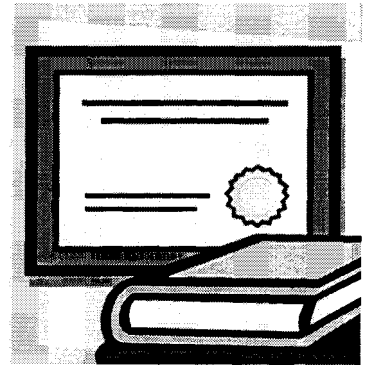


Accountability Report



To The
Joint Committee
On Educational Adequacy

From The
Accountability Subcommittee
Of The
Joint Committee
On Educational Adequacy

Senate Members

David Bisbee, Co-chair
Steve Bryles
Jim Argue, **Ex Officio**

House Members

Jodie Mahony, Co-chair
LeRoy Dangeau
Calvin Johnson, **Ex Officio**

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- Exhibit "D" - A copy of the Arkansas School Boards Association's presentation
- Exhibit "E" - A copy of the Arkansas Education Association's presentation
- Exhibit "F" - A copy of the Education Position Statement of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce
- Exhibit "G" - A summary of the education reform bill that Mr. Hussman and other business leader support
- Exhibit "H" - A copy of Mr. Matthews' letter

Executive Summary

Act 94 of 2003 established a legislative committee, the Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy. Among the statutory responsibilities assigned to the Joint Committee was the recommendation of a system or method to assess, evaluate, and monitor the entire spectrum of public education across the state to determine whether equal educational opportunity for an adequate education is being substantially afforded to Arkansas' school children.

To help the Joint Committee meet this obligation, a six (6) member subcommittee, known as the Accountability Subcommittee, was established. Based on the testimony and discussion from the Subcommittee's meetings of July 29, 2003 and August 12, 2003, a number of preliminary observations were developed for discussion by the entire Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy. These include:

The accountability functions of the Arkansas Department of Education could be modified by any four (4) of the following methods which include:

1. Leave the current structure in place but enhance it;
2. Modify the current structure of the Arkansas Department of Education by establishing a separate division responsible for accountability that operates under the authority of the State Board of Education;
3. Establish a new, independent entity reporting to a separate board; or
4. Combine either option 1 or 2 with an independent oversight group with its own staff.

Under any of the four (4) models outlined above, there must be a sufficient central office and field staff to ensure that the accountability entity, however it is configured, will have the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct both fiscal and programmatic (i.e., actual instructional delivery of materials to students v. academic content required for licensure and accreditation) review of the state's public schools.

The purpose of any accountability system developed and implemented by the State of Arkansas should be to allow citizens, schools, and state officials to make informed decisions about the performance of the systems of public schools, as well as the districts, schools, administrators, teachers, or students as appropriate. This will require a system that can provide information, in varying degrees of detail and format, to students, their parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, state-level policymakers, the business community, and other citizens.

The focus of any accountability system used by the state must be at the school and classroom level and must include both fiscal and academic measures that are robust, reliable, and valid. The overall structure of any accountability system used by the state must enable both the executive branch and the legislative branch to carry out their respective functions in a reliable and timely manner. Consideration should be given to whether the Department of Education needs more authority to target low performing schools, as most of the Department of Education's authority with respect to the academic distress statutes is applicable only when the entire school district is low performing.

A uniform financial accounting system is an absolute necessity in any successful accountability system. It is an absolute necessity that the system enable the tracking of both

revenues and expenditures at the school-site level with data input and a coding regimen that is strictly adhered to and backed by meaningful sanctions. Any financial accounting system must include the ability to accurately track the expenditures related to school-sanctioned extracurricular activities and other expenses by each school district separately and jointly by all districts in the state. The data maintained by the systems should be available to policy-makers, researchers, and the public.

The structure of the state's accountability system was an area of considerable discussion during subcommittee hearings. While there is agreement about many aspects of the structure of the current system, there are differences in key areas that have yet to be resolved. With respect to these areas, the committee received much testimony and evidence in support of the following conclusions:

- ✓ **Both norm-referenced assessments and criterion-referenced assessments** need to be used each year as a part of the state's system of academic accountability. Generally, the stakeholders can agree that there are benefits to continuing both norm-referenced assessments and criterion-referenced assessments. A blended assessment, commonly referred to as augmented assessment, combines criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment. Blended assessments should be investigated for use in Arkansas public schools, with consideration given to how long it would take and how much it would cost to develop a blended assessment.
- ✓ **Terminology alignment is a necessity for the state's accountability system.** The content, comparability, and alignment of the definitions used in the state's accountability system to describe various levels of student academic performance as compared to those used in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) statute and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) should be aligned. There is great concern and skepticism when the scores on NAEP and the scores on benchmark exams seem to have no correlation.
- ✓ **Student accountability for meaningful participation in the accountability system is necessary.** The need to ensure that students who take the assessments included in the state accountability system do so with a full appreciation of the importance and consequences of their participation (i.e. tying student performance on assessment to course grades, graduation or promotion, and post-secondary scholarship opportunities).
- ✓ **The mechanisms for reporting accountability information to the general public** in a way that is easily understandable and easily disseminated, (i.e. awarding letter grades to schools based on their performance under the state's accountability system) is a necessary component in the state's accountability system. Disaggregating information is a critical tool.
- ✓ **Timely scoring and reporting of the results of the assessments** used in the state's accountability system are important so that complete and comprehensive information can be provided to parents and educators in a comprehensible fashion and so it can be used to make informed decisions regarding student placement and services, as well as educator training and development. Consideration should be given to having students complete the writing sample portion of the assessment prior to taking the remainder of the exam to reduce the amount of time it takes to get the results.

- ✓ **The types of assessments that may be administered to students in kindergarten through grade two (K-2)** as part of the state's accountability system and use of those assessments in student placement and provision of services should be carefully reviewed.
- ✓ **Longitudinal tracking of students in a value-added system** should be considered in developing any accountability system so that the performance of both the student and the educational system can be monitored and adjusted. Longitudinal tracking uses standardized test scores to track the progress of the same student from year to year and from grade to grade, regardless of whether the student moves to another school or another school district within the state. This allows for early identification and intervention for students who are not making progress. The length of time to develop longitudinal tracking with the present accountability system should be accelerated.

The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) is the lynchpin of the state's current system for collecting both fiscal and academic data, thereby making it a vital component of the accountability system. It is critical that the hardware and the software associated with it be adaptable for current and future accountability requirements. It is also critical that entities not affiliated directly or indirectly with the Department of Education be utilized to ensure the reliability and validity of the data generated by the state's accountability system. Information contained in the system should be available for researchers and reporting entities.

The Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy reviewed the Subcommittee's report at its August 19, 2003 meeting and accepted it for inclusion in the Committee's final report.

REPORT OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY

INTRODUCTION

With respect to accountability, the Arkansas Supreme Court, in the decision of Lake View School District No. 25 v. Mike Huckabee, 351 Ark. 31 (November 21, 2002), held:

It is . . . the State's responsibility to assess, evaluate, and monitor, not only the lower elementary grades for English and math proficiency, but the entire spectrum of public education across the state to determine whether equal educational opportunity for an adequate education is being substantially afforded to Arkansas' school children.

One of the six (6) duties of the Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy is to recommend a system or method to assess, evaluate, and monitor public education in accordance with the Arkansas Supreme Court order. The Accountability Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy was formed to assist the full committee in carrying out its charge with respect to accountability.

The accountability subcommittee held two (2) full days of hearings to explore the issues related to accountability for public schools and to gather information to be provided to the full committee for use in development of a recommendation for a system. With the assistance of the Arkansas Department of Education, the subcommittee reviewed the current system of accountability in Arkansas. The subcommittee heard testimony from consultants and experts regarding successful accountability systems currently being used by other states. Finally, the subcommittee heard testimony from educational organizations, business leaders, and concerned citizens regarding their expectations and goals with respect to accountability systems for public education.

This report is a summary of the information gathered and observations made from those hearings.

ARKANSAS' CURRENT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
AND THE QUALITY EDUCATION ACT OF 2003 (OMNIBUS BILL)

The Quality Education Act of 2003, commonly referred to as the Omnibus Bill, incorporates the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) and the Arkansas Fiscal Accountability Program together with the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan to comprise Arkansas' current system of accountability programs and will be used by Arkansas schools and districts to comply with state and federal education legislation, specifically including the federal No Child Left Behind Act.¹

- **Academic Content Standards** are the first component of ACTAAP and are designed to define what a student should know and be able to do in the basic academic core. Arkansas' academic content standards are delineated in ten curriculum framework documents that are further broken into grade level benchmarks and refrigerator curricula documents designed to communicate the goals of each grade level to parents. This information is available on the Department of Education's website. The State Board of Education has adopted a cyclical process that provides for review and revision of Academic Content Standards on a five-year basis.

Several people addressing the subcommittee were concerned that Arkansas' current curriculum frameworks have been reported as being vague and unclear, notably by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation which gave Arkansas an "F" when grading the state's curriculum frameworks. Education Week reviewed Arkansas' curriculum frameworks and has gave the state a "B-". Judge Collins Kilgore, in his opinion regarding Lake View, noted that the state has successfully put in place "curriculum frameworks that specifies student expectations" and noted this as one of the three (3) key elements for an adequate education system.

- **Professional Development** is the second component of ACTAAP and is designed to provide a coordinated set of planned, research-based, best practice learning activities for teachers and administrators that are standards-based and continuous. Professional development is tied to school improvement planning and to licensure

¹ A summary of the Quality Education Act of 2003 (Omnibus Bill) is attached hereto as Exhibit "A".

requirements. Currently, thirty (30) approved professional development hours annually are required for each certified employee in the school district. As of 2003, administrators are required to take three (3) additional hours of professional development to enhance their understanding of effective parental involvement and the importance of administrative leadership. Schools are required to have a school improvement plan and to establish a professional development plan that should be reviewed annually and linked to identified teacher needs and student performance needs as established by the assessment system. Smart Start is a professional development program specifically designed to target reading and mathematics for students in kindergarten through grade four (K-4). Smart Step is a similarly targeted for grades five through eight (5-8) specific activities have also been provided for teachers of limited English proficient and special education students, as well school principals.

