



NEWS RELEASE

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ARKANSAS' GROWTH MODEL POSITIVELY IMPACTS ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS COUNT

The use of Arkansas' growth model enabled 69 schools to meet adequate yearly progress this year because it credits schools for adequately raising the performance of students even if they fall short of scoring "proficient" on the state's Benchmark Exams. Arkansas is one of seven states in the nation to be approved by the federal government to use a growth model in calculating adequate yearly progress for schools, which is based on the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the state Benchmarks exams.

"We were thrilled to have our growth model approved last year because we know it gets to the heart of what No Child Left Behind is about," said Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). "The model assesses the year to year growth of each child and determines which ones are making enough progress to achieve proficiency by eighth grade even though they haven't yet reached that performance level. It is gratifying to know that children scoring at the 'basic' and 'below basic' levels are making substantial academic progress. Those individual success stories were masked in previous years when AYP was based almost totally on the percentage of students scoring proficient and individual academic growth was not a factor."

After a school fails to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years along the trajectory to having all students score proficient on the state Benchmark exams by the 2013-2014 school year, it is placed in "school improvement." The 2007 school improvement list for Arkansas includes 325 schools, compared with 304 last year. Of these:

- 108 are in year one of school improvement
- 65 are in year two of school improvement

- 73 are in year three of school improvement
- 58 are in year four of school improvement
- 18 are in year five of school improvement
- 2 are in year six of school improvement
- 1 is in year seven of school improvement
- 77 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 is available under "What's New" on the ADE web site (<http://ArkansasEd.org>) and the actions pertaining to each year of school improvement are outlined below.

Schools achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind using what is called the "status model." That model mandates that schools have an increasing percentage of their students scoring proficient on the state's Benchmark Exams each year so that by the 2013-2014 school year, all students score proficient. (The state's Benchmark Exams are administered in math and literacy for grades three through eight. In addition, all 11th-graders take a Literacy Benchmark and End of Course Exams are administered to all Algebra I and Geometry students. All of these tests are used in AYP calculations for the status model.)

Adequate yearly progress, which is measured by increased performance on the state's Benchmark exams, must occur for the combined population of test-takers as well as for test-takers within each of the following subgroups: economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient, African-American, Caucasian and Hispanic. If any of these groups fails to make AYP in mathematics or in literacy, the entire school is considered not to have made AYP. Subgroups are considered in the AYP calculation when they include 40 or more such students in the school.

"No one wants to hear that his or her school has been placed on the School Improvement list," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner, "but, at its best, the process is meant to be corrective, not punitive."

To that end, the Arkansas Department of Education for the second year has contracted with America's Choice, a "turn-around" model to perform intensive work to raise the achievement in schools identified in years three, four or five of school improvement. America's Choice is in place in 31 schools across the

state, while 11 others received a waiver from the program because they are utilizing an approved alternative program.

The growth model allows schools that do not make AYP to add to its percentage of proficient students to the percentage of students that have made adequate growth along an individual trajectory that leads to proficiency by the time the students are in the eighth grade. If the sum of those two percentages reaches the target percentage for AYP, the school makes AYP.

In addition to the growth model, schools can also make AYP by meeting "safe harbor." Schools qualify for safe harbor if they have 95 percent attendance rate or have 95 percent or more of their student's taking the benchmarks in addition to reducing the number of students scoring below proficient by 10 percent.

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) established the 2001-2002 school year as the initial year for tracking student performance. For each school, the percent proficient is determined by dividing the sum of all eligible students tested in mathematics and literacy who scored at or above the proficient level by the total number of students enrolled. A school may use a percentage for a singular 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.

The progression of actions for a school not meeting AYP is as follows:

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| Year One/Alert Status | Review school improvement plan and establish professional development needs for faculty and staff |
| Year Two/School Improvement Status | 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 |
| Year Three/School Improvement Status | School must continue to provide choice and add the option of supplemental services to students who qualify |

Year Four/Corrective Action Status

The State is required to establish and implement a plan of corrective action

Year Five/Reconstruction Status

The State is required to act to restructure the identified school

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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.