

Department of
Education

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity

2017 Implementation Guide

Tennessee Department of Education | July 2017

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Purpose of the Guide

The Tennessee Department of Education (the department) is excited to provide this guide to assist districts and schools in implementing the 2017 *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* provided through funding appropriated in the governor's fiscal year 2018 budget. This guide is meant to provide specific logistical information for the 2017-18 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, Inc.

Overview

The department 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 higher education and high-quality employment in Tennessee.

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. Last year, Tennessee became the first state in the nation to offer a free retake opportunity to all public school seniors. In its first year, nearly **26,000 students** took advantage of the retake, **40 percent of whom increased their composite score**. Additionally, over **1,300 students met or exceeded the required composite score of 21** to become eligible for the HOPE lottery scholarship, and **thousands more increased individual subject scores** to surpass the minimum requirements for college-level coursework.

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.

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 2016–17 school year. Because of this, the department will only offer an ACT retake opportunity for the 2017–18 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.

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 to earn a regular high school diploma in Tennessee and may also be a requirement for admission and/or placement into many technical school programs, two-year colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

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. The ACT's criteria for qualifying for a fee waiver are listed [here](#).

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 2018 budget for these assessments.

School Test Coordinator: Personnel at the school level who are authorized to access ACT-related materials, communications, and the Pearson Access Next (PANext) tool.

Qualifying Student: All 12th grade students, regardless of whether or not they have previously taken the ACT, may participate in the fall administration of the exam.

Logistics

Logistical requirements to implement the 2017 *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* (“the retake”) are found below.

When and where is the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

- For the fall of 2017, the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity will be administered by local school districts, and the department will cover the costs of all exam fees.
- All districts will be able to administer the retake in their local schools for qualifying students on **Oct. 3** and/or **Oct. 17, 2017**. Similar to spring statewide testing, districts may choose the date they prefer or offer the test on both dates.
- The accommodations testing window will be **Oct. 3–Oct. 17**.
- **Note:** Regardless of which administration date the test is offered, school test coordinators are responsible for ordering and administering the correct **ACT test form** for the **corresponding test date**. Administering the incorrect test form will result in a misadministration.

What is the accommodations process for the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

- Students who received accommodations for spring 2016 ACT testing may have the same accommodations transferred to the retake exam, but **school test coordinators must manually change the test date** in the Test Accessibility and Accommodations System (TAA) to ensure that these students receive the correct testing form from ACT, Inc.
- If students need to apply for accommodations for the first time, school test coordinators must follow ACT’s process for requesting accommodations. More information about ACT accommodations and supports can be found on ACT’s website ([here](#)).

What is included in the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

- The department will cover the cost of the ACT exam (without writing) for qualifying senior students only.

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

- The department will provide ACT, Inc. with a file of qualifying students based on district enrollment as of May 1, 2017. Districts will receive a pre-populated file of qualifying students through the Pearson Access Next (PANext) system.
- School test coordinators will be responsible for reviewing the file and verifying students who intend to retake the exam.

- School test coordinators will be responsible for ordering exam materials for the date(s) the school chooses to offer the exam.
- School test coordinators will be responsible for administering and returning ACT exams in compliance with all ACT, Inc. guidelines and requirements.

