

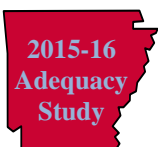


Research Report

Academic Distress

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**Prepared for
THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**



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Introduction

The Adequacy Study statute (A.C.A. §10-3-2102) requires the Education Committees to “assess, evaluate, and monitor the entire spectrum of public education across the State of Arkansas to determine whether equal educational opportunity for an adequate education is being substantially afforded to the school children of the State of Arkansas and recommend any necessary changes.” As part of the steps necessary for accomplishing that duty, the statute calls for the Education Committees to review the academic distress program (§ 10-3-2102(f)(4)). The purpose of this report is to explain how this program operates, which districts and schools have been designated as being in academic distress, and the outcomes of districts and schools that have received services through the program.

Academic distress is the state’s designation for a school district or individual school that has failed to meet required levels of academic achievement over several years. Created through Act 915 of 1995, academic distress is one of three distress programs used by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and the State Board of Education to identify, assist, and potentially sanction struggling schools and school districts. (The other two programs are fiscal and facilities distress, which were addressed by previous reports.¹)

Academic distress is different from other school labels, such as “priority” and “focus” schools, in that it is purely a state designation. The “priority” and “focus” school designations are the labels ADE has used to comply with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as No Child Left Behind). Priority schools are the lowest performing 5% of schools in the state, and focus schools are the 10% of schools with the largest achievement gaps between certain student groups. While most of the schools in academic distress also have one of these labels and receive similar monitoring and interventions as a result, the two labeling systems are distinct. The academic distress label and its consequences are established by state law and state rule and are not designed to meet a federal requirement.

Designation Criteria

The academic distress designation is established in Arkansas Code § 6-15-425, but state statute gives the State Board the authority to define the criteria used to classify a district or school as academically distressed (§ 6-15-424 and § 6-15-431). ADE rules specify that a district or school may be placed in academic distress under two circumstances:

- When **49.5% or less of its students test “proficient” or “advanced”** on state-mandated math and reading exams over the previous three years; or
- When the district has a school designated **“priority” under the state’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Plan that has not made the required level of progress**. A *school* can be designated as being in academic distress under this criteria if it is a priority school that is not making the required progress.

No schools or districts have ever been placed in academic distress using the second criterion, although some appear to have qualified. This may suggest ADE’s specified criteria do not result in automatic academic distress identification.

¹ See [http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/education/K12/AdequacyReports/2016/2015-08-11/04-E1-Fiscal%20Distress.%20BLR%20Memo%20\(11\).pdf](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/education/K12/AdequacyReports/2016/2015-08-11/04-E1-Fiscal%20Distress.%20BLR%20Memo%20(11).pdf) for the report on fiscal distress and [http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/education/K12/AdequacyReports/2016/2015-08-11/03-C1-Academic%20Facilities%20Funding%20Expenditures%20Distress.%20BLR%20\(40\).pdf](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/education/K12/AdequacyReports/2016/2015-08-11/03-C1-Academic%20Facilities%20Funding%20Expenditures%20Distress.%20BLR%20(40).pdf) for the report on facilities distress.

State statute gives ADE the authority to identify schools and districts in academic distress, allows schools and districts the right to appeal that determination to the State Board and gives the Board the authority to make the final classification determination.

Two important changes with the academic distress program occurred in 2013. First the designation became one that both school districts and individual schools could receive. Prior to Act 600 of 2013, the academic distress classification was a designation only for school *districts*. Individual schools were not placed in academic distress. Also in 2013, ADE stiffened its criteria for academic distress, setting the bar at less than 49.5% proficient or advanced. Prior to the rules change, districts were placed in academic distress only when 75% of students or more tested at the below basic level—the lowest scoring level. No districts had such dismal test results—though several had alarmingly low proficiency. The criteria for academic distress was so low that no district had been placed in academic distress since 2006. Since the 2013 change in criteria, four districts, one open enrollment charter school and 33 individual schools have been placed in academic distress.

