



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Results for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress in science show that Arkansas students performed below the national average. Also known as The Nation's Report Card, the assessment gauged knowledge in three broad areas -- physical science, life science, and earth and space sciences -- and was given to a representative sample of students in the fourth, eighth and 12th grades during the late winter of 2009. State-level results are available for the fourth- and eighth-grade exams, while the smaller sample size of 12th-graders only allows for the reporting of national scores at that grade.

"These results indicate more work is needed," said Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell. "I'm particularly concerned with the disparity in performance based on race. While we know the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts will help strengthen reading in the content area of science, we clearly need to focus attention on increasing the learning across both life and physical science in grades K-12."

In the fourth grade, 29 percent of Arkansas students scored proficient and above with an average score of 146, while 32 percent of public school students nationally scored proficient or above with an average score of 149. The top score on both exams was 300, and proficiency indicates solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter.

In the eighth grade, 24 percent of Arkansas students scored proficient or above with an average score of 144, while nationally 29 percent of public school students scored proficient or above with an average score of 149.

Twelfth-graders nationally scored an average of 150, with 21 percent scoring proficient or above.

While gaps exist among subpopulations of students, the gaps between Hispanic and white students in Arkansas were smaller at both fourth and eighth grades than they were for those subgroups nationally. The gaps between the state's white and black students, however, were larger at both grade levels than they were nationally.

Complete summaries of results for both grades are attached to this release.

Because the 2009 administration was the first assessment of a new set of science frameworks, these scores cannot be compared to previous science NAEP scores.

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.