



Bureau Brief

Memorandum

TO : Members of the House and Senate Committees on Education

FROM: Nell Smith, Bureau of Legislative Research

DATE : September 10, 2013

SUBJECT : Questions on the No Child Left Behind Act and Academic Distress

The Bureau of Legislative Research developed the following questions for the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to address in its presentations on the state's status under the No Child Left Behind Act and Academic Distress.

No Child Left Behind

1. **Alignment with previous school improvement system:** Discuss how well the state's system of designating schools as achieving, needs improvement, exemplary, focus and priority aligns with schools' designations before Flexibility. Do schools generally consider the new designations a more fair or less fair assessment of their performance?
2. **Use of school improvement consultants:** The ESEA Flexibility plan requires priority schools to use an external provider (i.e., school improvement consultant). Why did ADE include this requirement in its Flexibility Request? Discuss how the role of ADE staff working with priority schools (school improvement specialists) differs from the role of the external providers working with the schools. Describe the external provider evaluation process.
3. **Rewarding exemplary schools:** ESEA Flexibility requires states to "provide incentives and recognition for success on an annual basis by publicly recognizing and, if possible, rewarding Title I schools making the most progress or having the highest performance as 'reward schools.'" Describe the state's efforts to recognize and reward "exemplary schools."
4. **Student growth measures in teacher evaluations:** The ESEA Flexibility plan calls for states to include student growth measures in their teacher evaluation systems. How is ADE planning to implement this provision?
5. **ESEA reauthorization proposals:** Briefly describe the potential impact in Arkansas schools of the two proposed approaches to ESEA reauthorization currently before the U.S. House and Senate.

Academic Distress

1. **Update of districts in academic distress:** Lee County and Strong-Huttig School Districts were placed in academic distress in January. Please provide an update of how these districts are doing in the distress program and how the interventions allowed under academic distress differ from the interventions previously used in these districts under No Child Left Behind. How many students transferred to other districts following the January academic distress designations?
2. **Schools in academic distress:** Act 600 of 2013 allows for individual schools to now be designated as being in academic distress. How do you envision that authority will be used and integrated with the school-level accountability already in place under ESEA Flexibility?