In 2015, the General Assembly passed Act 1272 of the 2015 Regular Session allowing the State Board of Education to exempt some schools from the academic distress designation. The statute allows the State Board to draft rules that exempt the following types of schools:

- 1.) A school that is designated solely as an alternative learning environment. In 2015-16, only six schools were considered ALE schools.
- 2.) An open enrollment charter school or a conversion charter school that is primarily focused on students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school.
- 3.) The Arkansas School for the Blind and the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

ADE has not developed rules to exempt such schools. During the March 10, 2016, meeting of the State Board of Education, Education Commissioner Johnny Key indicated that the department's legal team is developing rules to exempt ALE schools. He recommended the State Board table action against four schools that operate as ALE programs. The next month Key again recommended tabling action against an open enrollment charter school that operates with a focus on dropout prevention. The State Board accepted the Commissioner's recommendation and tabled action against all of these schools.

Consequences For Districts/Schools in Academic Distress

While a **district** is in academic distress, the State Board has the authority **to take any measure allowed by law**, including the following:

- Remove the superintendent and appoint a replacement who serves under the Education Commissioner's supervision;
- Remove some or all of the local school board members
- Waive the application of Arkansas law (except the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act and the Public School Employee Fair Hearing Act); and
- Require the district to be annexed or consolidated with another district.

State statute specifies that when a **school** is academically distressed, the State Board may require:

- The reorganization of the school;
- The reassignment of administrative, instructional or support staff;
- The removal of the principal and/or the superintendent and appoint a replacement under the Education Commissioner's supervision;
- The replacement of licensed personnel;
- The removal of the public school from the school district; and
- The closure or dissolution of the school.

State law also allows the State Board to take any action against a district with a school in academic distress that's allowed for a *district* where the whole district is in academic distress. So, for example, if a district has one school in academic distress, state law gives the State Board the authority to remove the school board or consolidate the entire school district, if it deems necessary. The law provides no criteria for the State Board to use in determining what district and school conditions warrant the Board's use of increasingly restrictive action.

The law also allows **students who are in an academic distress school or district to transfer to another school or district** that is not in academic distress under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act of 2004 (§ 6-15-430(c)). (This school choice law is different from the Public School Choice Act [Acts 1227 of 2013 and 560 of 2015], which allows students to transfer to another school district unless the transfer conflicts with an enforceable desegregation court order.) The Opportunity Public School Choice Act allows the receiving school or district to transport the student and charge the resident district (the school or district in academic distress) the cost of transportation. The receiving district can charge up to \$400 per student each year. The student is allowed to remain at the school to which he/she transferred through the end of high school, but the receiving district can charge the cost of transportation only as long as the resident school or district is in academic distress.

In 2014-15, two districts reported a total of **36 student transfers to other schools within the district**, according to data districts reported through the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN). Nine districts reported **receiving a total of 31 students from districts** with schools in academic distress. (ADE does not have the number of Opportunity Public School Choice Act transfers by the resident district, i.e., the district where the district or the school is in academic distress.) In 2015-16, districts reported **60 students transferring to another school within the district**, and **65 students transferring to other districts**. When the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) contacted superintendents of schools in academic distress (see page 6 for description of survey), one indicated that parents "typically withdraw from the district and go to the other school districts without adhering to the [application] protocol." The district officially had one student transfer to another district and paid \$400 for that student's transportation. Two other districts reported no student transfers in 2015-16, but one of those districts is absorbing close to 100 transfers in 2016-17 and having to pay more than \$38,000 in transportation costs.

An **academic distress designation is removed** only after the district or school has "corrected all criteria for being classified as in academic distress" (ADE's Rules Governing the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program and the Academic Distress Program, 10.07.2) In practice, this has meant that when the calculated test scores of a school or district exceed the 49.5% proficiency level, it may be removed from academic distress. According to ADE's rules, the Department must certify in writing that the school district has corrected all of the criteria, and the State Board has approved the release.

