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— Vikki Carlson, Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning for North Platte Public Schools —

Introduction

North Platte High School (NPHS), a cornerstone of the North Platte community in Nebraska since 1868, reflects the grit and resilience of the city’s blue-collar roots. In the state of Nebraska, nearly half of students qualify for Free & Reduced Lunch. Although North Platte High School’s FRL percentage is slightly lower than the state’s average, the comprehensive high school is not exempt from other unique challenges that have, at times, impeded the prioritization of standardized testing. Recently, the school has experienced a breakthrough: students are not only raising their ACT® scores, the school is redefining what success looks like after graduation and at the center of this shift are NPHS’ students, staff, and community. The tool to their success? OnToCollege (OTC), a Test Preparation and college & career readiness program that helped spark new confidence, higher expectations, and unprecedented results. What began as Test Prep has grown into something much larger, and at the center of this shift is NPHS’s students, staff, and community.



The Numbers (Data)

At NPHS, approximately 43% of students qualify for the Free & Reduced Lunch program, and about 60% of students are college-bound. Other post-high school pathways include the military and the trades.

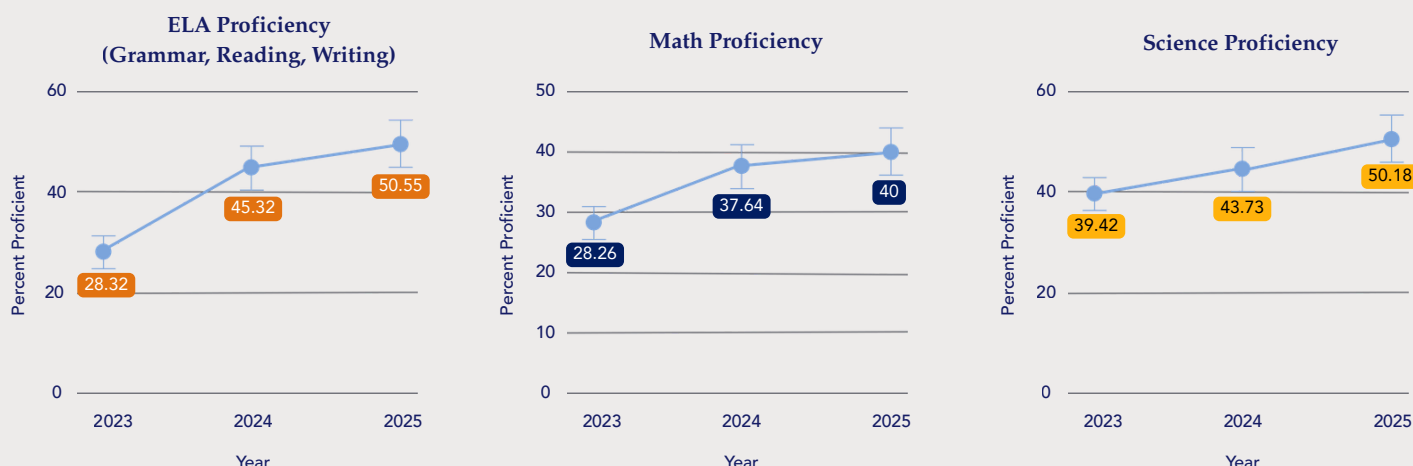
In 2016, Nebraska State Statutes began to require all juniors to take the ACT test beginning Spring 2017.

OnToCollege began working with NPHS in the 2023-2024 school year. The 2024 and 2025 results below reveal the impact.

25 and UP	2023	2024	2025
# of Students	15	22	35



OTC began working with NPHS in 2024



Provided by NPHS, from the Nebraska Department of Education's Nebraska Education Profile.

<https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/act/>



Implementation

NPHS rolled out OTC in a way that was both simple and effective, thanks to a clear plan and strong collaboration between staff at NPHS and OTC. The Principal Cory Spotanski also worked with the North Plate Public School Foundation (NPPSF) to secure student incentives and to help the community understand why this was the right time to invest in Test Prep and OTC. NPHS teachers had flexibility regarding when and how they implemented OTC's Prep for the ACT® Test. Examples of implementation plans for 2025 included:

- In homerooms/NPHS's "Bulldog Time," Juniors would watch the OTC course.
- Teachers would pick one day a week as a break from regular classwork to watch the OTC course videos.
- Math teachers would show OTC's Math Videos in class after teaching the concept as both a means to teach Math on the ACT® Test as well as reinforce the concept learned in class.
- To help NPHS juniors master OTC's 18 Grammar Rules, teachers would focus on a Grammar Rule a week, and at the end of the week, would give a Grammar Rule Quiz.

NPHS's Implementation Plan for 2026 is the following:

- Show main OTC Videos in core classes (English and Writing in English class, Math in Math class, Reading in Social Studies class, Science in Science class).
- English teachers will show the English instruction to the juniors in the fall so that in the spring they can do the Additional English Prep – 5 English Power Practice Passages – for even larger English score increases.
- In NPHS's "Bulldog Time" (homeroom-equivalent), students will reinforce concepts learned from Session Videos by watching OTC's Additional Prep resources throughout the entire school year. In the few weeks leading up to the spring schoolwide ACT, teachers will reinforce ACT® concepts through OTC's ACT® Refresher Course.
- Teachers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how often and when to show OTC Session videos in class (once a week, multiple times a week, every day for a set amount of weeks, etc.); teachers are also welcome to combine OTC content with other class content.

