ensure accurate score reporting from the ACT, all seniors must use their retake opportunity on the same date.

4. Can an eligible student register for the ACT with writing as part of this initiative?

Yes, students may register for the ACT with writing using their provided registration codes; however, a student who will be utilizing a retake voucher will be responsible for the additional cost of the writing section. An eligible economically disadvantaged student who is utilizing a fee waiver code will have the cost of the writing section waived by ACT, Inc.

5. If a student misses the regular registration deadline for October 22, can the student complete a late registration form?

Yes, a student may register late for the October 22 test date, but the student will be responsible for any late registration fees at the time of registration. The late registration deadline is Friday, September 30. Given the expected increase in students registering for the October 22 test date, the department strongly recommends that all eligible students register as early as possible to ensure a seat at their desired test center.

6. There is no ACT national testing center in my district. What should my students do?

Students will be responsible for their own transportation to their chosen test center. Keep in mind that students may register for the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* at any ACT national test center that offers an exam on the October 22 date, including those in neighboring states and districts.

7. Can students register to take the ACT in other states as part of the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*?

Yes, students may register to take the ACT at any ACT national test center using their retake voucher or fee waiver registration code, including test centers in neighboring states.

8. How will student scores be reported?

Students will receive their score reports through their ACT accounts. The department will receive a data file from ACT, Inc. with all Tennessee student scores for the October 22 national test date. Districts and schools will continue to receive individual student score reports, as well as aggregated student information in their annual cohort files from ACT, Inc.

9. Will student scores count for district accountability?

Yes, student scores from those participating in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* will be included in district accountability if the retake composite score is the student's highest score.

10. What if a qualifying student wants to retake the ACT using a retake voucher, but cannot be there on October 22?

The retake voucher is valid only for the October 22 test date. If a qualifying student does not participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*, the student may register for any other national test date at his/her own expense.

11. What if a qualifying student wants to retake the ACT using a fee waiver but cannot be there on October 22?

Qualifying students who meet the requirements to be considered economically disadvantaged are eligible for up to two fee waivers from ACT, Inc. These fee waivers can be used to register for the ACT on any national test date and are not required to be used on October 22.

12. A student cannot take the ACT on a Saturday due to religious obligations. Will that student still be able to participate in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* initiative?

The student will need to locate and register at an ACT national test site that offers a non-Saturday administration. More information about non-Saturday administrations can be found online at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/help.html#special4>.

13. How will the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* impact district accountability? Can it negatively impact my district?

Only a student's highest ACT composite score will be counted for district accountability purposes. If a student's score decreases after retaking the ACT, the student's initial score will be used in district accountability measures. Participation in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*, therefore, will not negatively impact district accountability results.

14. Can seniors take the ACT for the first time through the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*?

The legislation that appropriated funds to cover the cost of the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* explicitly states the funds are only to be used for students who participated in the exam as a junior. Therefore, the department is unable to allow seniors who have not yet taken the ACT to do so through this opportunity. If a senior has not taken the ACT and meets ACT, Inc.'s requirements to be considered economically disadvantaged, they can qualify for up to two fee waivers to take the exam at any time at no cost to them. For information on fee waivers, please visit <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf>.

School Level Recommendations & Resources

Because the logistics of the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* require individual student registration for the ACT exam, it is imperative that individual schools define a process for executing the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* and assist students, as needed, in participating.

Recommendations for Participating Districts and Schools

Each district should identify a point of contact for the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*. This point of contact will receive information about the opportunity directly from the department and will be the main source of information for district schools. In conjunction with this, the department recommends that each high school also identify a main point of contact for the opportunity who is familiar with senior students and the ACT registration process⁵. In small districts with only one high school, the district and school point of contact may be the same person.

This school-level point of contact should be responsible for:

- verifying those seniors who are eligible for the retake initiative;
- distributing the ACT retake voucher and fee waiver registration codes to the appropriate students; and,
- promoting and/or facilitating student registration prior to the regular ACT registration deadline of September 16.

⁵ In many cases, the appropriate person will be a school counselor. At larger schools, schools may wish to create a team that will be responsible for administering the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*.

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity District and School Checklist

July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify eligible students to receive vouchers or fee waivers <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate <i>ACT Senior Retake Opportunity</i> to students and families through standard communication methods and publish information on school and district websites and media outlets (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) <input type="checkbox"/> Use staff development/training to inform all teachers (especially advisors and grade 12 teachers) about the <i>ACT Senior Retake Opportunity</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Create a school slogan or challenge related to the ACT and set a goal for the percentage of students who will retake <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate your goal to students, staff, and families
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate a presentation about the purpose and opportunity for ACT retakes into senior orientation/welcome back activities <input type="checkbox"/> Prominently post national test dates and locations in high-visibility areas (e.g., cafeteria, marquee, library) <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals, track progress, and celebrate milestones for student registration and participation <input type="checkbox"/> Use a senior event, open house, or parent-teacher conference to communicate the ACT retake option and its requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Promote student registration process for all eligible students with retake voucher and fee waiver registration codes <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize flexible time and space in daily schedule to offer ACT registration support and preparation (e.g. advisory time, enrichment time embedded in RTI² scheduling)
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct individual outreach to students to verify registration <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare students for national test date (e.g. what to bring/what not to bring, check out calculators, buy/borrow watches, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop supports to ensure student turn-out on October 22 <input type="checkbox"/> Promote registration deadline of September 16 <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure students are aware of late registration deadline of September 30
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate and recognize students for retaking the ACT <input type="checkbox"/> Plan celebration/recognition for growth and achievement once scores are reported <input type="checkbox"/> Request local media coverage to recognize your district/school and students leading up to, on, and following October 22 <input type="checkbox"/> Test day is October 22, 2016

Free Student & Staff Resources

- [General ACT Test Tips for Students](#)
- [General ACT Test Tips: A Teacher's Guide](#)
- Free ACT & SAT Preparation through the [Tennessee Electronic Library](#)
- [ACT Sample Test Questions](#) & Question of the Day
- [Study Guide: Preparing for the ACT](#) (offered by ACT, Inc.)

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity Contacts

For all general inquiries about the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* and/or questions about registration, preparation, or programmatic support, contact Jerre.Maynor@tn.gov.

For questions pertaining to district accountability, contact Evan.Kramer@tn.gov.

For questions pertaining to ACT test coordination and logistics, contact Philip.Jacobs@tn.gov.