Academic distress is meant to be a temporary status, and state law limits the time a school or district can remain there. If a district is not removed from academic distress **within five years**, the **State Board is required to annex, consolidate, or reconstitute the district** (§ 6-15-429(c)). The statute allows the State Board to grant additional time if the school or district is unable to be removed from academic distress due to "impossibility caused by external forces beyond the control of the public school or school district" (§§ 6-15-429(b)(3)(B) and 6-15-430(e)(2)).

ADE's Intervention in Schools in Academic Distress

State statute and ADE rules provide only a skeleton process for assisting schools and districts once they are placed in academic distress. Once a district or school is placed in academic distress, it is required to modify its school improvement plan (commonly referred to as an ACSIP). The school/district's ACSIP must specify strategies for addressing its academic problem areas. ADE is also required to assist the school/district based on the needs identified in the ACSIP.

ADE’s School Improvement Unit is responsible for working with schools and districts in academic distress. The unit also works with schools that have been labeled as “priority” and “focus” schools because many schools in academic distress also fall into one of these other categories. The School Improvement Unit employs as many as 23 school improvement specialists who are assigned to work with schools in academic distress. However, the Unit averages about 15 specialists at any one time, due to high staff turnover rates. School improvement specialists frequently are hired away by school districts, according to ADE.

After a school is classified in academic distress, ADE rules require the department to assemble a **team of educators (three to nine people each) to evaluate** the school/district. ADE reviews each schools’ available data to determine the types of expertise that should be represented on the school’s team. In some cases, that may include a staff member from ADE’s Special Education Unit or the department’s Office of Educator Effectiveness (which handles programs that provide professional support to teachers and administrators). The teams have 60 calendar days to **visit the schools** (an on-site visit is not required by the rules) and **develop written recommendations**, which must be provided to the district. ADE’s rules also require its staff to provide “relevant technical assistance” to each school or district in academic distress. ADE is required to review each school/district in academic distress and report annually on the school or district’s “academic conditions.”

ADE requires schools and districts in academic distress to assign an **employee to serve as the school improvement specialist**. This person serves as a contact for the ADE school improvement specialist assigned to the school and is responsible for ensuring the school stays on track with its responsibilities as part of the academic distress program. The hope is that working closely with a local employee during the turnaround process will build necessary leadership capacity that will allow the school to maintain any progress achieved.

For its part, the State Board of Education created a subcommittee of its members in 2014 known as the **Special Committee on Academic Distress**. The committee meets about every two months—and sometimes more frequently—to discuss issues related to chronically underperforming schools. Since its creation, the Special Committee has heard detailed progress reports from several school districts with schools in academic distress.

Schools & Districts in Academic Distress

A total of 33 schools in 17 school districts and two open enrollment charter school organizations have been on academic distress at least once over the last three years. For a list of all 33 schools and their calculated proficiency, see Appendix A. Of the 33 schools:

- 3 are elementary schools
- 10 are middle schools
- 20 are high schools

Year of Classification	2013	2014	2015	2016
Schools	NA	26	22	25
Districts/Charters	2	2		2 districts and 1 charter school

Additionally, eight schools that operate as alternative learning environments or dropout prevention programs (seven schools in traditional districts and one open enrollment charter school) have been identified as being in academic distress. However, these schools appealed the designation, and the State Board opted to table making a decision. As a result, these schools are not considered to be in academic distress.

Of the group of schools most recently identified for academic distress, five schools appealed the designation to the State Board. Four of those appeals were denied, and one designation was tabled at the Education Commissioner's request because the open enrollment charter school operates as a dropout prevention program.

Of the 26 schools that were placed in Academic Distress in 2014, **five (19%) exited the distress list the next year** and have remained in good standing. **Two exited after two years** and one school was off the distress list the year after the designation and then returned the following year. **Seventeen schools (65%) have been on the academic distress list each of the three years** since schools were first designated in academic distress. One school closed.

