

# “Full Court Press”

Principal’s Academic Culture Change Propels MasteryPrep Partner School to Score Highest ACT Growth in Mississippi

*“You can shoot a basketball. But what’s your ACT? If you can combine those, you really will be a rock star.”*

Such is the message of North Forrest High School Principal Jennifer Riels to her students on the importance of achieving high standardized test scores, gaining entry to college, and earning scholarship awards.

The full court press and message was well received.

Forrest County School District posted the largest ACT growth in Mississippi, leaping from an average composite score of 15.9 to 18.2 (2.3-point increase). It was the second year in a row that a MasteryPrep partner school posted the highest ACT growth in Mississippi. Forrest County has partnered with MasteryPrep since 2016.

North Forrest High School, located in Eatonville County, Miss., is the only high school in the Forrest County School District, with 375 students in grades 7 -12. Thirty-two percent of students belong to minorities, and 71 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Forrest County used MasteryPrep’s ACT TruScore program to provide students an authentic practice test and help their teachers make data-driven instructional decisions to close gaps. Through the years of its partnership with MasteryPrep, Forrest County has also relied on ACT Boot Camps, and in 2019, rolled out The College Playbook, MasteryPrep’s student-friendly guide to college admissions.

“We have worked with purpose the last several years to grow our student’s success on the ACT and raise scores consistently every year, which has led to numerous scholarship and monetary awards to graduates,” said Riels, who added that 48 graduates earned \$2 million in scholarships this past school year.



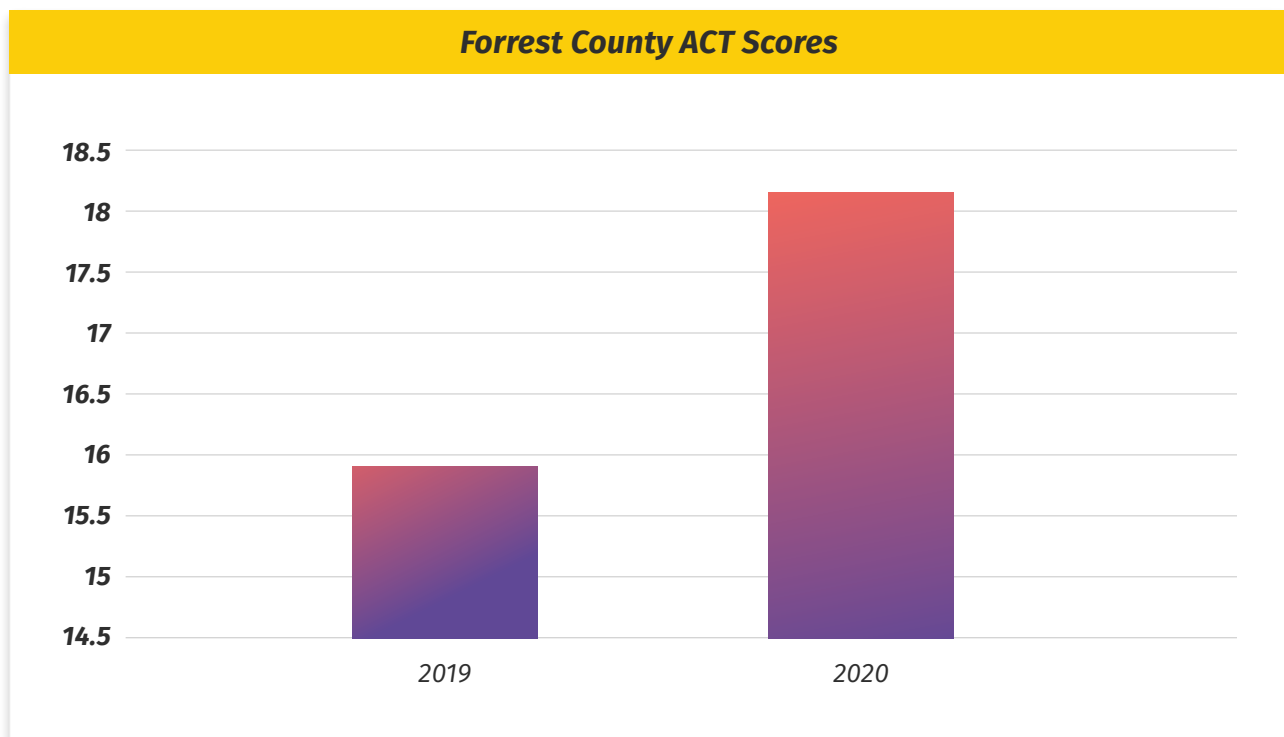
*“We have elevated the academic environment, changed our culture, instilled a high level of pride and passion, and provided the necessary resources to our teachers and students to inspire them to grow into and achieve opportunities for their futures.”*



