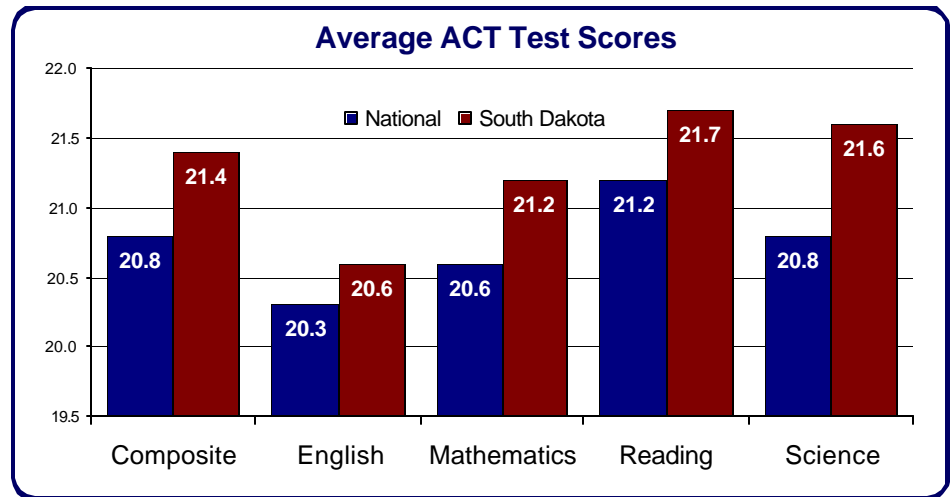


Synopsis: *Seventy percent of South Dakota's high school graduates take the ACT test. The ACT is designed to predict a student's readiness for college. South Dakota students continue to score higher than the national average on the ACT. There is, however, a widening gap between the scores of students who completed core courses in high school and those who have not. Consistently, those who have taken the core courses receive higher scores, particularly in the areas of math and science.*

South Dakota ACT test takers have consistently tested higher than the national average.

The greatest difference in scores occurs in science, where the South Dakota average is eight-tenths of a point higher than the national average in science.



Source: ACT Assessment 2003 Results

The Importance of Core Courses

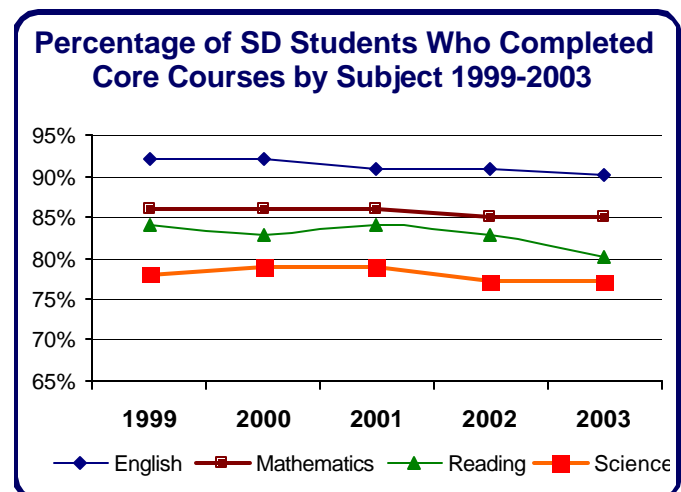
Since the ACT Assessment is designed for those students who plan to attend college, the focus is on students who completed the recommended college preparatory courses. The recommended college core courses (as defined by ACT) include:

- **English** (four years or more)- One year credit each for English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12.

- **Mathematics** (three years or more) - One year credit each for Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry. - One-half year credit each for Trigonometry, Calculus (not pre-calculus), other math course beyond Algebra II, Computer Math/Computer Science.

