

BACKGROUND

The **National Assessment of Educational Progress** (NAEP), also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is a national assessment of what students in each state know in various subjects. The Grade 4 and 8 mathematics and reading portions of the NAEP were administered in 2005 and the results were released in mid-October. This brief fact sheet highlights the recent NAEP results and demonstrates, simply put, that the *state’s students are gaining ground on the nation according to the NAEP.*

Grade 4 Math

In 2005, the average math scale-score for fourth-grade students was 236, which was an improvement over the average fourth-grade score in 2003 (229), 2000 (216), 1996 (216), and 1992 (210). In 2005, Arkansas students’ scale score was statistically identical to the national average score of 237, which was also an improvement over previous tests. The percentage of students in Arkansas who performed at or above the NAEP *Proficient* level was 34% in 2005 compared to 35% nationally. Just under 78% of Arkansas students scored at or above the NAEP *Basic* level, as compared to only 55% in 2000; *this is the biggest improvement among all the states.*

Grade 4 Reading

In 2005, the average reading scale score for fourth-grade students in Arkansas was 217, which was an improvement over the previous scores in 2003 (214), 2002 (213), 1998 (209), 1994 (209), and 1992 (211). In 2005, Arkansas students’ scale score average improved to the same as the national average (217) for the first time. Nearly 30% of Arkansas’ students performed at or above *Proficient*; this is equal to the national average. Nearly 63% of Arkansas students scored at or above *Basic*, as compared to only 54% in 1998; *this is the fifth-best improvement among all the states.*

Grade 8 Math

In 2005, the average math scale score for eighth-grade students in Arkansas was 272, which was an improvement over the previous scores in 2003 (266), 2000 (257), 1996 (262), and 1992 (256). In 2005, Arkansas students’ scale score average was six points behind the national average (278). This is the closest Arkansas students have ever performed to the national average. Approximately 22% of students in Arkansas performed at or above

Proficient, compared to 28% nationally. More than 64% of the state’s demonstrated at least *Basic* skills, as compared to only 49% in 2000; *this is the second-best improvement among all the states.*

Grade 8 Reading

In 2005, the average reading scale score for eighth-grade students in Arkansas was 258, unchanged from 2003 and slightly higher than in 1998 (256). In 2005, Arkansas students’ scale score average drew within two points of the national average (260), the closest it has ever been. The percentage of students in Arkansas who performed at or above *Proficient* was 26%, compared to 29% nationally. Nearly 70% of Arkansas students scored at or above *Basic*, as compared to 71% nationally; *only five states gained more than Arkansas from 1998 to 2005.*

Good News on Achievement Gaps

Not only did Arkansas’ students post better-than average gains on math and reading, but some subgroups in the state out-scored national averages. On the mathematics assessment, 25% of Arkansas’ Hispanic fourth graders demonstrated *Proficient* skills or better; nationally, only 19% of Hispanic students performed this well. Arkansas’ Hispanic students also outpaced their peers in the grade 4 reading exam, with 21% performing at or above *Proficient*, compared to only 15% nationally. Similarly, the free or reduced lunch students in Arkansas did as well or better than their peers nationally on all four 2005 assessments.

To receive a copy of this Fact Sheet or other information, please visit <http://www.uark.edu/ua/oeop> or contact the University of Arkansas’ Office for Education Policy at (479) 575-3773.

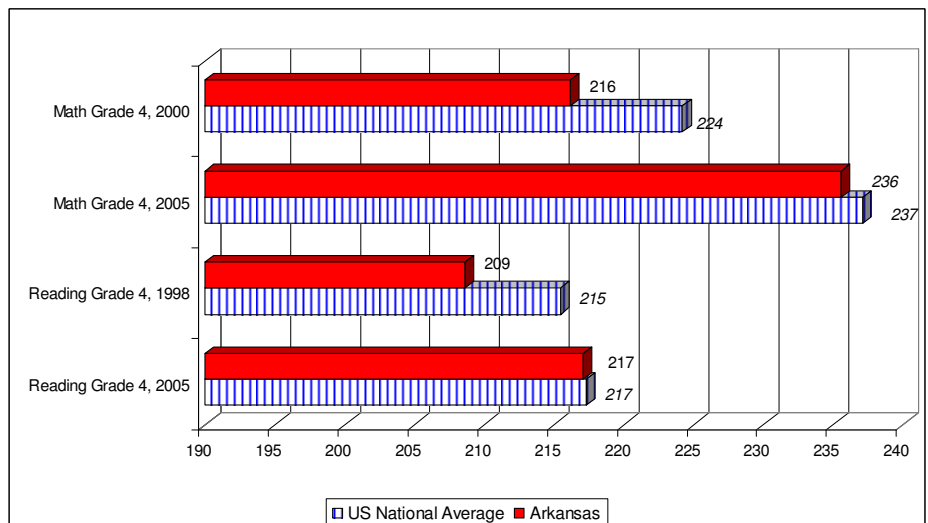


Figure 1: NAEP Scaled Scores for Arkansas and US