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**Get Educated About Education:
A Consumer Guide to Public Education in
Arkansas**

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Introduction

Our Schools Affect Us All

Throughout our nation and our state, a quality education is every child's birthright. Education is the gateway to a life of productivity and fulfillment at home, in the workplace, and within every community.

No matter who we are—business owner, employee, parent, educator, neighbor, senior citizen—the quality of Arkansas' public schools affects all of us. The vitality of our state's economy and the durability of our democratic principles, the height of our living standards and the scope of our service to others: prosperity in all its forms is linked to how well our schools are working.

It takes well-educated, highly-qualified workers to keep Arkansas business and industry vigorous and competitive: the state's economy is only as strong as the skills and knowledge of its workers. And a healthy democracy depends on citizens who understand our nation's history, society's challenges, and the American way of working together toward meaningful goals.

Public schools are the workshops that grow our workforce, and public schools are democracy's learning laboratories. The better our schools, the stronger our state and nation, the sturdier our economy, and the healthier our families and communities are.

We all benefit from high-quality public schools.

Our Changing World Creates New Demands on Schools

Our world is changing rapidly, and the rate of change continues to accelerate, with profound implications for our schools. In a global economy with revolutionary technologies, teachers are preparing students for a world that's hard for us to envision. In addition, schools now serve an increasingly diverse population of students who are growing up in a society far different from the one we knew as youngsters. We want our children—all children—prepared to lead successful, fulfilling lives in the challenging world that awaits them.

Building High-Performing Schools in Arkansas

In November 2002, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the state's public school system was not meeting the goal of preparing all children for the future. The court found that the education system was neither adequate nor *equitable*, that is, fair to all students.

As a result, the court decreed that:

- All Arkansas school districts are to offer students the same or similar courses.
- Every school district must have school facilities that give each student the opportunity for an adequate education.
- The state must define what constitutes an *adequate education* and provide sufficient financial resources for schools to achieve it.
- School funding must be measured on how many dollars reach the classroom for instruction and learning.
- Salaries must be sufficient to attract and keep high-quality teachers.

Since the court's ruling, the executive and legislative branches of state government have worked diligently to address the issues. Parents, business and civic leaders, and other citizens have joined in to help, as have many organizations that represent the school community. Their work together has not gone unnoticed. One national school adequacy expert, commenting on the state's education reform measures, said to the Arkansas Supreme Court, "I believe that in my 40 years of professional experience in this kind of endeavor, I have never before seen a state which leapfrogged an entire century . . . If I had been aware, I would have been astonished that a state could take such a range of actions so comprehensive, so thorough in such a short period of time."

This guide is designed to help parents and citizens better understand the initiatives, programs, and laws that determine how school districts are to operate in Arkansas. We hope that, with better understanding, schools and communities will work together with one goal in mind – to build high-performing schools that increase the opportunities for all Arkansas public school students. That's good for kids, for our schools, and for all of Arkansas.

**Facts About Arkansas' Public School System
A State Profile (2004-2005)**

Number of School Districts in the State 254

Number of Schools

Elementary	610
Middle/Junior High Schools	195
High Schools	<u>332</u>
Total	1,137

Arkansas' Classroom Teachers

Number of Teachers (K-12)	31,662
Avg. Salary of Classroom Teachers (K-12)	39,266
Percent of Teaching Staff Completely Certified	98.0%*
Percent of Teaching Staff with Masters Degree	34.7%*

* Most recent data available: 2003 - 2004

Funding Arkansas' Public Schools

Annual K-12 expenditures	\$3,543,443,536*
Current Expenditures Per Pupil in ADA	\$6,475

* For school year 2003 - 2004

(Information provided by the Arkansas Department of Education)

**Arkansas' Low Participation in Higher Education
Equates to Lower Average Income**

Compared to all states, Arkansas has the second-lowest percentage of college-degree holders relative to its 25-and-older population, and the second-lowest participation rate of adult students in higher education. To compound the problem, the percentage of the population 25 and older without a high school diploma is 24.7%, compared to the national average of 19.6%.

In addition to ranking 49th among all the states in those who hold a college degree, Arkansas also ranks 49th among the states as it relates to average per capita income.

The Face of Arkansas' School Children

Pre-K - 12 grade students	450,985
Minority students	29.5%
Children in poverty	22%
Children Eligible for Free and Reduced-Cost Meals	50.1%
Students with Disabilities	12.7%
English-Language Learners	3.4%

Children represent about one-third of the state's total population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the under-age-5 population, which is now at 185,349 children, currently represents about 7 percent of the state's population. Children ages 5-17 now number about 692,331, comprising about 25% of the state's population.

Research shows that children's success in school is related to a number of factors. Among the most critical conditions are the child's health, the size and annual income of the household, whether two parents or one are present, the parents' ages and education level, and whether English is spoken in the home.

By the time they begin formal schooling, children who live in poverty often lag significantly behind their more affluent peers in all measures of academic success, including test scores, high school graduation rates, college enrollment and college graduation rates. We often hear it referred to as the "gap" in student achievement. Charts found on the Just for the Kids website refer to it as "The Opportunity Gap."

Because Arkansas has a high number of children growing up in low-income homes, educating these children has been one of our state's greatest challenges as it requires more time and resources to help these children catch up to their classmates and sustain their progress. Arkansas' new school funding formula reflects this necessary financial support.

Arkansas' Blueprint for Public Education **Defining Educational Standards & Establishing Curriculum Guidelines**

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP), established in legislation by Act 999 of 1999, has become an important blueprint for education in Arkansas as it has led to significant improvement in student achievement for all grades in all schools. It is based on the premise that “all children can learn.”

ACTAAP is a comprehensive system that focuses on coordination of the following four areas:

High Academic Standards. Represented by the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks, standards are rigorous and clearly define what students are expected to know at each grade level. They also include a very specific definition of what is meant by “meet or exceed grade-level requirements.” The frameworks, often thought of as the “big picture,” are designed to facilitate learning from grade to grade. At grades K-4, the frameworks define what are the expected levels of proficiency in reading and mathematics. At grades 5-12, the frameworks increase the basic foundation in breadth and depth. Although the curriculum frameworks outline the goals and standards of education at each grade level, local school districts have the freedom to develop specific curriculum and programs to address the frameworks.

Professional Development. Focused on teachers and school administrators, professional development activities emphasize the frameworks and content standards and the need to guarantee that school curriculum is in line with the expected levels of proficiency, referred to as “curriculum alignment.”

Student Assessment. Assessment refers to the testing instruments or other evaluation methods used to measure student learning and performance. Student assessments are standards-based and determine a student’s understanding of expected knowledge for each grade level.

Accountability. Designed to improve student learning, schools and school districts have an obligation for every child to learn. In addition, school performance data will be available for everyone so that parents can have a clear picture as to how their child’s school is performing.

To learn more about ACTAAP, visit the following website link:
<http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/index.htm>

More About Benchmark Tests & Other Student Assessments

Toward the end of each school year, the state requires its public schools to give a set of tests to all students in grades K-12. These tests are part of ACTAAP's blueprint for improved academic achievement. The tests serve two purposes: (1) to measure students' mastery of basic skills and (2) to see how well schools are teaching and students are learning the state's academic content standards.

Benchmark Tests (Criterion Reference Tests or CRT)

Given in grades 3-8, benchmark tests reflect what teachers in Arkansas' public schools are expected to be teaching and what students are supposed to be learning. They are based on the state's frameworks and academic standards by grade level. Only Arkansas students take these standards-based tests so their results cannot be compared to test scores of students in other states.

The state has developed performance levels or cut points – scores students must achieve to reach specific levels of proficiency. There are four cut points for Arkansas' Benchmark Tests: Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic.