- Smart Step is the third component of the TAAE and includes both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments in the academic core. Criterion-referenced tests, commonly referred to as the "benchmark exams", are customized around the academic content standards in the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks, (i.e. state academic standards) and may be used to compare student, school, and district performance to other students, schools, and districts in the state. The norm-referenced tests compare performance of Arkansas students against the performance of the national norming group in other states and nationwide. Arkansas also has end-of-course testing in Algebra I, geometry, and eleventh (11th) grade literacy and expects to add an end-of-course test in biology in the 2006-2007 school year².

Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, students in kindergarten through grade twelve will receive an assessment. Kindergarten through grade two (K-2) students will receive developmentally appropriate assessments, grades three through eight (3-8) will receive criterion-referenced assessments in mathematics and literacy, students in grade eleven (11) will receive a criterion-referenced assessment in literacy, and grades five and nine (5 and 9) will receive

² See page 7 of Exhibit "B" for more detail regarding Arkansas' assessments at each grade level.

norm-referenced assessments. Students in grades nine through twelve (9-12) will receive end-of-course assessments as appropriate. Science assessments will be administered in to students in grades four, six, and eight (4,6, and 8) beginning in the 2006-2007 school year.

- **Accountability Reporting; and Rating** is the fourth component of Arkansas Comprehensive, Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program. Every school in the state has a School Performance Report that is provided to parents and the public. Accountability data is available on the Arkansas School Information website and annual reports regarding the progress of ACTAAP are to be made to the House and Senate Committee on Education. Every school is required to engage in development and implementation of a comprehensive school improvement plan based on priorities indicated by student assessment and other pertinent data.
- **Rewards, Sanctions and Targeted Assistance** are the final phase of A TAAF. Each year the Department of Education will recognize individual schools that demonstrate exceptional performance in student achievement and improvements. Awards could include cash payments to individual schools that may used to expand programs, to provide additional materials and supplies, to support technology, to provide bonuses to staff, or to make possible other enhancements that serve the needs of the school or children. Sanctions are applied for the purpose of improving teaching and learning; not for punishing schools or the people in them.
- **The Quality Education Act of 2003 (Omnibus Bill)** provides for a comprehensive system of accountability to enforce the Standards for Accreditation, the ACTAAP, the Arkansas Fiscal Accountability Program, the federal No Child Left Behind act, academic distress, and fiscal distress by giving the State Board of Education the authority to use a range of options to enforce the various provisions at both the district level and the school level. Individual schools and school districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress are to be identified as being in school improvement. Schools in school improvement are subject to varying levels of sanctions, which over the course of four (4) years,

include revising the school's Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, offering students school choice options for attending other schools in the district, offering supplemental services to eligible students, and developing plans with corrective actions. If a school is in school improvement for five (5) years, the Department of Education may require the school to be restructured.

School districts with 75% or more of its students scoring "below basic" performance level collectively across all grade levels for which criterion-referenced assessments are administered and across all schools in the district will be identified as being in academic distress. School districts that are in academic distress for two consecutive years shall be consolidated, annexed, or reconstituted prior to July 1 of the next school year. Students assigned to attend failing schools shall be allowed to participate in school choice.³

Many people have expressed concern that the seventy-five percent or more students scoring 'below basic' is too low and that the identification process for academic distress should be more aligned with the goal of having all students performing at grade level which is referred to as "proficient". In addition to raising the bar for achievement, the business community has expressed concern that the Quality Education Act of 2003 (Omnibus bill) does not go far enough in allowing the Department of Education to target low performing schools, as most of the Department of Education's authority with respect to the academic distress statutes is applicable only when the entire school district is low performing.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS IN OTHER STATES

- **Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)**

Florida's assessment system requires testing of students in grades three through ten (3-10) with use of a combination of criterion-referenced test and norm-referenced assessments. Each year, students in grades three through ten (3-10) take a norm-referenced test in reading and math. For the yearly criterion-referenced test, students in fourth grade are assessed in reading and writing,

³ A detailed report of the Arkansas Comprehensive, Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program is attached hereto as Exhibit "B".

students in fifth grade are assessed in math, and students in eighth and tenth grades are assessed in reading, math, and writing. The reading assessment for third grade and the reading and mathematics assessment for tenth grade are considered "high stakes" exams, meaning the students cannot be promoted to the fourth grade without passing the third grade assessment or students cannot graduate without passing the reading and mathematics assessments.

The assessments measure achievement levels identified as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 and learning gains from one year to the next. Schools gain points for each student reaching achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 and points for each percent of students making annual learning gains. Based on the number of points earned, schools are given a school performance grade of A, B, C, D, or F.

Students assigned to attend a school with a performance grade of D or F are allowed to transfer to another public school or may request an "opportunity scholarship" that may be used to attend approved private schools.

According to Dr. Thomas Fisher, the program has been successful in that most schools have moved out of the D and F range. One fallacy in the current system is that a school can have a very high performance grade because of student gains, but overall have very low student achievement levels.

- **Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program**

Tennessee's program requires assessments for students in grades three through eight (3-8) with a combination of criterion-references and norm-referenced assessments. Currently, the assessments are in reading/language arts and mathematics. The state will be adding social science and science. Tennessee also has ten (10) end-of-course exams. The end-of-course exams count toward at least fifteen percent (15%) of the student's final grade for the semester in which it is taken and some of the end-of-course exams are required for graduation.

Tennessee does have a value-added system that allows separation of results by teacher, school, and district. The results for each teacher are confidential and only available to the teacher, principal, and school board. The Tennessee Department of Education has very strict guidelines regarding the use of

the results of each teacher, but such a value-added system is especially useful in developing and targeting professional development.

Tennessee does have procedures for taking over schools based on poor performance on mandated assessments; but to date, the options have not been exercised.⁴

COMMENTS BY STAKEHOLDERS

- **The Arkansas School Boards Association** is supportive of a strong accountability system and emphasizes that the focus of any system should be to provide what is best for the children of the state. The Arkansas School Boards Association would like to see improvements to the current system. They are especially enthusiastic and concerned about professional development. The Arkansas School Boards Association supports continued use of benchmark exams.⁵
- **The Arkansas Education Association** and the teachers it represents support and welcome high standards and fair, effective accountability systems, if the standards and systems share responsibility for establishing clear goals, adapting high standards for student achievement, and providing adequate and equitable funding and support systems. The Arkansas Education Association emphasized that accountability is more than just testing. Accountability is the means by which individuals or organizations take responsibility for their actions. The Arkansas Education Association believes that large-scale testing should be used in conjunction with ongoing classroom assessment to produce a better picture of student achievement and school quality. The Arkansas Education Association supports continued use of benchmark exams.⁶
- **Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce** believes that to gain the business community's support for additional funding, the state must require that a substantial level of accountability be applied to school districts, schools,

⁴ A copy of the presentation regarding measuring a student's achievement and school progress by Dr. Thomas H. Fisher, of Fisher Education Consulting, Inc., is attached hereto Exhibit "C".

⁵ A copy of the Arkansas School Boards Association's presentation is attached hereto as Exhibit "D".

⁶ A copy of the Arkansas Education Association's presentation is attached hereto as Exhibit "E".

administrators, teachers, and individuals. National tests for student assessment, longitudinal tracking, and tightening of the fiscal/academic distress laws were addressed in the previous legislative session, and the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce would like to see expansion of these accomplishments.⁷

- **Walter Hussman**, the owner of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, has taken a personal interest in seeing meaningful education reform in the state. Mr. Hussman stated that he, along with other Arkansas business leaders, want to see Arkansas implement strong accountability systems that include norm-referenced testing that allows comparison of the progress of Arkansas' school children to other school children nationally. Mr. Hussman spoke in support of a bill that would require:
 - Testing annually in grades 1-10;
 - Nationally norm-referenced tests every year for all students;
 - Continuing ACTAAP state standards tests;
 - Letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) for all K-12 schools based on academic performance;
 - Rewards for schools that get an "A" or "B";
 - Public school choice for students in failing schools; and
 - Letter grades, (A, B, C, D, F) for all K-12 schools based on financial accountability.*
- **Ben Mays** addressed the subcommittee to express his concerns regarding school district accountability for athletic expenditures.
- **Dr. Dan Challener**, with the Chattanooga Public Education Foundation Leadership Development Program, provided the subcommittee with information regarding his experiences while working with nine (9) of the worst performing schools in the Tennessee public school system. Dr. Challener used information gathered from value-added assessments to help identify the most effective teachers in the school system and to identify specific areas that needed

⁷ A copy of the Education Position Statement of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce is attached hereto as Exhibit "F".

⁸ A summary of the education reform bill that Mr. Hussman and other business leaders support is attached hereto as Exhibit "G".

improvement in the school. The information gathered on the teachers was on a voluntary basis. The group of highly effective teachers was used to help improve the effectiveness of teachers in the low performing schools. The information gathered from the value-added system was used to improve the schools, not punish them, and within a two-year period the schools have shown significant improvement. The foundation, using an outside funding source, also gave a bonus of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per teacher for high performance.

- **David R. Matthews**, Attorney at Law, submitted a letter to the subcommittee providing his opinions and observations concerning accountability for the state's public schools.⁹

OBSERVATIONS

Based on the testimony and discussion at the Accountability Subcommittee's meetings of July 29, 2003 and August 12, 2003, a number of preliminary observations have been developed for discussion by the entire Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy. These include:

- **The accountability functions of the Arkansas Department of Education** could be modified by any four (4) of the following methods which include:
 1. Leave the current structure in place but enhance it;
 2. Modify the current structure of the Arkansas Department of Education by establishing a separate division responsible for accountability that operates under the authority of the State Board of Education;
 3. Establish a new, independent entity reporting to a separate board; or
 4. Combine either option 1 or 2 with an independent oversight group with its own staff.

