



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Arkansas students in the graduating class of 2009 earned an average 20.6 composite score on the ACT to tie the average score earned the previous year. The showing also maintained the upward trend from 2005 when the state average composite score was 20.3. The maximum possible is 36.

Seventy-three percent of the 2009 seniors in the state took the ACT, making Arkansas one of the largest 'ACT states' in the nation. The highest average composite score for a state testing 70 percent or more of its students occurred in Nebraska, which tested 72 percent of its students for a 22.1 composite score. The national average composite score was 21.1, the same as it was last year.

"Because we are preparing students to be college- and career-ready and ACT is a good indicator of that level of preparation, we would have liked to have seen these scores climb again this year," said Dr. Diana Julian, interim commissioner for the Arkansas Department of Education. "However, I do believe ACT scores and other college- and career-ready measures will continue to increase in years to come as more students benefit from the Smart Core curriculum and our educators continue to focus on raising achievement levels for all students."

Arkansas' graduating class of 2009 represented a more diverse set of test-takers for the state with a 15 percent increase in the Hispanic test-taking and 5 percent increase in African-American test takers. Scores by demographic group are listed below:

Demographic Group	2009 State	2009 Nat'l
All	20.6	21.1
Black	16.7	16.9
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	20.9	18.9
Caucasian	21.6	22.2
Hispanic	18.8	18.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	22.0	23.2
Other/No Response	21.1	20.9

Arkansas' math and reading scores remain at all time highs for the state, and the state's students scored at the national average on the English portion of the exam. The rest of the scores are listed below:

	2008 Arkansas	2008 National	2009 Arkansas	2009 National
English	20.7	20.6	20.6	20.6
Math	20.1	21.0	20.1	21.0

Reading	21.0	21.4	21.0	21.4
Science	20.3	20.8	20.2	20.9
Composite	20.6	21.1	20.6	21.1

Students attending Arkansas public colleges must score a 19 on the ACT Math and English tests to avoid mandatory remedial classes. According to ACT, 54 percent of the 2009 graduating class will not require remediation in math and 64 percent will not require remediation in English.

“ACT analyzed students’ scores against the courses they take in high school and found a strong, positive relationship between those courses and ACT scores,” Dr. Julian said. “While that relationship seems fairly intuitive, it does reinforce for us that students who pursue the state’s Smart Core curriculum will be able to increase their ACT scores by several points.”

For instance, ACT found that Arkansas students who took the Smart Core mathematics sequence -- which includes Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and a fourth year of higher level math -- scored an average two points higher than those students completing the Core curriculum, which stops with Algebra II.

“The scores we see this year indicate that the Smart Core curriculum is working to better prepare students for college,” said Dr. Jim Purcell, director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. “I agree with Dr. Julian that these indicators will continue to increase, and I anticipate that within the next few years we will see a significant rise in these test scores.”

Dr. Purcell noted that the state is on the cusp of a number of events that should have a positive effect in Arkansas education and higher education in coming years.

“With the coming lottery scholarships, we are going to be able to assist many more students in pursuing a college education,” he said. “We are seeing progress in the number of students that are beginning to come out of high school much better prepared for the rigors of higher education thanks to initiatives put in place several years ago. There is a large push in Arkansas to get the word out that education beyond high school is vital to the development of our economy and the well-being of our citizens. We could be seeing a perfect storm of positive developments that will help carry Arkansas into the 21st century better prepared than ever to lead the region, and possibly the country, as we move forward into the global economy. That is our goal.”

NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS: ACT and the Arkansas Department of Education do not release district and school-level scores. Those must be obtained from individual schools and districts.

The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.