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BESTS Policies

- The Belin-Blank Center reserves the right to modify or waive these policies. The Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search (BESTS) is subject to the Belin-Blank Center’s [privacy policy](#).
- In all cases except I-Excel dates coordinated by the school or ACT registrations coordinated by the school, the Belin-Blank Center will not share scores unless given explicit written permission by the parent. While the Center does not offer school score-sending as a service, we recommend that families share scores with educators at the child’s school, particularly those involved in making decisions about the child’s academic progress. For I-Excel and ACT registrations coordinated by the school, the school contact organizing testing will have access to the scores resulting from the test date and will be able to distribute scores to families.
- Discounts for Free/Reduced Price Lunch are at the discretion of the Belin-Blank Center, which may request verification of eligibility. The number of partial fee waivers for Free/Reduced Price Lunch is limited per academic year on a first-come, first-served basis. If this reduced fee is still too great a financial burden, the Center will work with the family to make a financial arrangement that allows the student to participate.
- Students may test through BESTS a maximum of once per academic year.
- Your child’s data may be used in aggregate and unidentifiable form to contribute to norms.

ACT

General

- Students who register for the ACT through the Belin-Blank Center are subject to all [ACT policies](#) and must agree to ACT’s [Terms and Conditions](#).
- Parents can save money by registering for an ACT date by that date’s early registration deadline. However, they must complete payment by that deadline, as well. If payment is not resolved by that deadline, the late registration fee will be added to the registration. Payment is required before the final deadline, or the registration will be dropped.
- Current fees are listed at belinblank.org/talent-search. The fee is lower for students eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch. If this reduced fee is still too great a financial burden, the Center will work with the family to make a financial arrangement that allows the student to participate.
- No refunds will be granted after the test registration is sent to ACT (see Signing Up, below, for details).

Signing Up

The Belin-Blank Center provides a one-step registration process for high-ability 7th-9th graders. That is, registration through BESTS signs students up both as members of the talent search and for the specific test date. There is no need to register directly with ACT.

1. Parents sign up their child for the test date of their choice and request a test date location. **Please note** that the Belin-Blank Center cannot guarantee a test location, as they are subject to changes by ACT and seat limits.

Particularly during the spring test dates, testing locations may fill, and ACT will assign students to the next-closest testing location.

- To view testing **locations** for your state, please either visit [ACT's website](#) or, between late August and early May, [our registration system](#).
 - If the test location you'd like is listed on ACT's website but not the Belin-Blank Center's, please email us at assessment@belinblank.org.
 - We do not offer the July or September ACT through our registration system.
2. The Belin-Blank Center sends the information for **paid in full** registrations to ACT (usually weekly). Registrations without full payment will not be sent to ACT. If they are not paid by the early registration deadline, the late registration fee will be added. If they are not paid by the late registration deadline, registrations will be dropped.
 3. **Once the registration has been sent to ACT, we are unable to refund the base fee or late registration fee.** If you would like to cancel a registration shortly after paying, please contact assessment@belinblank.org **as soon as possible**.
 4. Once the registration is processed, ACT will mail an admission ticket to the mailing address associated with the registration. You **must** bring the admission ticket and [acceptable identification](#) to the testing location the day of the test. If the child taking the test does not yet have an ID issued by a city/state/federal government agency or school, they will need to fill out the [talent search ID](#) and bring it to the testing location in place of an ID. More instructions for preparation and the day of the test are available on our [ACT Academic Talent Search Instruction Folder](#).
 5. If your child is 13 or older, we recommend making a copy of the admission ticket to help you receive the scores faster (see After the Test, below).

Special Accommodations (Disability or English Language Learner)

Students with documented disabilities may be eligible for [accommodations](#) through ACT. Students testing through BESTS should complete and pay for their registration, then use [this form](#) to request accommodations (disregard instructions to go through the school-based request system).