Advanced: Advanced students demonstrate superior performance well beyond proficient grade-level performance. They can apply established skills to solve complex problems and complete demanding tasks on their own. They can make insightful connections between abstract and concrete ideas and provide well-supported explanations and arguments.

Proficient: Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance for the grade tested and are well prepared for the next level of schooling. They can use established skills and knowledge to support problems and complete tasks on their own. Students can tie ideas together and explain the ways their ideas are connected.

Basic: Basic students show substantial skills. However, they only partially demonstrate the abilities to apply these skills.

Below Basic: Below basic students fail to show sufficient mastering of skills to attain the basic level.

Ever wonder what a benchmark test or end-of-course exam look like? The Arkansas Department of Education releases a few test items from the previous year so that students and parents and teachers can better anticipate what these tests are all about. To see released items from the last several years, go to this website:

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/student_assessment/student_assessment_p1.htm

Other Assessment Tools for Arkansas' Public School Students

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Norm-Reference Test or NRT)

The Student Assessment & Educational Accountability Act (Act 35 of Second Extraordinary Session of the Arkansas 84th General Assembly) requires a developmentally appropriate assessment be administered to all students in kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades in reading and mathematics. The assessment currently used in Arkansas is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

The ITBS measures the skills and achievement of students from kindergarten through grade 9. Developed at The University of Iowa and with a tradition of more than 70 years of educational research and test development experience, the ITBS provides an in-depth assessment of students' achievement of important educational objectives. Tests in reading, language arts, and mathematics provide comprehensive information both about the development of students' skills and about their ability to think critically.

The ITBS is a norm-referenced test. Students demonstrate their grasp of foundational skills by responding to a series of multiple-choice questions. The scores are reported as percentile points, meaning students perform as well as or better than a certain percentage of other students in the nation.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

National Assessment of Educational Progress is often referred to as the Nation's Report Card. It is the only measure of student achievement in the United States that allows comparisons by state and to the national average. The performance of students in Arkansas can be compared with the performance of students across the nation or in other states. NAEP, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, has been conducted for more than 30 years.

The NAEP exams are given to students in grades 4, 8 and 12 in a variety of subjects, including reading, mathematics, writing, science, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts. Each of these subjects is tested periodically, with mathematics and reading assessed every two years in grades 4 and 8.

The exam questions are either multiple choice or open-ended, where the students write their own responses. The NAEP exams are given to only a representative sample of the student population. About 100 schools in grade 4 and 100 schools in grade 8 are selected from every state to participate.

For each subject area tested, 25 to 30 students are randomly selected from each grade. All of the data are then combined to represent all students in the state. There are no individual student results.

End-of Course Exams

The end-of-course exams monitor the academic progress at the high school level. These assessments are administered to students at the completion of courses in algebra and geometry.

ELL Language Acquisition Assessment

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act requires an annual assessment of students who do not speak English as a native language to measure their oral language, reading, and writing skills in English. The State of Arkansas has adopted the MAC II Test of English Language Proficiency. The test measures proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and comprehension. The test is given during the spring to all Limited English Proficient (LEP) students enrolled in grades K-12.

Alternate Portfolios for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Individual Education Program (IEP)

The state's educational standards are the same for all Arkansas students. But under certain guidelines, teachers can take a different approach to assessing the educational progress of students who are severely disabled or beginning to speak English.

LEP stands for *Limited English Proficient* and refers to a student who doesn't speak English as a native language and is in the process of learning English. IEP means *Individual Education Program* and applies to children with various disabilities or handicapping conditions. Both state and federal laws require special accommodations and programs for children who meet LEP or IEP criteria.

While all students are expected to participate in the state assessments, the law recognizes that the usual tests aren't appropriate for some LEP and IEP children. So, the state has developed the Arkansas Alternate Portfolio Assessment System as an option for evaluating the performance of these students at grades 3-8, 11, and in certain 9th grade math courses.

This type of assessment involves inferring a student's progress by reviewing a *portfolio*, which is a collection of the student's work or other performance indicators over a certain period of time. This approach to assessment assures that the progress of all students is measured regularly so educators have valid information upon which to base decisions in the children's best interests.

Q: What do all these tests mean?

A: For those not meeting proficiency standards, it means

- (1) Intervention
- (2) Academic Improvement Plans
- (3) Possible Retention

As teachers identify students who aren't meeting proficiency expectations, intervention will be the key to continued academic progress.

- A student's progression from one grade to the next can be denied if the student does not receive a passing rate on the state mandated criterion reference assessment and fails to participate in his/her academic improvement plan.
 - * The State Board will establish proficiency levels of performance on statewide assessments for each grade level.
 - * Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, any student who doesn't pass the statewide assessments will participate in an intense remediation program tailored to meet the identified deficiencies through an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP).
- Students who don't demonstrate proficiency on statewide assessments will participate in an AIP designed by teachers working together with the student's parents.
 - * Students in Grades 1-6 who have been identified for an AIP but don't participate in the plan to correct their deficiencies will be retained.
 - * Students who don't pass end-of-course exams will participate in a remediation program to receive credit for that course. Beginning in 2009-2010 students must pass an end-of-course exam or alternative assessment in order to receive credit for the course. Students will be given several chances to pass end-of-course exams.
- Students in grades K-2 who are deficient in reading skills, based on statewide assessments, will participate in intensive reading instruction utilizing a reading program approved by the State Board of Education.
 - * Students will continue in the intensive reading instruction until the reading deficiency is corrected.

Grades K-4: Smart Start

Smart Start is a comprehensive approach to improving reading and mathematics achievement for students in grades K-4. The goal of Smart Start is to have all children meet or exceed grade-level requirements in reading and mathematics by grade 4.

Therefore, reading, writing and mathematics shall be incorporated into all curriculum areas for these early grades. All students shall receive instruction annually in the following subject areas:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Tools for Learning
- Fine Arts
- Practical Living Skills/Career Exploration
- Health & Safety Education and Physical Education

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW for 2005-2006

Grade Tested	Criterion-Referenced Test	NAEP	Norm-Referenced and National Tests
K	ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Vocabulary, Word Analysis, Listening, Language, Math
1	ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Vocabulary, Word Analysis, Reading Comprehension, Listening, Language, Math Concepts, Math Problem Solving
2	ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Vocabulary, Word Analysis, Reading Comprehension, Listening, Language, Math Concepts, Math Problem Solving
3	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Reading, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
4	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition	U.S. History Civics	Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science

Grades 5-8: Smart Step

Smart Step is a comprehensive initiative based on the premise that all students can be successful. The goal is to have all students on grade level in reading and mathematics by the end of grade 8.

Again, reading, writing and mathematics shall be incorporated into all curriculum areas that includes instruction annually in the following subject areas:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Education
- Fine Arts
- Health & Safety
- Tools for Learning
- Career and Technical Education
- Arkansas History

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW for 2005-2006

Grade Tested	Criterion-Referenced Test	NAEP	Norm-Referenced and National Tests
5	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
6	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
7	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
8	Benchmark Literacy & Math Alternate Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition	U.S. History Civics	Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science ACT EXPLORE

Grades 9-12: Next Step

Next Step is a state initiative focused on improving Arkansas public high schools for all students so that they are prepared for life beyond graduation. The goal is to implement educational strategies that are innovative, effective, rigorous, relevant, and rewarding so that students are prepared to compete and be successful in the ever-changing global marketplace.

