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2008 Report Card on Arkansas Schools

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OEP 2008 Report on Arkansas Schools:

Making Progress, Looking Forward...

Sections of this report:

1 Performance on

Standardized Assessments

On the Arkansas Benchmark and the NAEP, more students are scoring proficient or advanced each year. Generally, elementary students are performing better in math than their peers in middle school.

2 Achievement Gaps

The white-black achievement gap has remained relatively stable since 2003; however, the white-Hispanic gap is widening in all measured areas. The poverty achievement gap is generally consistent with the national and regional poverty gap. Arkansas FRL-eligible students perform at or above the regional and national average.

3 Secondary and Beyond

Arkansas students have demonstrated consistent improvement in performance on End-of-Course exams; there are also more students who are now taking Advanced Placement exams. Arkansas' high school graduation rate is higher than the region and the nation, and over half of these graduates (57%) attend college.

4 School Characteristics

Teachers in Arkansas have the second-highest salary in the region, with an average salary of \$44,009. Of the 1,087 schools in Arkansas, 325 are currently on the School Improvement list (30%), an increase from the previous year (23%).

As part of our effort to monitor K-12 education in Arkansas and provide useful information to all those across the state interested in our schools, this OEP Report on Arkansas Schools provides information on school and student characteristics, the performance of our students on standardized assessments, the achievement gaps between our advantaged and disadvantaged students, and how our students fare when they leave secondary school. Not surprisingly, there is both good news and bad news to be found in the pages that follow.

Certainly, there continues to be a great deal of activity surrounding schools in Arkansas. Just last year, in May 2007, the Arkansas Supreme Court decided that the state was meeting its constitutional mandate to provide and fund a "general, suitable and efficient system of free public schools" and closed the long running *Lake View* case. Indeed, in response to the lawsuit, Arkansas policymakers have enacted significant funding increases in recent years so that, today, districts in Arkansas now spend just under \$10,000 per pupil. In fact, in the categories of expenditures per pupil and average teacher salary, Arkansas ranks in the middle of the 50 states, right at the national average. Moreover, the funding formula in Arkansas is very progressive in that it intentionally provides additional resources to disadvantaged students across the state.

The point of this annual report is to check in on how we – and how our students – are doing with these resources. There is certainly evidence that the new programs are being developed. Arkansas has been singled out for its "Arkansas Better Chance" comprehensive pre-K program to ensure that students are prepared to start public school. Once in school, Arkansas students now benefit from Smart Core, the more rigorous curriculum that should result in more of our students being ready for college when the time comes. Along those lines, more students than ever are taking Advanced Placement courses in Arkansas schools and are being taught by teachers with more professional development.

These changes and enhancements are not going unnoticed. A recent Education Next study placed Arkansas in the top third of the nation for the high standards of the state exams. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has praised Arkansas on several occasions for a variety of reasons, including the Arkansas accountability model under NCLB and substantial increases in scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

For some, only the last line will matter. Sure, many changes have been implemented and most have been viewed positively. Nevertheless, the ultimate question is: are our students learning more and better able to succeed in the future. In our attempt to help get at this question, we present the OEP 2008 Report on Arkansas Schools. Enjoy!

1 Performance on Standardized Assessments



This section highlights overall student performance on the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP), and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). The ACTAAP, also referred to as the Benchmark, is an Arkansas developed assessment administered to students in grades 3 through 8 each year used to compare student performance to state learning expectations.

NAEP, also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and regular assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Because it is a national exam, NAEP allows student performance to be compared state-to-state. Students in grades 4 and 8 are tested and for this report, only math and reading are included because these subjects are tested most frequently.

