

Chalkboard

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Arkansas state law, along with the State Board of Education regulations, require public schools to administer both criterion-referenced (tests how well the student learned a specific body of knowledge/skills) and norm-referenced tests (compares test results with other students). The state-mandated criterion-referenced testing includes the Benchmark Exams at grades 3-8, End-of-Course Exams in Algebra I and Geometry, and a Grade 11 Literacy Exam. Student scores are reported by “performance levels”: advanced, proficient, basic and below basic. The chart below indicates the percent of students scoring proficient and advance in the areas of literacy and math.

Norm-referenced testing, presently the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, is administered in grades K-9 in reading comprehension and math problem solving. The Iowa Early Learning Inventory is administered to all kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year. Student scores are reported in percentile rankings. Percentile scores for grades 3-9 are listed below.

Benchmark Grade 3-8		
Grade	Literacy	Math
3	49%	61%
4	67%	65%
5	54%	40%
6	68%	42%
7	62%	55%
8	68%	30%

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Grade 3-8)		
Iowa Test of Educational Development (Grade 9)		
Grade	Reading	Math
3	64%	61%
4	69%	75%
5	66%	63%
6	58%	56%
7	56%	56%
8	52%	54%
9	48%	59%

EOC	
Algebra	79%
Geometry	62%
11th Literacy	42%

While not every grade in both literacy and math saw an increase in overall percentage scores here in the Gentry District, no sharp decreases were experienced. Eighth grade literacy, Algebra I and Geometry all experienced gains of 19 or more percentage points over test scores from the 2003-04 school year. We are very excited and proud of these gains and are continually working toward additional improvement.

As you know, there are many ways to assimilate data. While test scores are reported annually by grade level, I find it very interesting and helpful to take a specific group or class of students and chart their test scores from year to year. This is referred to as a "Growth Model". An example of this method, from the Gentry School District, would be the graduating class of 2009. In 2001, as 4th graders, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in literacy was 28%. This class was again tested in 2003 as 6th graders and scored 40%, proficient or advanced in literacy, followed this past spring as 8th graders, with 68% scoring proficient or advanced in the literacy area. These statistics indicate growth or gain of knowledge for this specific class of students.

As a result of the No Child Left Behind legislation, additional testing is required, and with the data gathered from these tests, we will be able to establish student gains or losses on an annual basis.

The 2005-06 testing schedule has recently been revised by the Arkansas Department of Education. The following are test dates for the Gentry School District:

November 8, 2005	Literacy Field Test – grade 11
January 24-25, 2006	Mid-Year EOC Algebra I
February 22-23, 2006	Benchmark Writing Prompts – grades 3-8
March 7-9, 2006	Benchmark Exams (reading, writing m/c, and math) grades 3-8
March 8-9, 2006	Grade 11 Literacy Exam
March 27-31, 2006	Iowa Test of Basic Skills – grade K-2
April 10-21, 2006	Iowa Test of Basic Skills – grade 3-9
April 25-26, 2006	End of Course Algebra I Exam
April 27-28, 2006	End of Course Geometry Exam