



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: The number of Arkansas schools categorized as being in school improvement under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation rose to 375 this year, for an increase of 50 from the year before. Arkansas has a total of 1,087 schools. Under No Child Left Behind, all students in the nation are to score proficient on their states' Benchmark Exams by the 2013-14 school year and, to that end, schools are mandated to make "adequate yearly progress" toward reaching that goal.

In Arkansas, the bar to reach adequate yearly progress, or AYP, is raised each year, and this year the percentage that must be proficient to make AYP ranges, depending on grade and test, from 46.63 percent to 55 percent. Those marks must be hit by the test-taking student body as a whole and also within individual subgroups of test-taking students in literacy and in mathematics. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years are placed in school improvement status.

"The probability is very high that the number of schools placed on the list of schools in need of improvement will increase each year because the bar gets higher each year," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education.

This year's list of schools, which is based on results from the 2007-2008 school year Benchmark Exams, contains 82 that met the standards for adequate yearly progress this year. If they meet standards again next year, they will be removed from the school improvement list.

- 104 are in year one of school improvement (37 met standards)
- 88 are in year two of school improvement (20 met standards)
- 58 are in year three of school improvement (14 met standards)
- 59 are in year four of school improvement (11 met standards)
- 49 are in year five of school improvement (1 met standards)
- 14 are in year six of school improvement
- 2 are in year seven of school improvement
- 1 is in year eight of school improvement

Schools achieve adequate yearly progress 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 11<sup>th</sup>-graders take an end-of-grade Literacy Benchmark, and End-of-Course Exams are administered to all algebra I, geometry, algebra II and biology students. All of these tests save for the algebra II and biology End-of-Course Exams are used in AYP calculations for the status model.)

Adequate yearly progress, which is measured by increased performance on the aforementioned 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.

When a school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, then they are considered to be in “school improvement.” A school must make AYP for two consecutive years to be removed from the school improvement list.

Because Arkansas was approved for use of a growth model beginning with last year’s school improvement calculations, schools may avoid the “in need of improvement label” if their students have achieved sufficient academic growth from the previous year. This year, 53 schools made AYP because of use of the growth model.

“It is really encouraging to see how many schools are moving their students toward proficiency,” Dr. James said. “The growth model allows those schools that perhaps are working with a more challenging population of students – students who came to school with fewer skills and less knowledge – to receive credit for the efforts and progress they have made in moving those students to higher levels of learning.”

The way the model works is that it adds to a school’s percentage of proficient students the percentage of students who have made adequate growth along individual trajectories that lead 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 a 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:

<b>Year One/Alert</b>	Review school improvement plan and establish professional development needs for faculty and staff
<b>Year Two/School Improvement</b>	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
<b>Year Three/School Improvement</b>	School must continue to provide choice and add the option of supplemental services to students who qualify.
<b>Year Four/Corrective Action</b>	The State is required to establish and implement a plan of corrective action.
<b>Year Five/Reconstruction</b>	The State is required to act to restructure the identified school.

The Arkansas Department of Education, for the third year, has contracted with America's Choice, a "turn-around" model to perform intensive work to raise the achievement in schools identified last year in years four or higher of school improvement. America's Choice is in place in 36 schools across the state, while 13 others received a waiver from the program because they are utilizing an approved alternative program.

The Department has also applied to the U.S. Department of Education for approval of a Differentiated Accountability model. Under this model, school districts would be differentiated based upon the number of subgroups that missed AYP and interventions and consequences would be more directly targeted to schools based on that differentiation. The state should learn if the proposal is approved in December.

The school improvement list is available electronically at **ArkansasEd.org**.

***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.***