Comparing the three-year average proficiency calculation in 2016 with the initial calculation made for 2014, **proficiency improved for 19 schools and declined for six schools**. One school closed. (It should be noted that the designations made in 2016 were based on test scores for 2013, 2014 and 2015, which included two years of scores using the Benchmark assessments and one year of scores using the PARCC assessments. The designations made in 2014 used three years of scores only from the Benchmark assessments. ADE, through the Office of Innovation for Education as the University of Arkansas, developed a method of comparability for the two tests.) The school that made the most improvement increased its proficiency by more than 11 percentage points. The school that lost the most ground saw a proficiency decrease of more than five percentage points.

According to a 2016 ADE report on the schools in academic distress, "The schools classified had **high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch**, all had **high minority populations**, and all reported **high rates of discipline referrals**. Teacher turnover or teacher attendance issues were identified by almost all as a substantial problem."²

After the statute and rules changes in 2013, several school districts have been placed in *district* academic distress. In 2013, the Strong-Huttig and Lee County school districts were designated as being in academic distress for having less than 49.5% of their students score proficient. Those two districts were released from academic distress in 2015, and no other districts were placed in academic distress until 2016. Dollarway School District, Blytheville School District, and Covenant Keepers open enrollment charter school were placed in academic distress in 2016. The table below shows the number of schools in each district in academic distress each year. The districts in bold have been or are currently in district academic distress.

	Schools in Academic Distress		
	2014	2015	2016
Augusta	1	0	0
Blytheville	1	2	2
CovenantKeepers	1	1	1
Dermott	0	1	1
Dollarway	1	1	2
Fordyce	1	0	0
Forrest City	3	3	3
Helena/West Helena	1	1	1
Hope	0	0	1
Little Rock Preparatory	0	0	1
Little Rock	6	6	5
Marvell-Elaine	1	0	1

² Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Review of Schools Classified in Academic Distress, July 15, 2016.

	Schools in Academic Distress		
	2014	2015	2016
Mineral Springs	0	0	1
Osceola	1	0	0
Pine Bluff	3	3	2
Pulaski County Special	3	2	2
Stephens	1	0	0
Strong-Huttig	1	1	1
Watson Chapel	1	1	1

State statute allows for the State Board of Education to take over a district in academic distress or a district with a school in academic distress. Since the rules change in 2013, the State Board has used that authority to take over three districts: Lee County, Little Rock and Dollarway School Districts. (This doesn't include districts that have been in state takeover due to fiscal distress or state accreditation violations.) The Lee County school district was designated as being in *district* academic distress because less than 49.5% of the district's students were proficient.

The Little Rock School District, however, was not in district academic distress. In fact, for the most recent year of designations, Little Rock's district-wide proficiency was just above 65%. However, the district had six individual schools in academic distress, and the State Board used its authority to take action against the district based on the low achievement levels in those schools.

Dollarway School District was placed in state takeover in December 2015, when only one of its schools, Dollarway High School, was in academic distress. ADE staff and a number of district employees and parents testified at a State Board of Education meeting that the district's school board was described as inappropriately involved in staffing decisions, divided into factions and distracting from district operations. Four months into state takeover, Dollarway added another school in academic distress, and district-wide test scores from the previous three years caused Dollarway to be identified as being in *district* academic distress.

During the Third Extraordinary Session of 2016, the General Assembly passed Acts 20 and 21, twin measures that call for a **one-year pause in designating schools and districts in academic distress**. For the 2016-17 school year, ADE will not identify any new schools or districts in academic distress. ADE can, however, remove a school or district from academic distress if it corrects all of the problems that led to the distress designation.

