

Alabama’s 2019 ACT scores lower than national average

By Dee Ann Campbell
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BUTLER, MONTGOMERY – The Class of 2020 is just beginning their final semester of high school, and students are now applying for college admission. For some, getting into college will be easier than others, because they have scored higher on their college entrance exams.

But many Alabama students, including some on a local level, have likely not attained ACT scores that will get them into the college or university of their choice.

Based on ‘The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2019’ report from ACT, the median ACT composite score in Alabama in 2019 was 18.9. Nationally, the average score was 20.7.

Scores in the state have dropped in recent years. For the Class of 2018, the average composite score was 19.1, which also marked a tenth of a point drop from the 19.2 logged in 2017.

Alabama’s scores have also declined by subject over the past several years. The average score on the English portion of the ACT in 2019 was 18.7, compared to 18.9 the previous year. The score was 18.8 in

2015. In math, the average score in Alabama was 18.1, a drop from the 18.3 logged in 2018 and the 18.4 reported in 2015. Reading scores averaged 19.5 for the Class of 2019, compared to 19.6 in 2018, but those scores actually did see an increase since 2015, when the average score was 19.1.

When it came to science, Alabama graduates reported an average 2019 score of 18.8. The score is somewhat lower than the 19.0 reported in 2018 and the 19.1 listed for the state in 2015.

About 15% of students in 2019 met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (standards for college or career readiness), compared to 16% in 2018 and in 2015. About half of students taking the ACT in 2019 met the College Readiness Benchmark in reading, compared to 51% in 2018 and 53% in 2015, and 22% met benchmark in math. About 34% met benchmark in reading, along with 24% in science.

The state’s scores have varied by race and economic background, with some groups seeing gains and others losses. Composite scores for white students remained the same between 2017 and 2018, at an average of 20.7, dropping slightly to 20.5 for 2019. African-American scores were lower, with an average of 16.2 in

2019, 16.5 for 2018, and remaining about the same since 2015.

Likewise, scores for students whose families are considered ‘non-economically disadvantaged’ were listed at 20.7 for the past two years and have remained relatively constant since 2015, while students at or below the poverty line showed average composite scores of 16.8 to 17.0 over the past five years.

Alabama is one of 17 states where 100% of high school students take the ACT. The state put in place 100% testing a few years ago, requiring all high school juniors to take the test.

According to a report from the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA), the average composite score among 100% states was 19.5 – still higher than the 18.9 listed in Alabama. The State of Wisconsin had the best average score among 100% states, at 20.5, while Nevada reported the lowest, at 17.7. Alabama ranked 13th overall among those states.

Some school systems in Alabama have seen more improvements than others in ACT scores. According to the ACT report, Sumter County’s school system was among those reporting the most gains, moving from 14.57 in 2015 to 15.91 in 2018. Also listed was Thomasville City Schools, with

a composite score average of 17.33 in 2015 and 18.52 in 2018.

When it comes to getting in to college, some institutions pull in students with higher scores than others. The University of Alabama at Huntsville tops the list, with the average ACT score of 28 among those entering school there in 2018. The University of Alabama and Auburn University were both listed at second highest, with median scores of 27 among those entering those institutions.

Many institutions set minimum requirements for college entrance exam scores in order to be considered for admission. For the most part, required scores are typically 21 and higher, depending upon the institution.

At both Auburn and UA, students could be considered for enrollment with scores of 21 but scores of 23 or higher provides greater chances to be considered. Full scholarship to Auburn or Alabama requires scores of 30 to 32, with minimum GPAs of 3.5.

Other institutions and community colleges may give students the opportunity to enroll with lower assessment scores and gain college course credits and degrees in their chosen fields, or work toward future entrance in other universities.



Local Girl Scouts will be conducting their annual cookie sale in the coming weeks. (Submitted photo)

It’s Cookie Time!

BUTLER -- Never fear Cookie Season is here! Soon Girl Scouts will be hitting the neighborhoods, bringing with them order sheets for several varieties of the popular cookies.

This year’s cookie line up includes Thin Mints®, Caramel deLites®, Shortbread, Lemonades™, Thanks-A-Lot®, Peanut Butter Patties®, Peanut Butter Sandwich, S’mores®, and the gluten-free Caramel Chocolate Chip. This year will also be the last year to purchase yummy Thanks-A-Lots, according to the organization.

Returning this year, Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama will pay for half of your shipping when you purchase between 5-12 boxes from a Girl Scout online. Gift boxes of cookies for a special someone will be available again online as well.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the

nation’s largest girl-led business and the leading financial literacy program for girls. Through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, girls learn five essential skills to leadership: goal setting, decision-making, money management, people skills, and business ethics.