Table 1.1: Arkansas Benchmark Math Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2008

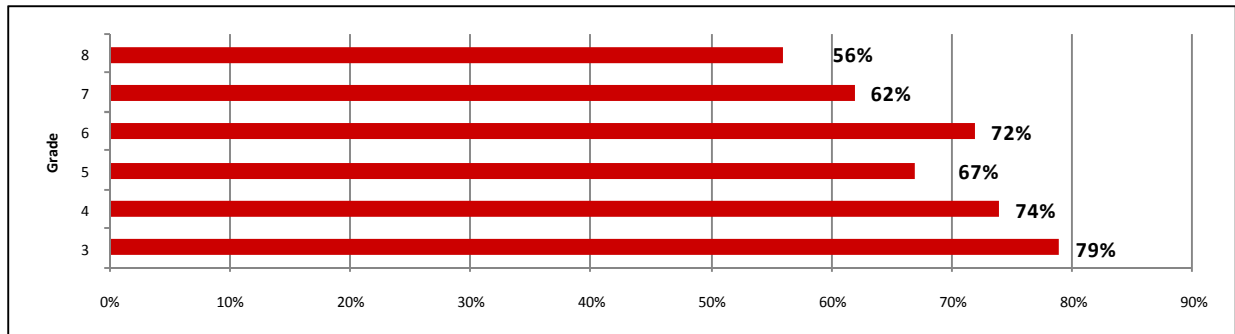


Table 1.2: Arkansas Benchmark Literacy Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2008

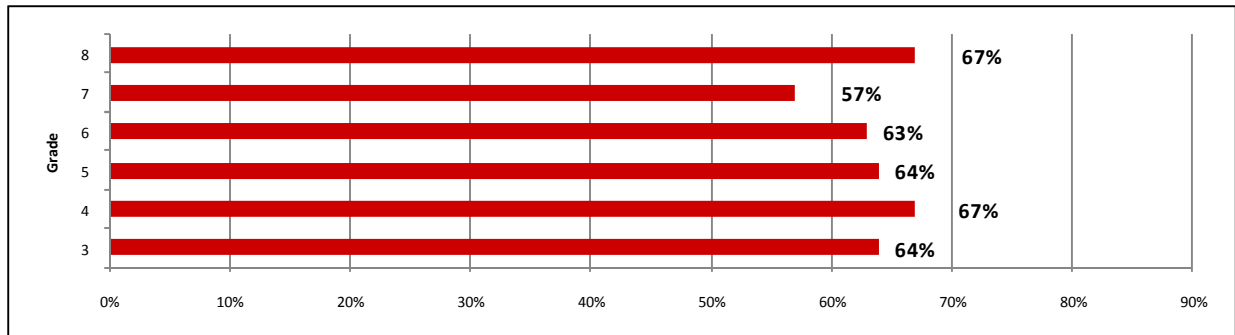


Table 1.3: Arkansas Benchmark Grades 4 and 8 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2005-2008

Year	Grade 4		Grade 8	
	Math	Literacy	Math	Literacy
2005	50%	51%	33%	57%
2006	60%	61%	44%	66%
2007	65%	59%	48%	63%
2008	74%	67%	56%	67%

Table 1.4: NAEP Math and Reading Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2007

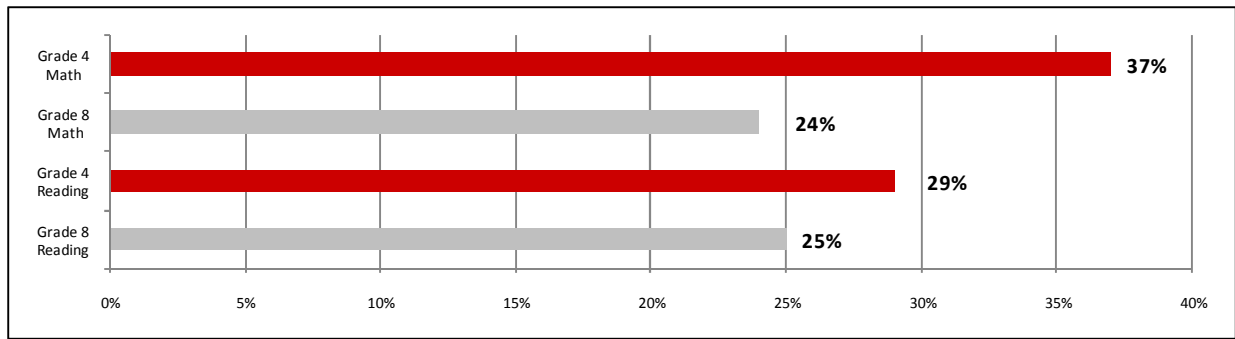


Table 1.5: NAEP Math Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2000-2007

