Get Your ACT Together! ACT Prep Student Workshop

Lindsay Hawkins, Lindsay Williams, Adriana Knight
Published by *K20 Center*

Time Frame Seven 2-hour sessions

Essential Question(s)

What are the goals of ACT test preparation?

Summary

This workshop prepares student for the ACT test by utilizing several K20 Instructional Strategies. The workshop is designed to be an after-school program lasting for seven weeks and including one 2-hour session each week. Sessions will be broken up into reading/ELA and science/math. This resource provides suggestions for how to use these strategies as well as templates for student use during the workshop. The workshop will also allow students to increase their ACT score by two to three points.

Learning Goals

SMART GOAL: Provided a seven-week, 14-hour ACT readiness activity, 60% of participating students will increase their ACT (pre-to-post) score by two to three points.

Attachments

- ACT Score Tracker—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Score Tracker—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Session Draft Plan—Get Your ACT Together.xlsx
- ACT Student Sign-in—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Student Sign-in—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- ACT Student Sign-up—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- ACT Student Sign-up—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Appointment Clock Template–Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Appointment Clock Template–Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- CER Template—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- CER Template—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Editable ACT Prep Flyer—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Editable ACT Prep Flyer—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- I Used To Think, But Now I Know Template—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- I Used To Think, But Now I Know Template—Get Your ACT Together.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Get Your ACT Together.pptx
- Strategy Harvest Template—Get Your ACT Together.docx
- Strategy Harvest Template—Get Your ACT Together.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Exit Ticket
- ACT Score Tracker (attached)
- Flyers/Posters (attached template; can be custom student created)
- Sign-In Sheet (attached; one per session; ELA, reading, science and mathematics)
- Interest Sign-Up Sheet (attached)
- Instructional Strategy Templates Appointment Clocks, CER, Strategy Harvest, I Used to Think...but Now I Know (attached)
- Teachers for each content (ELA, reading, science and mathematics)
- Chart Paper and Markers (one set per teacher)
- Expo Markers (one set per teacher)
- Presentation equipment (projector/computer one per teacher)
- Snacks (optional but suggested if hosting after school sessions)
- Chad Cargill's ACT: Sailing to Success (one per teacher and one per student)
- Online ACT Prep (pre and post-test) (GALE Resources, ACT.org, Powerscore.com, or etc.)
- Chromebooks/computer with Internet access (one per student)
- Graphing Calculators: TI-89 suggested (one per student during mathematics section)
- Copy paper (two reams per teacher for copies and scratch paper)
- 1inch, 3-Ring Binders (one per student)
- Highlighters and pencils (one per student)

Engage

Each session should begin with an engagement strategy to reactivate prior knowledge, stimulate thinking, and review content from the previous sessions. Commit and Toss; Chain Notes; I Used To Think . . . But Now I Know; and Always, Sometimes, or Never True are a few suggested engaging strategies.

Teacher's Note

Throughout this activity script, all instructional strategies mentioned are hyperlinked to descriptions for possible uses. A citation with URL is provided under the Resources section for each strategy as well. Also under Resources are links to a few videos demonstrating how these can be used with students.

Commit and Toss: Students respond to a question or prompt they have been provided with. Student responses are then crumpled and tossed into a community pile or across the room. Each student then selects an anonymous response from the pile or from the floor and uses it to engage in a class discussion. The Commit and Toss strategy can be especially effective in helping students form good questions and is helpful when they are learning to write hypotheses. It can be done as a class or in small groups.

Possible Uses for Commit and Toss

All content areas could pose a question about the content previously reviewed and have students generate responses on fourth- or half-sheets of paper. After students toss and find a new crumpled response, they may read them allowed and share the response with either the whole group or an elbow partner.

Chain Notes: Students are presented a with question or statement. It can be printed at the top of a paper. The paper is then circulated from student to student. Each student responds with one or two sentences related to the question or statement and then passes it onto the next student. Upon receiving the previous "chain of responses," a student adds a new thought or builds on a prior statement. More than one paper can be circulating at the same time, depending on group size. This strategy provides an opportunity to examine the ideas of others and compare them to their own thinking. Once the paper is returned to the person who began with it then the student may share out the ideas and statements written.