High School Graduation Requirements

For the graduating classes of 2005 - 2008, a minimum total of 21 units must be earned by a student in grades 9 -12 in order for that student to be entitled to graduate from an Arkansas public high school. Only one of the units can be a physical education course. The 21 units are as follows:

Common Core - 15 units

- English - 4 units
- Social Studies - 3 units (1 unit of World History, 1 unit of U.S. History, 1/2 unit of Civics or Government)
- Mathematics - 3 units (1 unit of Algebra or its equivalent, 1 unit of Geometry or its equivalent)
- Science - 3 units (at least 1 unit of biology and 1 unit of physical science)
- Oral Communications - 1/2 unit
- Physical Education - 1/2 unit
- Health & Safety - 1/2 unit
- Fine Arts - 1/2 unit

Career Focus - 6 units

- All units in the career focus requirement are established by the local school district.

All the common core and career focus units must total at least 21 units to graduate. Local school districts may require additional units for graduation beyond the 15 common core units and 6 career focus units.

For the graduating classes of 2009, an additional math unit will be required, equaling 22 minimum units required to graduate.

For the graduating class of 2010 and beyond, students will be required to meet the Smart Core curriculum requirements of 22 units, which are as follows:

Smart Core Curriculum - 16 units

- English - 4 units to be taken in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades

- Social Studies - 3 units

Civic or Civics/American Government

World History

American History

- Mathematics - 4 units

Algebra I or Algebra A & B (Grades 7-8 or 8-9)

Geometry or Investigating Geometry or Geometry A & B (Grades 8-9 or 9-10)

Algebra II

1 unit from the following options (Transitions to College Math, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Trigonometry, Statistics, Computer Math, Algebra III or Advanced Placement Math)

In addition, all students must take a mathematics course in grade 11 or grade 12 and complete Algebra II)

- Physical Science - 3 units from the following options:

Physical Science

Biology

Applied Biology/Chemistry

Chemistry

Physics

Principles of Technology I & II

PIC Physics

- Oral Communications - 1/2 unit
- Physical Education - 1/2 unit
- Health & Safety - 1/2 unit
- Fine Arts - 1/2 unit

Career Focus - 6 units

- All units in the career focus requirement are established by the local school district.

All the common core and career focus units must total at least 22 units to graduate. Local school districts may require additional units for graduation beyond the 16 common core units and 6 career focus units.

Beginning with those students who are in 9th grade during 2006-2007, all high school students will participate in the Smart Core curriculum unless the parent or guardian waives the student's right to participate. In that event, the curriculum units are the same for the original Common Core curriculum with the exception of 4 units of Mathematics (1 unit of Algebra, 1 unit of Geometry; concurrent credit college courses may be substituted).

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW for 2005-2006

Grade Tested	Criterion-Referenced Test	NAEP	Norm-Referenced and National Tests
9	End-of-Course Algebra I Algebra I Portfolio for LEP 9th Grade Math for IEP ELL Language Acquisition		Iowa Test: Reading Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science
10	End-of-Course Geometry Geometry Portfolios for LEP ELL Language Acquisition Development only of Biology items		ACT PLAN
11	Grade 11 Literacy Literacy Portfolios for LEP and IEP ELL Language Acquisition		ACT Advanced Placement Exams
12	ELL Language Acquisition	U.S. History Civics Economics	ACT Advanced Placement Exams

Definitions:

ACT: The ACT is a college entrance exam that assesses high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The multiple-choice tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science; and the writing test, which is optional, measures skill in planning and writing a short essay. For more information go to: <http://www.act.org/aap/>

ACT EXPLORE: The ACT EXPLORE program is an assessment that is designed to help 8th and 9th grade students explore a broad range of options for their future. EXPLORE is made up of four academic achievement tests: English, mathematics, reading and science, as well as other information that is helpful for students and parents. For more information go to: <http://www.act.org/explore/>

ACT PLAN: The ACT PLAN is a “pre-ACT” test that is generally given in the fall of the 10th grade year and is a powerful predictor of success on the ACT. It is generally given to all students because it is recognized as a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for their remaining high school and post-graduation years. For more information go to: <http://www.act.org/plan/>

Advanced Placement Courses: Advanced Placement (AP) Courses are a series of courses administered by the College Board and Educational Testing Service that high

school students can take to earn college credit. Students must master a generally higher level of coursework and pass an accompanying test.

Concurrent Credit Courses: Concurrent Credits are courses or coursework that satisfy both college and high school credit hours. A 9th- through 12th-grade student who successfully completes a college course(s) from an institution approved by the Arkansas Department of Education is given credit toward high school grades and graduation at the rate of one-half high school credit for each three semester hours of college credit. Unless approved by the school's principal prior to enrolling for the course, the concurrent credit is applied toward the student's graduation requirements as an elective.

Refrigerator Curriculum Documents: So that all parents can be familiar with what their child will be taught and expected to learn at each grade level, the Arkansas Department of Education provides "refrigerator curriculum" documents on its website. These documents outline grades-specific (grades K-8) curriculum samples for parents to use in supporting and helping their child achieve in the classroom. The easy-to-read format allows parents and students to print and display the curriculum sheets in a high-traffic, seldom-missed spot in their homes—such as the door of the refrigerator. The information contained on each sheet is taken from the state's Curriculum Frameworks. Your child's teacher or principal can give you a copy of these documents. Or you can find them at: http://arkedu.state.ar.us/parents/refrigerator_curriculum.html

Accountability

Accountability:

- To provide an explanation for something
- To be responsible for something or be an important factor in something

No Child Left Behind (Federal Law)

In 2001, Congress passed far-reaching legislation called the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The goal of NCLB is to close or dramatically narrow the differences in academic achievement among American

students without regard to race, ethnicity, immigrant status and wealth. It is grounded in the belief that the success of American democracy and our economic future depends on a society in which everyone is educated to their full potential. At its foundation, NCLB requires every state to bring 100 percent of students to state standards by the year 2014.

The NCLB law has several key elements that apply to every state and all public schools.

Standards: All states are required to set challenging standards for what children should know and be able to do in reading, math and science at various grade levels.

Assessments: All states must develop or use assessments in reading and math every year in grades 3-8. Students will also be tested at least once in high school. All students must take the tests, and all tests must be tied to their standards.

Report Cards: Each school must produce reports for individual students that explain what their scores mean. In addition, states and school districts are required to publish annual report cards for all public schools. These must include data on school and student performance, schools identified as needing improvement, graduation rates and teacher qualifications.

High Quality Teachers: By 2005, all classroom teachers must be “highly qualified”—a term used for a teacher who proves that he/she knows the subjects he/she is teaching, has a college degree, and is state-certified. NCLB requires that all children be taught by a Highly Qualified Teacher in core academic subjects.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): All schools must make AYP in student improvement, toward a goal of all students meeting the reading and math standards by 2014. Schools that states certify as not making adequate progress are subject to sanctions, and parents may transfer their children to other, better-performing public schools at district expense.

Public School Choice: If the state says that a school is “in need of improvement”—not making adequate yearly progress—NCLB allows parents to transfer their child to another public school. In addition, the school not meeting AYP standards must pay for transportation for your child to attend a better-performing school.

Reading First: This is part of the NCLB that is dedicated to ensuring all children learn to read on grade level by the third grade. Reading First provides money to states and many school districts to support high quality reading programs based on the best scientific research.

Extra Help With Learning: If the state says that a school is “in need of improvement”—not making adequate yearly progress—for two years in a row, NCLB requires that the school provide children with free tutoring and extra help with schoolwork. This extra help is referred to as Supplemental Education Services.

Parental Involvement: NCLB requires all schools to develop plans to get parents more involved in their child’s education and improving the school. Ask your child’s school how you can get involved.

Chart:

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Timeline

Chart Headings:

NCLB Status	Action Required by NCLB
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School doesn’t make AYP for two years in a row.

In the following school year:

- School must develop an improvement plan,
- Local education agency must provide technical assistance, and
- Students must be offered the option of transferring to a higher performing school.

School doesn’t make AYP for three years in a row.

In addition to earlier measures, the local education agency must offer supplemental services to low-income students.

School doesn’t make AYP for four years in a row.

