



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Thompson
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LITTLE ROCK: More public school students in Arkansas participated in Advanced Placement courses and scored well on Advanced Placement Exams in 2008 than in 2007, in a continued pattern of expanded access and improved performance, the College Board announced today.

"We appreciate news such as this because increased access to Advanced Placement is part of the state's overall strategy to teach a rigorous, rewarding curriculum to all of our students and increase their likelihood of success in college," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education.

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 2008 graduating class. (The majority of Arkansas students take the ACT for college admissions.) Both participation in the SAT and average SAT scores remained relatively stable from the previous year.

In 2008, 17,037 public school students took AP exams, representing a 5.5 percent increase over the 16,153 students who took the exams the previous year. What's more, there was a 6.2 percent increase in the number of exam scores of 3 or higher from last year for public school students with 8,005 of the total 28,231 exams taken being scored 3, 4 or 5. On AP exams, a 3 is "Qualified," a 4 is "Well Qualified," and a 5 is "Extremely Well Qualified."

"These numbers tell us that many of the initiatives in place in Arkansas for several years are working," said Dr. Jim Purcell, director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. "All indications are that we are building a larger and larger pipeline of students who will enter higher education better prepared and positioned for a successful college career and a realistic chance at achieving the American Dream."

The five Advanced Placement (AP) courses in which exams were taken most often in the state are AP English Language, AP English Literature, AP U.S. History, AP World History, and AP Calculus. As of the 2008-2009 school year, all high schools in the state will be required to offer an AP course or its equivalent in each of the four core areas of English, mathematics, science and social studies. The state also began paying for students taking AP exams in May 2005. Both of these pieces of legislation have garnered national praise for Arkansas because of the increased access they gave public school students to rigorous course work.

The Arkansas public school 2008 graduating students who took the SAT Reasoning Test scored slightly lower than their 2007 counterparts:

- The state's public school students' mean score in Critical Reading decreased by three points to 575, as compared with a one point drop in scores nationally to 497.
- The state's public school students' mean score in Math remained at 570 as compared with a three point increase in scores nationally to 510.
- The state's public school students' mean score in Writing fell seven points to 559 as compared with an unchanged score nationally of 488.

Of the public school students taking the SAT, 87.2 percent enrolled in colleges, according to the College Board, and two-thirds of those attended Arkansas schools. The three colleges and universities in Arkansas receiving the most SAT scores from Arkansas test-takers were the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, the University of Central Arkansas and Hendrix College.

Additional data and national comparisons are available on the accompanying fact sheets for both the cohort of public school students and the cohort of all Arkansas students.

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.