Possible Uses for Chain Notes

All content areas could pose a question or statement about the content previously reviewed and have students generate responses following the directions above and on the hyperlinked strategy card.

I Used To Think . . . But Now I Know: Students list their understanding of a topic before a lesson and then list their understanding of a topic after the lesson (during the "Explain" or "Evaluate" segment of the lesson) so they can see what they learned from the instruction. This strategy gives the instructor an opportunity to see how students' thinking changes as a result of instruction and whether or not participants recognize their own prior misunderstandings. The results can help instructors determine the effectiveness of their instruction.

Possible Uses for I Used to Think... But Now I Know

Have students generate responses about what they now know but didn't know before regarding content from previous sessions.

Always, Sometimes, or Never True: Students examine a set of statements, reflect on their individual interpretations of each, and decide if they are always, sometimes, or never true. This strategy can be used in a variety of ways, both at the beginning of a learning cycle to elicit prior knowledge or to check for understanding at the end of a learning cycle. This strategy gives students time to think and process their own knowledge or beliefs and then share and discuss why they answered the way they did. When they have to defend what they chose, it opens the door for discussion, reflection, and deeper understanding. They may decide their own answer is incorrect, but they have also heard their classmates' arguments and have more of an understanding of the topic and an idea of what a better solution is. It is not the teacher saying, "Yes/no that is correct/incorrect," but rather, it's about the students helping one another build and develop meaning.

Possible Uses for Always, Sometimes, or Never True

ELA teachers can use this strategy with rules for grammar, sentence structure, or punctuation rules. Math teachers can use this strategy for rules/steps/identities of mathematics. Science teachers can use this strategy to review or introduce drawing conclusions from a data source (e.g., graphs, tables, charts, etc.). Reading teachers can use this strategy after students read a short passage. Then they reflect on a few statements and decide if they are always, sometimes or never true, based on the passage.

Explore

After the Engage activity, you should begin exploring the planned content for the session. Each content uses the pre-test given to determine the skills and material that should be addressed during the seven weeks. (All strategies are hyperlinked to general instructions and in the RESOURCES section there are links to a few videos demonstrating how these can be used with students.)

Think-Pair-Share: Students reflect on a question, reading, or task, then write a response to share and debate with a partner. Partners decide on the best response or they collaborate to create a shared response. Partner groups share out their agreed upon shared response with the whole group. The sharing out of this strategy becomes the "explain" component of the lesson because the students are sharing out and explaining their responses and thinking. This strategy can be paired with the Jigsaw strategy in which students read different writings and reflect or summarize what they read, then pair with a partner to compare, compile, or contrast these writings.

Possible Uses for Think-Pair-Share

ELA teachers can use this strategy with written works. Students can make edits and find rules for grammar, sentence structure, or uses for punctuation that is incorrect. Then pair with a partner to discuss and decide what is actually correct or needs to be changed. There may be some disagreement and that is okay. The disequilibrium creates meaning and connections for students to dig deeper into the subject/lesson. **Math teachers** can use this strategy to think about how they would solve a problem. What steps would they take? What strategy would they use? Then pair up with partners to discuss their strategies and steps. Check solutions as well. Discuss and defend why their solution is best. **Science teachers** can use this strategy for introducing how to draw conclusions from a data source (graphs/tables/charts/etc.). **Reading teachers** can use this strategy after students read a short passage they reflect and decide on the main idea, narrators' attitude, or an idea the whole article is suggesting. Students can reflect and discuss posed questions such as: "What other major concepts can be determined based on the reading?" and "How is the figurative language being used in this reading?"

Claim, Evidence, Reasoning: CER makes it easier for students to begin formulating their own arguments by breaking down persuasive texts or arguments into smaller pieces for analysis. Students annotate a persuasive text, labeling the author's claim, his or her evidence to support that claim, and his or her reasoning. This forces students to identify the author's argument and then to analyze the argument's structure, helping them become more familiar with the argumentative writing process and with logical arguments in general. Below is the procedure for using CER to analyze a reading, but CER can also be used to analyze non-written persuasive texts or to help students construct their own arguments, as well. (see the attached CER Template for general format example).