Year	Grade 4				Grade 8			
	Arkansas	Nation	Gap	Rank	Arkansas	Nation	Gap	Rank
2000	14%	22%	-8	34 of 41	13%	25%	-12	36 of 40
2003	26%	31%	-5	38 of 51	19%	27%	-8	45 of 51
2005	34%	35%	-1	33 of 51	22%	28%	-6	40 of 51
2007	37%	39%	-2	32 of 51	24%	31%	-7	40 of 51

Table 1.6: NAEP Reading Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2002-2007

Year	Grade 4				Grade 8			
	Arkansas	Nation	Gap	Rank	Arkansas	Nation	Gap	Rank
2002	26%	30%	-4	32 of 44	27%	31%	-4	31 of 42
2003	28%	30%	-2	36 of 51	27%	30%	-3	35 of 51
2005	30%	30%	0	29 of 51	26%	29%	-3	34 of 51
2007	29%	32%	-3	34 of 51	25%	29%	-4	40 of 51

Results

- **Benchmark:** Lower grades performed better than higher grades on the 2008 math test. The percent scoring proficient or advanced in literacy ranged between 57 and 67 percent for all grade levels (Table 1.1 and 1.2).
- **Benchmark:** All grade levels in each subject have improved since 2005 (Table 1.3).
- **NAEP:** Grade 4 scored higher than grade 8 in both math and reading results from 2007 (Table 1.4).
- **NAEP:** Arkansas remains just below the national average in each grade level and subject, ranking Arkansas in the bottom half of the nation (Table 1.5 and 1.6).
- **NAEP:** Arkansas ranked number four in the nation in grade 4 math for scale score gains between 2003 and 2007, and ranked number three in grade 8 math for scale score gains between 2003 and 2007.

2 Achievement Gaps



A critical area of concern for schools in Arkansas is the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. In this section, we compare performance on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for black and Hispanic students to the performance of white students, to determine if achievement gaps in Arkansas are widening. We also compare NAEP performance for those students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL) to students who are not eligible, to highlight the current poverty achievement gap. To provide some context for how FRL and non-FRL students perform compared to other students across the nation, we highlight the performance for these students compared to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the national average. In the provided tables, the numbers in red represent the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. These gaps are simply the difference in the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced between the relevant student groups.

Table 2.1: NAEP Math Grade 4 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2003-2007 (by Racial Status)

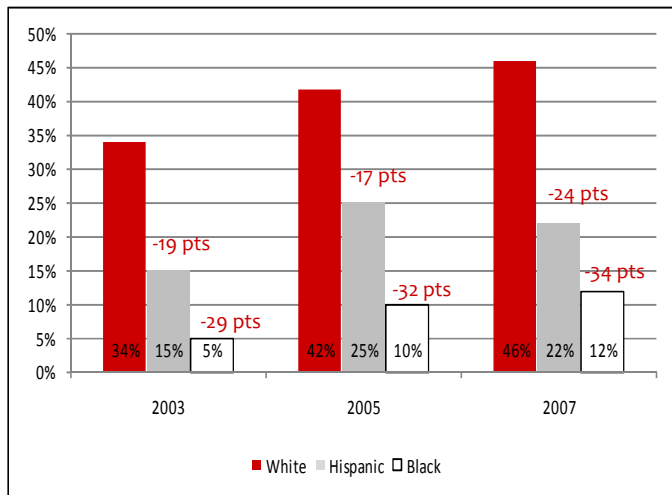


Table 2.2: NAEP Math Grade 8 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2003-2007 (by Racial Status)

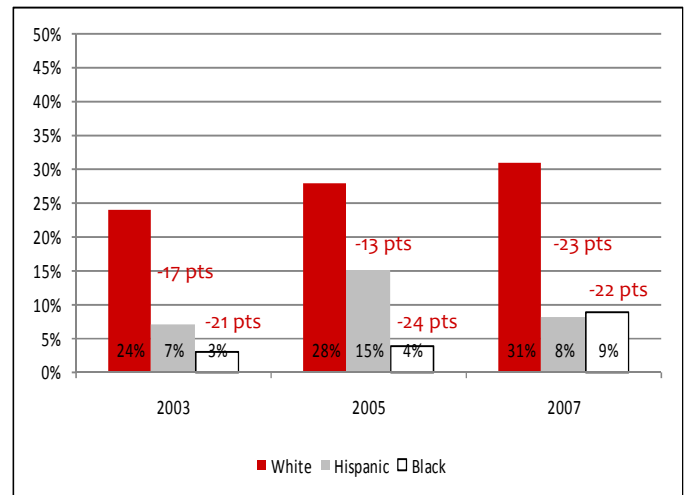


Table 2.3: NAEP Reading Grade 4 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2003-2007 (by Racial Status)

