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Test Scores Show More Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in 2010

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TEST SCORES SHOW MORE STUDENTS SCORING PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED IN 2010

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In mid-June, the ADE released the results of the 2009-10 standardized achievement tests, including the Arkansas Benchmark and SAT-10 exams for students in grades 3-8 and the End-of-Course (EOC) Literacy exam for students in grade 11. The following policy brief will highlight the current performance of all Arkansas students, the performance for particular subgroups of students, and finally the changes in achievement over time.

The percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in all grades in both Math and Literacy on the Arkansas Benchmark exams has grown from 2005 to 2010. As compared to last year's performance, the state's students showed gains in most grades and in all subjects tested (Math, Literacy, and Science); the only exceptions were grade 6 Math and grade 7 Science. The

percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in Grade 6 Math dropped 4 percentage points in 2010, from 79% in 2009 to 75% in 2010.

While Math scores continue to improve (see Figure 1), the rate of improvement has gradually slowed. For example, from 2005 to 2006, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced on the Grade 8 Math test improved by 11 percentage points; in the last year, the improvement in the same category was only two percentage points. While the slowing improvement is to be expected since as more and more students become proficient, it is more difficult to realize large scoring gains; however, it also suggests the state will require additional educational innovations to obtain increased future growth.

Figure 1: Mathematics Benchmark Exam: Percentage of AR Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced, 2005-2010

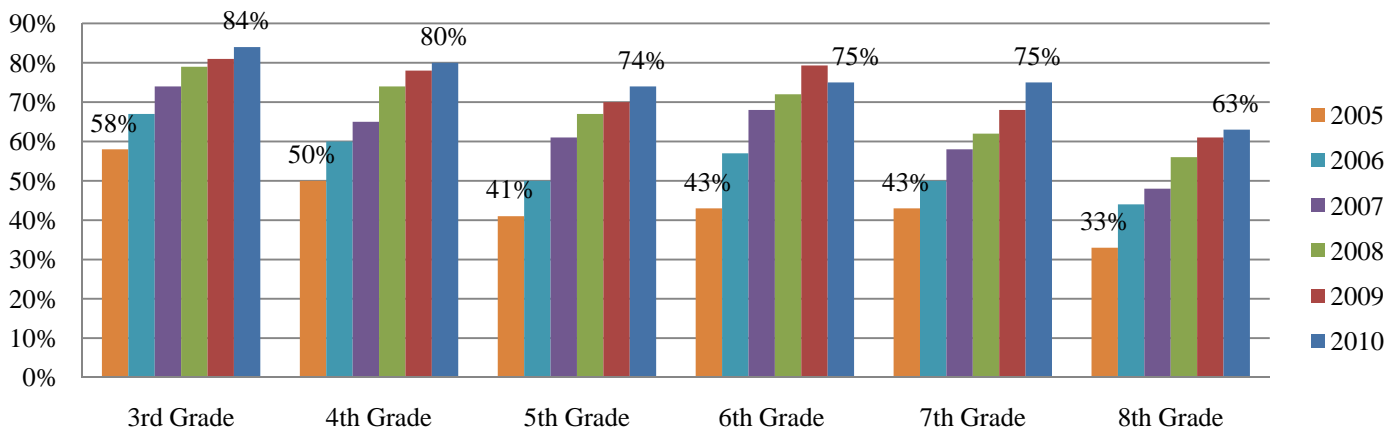


Figure 2: Literacy Benchmark Exam: Percentage of AR Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced, 2005-2010

