



ACT brings its unique experience and research in education and workforce assessment as a partner to Michigan and a leader in the national conversation around ensuring college and career readiness for all students and identifying future workforce and economic development needs. By continuing to provide the ACT WorkKeys assessments, Michigan is equipping every graduating student with a nationally recognized, portable, stackable credential that identifies key career-ready skills and that helps to align Michigan's education, workforce, and economic development goals and objectives.



- *Policy recommendations from ACT's Workforce Development Policy Platform (2018)*

Only ACT WorkKeys can offer:

- A certificate of work readiness with more than 4 million NCRCs issued across the country and more than 23,000 employers recognizing the NCRC for job seekers
- A database of 21,000+ job profiles generated by businesses to link the tasks of their jobs to the skills measured by ACT's WorkKeys assessments
- Decades of research on foundational skills that provide a common language for educators, workforce developers, and employers to communicate key job readiness skills
- A Work Ready Communities framework to help community leaders develop a sustainable mechanism to map and close skill and equity gaps and to align education, economic development, and workforce needs

The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate is the only credential of foundational workplace skills that is:

- Endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and other national trade organizations
- Used by *Site Selection* magazine as a key factor for verifying local workforce skills and determining where businesses should expand or relocate

Students can score at these NCRC levels upon taking the ACT WorkKeys tests of Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents:

- Platinum (qualified for 99% of profiled jobs)
- Gold (qualified for 93% of profiled jobs)
- Silver (qualified for 67% of profiled jobs)
- Bronze (qualified for 16% of profiled jobs)

With an ACT NCRC, students are able to:

- Match their skill sets and scores to those of profiled jobs through MyWorkKeys.com
- Apply for full-time or part-time jobs that list the NCRC as a required or recommended qualification
- Earn college credit, per the recommendation of the American Council on Education (ACE)

ACT State Partnerships

23 states provide and fund ACT WorkKeys and National Career Readiness Certificates at the state level. Of those, 12 states provide and fund ACT WorkKeys to high school students through their Departments of Education.

Profiling State ACT WorkKeys/NCRC Usage

North Carolina: Utilizing ACT WorkKeys/NCRC to Achieve Postsecondary Enrollment/Employment Goals

After administering the ACT WorkKeys/NCRC through their Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina surveyed their recent graduates and found that 94% were employed, in military service, or enrolled in postsecondary education or training six months after graduation. NC DPI also uses both the ACT and ACT WorkKeys for school accountability, in conjunction with the state's commitment to becoming a job-ready state.

- 461,461 total National Career Readiness Certificates have been awarded in the state of North Carolina
- 62 of NC's 100 counties currently participate as ACT Work Ready Communities
 - 42 are certified Work Ready Communities (counties that have assembled teams of education, workforce, and government leaders to identify and meet local goals)
- 3,184 North Carolina employers have signed on as supporting Work Ready Communities
- 961 job profiles have been completed in North Carolina

"We want to be sure we aren't just graduating students – which is an admirable goal. We want to be sure that when they leave us, they are college and career ready." – Tammy Howard, Director of Accountability Services, NC Department of Public Instruction

Alabama: Utilizing ACT WorkKeys/NCRC for Federal Accountability Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

Student attainment of Silver NCRC or above qualifies as an indicator of the School Quality/Student Success component of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Students may qualify using their ACT WorkKeys score as part of statewide ACT WorkKeys testing or meeting ACT College Readiness benchmarks as part of statewide ACT testing.

West Alabama Works developed a partnership in the region between Shelton State Community College, area employers, the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce, and high schools, creating a five-week boot camp in high schools after students received their ACT WorkKeys/NCRC scores. *Employers and the Chamber came together to offer five hiring fairs during that time, resulting in 900 new hires in the region's rapidly expanding manufacturing industry cluster.*

Ohio: Utilizing ACT WorkKeys/NCRC as a Graduation Pathway Option

While Ohio tests all students with a college readiness assessment chosen by the district, Ohio funds the ACT WorkKeys/NCRC as an alternate pathway to graduation based on students' scores. The Ohio Department of Education worked with ACT to set cut scores on the three ACT WorkKeys assessments, leading to a state workforce readiness score.

