



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Arkansas's fourth- and eighth-grade public school students maintained the scores students in those grades made on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading exam two years ago, according to results released today by the National Assessment Governing Board and the U.S. Department of Education. The NAEP test, which is known as The Nation's Report Card, was administered in the spring semester of 2009 to a sample of Arkansas students of about 3,000 each in the fourth and eighth grades attending more than 300 Arkansas schools. Nationally, 178,000 fourth graders and 160,900 eighth graders took the NAEP Reading exams.

"While we are pleased that we maintained our performance in reading on the NAEP assessments at these two grade levels, we will continue to look for ways to improve performance," said Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell, Arkansas Commissioner of Education.

On a 0-500 scale, Arkansas fourth graders averaged a score of 216, which was not considered statistically different from the average of 217 in 2007. When classified into NAEP's performance levels, 29 percent of fourth-graders performed at "proficient" or "advanced" in 2009. (While the labels are the same, these performance categories do not correspond directly with those of the state's Benchmark exams.)

Likewise, eighth graders averaged 258 on this year's exam, exactly the same score as two years ago. Twenty-seven percent scored at or above "proficient" in 2009.

Nationally, fourth graders maintained a score of 220, exactly the same as in 2007. Eighth graders, however, showed improvement increasing to a score of 262 in 2009 from 261 in 2007. The increase is considered statistically significant at a .05 probability level.

NAEP is administered to a sample of students that is large enough to show average scores for each of the states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense schools. One difference between the states that can affect scores is the fact that states do not all allow the same accommodations for students needing some assistance in taking the exam or the same reasons for exclusion from the exams, resulting in varying rates in accommodations and exclusions. Arkansas policy is to include all students possible in assessments in order to glean information on the performance of all students. Therefore, Arkansas is one of the more restrictive states in both instances, leading to both lower accommodation and exclusion rates than in most other states.

Complete results are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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.