Under any of the four (4) models outlined above, there must be a sufficient central office and field staff to ensure that the accountability entity, however it is configured, will have the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct both fiscal and programmatic (i.e., actual instructional delivery of materials to students v.

⁹ A copy of Mr. Matthews' letter is attached hereto as Exhibit "H"

academic content required for licensure and accreditation) review of the state's public schools.

- **The purpose of any accountability system** developed and implemented by the State of Arkansas should be to allow citizens, schools, and state officials to make informed decisions about the performance of the systems of public schools, as well as the districts, schools, administrators, teachers, or students as appropriate. This will require a system that can provide information, in varying degrees of detail and format, to students, their parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, state-level policymakers, the business community, and other citizens.
- **The focus of any accountability system** used by the state must be at the school and classroom level and must include both fiscal and academic measures that are robust, reliable, and valid. The overall structure of any accountability system used by the state must enable both the executive branch and the legislative branch to carry out their respective functions in a reliable and timely manner,

Consideration should be given to whether the Department of Education needs more authority to target low performing schools, as most of the Department of Education's authority with respect to the academic distress statutes is applicable only when the entire school district is low performing.

- **A uniform financial accounting system** is an absolute necessity in any successful accountability system. It is an absolute necessity that the system enable the tracking of both revenues and expenditures at the school-site level with data input and a coding regimen that is strictly adhered to and backed by meaningful sanctions. Any financial accounting system must include the ability to accurately track the expenditures related to school-sanctioned extracurricular activities and other expenses by each school district separately and jointly by all districts in the state. The data maintained by the systems should be available to policy-makers, researchers, and the public.
- **The structure of the state's accountability system** was an area of considerable discussion during subcommittee hearings. While there is agreement about many aspects of the structure of the current system, there are differences in key areas

that have yet to be resolved. With respect to these areas, the committee received much testimony and evidence in support of the following conclusions:

- o **Both norm-referenced assessments and criterion-referenced assessments** need to be used each year as a part of the state's system of academic accountability. Generally, the stakeholders can agree that there are benefits to continuing both norm-referenced assessments and criterion-referenced assessments. A blended assessment, commonly referred to as augmented assessment, combines criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment. Blended assessments should be investigated for use in Arkansas public schools, with consideration given to how long it would take and how much it would cost to develop a blended assessment.
- o **Terminology alignment is a necessity for the state's accountability system.** The content, comparability, and alignment of the definitions used in the state's accountability system to describe various levels of student academic performance as compared to those used in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) statute and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) should be aligned. There is great concern and skepticism when the scores on NAEP and the scores on benchmark exams seem to have no correlation.
- o **Student accountability for meaningful participation in the accountability system is necessary.** The need to ensure that students who take the assessments included in the state accountability system do so with a full appreciation of the importance and consequences of their participation (i.e. tying student performance on assessment to course grades, graduation or promotion, and post-secondary scholarship opportunities).
- o **The mechanisms for reporting accountability information to the general public** in a way that is easily understandable and easily disseminated, (i.e. awarding letter grades to schools based on their performance under the state's accountability system) is a necessary component in the state's accountability system. Disaggregating information is a critical tool.
- o **Timely scoring: and reporting of the results of the assessments** used in the state's accountability system are important so that complete and

comprehensive information can be provided to parents and educators in a comprehensible fashion and so it can be used to make informed decisions regarding student placement and services, as well as educator training and development. Consideration should be given to having students complete the writing sample portion of the assessment prior to taking the remainder of the exam to reduce the amount of time it takes to get the results.

- **The types of assessments that may be administered to students in kindergarten through grade two (K-2)** as part of the state's accountability system and use of those assessments in student placement and provision of services should be carefully reviewed.
- **Longitudinal tracking of students in a value-added system** should be considered in developing any accountability system so that the performance of both the student and the educational system can be monitored and adjusted. Longitudinal tracking uses standardized test scores to track the progress of the same student from year to year and from grade to grade, regardless of whether the student moves to another school or another school district within the state. This allows for early identification and intervention for students who are not making progress. The length of time to develop longitudinal tracking with the present accountability system should be accelerated.
- **The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN)** is the lynchpin of the state's current system for collecting both fiscal and academic data, thereby making it a vital component of the accountability system. It is critical that the hardware and the software associated with it be adaptable for current and future accountability requirements. It is also critical that entities not affiliated directly or indirectly with the Department of Education be utilized to ensure the reliability and validity of the data generated by the state's accountability system. Information contained in the system should be available for researchers and reporting entities.

CONCLUSION

The responsibility of the Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy develop an accountability system "to assess, evaluate, and monitor. . .the entire spectrum of public education across the state to determine whether equal educational opportunity for an adequate education is being substantially afforded to Arkansas' school children" is a critical component of the state's responsibility to provide an equal opportunity for an adequate education. The information and observations contained herein are designed to assist the committee in developing an accountability program, as this subcommittee is committed to the importance of a quality and reliable system of accountability for the benefit of the state's public schools, citizens, and taxpayers.

House Bill 2697
The Omnibus Quality Education Act of 2003

This bill provides for a comprehensive system of accountability to enforce Standards for Accreditation, the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP), **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**, Academic Distress, and Fiscal Distress.

Sections 1-6 Standards for Accreditation:

- Amends current law to allow the State Board of Education (SBE) a range of options to enforce current Standards for Accreditation.
 - Once a school or school district is placed in probationary status the SBE may act on any of a range of options to enforce Standards for Accreditation.
- Should a school or school district fail to meet Standards for Accreditation for **two** consecutive years, the SBE is required to take at least one **of** eight possible actions to enforce Standards for Accreditation in that school or school district.
 - Options may include reorganization of a school, implementation of a new curriculum, annexation, consolidation, or reconstitution of a school district.

Sections 7-17 ACTAAP, NCLB and Academic Distress:

- Amends current law to require a single comprehensive assessment and accountability system **as** required by NCLB.
- The system of criterion reference tests will be used for accountability purposes. **The norm** reference tests will be used for reporting purposes.
- Enables the Arkansas Department of Education to promulgate rules and regulations in ACTAAP to incorporate the requirements of NCLB, including adequate yearly progress.
- This single system allows the state to address both “schools and school districts **in** school improvement” or “school districts in Academic Distress.”
- The SBE may take immediate remedial action on any school district determined to be **in** Academic Distress.
- The SBE is required to annex, consolidate, or reconstitute any school district that has been in Academic Distress for two consecutive years.
- Any student enrolled in a school district determined to be in Academic Distress will automatically qualify to apply for school choice options to school districts contiguous to the school district in Academic Distress. Students must still meet requirements **in** current school choice law to qualify for choice.
 - Cost of transportation will be the responsibility of the school district in Academic Distress.

Section 18 Fiscal Distress:

- Amends current fiscal distress law to provide a list of indicators that the SBE would review **to** determine if a school district is in fiscal distress.
- Amends current fiscal distress law to allow the **SBE** to take remedial action immediately **on** any school district determined to be in fiscal distress status.
- Amends current fiscal distress law to require the SBE to annex, consolidate, or reconstitute **any** school district that has been in fiscal distress status for two consecutive years.

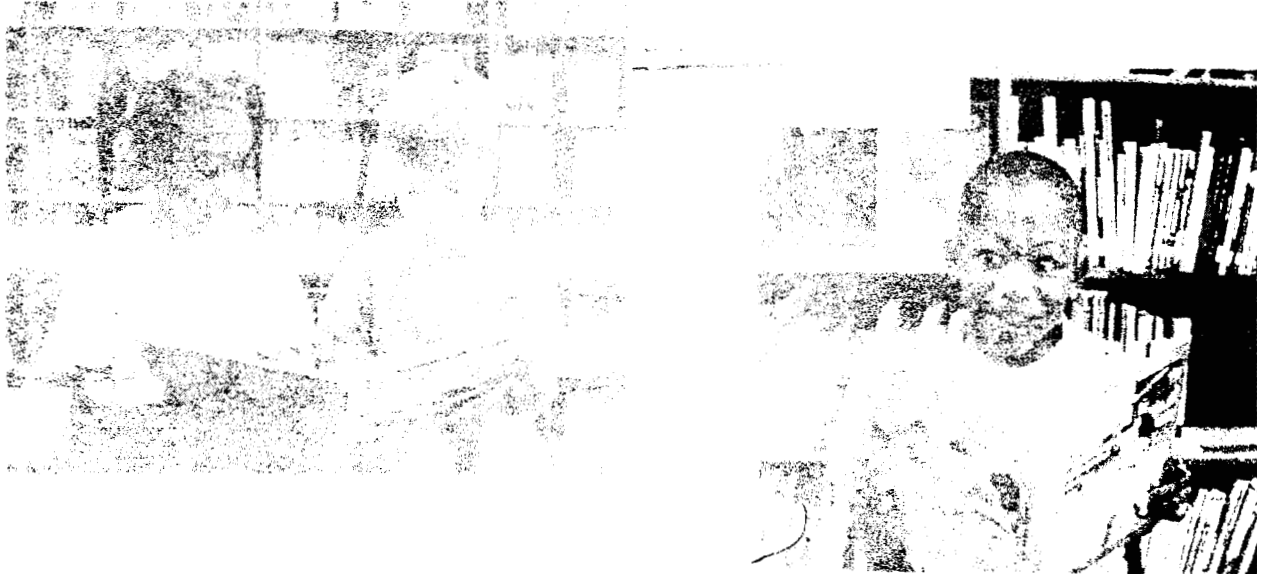
Sections 19-21 Other Amendments and Appeal Process:

- Amends current law to allow the SBE to annex or consolidate **a** school district determined to have failed to meet Standards for Accreditation or is determined to be in Academic Distress **or** Fiscal Distress.
- Provides the school district a right of appeal to circuit court on consolidation **or** annexation enforcement actions taken against a school district in the areas of Standards for Accreditation, Academic Distress, or Fiscal Distress.
- Repeals current Academic and Fiscal Distress statutes.

