



# COLUMBIA ACADEMY

## News Release

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### **Columbia Academy to launch new standardized testing with the ACT Aspire**

COLUMBIA, TENNESSEE (February 29, 2016) – After over a year of deliberation and examination of available standardized testing options, Columbia Academy will begin administration of the new ACT Aspire standardized test in April to students in grades 3 through 10. Since 2006, Columbia Academy has used Tennessee state testing and administered the TCAP test, but will making a departure from the state’s TN Ready testing this year.

“As a private school, we have the flexibility to choose the test frequency and design that we believe best meets our students’ academic needs,” said President Dr. James Thomas. “With the state making such significant changes to their testing process, we took the opportunity to consider other testing options. As we thought about the value of the ACT as a college admissions test, we felt that aligning our standardized testing with the ACT made the most sense. By using the ACT Aspire, our students will have experience that will benefit them as they prepare for college entrance.”

ACT Aspire, which assesses English, math, reading, science, and writing for grades 3-10, is administered online or with a traditional paper-and-pencil option. Columbia Academy students are already using iPads in the classroom and are comfortable with online testing, so the current plans include using the online testing model, Thomas said. Multiple question types are offered including constructed response, selected response, and technology-enhanced response.

One of the strengths of the ACT Aspire is the longitudinal data it will provide in evaluating students and programs, Thomas said. The test is also tied to ACT’s measures of College and Career Readiness and will provide reports that show a child’s progress toward these important benchmarks.

“As a college preparatory school, we have the additional charge of ensuring that all of our graduates are equipped to compete and succeed at the college level,” Thomas said. “We are thrilled that we have found a testing model that supports this goal. By middle school, we will have data to share with parents that can predict how students will perform on the ACT. That information can help us made changes as needed to move those students closer to their highest potential.”

Starting as early as third grade, the ACT Aspire will be able to monitor if students are on track for College and Career Readiness. That data will continue to be used over the course of a child's education at CA so that continual strategies for success can be employed for each student, Thomas added.

The ACT Aspire is just the newest addition to the college readiness strategy at Columbia Academy, according to Upper School Principal Jon Bennett. In 2014, an ACT preparation course was added to the coursework for all high school sophomores. The yearlong course is taught by specialized teachers each quarter covering all four of the ACT subject areas and is required for graduation. CA also requires that all high school juniors take the ACT at least once. The test is available to juniors to take once at Columbia Academy and the school covers the cost; however, students are encouraged to take the test more than once if needed in order to achieve their best possible score. Currently, the ACT average composite score for CA's senior class is 24 compared to a national average of 21 and a state average of 20.

More information about the ACT ASPIRE test may be found at [discoveractaspire.org](http://discoveractaspire.org).

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*Columbia Academy is a PreK-12<sup>th</sup> grade college preparatory school founded in 1979 to provide high quality academics from a Christian perspective. Enrolling more than 930 students, CA is located on a beautiful 67-acre campus in Columbia, Tenn., formerly home to the Columbia Military Academy. CA also maintains a satellite campus in Spring Hill, Tenn. Columbia Academy is accredited by AdvanED and is a member of the National Christian School Association.*

SCHOOL INFORMATION

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