

Dr. Ken James
Commissioner of
Education

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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.*

Staying in touch



Dr. Ken James

Welcome to the first edition of the Arkansas Department of Education's electronic newsletter specifically geared for teachers. We have initiated this monthly publication as a means of communicating important news and information directly to you, the frontline educators of our students.

Because your role is so instrumental, it's important you know what is happening at the state level that may affect your day-to-day activities in the classroom. We want to enable you better understand the reasons behind and the implications of new policies and directions. We also hope to receive feedback from you.

Education Matters for Teachers will be posted the first week of each month on the Teachers site of ArkansasEd.org. Please send your feedback or any items of interest you would like considered for the newsletter to Julie Johnson Thompson, ADE's director of communications, at julie.thompson@arkansas.gov.

Let me end by saying how much I appreciate the work you do every day. Each student in this state deserves the finest education we can give them, and I know that each of you do your best to make sure that is a reality for every child you teach.

Thanks! And best wishes for a terrific school year.

T. Kenneth James, Ed.D
Arkansas Commissioner of Education

Arkansas Teacher of the Year chimes in on NCLB

In its preparation to reauthorize the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the United States Congress has tapped into a number of resources to consider implications of the five-year old laws and to consider ways to improve them. One of the constituencies Congress heard recommendations from were the 2007 Teachers of the Year.

Justin Minkel, who not only represented Arkansas in that position but was also one of the four finalists to be named the national Teacher of the Year, helped write the position paper outlining teachers' concerns and recommendations for NCLB.

"Gene Wilhoit, the head of the Council of Chief State School Officers, asked our group to

2007-2008 Testing Dates

**August 13, 2007 –
September 21, 2007**
*Window for Kindergarten
Inventory*

January 22-23, 2008
*Mid-Year End of Course
Algebra I Exam
(Tuesday-Wednesday)*

January 24-25, 2008
*Mid-Year End of Course
Geometry Exam
(Thursday-Friday)*

January 29-30, 2008
*Mid-Year End of Course
Biology Exam (Tuesday-
Wednesday)*

March 4-5, 2008
*Grade 11 Literacy Exam
(Tuesday-Wednesday)*

March 31 – May 9, 2008
*(Window) English
Language Development
Assessment (ELDA) for LEP
students K-12*

April 7-18, 2008
*Window for K-2, Grade 9
NRT Testing*

April 14-18, 2008
*Augmented Benchmark
Exams in Grades 3-8
(Monday-Friday)*

April 16-17, 2008
*End of Course Biology
Exam (Wednesday-
Thursday)*

April 22-23, 2008
*End of Course
Geometry Exam
(Tuesday-Wednesday)*

April 24-25, 2008
*End of Course Algebra I
Exam (Thursday-Friday)*

take a different, more central role than any previous group of Teachers of the Year had taken when it comes to contributing our perspective to matters of policy," Minkel explains, adding, "It has been inspiring to work with this year's group of Teachers of the Year on meeting that challenge, and I have become deeply optimistic about the opportunity for exemplary classroom teachers to contribute their insights to matters of policy."

Minkel said the group emulated some of Arkansas' approaches in that area. "Arkansas has definitely taken the lead in that regard," he said. "Arkansas' idea of the state Teacher of the Year becoming an ex-officio member of the State Board of Education is central to our proposal that three to five teachers from our group be included as non-voting members of the House and Senate Education Committees."



Justin Minkel

In June, Minkel and the Teachers of the Year from New York, Illinois, Connecticut and Nebraska met with members of the U.S. House and Senate Education Committees in hopes of persuading them to act on the proposal. "The happy result was that the House introduced the Teachers at the Table Act" sponsored by Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D, NY) and Congressman Lee Terry (R, NE) Minkel said. A few weeks ago, the Senate drafted their own version, brought forward by Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI).

Minkel will begin serving as an ex-officio member of the State Board of Education when it meets in September. He will also write a regular column for Arkansas Education Matters for Teachers in October.

To view the documents developed by the teachers as well as the legislation, please visit the following links:

http://ArkansasEd.org/pdf/house_2007_emteachers.pdf

http://ArkansasEd.org/pdf/senate_2007_emteachers.pdf

http://ArkansasEd.org/pdf/partnership_2007_emteachers.pdf

Julian new deputy commissioner



Dr. Diana Julian

Dr. Julian, who holds bachelor's and master's degrees in education as well as an Ed.S. in educational administration from Arkansas State

Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of Education, recently named Dr. Diana Julian as ADE's new deputy commissioner. Dr. Julian, who has been serving as assistant commissioner for the department's Division of Learning Services for the last two years, assumed the position effective July 1. She replaces Dr. Donald M. Stewart, who retired from ADE on June 30.

"Diana brings a breadth of experience to the position, as she has been a teacher, a principal, and a superintendent as well as a state department administrator," Dr. James said. In addition to her state-level role as assistant commissioner for learning services, Dr. Julian previously served as deputy director of ADE under Director Gene Wilhoit from 1994 to 1997.

Photo Gallery Now on ArkansasEd.org

Arkansas Department of Education events are now captured electronically for your viewing pleasure.

Photos from awards ceremonies, news conferences, education-related lectures and more are now available by visiting the department's Web site at **ArkansasEd.org**.

You will find the link to the gallery under the Communications heading on the left-hand side of the site's home page.

