



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Arkansas, oft-cited as a national model for providing public school students with access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses, saw another increase in the number of public school students taking AP examinations in the 2008-2009 school year as well as an overall better performance on those tests, the College Board announced today. Those trends were most pronounced in African-American and Hispanic student populations.

“Arkansas has built a quality Advanced Placement system, and it works,” Dr. Diana Julian remarked about the 2009 results. “What greater affirmation for our state’s education policies than the significant progress we’ve seen in these rigorous courses, both in terms of numbers of students taking the higher level courses and the quality of work they are doing in them.”

The College Board also released information concerning scores for the SAT Reasoning Test, which is used in the college admissions process and was taken by about 5% of the 2009 graduating class. (The majority of Arkansas students take the ACT for college admissions.) Both participation in the SAT and average SAT scores decreased slightly from the previous year.

Specifics regarding Advanced Placement include:

- The number of test takers increased by 8.2 percent to 18,437 in 2009
- The number of tests administered increased by 6.7 percent to 30,114
- The number of tests with scores of 3, 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5) increased by 8.1 percent to 8,654
- Of the 2,533 African-American students (13.7 percent of test takers) taking AP exams, 228 students scored a 3, 4 or 5 on 305 exams for a 45.2 percent increase since 2008
- Of the 930 Hispanic students (5 percent of test takers) taking AP exams, 324 students scored a 3, 4 or 5 on 427 exams for a 22 percent increase since 2008

“It’s good to know that students are taking more courses that will prepare them for college,” said Dr. Jim Purcell, director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. “We’ve been talking about the importance of higher education in the 21st Century economy for some time now, and it appears that the message is getting through.”

Advanced Placement courses are courses with curricula approved by the College Board and taught by specially trained teachers. As part of education reform effort in 2003, Arkansas policy makers enacted laws to increase access to Advanced Placement for public school students. These included passing legislation that require all high schools to offer at least one Advanced Placement course in each of the four core subjects – mathematics, English, social studies and science – and for the state to pay the fee for any public school student taking Advanced

Placement exams. In 2007, the state was awarded a \$13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative to pilot an effort to increase both access and scores in Advanced Placement. Results specific to those schools will be released Wednesday by the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science.

Regarding the 2009 SAT, the College Board reported that 996 public school students took the test for a 5.7 percent drop from 2008. Scores also fell slightly from 2008 to 2009:

- The state's public school students' mean score in Critical Reading decreased by six points to 569, as compared with a one-point drop in scores nationally to 496.
- The state's public school students' mean score in Math fell three points to 567 as compared with an unchanged score nationally of 510.
- The state's public school students' mean score in Writing fell seven points to 552 as compared with a one-point drop in scores nationally to 487.

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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.