In addition to the earlier measures, the local education agency must do one or more of the following:

- Replace school staff responsible for school not meeting AYP.
- Implement new curriculum.

- Decrease management authority at the school level.
- Appoint outside expert to advise the school.
- Extend the school day or year.
- Change the schools' internal organizational structure.

School doesn't make AYP for five years in a row.

In addition to earlier measures, the local education agency must prepare a plan to restructure the school in one of the following ways:

- Reopen the school as a public charter school.
- Replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's failure to make AYP.
- Enter into a contract with an entity, such as a private management company with demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the school as a public school.
- Turn the operation of the school over to the state education agency, if permitted under state law and agreed to by the state.

School doesn't make AYP for six years in a row.

In addition to earlier measures, the local education agency must implement the restructuring plan at the school.

CHART:

Arkansas Schools That Made Adequate Yearly Progress and Schools in Need of Improvement, 2004

Most state's low-performing schools are not at the restructuring stage of the AYP timeline. But given the potentially large number of schools that may face this fate in the next few years, school restructuring is sure to become more of an issue for education communities and state policymakers.

Percent of All Schools That Met Adequate Yearly Progress Requirements
77%

Schools Reported as "In Need of Improvement"

Percent - Year 1 and Higher	Number	
30%	Year 1	231
	Year 2	69
	Year 3	4
	Year 4 and Higher	1

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

Charter schools are public schools of choice that operate with freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional public schools. The charter establishing each such school is a performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, and methods of assessment.

Charters are granted for a period of up to five years. At the end of the term, the State Board of Education may renew the school's contract. Charter schools are accountable to the State Board of Education to produce positive academic results and adhere to the charter contract. The basic concept of charter schools is that they exercise increased autonomy in return for this accountability. This autonomy is gained by requesting exemption from Title 6 of the Arkansas Education Code and State Board of Education rules. The charter schools are accountable for both academic results and fiscal practices to several groups: the sponsor that grants them, the parents who choose them, and the public that funds them.

The maximum number of open-enrollment charter schools allowed in Arkansas was recently increased (in 2005) from 12 to 24, to be phased in over a three-year period with an equal distribution across the state's four congressional districts. For more information about Charter Schools in Arkansas: http://arkedu.state.ar.us/schools/schools_charter.html

The Student Assessment and Educational Accountability Act (Arkansas Act 35)

The purpose of Act 35 is to provide transparency, easy-to-understand information needed to improve our public schools. This law requires schools to measure the gains in learning that students make from one year to the next through longitudinal tracking, explained below. Act 35 also provides for parents to be kept informed about the educational improvements their schools are making and how well they're performing, both academically and in managing their financial resources.

Act 35 is specific about how the educational system is to keep track of students' achievement by means of standardized tests. These tests, and how they are measured, make up what is known as the *assessment program*, because it gives educators the information they need to assess (take stock of) how well students are learning.

The assessment program requires certain statistical measurements of students' test results, known as "value added" calculations. Value-added data can reveal detailed information about each student's academic growth and also allow longitudinal tracking, that is, a long-term view of each student's academic progress from one year to the next.

Value-added assessment is a new way to measure teaching and learning. It gives educators a method to determine whether *what* and *how* they teach is improving student achievement. Based on a review of students' test scores from previous grades, researchers can predict the amount of growth those students are likely to make in a given year. Value-added assessment can show whether students have made the expected amount of progress, have made less than the expected progress, or have stretched to make extra gains beyond those expected. Over several years it is possible

to measure the long-term impact that a particular school, teaching method, or curriculum has had on student achievement. This will help:

- assess the yearly learning gains of each student toward achieving the Arkansas State Standards.
- provide data for evaluating the effectiveness of what is being taught and how it is being taught.
- uncover students' educational strengths and challenges, as well as their readiness to be moved on to the next grade level.
- identify students who need extra help in school, requiring that they get extra instruction so they can perform at their grade level before they're promoted to the next grade.
- assess how well academic goals and performance standards are being met.
- provide information to guide the development and evaluation of educational policies and programs.
- indicate how well Arkansas students are performing compared with students from other states.

Act 35 also:

- Requires developmentally-appropriate standardized assessments for grades K-2 for early identification of children who need extra help so they won't fall behind in school.
- Directs schools to develop an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) for each student who doesn't score proficient or advanced on one of the subject areas on the state-mandated tests in a subject area.
 - The AIP is to be developed together with the student's parents.
 - Students who don't participate in their AIP won't be promoted to the next grade level.
- Requires that, starting in 2009-10, high school students must pass an end-of-course exam to receive credit for the course that's being tested. Since these courses are required for graduation, the tests effectively become exit exams.
- Establishes a system to identify best financial practices and, once identified, assigns letter grades to schools according to how well they implement those practices.

Starting in 2009-10, the Act 35 accountability program:

- Establishes an *academic performance* evaluation system for schools based on the results of the Arkansas criterion-referenced (Benchmark) tests. Schools will annually receive a performance rating level of 1 through 5, with 1 the lowest rating and 5 the highest.
- Establishes an *academic improvement* evaluation system for schools based on value-added information from the results of the Arkansas criterion-referenced (Benchmark) tests. Schools will annually receive a performance

level of 1 through 5 to recognize schools where students have made larger annual gains than normally expected.

- Establishes an award system for high performing schools, if funds are available.
- Allows an expansion of school choice for students who attend schools that are classified as low-performing schools (Level 1) for two consecutive years, so those students can transfer to a higher performing school at the state's expense.

Accountability Comparisons Between Act 35 and NCLB

No Child Left Behind Act, 2001	Arkansas' Act 35, 2003: Student Assessment and Educational Accountability
Assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing in reading and math for students in grades 3-8 • By 2007-08, students tested at least once in elementary, middle, and high school in science • National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing in reading and math every other year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally appropriate testing for students in grades K-2 • Norm-referenced tests in grades 3-9 • End of course tests in algebra I, geometry, literacy and other content areas as defined by the State
Accountability: For Schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide reports will include performance data disaggregated according to race, gender, and other criteria • Annual report cards will be made available to parents, educators, citizens, and policymakers • Schools are labeled as "in need of improvement" if they fail to meet their AYP goals two years in a row • Parents will be allowed to transfer their child to a better performing public school • Expands federal support for charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools undergo a best financial management practices review biennially, conducted through site visits and receive a grade rating between an "A" and an "F" • Beginning in 2007-08, schools will receive a ranking between 1 and 5 based on student performances on criterion-referenced exams
Accountability: For Districts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts publish annual report cards that report on the students as a whole as well as specified disadvantaged subgroups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts must publish a school performance report in the local newspaper by October 15 of each year, beginning in 2004
Accountability: For Students	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any eligible student in a school labeled as failing after one year will be eligible for supplemental services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students not meeting the proficiency level will have a personal academic improvement plan • Beginning in 2004-05, non-proficient students will participate in a remediation program

The Omnibus Quality Education Act of 2003 (State Law)

While the State of Arkansas has adopted many laws and rules that control how local school districts must operate, Arkansas, like almost all other states, still gives local school district boards, administrators, and other school district employees a large measure of “local control” over how school children are educated. However, under the Arkansas Constitution it is the State’s ultimate duty to ensure that children receive an adequate public education. If local school officials cannot or will not provide an adequate education to all of their students, the State must step in to take corrective action.

Accordingly, the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 1467 of 2003, which is commonly referred to as “The Omnibus Quality Education Act of 2003.” The so-called Omnibus Act is lengthy—39 pages—but its basic purpose is to give the Department of Education and the State Board of Education the authority to intervene when local school district officials fail. The Omnibus Act authorizes the State Board of Education to develop minimum standards that all school districts must satisfy with regard to, among other things, course offerings, teacher qualifications, financial management and reporting, and student performance on State-mandated tests. School districts that fail to meet these standards may be classified by the State as being in academic or fiscal distress, and must then develop State-approved plans to remedy the situation.

