

ACT ACCELERATOR

Created by:
Oklahoma Citizens for Education

What is the ACT Accelerator?

ACT Success Saturdays Program Overview (Assessment Accelerator)

Empowering Students, Supporting Teachers, Engaging Communities

Oklahoma Citizens for Education (OCE) believes that teachers are the backbone of our communities, students are the future, and community is the power that connects and uplifts both.

We believe preparing for the **ACT** should be a pathway to opportunity—not a source of **stress, isolation, or discouragement**. Yet, for many students, standardized test prep feels intimidating and uninspiring, and for teachers, it can feel like yet another burden on their already full plates. We know it doesn't have to be that way.

We can show up together—students, teachers, and the community—to turn test prep into an energizing, supportive, and confidence-building experience.

ACT Success Saturdays is more than just a test prep event—it is a movement designed to build students' belief in themselves, uplift teachers, and forge stronger bonds between schools and their communities.

This program is not about **OCE** coming in with all the answers—it's about **partnership**. We work alongside each school, listening, adapting, and co-creating something that works for their unique students and staff.

Core Values That Drive the Program

- **Students are Capable.** Every student can succeed when given support, tools, and belief.
- **Teachers are Heroes.** Educators are the heart of our schools, and their work deserves recognition and support.
- **Community is Power.** When families, local businesses, and neighbors stand with a school, everyone wins.
- **Preparation Should Inspire, Not Exhaust.** Test prep works best when paired with encouragement, incentives, and positivity.
- **Collaboration Creates Lasting Change.** This program is a partnership, designed to evolve based on feedback from students, teachers, and administrators.



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Program Goals

- Equip students with the tools, strategies, and confidence to perform their best on the ACT.
- Celebrate and support teachers who work tirelessly to prepare their students.
- Foster lasting school-community partnerships—so students feel the power of their community behind them.
- Develop a flexible program model that schools can adapt to their unique needs—whether in partnership with OCE or independently.
- Inspire other schools and communities across Oklahoma to build their own versions of Success Saturdays—so this movement spreads beyond us.

Why This Model Works – Research & Real-World Validation

This approach is backed by both data and common sense:

- **Incentivized Learning Works:**
 - Small, meaningful rewards increase student effort, participation, and retention.
 - (National Bureau of Economic Research)
- **Game-Based & Active Learning Improves Outcomes:**
 - Interactive, competitive learning environments increase student retention rates by up to 40%.
 - (Edutopia Study)
- **Emotional Support Reduces Test Anxiety:**
 - Building students' belief in themselves directly improves their performance on high-stakes exams.
 - (American Psychological Association)
- **Community Presence Elevates Student Effort:**
 - When students see adults from their community showing up for them, they engage more and take their future more seriously. (National Education Association)

How It Works – Core Program Components

1. Collaborative Partnership with Schools

Each program is custom-built alongside the school's leadership and teachers.

Our goal is to enhance and support the work already being done—not to add burdens or replace existing efforts.

2. Energizing Environment – Making Test Prep Fun & Inviting

We replace the traditional overly quiet and stressful prep environment with one that is positive, social, and energizing.

- Pep Talk & Warm Welcome:
 - Each Saturday starts with a motivational pep talk from a teacher, principal, student, or volunteer.
 - **Goal: Remind students they are capable and supported.**

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- **Music That Motivates (Making Test Prep Fun & Inviting Continued):**
 - Student-input playlists will play during arrival and breaks, creating an uplifting vibe.
- **Brain Boost Café (Snacks & Drinks):**
 - Healthy snacks and drinks will be available all morning:
 - Donuts, bananas, granola bars, juice, Gatorade, water.
 - Encouraging labels will accompany snacks:
 - “Test Tamer Donuts – Taste the Confidence!”
 - “Brain Boost Bananas – Fuel for Your Future!”

3. Skill-Building Learning Stations

- Each station is staffed by trained volunteers with ACT prep guides and encouragement strategies.
- Students will move every **45-60 minutes** to keep energy high and content fresh.