EXHIBIT
”A”

DRAFT

ARKANSAS COMPREHENSIVE
TESTING, ASSESSMENT, &
ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM



Arkansas Department of Education
Ray Simon, Director

DRAFT

June 1999

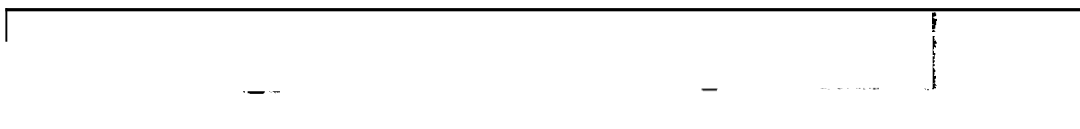


EXHIBIT
"B"

INTRODUCTION

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP), a comprehensive system encompassing **high** academic content standards, professional development, student assessment, and accountability for schools and students, has the following purposes:

- To improve student learning and classroom instruction;
- To provide public accountability by establishing expected achievement levels and reporting on student achievement;
- To provide program evaluation data; and
- To assist policymakers in decision-making.

Based on principles of rigor, clarity, and fairness, ACTAAP makes student achievement of the academic standards the shared priority of all public schools, school districts, education service cooperatives and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). It will result in improved teaching and learning. It will establish a single accountability system that will identify successful schools and programs and encourage replication of those successes. It will identify encourage individual schools and school districts ~~to reflect on their practices,~~ that must take corrective actions, and receive support from state agencies. Finally, it will fulfill the requirements of various Arkansas statutes, including Act 999 of 1999, which mandates “that all students in the public schools of this state demonstrate grade-level academic proficiency through the application of knowledge and skills in the core academic subjects consistent with state curriculum frameworks, performance standards, and assessments.”

Through ACTAAP and the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP), Arkansas schools and districts will meet the compliance requirements of current federal education legislation.

ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

The Department of Education and the State Board of Education have identified four distinct types of standards: Accreditation; Academic/Content; Performance; and Finance. School accountability is interdependent on each type of standard. ACTAAP is established upon a clear statement of what students should know and be able to do and the implementation of a comprehensive assessment system that measures student progress in meeting those standards and subsequently reporting that progress to the public.

The first component, a set of clear, challenging **academic content standards**, defines what students should know and be able to do in the basic academic core. Arkansas' academic content standards are delineated in ten state curriculum framework documents. Written by Arkansas classroom teachers with review by national content experts, the curriculum frameworks are revised on a State Board of Education adopted schedule to ensure that state learning expectations will prepare students to succeed in increasingly more demanding post secondary education and in an ever more competitive job market. As part of Smart Start and Smart Step, as a support and supplement to the curriculum frameworks, K-8 Benchmark documents in Language Arts and Mathematics have been created. These documents are examples of how a school district might implement the curriculum frameworks by grade level. The K-8 Benchmark documents also contain suggested instructional strategies, classroom assessments, ~~and a grade-level skills checklist, and an array of teacher resources. Other supportive curriculum documents built around the academic standards are under development.~~

Academic content standards are general statements of what students are expected to know (knowledge) and be able to do (skills) in the academic content areas.

Frameworks provide an outline on the broad academic standards of an entire system of education, while giving the local school district the opportunity to develop a specific program to address the frameworks.

Benchmarks tell what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels

The reader is referred to the Department of Education Web site for an in depth discussion of the frameworks, academic content standards and supporting documents. <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/curriculum/frameworks.html>

The State Board of Education has adopted a cyclical process that provides for review and revision of the Academic Content Standards on a five-year basis.

Framework Revision Cycle

<u>Time Element</u>	<u>Discipline</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2000</u>	<u>Social Studies</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2001</u>	<u>Fine Arts</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2002</u>	<u>Health</u> <u>Physical Education</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2003</u>	<u>English Language Arts</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2004</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2005</u>	<u>Science</u> <u>Health</u> <u>Physical Education</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2006</u>	<u>Social Studies</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2007</u>	<u>Foreign Languages</u>
<u>Summer/Fall 2008</u>	<u>Fine Arts</u>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The second component, **professional development**, is a coordinated set of planned, research-based best practice, learning activities for teachers and administrators which are standards-based and continuous. It shall be tied with school improvement planning and with licensure renewal requirements.

Thirty approved professional development hours annually will be required for each certified employee in the school district. At least six of these hours must be in the area of instructional technology. Beginning in January 2002, thirty approved professional development hours annually over a five-year period shall be required to renew a teacher or administrator license. To be eligible, professional development activities must produce teaching and administrative knowledge and skills designed to improve students' academic performance. Such activities may include approved conferences, workshops, institutes, individual learning, mentoring, peer coaching, study groups, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification, distance learning, internships, and college/university coursework. Approved professional development activities shall relate to the twelve areas adopted by the State Board of Education: content (Grades K-12); instructional strategies; assessment; advocacy/leadership; systemic change process; standards, frameworks, and curriculum alignment; supervision; mentoring/coaching; instructional technology; principles of learning/developmental stages; cognitive research; and building a collaborative learning community. All approved professional development activities, whether individual or school wide, shall be based on the improvement of student achievement on state-mandated criterion-referenced examinations and other related indicators as defined by ACTAAP.

Schools are required to establish a professional develop plan as part of the school's ACSIP plan. The professional develop plan shall be reviewed annually and linked to identified teacher needs and student uerformance needs as established by the assessment system.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The third component is a **student assessment** program, which includes both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests in the academic core.

Criterion-referenced tests are customized around the academic standards in the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks. These tests are developed under contract with a nationally recognized company with advice and input ~~and are developed by~~ from committees of Arkansas teachers. These criterion-referenced tests are administered to establish the level of student achievement of the state academic standards and to compare the level of student achievement with the expected performance levels set by the State Board of Education.

Norm-referenced tests provide information to compare the performance of Arkansas students against the performance of a sample of students ~~from across the country~~ who composed the norming/standardization group. Because norm-referenced tests are not built exclusively around Arkansas' academic standards and because their purpose is to group students based on their performance relative to the norming group, they can best be used for assisting in broad program evaluation and in individual student diagnosis. Norm-referenced test data will not be a ~~primary~~-state-mandated indicator within the accountability component, but will be reported annually on the School Performance Report.

State-Mandated Assessments

~~The results of all assessments should be used during the school improvement planning process to help the school focus on the Arkansas academic standards and the need to increase proficient student performance around those standards.~~

State mandated assessments shall be as follows:

Assessments	Grade Level	Month Administered
Criterion-Referenced		
— Primary Benchmark	Grade 4	April
— Intermediate Benchmark	Grade 6	April
— Middle Level Benchmark	Grade 8	April
— End of Course — Algebra I	When Completed	January/May
— End of Course — Geometry	When Completed	January/May
— End of Course — Literacy	Grade 11	January/April
Norm-Referenced	Grades 5, 7, and 10	September

The State Assessment System includes multiple measures that provide a continuous record of student performance beginning with a screening instrument for kindergarten students and culminating with end-of-course tests at the high school level. The following chart identifies specific measures, the status of the development/implementation and anticipated grade level for each measure.

Table of Assessments (Academic Indicators)

Grade Level	Assessment	Status
	<u>uniform school readiness screening to validate a child's school readiness</u>	
<u>Grade 1 and Grade 2</u>	<u>Developmentally appropriate assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>School Year 2004-2005</u>
<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2004-2005</u>
<u>Grade 4</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
	<u>CRT assessment in science</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in 2006-2007</u>
<u>Grade 5</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2004-2005</u>
<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
	<u>CRT assessment in science</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2006-2007</u>
<u>Grade 7</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2004-2005</u>
<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>CRT assessment in reading and mathematics</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
	<u>CRT assessment in science</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2006-2007</u>
<u>High School – end-of-course Algebra I (Traditionally Grade 9 – taken when course is taken may be grades 8 – 10)</u>	<u>CRT assessment – Algebra I</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
<u>High School – end of course Geometry (Traditionally Grade 10)</u>	<u>CRT assessment – Geometry</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
<u>High School – Literacy (Grade 11)</u>	<u>CRT assessment – literacy</u>	<u>Fully operational</u>
<u>High School – end-of-course biology</u>	<u>CRT assessment – biology</u>	<u>Under development – fully implemented in school year 2006-2007</u>

The Department shall test public school students with a norm-referenced test to be selected by the State Board of Education in at least one grade in each of the following levels, primary (K- 4), middle (5 – 8) and high school (9 - 12).

The Primary, Intermediate, and Middle Level Benchmark Exams, as well as the End-of-Course Exams, will be given late in the school year to allow maximum instructional time for covering the academic standards. Special provisions will be made for an alternate administration in January for those secondary students on a block scheduling system. The Literacy End-of-Course Exam will be given to students in Grade 11 to allow time for additional remediation, at the school's option, before graduation. These exams are tailored to Arkansas' curriculum standards, and their performance levels are absolute and

held constant over time. The results of the End-of-Course Exams shall become a part of each student's ~~transcript or~~ permanent record.

In keeping with Act 999 of 1999, any school selected for participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) must agree to participate and must provide administrative support necessary to identify grades, students and teacher participation to meet the requirements of NAEP administration guidelines.

An academic improvement plan means a plan which details supplemental and/or intervention and remedial instruction in deficient academic areas. One shall be developed and implemented for each student not performing at the proficient level in every portion of the criterion-referenced examinations.