Survey of Districts With Schools in Academic Distress

The BLR surveyed superintendents of districts and charter schools with schools in academic distress. (The survey did not include Mineral Springs because its only school in academic distress was classified after the survey was conducted.) Only three of the 16 districts responded to the email survey. The survey was administered as the districts were preparing for the start of the school year, which may have been the primary factor in the low response rate. To obtain the most candid responses, respondents were assured their answers would remain anonymous. The full list of questions is provided in Appendix B.

Superintendents were asked to describe the most beneficial elements of the academic distress program and the parts they believe need to change. They were also asked to assess ADE's ability and capacity to assist them in their school turnaround. They were asked their opinion about the appropriateness of the authority ADE and the State Board hold over them. Finally they were asked about the number of students who have transferred from their district due to the academic distress designation and the cost of transporting those students to their new school. The responses to the questions about student transfers can be found on page 3.

ADE'S ABILITY/CAPACITY TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN ACADEMIC DISTRESS

In assessing ADE's ability/capacity to assist schools, one superintendent said "I believe there are **pockets of expertise in staffing** with the School Improvement Unit," but this superintendent questioned whether "there is clarity as to how the school improvement specialists offer support," with their recommendations. The superintendent thought that much of the support provided by the ADE unit is focused around the "priority" and "focus" school designation but "not all of those pieces directly correlated with our academic distress recommendations."

One superintendent appreciated the consistency that ADE has brought to the turnaround process, but another noted a problem with consistency in ADE staffing. "Dr. [Richard] Wilde [School Improvement Unit Programs Manager] has created **a consistency in process** for schools in academic distress, one superintendent noted. "The standardization of the process using the Turn Around Rubric is especially beneficial. This superintendent noted that the "willingness" of the department to discuss a variety of existing rubrics to streamline what schools are asked to do is "extremely helpful."

Another superintendent noted a problem with **ADE staff turnover**. "Consistency is the key in terms of support. Your best people at ADE are constantly getting picked up by school districts."

Still another superintendent noted that school turnaround **may not be the right role of the state education agency**. "I do not think that the ADE was designed to assess individual school academic distress. There are agencies such as AdvancED that are more efficient and better trained for those purposes."

APPROPRIATENESS OF ADE/STATE BOARD AUTHORITY

All three superintendents said the authority exerted on their districts was appropriate. Two noted that they considered it appropriate because the ADE/State Board followed the law. However, they noted some objections to the level of authority the law grants. One superintendent objected to the state takeover authority. "The **research does not back up state takeover** improving academics (generally speaking, in most cases, state takeovers usually result in school closings)." Another superintendent noted that the academic distress label was being applied at a time when schools were **coping with new Common Core State Standards and changing state assessments**. Putting schools in academic distress at the same time "is not only irresponsible of ADE and the legislature, but also dehumanizing to the [District] teachers, students and community." The superintendent indicated the district has implemented all the recommended turnaround strategies and is showing some results, but "the stakes continue to move, the standards continue to change."

One superintendent mentioned the impact of allowing students to transfer out of schools in academic distress, which is happening "at alarming rates." The loss of students means a corresponding loss in funding. The superintendent said the academic distress designation "has the district **on the brink of fiscal distress** as we watch student enrollment plummet."

Another superintendent noted the many strategies the district has implemented and indicated the districts' offerings are more robust than those in neighboring districts, "I would be curious to see what other 'high performing schools' would do with our impoverished students and would want an acknowledgement from the state that there is a **difference between having a 'good school' and having 'good students.'**"

MOST BENEFICIAL ELEMENTS OF ACADEMIC DISTRESS

One superintendent said the **additional level of support** was the most helpful aspect of the academic distress program—from the quality professional development to the technical support. Another superintendent said the ability to network with the individual ADE staff in terms of guidance and policies was most helpful. Another superintendent noted **ADE's thoughtfulness and willingness** to engage in conversation, and appreciated the ADE school improvement specialist

assigned to the district. One superintendent said the **45-day reporting plan** the School Improvement Unit requires schools to complete gives the district “the opportunity to actively track our data, our progress and our plans.”