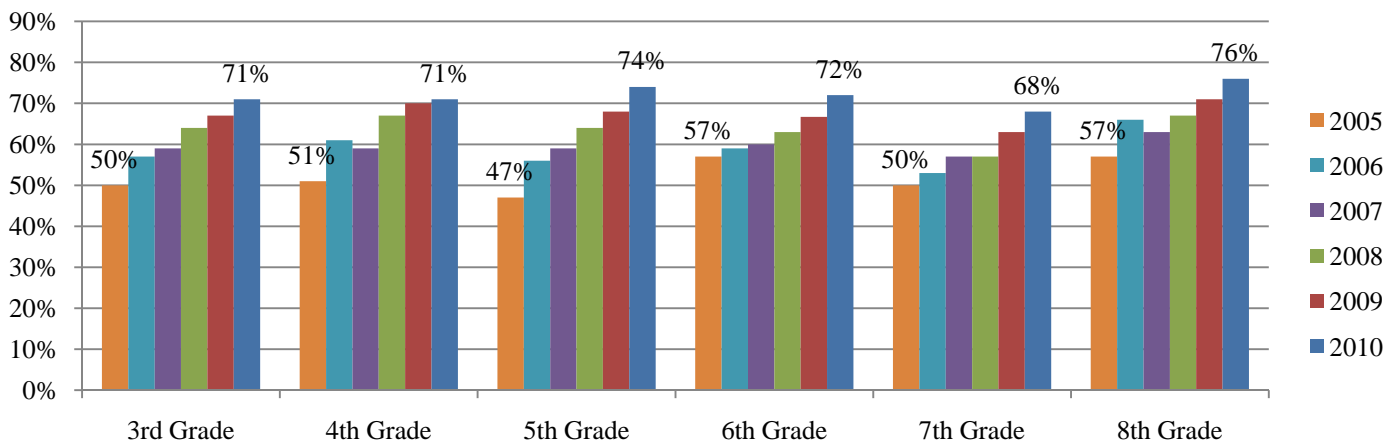


Figure 2 shows the growth pattern for Literacy scores has been more consistent. Most grades have shown an evenly spaced upward trend in literacy.

CLOSING THE GAP

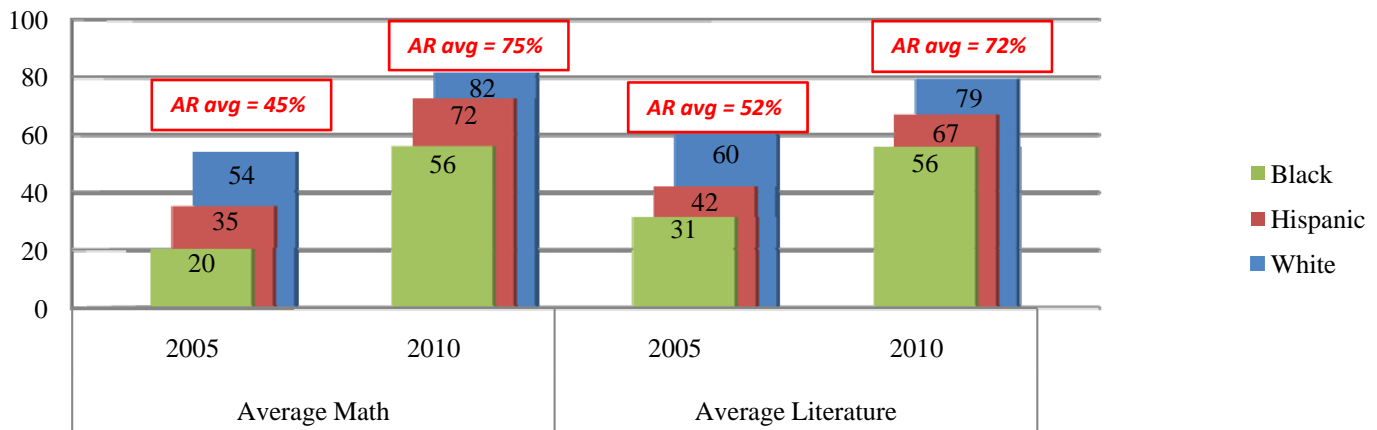
Not only are more students overall scoring proficient and advanced on the Benchmark exam, but the scores for each racial subgroup of Arkansas students are also increasing. Indeed, the achievement gap between white students and minority students is shrinking. Figure 3 compares the scores for white, Hispanic, and black students in 2005 to those in 2010. Figure 3 below shows the average percentage of all students in grades 3 through 8 in each subgroup scoring proficient or advanced on the Math and Literacy tests in 2005 compared to 2010. For example, the gap in Math performance between white students and Hispanic students has dropped from 19 percentage points in 2005 to nine percentage points in 2010. Further, the gap

between white and Hispanic students in Literacy decreased from 18 percentage points in 2005 to 13 percentage points in 2010, a drop of almost one-third. Overall, there has been consistent improvement for each subgroup, in both subjects, though greater gains have occurred in Math.

The achievement gap between white and black students has also decreased over time. For example, the gap in Math fell from 34 percentage points in 2005 to 26 percentage points in 2010. In Literacy, the gap between white and black students dropped from 29 percentage points to 25 percentage points.

Due to the strong gains made by all Arkansas students over the last five years, more than half of each group is achieving at proficient or better in both Math and Literacy. More than two-thirds of all Hispanic test takers are attaining proficiency. Nearly four-fifths of the white students earned scores of proficient or better.