~~The norm referenced tests will be given in early fall of the school year in order to provide teachers with immediate and initial performance assessment data on students currently enrolled or newly enrolled in classes and content areas. The performance of Arkansas students taking the norm referenced tests in the fall will be compared to the performance of a norming group who took the same tests during the same period in the fall, thus ensuring the reliability, validity and fairness of comparison. Score reports will be returned early in the school year for classroom teachers to use the testing information to address the individual student learning needs, and to modify the instructional program, teaching strategies, and/or classroom assessments as needed. Instruction then can focus fully on the Arkansas academic standards throughout the year and on increasing proficient student performance around those standards. Schools may request a waiver from the fall to a spring testing date. Such waivers will only be granted after a written plan is presented to the ADE and the school agrees to the guidelines as established. The timing of such requests must also fall within the deadlines as established by the testing company.~~

As ~~another~~ part of the student assessment program for Grades **K-4**, schools shall select performance assessments or screening/diagnostic tools to assess primary grade students. Any student in Grades **K-4** failing to perform at the proficient level in reading and writing literacy or mathematics shall be evaluated as early as possible within each of the Grades **K-4** academic years. Those students shall be evaluated by personnel with expertise in reading and writing literacy or mathematics who shall develop and implement an academic improvement plan, using ADE sanctioned early intervention strategies for Grades K-1 students and remediation strategies for Grades **2-4** students. These strategies should assist the students in achieving the expected standard.

Schools serving Grades 5-12 shall establish a plan, using multiple measures, to assess whether children are performing at the proficient level in order to help assure eventual success on every portion of the Intermediate, Middle Level, and End-of-Course Benchmark Exams.

~~For accountability purposes, no points will be assigned for the results of these performance assessments or screening/diagnostic tools.~~

Act 855 of 1999 mandates that students in Grades ~~IS-3~~ not performing at grade level during the regular school year shall participate in ~~an~~ ADE approved remediation program or a summer school remediation program to be eligible for promotion to the next grade. Those schools electing not to offer a summer school program shall offer an ADE approved remediation program during the regular school year to students in Grades K-3 not performing at grade level.

Optional Assessments

There are other assessments which are optional for student and school participation. These include ~~the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)~~, college entrance examinations (e.g., ACT and SAT), Advanced Placement testing, PLAN, EXPLORE, and others. Some of these may be included as indicators on the School Performance Report, ~~or~~ in the annual school report to the public, or as part of the (Arkansas) Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIIP).

~~Note: Although NAEP is optional for individual school districts, state participation is mandated by Act 999 of 1999.~~

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

Accountability is a comprehensive, focused process designed to improve student learning. It is a shared responsibility of the state, school, district, public officials, educators, parents, and students.

The ACTAAP accountability model focuses on each individual school and ~~is constructed around a three-tiered system that includes academic and non-academic statewide indicators, individual school improvement indicators, and a locally-generated school accountability narrative. Once appropriate time has elapsed to evaluate trends and improvement expectations in a sufficient number of indicators and a statistically defensible point assignment system can be developed, points for each of the statewide and individual school improvement indicators will be given. This point system will form the basis for rewards and sanctions.~~

Academic Indicators consist of student performance on state-mandated criterion-referenced assessments. (Detailed in the Table on Page 7.)

Non-Academic Indicators consist of average daily attendance for Grades K-8 and graduation rate for Grades 9 – 12.

Graduation Rate means the percentage of students who graduate (earn a diploma, not a GED) as compared to the number who entered the school at the ninth grade level. Graduation rate is calculated in two steps: (1) determining the dropout rate which is the percentage of students who drop out each year between grades 9 and 12 as compared to total school membership; and (2) computing the percentage of completers/graduates as compared to graduates plus the dropouts for each year 9 through 12 for that class. Graduation rate is identified as the non-academic indicator for high schools for determining Adequate Yearly Progress.

Average Daily Attendance means the total number of days attended by students divided by the number of days actually taught by the school. The number includes those students who attend school outside of the resident district on a tuition agreement between the two respective districts. Average daily attendance is identified as the non-academic indicator for all elementary and middle-grade schools for determining Adequate Yearly Progress.

This ~~three-tier~~ system allows for meaningful and appropriate state and local involvement to implement accountability within clearly articulated parameters. ACTAAP encourages proactive corrections by individual schools and their local districts through the development and application of strategies using the comprehensive school improvement process as a planning instrument.

Performance Levels

The primary goal of the accountability system is to assure that all students achieve grade-level performance. In this system, grade-level performance is defined as performing at the proficient or advanced level on state-mandated criterion-referenced tests. Four performance levels have been established for these exams: advanced, proficient, basic and below basic. ~~The only tests for which scaled scores defining these levels have been set is the Primary Benchmark and Middle Level Benchmark Exams. Similar scales will be established by the State Board of Education as additional tests are completed and data become available.~~

Definition of Performance Levels

Advanced students demonstrate superior performance well beyond proficient grade-level performance. They can apply Arkansas’ established reading, writing, and mathematics skills to solve complex problems and complete demanding tasks on their own. They can make insightful connections between abstract and concrete ideas and provide well-supported explanations and arguments.

Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance for the grade tested and are well-prepared for the next level of schooling. They can use Arkansas’ established reading, writing and mathematics skills and knowledge to solve problems and complex tasks on their own. Students can tie ideas together and explain the ways their ideas are connected.

Basic students demonstrate a need for some additional assistance, commitment, or study to reach the proficient level. They show substantial skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; however, they only partially demonstrate the abilities to apply these skills.

Below Basic students fail to show sufficient mastery of skills in reading, writing and mathematics to attain the basic level.

Performance Levels for the Primary Benchmark Examination^{*}

Performance Level	Scaled Score Ranges for Performance Levels for Mathematics	Scaled Score Ranges for Performance Levels for Literacy
Advanced	250 and above	250 and above
Proficient	200-249	200-249
Basic	155-199	179-199
Below Basic	154 and below	178 and below

(^{}Performance is subject to adjustment on a periodic basis due to statistical scaling and variability in the test.)*

Disaggregation of Student Data

Each school is responsible for the performance of ALL students continuously enrolled in the school each year. Additionally, the school shall disaggregate its student performance data so as to track performance by the following sub-groups:

- Economically Disadvantaged
- Racial/ethnic
- Students with Disabilities
- Students with Limited English Proficiencies

Within the Racial/Ethnic sub-group the following major racial groups will be observed:

- Caucasian
- African American
- Hispanic

Public Reporting

Each public school in Arkansas will have a **School Performance Report** that will be created through the combined efforts of the local school, school district, and the ADE. The School Performance Report will provide parents and the public data upon which to evaluate their schools and provide benchmarks for measuring school improvement. Although results from the school's performance ~~on the three-tiered system~~ on the state criterion-referenced assessments will be the primary focus of the School Performance Report, other indicators may be included as determined by law or State Board of Education rules and regulations.

~~Although~~ The same standards of student performance will be expected from all students. Assessment data will be analyzed and reported ~~separately~~ for the total (combined) population and for each of the sub-groups as defined. ~~three student classifications: special education, limited English proficiency, and high mobility.~~ The purpose of tracking the performance of these student groups is to focus on narrowing the achievement gap between them and their normally higher performing peers. ~~For purposes of this reporting, the following definitions apply: Where applicable, students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency may complete an alternate portfolio assessment. The results of such alternate assessments will be reported as part of the overall student performance report for each school.~~

Disaggregated Reporting

General Population students are those participating in the mandatory criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments that are not classified as special education, limited English proficient, or highly mobile.

Combined Population students include all those participating in the mandatory criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments regardless of classification.

Special education students are those determined to be eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and who have an individualized education plan (IEP). The student's IEP must stipulate that the student may participate in the mandatory criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments either with or without accommodations. Beginning July 1, 2000, those unable to participate with or without accommodations and be assessed through the Alternate Assessment program.

~~Beginning with the kindergarten class of 2000-2001, the scores of all students classified as special education students participating in the mandatory criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment with or without accommodations shall be aggregated (combined) with those of the general population students according to the following calendar:~~

~~2004-05 — Primary Benchmark
2005-06 — Fifth Grade Norm Referenced~~

~~2006-07 — Intermediate Benchmark~~
~~2007-08 — Seventh Grade Norm Referenced~~
~~2008-09 — Middle Level Benchmark~~
~~2009-10 — End of Course (where applicable)~~
~~2010-11 — Tenth Grade Norm Referenced~~
~~2011-12 — End of Course Literacy~~

Limited English proficiency students are those having a language background other than English and whose proficiency in English is such that the probability of academic success in an English-only classroom is below that of native English language students. The district's Language Assessment Committee must have determined that the students may participate in the mandatory assessments either with or without accommodations. Beginning July 1, 2000, those unable to participate with or without accommodations will be assessed through the Alternate Assessment program.

High mobility students are those who are not in continuous enrollment in a school between October 1 and the first day of testing, , at the time of spring testing, were not enrolled in the current school district on October 1 of the current school year or who, at the time of fall testing, were not enrolled in the current school district on October 1 of the previous school year. ~~To be included in the accountability reporting of a school, a student must be in continuous enrollment in a school between October 1 and the date of testing for any school year.~~ Performance reports for students not meeting the continuous enrollment status will be either reported at the district level or at the state level depending on the enrollment pattern of those students during the school year.

~~Beginning with the 1999-2000 mandatory assessments, results will be reported separately for the following categories of students:~~

- ~~———— General Population~~
- ~~———— Special Education Students~~
- ~~———— Limited English Proficient Students~~
- ~~———— High Mobility Students~~
- ~~———— Combined Populations~~

~~Beginning with the 2000-01 mandatory assessments, the number of students not tested through either the mandatory criterion referenced and norm referenced assessments or Alternate Assessment program will be reported by school. Schools should make every effort to assure that all students are tested.~~

Schools are expected to test 100% of the students who are enrolled in each of the tested grades. Students with an IEP that specifies an alternate assessment and students identified as Limited English Proficient may complete the appropriate Alternate Assessment and be counted as completing the assessment. (Not more than 1% of the number of students enrolled may engage in the Alternate Assessment for special education.) Schools that fail to test and report at least 95% of the number of students

enrolled will be subject to sanctions as outlined under the definition of Adequate Yearly Progress.

Each school annually must report the number of students continuously enrolled between October 1 and the onset of test administration. Any student enrolled in a school at the onset of testing that does not meet the continuous enrollment condition must be tested, but that student's scores will not be used to compute the school's performance for that year. However, the scores of those students who are not in continuous enrollment will become part of the district calculation or the total state calculation as determined by the student's enrollment status during that school year.

