



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2006

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### CRITICAL TEACHER NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN TWO DAYS OF EVENTS

Schools across southeast Arkansas struggle because of the area's severe teaching shortage, and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has planned a series of events for November 8 and 9 at the University of Arkansas at Monticello's Gibson Center to help schools in the region both address and alleviate the need.

"We know through research how vitally important having a good teacher in the classroom is for students' learning," said Beverly Williams, Assistant Commissioner for Human Resources/Licensure. "We must train and recruit those high quality professionals to work with students in southeast Arkansas to guarantee their opportunities for success as students and as adults."

During the 2005-2006 school year, 64 percent of the school districts in southern and eastern Arkansas had at least one course being taught by teacher who was not fully certified in the area in which they were teaching.

The first event is a District Recruitment Model Workshop from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, November 8. "This event will provide recruiters from school districts with resources and instruction so they are armed with the best tools to fill their classrooms with highly qualified teachers," said Christina Villareal, ADE's coordinator of teacher recruitment.

Later that evening, an Education Partners Reception will allow area educators and school district leaders to engage with business, civic and community leaders to form education partnerships. The

event, set for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., will focus participants' attention on the education crisis in southeast Arkansas and encourage them to share ideas for working together to improve the situation for the area's students.

On the following day, a free Education Career Fair will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to help pair licensed educators with school districts in search of qualified administrators and teachers. In addition to the presence of recruiters at the career fair, representatives will be on hand to explain financial incentives Arkansas offers in terms of housing assistance for educators in high-needs areas and loan reimbursement programs. Community colleges and universities that offer programs to enable those who work in other fields but would like to become a licensed educator in Arkansas will also have representatives on hand to explain their programs.

"When we've held these career fairs in the past, they've been very successful," Villareal said. "It's truly a win-win situation, both for the districts that have positions to fill and for individuals who begin careers in education. I'm really excited about the potential for this happening in this part of the state. After all, the students are the ones who will really reap the benefits."

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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.***