Students rotate between four interactive stations led by trained volunteers:

Math Masters

Problem-solving, calculator efficiency, formula recap

Reading Rockets

Reading comprehension, skimming, time management

Pacing Pros

Test pacing, time management, reducing guesswork

Confidence Corner

Encouragement, stress relief, personalized tips, mental reset

4. Motivation & Incentives

- **Raffle Tickets Earned By:**
 - Showing up
 - Participating
 - Winning mini-games
 - Demonstrating effort
- **Prizes Include:**
 - Gift cards, headphones, large snack bundles, Gatorade packs, school supplies, and more

5. Volunteers

5-15+ volunteers per Saturday

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Roles include:

Station Leaders

Snack Table Hosts

Encouragement Writers (desk notes prepared ahead of the day)

Confidence Corner Support

6. Sponsorship Opportunities

Local businesses can **sponsor snacks, prizes, or teacher gifts.**

7. Community Collaboration & Visibility

While the **heart** of this program is **helping students prepare for the ACT**, it's also a powerful opportunity to **strengthen the relationship between schools and the community**. We believe **that by inviting local businesses, families, and civic groups to contribute**—either through sponsorships or volunteering—**we can create** a visible, sustained culture of support around **education**.

Key Community Partnership Opportunities:

- **Local businesses can:**
 - Donate snacks, drinks, or raffle prizes.
 - Sponsor the “Brain Boost Café” or “Grand Prize Raffle.”
 - Provide branded items (pens, notebooks, snack bags) for student giveaways.
 - Attend and **serve as guest volunteers**—allowing students to see **professionals investing in their success**.
- **Faith-Based & Civic Organizations can:**
 - Help recruit volunteers from their congregations/members.
 - Sponsor or provide encouragement cards for students and teachers.
 - Offer transportation support for students needing assistance.
- **Parents & Alumni can:**
 - Volunteer as table leaders or snack hosts.
 - Contribute notes of encouragement or nominate teachers for appreciation awards.

Goal: When students see their community showing up for them, it sends a message:

“Your success matters to all of us.”

This is how we start a ripple effect that can transform how students see their futures—and how communities see their schools.

Printed Materials	\$25-\$50
Snacks & Drinks	\$100-\$200
Prizes	\$150-\$250
Total:	\$275-\$500

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ADAPTABLE SCHEDULE

(This schedule serves as a sample for a one-day course and can be modified as needed. For maximum effectiveness, it is advisable to conduct this program over three consecutive Saturdays or spread it across two to three days during the school week, allowing more time for each breakout session.)

8. Saturday Schedule (9 AM - 12 PM)

8:00 AM

Volunteer Arrival & Setup

Snacks, Music, Poster, Materials, Table Themes Ready

9:00 AM

“Pep Rally Kickoff”

Music, Energy, Call & Response, Announce Raffle, Pep Talk

9:15 AM

Station 1 (1st Rotation)

Math, Reading, or Pacing

9:45 AM

Mini Game 1

Group Game – Energizer & Review

10:00 AM

Station 2 (2nd Rotation)

Students Switch Tables

10:30 AM

Brain Boost Café Break

Snacks, Relaxation, Social Recharge

10:45 AM
Station 3 (3rd Rotation)
Final Table Rotation

11:15 AM

Mini Game 2 - Beat the Clock Challenge

Quickfire Pacing or Math Drill (Fun, Competitive)

11:45 AM
Confidence Corner Wind-Down (Open Help)

Open Q&A, Volunteers Rotate to Help Anyone One-on-One

11:50 AM

Raffle Drawings + Hype Send-Off

Announce Winner, Music, High-Fives

12:00 PM

Dismissal

Encourage to Return Next Week

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9. Materials & Supplies Checklist

Executing this program smoothly and effectively requires proper preparation.

This checklist serves as a guide for schools, volunteers, and partners—ensuring every Saturday is fully equipped.

Learning Stations:

• Tables (or desks) for 4 Station Setups:

- **Math Masters Table** (with calculators, formula cheat sheets)
- **Reading Rockets Table** (timed reading passages, comprehension guides)
- **Pacing Pros Table** (sample ACT tests, time-tracking worksheets)
- **Confidence Corner** (comfortable seating, stress-relief items like stress balls, encouraging posters)

Other Materials:

- **ACT Prep Handouts** (customizable based on school needs)
- Pencils, pens, scratch paper
- Calculators (if students do not bring their own)

Brain Boost Café (Snack & Hydration Station):

- Donuts, bananas, granola bars, small snacks
- Bottled water, juice, Gatorade
- Printed, fun food labels (e.g., “Brain Boost Bananas”)
- Napkins, cups, trash bags

Prizes & Raffle:

- Raffle Prizes (snacks, headphones, gift cards, school supplies)
- Raffle Tickets & Collection Box

Atmosphere Setup:

