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**CONTACT:**

Elizabeth Keest Sedrel  
(o) 515-725-3417 (c) 515-710-1257  
[Elizabeth.Sedrel@iowa.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Sedrel@iowa.gov)

## **GEAR UP Iowa program arranges districtwide testing for 3,400 high school juniors**

Nine Iowa school districts saw a marked jump in the number of high school juniors taking the ACT this year after the GEAR UP Iowa program provided districtwide testing.

GEAR UP, a federal program for low-income school districts administered by Iowa College Aid, paid the test fees and helped school districts plan and staff their test days. Tests were offered during the regular school day, many of them on the high schools' campuses.

A total of 3,400 students—about three-quarters of high school juniors in those nine districts—took the ACT in February, March, and April. Based on testing figures from previous years, Iowa College Aid estimates that less than half the juniors in these districts would have taken the ACT without the GEAR UP Iowa initiative. Statewide, the ACT testing rate is about two-thirds.

“It’s exciting and encouraging to see the ACT testing rates in these districts go from below average to above average,” said Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid. “This test is one of the essential measures of college readiness. It not only serves as the entrance exam for many colleges in Iowa, but ACT benchmark scores determine the probability of college success. District testing eliminates the time and cost barriers for students by making it part of the school day and ensures the greatest number of students can be tested.”

The following districts and high schools took part:

- Cedar Rapids (Jefferson, Kennedy, Metro, and Washington)
- Fort Dodge
- Perry
- Ottumwa
- Clinton
- Marshalltown
- Storm Lake
- Davenport (Central, Mid-City, North, West)
- Sioux City (East, North, West)

GEAR UP Iowa serves the high school class of 2020 in 12 districts. Two districts, Des Moines and Columbus Junction, already offered districtwide ACT testing. The Denison district chose to provide vouchers for students to take the ACT during nationally scheduled testing days. GEAR UP Iowa began targeted college readiness efforts in its districts last year through ACT preparation programs.

Find more information about GEAR UP Iowa at [GEARUPIowa.gov](http://GEARUPIowa.gov).

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