University, obtained her doctorate in education from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in educational leadership. She has served as superintendent for both the Benton and Bryant school districts and was named Arkansas Superintendent of the Year in 2005. That same year she was named an Outstanding Alumni in Educational Leadership, Curriculum, and Special Education by Arkansas State University. In addition to her role at the department, Dr. Julian serves as an adjunct professor for several universities in the state. She began her career as a fourth grade teacher in Selma, Alabama.

"So many positive things are happening with public education in Arkansas right now, so I am pleased to be able to continue working with educators across the state for the academic achievement of all students," Dr. Julian said. "I have enjoyed my role as an assistant commissioner and look forward to the new opportunities and expanded responsibilities I will have as deputy commissioner."

Growth model tied to individual student's academic progress

When the list of schools not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) is released later this fall, the measure will include the academic growth of individual students as well as overall cohort performance for the first time in the state's history of calculating AYP under the federal No Child Left Behind laws. That's because Arkansas had its growth model approved for AYP calculations by the U.S. Department of Education last year, making it one of the first seven states in the nation to do so.

While this was significant recognition for the state's educational leadership, teachers may wonder what it means at the classroom level. In a nutshell, use of the growth model means that schools get credit for an individual child's growth toward proficiency, even if the child does not yet score proficient on the exams. For each student, the trajectory of growth required to have that child meet proficiency by 8th grade is determined. As long as the child makes adequate growth along that trajectory, schools are not penalized for that child scoring below proficient on the benchmark exam.

"We believe this will allow teachers to focus on the growth of all children," says Janinne Riggs, Arkansas Department of Education special assistant to the commissioner. "The way NCLB previously called for the calculation of AYP, an enormous amount of pressure was placed on raising the test scores of those students scoring at the bubble – that group just below proficient. The growth model makes it easier for teachers to do what they are in the classroom to do, and that is stimulate academic growth for all students."

To read the complete approved plan for the Arkansas growth model, please visit this link: http://arkansased.org/nclb/pdf/growth_model_111506.pdf

High school needs more rigor

All Arkansas students need to complete the rigorous Smart Core curriculum in high school, Dr. Ken James said at the August 16 organizational meeting of the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention and Graduates Rates.

About 10 percent of students opt out of the default Smart Core curriculum, though some pockets of the state have larger percentages of their students opting out. Smart Core has been recognized nationally as the appropriate curriculum to provide the skills needed whether students go to work or to college after high school. Dr. James said he would work with legislators to look at the feasibility of eliminating the opt-out provision through legislation when the 87th General Assembly meets in regular session in 2009.

September

September 5

[Praxis III Preparation for Novices and Mentors](#) - Harding University

September 6

Distance Learning Workshop: [Free and Reduced Price Meal Application/Verification Process](#)

September 7

Registration deadline for ["Tools in the Toolbox,"](#) professional development workshop for working with students with visual impairments

September 11

[Hearings for pending rules - Alternative Pay program, Rrewarding Excellence in Achievement Program, Teacher Recruitment and Retention.](#)

September 11, 12

Beginning Administrator Induction Training

September 12, 19

[Pathwise Mentor Training](#) - Harding University

September 14

[AP Equipment and Materials Grant Application](#) deadline

September 17

[Constitution Day](#) programs

September 17-19

[Pathwise Mentor Training](#) - UCA Campus

September 26

[Pathwise Mentor Recalibration](#) - UCA Campus

September 26-28

[Pathwise Training](#) - Western Arkansas Co-Op

September 30-October 2

21st Century Community Learning Centers [4th Annual Statewide Conference](#)

October

October 8-10

9th Annual Conference for Parent Education and Parental Involvement: ["CHARTING THE COURSE"](#)

Alice Barnes Rose to join ADE

Dr. Alice Barnes Rose will join the Arkansas Department of Education in the position of assistant commissioner for the Division of Learning Services. Dr. Rose, who has served as deputy superintendent of the Forrest City School District since 2000, will assume her new role on October 1.

"I am so pleased to have Dr. Rose joining the administrative team at the Arkansas Department of Education," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education.

"She will bring a wealth of experience and insight to this important role, and I am confident that she will make valuable contributions as we continue our mission of providing the best education possible to all students in the state."

In addition to being deputy superintendent for the Forrest City School District, Dr. Rose is an adjunct faculty member with Arkansas State University. Prior to her current position, Dr. Rose worked in the Forrest City School District in both administrative and teaching roles. She has been with the district since 1978.

Dr. Rose earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in 1977, a master's degree in education from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in 1978, an elementary principals' certification in 1987 from Arkansas State University, a specialist degree in educational administration from Arkansas State University in 1994 and an educational leadership doctoral degree from Arkansas State University in 2001.

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll survey looks at public support of NCLB

According to the 39th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, support for the No Child Left Behind is relatively low -- only 26 percent of those polled said the federal legislation is helping education; 27 percent said it is hurting, and 41 percent said it is not making a difference in public education.

On other matters, when asked to grade schools using the traditional A, B, C, D or F, 67% of parents gave the school their oldest child attends an A or a B. Only 3% of the parents gave their child's school a failing grade. When asked to grade schools in the nation as a whole, 14 percent of parents gave the schools grades of an A or B.

In other areas, 60 percent of those polled this year were in favor of charter schools. When asked what they thought was the biggest problem facing the public schools in their community, 22 percent said funding, 10 percent said lack of discipline; and 7 percent said overcrowded schools.

To view the complete survey and related materials, visit pdkintl.org.



Dr. Alice Barnes Rose

