



NEWS RELEASE

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ARKANSAS BENCHMARKS GET GOOD GRADE FOR "TRUTH IN ADVERTISING"

Education Next, a journal published by the Hoover Institution, recently gave Arkansas and two other states the third highest grade in a report card scoring states for the accuracy of their state-set levels of proficiency on state assessments.

Arkansas, Rhode Island and California all earned overall grades of B-minus. Scoring higher than those three states were Hawaii with a B-plus and the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Maine, South Carolina, Wyoming and Missouri with A's.

Oklahoma, Tennessee and North Carolina all scored F's in the study.

Education Next editors Paul E. Peterson and Frederick M. Hess said in a release: "We are not evaluating state tests, nor are we grading states on the performance of their students. ... We are checking for 'truth in advertising,' investigating whether state-announced proficiency levels mean what they say."

Peterson and Hess analyzed the numbers of students scoring proficient on 48 state tests in comparison with how the states' students scored on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is also called "The Nation's Report Card".

"Our mission in Arkansas is to teach students so that they meet high academic standards, not to give easy tests so that they only appear to do so," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education. "We at the Arkansas Department of Education have confidence that our curriculum frameworks and our assessment tools work together to promote high levels of learning. We have often said that proof of that happening is found in Arkansas' improved NAEP scores. It's great to have the Hoover Institution echoing that statement."

In addition to the grade, Arkansas was noted for having significantly boosted proficiency standards over the last year.

"Part of this increase is no doubt due to our raising the bar for our fourth grade cut scores on the 2005 Benchmark tests," Dr. James explained. "It was part of a regular cycle to review how we scored those exams, and the Arkansas educators who made up that committee decided those standards needed to be at a higher level."

Education Next describes itself as a "scholarly journal ... committed to looking at hard facts about school reform." The Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation are also sponsoring institutions of the publication.

The full report may be found at <http://www.educationnext.org/20063/28.html>.

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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.