The Omnibus Act also authorizes the Department of Education and the State Board of Education to take action when school districts will not or cannot take appropriate corrective action, including but not limited to the authority to suspend or remove local school district superintendents and/or board members, to take over the operation of school district, and the authority to annex or consolidate school districts with other school districts.

Annual School Performance Report

The Annual School Performance Report Card, commonly referred to as the School Report Card, is produced annually by the Arkansas Department of Education. It’s different from the reports you get from your child’s teachers during the year. Those reports tell you how your own child is doing. These report cards tell you how your child’s school is doing—compared to last year and the year before, and compared to other schools. The intent of these annual reports is for parents to carefully review the information, contact their child’s school with specific questions or concerns, and become more empowered and engaged in the process of public education.

To see how your child’s school and district is performing, visit the Arkansas School Information Site at: <http://www.as-is.org/reportcard/>

Your School’s Website

Arkansas state law requires that every school district host a website.

To find your school district’s website go to:

<http://www.as-is.org/directory/schoolsites.html>

How To Use The School Report Card

Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your child's school. Which groups of students are doing well? Which groups are not doing so well? What are the academic trends from year to year? Are all students making gains, or so some groups stay the same, or fall behind? How does the school compare to the district or state average?

Ask what is being done to address the weaknesses identified by the data. For example, if reading scores are low, what is the school doing to improve reading instruction? If students with limited English are not making progress, how will the school modify its program for English language learners? For low-performing students, what strategies have been put in place to help them catch up to others?

**Another source for school data is the Just For The Kids website:
www.justs4kids.org**

School Choice

Public school choice in Arkansas allows students to attend a public school in a district other than the one in which they reside. The state law creating public school choice is designed to provide parents and guardians greater freedom to determine the most effective school for meeting their children's individual educational needs.

Before a student can attend a school in a nonresident district, the student's parent or guardian must submit an application to that district. The application must be postmarked no later than July 1 of the year the student would began the fall semester in the nonresident district. The nonresident district may reject an application for admission if its acceptance would necessitate the addition of staff or classrooms; exceed the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or school building; or cause the district to provide educational services not currently provided in the affected school. The district must reject applications that would cause it to be out of compliance with applicable laws and regulations regarding desegregation.

Early Childhood Education

Today in Arkansas and around the country, there is an increased awareness that children need to start school ready to learn. When children have a strong educational foundation, they are more likely to succeed not only in school but also in life. Arkansas has made a strong commitment to preparing our children for school through several kindergarten and pre-kindergarten initiatives designed to better prepare all children for the classroom.

Pre-Kindergarten

Studies show that in order for a child to reach their full potential as curious, confident and able lifelong learners and contributing members of their families and communities, they must receive warm, consistent care (nurturing) during the early years of life. Young children are cared for in a variety of settings, including the child's home, child care centers and family child care. As more mothers are entering the workforce, the quality of care that young children receive is a primary concern. To meet this concern, the Arkansas Early Childhood Framework and the Framework for Infant and Toddler Care were developed and aligned with the Kindergarten Framework so that children can have seamless transitions from one level of early care and education to the next. Whether a child is at home with a parent or in an early care and education setting, there is information and support to assist caregivers in providing quality care. In fact, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, Arkansas is the only state in the country to get a perfect 10 for its state-funded preschool quality standards.

During the past two legislative sessions, Arkansas lawmakers have expanded and authorized funding for 3- and 4-year-old children from eligible families to attend free early childhood education programs. These programs are not daycares but rather are educational programs led by certified teachers that use accredited curriculum. They teach students social skills as well as learning basics to get them ready for school.

The following 3- and 4-year-old children are eligible for the program:

- From a family who's gross family income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Parents without a high school diploma or GED.
- Low birth weight (below 5 pounds, 9 ounces).
- A teen parent at child's birth.
- A family with a history of substance abuse/addiction.
- Families that are eligible for Title I programs.
- Families that are eligible for services under IDEA.
- A family with a history of abuse or neglect.
- Children who have been the victims of abuse or neglect.
- Children with demonstrable developmental delays that can be identified through screenings.

- Children who have limited English proficiency.

These early childhood education classes are available in cities across the state. To see if you qualify or to find out how to enroll, call the Department of Human Services toll free at 1-800-445-3316.

Arkansas has made much progress providing access to high-quality early childhood education programs. Parents have more options now than ever before: Arkansas Better Chance, Arkansas Better Chance for School Success, Head Start, Early Head Start, HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), and Even Start. For more information about the programs in your area, go to <http://www.accessarkansas.org/afl/program.html> or call the Department of Human Services toll-free number, 1-800-445-3316.

Kindergarten

Starting school is a big step in the life of a child. Studies have shown being ready to learn in school means a child will have a head start that will last a lifetime. The Arkansas School Readiness Committee has identified 38 indicators that will help get a child's educational experiences off to a good start. The Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist is simply a list of skills that will give parents a place to begin in preparing your child for entering kindergarten. While mastery of any or all of the skills identified here is not required for admission to kindergarten, the Arkansas Department of Education hopes that parents will use these indicators to help children enter kindergarten with confidence.

Here is a link to the tri-fold brochure, Kindergarten Readiness Indicators:

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/parents/indicator_checklist.html

Early Education prepares children for success in school!

- Children who participate in high-quality early childhood education develop better language skills, score higher in school-readiness tests and have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems once they enter school.
- Children with high-quality early learning experiences are 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade.
- Children from low-income families who participate in high-quality early childhood education programs show the most benefits—they repeat fewer grades and learn at higher levels.
- A child who enters school reading below grade level has only a one in eight chance of catching up.

School Facility Improvements

During the 85th General Assembly session (2005), state legislators spent much time addressing the issue of improving and upgrading school facilities as addressed by the Arkansas Supreme Court in its landmark Lake View III decision. Their task was to review the recommendations of the Arkansas Statewide Education Facilities Assessment report and determine how to fund them. In the end, the legislature and the Governor approved a package of several measures to address the needs of Arkansas students with respect to adequate school facilities and a process for fair funding. The specific measures include the following:

- Lawmakers created a system of state oversight of public school academic facilities so that each school district can provide the opportunity for each student to have an adequate education.
- New law requires each school district to submit a facilities improvement plan and a facilities master plan, indicating immediate, short-term and long-term needs.
- Using this information, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) will develop a State Master Plan and will make annual recommendations concerning upcoming facility needs, projected expenses, and the state portion of these expenses based on an established formula that considers the financial resources of each school district.
- The ADE will develop standards for construction and/or the purchase, maintenance, and repairs of school facilities and equipment. Further, the ADE will develop a plan for unannounced site visits to schools to measure compliance with these standards.
- When a particular school facility or district has been designated as “in facility distress,” several options and/or sanctions are available for ADE to work with the district. Those options range from providing on-site technical assistance to petitioning the State Board of Education for the consolidation, annexation or reconstitution of a school district in facility distress.
- In terms of funding, the percentage of state dollars that school districts receive to pay for facility improvements will be based on a wealth index. Local wealth will be measured by the amount of revenue a district’s property taxes generate, divided by the student population. Therefore, districts in areas that have a strong economic base from which to generate property taxes will receive less state funding than will districts with greater financial need.

Child Health Report

More and more adults and children are becoming overweight. This upward trend is the result of changes in eating and physical activity habits over the last 40 years. Some of the facts about obesity include:

- About 21 percent of Arkansas children are now overweight.
- Another 17 percent of Arkansas children are at risk for becoming overweight.
- Obesity is the number one risk factor for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
- Obesity in adults has increased in Arkansas from 13.2 percent in 1991 to 23.3 percent in 2000.