1. Students look at a persuasive text (science journal article, newspaper column, etc.).
2. They annotate the article by labeling the author's claim, evidence, and reasoning. Students could also write the claim, evidence, and reasoning on a large paper to allow their classmates to see if they all gathered the same components or if there were different perspectives.

Possible Uses for CER

Math and science teachers can use this strategy for making claims from a graph and using the evidence to prove and support why they made the claim. **Reading teachers** can use this strategy with any argument text. Students would find the claim, text-based evidence to support the claim, and then the reasoning to support both evidence and claim. This strategy helps improve students writing as well, using text-based support for research papers and projects.

Pass the Problem: Students work in pairs to respond to a problem, partially completing the solution. When time is up, they exchange their problem and the work they've done with another pair of students. That pair continues the work and revise as they go. When they have solved the problem, pairs share their solutions and justify their choices.

Possible Uses for Pass the Problem

ELA teachers can give students a reading passage with errors (grammatical, punctuation, etc.) and instruct students to begin to identify and correct errors. Students would work in pairs and after a few minutes pass the paper/reading/text to another pair and they would continue to look for errors and make notes on the page why or why not they agree with the other group's work or corrections. **Math teachers** can use this strategy on multistep math problems. Students would work in pairs to begin solving a problem and then after a few minutes, they would pass their problem to another group to finish it. The students would then check the work of others and try to finish the problem. If errors are seen students would note the error and correct it on the problem.

Why-Lighting: Students highlight a text then write why they highlighted what they did in the margins of the document. Once all students are done, they discuss their highlights and reasoning in small groups or in a whole-class discussion. This discussion provides them with the opportunity to address the text in a different way and to notice the importance of passages that they, personally, might not have highlighted.

Possible Uses for Why-Lighting

Why-Lighting is mostly used with long text, however, a **math or science teacher** could use this strategy as well with word problems. Students would similarly highlight or underline the keywords or identifiers that help guide students to solve the problems. They could also highlight or underline detractors in word problems. Students should be encouraged to underline important passages when taking the ACT test to help them understand main ideas.

Stop and Jot: This strategy forces students to digest a reading paragraph by paragraph. Students read an assigned text, stopping at the end of each paragraph to jot down the main ideas of that paragraph. They review their notes with a partner before engaging in a whole-class discussion.

Possible Uses for Stop and Jot

ELA and reading teachers can use this in just the way it is described. Math and science teachers may only use this similar to why-lighting. They would have students read the word problem and write down the important information that is helpful to know when solving. In science, if students are reading a short passage this strategy helps students refer quickly to the passage when they get to questions.

Explain

The Explain section is when a student shares out what they have learned, connected, experienced and the new meaning created or deepened. Many of the Explore strategies flow effortlessly into the Explain. Anytime the students finish exploring a concept or content and they begin to share out their thinking or solutions they are explaining. Think-Pair-Share, CER, and Pass the Problem all have an Explain component. If one of those strategies is used in the Explore, then the Explain just follows as sharing out what students found during the Explore activity. There is no need to add an additional strategy. However, if students have explored content and need a strategy to share and explain their thinking and reasoning Strategy Harvest, Appointment Clocks, Tweet Up, Two-Minute Documentary, and Gallery Walk. (All strategies are hyperlinked to general instructions and in the Resources section there are links to a few videos demonstrating how these can be used with students.)

Strategy Harvest: (see the attached template for worksheet example) Each student solves a problem then shares the solution and strategy they used with a partner. After sharing with a few partners, volunteers can then share some of their partners' strategies with the rest of the class.

Possible Uses for Strategy Harvest

For all contents, this strategy is similar to allowing students to share out the way they solved a particular problem in a whole-class setting. Strategy Harvest allows students to explain their strategies multiple times, reinforcing learning, and provides an opportunity for students to view the processes of others to compare them to their own. While students observe other processes, it allows for the new strategies to build and connect to their own prior knowledge, thus creating a deeper understanding of the content being taught. Even though this is common among math teachers, other content areas could use this to have students explain thinking, strategies, and understanding of why and how. Remember the power students have when their learning is validated and reinforced this strategy does just this for students.