Annual School Report to the Public: Each year, each school will prepare a report to the parents and community. This report will include a narrative description (such as prepared for the annual school narrative) ~~Tier III indicators~~) that will highlight the school's improvement plan and indicate progress made in implementing the performance indicators within that plan.

Arkansas School Information Site (AS-IS): The ADE plans to make school accountability data available statewide through the Department's World Wide Web – as-is.org. This Web site will display school data based on student performance and other selected indicators.

Annual ADE Report to the Legislature: The ADE shall report to the members of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education on the progress of ACTAAP. The report shall be due on September 1, 1999 and annually thereafter.

Comprehensive School Improvement Planning

As part of the state's accreditation process, each school is required to engage in the development and implementation of a **comprehensive school improvement plan** based on priorities indicated by student assessment and other pertinent data. This plan is designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on all portions of the state-mandated criterion-referenced exams. The initial step in the planning model is a structured process that leads to disaggregation of student achievement and other student data. The study of this data helps schools identify areas within the curriculum where student performance does not meet expectation.

Schools prioritize the needs areas, then develop performance-based benchmarks that can be tracked during the implementation phase of the plan. Schools then identify intervention and remediation strategies that, if effectively implemented, will move students toward meeting the established benchmarks. Finally, schools develop an action plan that assigns tasks, identifies resources (including the source of funds), and projects evaluation strategies that will signal movement toward meeting the performance standards. The process requires that the intervention and remediation be research-based and linked to proven practices.

The comprehensive school improvement planning process also becomes the application for federal funds under current federal education guidelines and the State’s single accountability process.

Rewards

Rewards will be based on a system structured to recognize schools that demonstrate and maintain high performance over time and to recognize schools that demonstrate growth on ~~both~~ the state-mandated ~~and school-selected~~ indicators. Rewards also can be used to highlight individual schools so that their practices can be adapted in other schools and districts across the state.

Trend goals will be established for different cohorts of students using cross-sectional data from the same indicator (e.g. Primary Benchmark Exam). Statistical techniques will be developed, by averaging multiple years of data, to minimize the inherent volatility -associated with the natural variation in performance of these different groups. This means that if a school is continuing to improve, the trend will be a consistent indicator that fewer students are below proficient, with the effect of “off-year” or “good-year” performance minimized.

Improvement goals will be established for the same cohort of students using a longitudinal database. As students progress from grade to grade, data will be maintained and constantly updated.

Each year the ADE will recognize individual schools that demonstrate exceptional performance in two categories:

Performance Awards - Absolute levels of student achievement and other indicators.

Growth Trend and Improvement Awards – Recognized growth trends and improvement in student achievement and other indicators.

All award categories, which could include cash payments to individual schools, ~~will be phased in over time and~~ will be implemented as the indicator performance levels are established through the standard setting process.

The focus of any cash awards must be to enhance the capability of the school to better serve its students. Awarded funds shall be used to expand programs, provide additional materials and supplies, support technology, provide bonuses to staff, or make possible other enhancements that serve the needs of the school or children.

Sanctions

Sanctions are applied for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, not for punishing schools or the people in them. Intervention from the state is not meant to be a permanent solution to unacceptable student achievement, but a way to help local schools improve student performance. It is expected that individual schools and districts will monitor their own progress and take corrective steps to improve student achievement prior to intervention from the state.

~~To avoid sanctions, each school is expected to achieve annually a minimum percentage of its total possible points given for the accountability indicators described within the three-tiered system. Failure to do so will result in the following designations:~~

- ~~• High Priority Status — first year.~~
- ~~• Alert Status — second year.~~
- ~~• Low Performing Status — third year.~~
- ~~• Academic Distress Phase I Status — fourth year.~~

* School Improvement

The State Board of Education in concurrence with current federal legislation will establish a system of school and school district performance based on student results from the mandated assessment system. The Board will establish a level of performance from which each school and school district in the state will be compared. Also, the Board will establish a series of expected annual increments to be known as “adequate yearly progress.” Adequate yearly progress will be established by determining the gap between the established starting point and 100% proficient and distributing the gap over a period of 12 years. Schools and school districts that fall below the established starting point and fail to make expected progress will be subject to sanctions.

When a school or school district falls below the initial starting point or in subsequent years is below the expected performance level for two consecutive years that school or school district is identified in school improvement

School Improvement Status

Time Line	Reauired Status and Action
First year a school's performance is below AYP starting point or first year a school or school district fails to make adequate yearly prograss	Alert Status – Review school improvement plan and establish professional development needs for faculty and staff ¹

¹ Any public school or school district classified as in school improvement shall develop and file with the ADE a revised comprehensive school improvement plan, which shall be designed to provide the opportunity for all students to demonstrate proficiency on all portions of the state mandated criterion-referenced assessment. That plan shall include strategies to address the achievement gap existing for any identifiable subgroup previously listed.

<u>Second consecutive year of a school's failure to make AYP.</u>	<u>School Improvement Status – 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.</u>
<u>Third consecutive year of a school's failure to make AYP</u>	<u>School Improvement Status – School must continue to provide choice and add the option of supplemental services to students who qualify.</u>
<u>Fourth consecutive year of a school's failure to make AYP</u>	<u>School enters corrective action status – The State is required to establish and implement a plan of corrective action</u>
<u>Fifth consecutive year of a school's failure to make AYP.</u>	<u>Reconstruction status – the State is required to act to restructure the identified school.</u>

School District Improvement Status

<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Required Status and Action</u>
<u>First year a school district fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress and subsequent years</u>	<u>Each year the school district fails to make adequate yearly progress, the district, in addition to any schools in the district that fail to make progress, must develop a district improvement plan that will include in depth disaggregation of student performance data, the development of a district improvement plan, and development of a professional development plan specifically aligned with the identified needs of the entire district staff.</u>

Academic Distress

Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, the State Board of Education shall declare any school district in “academic distress” for which 75% or more of its students score at the “below basic” performance level collectively across all grade levels for which criterion-referenced assessments are administered and across all schools in the district.

Any public school district classified as in “academic distress” shall have no more than two (2) consecutive school years from the date of notice of identification by the ADE to be removed from academic distress status. If the district fails to be removed from academic distress status within the two (2) consecutive year time period, the State Board of Education shall annex, consolidate or reconstitute that district prior to July 1 of the next school year unless the State Board of Education finds that the school district could not remove itself from academic distress due to circumstances beyond its control.

~~To be considered for removal from any sanctioned designation leading up to, but not including, Academic Distress Phase I, a school must attain the minimum percentage of its total possible points for two consecutive years. Once classified as Academic Distress Phase I, a school must comply with rules and regulations to be promulgated by the ADE in order to be removed from this category. Failure to do so will result in the school's designation as **Academic Distress Phase II** and/or **Academic Distress Phase III**.~~

~~The ADE reserves the right, for any school in any of the designations above, to mandate a specified intensive intervention plan which could include, but not be limited to, specific one year goals in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. This plan could also include a mandated summer school program for students performing below grade level.~~

~~**Current rules and regulations governing schools in Academic Distress will remain in effect until the ACTAAP system described here is fully operational.**~~

Accountability Indicators

Definitions of the non-academic (learning environment) indicators are provided later in this document.

Tier I Indicators, all state-mandated, are based on performance goals and apply to every school in the state, where appropriate, by grade level configuration. They are as follows:

Indicator	Goal (Definition)	Grade Level(s)
Performance on State-Mandated Criterion-Referenced Tests	100% of a school's students shall perform at or above the "proficient" level in reading and writing literacy. 100% of a school's students shall perform at or above the "proficient" level in mathematics.	4 th , 6 th , and 8 th
Performance on State-Mandated Criterion-Referenced Tests	100% of a school's secondary students shall perform at or above the "proficient" level in Algebra I. 100% of a school's secondary students shall perform at or above the "proficient" level in Geometry. 100% of a school's secondary students shall perform at or above the "proficient" level in Literacy.	Secondary
School Drop Out	At least 99% of secondary students will remain in school to complete the 12 th grade.	7 th through 12 th
Average Daily Attendance	Average daily attendance rate will be at least 95%.	Kindergarten through 12 th
Classes Taught by an Appropriately Licensed Teacher	100% of a school's classes will be taught by an appropriately licensed teacher.	Kindergarten through 12 th
Professional Development	100% of a school's certified staff will complete at least 30 hours of approved professional development annually.	Kindergarten through 12 th
School Safety	Schools will be free of drugs, weapons, and violent acts.	Kindergarten through 12 th

Tier II Indicators are based on trend and improvement goals on state-mandated criterion-referenced tests and on school-selected indicators. Any "Other School Selected Indicators" must have prior approval of the ADE.

Tier II – State Mandated Indicators

Indicator	Goal (Definition)	Grade Level(s)
Performance on State-Mandated Criterion-	The percent of students performing at or above the "proficient" level in reading and writing literacy on the criterion-referenced tests will meet or exceed	4 th , 6 th , and 8 th

Referenced Tests	the trend and improvement goals each year.	
	The percent of students performing at or above the “proficient” level in mathematics on the criterion-referenced tests will meet or exceed the trend and improvement goals each year.	
Performance on State-Mandated Criterion-Referenced Tests	The percent of secondary students performing at or above the “proficient” level in Algebra I will meet or exceed the trend goal each year.	Secondary
	The percent of secondary students performing at or above the “proficient” level in Geometry will meet or exceed the trend goal each year.	
	The percent of secondary students performing at or above the “proficient” level in Literacy will meet or exceed the trend goal each year.	