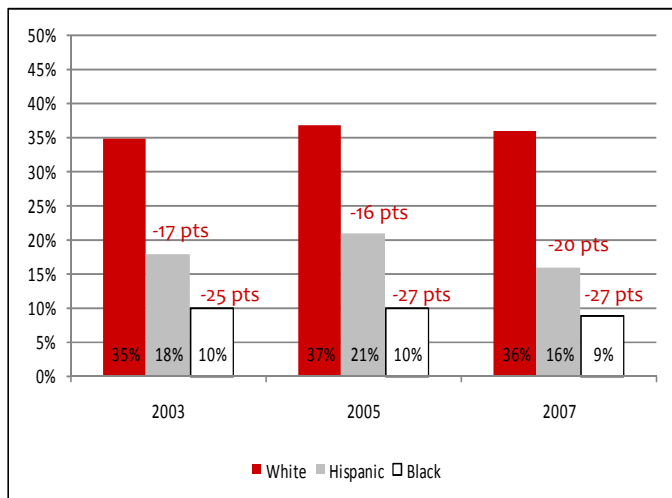


Table 2.4: NAEP Reading Grade 8 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2003-2007 (by Racial Status)

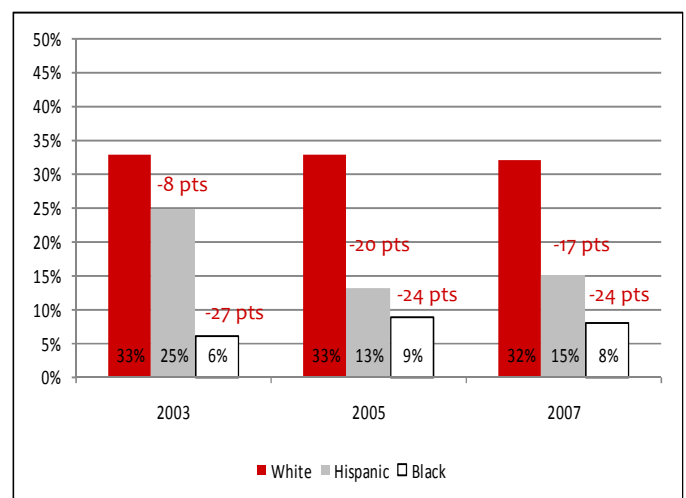


Table 2.5: NAEP Math Grade 4 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2007 (by Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility)

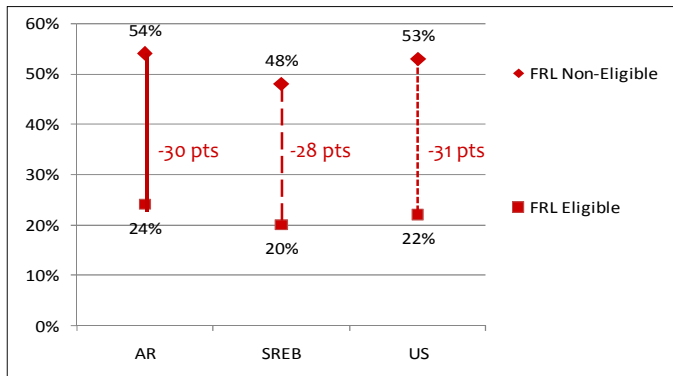


Table 2.6: NAEP Math Grade 8 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2007 (by Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility)

