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CONTACT: [Mary Stadick Smith](#), South Dakota Department of Education, 605-773-7228 or [Ruth Raveling](#), South Dakota Department of Education, 605-773-2593

South Dakota students persevere in taking ACT, scores stay above national average

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota’s average ACT composite score for 2021 was 21.6, compared to the national average of 20.3. The composite score reflects sub-scores across the subjects of English, math, reading and science. ACT is a commonly recognized college entrance exam.

“It goes without saying how challenging the 2020-21 school year was, as schools and students navigated the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. “Despite those challenges, South Dakota’s 2021 graduates stayed focused on their postsecondary goals, took the ACT in impressive numbers, and continued to earn good scores.”

Fifty-five percent of South Dakota’s 2021 graduating class took the ACT. Taking the test is voluntary in South Dakota, and the state has one of the higher participation rates where the test is voluntary. Of states with 50% or more of graduates tested, South Dakota is tied with Minnesota for the highest average composite score.

While across the country, participation in the ACT dipped by 22.5% from 2020 to 2021, South Dakota’s participation was down only 9.6%. Across the Midwest region, participation was down 15.4%.

For more information, visit ACT’s website at act.org.

Average Composite ACT Scores – South Dakota vs. National (public and non-public)

Year	South Dakota	National
2017	21.8	21.0
2018	21.9	20.8
2019	21.6	20.7
2020	21.7	20.6
2021	21.6	20.3