- Portable speaker for music playlist
- Welcome signage
- Volunteer name tags
- Encouragement Posters (“You’ve Got This!”)
- Sticky notes and pens for Desk Notes (volunteers can write quick personal messages to students before they arrive)

Administrative:

- Volunteer Sign-in Sheet
- Printed Schedule for the Day
- Contact List (Lead Volunteer, School Staff)
- First Aid Kit (basic)

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5-10 Minute Pep Talk Guide

Why This Matters

Before students can focus on content, they need to feel calm, capable, and supported. Test anxiety is one of the biggest barriers to performance—not because students lack knowledge, but because stress interrupts focus, confidence, and decision-making. This short pep talk is designed to reset the room emotionally before learning begins. By normalizing nerves, offering simple tools to manage anxiety, and reminding students they are not alone, we create the mental conditions students need to engage, retain strategies, and perform at their best. When students feel grounded and encouraged, everything that follows works better.

Reducing Anxiety & Preparing the Mind

When: 9:00–9:10 AM (before stations)

Who: Lead Volunteer, trusted teacher, counselor, or community leader

Tone: Calm. Real. Encouraging.

Goal: Students feel grounded, capable, and supported before they start.

Pep Talk Goals (For the Speaker)

In 5–10 minutes, we want students to:

1. Understand that nerves are normal
2. Learn one or two simple tools to reset anxiety
3. Reframe the ACT as a moment, not a measure
4. Leave believing: “I can handle this.”

This is not a speech.

It's a conversation with the room.

Ground Rules for the Speaker

- Speak slowly
- Use plain language
- Avoid pressure phrases (“This matters so much,” “This decides your future”)
- Do not hype stress — normalize calm

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The Script (Use As-Is or Adapt)

Step 1: Open (1 minute)

(Speaker stands where students can see them clearly)

“Before we jump into anything today, I want to say this out loud —

If you feel nervous about the ACT, that’s normal.

If your stomach tightens when someone says ‘test,’ you’re not broken.

That’s just your brain trying to protect you.”

“Today isn’t about proving anything. It’s about learning how to stay calm, focused, and confident — even when something feels hard.”

Step 2: Name What Anxiety Really Is (1 minute)

“Here’s something most people don’t tell you: Anxiety is just energy without direction.”

“When your heart speeds up, when your mind races — that doesn’t mean you can’t do this.

It means your body is awake.”

“Our job today is to show your brain where to send that energy.”

Step 3: Teach One Simple Reset Tool (2 minutes)

Option A: Box Breathing (Recommended)

“Let’s try something together. No one’s watching. This is just for you.”

- Breathe in through your nose for **4**
- Hold for **4**
- Breathe out through your mouth for **4**
- Hold for **4**

(Do it together once or twice)

“Any time you feel stuck — today or on test day — you can do that. It tells your brain: *I’m safe. I’m focused. I can move forward.*”

OR

Option B: Physical Reset

“If your hands feel shaky, press your feet into the floor.

Feel the chair under you.

That’s your body reminding your brain you’re here and you’re okay.”

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Step 4: Reframe the Test (2 minutes)

“This test is not a judgment of your intelligence.
It’s not a label.
It’s not a definition of who you are.”

“It’s a **moment**.
And moments pass.”

“What matters is how you move through it — one question at a time.”

“If a question feels hard: skip it.
If your mind blanks: guess and move on.
If you mess up: breathe and keep going.”

“That’s not failure — that’s strategy.”

Step 5: Build Confidence with Truth (1-2 minutes)

“You know more than you think.
You’ve learned more than you realize.
And today, you’re not doing this alone.”

“Look around this room.”

(Pause — *let them look*)

“Every person here showed up because they believe you can do this.
That belief matters.”

Step 6: Close with a Mantra (30 seconds)

“When you sit down to practice today — or when you take the ACT — remember this:
▪ I don’t have to be perfect.
▪ I just have to keep moving.
▪ I can handle this.

Let’s get started.”

(Applause encouraged, music fades up as students transition)

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Optional Add-Ons (If Time Allows)

Call & Response (Quick Energy Reset)

Speaker: "I don't have to be perfect."

Students: "I just have to try."

Speaker: "I can breathe."

Students: "And keep moving."

Visual Anchor

Have a poster or slide that says:

Breathe.

Move Forward.

You've Got This.

Students will remember it

**Please see Volunteer Guide
and Game Library**



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Volunteer Guide

What this is

A high-energy ACT prep Saturday that feels more like a team practice than a test. Students rotate through short learning stations, earn raffle tickets for effort, and play mini-games that sneak in real ACT skills.