Recognizing that obesity is best prevented in childhood, Act 1220 focused on strategies that would affect children. These strategies are aimed at providing healthy choices and activities in the school environment.

Act 1220 is a comprehensive piece of legislation that addresses the key components of a good intervention system.

1. Data Gathering and Research: a Body Mass Index (BMI) screening for every child and a confidential report sent to parents.
2. State standards that address the foods served to children in school, the amount of physical activity students receive during a school day, nutrition education provided to students, and training of food service personnel.
3. New regulations that address access to vending machines on all school campuses.
4. Local school districts are now required to establish school nutrition and physical activity advisory committees that will include students, parents and community members.

Act 1220 is about more than the Body Mass Index or vending machines. It is about including state and local leaders, parents and school personnel in an effort to provide students with healthier options and opportunities. The recommendations from Act 1220 are a work in progress and will be revisited as the Child Health Advisory Committee continues its work.

Parental and Family Involvement

About NCLB

No Child Left Behind supports parent involvement because research overwhelmingly demonstrates the positive effect that parents can have on their children's academic achievement. In the event a school is identified as needing improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, the law requires the school or school district to notify parents accordingly and to explain how they can become involved in school improvement efforts. The law requires all the schools or school districts give parents local report cards with up-to-date information about their child's school.

In addition, the law has other specific requirements on parent involvement that include the following:

- The Arkansas Department of Education must support, collect and distribute information on effective parent involvement practices to local education agencies and schools.
- The law in Title I (see glossary) spells out specific measures that school districts and schools receiving Title I funds must take to make sure that parents are involved in significant areas, including:
 - overall planning at the district and school levels;
 - written policies on parent involvement;
 - annual meetings;
 - training;
 - coordinating parent involvement strategies among federal education programs, such as Title I, Head Start, and Reading First; and
 - evaluating those strategies and revising them, if needed.
- Schools that have school-wide programs must involve parents in developing plans for those programs. Such programs are designed to raise the achievement of low-achieving students in high-poverty Title I schools by improving instruction throughout the entire school, thus using Title I funds to serve all children.
- The law provides for school choice.

About State Laws

Act 603 of 2003, the Parent Involvement Act, requires all public schools to develop and implement plans with input from parents to help develop stronger partnerships between school and home. The information below highlights some of the requirements of the law.

Act 603 requires all public schools:

- To develop a parent involvement plan that involves parents from all grade levels, is comprehensive and coordinated, and recognizes that communication with parents should be regular, two-way, and meaningful.

- To designate one certified staff member to serve as a parent facilitator to organize the components of the Parent Involvement Plan. This plan is to be updated on an annual basis and must include parental input in its development.
- To create a Parent Center.
- To provide professional development of no less than two hours for teachers and three hours for administrators designed to “enhance the understanding of effective parental involvement strategies.”
- To encourage parents to participate as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and family.

What Research Shows about Parental/Family Involvement

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) built on the six types of parent and family involvement identified by Dr. Joyce Epstein, a leading parent researcher from Johns Hopkins University, to develop the National PTA standards. The standards are:

1. **Communicating:** Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
2. **Parenting:** Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
3. **Student Learning:** Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
4. **Volunteering:** Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
5. **School Decision Making and Advocacy:** Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
6. **Collaborating with the Community:** Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning. (*National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, 2004*)

After analyzing and correlating 85 rigorous studies, Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla (1994) concluded that the most accurate predictor of a student’s achievement in school is the extent to which the student’s family is able to: (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) express high expectations for their children’s achievement and future careers; and (3) become involved in their children’s education at school and in the community. Each of these three factors can look very different in different cultures. Our schools reflect the rich diversity of our country. When schools and communities learn about the values, skills, and dreams of the students’ families and home cultures, it can begin to recognize the strengths and opportunities that are there.

Other important family involvement research tells us that:

- Student achievement increases directly with the increased duration and intensity of parental involvement.
- Students with involved parents have: higher test scores and grades, better attendance, more positive attitudes and behavior, and higher graduation rates.
- The academic level of parents, their socioeconomic level, and their ethnic or racial origin are not determining factors for academic success.

- Successful students have parents who have a positive attitude about education, believe their children can do well academically, and convey that belief to their children.

Community and Business Involvement

It takes more than just parents and teachers to ensure that our children have a positive experience in school: it takes the whole community. Local businesses, senior citizens, civic and social organizations, government agencies, and faith-based groups all benefit from a strong educational system for children. Even though 70 percent of citizens don't have school-age children, all groups are needed to play a vital role in the success of public schools. But how can they be meaningfully involved?

Community members can actively support their public schools in many ways, such as:

- mentoring or tutoring a child;
- introducing new ideas and helping implement new programs;
- offering to help with out-of-school activities for children;
- contributing to broad-based support for the school system, including identifying strategies to reach all parts of the community;
- identifying volunteers who can help implement school district plans;
- staying engaged and asking questions to understand the accountability measures required of public schools;
- asking educators how to help them meet their goals.

Local businesses can also help support student achievement by:

- advising schools in developing the curricula and instruction that students will need in the world of work;
- participating in partners in education programs;
- speaking to classes about the relevance of schoolwork to employment;
- designing work-study programs so students can gain insight from first-hand experience in the workplace;
- donating equipment, supplies, and in-kind services to the schools;
- helping school systems establish specialized programs to capitalize on cutting-edge knowledge in such areas as technology;
- sponsoring field trips to places of business for on-site learning;
- reinforcing the importance of education and parenting skills with their own employees;
- establishing policies that give employees time during the workday to meet with their children's teachers or to volunteer at a school;
- supporting local millage elections and lobbying state legislators on key education issues;
- running for the local school board.

Web Site Resource Directory

Just for the Kids

www.just4kids.org

Communities Just for the Kids

www.communitiesjust4kids.org

Arkansas Department of Education

<http://arkedu.state.ar.us>

Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas, Inc.

www.statechamber-aia.dina.org

Arkansas State PTA Association

www.arkansaspta.org

Arkansas School Boards Association

www.arsba.org

Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators

www.aaea.k12.ar.us

Arkansas Education Association

www.aeaonline.org

Arkansans for Education Reform Foundation

www.educatearkansas.com

Arkansas Rural Education Association

<http://se.sesc.k12.ar.us/area>

Other Arkansas Resources

Arkansas 21st Century Network

www.yale.edu/21C/

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

www.aradvocates.org

Arkansas Department of Higher Education

<http://www.arkansashighered.com/>

Arkansas Department of Workforce Education

<http://dwe.arkansas.gov/>

Arkansas General Assembly
www.arkleg.state.ar.us

ARKids First
www.arkidsfirst.com/home/htm

Center for Effective Parenting
www.parenting-ed.org

**Children's Research Center
Institute for Economic Advancement
University of Arkansas at Little Rock**
www.aiea.ualr.edu/csdc/CRC/index.html

**Division of Early Child Care and Early Childhood Education Programs
Arkansas Department of Human Services**
www.state.ar.us/childcare/

Learning Disabilities Association of Arkansas
www.lidaarkansas.org

**The National Office for Research, Measurement and Evaluation Systems
(NORMES)**
www.normes.uark.edu

University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy
www.uark.edu/ua/oep

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)
www.arkansashighered.com/student_site/youth.html

National Education Internet Resources

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
www.aspira.org

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
www.ascd.org

Center for Law and Education
www.cleweb.org

**Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships
National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University**
www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm

Coalition of Essential Schools
www.essentialschools.org

Communities in Schools
www.cisnet.org

Connect for Kids
www.connectforkids.org

Do Something
www.dosomething.org

Education Commission of the States
www.ecs.org

Institute for Responsive Education
www.responsiveeducation.org

Just For The Kids
www.just4kids.org

Learning Disabilities Association of America
www.ldanatl.org

National Alliance of Black School Educators
www.nabse.org

**National Assessment of Educational Progress
National Assessment Governing Board**
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/sitemap.asp>