Students then pair their ACT WorkKeys/NCRC workforce readiness score with state cut scores on industry-specific credentials pursued throughout high school or through a senior-only certificate program. High schools are encouraged by the state to offer elective courses or dual-enrollment offerings for college credit, to create opportunities for coursework at career-technical or postsecondary institutions, or to build credential attainment into existing courses. *Through a countywide partnership, Pickaway-Ross Career-Technical Center offers a partial-day senior-only certificate program, intended for local high school students who plan to pursue postsecondary education elsewhere, with a 92% completion rate from 2015-2018.*

ACT WorkKeys/NCRC Research and Case Studies

<p>ACT and Equifax Research Report: Employment Outcomes for NCRC Earners (2017)</p>	<p>Through joint research with Equifax, one of the nation’s largest consumer credit reporting agencies, ACT determined a positive relationship between higher WorkKeys/NCRC skill levels and wages. Among NCRC recipients with just a high school diploma or GED, the study found that those individuals can expect both short- and long-term increased earnings above others with a similar level of education and geography who do not possess the credential.</p>
<p>ACT Research Report: Income Trends with NCRC (2018)</p>	<p>While confirming the correlation of higher NCRC levels with higher average incomes, ACT found that adults with some postsecondary education earned approximately \$8,000 more with a Silver NCRC as compared to a Bronze NCRC, and roughly \$5,500 more with a Gold or Platinum NCRC as compared to a Silver. With high school testers in particular, students with higher NCRC levels, especially Gold or Platinum, increased their incomes at a much faster rate starting three years after testing. The increase can be attributed to several factors, such as the value of the NCRC resulting in a higher paying job, higher NCRC earners seeking employment in higher paying industries, and seeking postsecondary training for higher paying jobs.</p>
<p>Ohio Manufacturing Career Pathways Initiative</p>	<p>Ohio workforce boards recommended that individuals enhance their ACT WorkKeys/NCRC credentials by completing the Certified Production Technical (CPT) credential in a five-week program shortly after the NCRC. Through Cincinnati’s Advanced Manufacturing Career Pathways Initiative, individuals with both credentials were guaranteed an interview and a 50-cent-per-hour salary increase at member employers. <i>“With an accelerated program, it is extremely important that we measure and confirm foundational skills first. It just made sense to have workers earn the NCRC.” – Cathy Metcalf, Executive Director, Cincinnati Labor Agency for Social Services</i></p>
<p>Indiana Schools: College and Career Readiness District Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Greater Clark County Schools in Indiana developed a College and Career Readiness initiative as a result of a strategic plan from a committee of over 70 area stakeholders. Students are encouraged to earn a Work Ethic Certificate through their high school career, utilizing ACT WorkKeys scores, internships/apprenticeships, and measures of essential career soft skills to create a credential to present to either postsecondary institutions or employers.</p>
<p>Tennessee Schools: Creating Courses for Career Skill Development</p>	<p>Colliersville School District in Tennessee created a Career Success Course for their juniors and seniors in conjunction with their Chamber of Commerce and their local industrial council. Based on their district ACT WorkKeys results and ACT WorkKeys curriculum, as well as locally-identified skills gaps, area employers identify and help teach key skills, interview and resume techniques, and career exploration tactics to high school students.</p>
<p>Wisconsin Postsecondary Institutions: Offering College Credit</p>	<p>In response to Wisconsin’s statewide ACT WorkKeys administration to all students, Chippewa Valley Technical College led the initiative to award college credit based on the ACT WorkKeys/NCRC as a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). In working with ACT, CVTC cross-walked NCRC scores to individual course competencies and treated NCRC credentials similar to AP, CLEP, or DANTES credit. In 20</p>

ACT in Michigan

MDE Partnership: Students Earning National Career Readiness Certificates

ACT WorkKeys has served as the career readiness component of the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) since 2007, allowing all students to graduate with a portable career readiness credential in addition to a college readiness indicator.