As teachers worked with students on the OTC course, counselors supported students and staff by enrolling students in the course and keeping them on track. Community engagement amplified the effort: leaders from the Rotary Club and other local businesses sponsored prizes, donated technology such as iPads, and even handed out awards at an Academic "Prep Rally" where students were celebrated by their peers, families, and community members. These incentives added energy, but the real driver was shared pride in building a culture of achievement. The steady growth in participation and results at NPHS shows this is not an isolated success story—it's a replicable model that any school and community can adapt to their specific needs.

The Real Impact

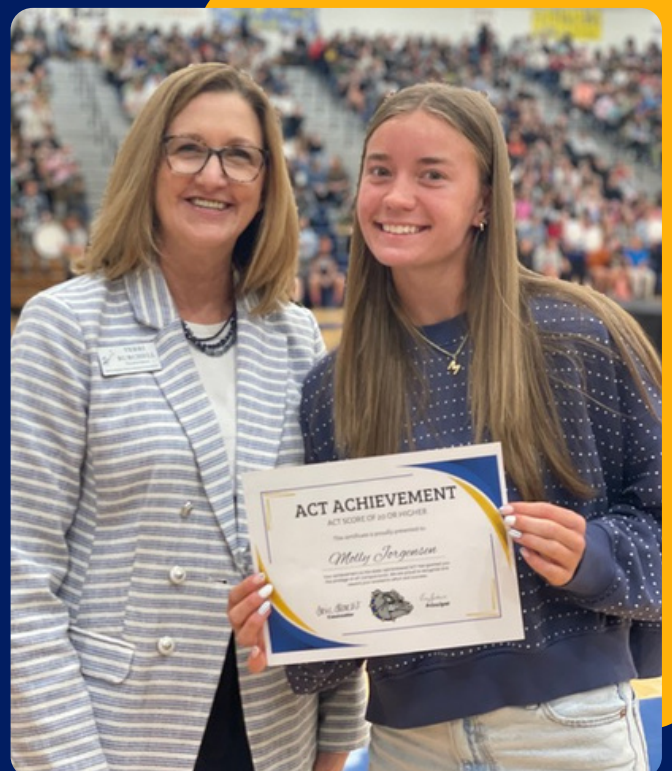


Students and staff at NPHS have seen life-changing results from implementing OTC and involving everyone every step of the way. Rebecca Keneipp, a senior at NPHS, shared her experiences from taking OTC Prep for the ACT® Test: “I didn’t know anything (about the ACT®) until my junior year when we started using OnToCollege. I just thought you were thrown a book, and you had to study by yourself.” Through NPHS’s collaboration with OTC, Keneipp learned more about how her ACT® score could support her dreams of attending Creighton University, engaged in fun and collaborative learning with her peers using OTC, and increased her ACT® score.

The intentional effort to set every student up for success has created a ripple effect across not only the school but also the community. Students became more enthusiastic about Test Prep and reinforced their hard work with positive encouragement and peer accountability. Teachers even shared how students would rush to check their scores as soon as they became available, celebrating their gains and encouraging each other to aim higher. Underclassmen became influenced by the infectious energy of their peers, talking about their futures and treating the ACT® as a real opportunity rather than an obstacle or chore.

Teachers have also embraced the shift; while some were hesitant at first, they quickly saw the growth and began to take pride in students’ progress, raising their own expectations for what’s possible. Vikki Carlson, Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning for North Platte Public Schools, noted, “Students know when teachers care about student success. OnToCollege has been a vehicle to create momentum and real academic success, strengthening student-teacher connections. Everyone is bought in. So OTC has meant much more to our culture than just higher scores.”

In 2025, NPHS saw even greater improvement and hosted an Academic Pep Rally to celebrate student achievement and create an opportunity for families, friends, and community members to celebrate alongside the students. At this pep rally, students were recognized for their performance on the ACT®: students who earned a Composite Score between 25-29 were awarded with an iPad and students who received a Composite Score of 30 or higher were awarded with a MacBook– all gifted by community members and the NPPSF. This cultural shift has gone beyond Test Prep–NPHS has established itself as a school where success in academics is celebrated as loudly as success in sports, and where students, staff, and supporters alike believe bigger futures are within reach.



What's Next?



At NPHS, the expectation for ACT® scores and student success has shifted dramatically. What once felt out of reach is now the new standard, and the growth only continues to trend positively. More students are not only scoring higher, but also planning to pursue their desired post-high school pathway with confidence. Already, dozens of seniors have put themselves in a position to earn tuition-free education at schools such as Wayne State College and Chadron State College thanks to their improved ACT® results, proving that academic preparation and support truly change futures.

The message is clear: at NPHS, with OnToCollege, higher scores now mean higher expectations, and pathways like college, the military, and the trades are no longer just dreams. The ripple effect continues to grow as underclassmen step into a culture where Test Prep is taken seriously, teachers push students to aim higher, and community members rally in support. With OTC's impact growing each year, future classes will walk into standardized tests more prepared, ready to earn scholarships, and expecting to catch dreams.

OnToCollege thanks these individuals who participated in interviews:

- John Bryn
- Terri Burchell
- Kyle Milton
- Vikki Carlson
- Amie Albrecht
- Emily Kearney
- Rebecca Keneipp

While their remarks are not quoted directly, their perspectives informed and enriched this white paper on the success of North Platte High School.



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