Figure 3: Mathematics and Literacy Benchmark Exam: Average Percent (Grades 3-8) Scoring Proficient or Advanced by Sub-Population, 2005 vs. 2010



SAT-10 2010 RESULTS

Table 1 shows the performance of Arkansas students by national percentile rank on the SAT-10 from 2008-2010. The national percentile rank demonstrates how Arkansas students performed compared to their peers across the nation. In 2010, Arkansas students continued to make steady gains in Math performing above the 50th percentile for the first time in all grades.

While the performance of Arkansas students in Reading has not been as strong as in Math, performance has improved in all grades with the exception of grade 9, which has held steady in both subjects from 2009 to 2010.

Table 1: SAT-10 Math and Reading Exams: National Percentile Rank NCE (Grades 1-9), 2008-2010

Grade	Math			Reading		
	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010
1	48	49	51	41	41	42
2	49	51	53	41	41	42
3	56	58	60	48	43	55
4	65	68	72	64	61	72
5	61	60	67	56	53	66
6	64	65	71	46	44	54
7	56	58	66	53	51	63
8	64	66	74	53	50	63
9	63	66	67	49	46	46

END OF COURSE LITERACY RESULTS

Student performance on the Grade 11 End of Course Literacy scores also continued to show a positive trend (see Table 2). Over the past decade, the percentage of Arkansas students scoring Proficient or better has almost tripled, from 22% in 2001 to 60% in 2010. In addition to more students scoring at the proficient and advanced level, there has also been a sharp reduction in the percentage of students scoring below basic on the EOC

Literacy exam. The percentage of students scoring below basic has dropped to a 10-year low of 7% in 2010, down from 31% in 2001. This drop, coupled with a rise in the percentage of students scoring proficient, indicates improvement across the ability spectrum; however, there continues to be very few students earning advanced scores on this exam; only 2% of test-takers met this mark in 2010.

Table 2: End Of Course Literacy Exam: Percentage of Students Scoring in Each Category, 2001-2010

Year	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Prof/Adv
2010	7%	33%	58%	2%	60%
2009	9%	35%	55%	1%	57%
2008	9%	40%	50%	1%	51%
2007	12%	37%	49%	1%	51%
2006	11%	44%	45%	0%	45%
2005	14%	40%	44%	1%	45%
2004	15%	40%	43%	2%	45%
2003	18%	40%	39%	2%	41%
2002	22%	41%	36%	1%	37%
2001	31%	47%	21%	1%	22%

SUMMARY

Arkansas' students continue to make progress on the state-specific exams. Still, it is also important that we check the progress of our students on national measures, such as the nationally norm-referenced National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam. For example, the NAEP Reading results from 2009 (http://www.uark.edu/ua/oep/policy_briefs/2010/2009NAEPReading.pdf) showed that the performance of our students in grades 4 and 8 has been relatively stagnant. NAEP Math results from 2009 showed a similar trend as NAEP Reading scores (http://www.uark.edu/ua/oep/report_cards/2009_ReportCard.pdf).

While Arkansas' average NAEP Reading score has not shown much movement, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced on the grade 4 exam has risen from 23% in 1992 to 29% in 2009. Arkansas even tied the National percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in 2005; however, the gap has since slipped to three percentage points in 2009. Likewise, Arkansas has reduced the seven percentage point gap in students scoring proficient or advanced on the grade 8 NAEP Reading in 1998 (23% Arkansas vs. 30% National) to just three percentage points in 2009 (27% Arkansas vs. 30% National).

Another national comparison to consider is the ACT. Based on data from the Arkansas Department of Education in 2009 (http://www.arkansased.org/testing/pdf/performance_understanding_2009.pdf), the average ACT English score of Arkansas students was on par with that of national average; however, Arkansas' students did lag slightly behind the national average in all other categories. The Arkansas average composite ACT score was 20.6, while the national average composite was 21.1.

Thus, while the Benchmark, SAT-10 and EOC scores are good news, our school leaders and policymakers should continue in their efforts to encourage innovation and improvement in teaching and learning across the state. While the past decade has witnessed much good news for Arkansas schools, we will need to work even harder if our students are to continue improving on all measures, including both our home-grown benchmark exams and national assessments like the NAEP and ACT.

An Excel spreadsheet containing the 2010 Arkansas Benchmark data used in this policy brief is available at http://www.uark.edu/ua/oep/Resources/BenchmarkDatabase_2009-10.xls.

For more information about this policy brief, please contact the Office for Education Policy at oep@uark.edu