

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF**  
**Education** 

**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 13, 2008

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Julie Johnson Thompson  
Office: 683-4786 Cell: (501) 580-6508  
Email: [julie.thompson@arkansas.gov](mailto:julie.thompson@arkansas.gov)

**PERFORMANCE GAPS CLOSE FOR TWO GROUPS IN ARKANSAS' AP PROGRAM**

Two subgroups of Arkansas public school students – Hispanic/Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native – eliminated the performance gap in the 2007 Advanced Placement (AP) Examination scores, according to the College Board. Arkansas was one of 10 states to see the gap closed for both groups. Only Hawaii saw the performance gap close for the Black/African-American subgroup.

“As we have expanded access to Advanced Placement classes over the past several years, it is quite rewarding to know that the gaps between achievement levels are diminishing,” said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education. “And while we’re pleased with this progress, we are not surprised. Research shows that with the proper supports and environment, all students, regardless of color, ethnicity, gender or background, can achieve high levels of learning.”

Dr. Jim Purcell, Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, said that access to rigorous courses makes a difference for all students. “By expanding access to the AP studies, we also raise expectations of our students, and that in turn provides an incentive for students to work harder to meet those expectations,” he said. “It’s a proven formula that works across all aspects of society. When you raise the bar, more people work harder to clear the bar.”

Of Arkansas high school seniors in 2007, 32.2 percent had taken at least one AP exam during their high school careers, and 9.6 percent of those scored 3 or higher on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 being the highest. Nationally, 21.1 percent of high school seniors have taken an AP exam with 15.2 percent of those scoring a 3 or above.

Among the subgroups:

- Hispanic/Latino students represent 5.1 percent of the student population and accounted for 6.2 percent of the students scoring 3 or higher.
- American Indian/Alaska Native students represent .6 percent of the student population and accounted for 1.0 percent of the students scoring 3 or higher.
- Black/African American students represent 21.3 percent of the student population and accounted for 3.9 percent of the students scoring 3 or higher.

“In the majority of states, Advanced Placement remains an option for only the top-performing students,” Dr. James explained. “In Arkansas, we recognize that when a student takes an AP class,

even though he or she doesn't score a 3 or higher, that rigorous class work remains beneficial and better prepares students to succeed in college. That is why Arkansas has been lauded nationally for our policies that ensure that AP is offered in all high schools in the state and open to all students."

The state's AP focus in recent years has been on expanding access, according to Ann Biggers, administrator of gifted education for the Arkansas Department of Education, and, while the effort to expand AP will continue, the focus will shift to increasing achievement levels within those classes.

"With the introduction of the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science at the first set of pilot schools, the state will be able to pilot some proven strategies for improving Advanced Placement scores," Biggers said. "We plan to replicate some of these same methods in all high schools over time."

Attached please find two fact sheets regarding Advanced Placement participation and Achievement in Arkansas.

--ADE--

***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.***