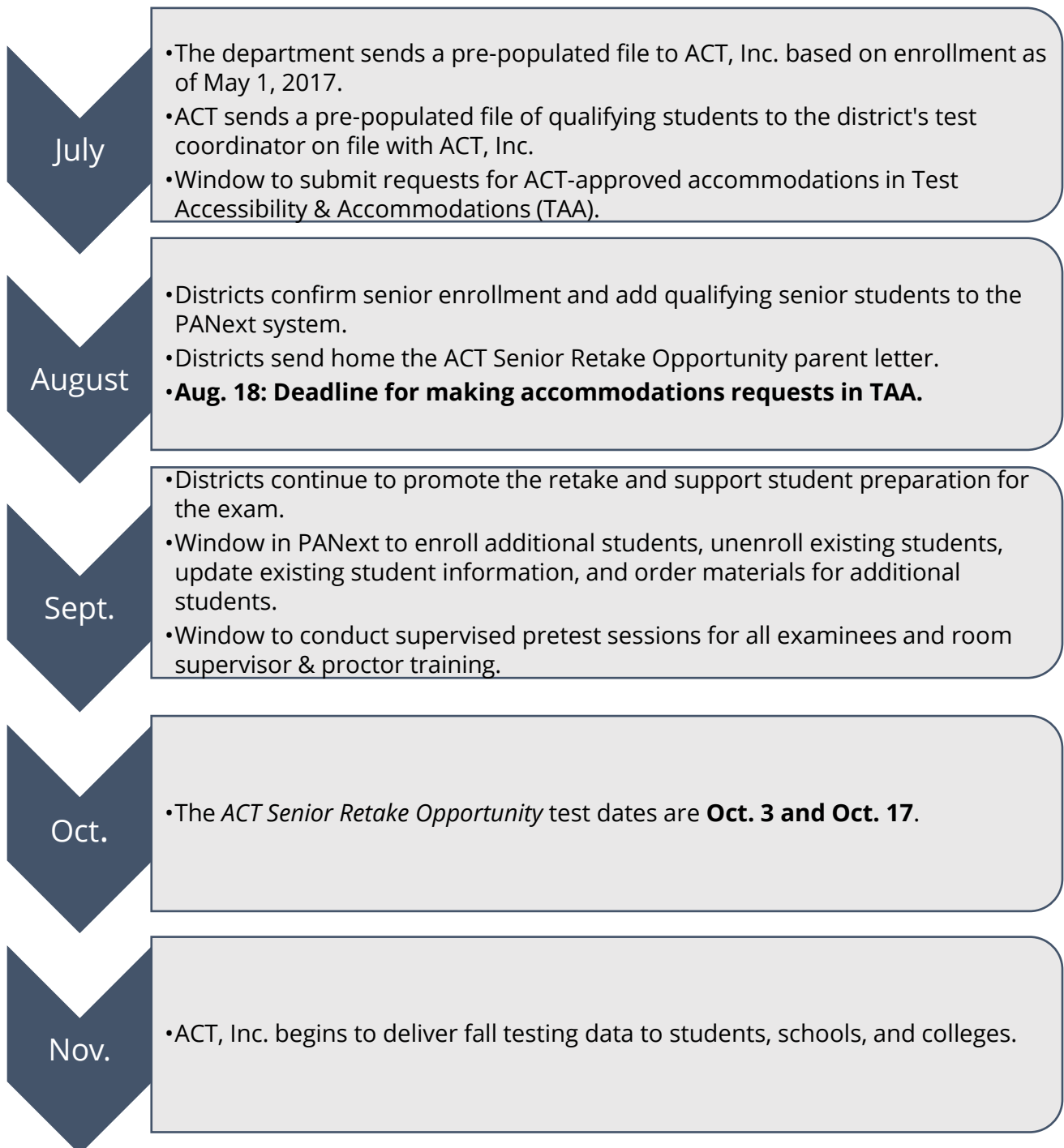
How do students register for the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity?

- Senior students will be automatically included in the district file if they participated in the junior statewide ACT testing in the district of their current (senior year) enrollment.
- Qualifying students who have transferred into a new district will need to be manually uploaded into the PANext system by the district in which they are currently enrolled.

Additional important information about the ACT Senior Retake Opportunity

- ACT, Inc. will communicate important information regarding the retake in the same manner as they communicate for spring ACT testing. Because local districts and schools will be responsible for test administration, the process for the retake will closely resemble the process for spring testing. For more information about 2017–18 ACT testing, please refer to the [ACT State Testing administration guidelines](#).

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity Process*



*A complete "Schedule of Events" will be delivered to all district and school test coordinators by ACT, Inc.

Questions & Answers

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. Is the ACT a graduation requirement?

Yes, beginning in the 2017–18 school year, the ACT or SAT will be required for students receiving a regular high school diploma who were enrolled in a Tennessee public school in their junior year per the Tennessee State Board of Education’s [high school policy](#).

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

No, students who need to take the writing portion of the ACT should register for a national ACT testing date. Information on ACT national testing can be found [here](#).

4. How will student scores be reported?

Students will receive a physical score report from ACT, Inc. three to eight weeks after testing. The department will receive a data file from ACT, Inc. in Dec. 2017. 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.

5. 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.

6. What if a qualifying student wants to retake the ACT but is absent on the date that we offer the test?

Students who miss the test date at their school will need to retake the exam on a national test date at their own expense or by using an [ACT fee waiver](#). 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. The department will no longer offer districts or students vouchers to test on national test dates.

7. 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.

8. It is impossible to administer the ACT and run regular classes in our building—what should we do?

For many schools, testing requires an alternate schedule or moving non-testing students out of the building. If this is the case for your school, we have specific recommendations in the section below titled “School-Level Recommendations & Resources.”

