



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Julie Johnson Thompson  
Office: 683-4786 Cell: (501) 580-6508  
Email: [jthompson@arkedu.k12.ar.us](mailto:jthompson@arkedu.k12.ar.us)

### SAT SCORES, AP PARTICIPATION ON THE UPSWING

The College Board today released SAT scores as well as information about participation and scores in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, offering additional evidence that educational achievement in Arkansas is reaching levels higher than ever.

"Last week we were able to deliver good news about the performance of our 2006 high school graduating class on the ACT college-placement examination, boasting the largest increase of any state in the nation," said Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of Education. "I'm very happy to follow that news with today's announcement of two more positive indicators – higher SAT scores and an increased participation rate in Advanced Placement courses as well as higher percentage of Arkansas students scoring well on those AP exams."

"With Arkansas' college-going rate now an all-time high at 63.4 percent coupled with more of our high school students taking Advanced Placement courses and scoring higher on college-placement exams, our state's college-going rate will likely continue an upward trend," said Dr. Linda Beene, Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. "According to the Southern Regional Education Board, students who take a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum are more likely to be successful in college and careers. These AP and SAT results are good indicators that in addition to more Arkansas high school students enrolling in college, they will be better prepared."

SAT scores for the state increased across the board from last year – overall in both Critical Reading and Mathematics subject areas and for all ethnic and gender subgroups on both tests. Overall, the 2006 Critical Reading mean score was 574 in 2006, compared with a mean of 563 in 2005. For Mathematics,

the 2006 mean was 568, compared with 552 in 2005. A new portion of the SAT – Writing – debuted with a mean score of 577 for Arkansas students. Subgroup scores are included in a chart in the press packet.

The 1,489 students in Arkansas who took the SAT scored above the national average. This is partly a function of the smaller number of Arkansas students who take the SAT; more Arkansas students take the ACT exam as that is the preferred college entrance test at many Arkansas and regional colleges and universities.

The national SAT mean scores for 2006 were 503 in Critical Reading, 518 in Mathematics and 497 in Writing. It is important to note that while Arkansas' mean scores rose, the national mean score dropped in both subject areas from the year before – five points in Critical Reading and two points in Mathematics.

“We have had a number of reforms at the high school level that are helping our students perform better. By creating equal opportunities for students, wherever they live and go to school in Arkansas, we are helping those individual students and creating statewide improvement in achievement levels,” Dr. James said.

“All students in the state now have access to at least 38 units of high school courses that are critical to their success in college and in the work force,” Dr. James said. He also cited the presence of Next Step, the professional development courses designed for high school teachers, and of Smart Core – the default curriculum that includes four years of grade-level English and four-years of mathematics with a sequence of Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra II and a fourth year of higher-level math that begins with this year's ninth-graders as positive influences.

“And, of course, there is also the impact of AP courses,” Dr. James said. “By the 2008-2009 school year, all high schools in Arkansas are required to offer AP classes in the four core areas – science, English, math and social studies. The majority of high schools have already put those in place. And many schools offer even more.”

As a result, AP participation is growing in Arkansas. In 2006, 15,705 students took AP Examinations, representing a 13.1 percent increase from 2005 and a 241 percent increase from 2002. Those 15,705

students took a total 25,780 exams for an 11.4 increase over the number of exams taken in 2005. The state began paying for the cost of AP exams in May 2005.

What's more, there was a 12.9 percent increase in the number of exam scores of 3 or higher from last year. On AP exams, a 3 is "Qualified," a 4 is "Well Qualified," and a 5 is "Extremely Well Qualified."

"Simply having participated in an AP course is a predictor of later success," Dr. Ken James said. Research shows that students taking AP courses have a 30 percent greater chance for completing a bachelor's degree in four years or less.

"These increases are indeed cause to celebrate," Dr. James said. "Our students' academic success continues to improve, and this is a trend that I believe has just begun if we all stay the course of providing our students with the curriculum and quality of teaching that they both need and deserve."

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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.***