- There are two types of accommodations – [this infographic](#) can help you decide which one is the best fit.
- Accommodations are also available through ACT for [English Language Learners](#). Students testing through BESTS should complete and pay for their registration, then use [this form](#) to request accommodations (disregard instructions to go through the school-based request system).
- **Please note that you will need to apply for and be approved by ACT for accommodations for your child to receive those accommodations.**

Preparing for the Test

There are a few things students (and parents) should know before the test:

- To take an above-level test (such as ACT for 7th-9th graders), students must have at least one score in the 95th percentile or above on a core subject of a grade-level test, such as the Iowa Assessments. By definition, an above-level test was designed for older students, so it is best-suited to students who are maxing out grade-level tests in at least one subject. Sometimes even if students meet the 95th-percentile guideline on a grade-level test, they or their parents may be nervous about taking such a challenging test. The guideline is intended to prevent students from being overly stressed or frustrated by the testing experience. Students can try out sample questions [for free](#) to gauge the level of the test and whether it is a good fit.
- Some families ask if taking ACT early impacts college admissions later. It should not impact admissions in any way. A college cannot request scores from ACT -- the family or student must agree and pay to have scores sent to a college from ACT. It is the student's choice to indicate what test date they wish to have released. When the student takes the ACT as a junior/senior in high school, they can then choose to send just those scores to the college(s) of their choice, and that process will not be affected by their previous scores.

- If your child is 13 or older, we recommend making a copy of the admission ticket to help you receive the scores faster. The admission ticket has your ACT ID number, which you can use to view your scores online after the test. Generally, scores are available online well before the paper score report is mailed to you.
- If you haven't received an admission ticket by the week of the test, please call ACT's customer service line at 319-337-1270 between 8AM-8PM CT. Let them know that your child registered through a talent search and that you haven't received the admission ticket.
- We recommend that students take a look at the [sample items](#) to get comfortable with the format of the test. We **do not** recommend that students study for the test.

Test Day

- More instructions for preparation and the day of the test are available on our [ACT Academic Talent Search Instruction Folder](#).
- You must bring the admission ticket and [acceptable identification](#) to the testing location the day of the test. If the child taking the test does not yet have an ID issued by a city/state/federal government agency or school, they will need to fill out the [Talent Search Student Identification](#) and bring it to the testing location in place of an ID. More instructions for preparation and the day of the test are available on our ACT Academic Talent Search Instruction Folder.

After the Test

- ACT generally sends scores through the mail to parents 3-8 weeks after the test date.
- If your child is 13 or older (the federal age at which a child can have an online account), they usually also send an email with instructions to sign in to an online account to see the scores. That online account requires that you have access to the ACT ID, which is printed on the admission ticket. If you don't have a copy of it, parents have had success in calling the main ACT customer service line (319-337-1270), explaining that their child tested through a talent search, and asking for help logging in.
- Once you have the scores (either through the mail or online), you'll then be able to enter the scores in our interpretation system, *IDEAL Solutions[®] for STEM Acceleration*, using a code for a free interpretation guide (enclosed in the confirmation email you received following registration). If you have misplaced that email, please contact us at assessment@belinblank.org for instructions.
- The results can be helpful for curriculum planning. One option, depending on the results, may be [subject acceleration](#). Additional options include [whole grade acceleration](#) or [early entrance to college](#).
- Students who score highly on an above-level test may be eligible to take courses online through the [Iowa Online AP Academy \(IOAPA\)](#), which provides above-level coursework online without a course fee (currently available in Iowa only). Only educators may register students for IOAPA. [Learn more](#).
- Very high-scoring students may be invited to the [Recognition Ceremony](#). Only those students who register using the Belin-Blank Center's registration form in a given academic year are eligible for that year's Recognition Ceremony.

ACT for Educators

Educators have two options for getting their students signed up for the ACT as an above-level test.

- Educators can invite parents to register their children individually (you can [download a sample letter](#) to send to parents). For this option, parents will have to manually share results with the school.
- Educators can register a group of students at the same testing location (final testing location placement not guaranteed) and, as an option, can arrange for the school to pay for this testing at a discounted rate. This tends to require more work on the part of the educator, but it guarantees access to the scores.
 - Teachers should register each student with the teacher's email address and school mailing address to ensure results are sent to the school. We encourage teachers to share these results with families.
 - Please ask students not to change the address, email, or ID number on their answer sheet the day of the test.

- For more details on registering a group of 7th-9th grade students for ACT, email assessment@belinblank.org.
- Iowa educators can easily create a list of qualifying students using Iowa Testing Programs' [handy online tool](#).