

# AN ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COMES **TOGETHER** FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

## How **PreACT**® and **ACT**® Academy™ Helped Arkadelphia High School Rally for **College and Career Readiness**.

Bud McMillion, engineering teacher and 30-year veteran educator, is a self-proclaimed “data guy.” He is an Arkadelphia, Arkansas, native and works as an instructional facilitator in Arkadelphia High School, where he used a variety of ACT® tools to implement a program focused on creating a culture of student success. By combining these tools from ACT with an intentional, targeted plan involving teachers, administrators, parents, and the community, McMillion was able to achieve his goal of improving student ACT® test scores.

“**Schools are a reflection of the communities around them.**”

**Bud McMillion**  
*Instructional Facilitator,  
Arkadelphia High School*

Arkadelphia is home to two universities, and McMillion describes Arkadelphia High School as a rural school with a strong college-going tradition and a free and reduced lunch rate that fluctuates between 50–60%. With the hope of encouraging every student to attend either college or postsecondary workforce training, McMillion set out to improve his students’ ACT test scores to help open many different paths to success. He implemented several strategies with this goal in mind, including: PreACT® testing and targeted ACT Academy practice; an ACT prep day at

nearby Henderson State University; goal-setting workshops; and various events to get teachers, families, and the community at large involved in promoting college and career readiness.

Arkansas uses ACT state testing, and Arkadelphia High School has given the ACT to all eleventh graders for around a decade. McMillion saw implementing PreACT testing as a way to offer students a head start on understanding what they already knew and where they could improve. He used the data from PreACT to guide conversations with teachers and inform personalized ACT Academy test prep—helping students focus on the areas where they wanted to build their skills the most.

As part of the same effort, McMillion also held an event he called “ACT Boot Camp,” bringing students to one local university for a day of learning about why the ACT test was important, how they could work to improve their scores, and what life was like for college students. Arkadelphia teachers helped with test prep for the different subject areas, and the students ate lunch with members of campus organizations. “Even in a town with colleges, a lot of kids don’t go to the campus very often,” McMillion said. “The knowledge that someone wants them there and supports them is a revelation.”



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# Arkadelphia High School

## Striving for college and career readiness.

**59%**



of students achieved ACT<sup>®</sup> test scores that qualified them for the Arkadelphia Promise Scholarship and the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship.

**78%**



of students scored at or above their predicted ACT test range based on PreACT scores.

“**Understanding our own culture and what it’s doing to contribute to college readiness is important.**”

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A goal-setting workshop was also a key part of McMillion’s program. McMillion asked the students to reflect on what they wanted to achieve and how their ACT score would help them achieve it. As students worked to focus on their specific goals, McMillion also realized that this helped educators know how best to support them. “If they were able to see that the kids had these goals and were committed to trying to achieve these goals,” McMillion said, “the teacher would do whatever was possible to help.”

Beyond the classroom, community engagement was also a key part of McMillion’s efforts to encourage student success. “Understanding our own culture and what it’s doing to contribute to college readiness is important,” McMillion said. “Schools are a reflection of the communities around them.” McMillion held school assemblies to discuss how achievement in the classroom was key for helping students reach their dreams. Community leaders, including the local football coaches, visited the school to talk with students about the importance of academics and ACT scores. To get families more involved, McMillion also set up meetings with parents to take them through their student’s assessment score reports, helping parents understand their children’s strengths and opportunities for growth.

McMillion’s efforts were successful, and the program led to several positive outcomes for students:

Of the 105 students who took the ACT test, 59% of students achieved ACT scores that qualified them for the Arkadelphia Promise Scholarship and the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship—a significant step in making postsecondary education more accessible.

There was also a notable improvement in science scores in particular: 44% of students scored within the 20–36 range, versus just 40% the year before.

Perhaps one of the program’s most powerful outcomes was that a full 26% of the students scored above the range predicted by PreACT.

Additionally, in total, 78% scored at or above their predicted range, based on initial PreACT scores.

McMillion looks forward to continuing to help his students prepare, improve, and grow. “You don’t just show up on game day and start playing the game,” he said, noting it’s all about helping students feel ready—both for the ACT test and for their post-high school futures.

“It’s been a big thing,” McMillion said, “and very exciting.”

Learn more at [act.org/k12](https://act.org/k12).