CHANGES NEEDED

When asked what changes the superintendents thought were needed for the academic distress program, one superintendent said, “The program needs to be pulled down, reconsidered and reconstituted.” Two superintendents said the **criteria for the academic distress designation** should be changed. “I think we have to look at how we look at data differently to determine who is on distress and who gets off,” the superintendent said. Another superintendent said academic distress criteria should consider regional challenges, poverty and family unit degradation, and suggested that there should be multiple measures to assess a school or district for academic distress.

Another superintendent said schools should either be placed in academic distress or designated as a priority school, but not both. The schools should **not have to respond to two sets of requirements**.

Responding to a question that sought general comments, one superintendent noted that the academic distress designation makes **teacher recruitment** even more difficult. The superintendent also noted the **loss of students** in the district “with parents/students running away from the designation.”

School Turnaround Policies in Other States

A recent report produced by Marzano Research for the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences examined all 50 states’ policies on school turnaround for low achieving schools.³ The report found that states’ strategies can be categorized into six general types of policies. As described in the report, these six categories are:

Policy Category	# of States With Policy	Part of AR Policy?
Development or monitoring of school improvement plans	50	Yes
Changes in staffing	47	Yes
Closing a school	31	Yes
Financial incentives or interventions	37	No
Reforms to the day-to-day operation of the school	32	Yes
Changes related to the entity that governs or operates the school	39	Yes

The research on effective state turnaround strategies is far from conclusive, according to a 2016 summary of such research also written by Marzano Research.⁴ The most common turnaround strategy studied is using a “turnaround partner.” In some states this strategy may mean hiring a private consulting company to evaluate the school and recommend changes or it may be a team of at the state Department of Education working with an individual school. In some states, working with a turnaround partner is voluntary, while in others, the partnership was required. In some states the schools in turnaround received additional state funding to pay for the work; while in others, no additional funding was provided. The studies of these strategies found **mixed results with no clear pattern of success with any one state policy approach**. In schools that were successful, the improvement was attributed to efforts and school characteristics that are generally more difficult to

³ Marzano Research, State policies for intervening in chronically low-performing schools: A 50-state scan, June 2016, retrieved at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/pdf/REL_2016131.pdf

⁴ Marzano Research, Summary of research on the association between state interventions in chronically low-performing schools and student achievement. April 2016, retrieved at

produce through state policy alone. The research summary noted that “the schools that improved had strong leadership, used data to guide instruction, had a positive school culture characterized by trust, and had increased expectations.” This suggests that while state policies that provide assistance to low-performing schools can be helpful in turning around these schools, these state efforts are only one part of the equation.

The summary also explored the findings of research on other types of state interventions, including state guided school improvement planning, school restructuring, changing the organization operating the school, and school closure. The results with these state interventions was, again, mixed with very limited research on each strategy.

In 2015, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) wrote about three “emerging” school turnaround strategies state policymakers are beginning to employ.⁵ The three described by the ECS policy brief were:

- Innovation zones: A state allows a district some freedom from state education requirements to allow some experimentation with the way a school provides its education.
- Recovery districts: A state takes over its lowest-performing schools and operates the schools as a single district. Schools may be run by charter operators, the state board or recovery district authority.
- Receiverships: A state grants authority over a district or a school to another entity, such as an education management company. The ECS policy brief notes that receiverships are different from recovery districts because receiverships “do not require the creation of a new district.”

The ECS policy brief notes that states have claimed some success using these strategies, but the authors caution that **some efforts are too new to have produced results that can be evaluated.** They also cite criticism that despite any positive student achievement gains, school turnaround strategies that involve state takeover of local schools have other negative effects on communities.