Your job (in one sentence)

Make students practice without it feeling like practice—by keeping the room positive, fast-moving, and confidence-heavy.

1) Quick Start for Volunteers

Arrive

- Volunteer arrival: 8:00 AM
- Students: 9:00 AM
- End: 12:00 PM

Non-negotiables

- Reward effort, not perfection.
- Keep everything moving. If energy dips, run a mini-game.
- Use short instructions, lots of reps, and celebrate small wins.

What you don't need

You do not need to be an ACT expert. You need to be:

- encouraging
- organized
- willing to keep it fun

2) Roles (Pick what fits you, roles are adaptable and can be combined)

Lead Volunteer (1)

Runs timing, makes announcements, solves problems, keeps pace.

Volunteer Reminder (Important)

If a student looks anxious later:

- Quietly remind them of the breathing
- Say: “Remember — one question at a time”
- Offer a reset, not a lecture

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Station Leaders (4)

Run ACT skill practice at a table:

- Math
- Reading
- English/Writing (or “Grammar + Clarity”)
- Pacing/Strategy (or “Test Mechanics”)

Snack Host (1-2)

Runs the Brain Boost Café and keeps the vibe friendly.

Game Master (1)

Leads mini-games, keeps competition clean, distributes tickets.

Raffle Coordinator (1)

Owns tickets + prize table + drawing process.

Floaters (1-3)

Help anywhere, coach small groups, hype students up, watch for students who need encouragement.

3) The Simple Saturday Flow (9-12 example)

8:00 Am Volunteer Arrival & Setup

Snacks, Music, Poster, Materials, Table Themes Ready

9:00 AM “Pep Rally Kickoff”

Music, Energy, Call & Response, Announce Raffle, Pep Talk

9:15 AM Station 1 (1st Rotation)

Math, Reading, or Pacing

9:45 AM Mini Game 1

Group Game – Energizer & Review

10:00 AM Station 2 (2nd Rotation) Students Switch Tables

10:30 AM Brain Boost Café Break

Snacks, Relaxation, Social Recharge

10:45 AM Station 3 (3rd Rotation)

Final Table Rotation

11:15 AM Mini Game 2 – Beat the Clock Challenge

Quickfire Pacing or Math Drill (Fun, Competitive)

11:45 AM Confidence Corner Wind-Down (Open Help)

Open Q&A, Volunteers Rotate to Help Anyone One-on-One

11:50 AM Raffle Drawings + Hype Send-Off

Announce Winner, Music, High-Fives

12:00 PM Dismissal

Tip: If your school wants fewer rotations, do 3 rotations + 3 mini-games. The games are what make this special.

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4) Raffle Tickets (simple system that works)

Students earn tickets for:

- Showing up (1 ticket at arrival)
- Participating (answering, attempting, staying engaged)
- Winning mini-games
- Being a positive teammate (helping others, staying respectful)

Volunteer guidance

- If a student is struggling, reward the try.
- Tickets are a tool to create momentum, not pressure

Raffle rule

Make it fun and exciting. Incentivizing participation will increase retention and reduce test anxiety.

5) Station Leader Basics (keep it easy)

Each station should feel like:

- 3 minutes: explain the skill
- 10 minutes: guided practice
- 10 minutes: student reps (fast)
- 2 minutes: recap + hype + switch

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MINI-GAMES LIBRARY

These games are designed to:

- feel fun and competitive
- build real ACT skill
- reward effort and speed
- keep students coming back

Mini-Game Rules (for ALL games)

- Keep it 5-8 minutes
- Explain in 20 seconds
- Do fast rounds
- Give tickets immediately
- Always end with: "One more round!"

Ticket standard

- Winner: 2 tickets
- Runner up / strong effort: 1 ticket
- "Team energy / brave attempt": 1 ticket

A) Whole-Room Hype Games (best between rotations)

1) Beat the Clock

Skill: pacing + confidence under time

Setup: timer, 10 questions on board or printed slips (from practice test)

How to play:

- Game Master says: "You have 30 seconds to get 3 correct."
- Students work silently, then hold answers up.
- Repeat with different time limits (30s → 25s → 20s).

Ticketing:

- Anyone who hits the goal earns 1 ticket.
- Fastest 3 earn 2 tickets.

Make it better:

- Let students pick the category: "Math? Grammar? Reading?"
- Use "speed rounds" with easy questions so more students win early.