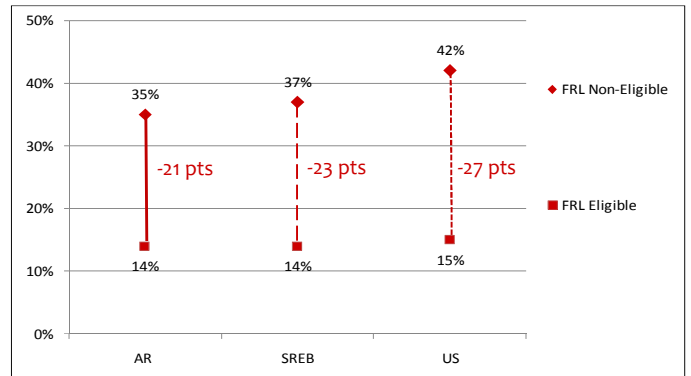


Table 2.7: NAEP Reading Grade 4 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2007 (by Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility)

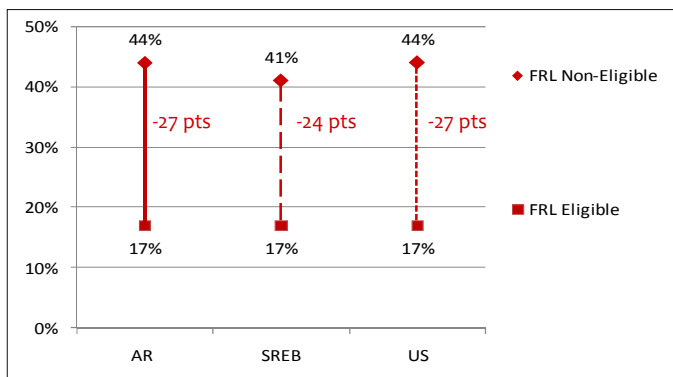
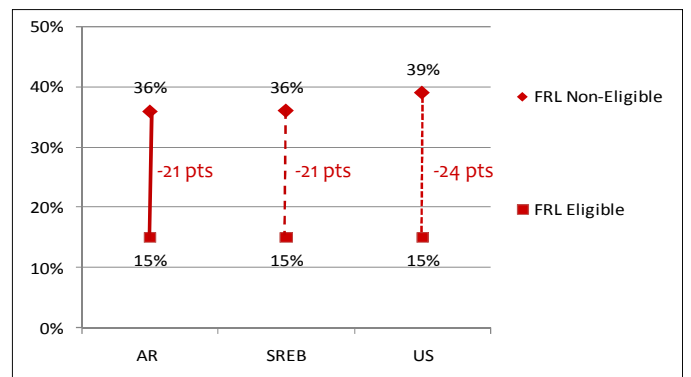


Table 2.8: NAEP Reading Grade 8 Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2007 (by Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility)



Results

- The most notable widening in the White/Black achievement gap on the NAEP occurred in grade 4 math. Since 2003, the gap in performance has widened by five percentage points (Table 2.1), whereas the gap for white/black students in grade 8 reading has narrowed by three percentage points (Table 2.4).
- On the NAEP, the White/Hispanic gap has widened for grade 4 and 8 students in both subject areas. Students in grade 8 reading showed the largest gap increase, widening by nine percentage points since 2003 (Table 2.4).
- The current poverty achievement gap in Arkansas is generally consistent with the SREB and national gap. The lone exception to this occurs for grade 8 students in math, as the current gap in Arkansas is two percentage points less than the SREB gap, and six percentage points less than the national gap (Table 2.6).
- Current levels of performance for FRL eligible students in Arkansas are similar to student performance in the region and across the nation. However, in grade 4 math, FRL eligible students in Arkansas outperform students in the region by four percentage points and the national average by two percentage points (Table 2.5).
- For this report card, we have chosen to only highlight achievement gaps on the NAEP. However, similar trends in achievement gaps emerge on the Arkansas Benchmark exam and the ACT.

3 Secondary and Beyond



In preparation for graduation and postsecondary education, Arkansas students take End-of-Course examinations, Advanced Placement (AP) exams and/or the ACT. The following section highlights the most recent scores from such examinations in Arkansas, comparing scores with the US population where appropriate. In addition, graduation rates, college attendance, and educational attainment levels are also presented.

