



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Results from the 2010 Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Exams and the Grade 11 Literacy Exam again yielded good news: more students scored proficient and advanced for another annual increase in math and literacy performance and, for the fourth year in a row, the achievement gap between white students and students of color continued to narrow.

“When you have the achievement gap closing while scores of each student subgroup improve, you know that the system is working together to produce the right results. You can’t ask for a much better trend than that,” said Tom W. Kimbrell, Arkansas Commissioner of Education.

Kimbrell credited the continued improvements to the comprehensive reforms enacted by the legislature and implemented by educators after the 2002 Arkansas Supreme Court’s mandate to provide all students access to an adequate and equal education. These efforts include professional development to ensure effective teaching, strong educational leadership, a rigorous curriculum and assessments that are well-aligned to that curriculum.

All of the school-, district- and state-level scores are available at ArkansasEd.org, as is a PowerPoint containing charts illustrating score- and achievement gap trends, but some highlights include:

- The largest percentage of proficient and advanced scores – 84 percent – occurred on the third grade mathematics benchmark.
- The largest increase of proficient and advanced scores – 7 percentage points – occurred on the seventh-grade mathematics benchmark, with 75 percent scoring at those levels in 2010.
- Three-quarters or more of students scored proficient or advanced on six of the 12 literacy and mathematics benchmark exams – third-grade math at 84 percent; fourth-grade math at 80 percent, sixth-grade math at 75 percent; seventh-grade math at 75 percent and eighth-grade literacy at 76 percent.
- The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the Grade 11 Literacy Exam increased to 60 percent in 2010 from 57 percent in 2009.

All of these results, plus those from the Algebra I and Geometry End-of-Course exams, are used to calculate adequate yearly progress for schools and districts, which in turn determines the improvement status of schools and districts under the federal No Child

Left Behind laws. Results from the Algebra I and Geometry as well as the Algebra II and Biology End-of-Course exams will be released later this month.

Beginning in 2008, Arkansas also conducts Science Benchmark exams in fifth and seventh grades, though those scores are not included in adequate yearly progress calculations. Fifth-graders' scores improved with 59 percent scoring proficient and advanced in 2010 as opposed to 43 percent in 2009 and 37 percent in 2008. The seventh-grade scores have been much more stagnant, with 33 percent scoring at the proficient and advanced levels in both 2010 and 2009 and 32 percent in 2008.

“As Governor Beebe is always quick to remind us, we will celebrate the accomplishments announced today, but then we will get right back to work to continue improving the performance of our students in science, mathematics, literacy and in all academic areas. After all, it is our job to make sure that when students graduate from Arkansas public schools they are indeed ready to succeed in college or in a career,” Kimbrell said. “That is what we as educators owe each of our students, and it is what is necessary for the economic and civic future of our state.”

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.