⁵ Aragon, S. and Workman, E., Emerging state turnaround strategies, October 2015, <http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/12139.pdf>

Appendix A: Schools in Academic Distress

The following table lists the schools that have been designated as being in academic distress at any time since the statute was changed from being a district-only designation. The cells in red indicate a proficiency level that put the school in academic distress the following year.

District	School	2011-13 % Proficiency	2012-14 % Proficiency	2013-15 % Proficiency
Augusta	Augusta High School	43.428	50.169	54.173
Blytheville	Blytheville High School New Tech	47.744	42.664	44.089
Blytheville	Blytheville Middle School	51.55	49.423	44.899
Covenantkeepers Charter School	Covenant Keepers Charter	46.965	46.640	44.147
Dermott	Dermott High School	50.00	48.562	49.445
Dollarway	Robert F Morehead Middle School	55.06	52.581	46.206
Dollarway	Dollarway High School	28.481	32.306	39.53
Fordyce	Fordyce High School	43.64	56.277	54.094
Forrest City	Forrest City High School	44.728	43.979	39.516
Forrest City	Forrest City Jr. High	46.154	48.240	48.697
Forrest City	Lincoln Academy Of Excellence	47.519	46.513	46.771
Helena/ W.Helena	Central High School	43.625	44.666	48.517
Hope	Hope High School	52.98	55.466	47.362
Little Rock Preparatory Academy	Little Prep Academy Elementary	50.62	51.479	47.992
Little Rock	Baseline Elementary School	48.251	46.208	50.144
Little Rock	Cloverdale Aerospace Tech Charter	41.47	41.360	42.905
Little Rock	Hall High School	40.642	39.255	41.006
Little Rock	Henderson Middle School	46.049	46.041	46.459
Little Rock	J.A. Fair High School	43.304	44.420	48.335
Little Rock	McClellan Magnet High School	40.748	43.697	46.989
Marvell-Elaine	Marvell-Elaine High School	48.974	51.659	45.932
Mineral Springs	Mineral Springs High School	55.80	52.47	48.130
Osceola	Osceola High School	47.043	52.348	53.299
Pine Bluff	Belair Middle School	48.302	47.782	46.129
Pine Bluff	Oak Park Elementary School	46.429	48.276	50.642
Pine Bluff	Pine Bluff High School	37.38	38.132	43.268
Pulaski County Special	Harris Elementary School	48.79	50.83	49.701
Pulaski County Special	Jacksonville High School	46.877	54.363	52.769
Pulaski County Special	Wilbur D. Mills High School	45.017	48.398	46.188
Pulaski County Special	Jacksonville Middle School	49.90	48.885	46.487
Stephens	Stephens High School	44.603	46.076 Closed 2014-15	Closed
Strong-Huttig	Strong High School	41.667	43.464	46.05
Watson Chapel	Watson Chapel High School	47.109	45.221	47.31

Data Sources: ADE, Office of Innovation for Education, Arkansas Research Center

Appendix B: Superintendent Survey

The BLR surveyed superintendents of districts and charter schools with schools in academic distress. The survey was emailed to superintendents and contained the following questions.

1. Please assess ADE's ability (amount of staffing, knowledge/skills, consistency of staffing, etc.) to effectively assist your school/district in academic distress.
2. Do you think the authority ADE/the State Board exerts on your school/district is appropriate for your school/district's particular situation? Why or why not? If you object to specific measures ADE/the State Board has taken, what are they?
3. What are the most beneficial elements of the state's academic distress program?
4. What areas of the academic distress program do you believe should be changed?
5. For each school in academic distress in your district in 2015-16, please indicate the number of students who transferred to another school within your district.
6. For each school in academic distress in your district in 2015-16, please indicate the number of students who transferred to another district.
7. How many students did your district pay to transport to another district in 2015-16?
8. How much did your district pay to the receiving district per student transported in 2015-16? (If you handle the transportation of these transfer students another way, please describe the arrangement your district has with receiving districts.)
9. Please provide any additional comments you have about academic distress.