- There has been a sharp increase in students taking the AP exam since 2002. Although the percentage of students scoring a three or higher has declined, the actual number of students scoring a three or higher has nearly doubled since 2002 (Table 3.3).
- Graduation rates among Arkansas students are slightly above the national average (Table 3.4). Further, both Hispanic students and black students in Arkansas are graduating at a higher rate than their peers across the US (Table 3.5).
- Of 2005 graduates, 57% attended college. Of those, 89% attended a college in Arkansas.

Table 3.1: State and National ACT Scores

	AR 2007	AR 2008	US 2008
English	20.5	20.7	20.6
Math	19.9	20.1	21.0
Reading	20.9	21.0	21.4
Science	20.2	20.3	20.8
Composite	20.5	20.6	21.1

Table 3.4: High School Graduation Rates, 2005

	Graduation Rate
United States	74.7%
Southern Region States ¹	72.8%
Arkansas	75.7%

¹Southern Region States are states of the Southern Regional Education Board, which includes Alabama, Arkansas Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Table 3.2: End-of-Course Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2006-2008

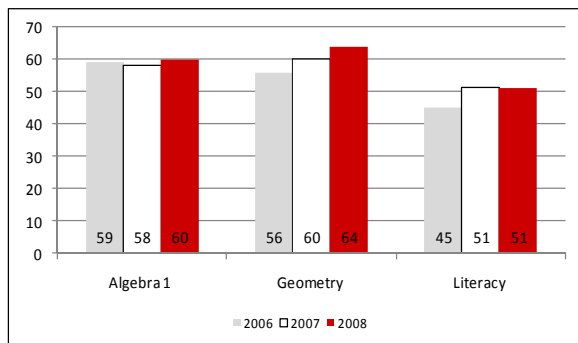


Table 3.5: National and State High School Graduation Rates, 2005 (by Racial Status)

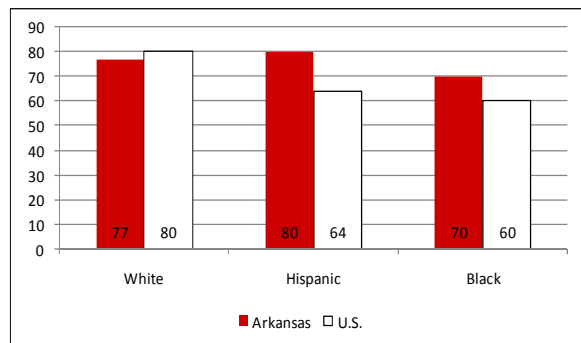
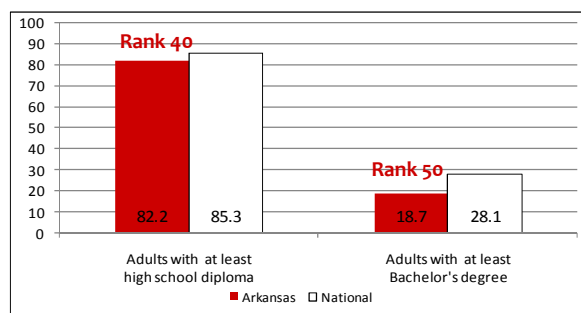


Table 3.3: Advanced Placement Results, 2002 and 2007

	AR 2002	AR 2007	US 2007
Percent of graduates who took AP exam	9.8%	32.2%	24.9%
Percent of students who scored a 3 or higher	50.7%	29.8%	61.0%
Number of students scoring 3 or higher	1,337	2,611	N/A

Table 3.6: Adults Education Levels, 2006



4 School Characteristics



This section concludes with background information, including student demographics, teacher salary, and an Adequate Yearly Progress summary.

- Over the past decade, Arkansas' Hispanic student population increased six percentage points. Although our student body remains less racially diverse than the country, the population of black students in Arkansas is three percentage points higher than the national average. (Table 4.1)
- Among states in this region, Arkansas has the second highest average teacher salary in 2006-07 (Table 4.2). After controlling for cost of living differences between states, the average teacher salary in Arkansas is equal to the national average.
- Of 1,087 schools in Arkansas, 325 (30%) are on the School Improvement (SI) list for Adequate Yearly Progress from the 2006-07 school year. Approximately seven percent of Arkansas schools are in a reconstructing phase of SI (Table 4.4).