Tier II – School Selected Indicators (Schools select any 5)

Indicator	Goal	Grade Level(s)
School Drop-Out	Secondary schools will improve the percentage of students who stay in school to complete the 12th grade.	Secondary
Average Daily Attendance	Schools will improve their average daily attendance rate.	All Levels
Classes Taught by an Appropriately Licensed Teacher	Schools will improve the percent of classes taught by an appropriately licensed teacher.	All Levels
Professional Development	Schools will increase the percent of certified staff who complete 60 or more hours of approved professional development annually.	All Levels
School Safety	Schools will be free of drugs, weapons, and violent acts.	All Levels
Other School Selected Indicators	Schools will select trend or improvement goals directed to student achievement in specific sub-populations or sub-test areas. These must have prior approval of ADE.	All Levels

Trend and Improvement Goals on State Mandated Criterion Referenced Tests

~~On average, each school’s trend goal for annual rate of reduction in the number of students below proficient will be determined by dividing the total percent of students below the proficient level by 10.~~

~~To help establish improvement goals, each cohort of students will be monitored, beginning with the 1999 Primary Benchmark Exam, and a longitudinal database developed. As students progress from grade to grade, data will be maintained and constantly updated. This information will allow for the assessment of performance~~

~~changes relative to initial performance and will assist in the development of expected improvement models.~~

~~Test analysis and methodical planning to reach these goals will be facilitated and guided by the state school evaluation process.~~

~~Trend and Improvement Goals on School Selected Indicators~~

~~The school, with approval of the ADE, selects five additional indicators to complete Tier II. These additional indicators can be selected from among school drop out, average daily attendance, teacher licensure, school safety, or professional development as defined in Tier I; OR, a school may identify trend or improvement goals directed to student achievement in specific sub populations or sub test areas related to the criterion-referenced or norm referenced tests. Guidelines will be developed for use in selecting minimum numbers of students for sub population study in order to preclude identification of individual students. In order to protect the integrity of the accountability system, the ADE must also approve the trend and improvement goals selected by the school. If a school elects to include results of its norm referenced tests within its Tier II indicators, points will be assigned even though no points are given for these exams in Tier I.~~

~~Note: The Professional Development indicator is set at a minimum level of 60 hours in order to encourage schools to offer more than the state required minimum of 30 hours. Thus, schools will be rewarded for encouraging additional professional development opportunities for its teachers and administrators.~~

~~Once selected, Tier II indicators will remain until they have been substantially attained or alternate indicators approved by the ADE.~~

~~The following are examples of indicators based on sub populations:~~

- ~~✓ The gap between the scale score in mathematics on the Primary Benchmark Exam for African American students and white students will be decreased by 10% each year.~~
- ~~✓ Title I eligible students will improve 5 percentile points in reading comprehension each year on the fifth grade norm referenced test.~~

~~Voluntary Reporting of Off-Grade Data~~

~~The ADE strongly encourages, and will provide assistance toward, voluntary implementation by local schools of an expansion of the process of measuring improvement goals by utilizing data for a longitudinal study of students' performance on off grade tests. Participating schools may include results from off grade testing as Tier II indicators, if so desired.~~

Tier III Indicators School Narrative

~~Tier III is a narrative developed by the staff of each school.~~ The annual school narrative of approximately 500 words generally describes data sources (e.g., criterion-referenced tests, norm-referenced tests, etc.) used to address state and local performance indicators. The narrative also describes progress that the school has made in formulating the plan and in successfully implementing the trend and performance indicators within the school improvement process. This narrative, which shall be sent to the ADE during the spring of each year, will be incorporated in the School Performance Report that will be disseminated to the public. No points will be assigned for the narrative.

Sample School Narrative

For the last three years, scores on the Primary Benchmark Exam's reading test have exceeded the district's average. Each child from kindergarten through fifth grade receives an hour and a half of developmental reading instruction per day. Emphasis is also placed on the implementation of activities as outlined in the School Improvement Plan. Independent reading of books by primary and intermediate grade level students has been a priority – a goal was set for each student. This year 85% of the fourth grade students met or exceeded their goal compared to 70% last year. Students are being taught writing skills using many different approaches including computer word processing. The writing and scoring process is designed to help students improve writing scores on the Benchmark Exams. The computer-student ratio is 1:4. Children have access to the Internet and the school has a homepage on the Web.

In mathematics over the past five years, fifth grade students scored below the district goal of 50% above the national average on the SAT-9. This year, a staff focus group supported by a Title I supplemental grant, recommended a teacher accountability math pacing chart. It included chapter test scores, a consistent five-day math homework policy, in-service for staff and parents, a student test awareness program, homework room and a Math Intervention Assistance program. All recommendations were implemented with the approval of the school council. In May, an in-service continued to provide staff with training on computer software and accessing the Internet for mathematical teaching materials and techniques.

Parent involvement (via parent-teacher conferences) increased by 40% this year. Parents participated in developing instructional materials for use at home to reinforce skills, learning instructional uses of the computer, donated time to serve as individual tutors for students during the school day and assisted with holiday events for the students.

Definitions of Non-Academic (Learning Environment) Indicators

~~**School Dropout** means the percentage of students who leave school for any of the following reasons as defined in the Statewide Information System (SIS) database: incarcerated, failing grades, suspended or expelled, lack of interest, conflict with school, economic hardship, pregnancy/marriage, peer conflict, lack of attendance, alcohol/drugs, other. A code will be used for GED participation but will not count as a dropout for ACTAAP purposes. A student will be considered a dropout for the previous year if he/she has a Dropout/Withdrawal date between October 1 of the previous school year and October 1 of the current school year and has not re-entered. The percentage completing will be calculated by dividing the number not dropping out by the previous year's October 1 enrollment.~~

~~**Appropriately Licensed Teacher** means that a teacher has the appropriate license and/or approval to teach the respective class. The teacher is teaching a class that would not cause the school to have a citation in the accreditation process. For the purpose of this calculation, the teacher would fill one of the job assignments as defined in the SIS database. (These are instructional positions, not administrative or supervisory job classifications.) The percentage of classes taught by an appropriately licensed teacher will be determined by dividing the number of classes taught by appropriately licensed teachers by the total number of classes taught.~~

~~**Professional Development** is as defined in the component definition earlier.~~

~~**School Safety** means a percentage safety index determined by dividing the number of violent incidences involving students by the current year three quarter average daily membership of the school and subtracting from 100%. A safety infraction committed by a student includes any of the following as defined in the SIS database: drugs, alcohol, student assault, staff assault, knife, handgun, rifle, shotgun, explosive, club, and gang. Schools reporting user defined infractions should request confirmation from the ADE as to their inclusion in this indicator. Each reported incident will be factored into the calculation; therefore, there is no difference between one student being reported four times and four students being reported once.~~

~~**Calendar for Data Collection and Point Assignment System**~~

~~Since the determination of rewards and sanctions will be based on points assigned to the Tier I and Tier II indicators, it is extremely important that such a system be fair and statistically and legally defensible. It is also necessary to allow appropriate time for sufficient data to be gathered that will permit an accurate measurement of trends and improvement expectations in a sufficient number of indicators.~~

~~Once the assignment of points is initiated, the ADE, through a contract with the University of Arkansas' Office of Research, Measurement and Evaluation (ORME), will be responsible for all calculations and rankings. The local school should not need additional personnel or resources to respond to the requirements of ACTAAP.~~

The following calendar outlines the **Baseline Year**, or the first year in which official data for each Tier I indicator will be collected.

~~1998–99 — Primary Benchmark~~

~~1999–00 — Middle Level Benchmark~~

~~———— School Dropout~~

~~———— Average Daily Attendance~~

~~———— Classes Taught by an Appropriately Licensed Teacher~~

~~———— Professional Development~~

~~———— School Safety~~

~~2000–01 — None~~

~~2001–02 — Intermediate Benchmark~~

~~———— End of Course Algebra I~~

~~———— End of Course Geometry~~

~~———— End of Course Literacy~~

~~The Baseline Year for trend goals with each Tier II indicator will be two years following that indicator's introduction in Tier I. The Baseline Year for improvement goals will vary, depending on when the same cohort of students reaches the next appropriate, measurable indicator.~~

~~Even though baseline data accumulation was begun with the 1998–99 year, actual points for rewards and sanctions will not be assigned until 2001–02, and then only for those indicators for which sufficient data has been gathered. The complete accountability point system will become fully operational, with all indicators, in 2003–04.~~

~~**Note:** In order to meet federal mandates, a temporary system will be developed to identify those schools designed for school improvement. Beginning in 2000–2001 and continuing until the ACTAAP accountability system is fully operational, a school will be designated in school improvement under the following condition: Seventy five percent or more of the students perform below proficient on either the literacy (reading and writing) or the mathematics section of the Benchmark Exam for the designated grade or grades represented by the school.~~

Assessment and Accountability



Measuring Student Achievement and School Progress

Fisher Education Consulting, Inc.



Brief Historical Perspective

- Prior to 1970, there were very few state testing programs.
- States did not have organized ways to monitor whether students were progressing.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress did not exist until 1969.



Philosophic Beginnings

- States are responsible for education.
- States assign to local districts the task of implementing public education.
- A classroom teacher is part of the larger picture and he/she has responsibilities.
- Schools exist to educate. Students attend schools to learn.