2017-2018 – ACT WorkKeys/NCRC in Michigan

- **108,165** high school juniors at **1,084** high schools took the ACT WorkKeys in 2018
 - **20,509** students received Platinum NCRCs
 - **12,426** students received Gold ACT NCRCs
 - **23,962** students received Silver ACT NCRCs
 - **22,973** students received Bronze ACT NCRCs
- ACT expanded offerings to provide test directions in 12 languages, as well as NCRC en Español
- In collaboration with MDE, ACT offered three live and recorded webinars, provided 33 *Spotlight* articles on ACT WorkKeys topics, and developed supplemental state-specific materials for test coordinators and educators

Michigan Postsecondary Outlook:

- Michigan's college enrollment rate is **45.6%**, meaning that **54.4%** of 18- to 24-year-olds are not enrolled in a degree-granting postsecondary institution (National Center for Education Statistics)
- Out of 100 MI 9th graders, while **45** enroll in postsecondary education within a year of HS graduation, only **18** graduate with a degree within six years (Michigan College Access Network)
- **20%** of 2018 MI high school graduates were undecided about whether or not to enroll in postsecondary education upon graduation (The College Board)

Michigan and ACT WorkKeys/NCRC:

ACT partners with the Michigan Department of Corrections, Michigan Works, the Michigan College Access Network, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Manufacturers Association, and the Michigan Economic Development Association, among other Michigan leaders, to provide support for statewide and regional efforts.

- **636,828** total National Career Readiness Certificates have been awarded in the state of Michigan
- In 2018, Michigan was ranked **#1** by *Site Selection* based on the number of ACT NCRC holders in the state
- **256** Michigan employers have signed on as supporting ACT WorkKeys
- **110** job profiles have been completed in Michigan
- **13** of Michigan's 83 counties currently participate as ACT Work Ready Communities
 - **Two** are certified Work Ready Communities: Kent County (certified August 2016; home to 178 of Michigan's supporting employers) and Lake County (certified February 2017)
 - Leading employers utilizing ACT WorkKeys in Kent and Lake Counties include Benteler, Farmers Insurance, Goodwill Industries, Kellogg's, Meijer, Mercy Health, Speedway, UPS, and Wesco

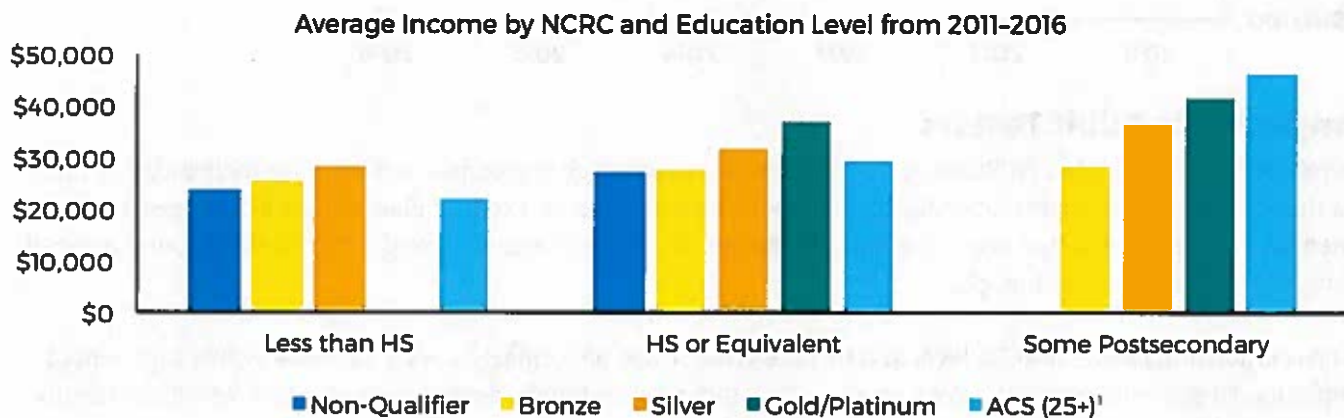
"The National Career Readiness Certificate, consisting of the related WorkKeys assessments and learning systems, have been invaluable in helping us to hire and retain world-class employees, with the foundational job skills needed to be successful at Dow. We have proven correlations between high scores in WorkKeys and employees' ability to quickly learn on the job technical skills." – Michigan Project Operations Leader, Dow Chemical Company

INCOME TRENDS for ACT NCRC EARNERS

HIGHER NCRC LEVELS are correlated to HIGHER INCOME LEVELS—new study reinforces previous ACT findings

Results

Performing well on the ACT® WorkKeys® Assessments and earning a higher WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®) level can help people secure higher incomes in the short and long terms. Individuals who took WorkKeys in 2011 and earned an NCRC tended to increase their incomes at a rate much greater than national trends.