Appointment Clocks: (see the template for worksheet example) Students partner up by setting up "appointment times" with their classmates. The activity below only uses four "appointment times," but it can be altered to have more or fewer. Another way to use the strategy is to have students store their clocks after the activity and use them to pair students up in the future. This activity would be great for students to use to explain what they learned with their appointment times throughout the Explore. "Find your 3:00 appointment time and explain in your own words what we have discussed/explored/read/completed so far. What questions have you formed during the lesson? Can your scheduled partner help you reconcile/solve that question?"

Tweet Up: Students write a summary statement in the form of a tweet, using 140 characters or less, that includes a hashtag to identify the main idea of a lesson, concept, or text(s). This strategy can also be used to help students form short opinion statements that can be used later as thesis statements in longer-form writing.

Possible Uses for Tweet Up

Math teachers can use this strategy to summarize the steps they take to solve a multistep problem. The hashtag could be the process they use to remember the order of steps or the part that was tricky and almost got them off track. For example: #NegxNeg=Pos, or #OrderOfOperations. **Science teachers** can have students summarize what charts and graphs are telling, using a hashtag to identify the answer or key concept of the graph/data. **Reading teachers** can have students summarize after reading a passage. The hashtag could be the main idea, the voice of the narrator, the point of view, etc.

small groups to create a response. Once the groups have decided upon their responses, each group creates a two-minute video to present their response. The videos can be shared via a class blog, website, or other online options. Again, this strategy is the students explaining their learning but in a fun and creative way. If technology is not available it can be modified to a live skit.

Gallery Walk: Student group presentations are posted around the room, creating a circuit. Groups then move from station to station, learning from each presentation and leaving feedback for the presentation's creators. This strategy encourages participation, allows for peer feedback, and is exceptionally flexible. Expert groups could design a poster explaining their main ideas from the reading/work or steps to problems solved. The Gallery Walk is the way students explain and display their work and knowledge. Teachers and students can ask questions for clarification as needed.

Extend

To extend the lesson or activity, students apply knowledge or create connections outside the classroom. Listed below are some possible extensions:

- Students think about how might these skills or content help them in college in their future profession.
- Students could be assigned to seek out someone in college or a profession and ask them how specific skills and content have benefited them beyond high school and the ACT.
- Teachers from all contents could invite a recent high school graduate allowing the students an opportunity to ask questions about how specific skills and content like this have benefited them beyond high school and test prep. The recent graduates could share tips of how they prepared for the ACT.
- Allow students to collaboratively create an ACT question. In small groups or pairs, they could use the information taught/reviewed from the session and create an example of what the ACT questions might look like. Students could use these compiled throughout the session as practice questions.
- Encourage students to practice these skills outside of the session and identify real-life examples or experiences that use these skills or knowledge. This might be similar to homework. Students could use free or paid online resources or an ACT prep book to further practice what was studied during the session. They could quiz themselves to make sure they still understand what is being discussed within the session.

Evaluate

At the end of each session, it is important to evaluate the students' learning. A few great strategies for evaluation are 3-2-1, Parking Lot, Exit Tickets and Two-Minute Paper. Teachers can use these strategies to reflect on how students feel about the content and what questions still need to be explored further. These strategies can be used to design and build the next session. Things to think about and ask are, "What skills do my students feel they need help with?" "What questions are they asking?" "What themes or consistent problems do I see among my students' reflections that I should address next time?" (All strategies are hyperlinked to general instructions and in the Resources section there are links to a few videos demonstrating how these can be used with students.)

3-2-1: Students reflect on their own knowledge using a writing strategy that asks them to identify the things they have learned and questions they still have. Characteristic of the strategy, the first question results in three responses, the second question results in two responses, and the last question results in one response. Though this strategy can be used any point in the lesson, it makes for an ideal evaluation strategy, showing educators both the information that stuck as well as the holes students felt they had in their understanding of the material.

Possible Uses for 3-2-1

Students write three things they feel confident they know from today's lesson. Then Students write two things that they still need more practice on or are still mastering. Lastly, students write one thing they are still struggling with or questioning. What is the one thing they need much more practice or explanation to move to the familiar and confident category?

