

The Future Workforce of Nevada

Nevada's labor force and economy are strengthened when the state's high school graduates are prepared for college and are interested in pursuing available jobs in Nevada. Academic preparation is critical, given that many of the projected high growth job openings in Nevada will require a 2-year college degree or more. In Nevada, five of the expected highest growth career fields will be management, education, health care, engineering, and community services. Do Nevada's future workers have the necessary skills to fill positions in these high-growth careers? Are Nevada's future workers interested in jobs in these fields?

Using 2008 ACT results for 4,122 Nevada high school graduates with career interest information, and 2004-2014 Nevada state long-term occupational projections (based on job growth and job replacement), here is what we know so far.

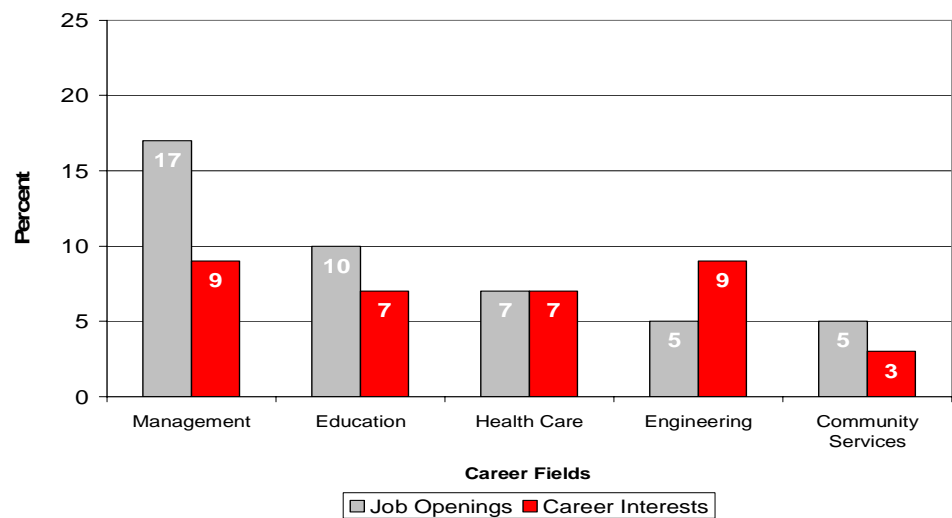
- There is some interest among Nevada high school students in pursuing these high-growth career fields, but not enough to meet the overall demand.
- Of Nevada students expressing interest in many of these high-growth career fields, more than two-thirds are ready for first-year college English courses, while less than two-thirds are prepared for college-level social science courses.
- Of Nevada students expressing interest in most of these high-growth career fields, less than one-half are ready for college-level math or science courses.

Nevada educators should continue to encourage their students to pursue high-growth Nevada career fields.

Students' Interests

- Gaps between expected jobs and interested students are apparent for careers in management (convention planners, hotel/restaurant managers, etc.), education (secondary teachers, administrators, etc.), and community services (social workers, school counselors, etc.), with more jobs expected than students interested in jobs in these fields (Figure 1). Nevada may be faced with potential labor shortfalls in fields where skilled individuals are most needed.

Figure 1: Projected Annual Job Openings and Nevada High School Students' Interests in High Growth Nevada Career Fields^{1, 2}

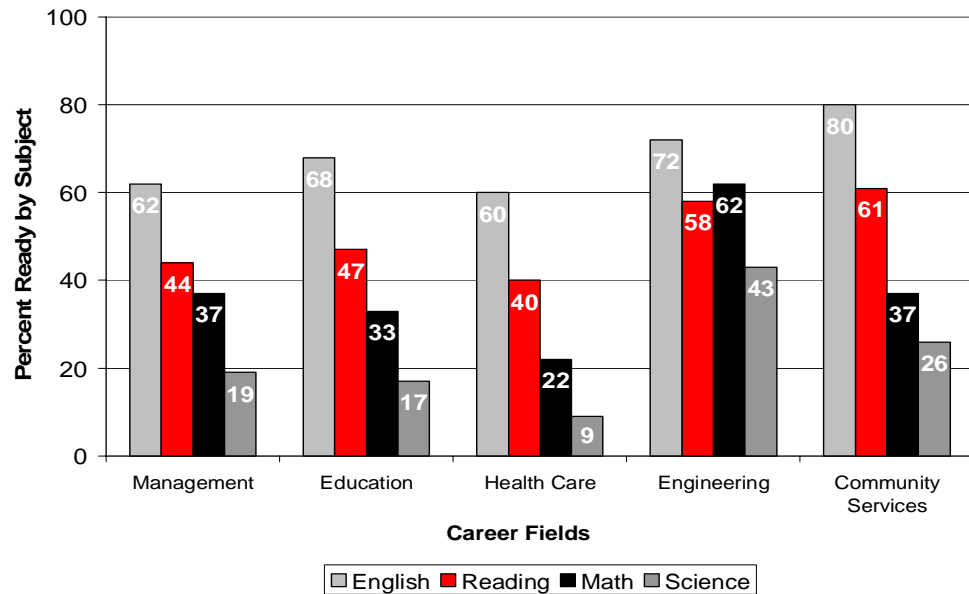


¹State projections 2004-2014 provided by Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation.

²Based on 2008 ACT-tested Nevada students ($n = 4,122$) with valid career information.

- It appears that there is no gap between students interested in health care (nurses, occupational therapists, etc.), and the jobs that will be available in this field. There are also more students interested in engineering (architects, mechanical engineers, etc.) than jobs that will be available in this field. However, many of the students interested in the health care and engineering fields are not ready to meet or exceed one or more of ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks in English, reading, mathematics, or science, as shown in Figure 2. Students who are interested and college ready are more likely to be successful in the coursework needed to enter these high-growth career fields.

Figure 2: ACT College Readiness Benchmark Performance of Nevada High School Students Interested in High Growth Nevada Career Fields by Subject³



³Based on 2008 ACT-tested Nevada students ($n = 4,122$) with valid subject scores and career information.

Nevada educators should continue to encourage their students to achieve the highest level of preparation for college, in order to meet Nevada Workforce demands.

Students' Skills

- Students are ready to succeed in entry-level college courses if they meet ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. In Nevada, more than two-thirds of students are prepared for first-year college coursework in English for three of the five high-growth career fields. Fewer students interested in these high-growth fields are prepared to succeed in college-level social science courses (indicated by ACT Reading Benchmark), with students pursuing health care careers being the least prepared and students pursuing community services careers being the most prepared.
- More than one-half of students wanting to enter engineering are ready for college-level math courses, while less than one-half of these students are ready for college-level science. Approximately one-third or less of students pursuing careers in management, education, health care, and community services are ready for college-level math or science.
- Overall, the pattern of readiness for college coursework is similar across the five high-growth career fields: Student preparation is highest for English and social sciences, and much lower for math and science. The lower levels of preparation among graduating high school students is alarming, given the high demand for science- and math-intensive careers such as nursing, pharmacy, and teaching.