## #1 Improving District, 2 Years in a Row

For the second year in a row, a MasteryPrep Partner posted the largest ACT growth in the state of Mississippi. Congratulations to Forrest County School District, which leaped from an average score of 15.9 to 18.2 in a single year (+2.3 composite points).

32% of Forrest County students belong to minorities, and 71% qualify for free or reduced lunch. Forrest County used MasteryPrep's ACT TruScore program to provide students an authentic practice test and help their teachers make data-driven instructional decisions to close gaps. Through the years of its partnership with MasteryPrep, Forrest County has also relied on the ACT Boot Camp, and in 2019 rolled out the College Playbook, MasteryPrep's student-friendly guide to college admissions.



## Student Feedback from MasteryPrep Programs at Forrest County

*"It was helpful and interesting."*

*"It has everything we need to know."*

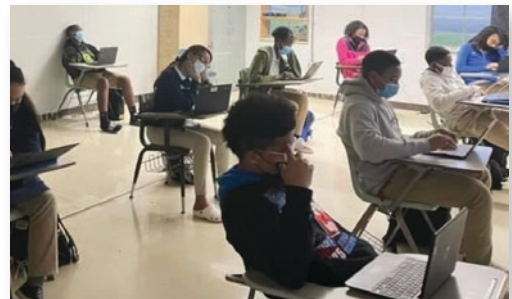
*"So much fun and interesting. I learned so much."*

*"It is a wonderful experience."*

## Academic Culture Change – Tips for Success

North Forrest High School Principal Jennifer Riels shared several tips for success when trying to increase scores school-wide.

1. Implement dedicated one-semester class (mandatory unless already scoring 20-plus).
  - Select a strong instructor to teach the class.
2. Persist across multiple years.
  - Build expertise and capacity over a long period of time.
3. Use TruScore for 9th through 11th graders.
  - Detailed reports from practice tests give teachers clear test-taking skill metrics and data-driven recommendations.
4. Employ professional development to build buy-in with teachers.
  - It takes several years to change the culture of faculty, staff, and then see it trickle down to students.
5. Support students every way you can.
  - Buy test vouchers, extra test administrations, and help students sign up for tests.



## “18 and You’re In”

North Forrest High School started an ACT Club, which included entry to all students scoring 18 and above. There are celebrations, recognitions around school, awards for silver, bronze, and gold levels, and t-shirts made. To further prepare students for college, North Forrest High School partnered with William Carey University to offer Dual Enrollment classes that enable students to attain up to 27 hours of college credit prior to graduation. North Forrest High School also offers classes that target individual’s interests, such as: culinary arts, allied health, construction, art, drama, Spanish, and digital media.

“We simply changed the whole environment and attitude towards getting into college, invested in our kids, and got them to realize what a high score and passion for their future can do for their opportunities,” Riels said. “We are here to celebrate every step of that journey with them.”

Riels said she values MasteryPrep’s extensive bank of ACT practice questions and resources and also the professional development coaching that MasteryPrep instructors supplied to North Forrest High teachers before implementing the mastery courses and materials into the curriculum. “ACT is a lot of strategy, but it also involves routinely teaching students the necessary academic skills to succeed on each of the section tests. MasteryPrep provides both of those measures.”

**About MasteryPrep:** *Founded in 2012, Baton Rouge-based MasteryPrep provides mastery-based college readiness services and resources, such as for the ACT and SAT, to more than 2,000 schools and districts. In addition, MasteryPrep has helped more than 500,000 low-income students prepare for the ACT and SAT at no cost to the student. Nationally, MasteryPrep is the preferred ACT and SAT prep provider of the Council for Opportunity in Education, expanding college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the Pacific Islands, and Puerto Rico. MasteryPrep is ranked among the Inc. 5000 “Fastest Growing Companies”; featured by “Entrepreneur 360”; and honored among “Louisiana Growth Leaders” for two consecutive years by the Louisiana Department of Economic Development.*