



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell, Commissioner

Contact: Phyllis Stewart, Chief of Staff | 501-683-4788 | phyllis.stewart@arkansas.gov

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NAEP Releases New Report

LITTLE ROCK – Today, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released a new report connecting vocabulary skills to reading comprehension. According to the report, fourth- and eighth-grade students in Arkansas scored lower than the national average.

This is the first time NAEP has reported on students' vocabulary knowledge, which includes data from the 2009 and 2011 NAEP reading assessment. Nationally, the average score in 2009 and 2011 was 217 for grade 4. For grade 8, the national average score was 263 in 2009 and 2011. In Arkansas, fourth-graders' vocabulary scores decreased from 2009 to 2011 – from a score of 217 to 213, respectively. Average scores for grade 8 increased slightly from 256 in 2009 to 257 in 2011.

Vocabulary was administered as part of the reading assessment. Only 2,900 of Arkansas's approximate 72,000 fourth- and eighth-grade students participated in the NAEP reading assessment. Vocabulary results cannot be directly compared to reading comprehension, nor can vocabulary results be reported in terms of NAEP achievement levels.

Nationally, fourth- and eighth-grade girls outscored boys. This pattern was true among Arkansas eighth-graders, but there was no significant gender gap at grade 4.

NAEP assesses vocabulary in a way that aims to capture students' ability to use their understanding or sense of words to acquire meaning from the passages they read. Unlike traditional vocabulary tests that ask students to write definitions of words in isolation, NAEP assesses word meaning within the context of particular passages. Students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of words by recognizing what the meaning of the word contributes to the passage in which it appears.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Tom Kimbrell said it was impossible to draw any broad-brush conclusions about Arkansas's results. The state's Benchmark Exams include vocabulary. However, scoring specifically for vocabulary is not done.

"The NAEP scores show that we have work to do," Kimbrell said. "This reinforces our

decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards and a new common assessment system which will allow for a better comparison among states.”

Vocabulary results from the 2009 and 2011 NAEP Reading Assessments are available at www.nationsreportcard.gov.

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Arkansas Department of Education | Four Capitol Mall | Little Rock, AR 72201