National Center for Education Statistics
www.nces.org

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
www.ncpie.org

National Coalition of Advocates for Students
www.igc.org/ncas

National Community Education Association
www.ncea.com

**National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
Clemson University**
www.dropoutprevention.org

National Education Association
www.nea.org

National Parent Teacher Association
www.pta.org

National School Boards Association
www.nsba.org

National Urban League
www.nul.org/index.html

Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc.
www.PATNC.org

Public Agenda
www.publicagenda.org

Public Education Network
www.publiceducation.org

Rural School and Community Trust
www.ruraledu.org

Quality Education for Minorities Network
Qemnetwork.qem.org

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
www.sedl.org

Southern Education Foundation
www.southerneducation.org

Southern Regional Education Board
www.sreb.org

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

Glossary of Terms

ABC Program – Arkansas Better Chance Program: State funded early care and education program that serves educationally deprived children, ages birth through 5, excluding kindergarten programs. A top priority are districts where 75 percent of students score below proficient in literacy and math on the benchmark exams, as well as those children in schools that have been designated on school improvement status. Any willing provider may apply for funding as long as they meet the State Quality Approval and ABC Standards.

ACSIP – Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan: A plan developed by a local school team that is based on student performance data and other information and provides a plan of action to address areas where students are not scoring well on the benchmark tests. The local school team members should include teachers, parents, and community members. The plan includes professional development, technology, materials, and resources needed to carry out the plan. This plan determines how federal funds will be used at the school.

ACTAAP – Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program: The blueprint for education in Arkansas which includes the state’s Smart Start Initiative (focuses on grades K-4), Smart Step Initiative (focuses on grades 5-8), and education for grades 9-12. ACTAAP represents the result of extensive planning and discussion by Arkansas educators, policymakers, and school patrons. The authority to implement ACTAAP is firmly established in legislation by Act 999 of 1999. ACTAAP is a comprehensive system that focuses on high academic standards, professional development, student assessment, and accountability for schools.

ADE - Arkansas Department of Education: The state educational agency (SEA) designated in state law as responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

AIP - Academic Improvement Plan: A plan that is to be developed for each student who fails to meet the satisfactory pass levels on any portion of the criterion-referenced tests and for students in grades K-2 on the state mandated NRT for those grades. This plan is to have a detailed description of supplemental and/or intervention and remedial instruction used to help a student in the areas where he/she is not achieving. The AIP is developed by teachers, school personnel, and the student’s parents and describes the parent’s roles and responsibilities as well as the consequences for failure to participate in the plan. **Students who do not participate in their remediation program are retained.**

AP – Advanced Placement: A high school level college preparatory course administered by the College Board that students can take to earn college credit. Students must master a generally higher level of coursework and pass an accompanying test to earn college credit.

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress: The minimum level of academic performance school districts must achieve each year in reading and math (and eventually science) on the state-mandated criterion-reference assessment (Benchmark Exam). Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), each state sets the AYP gains every school must meet to reach 100 percent proficiency by 2014. Parents will be notified if their child’s school has not met AYP requirements.

Academic Content Standards: The written documents that outline what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level. The state testing system is based on (aligned with) these content standards.

academic distress: A classification assigned to any public school district in which 75 percent or more of its students perform at the “below basic” performance level on the criterion-referenced assessments.

accountability: Being held responsible for your actions. Student assessments are used to determine how well schools and school districts are meeting their responsibility to help all students to meet the standards.

achievement gap: Refers to the difference in standardized test scores among different student groups, such as racial/ethnic or socio-economic groups.

alternative school: Schools that are set up to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems are provided an opportunity to achieve in a different setting, often with more flexible schedules, smaller teacher-student ratios, counseling support, and modified curricula.

annexation: The joining of a school district or parts of a district with a receiving district.

Arkansas Benchmark Exams: A type of criterion-referenced test that Arkansas administers to students in grades 3 through 8.

Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program: State funded early care and education program that serves children ages 3 and 4 years from families with gross income not exceeding 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

assessments: Tests or other tools that measure student skills and knowledge. They help educators and parents determine to which extent students are meeting standards. Examples include: multiple choice tests, portfolio assessments, and performance tasks.

BMI - Body Mass Index: A popular method used to gauge whether or not a person is overweight. BMI is calculated by dividing a person’s weight (in kilograms) by his or her height (in meters, squared). Schools are required to provide a student’s body mass index as part of an annual student health report to parents.

benchmark: A detailed measure of what students should know and be able to do at particular ages, grades, or developmental levels.

CRT - Criterion-Referenced Test: An assessment instrument that is customized according to the state’s curriculum frameworks. The test items are based on the academic standards in the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks and are developed by a committee of Arkansas teachers, with

support from the Arkansas Department of Education and the testing contractor. This test is also known as the State's Benchmark Exam.

charter school: Independent public schools designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs, or others who operate outside of the traditional system of public schools. They are sponsored by designated local or state educational organizations, which monitor their quality and effectiveness.

concurrent credit: Courses or coursework that satisfy both college and high school credit hours.

consolidation: The joining of two or more school districts or parts of districts to create a single new school district.

content standards: The information, ideas, and facts students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate at each grade level.

core curriculum: The course of study recommended for all students.

curriculum: The subject matter, skills, and processes that are taught so students will learn standards that have been identified at the national, state, and local level.

curriculum frameworks: The listing of what students should learn, by grade level, that guides the development of the curriculum.

desegregation: Involves eliminating the vestiges (traces) of segregation to compensate for past discriminatory acts, usually by reassigning students or faculty to remove the prior racial or ethnic identifiability of schools.

disaggregated data: In education, this means that test results are sorted by groups of students with similar characteristics: those who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or speak limited English. This helps parents and teachers see how each student group is performing.

early intervention: Short-term, intensive, focused individualized instruction developed from ongoing, daily, systemic assessment that occurs while a child is in kindergarten through grade 1 (K-1) stages of learning.

end-of-course exam: A test taken at the end of a course to measure whether a student has the knowledge and skills necessary for proficiency in that course.

- Until the 2009-2010 school year, a student not meeting the satisfactory pass levels on an end-of-course exam must participate in his/her remediation activities prescribed in an AIP to receive credit for a course.
- Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, a student not meeting the satisfactory pass levels on an exam must participate in an AIP that is to include remediation activities and

multiple opportunities to pass the exam. A student who does not pass an initial end-of-course exam will not receive credit until:

1. the student receives a satisfactory pass level on a subsequent end-of-course exam, or
2. by the end of grade 12 the student has passed an appropriate alternative assessment related to completion of an alternative exit course.

equitable: Fair to all students.

equity: The right to treatment without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, gender, handicap, lifestyle, or age. Within the educational arena, equity implies that children are treated fairly by receiving services according to their individual strengths and needs.

Essential Elements – Early Reading:

- comprehension – understanding and remembering what is read
- decoding and word recognition (phonics) – recognizing words accurately, fluently, and independently
- fluency – ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with expression
- phonemic awareness – ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language
- vocabulary – words that must be known in order to communicate effectively

Even Start: A grant-funded literacy program to help break the cycle of poverty by improving the educational opportunities of low income families through the integration of early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program.

Free and Reduced Lunch Program (now known as the National School Lunch Program):

Low-cost or free meals that are provided to children who are determined eligible according to federal guidelines. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents.

GED – General Education Development Test: The GED Tests are a nationally recognized measure of high school knowledge and skills. The GED credential is based on five areas which cover reading, writing, social studies, science, and mathematics. The tests also measure communication, information-processing, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills.