Table 4.1: Percent of Students in Public Schools, 1996 and 2006 (by Racial Status)

	AR 1996	AR 2006	US 2006
White	77%	68%	57%
Black	24%	23%	17%
Hispanic	1%	7%	20%
Other¹	1%	2%	6%

¹Includes American Indians, Alaskan natives, Hawaiians, Asians & Pacific Islanders

Table 4.2: Average Teacher Salary, 2006-07

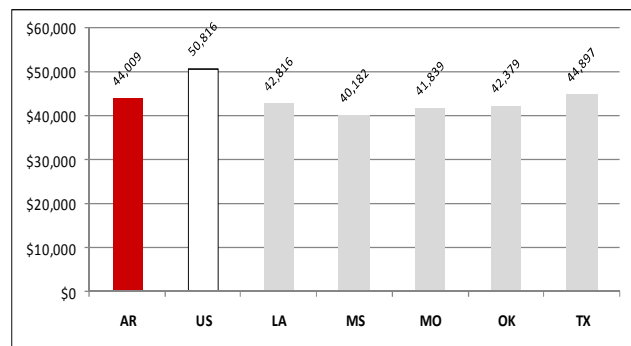


Table 4.3: Average Teacher Salary Based on Degree, 2006-07

	Bachelor's Degree			Master's Degree		Highest Degree
	BA: 0 years	BA: 15 years	Top of Bachelor	MA: 0 years	MA: 15 years	Top of Schedule
State Required Minimum	\$28,611.00	\$35,361.00	\$35,361.00	\$32,902.00	\$40,402.00	\$40,402.00
State Average	\$30,525.00	\$38,315.00	\$42,151.00	\$34,252.00	\$42,541.00	\$47,146.00

Table 4.4: Adequate Yearly Progress, 2004-2007

SI Phase	Description	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
AR Total Schools		1137	1112	1087
Total on SI List	Schools that did not achieve adequate yearly progress are placed on the School Improvement List.	255	306	325
Met Standards	Has been on the SI list and achieved adequate yearly progress. Schools are removed from the SI list after achieving AYP two consecutive years.	29	73	77
Year 1	School must provide choice option for students to attend another school in the district not in improvement.	52	85	77
Year 2 or 3	School must continue to provide choice and add the option of supplemental services to students who qualify (Year 2). District is required to establish and implement a plan of corrective action (Year 3).	169	119	96
Year 4 or 5	District is required to plan to restructure the identified school (Year 4). District is required to implement restructuring of school (Year 5).	5	28	72
Year 6 or 7	District/school must continue with restructuring efforts.	0	1	3

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OEP 2008 Report on Arkansas Schools: The Director's Note

In April, we were fortunate to be joined by an impressive group of policymakers, educators, and civic leaders at the OEP 2008 annual conference, "Adequacy Achieved... Now What?" Senator Jim Argue, a key player in education policy in Arkansas throughout the past decade and the keynote speaker of this event, emphasized the need for an annual report on the progress of our schools and students. He stressed that this "report card" should not be published by state policymakers, but by outsiders with the ability to provide a fresh and objective perspective. This is our goal in this report.

What did we find? Of course, there is much good news to report. More students reach proficiency on our benchmark exams each year and our NAEP scores continue to creep up to the national average. We have more students than ever taking rigorous Advanced Placement courses and exams. And more students are passing these exams, although our rate of passage has experienced a drop with the great increase in test-takers.

However, the tables highlighting the achievement gaps facing our minority and economically disadvantaged students are clear reminders that we have much work left to do. We simply are not doing a good job in this area. Our policymakers have taken the first step and enacted funding formulae which provide additional resources to our disadvantaged student subgroups. Now, we must do the hard work of figuring out how to use these resources to help all Arkansas students move forward.

Thanks for reading ... we appreciate your continued support and interest in the students of Arkansas!



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Report Card 2008 Sources

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Table 2.1: NATION'S REPORT CARD

Table 2.2: NATION'S REPORT CARD

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Table 2.4: NATION'S REPORT CARD

Table 2.5: NATION'S REPORT CARD

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Table 2.8: NATION'S REPORT CARD

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Table 3.4: SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

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Table 4.2: SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

Table 4.3: ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Table 4.4: ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION