



The Future Workforce of South Carolina

South Carolina'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 South Carolina. Academic preparation is critical, given that many of the projected high growth job openings in South Carolina will require a 2-year college degree or more. In South Carolina, five of the expected highest growth career fields will be management, education, health care, marketing & sales, and community services. Do South Carolina's future workers have the necessary skills to fill positions in these high-growth careers? Are South Carolina's future workers interested in jobs in these fields?

Using 2008 ACT results for 11,676 South Carolina high school graduates with career interest information, and 2004-2014 South Carolina state long-term occupational projections (based on job growth and job replacement), here is what we know so far.

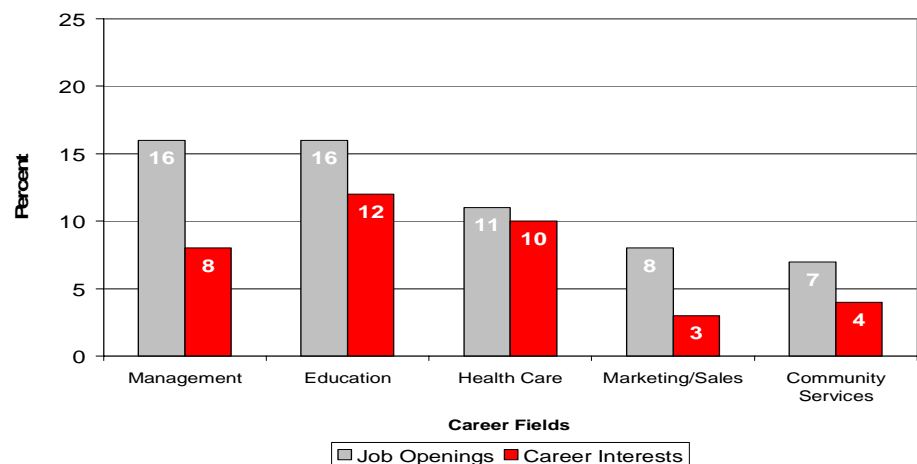
- There is some interest among South Carolina high school students in pursuing these high-growth career fields, but not enough to meet the demand.
- Of South Carolina students expressing interest in many of these high-growth career fields, more than one-half are ready for first-year college English courses,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

South Carolina educators should continue to encourage their students to pursue high-growth South Carolina 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.), marketing & sales (insurance agents, buyers, etc.), and community services (social workers, school counselors, etc.), with more jobs expected than students interested in jobs in these fields (Figure 1). South Carolina may be faced with potential labor shortfalls in fields where skilled individuals are most needed.

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

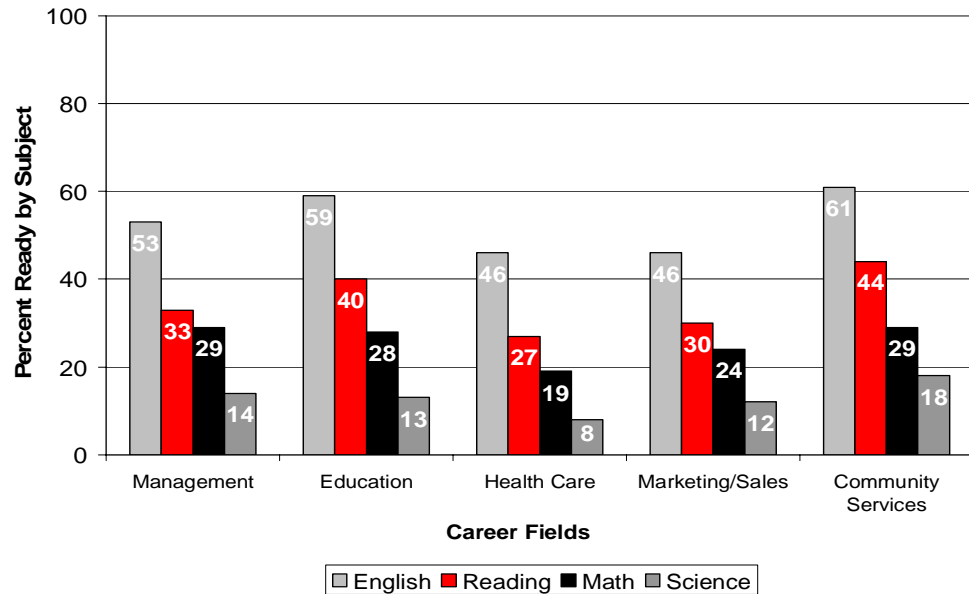


¹State projections 2004-2014 provided by South Carolina Employment Security Commission.

²Based on 2008 ACT-tested South Carolina students ($n = 11,676$) with valid career information.

- Although the gap between students interested in the health care field (nurses, occupational therapists, etc.), and the jobs that will be available in this field is more narrow, many of these students 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 this high-growth career field.

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



³Based on 2008 ACT-tested South Carolina students ($n = 11,676$) with valid subject scores and career information.

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

Students' Skills

- Students are ready to succeed in entry-level college courses if they meet ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. In South Carolina, more than one-half 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.
- Less than one-third of students wanting to enter the five high-growth career fields are ready for college-level math courses. Less than one-fifth of students pursuing these careers are ready for college-level 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.