When comparing individuals with the same level of education, higher NCRC levels were consistently correlated to higher average incomes. The results confirm that the NCRC is a valuable signal of the foundational skills needed for career success.

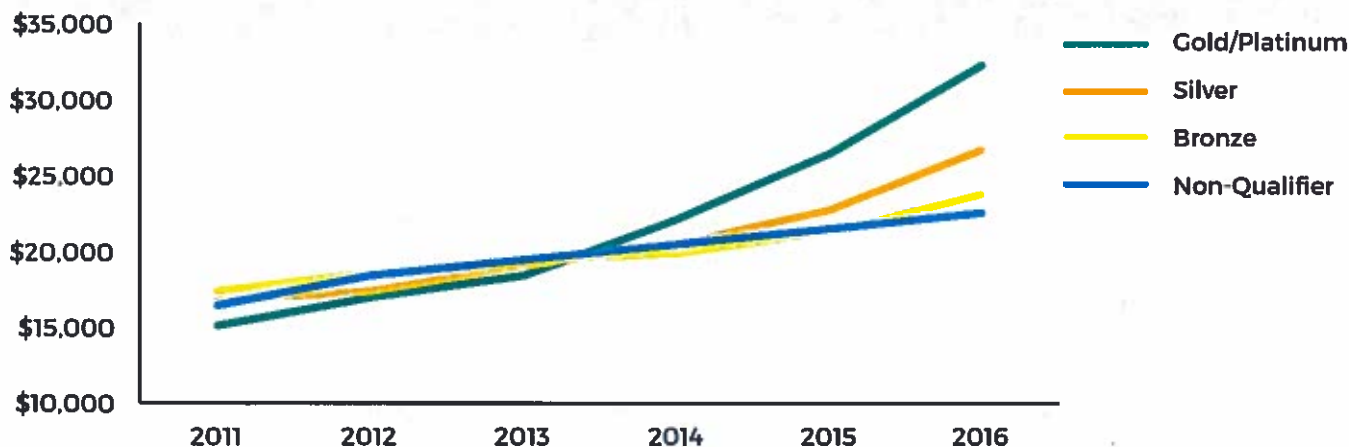
What's more, higher NCRC levels translate into higher increases in earning. In fact, adults with some postsecondary education earned approximately \$8,000 more with a Silver NCRC as compared to a Bronze NCRC, and roughly \$5,500 more with a Gold or Platinum NCRC as compared to a Silver.

Impacts for High School Testers

Students who took the ACT WorkKeys assessment in high school increased their income level in the years following. Short-term income trends were similar for all high school WorkKeys testers, but those who earned higher NCRC levels—especially Gold or Platinum—increased their incomes at a much faster rate starting three years after testing. The increase can be attributed to several factors, such as the value of the NCRC resulting in a higher paying job, higher NCRC earners seeking employment in higher paying industries, and seeking postsecondary training for higher paying jobs.

With this information, individuals can be confident that the NCRC is a valuable credential.