Head Start: A federally sponsored comprehensive child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT): A teacher who proves that he or she knows the subjects he or she is teaching, has a college degree, and is state-certified. No Child Left Behind requires that all core academic courses must be taught by a Highly Qualified Teacher.

HIPPY – Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters: HIPPY is a parent involvement, school readiness program that helps parents prepare their 3-, 4-, and 5-year old children for success in school and beyond. The program helps empower parents to be their child’s first teacher by giving them the tools, skills and confidence they need to work with their children in the home.

Home School: A school conducted primarily by a parent or legal guardian for their own children.

IEP – Individualized Education Plan: A written instructional plan for students with disabilities designated as special education students under federal law (IDEA).

IDEA - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A federal law that requires states to provide all eligible children who have disabilities with a free, appropriate public education, from infancy through age 21 years, consistent with State law age provisions for making education available.

IRI – Intensive Reading Improvement Plan: An intervention program for any K-2 student identified with substantial reading difficulties.

inclusion: The practice of placing students who have disabilities in regular classrooms, a practice also known as mainstreaming.

LEP – Limited English Proficiency: A student who does not speak English as a native language and is in the process of learning English.

LEA - local education agency: A public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, school district, or other political subdivision of a state.

longitudinal tracking: A system that uses test scores to keep up with the progress of the same student from year to year and from grade to grade, regardless of whether the student moves from one school to another or one district to another. Educators can use the system to help students who aren’t making appropriate academic gains. Longitudinal tracking can also be used to help develop site specific, targeted, quality professional development for educators.

modeling: Teaching by showing a student how to do a task with the expectation that the student will copy the action.

multiple choice: A test question that asks students to select the correct answer from a list.

NAEP - National Assessment of Educational Progress: NAEP, often referred to as the Nation’s Report Card, is a standards-based test that reports the percent of students who reach the “basic” level, the “proficient” level, and the “advanced” level, as well as those who are below the

basic level. NAEP exams are given to a representative sample of the student population in grades 4, 8, and 12 in every state.

NCLB - No Child Left Behind: A federal law requiring states to give tests in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 every year. According to the NCLB website, the law is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works, based on scientific research.

NRT - Norm-Referenced Test: A standardized exam based upon a student's broad-based exposure to a variety of topics. Examples of norm-referenced tests are Stanford 9 or 10, Terra Nova, and the Iowa Basic Skills Test. A norm-referenced test is used to measure and compare student performance and progress against a national sample of students at the same grade level.

open response: A test question that asks students to develop their own answer, rather than pick one from a list.

opportunity gap: A measure used on the Just for the Kids website that shows how well an individual school performed compared to the strongest-performing schools in the state serving equally or more disadvantaged students. The opportunity gap shows the difference in proficiency levels between the selected school and the top comparable schools, identifying each school's potential for improvement. If your school's scores are higher than your comparable schools, you have a positive opportunity gap. If the scores are lower, you have a negative opportunity gap.

parent, family and community involvement: The term is used broadly in referring to several different ways in which parents and community members or organizations take part in all aspects and levels of the educational process on behalf of children. Participation is both formalized (such as PTA, PTO, school-business partnerships, parent-teacher conferences, school volunteer programs, and so on) and informal (reading to children in the home, parental supervision of homework, supporting millage issues, and the like).

parent-school compact: A written agreement of shared responsibility that defines the goals and expectations of schools and parents as partners in the effort to improve student learning.

partnership: A mutually supportive arrangement between parents, businesses, or community organizations and a school or school district, often in the form of a written contract, in which the partners commit themselves to specific goals and activities intended to benefit students.

pass rate: A level of performance on student assessments that is determined by the standard-setting process, which establishes the level below which students are required to have an AIP and must participate in remediation.

performance standards: Skills and knowledge that a student is supposed to be able to demonstrate by the end of a particular grade.

portfolio assessments: A purposeful or systematic collection of selected work and self-assessments developed over time, gathered to demonstrate and evaluate progress and achievement.

poverty rate: The poverty rate of a school is generally determined by the percentage of students who are eligible to receive free or reduced-cost meals.

professional development: Intentional, ongoing, and systemic processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators to achieve specific objective. The goal is increased student learning and continuous improvement for all staff.

public engagement: The sustained, active involvement of parents, community members, and taxpayers in the improvement of schooling and efforts to reform schools.

Reading First: A part of No Child Left Behind that is dedicated to making sure all children learn to read on grade level by the third grade. Reading First provides money to states and school districts to support high quality reading programs based on the best scientific research.

refrigerator curriculum: Documents that are on the Arkansas Department of Education website that show what students will be taught and expected to learn at each grade level. These easy-to-read downloadable documents contain curriculum samples for parents to use in supporting and helping their child achieve in the classroom.

remediation: The process of providing extra instruction to help a student improve in a particular subject area identified in a student's academic improvement plan (AIP).

School Report Cards: The Annual School Performance Report Card, commonly referred to as the Report Card, is produced annually by the Arkansas Department of Education. While the Report Card does not grade or rank Arkansas schools, it does provide parents and school patrons with a wide variety of statistical information about schools and school districts.

resources: Sources of supply or support.

rigor: The goal of helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is vague, complex, and personally or emotionally challenging.

rigorous: Demanding strict attention to rules and procedures; allowing no deviation from a standard.

rubric: A scoring guide, showing what kind of work qualifies for a particular score.

SES - Supplemental Educational Services: This is the term used by No Child Left Behind to refer to extra help children from low-income families may be eligible to receive, such as tutoring and schoolwork assistance in subjects like reading and math. This help is paid for by the school and is provided free of charge to the parent. The tutoring service is chosen from a list of

approved providers and generally takes place outside the regular school day, such as after school or during the summer.

school dropout rate: The percentage of students who leave school for any of the following reasons: incarceration, failing grades, suspension or expulsion, lack of interest, conflict with school, economic hardship, pregnancy, marriage, peer conflict, lack of attendance, alcohol, drugs, or other.

school in need of improvement: This is the term No Child Left Behind uses to refer to schools receiving Title I funds that have not met state reading and math goals (AYP) for at least two years. If a school is labeled a “school in need of improvement,” it receives extra help to improve. Also, children in the school have an option to transfer to another public school within their district, including a public charter school. Children in these schools may also be eligible to receive free tutoring and extra help with schoolwork (SES).

school-wide programs: School-wide programs use Title I money to support comprehensive school improvement efforts and help all students, particularly low-achieving and at-risk students, meet state standards. At least 40 percent of a school’s students must qualify as low-income to be eligible to have a school-wide program.

staff development: See professional development

standards: Content standards are a description of what students need to know and be able to do. Performance standards are a description of how well students need to demonstrate on various skills and knowledge to be considered proficient.

standard-based test: A test that tells how a student’s performance compares to some standard of quality.

State Board of Education: The policy-making body for public elementary and secondary education in Arkansas. The Arkansas State Board of Education is a nine-member group of business and community leaders. The board is to be composed of two members from each of the state’s four congressional districts, and the remaining member is to be selected at-large. The Governor appoints members for a single seven-year term. The board meets on the second Monday of each month.

thematic units: Units of study built around a particular theme or topic that draws from two or more subject areas.

Title I: Title I is the largest federal aid program for elementary and secondary schools. Funding is based on the number of low-income students enrolled in a school. Schools use Title I money to pay for extra educational services for children who are behind or at risk of falling behind in school.

USR – Uniform Readiness Screening: A state mandated, developmentally appropriate assessment that shall be used to determine if a student has substantial difficulty reading.

value-added: Among educators, the term refers to the increase of learning that occurs over the time of a course of a course or program that is provided to a student. For example, the difference between a students reading ability from the beginning of a certain program to the end of it can be considered the value-added result.