Parking Lot :A poster is placed in a strategic place in the classroom where students can leave questions that they are pondering during the session or at the end of the session as a closing. The teacher spends a few minutes, when necessary, answering questions from the Parking Lot for the class. This can also be questions that the teacher needs to know about how a student is feeling about the session content. Are they confident? Are they still really struggling to understand? Teachers can use this parking lot to evaluate and reflect on student learning and questions. Names are not necessary on these sticky notes unless the students want to individually discuss their questions and concerns. Different questions can be posed to provide a wide range of uses and outcomes for each session.

Exit Tickets: Exit tickets serve a similar purpose as those listed above. At the end of the class, usually consisting of one question that asks students to make use of the information in the lesson to create a written response. Exit Tickets are a quick, informal way to assess what students were able to learn from the lesson. These can be used in connection with a Parking Lot. The Parking Lot becomes a place to hold and post all summaries.

Introduction to ACT Prep Student Workshop

The first two subsections below are the pre-planning and orientation leading up the to actual 14 hours of the ACT prep workshop. These must be completed before the student sessions begin. After these pre-events, the information for the seven weekly sessions begins. This information (in the 5E format) is not explicit in specific content, but rather, it explains strategies to help reteach and engage students. The design of the content to be taught should be determined by reviewing the pre-test handed out in the first session.

PRE-PLANNING NOTE FOR ORGANIZER

This workshop for students must begin with weeks of advance planning and promotion and can be held multiple times during the year to provide students with opportunities to attend. For example, a seven-week session can be hosted in the spring and then again in the fall.

Students and parents must be notified that the prep course is open to all students interested in committing to one day a week for seven weeks of intense ACT prep to help raise their scores by two to three points using proven, researched methods. Promoting this can vary from campus to campus, but it is recommended that 10th through 12th-grade teachers speak to their students multiple times to promote the workshop sessions. Post flyers around the school and in the classrooms to encourage and remind students to attend.

Other ways to promote the ACT workshop are to send letters or flyers home with students, post information on school and district websites, or use other forms of campus mass communication to promote the workshop (e.g., school newspaper/broadcast, campus Facebook/Instagram/Twitter, etc.). If site funds are available, the campus can give away free graphing calculators (or something equally useful and rewarding) to the students who complete all 14 hours of the workshop. The campus could also promote the workshop by providing a free ACT prep book for each student if funds are available.

It is also recommended that the workshop provide snacks for students each week since the workshop is held after school. Students will be tired and will need the fuel for their brains to continue to process and work on the ACT prep.

Provide a sign-up sheet for students who are interested. The sign-up sheet provides you with an estimated number of students who might commit to attending the session. It is important to remember that some students will miss sessions, but make sure they understand in advance it is important they try their best to attend all 14 hours of the workshop.

GENERAL ORIENTATION, INFORMATION SESSION, AND BEGIN PRE-TEST: REQUIRED FIRST HOUR OF THE TOTAL 14 HOURS

The first hour is an information session, consisting of presenting a customizable PowerPoint to inform students of expectations during the rest of the 14 hours of the workshop. During this first hour, you also need to assess the students' need for transportation. Organizers need to brainstorm solutions for any transportation needs.

Notify all students who have signed up and are interested in the 14 hours of ACT workshop preparation that the informational session will be on (date/time). During this meeting, use the attached **Lesson Slides**. This PowerPoint should be edited to match the campus/district promotional dates and information that was on the flyers posted around the site. Some slides will not need to be changed, but it is important to look over and save the updated PowerPoint before holding this orientation with students. Below are the general things you must address with your students during this one-hour orientation session. These notes are also included in the notes sections of their respective slides on the PowerPoint, for your convenience.