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2) The Comeback Round

Skill: resilience + not quitting on hard questions (from example or practice test)

How to play:

- Ask 1 tricky question.
- Students vote A/B/C/D.
- Then you teach the trick in 30 seconds.
- Immediately ask a similar question.

Ticketing: 1 ticket for anyone who changes their answer correctly on the second question.

Why it works:

Students feel improvement instantly—this builds buy-in.

3) ACT Relay Race

Skill: speed + teamwork + accuracy

Setup: create teams, each team gets a mini packet (5 questions)

How to play:

- First student answers Q1 and hands it to next student.
- Next answers Q2, etc.
- If someone gets stuck, they can “phone a friend” in line (costs 5 seconds).

Ticketing:

- Winning team: 2 tickets each
- Other teams who finish: 1 ticket each

Rule:

No yelling answers across lines—keep it fair.

4) Four Corners: Elimination (but kind)

Skill: rapid decision-making (multiple choice)

Setup: label corners A/B/C/D

How to play:

- Read a question.
- Students walk to their answer corner.
- Reveal correct answer + 15-second explanation.
- Anyone incorrect is not out—they become “Coaches” and must encourage remaining players.

Ticketing:

- Correct corner: 1 ticket
- Final 3 standing: +1 ticket bonus

Why it works:

Movement resets attention. “Coaches” keeps it positive.

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B) Math Games (high impact)

5) Fast Facts Showdown (use example or practice test questions)

Skill: mental math + speed + confidence

How to play:

- Volunteer calls out quick math prompts.
- Students raise hands.
- Correct = ticket.

6) The Trap Spotter

Skill: avoiding ACT “trick” answers

How to play:

- Show 1 question and 4 answers.
- Ask: “Which answer is the trap and why?”

Students vote which choice is the “tempting wrong one.”

Ticketing:

- 1 ticket for naming the trap
- 1 ticket for explaining why (even if imperfect)

Why it matters:

This teaches ACT thinking, not just math.

C) English/Grammar Games (quick wins)

7) Grammar Gladiators (use practice exam questions)

Skill: common ACT English rules

Setup: “Rule Cards” (comma splice, subject-verb agreement, pronoun clarity, tense, modifiers)

How to play:

- Read a sentence with a mistake.
- Students identify the rule broken.
- Then fix it.

Ticketing:

- 1 ticket for naming the rule
- 1 ticket for correct fix

Pro tip rules to prioritize:

- commas (lists vs. splices)
- subject-verb
- pronoun clarity
- concise wording (“shorter is often right”)

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8) Concision Cage Match

Skill: choosing the cleanest answer

How to play:

- **Put two answer choices on board: long vs short.**
- **Students vote.**
- **Teach the rule: “Same meaning + fewer words usually wins.”**

Ticketing:

Correct voters get 1 ticket.

Why it works:

Students start winning fast → confidence jumps.

D) Reading Games (most overlooked—make them fun)

9) Keyword Hunt

Skill: finding proof in the passage

How to play:

- Give a short passage excerpt.
- Ask a question.
- Students race to underline the proof line.

Ticketing:

- 1 ticket for correct proof line (not just the answer)

10) Main Idea in 10 Words

Skill: comprehension + summary

How to play:

- Read a short paragraph.
- Students write main idea in 10 words max.

Ticketing:

- Best 3 summaries get 2 tickets
- Strong attempts get 1 ticket

Why it works:

It trains “big picture” thinking fast.

E) Pacing + Strategy Games (ACT-specific edge)

11) The 12-Second Guess

Skill: not freezing, making smart guesses

How to play:

- Show a tough question.
- Students have 12 seconds to pick the best guess.
- Teach 1 elimination trick (units, extreme answers, plug-in, skim choices).

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Ticketing:

- 1 ticket for any attempt within time
- +1 for correct

Message:

“On the ACT, an educated guess beats a blank every time.”

12) The Micro-Victory Round

Skill: anxiety reduction

How to play (2 minutes):

- Everyone writes one thing they improved today (even small).
- 3 volunteers read theirs out loud.

Ticketing:

- 1 ticket for anyone who shares

These **mini-games** are designed to **increase participation, improve retention, and reduce test anxiety** by making preparation feel engaging and supportive rather than stressful. Students already carry the weight of test pressure, and our role as educators and volunteers is to help ease that burden by offering practical tools, encouragement, and confidence-building moments that help students believe they can **succeed**.

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