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

All students receiving a regular diploma in the state of Tennessee are expected to participate in spring state day ACT testing in their junior year. The intent of the retake is to offer an ***additional opportunity*** to all students who tested as juniors.

If a senior has yet to take the ACT, however, it is permissible for the student to participate in the October test administration. Juniors and underclassmen are not permitted to participate in the October test administration.

Please note that juniors and seniors who are considered economically disadvantaged may request up to two fee waivers to take the ACT on a national test date at no cost to them. For information on ACT fee waivers, please visit

<https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf>.

School-Level Recommendations & Resources

Recommendations for Participating Districts and Schools

- If you have physical constraints that prevent you from operating both testing and scheduled courses, consider the following options:
 - Offer juniors a simulated practice ACT test at the same time as the official senior retake. Use the results from the junior practice test to target instruction and remediation leading up to the spring ACT testing dates for juniors.
 - Take sophomores and freshmen on campus visits to local postsecondary institutions or businesses, and use the day to teach students about the connections between the ACT exam and college and career readiness.
 - Ask a local postsecondary partner to offer space and/or resources (admission representatives, professors, program directors) to conduct a postsecondary planning day with your underclassmen. See [this example](#) of an event called “Admission 101” at Sewanee: The University of the South.
 - Plan a community service day with local businesses, non-profits, and partners to build culture and community among students. Combine community service time with a picnic or other fun afternoon activity such as a celebration for seniors who participate in the retake.

ACT Senior Retake Opportunity: District and School Checklist

This checklist provides a sequential list of activities and strategies to ensure strong participation and student preparation for the retake.

<p style="text-align: center;">July</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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.
<p style="text-align: center;">August</p>	<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 information about the retake in high-visibility areas (e.g., cafeteria, school marquee, library). <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals for student participation. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a sporting event (e.g., home football game), open house, or parent-teacher conference to broadcast the retake and its potential benefits. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize flexible time and space in the daily schedule to offer ACT preparation and support (e.g., advisory time, enrichment time embedded in RTI² scheduling).
<p style="text-align: center;">September</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct individual outreach to students who are unsure if they should retake. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop supports, incentives, and post-test celebrations to ensure student turnout on testing day.
<p style="text-align: center;">October</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate and recognize students for retaking the ACT. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a 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 testing days. <input type="checkbox"/> Test dates are Oct. 3 and/or Oct. 17, 2017.

Sample Parent Letter

INSERT YOUR LETTERHEAD HERE

Month Day, Year

Recipient Name(s)
Company Name
First Address Line
Second Address Line (if needed)
City, State Zip Code

Dear Parents, Families, and Community Partners:

As we begin the school year, I am excited to share that the Tennessee Department of Education will again offer the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* for all public school seniors. If your student took the ACT as a junior, he/she will have the opportunity to retake the ACT **at no cost**. If your student is a senior and has yet to take the ACT, he/she may also take the exam for free this fall. Our school will offer the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* on [insert date(s) school will offer (**Oct. 3** or **Oct. 17**)].

The ACT is a powerful national measure of readiness in terms of the cumulative academic knowledge and critical thinking skills **valued by both employers** and **postsecondary institutions**. The Tennessee General Assembly, as part of the *Tennessee Student Assessment Transparency Act* of 2016, approved an opportunity for seniors to retake the ACT if they took the ACT during their junior year. National data indicate that retaking the ACT typically leads to a composite score improvement of 1–2 points. In Tennessee, our state data indicate that students who retake the ACT typically increase their score by 1–3 points. By increasing their scores, students can open more doors for postsecondary education and high-quality employment.

Last year, nearly 26,000 students participated in the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity*, and 40 percent of those students improved their composite score. As a result of retaking the ACT, Tennessee students gained access to over **\$21 million in HOPE scholarship funds**, and **thousands of students** were able to avoid remedial coursework in postsecondary. Increasing the percentage of students who graduate high school with improved ACT scores will allow for more students to start their next phase in life on pathways to success.

Seniors who are eligible for the *ACT Senior Retake Opportunity* will be automatically registered for the retake. The test will take place at school on [insert chosen date(s) here] during regular school hours. We expect all seniors to participate in this opportunity. If you have questions or need more information, please contact

_____.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Principal

Test Preparation Resources

- [ACT Toolkit: Student, Parent, & Educator Resource](#)
- Free ACT & SAT Preparation through the [Tennessee Electronic Library](#)
- [Study Guide: Preparing for the ACT](#) (offered by ACT, Inc.)
- [Test Anxiety Toolkit](#)

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.