1. **Slide 1** is an introduction to the time and date commitment for the workshop session. Remind students when the session will be held and that you expect them to come to each session.
2. Show **slide 2**, "Why is this important?" Then, highlight why this workshop is so important. Some suggested reasons are: 1) This research-proven method of ACT prep can raise your composite scores by up to three points. 2) Raising your ACT score can help you get into the college you desire. 3) By raising your ACT score, you could possibly be considered for more scholarships to help pay for college.
3. Transition to **slide 3**, "What to Expect." Give an overview of what the students should expect during the sessions. Some of these are test-taking strategies, content tutoring, and review, practice ACT tests, and ACT prep materials to use at home.
4. Show **slide 4**, "Classrooms," and explain to students that these are the locations where they will be meeting each week. Each week, students will attend a two-hour session. The first hour will cover the content area, and the second hour will cover the second content area. Science and math will be grouped together, and reading and English will be grouped together. Students will attend all groups by rotating every other week between the grouped content. For example: For the first week, a student might attend the science/math grouped content. For the second week, the same student will attend the reading/English combo. Then, in the third week, the same student would attend the science/math session again, continuing to rotate between the two combinations.
5. Change to **slide 5**, "How to receive the incentives." This slide needs to be modified based on what your site can afford to offer to the students. It is important to have some kind of incentive for the students. They will be working hard. Those who complete the workshop could receive something special like a free graphing calculator, free ACT prep book, certificate of completion, pizza party during lunch or after school, or something that will extrinsically motivate your students to attend after school for 14 hours.
6. Change to **slide 6**, "Importance of Attendance!" and explain the rotation between the four content areas. Also, share the pre-test and post-test information. If you can offer your students a full ACT practice test, provide the date and time that will be offered. Also, this would be the time to address the need for transportation and if your school can offer support in transporting students. If your school/district cannot afford to run a bus one day a week in the evenings, then communicate that to parents and students in advance so they may have time to find an alternate way home in the evenings after the end of each session.
7. The last slide, **slide 7**, should have contact and communication information to allow students and parents to reach you with questions or concerns. Organizers might use Google Classroom or a web app like Remind.
8. Students take a pre-test after the PowerPoint. The first session ends after two hours. Students can finish the pre-test during the first full session if needed.

HOW TO FOLLOW 5E FORMAT FOR HOUR-LONG ACT PREP SESSION

Below are ideas on how to follow the 5E format for an hour-long ACT prep session. This can be implemented in any content area with few modifications. There will be many variations and ideas of what to do, but it is the teacher's decision on whether or not to implement the different instructional strategies. It is important to remember to make sure things vary a little during each session because both you and the students will get tired of having the same routine each session.

Research Rationale

The ACT is an bridge that students who want to attend certain colleges must know how to navigate. Colleges have set requirements, and students must achieve certain composite scores on the ACT to be admitted into certain schools (Grove, 2016). Teachers often focus on test taking strategies instead of the knowledge and content that will be tested. Low level tasks are assigned to students and higher-order thinking is not activated in activities such as determining the best answer choice, taking practice tests and completing practice problems. Spending time on practice tests and working on testing strategies has shown to have little to no impact on improving student test scores (Briggs, 2001; Briggs, 2009; Powers & Rock 1999). Traditional test preparation strategies are not the best way a student can prepare, so understanding test strategies that work is important for teachers and students. Test prep should include and integrate training in course curriculum, the use of engaging strategies guiding to inspire students in active participation, and deconstructing student's misconceptions within the ACT (K20 Center, 2015). Kalchman (2011), and his research team discovered 76% of students considerably increased their standardized testing scores from fall to spring when they are regularly practicing problem solving and explaining life experiences through content learning.

Organizer Notes: After All Sessions Have Concluded

After all the sessions have concluded it is important to have some sort of teacher and student evaluation to ask important questions. An option to include all students in SWOT is to provide an online survey via tools like Google and allow students to contribute that way.

One way to do this is a SWOT and is described as written below:

SWOT is an analysis strategy used for understanding your Strengths, Weaknesses, and for identifying both possible Opportunities and Threats that might appear in regards to the main goals. To complete a SWOT, participants (session teachers and organizers and then a separate one including students (or sample of students) with teachers/organizers), begin taking turns going around and allow each person an opportunity to express one Strength at a time. Continue to go around as many times as necessary until there are no more strengths to be added. Then do the same thing moving on to the Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This strategy provides each person a voice and a chance to be heard. If a participant doesn't have anything else to add they simply say pass.

SWOT Tips

Strengths and Weaknesses might be internal to your sessions, while Opportunities and Threats might appear as external factors. For example, a Threat might be a kid doesn't come because of sports or transportation, but an Opportunity might be to hold a spring and then a fall session for students who play sports in the spring but not the fall (or vice versa).

Resources

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