From January 17 until March 1, you can find Girl Scouts showing off their cookie-selling skills by participating in booth sales and cookie drive-thrus at local retail locations.

The more cookies girls sell, the more earnings they have to fund community projects and personal enrichment experiences, such as STEM activities and traveling. All net revenues from the cookie sales remain local.

To learn more about the Girl Scout Cookie Program, and to find out where Girl Scouts are selling near you, visit girlscoutssa.org.

STUDENTS GIVING BACK SCHS Band makes food bank donation

GILBERTOWN -- The Southern Choctaw High School Tri-M Music Honor Society Chapter T1103 collected donations of canned goods and nonperishable food items at the Christmas Concert in December. Pictured are Tri-M members Trinity Philyaw and Ramsey Johnson donating the canned goods to Gilbertown Mayor Billy May. The donation will be added to the food bank in Gilbertown for local families in need. (Submitted photo)

■ Byrne
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state’s agriculture and automotive industries, he said.

Byrne cited peanut crops as one of the products that will see benefit from USMCA.

“Canada and Mexico are major places where we sell Alabama peanuts,” he explained. “And for the automotive industry, we know it will increase the numbers of parts sold from America primarily to Mexico. We are a huge center in the U.S. for this, and it’s bound to help our state.”

A Senate Finance Committee passed USMCA on Tuesday, moving it closer to ratification, with the full Senate potentially taking up the bill later this month. The House approved the bill in late 2019. The deal would take effect once all three nations ratify it.

Byrne also said that he was supportive of the president’s efforts in regard to tariffs, in particular regarding China.

“We are blessed in Alabama to have manufacturers with international supply chains,” he said. “We may assemble in Alabama, but parts are coming from all over world. I’m very sensitive to tariffs for that

reason. But I support the push-back against China.”

Byrne said that, in regard to the need for infrastructure improvements in the state and in Choctaw County, he hoped to work on a federal infrastructure plan that would chisel out money for rural areas.

“We need to have it set aside for rural infrastructure, or the urban areas will soak up every bit of it,” he said. “We have to make sure we set aside enough money to allocate to rural areas.”

When it comes to such infrastructure projects, Byrne said that four-laning U.S. Highway 84 in Silas makes “all the sense in the world”.

“It should have been done a long time ago,” he said.

In regard to healthcare, Byrne said that he was very disturbed about a plan proposed in the House of Representatives that would lower prescription drug costs by placing significant cost restrictions on drug companies.

“It would substantially alter the ability of drug companies to develop drugs,” he said. “It could be you or your relative that needs that one drug and can’t get it. The effort to control cost is wise, and I’m 100% in favor of that. We currently have a Republican bill where we can control the cost

of drugs but not in such a way that hampers our ability to get them.”

Byrne said that he was also concerned about the fact that Alabamians only have one major provider for health insurance, adding that the availability of more providers would help lower the high cost of premiums for Alabama residents.

“If you go to shop for insurance in Alabama, there’s not much choice,” he said. “We need to allow shopping across state lines. You can buy auto insurance across state lines, but not health insurance. Market pressures control prices.”

He also advocated the use of health clinics and rural health centers.

“The federal government made a big mistake in trying to push everyone to big urban health centers,” he said. “It’s more cost effective to keep people as close to their homes as possible. I’m a strong proponent of rural hospitals.”

Byrne said that he had led efforts to raise the Medicare reimbursement rates for Alabama providers, a problem that had affected many rural hospitals in the state. Choctaw General was not one of them, he said, because of the facility’s Critical Access designation.

“In Alabama, we used to get 20% less than some other states for the same serv-

ice,” he said. “I want to make sure we keep rural hospitals healthy economically and otherwise, because I believe it’s better for the patients.”

In other matters, Byrne said that he voted against impeachment proceedings against the President and believes that the Senate will quickly find that he should not be impeached.

“It’s a waste of time and effort,” he said. “When people actually see what’s going on, the president’s support gets stronger.”

In seeking a position in the Senate, Byrne said that he believes he can bring to the office the right ideas for the state.

“It’s very important for our country right now that we have people who understand what the job is,” he said. “The job is to represent the people, not the ‘Swamp’.”

Byrne said that Washington was filled with enough individuals who were tied to ‘the swamp’.

“Alabama needs a senator who will wake up every day and say ‘I’m for the people of Alabama. I’m not up here for any other reason’,” he said.

Following the visit to Butler, the Byrne campaign announced that he was the first candidate for the position to visit all 67 counties in the state.

A DAY in the LIFE of Choctaw County coming in April!