



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**  
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LITTLE ROCK: Arkansas middle schools and high schools will begin distributing reports this week to students concerning their performance on the administration of the Algebra II End of Course exam last spring. Arkansas was one of 15 states in the America Diploma Project (ADP) to offer the exam, and one of only three states that required all Algebra II students to take it. While the Algebra II exam was first administered in 2008, this is the first year the cut scores were devised so that exam results could be reported in “performance level” categories.

The scores on the exam are categorized into one of three performance levels: “well prepared,” “prepared” or “needs preparation.” Each student’s report shows their individual performance level as well as the percentage of students within the student’s school, district and state who scored at each of those levels. In Arkansas, 3 percent students are “well prepared,” 9 percent are “prepared” and 88 percent “need preparation.” These are similar to results found in the other 14 states.

“We have never been afraid in this state to learn how our students are performing, even if the news is not what we would like it to be the first time around,” said Dr. Diana Julian, Interim Commissioner of Education. “We know that good assessments that are aligned to quality standards drive good teaching in the classroom. That’s apparent if you look at the history of the state’s benchmark exam scores. In 2001, 20 percent of our students scored proficient or advanced on the Algebra I exam; in 2009, 70 percent did.”

To that end, the Arkansas Department of Education worked with mathematics professors at Arkansas universities and colleges this past summer to provide intensive professional development for Algebra II teachers. Efforts to support quality instruction of Algebra II will continue.

“While the Algebra II exam is important to us as a means of gauging our performance,” Dr. Julian said, “we also want families to know this exam does not impact graduation requirements as does the Algebra I End-of-Course exam, nor is it used in calculations for adequate yearly progress.” The 2009-2010 school year is the first year that the state’s Algebra I exam must be passed within four attempts for a student to graduate.

The ADP Algebra II consortium was formed to ensure that states offer quality, rigorous assessments that reflect equally rigorous learning standards in the subject. Algebra II is now deemed the “gateway” course for college and career, meaning the skills and knowledge gained in Algebra II are needed for students to have the best opportunity for success after high school. In Arkansas, all students must take Algebra II as part of the state’s Smart Core, which is the default curriculum required for graduation.

The 15 states who voluntarily joined the initiative include Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Arizona, Hawaii, Minnesota, North Carolina and Washington. Performance levels by states are included in the attached FAQ sheet from the American Diploma Project. To see results by school, please link to this Web page: [http://arkansased.org/testing/excel/algll\\_091809.xls](http://arkansased.org/testing/excel/algll_091809.xls).

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*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.*