



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARKANSAS SCHOOLS NOTIFIED CONCERNING NOT MEETING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Public schools that did not achieve adequate yearly progress this year as mandated under the federal No Child Left Behind Act were notified of their status this week. Certified letters were mailed to superintendents of 325 schools that are in some phase of school improvement. Of these:

- 96 are in year one of school improvement
- 37 are in year two of school improvement
- 90 are in year three of school improvement
- 30 are in year four of school improvement
- 3 are in year five of school improvement
- 1 is in year six of school improvement
- 68 schools that have been in school improvement have achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the first year. Schools are removed from the school improvement list after achieving AYP for two consecutive years.

The list of schools in School Improvement is available under "What's New" on the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) web site, <http://ArkansasEd.org>, and the actions pertaining to each year of school improvement are outlined below. Arkansas has just over 1,100 public schools serving grades Kindergarten through 12.

"The end goal of No Child Left Behind and, more specifically, of determining schools that are not meeting adequate yearly progress, is a good one – making all schools accountable for the academic success of each and every student," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner. "By identifying schools that don't make AYP, we are able to help them identify areas

that need strengthening through professional development or through spending additional time engaging students in the learning process. It's really meant to be a corrective and not a punitive system."

To that end, this year the ADE is implementing America's Choice, a "turn-around" model for schools that last year were as identified as being in years three, four or five of school improvement. America's Choice is a research-based set of strategies shown to improve the overall academic success in low-performing schools. Teachers and administrators from the 36 identified schools have already begun training in the program this summer, and America's Choice representatives will continue working with personnel in these schools throughout the 2006-2007 school year.

"We are excited about being able to put America's Choice in these schools," Dr. James said. "It's a comprehensive model that offers intensive effort throughout the school, from the superintendent's and principal's offices to the family's involvement at home. While it takes time to institutionalize achievement-producing strategies, we believe these schools will begin showing improvement within the first few years."

About 50 more schools are in some phase of school improvement this year than last year. Much of that is due to the fact that grades three, five and seven were added to the calculations this year. In doing that, schools became more likely to have subgroups with 40 or more students in them. Subgroups of students with 40 or more from across all grades within a school must also meet AYP in both literacy and math; if a single subgroup does not meet AYP in either subject, the entire school is placed in school improvement. In Arkansas, the subgroups for which AYP is calculated include economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, African-American students, Caucasian students and Hispanic students.

"Parents should always look at what has triggered a school to be in school improvement," Dr. James said. "While the label should raise some level of concern, there's a difference when the school has failed to sufficiently raise test scores for the entire population in both literacy and math as opposed to one subgroup of students missing AYP in one subject by a narrow margin."

Schools have 30 days from receipt of their letters to appeal their status in regard to AYP. Many times, these appeals are made because of coding errors that place students in the wrong subgroup. These appeals do sometimes change a school's status, and the Arkansas Department of Education will release a revised list once all of the appeals have been processed.

In addition to the appeals, schools may qualify for “safe harbor,” which keeps them off the list of schools failing to meet AYP. To be eligible for safe harbor, schools must have decreased the percent of students scoring below proficient by 10 percent from the previous year AND have shown that 95 percent of eligible test takers took the exam. In addition they must have met a secondary criteria: graduation rates for high schools and attendance rates for elementary schools. Safe harbor is calculated in the initial AYP calculations, so those schools are already accounted for on today’s released list.

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) established the 2001-2002 school year as the initial year for tracking student performance and, in compliance with No Child Left Behind, required that all students be proficient in math and reading/language arts by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. This is determined by students’ performance on the state’s benchmark exams in grades three through eight; on the end-of-course exams in algebra and geometry; and on the 11th grade literacy exam. Performance levels for those tests are below basic, basic, proficient and advanced.

For each school, the percent proficient will be determined by dividing the sum of all eligible students tested who scored at or above the proficient level by the total number of students enrolled. A school may use a percentage for a single year or may use the percentage representing a three-year average. Whichever method a school chooses for reporting scores must be used for all of the tests that year.

Adequate yearly growth is determined depending on where a school started in the process in 2001-02 and how much growth is needed to reach 100 percent proficient by 2013-2014.

While some states have developed a method for reaching AYP that requires low increases for 10 or so years and then a large jump in the percentage of students reaching proficiency in the final year or so, Arkansas has followed a “straight-line” method, requiring schools to show a steady annual gain between 2001-2002 and 2013-2014. While retaining the straight-line method, Arkansas did readjust that line this year to compensate for the additional subgroups that would be added as a result of nearly doubling the student count for AYP calculations. This, of course, creates a steeper line for the remaining years.

Schools do not get put on the School Improvement list until they have failed to meet AYP for two consecutive years. When a school fails to reach AYP the first time, it receives notice that it is in alert

and school staff is to review its school improvement plan and establish professional development goals for all faculty and staff.

Schools fail to meet AYP two years in a row anytime the entire enrollment or any subgroup fails to meet AYP, even if the failed area the previous year did make AYP. For example, assume a school that had always made AYP missed AYP last year for its Hispanic population on math. The school would have been notified of its alert status. This year, though the school's Hispanic subgroup met AYP in math, the white subgroup did not make AYP in literacy. The school would be in School Improvement Year 1.

The following designations and actions occur with each successive year of not meeting AYP:

School Improvement Year 1	School must provide choice option for students to attend another school in the district not in improvement. May, at the option of the school/district, offer supplemental services if choice is not an option
School Improvement Year 2	School must continue to provide choice and add the option of supplemental services to students who qualify
School Improvement Year 3	District is required to establish and implement a plan of corrective action
School Improvement Year 4	District is required to plan to restructure the identified school
School Improvement Year 5	District is required to implement restructuring of school
School Improvement Year 6	District/school must continue with restructuring efforts

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The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.