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## A Report on the ACT Engage August 18 2015

**The ACT assessment:** The ACT Engage is an on-line assessment developed by ACT to measure 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' attitudes towards learning, school, and family engagement. The self-report inventory consists of 10 scales that fall into 3 domains.

DOMAIN	SCALE
Motivation/Skills	Academic Discipline
	Commitment to School
	Optimism
Social engagement	Family attitude towards education
	Family Involvement
	Relationships with School Personnel
	School Safety Climate
Self-Regulation	Managing Feelings
	Orderly Conduct
	Thinking before Acting

Two indices are also created that can be used to identify students who may be at academic risk. These Are the Academic Success and the Graduation Indices.

In the *Guide to Using Results* published by ACT, scores fall into three primary categories that can be used as a basis for student or counselor actions.

ACTION	SCORES
Capitalize on Strengths	76 <sup>th</sup> percentile or above
Continue to Develop Skills	26 <sup>th</sup> percentile and 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Make Plans for Improvement	25 <sup>th</sup> percentile or below

**The Student sample:** A total of 537 students with usable scores took the ACT Engage in May 2015. This included 251 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from 4 District Middle schools (Doolen, Mansfeld, Pistor, Secrist), and 286 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from University High School. The ethnographic characteristics of the students are provided in the table below.

### ACT Engage breakdown by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	8th grade		9th grade	
	N	%	N	%
White	63	25%	137	48%
African Am	63	25%	13	5%
Hispanic	56	22%	104	36%
Native Am	29	12%	1	0%
Asian Am	34	14%	19	7%
Multi-race	0	0%	12	4%
Total	251		286	

**The Student Ratings:** The following table presents the mean percentile ratings by ethnicity and grade for each scale.

Student ACT Engage Ratings by Scale, Grade, and Ethnicity														
etc_code	Grade	Academic Success Index Percentile Mean	Graduation Index Percentile Mean	Academic Discipline Percentile Mean	Commitment to School Percentile Mean	Optimism Percentile Mean	Family Attitude toward Education Percentile Mean	Family Involvement Percentile Mean	Relationship with School Personnel Percentile Mean	School Safety Climate Percentile Mean	Managing Feelings Percentile Mean	Orderly Conduct Percentile Mean	Thinking Before Acting Percentile Mean	Avg
White	8th grade	43	44	45	39	41	40	47	52	39	62	58	56	48
	9th grade	71	77	62	60	54	55	55	66	71	65	82	63	63
	Total	62	67	57	53	50	50	52	62	61	64	75	61	59
African Am	8th grade	39	39	45	53	60	52	53	53	40	49	46	50	50
	9th grade	67	70	51	49	44	51	50	73	75	61	80	63	60
	Total	44	44	45	53	57	52	53	57	45	51	52	52	52
Hispanic	8th grade	46	47	49	49	47	48	54	50	45	60	58	57	51
	9th grade	62	68	53	60	47	56	52	60	75	64	79	56	60
	Total	57	60	52	56	47	53	52	57	64	62	71	57	57
Native Am	8th grade	22	27	30	43	42	46	44	46	47	46	48	47	44
	9th grade	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Total	24	28	31	44	41	45	43	47	48	47	50	47	44
Asian Am	8th grade	55	59	54	60	49	61	53	51	44	65	62	57	55
	9th grade	77	80	60	56	32	59	43	48	60	60	77	58	55
	Total	63	67	56	58	43	60	49	50	50	63	68	58	55
MultiRace	9th grade	73	82	66	50	46	53	46	59	70	65	86	69	61
	Total	73	82	66	50	46	53	46	59	70	65	86	69	61
Total	8th grade	42	43	45	49	49	48	51	51	42	56	54	54	50
	9th grade	68	74	58	59	49	55	52	63	72	64	81	61	61
	Total	56	59	52	54	49	52	52	57	58	61	68	57	56

Overall, the total mean percentile score for all scales for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade sample is significantly higher than for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. However, there are two notable exceptions. The mean percentile score for Optimism is the same for both grades (49<sup>th</sup> percentile), and Family Involvement (51<sup>st</sup>

percentile for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile for 9<sup>th</sup> grade). Optimism, part of the Motivation domain, is defined as ‘having a hopeful outlook about the future in spite of difficulties or challenges’ and can assist students with overcoming challenges, while Family Involvement (Social engagement domain), part of a students’ social capital, refers to ‘involvement in a student’s school life and activities’. In looking at these scales by ethnicity, the table shows that the UHS African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students all express lower levels of Optimism than their White peers (44<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, and 60<sup>th</sup> percentile respectively). Similarly, African American and Asian American 9<sup>th</sup> graders scored below their 8<sup>th</sup> grade counterparts (44<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> /49<sup>th</sup>) on this scale. These differences may be due to the smaller sample sizes for these groups.

Overall, in terms of the mean percentile score across all scales, the UHS 9<sup>th</sup> graders are relatively homogeneous across ethnicity. However, there is one area worth noting – Commitment to School. The mean percentile score for African-American students at UHS is 49 compared to 60 for White and Hispanic students, and 53 for African-American 8<sup>th</sup> graders. According to ACT, Commitment to school may be viewed as a predictor of persistence for high school and postsecondary education. This pattern is not seen with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Here, the mean percentile scores African-American students across the Motivation and Social Engagement domains are the same or higher than their White peers. For example, the African American mean percentile score for Commitment to School is 53 compared to 39 for White students. Only with respect to the Self-Regulation Domain (Managing feelings, Orderly Conduct, Thinking Before Acting) are they lower.

Using ACT Engage in UHS admissions: The 9<sup>th</sup> grade UHS class was divided into categories based on how many admission points they received in the admissions process. Students who gained admission as a result of the essay were also categorized and mean percentile scores were calculated. The table below shows the mean percentile scores by category. Due to extremely small numbers of students, it is only possible to show ethnicity breakdowns for a few categories.

Student ACT Engage Ratings by Scale and Admission Category for 9th Grade UHS students															
Admission Status	Ethnicity	Number of students	Academic Success Index Percentile Mean	Graduation Index Percentile Mean	Academic Discipline Percentile Mean	Commitment to School Percentile Mean	Optimism Percentile Mean	Family Attitude toward Education Percentile Mean	Family Involvement Percentile Mean	Relationship with School Personnel Percentile Mean	School Safety Climate Percentile Mean	Managing Feelings Percentile Mean	Orderly Conduct Percentile Mean	Thinking Before Acting Percentile Mean	Avg
High Admission Points (61-63)	Total	80	79	84	63	54	52	57	52	62	71	66	82	61	62
	White	43	78	84	65	59	57	55	52	64	69	65	83	61	63
	Hispanic	21	78	85	59	45	51	60	50	54	77	71	84	60	61
Low Admission Points (50-52)	Total	25	58	64	56	71	53	57	53	68	78	68	83	57	64
Essayists	Total	46	54	61	48	58	40	52	40	56	76	61	83	57	57
	Hispanic	25	48	55	42	51	34	53	41	57	75	59	78	48	54

As the table shows mean percentile scores for both the Academic Success and Graduation indices are higher for students who received top admission points as compared to those who received low admission points or took the Essay. Interestingly, the mean percentile scores for the Commitment to School scale are higher for students at the lower end of the admission points and the essayists than for those who received top admission points. The difference in the two other scales of the Motivation domain, Academic Discipline and Optimism, for Essayists suggest that the use of the ACT Engage could potentially identify a different sort of student than those found through the existing essay process.