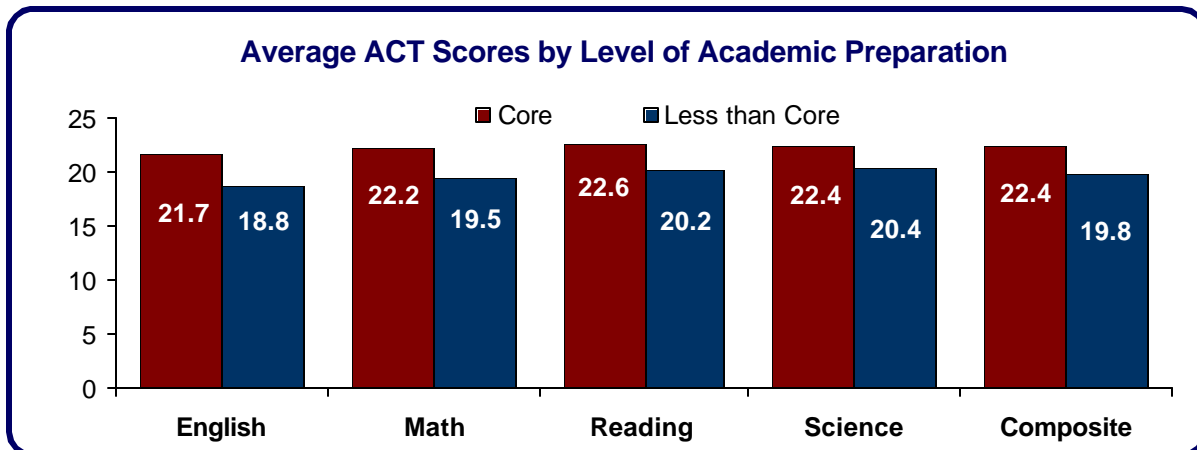
- **Social Sciences** (three years or more) - One year credit each for American History, World History, American Government. - One-half year credit each for Economics, Geography, Psychology, other History.

- **Natural Sciences** (three years or more) - One year credit each for General/Physical/Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics.

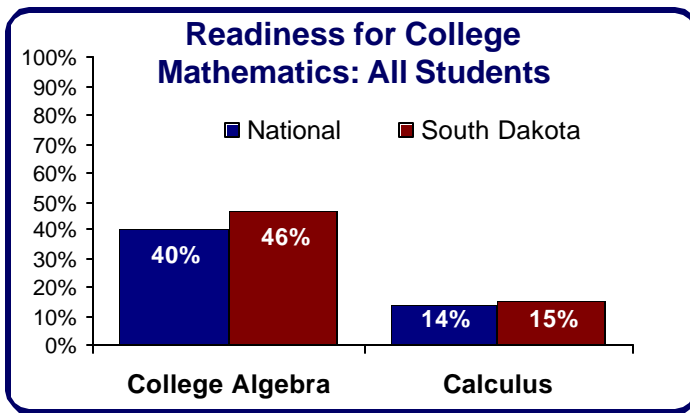


Source: ACT Assessment 2003 Results

In all four subject areas, students who completed the core courses scored higher than those who did not complete the core courses.

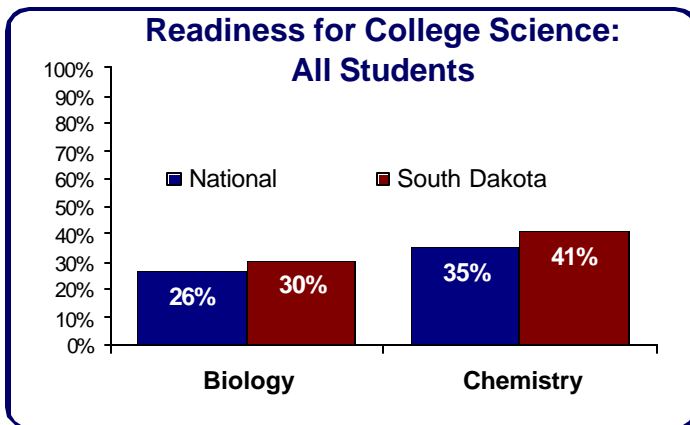


Source: ACT Assessment 2003 Results



Source: ACT Assessment 2003 Results

Typical ACT mathematics cutoff scores are: College Algebra 22 and Calculus 27. Only 46 percent of South Dakota ACT test takers were considered ready for College Algebra and only 15 percent were ready for Calculus. For those who took at least three years of advanced math in high school, the percentage of students ready for college math was higher. Fifty-five percent of students who completed the math core were prepared for College Algebra and 19 percent were ready for Calculus.



Source: ACT Assessment 2003 Results

Typical ACT science cutoff scores are: Biology 24 and Chemistry 23. Only 30 percent of South Dakota ACT test takers were considered ready for college Biology and only 41 percent were ready for Chemistry. For those who took at least three years of natural science (laboratory science) in high school, the percentage of students ready for college science courses was higher. Thirty-six percent of students who completed the science core were prepared for college Biology and 48 percent were ready for Chemistry.

Preparation is Important

Students should be encouraged to consider courses that will prepare them for college when planning their high school curriculum. Strengthened backgrounds in math and science consistently increase a student's preparedness for college coursework.

For more information, contact Tracy Mercer at 605-773-3455 or send email to tracym@ris.sdbor.edu.