Median Income for High School Testers by NCRC Level

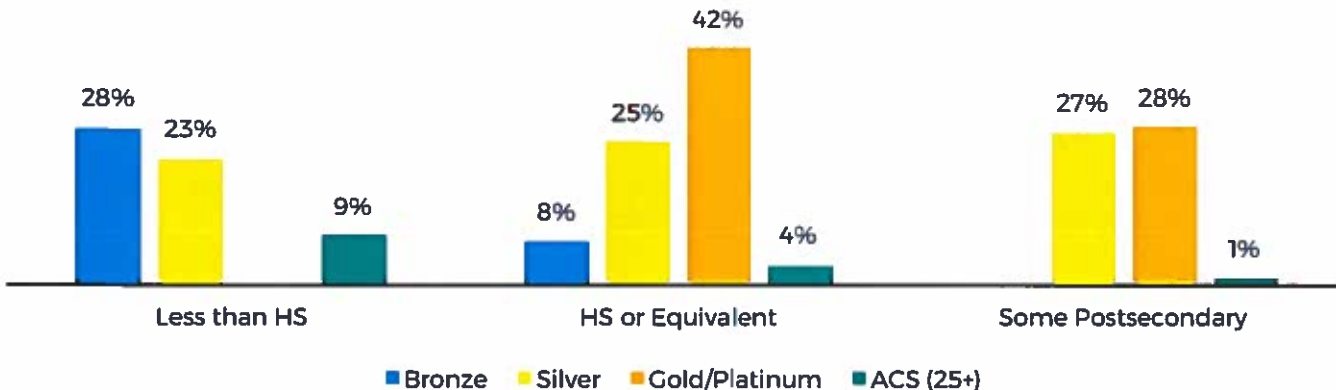


Impacts for Adult Testers

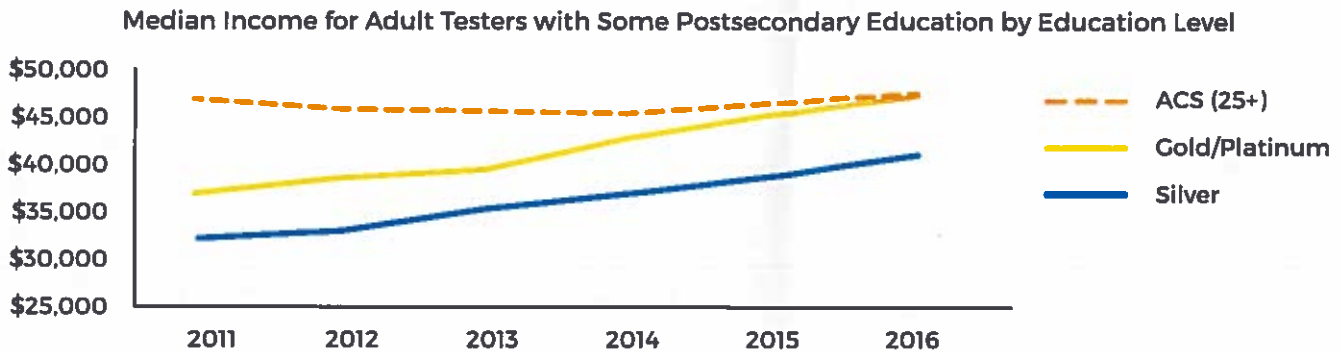
Adults who earned higher NCRC levels in 2011 tended to earn higher incomes and increase their incomes more in the five years after testing. Specifically, those who earned a Silver, Gold, or Platinum NCRC increased their median incomes within two years of taking WorkKeys. Moreover, income increases for NCRC earners outpaced national trends by a wide margin.

The relationship between NCRC level and income growth was particularly strong for those with a high school diploma. This group tended to have higher median incomes, and their incomes increased faster—dramatically exceeding the national trend.

2011–2016 Increases in Median Income



For adults with some postsecondary education, higher NCRC levels translated to steady increases in median incomes during the five years after taking the ACT WorkKeys assessments.



In all, these findings are consistent with the claim that performing well on WorkKeys and earning higher NCRC levels can help people secure higher incomes in the short- and long-term.

Conclusion

Foundational skills are vital to job performance, and the NCRC is a useful measure of the foundational skills needed for career advancement. Employers and workforce and economic developers alike can rely on the ACT WorkKeys assessment system to build a skilled workforce and boost the economic health of their community.

About ACT WorkKeys NCRC

The ACT WorkKeys Assessments are a collection of proctored tests which measure the most important workplace skills affecting an individual's job performance. A WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is earned by completing the three WorkKeys Assessments, Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents, and is issued at four levels of achievement, Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. More than 4 million NCRCs have been issued in the United States as of December 2018.

Notes

1. National trends based on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) for workers ages 25 and older.
2. ACT. (2017). *Employment Outcomes for ACT NCRC earners*. Iowa City, IA: ACT. Retrieved from act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/NCRC-Outcomes.pdf
3. Equifax's Work Number system collects week-by-week salary information, length of employment, job titles, and industry category. The Work Number is used by over 50,000 organizations, including government agencies (to verify employment and wages to determine eligibility for government assistance) and employers (to verify work history for a job candidate).
4. Data from the US Census Bureau's Factfinder (factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml) were weighted to reflect the distribution of regions and educational attainment in the study sample.

For the full report, please visit act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/R1714-income-trends-ncrc-2018-08.pdf