Components of Accountability

- Academic goals and standards
- Assessment procedures
- Accountability expectations
- Public information



Assessment Instruments

- Norm-referenced; compare student to a reference group, may or may not be nationally representative
- Criterion-referenced; compare a student to a standard such as a required passing score or levels of achievement required by No Child Left Behind

I Assessment Requirements



- Reliable and valid
- Free from bias
- Reports must be understandable
- Score scale must be stable over time
- Data must be accurate
- System must be legally defensible

		Math					Read		
Name	I.D.	Ethn.	ESE	Score	Name	I.D.	Ethn.	ESE	Score
John	5969	C	1	290	John	5969X	C	1	400
Mary	9659X	B	1	600	Mary	9659X	B	2	200
Andy	9468X	H	3	540	Andy	9468X	C	3	875
Anton	6594X	C	2	420	Anton	6594X	C	2	550
Jim	7695X	A	1	.	James	7695X	A	1	600

Florida's Assessment system



- Reading, mathematics, writing, science
- Required high school graduation test
- PSAT or PLAN in grade 10
- Pre-K assessment system
- Florida owns the CRT
- Publisher owns the NRT
- Participation in NAEP

		Florida Assessment Program		
Grade	Subjects	Performance Tasks?	NRT	High Stakes?
3	R, M		R, M	R
4	R, M, W	R, W	R, M	
5	R, M, S	M	R, M	
6	R, M		R, M	
7	R, M		R, M	
8	R, M, W, S	R, M, W	R, M	
9	R, M		R, M	
10	R, M, W, S	R, M, W	R, M	R, M

GRADING FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001-2002

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER, www.firn.edu/doi

School grades for 2001-02 utilize a point system. Schools are awarded one point for each percent of students who score *high on the FCAT and/or make annual learning gains.*

Scoring High on the FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the primary measure of students' achievement of the Sunshine State Standards. Student scores are classified into five achievement levels, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

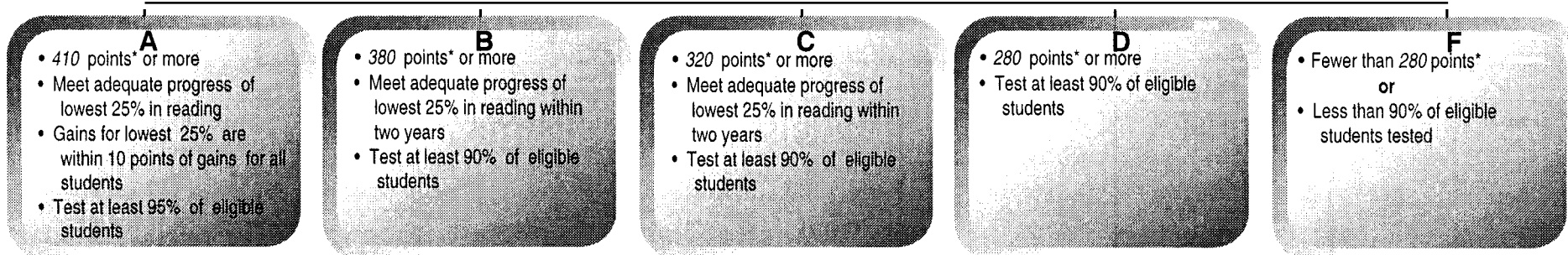
- ⇒ Schools earn one point for each percent of students who score in achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in reading and one point for each percent of students who score 3, 4, or 5 in math.
- ⇒ The writing exam is scored by at least two readers on a scale of 1 to 6. The percent of students scoring "3" and above is averaged with the percent scoring "3.5" and above to yield the percent meeting minimum and higher standards. Schools earn one point for each percent of students on the combined measure.

Making Annual Learning Gains

Since FCAT reading and math exams are given in grades 3 – 10, it is now possible to monitor how much students learn from one year to the next.

- ⇒ Schools earn one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in reading and one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in math. Students can demonstrate learning gains in any one of three ways:
 - (1) Improve achievement levels from 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5; or
 - (2) Maintain within the relatively high levels of 3, 4, or 5; or
 - (3) Demonstrate more than one year's growth within achievement levels 1 or 2.
- ⇒ Special attention is given to the reading gains of students in the lowest 25% in levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school. Schools earn one point for each percent of the lowest performing readers who make learning gains from the previous year. It takes at least 50% to make "adequate progress" for this group.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADING SCALE

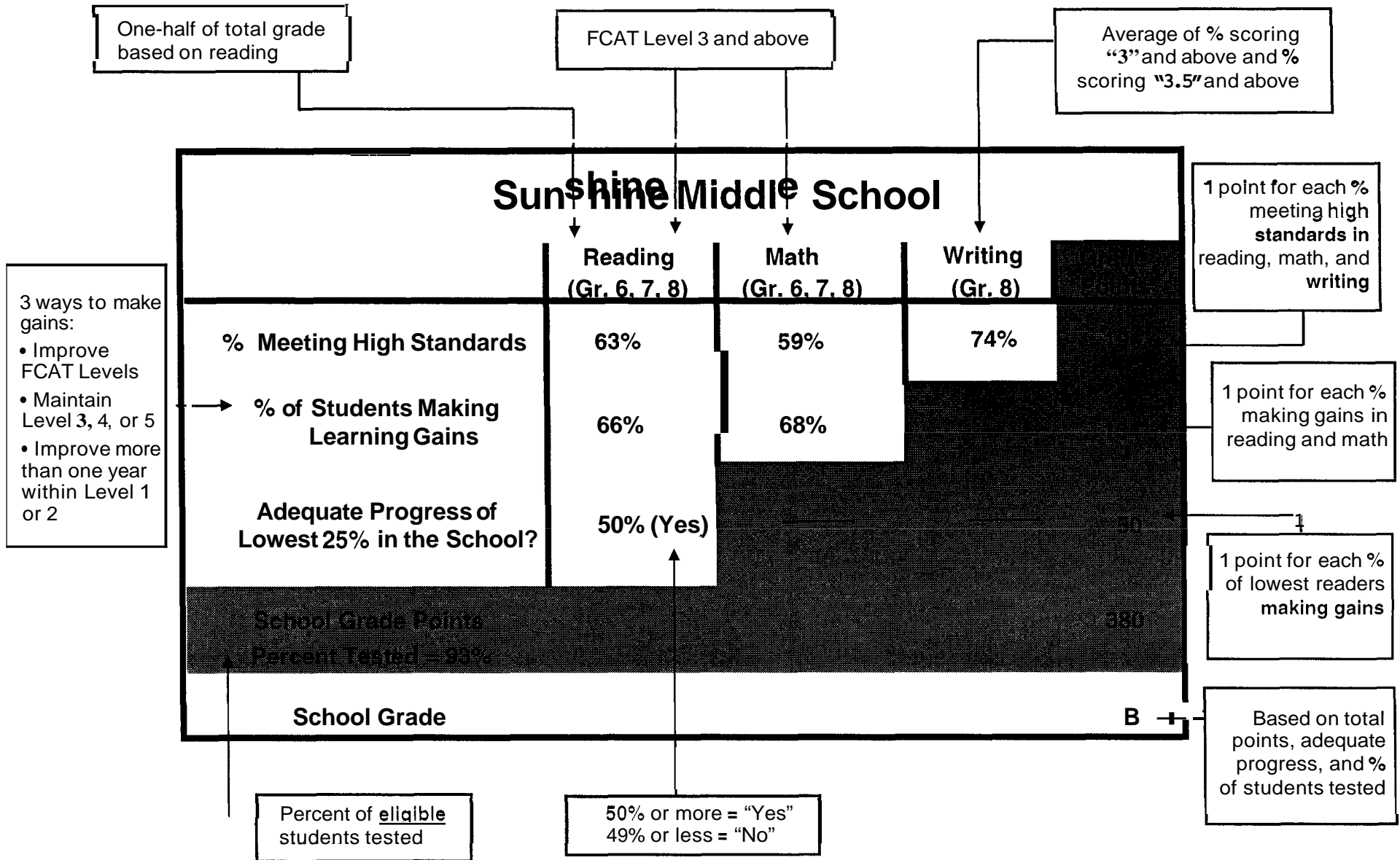


Which students are included in school grade calculations? As in previous years, only standard curriculum students who were enrolled in the same school in both October and February are included. Speech impaired, gifted, hospital/homebound, and Limited English Proficient students with more than two years in an ESOL program are also included.

What happens if the lowest 25% of students in the school do not make "adequate progress" in reading? Schools that aspire to be graded "C" or above, but do not make adequate progress with their lowest 25% in reading, must develop a School Improvement Plan component that addresses this need. If a school, otherwise graded "C" or "B", does not demonstrate adequate progress for two years in a row, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

*The 2002 grading scale above may vary by as much as 5% in order to make a smooth transition from 2001.

Example Report for 2002



| For comparison - Tennessee

- Tenn. Comprehensive Assessment Program has both CRT and NRT parts
- Reading/language arts, math; adding social science and science
- Expanding to grades 3-8 for NCLB
- 10 end-of-course tests; 3 are required for graduation
- Some parts are commercial NRT; other parts developed for Tenn. curriculum

2002 Tenn. Value-Added System Scores for District X

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	Cumulative	
							% Norm	Gain
Nat'l Norm		25	20	18	14	16		
State 3-Yr. Aver.		28	21.5	17.2	14	16.3	USA	State
2002 Mean Gain		29.5	35.7	28	25.5	14.3	142.9	137
Std. Error		2.9	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.8	6.5	6
2002 3-Yr Avg		24.7 Y	21.6 G	24.2 G	19.4 G	16.9 G	114.9	110
Std. Error		1.6	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6	2.9	2



Fundamental Decisions

- **Will you use a simple model?**
- **Will you use one of the more sophisticated systems using regression, HLM, etc.?**
- **Will you make "adjustments" for factors such as income, mobility, class size, etc.?**

Illustration of Gains

	Average	Gains
School A	580	280
School B	680	250
School C	620	260
School D	640	220
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
District	630	250

I Tenn. Value-Added System



- Created by Dr. Sanders while at U.T.
- Based on a single, consistent set of test scores, adjacent grade levels, stable score scale over time
- Divides results by teacher, school, and district; analyzes gains
- Complex analysis model; based on norm group gains

Value-added assessment



- No single definition to the term; must try to determine if student is making progress
- No single way to perform calculations; can be complex or can be more easily defined
- Linking individual student and teachers is a big challenge



Anticipate Opposition

- Citizens, business leaders, parents support assessment and accountability
- Educators generally do not want large-scale assessment and accountability programs with public disclosure of results



Anticipate Litigation

- High-stakes testing programs result in decisions about students
- Many people think a diploma is automatic
- Grade inflation issues



Anticipate Changes

- Need to renew content and performance standards
- Need to re-bid testing contracts
- Experience with a system leads to ideas to change the system
- An educational system improves over time; think long-term

Conclusions



- Assessment and accountability programs are needed
- No technical reasons not to proceed
- No single correct approach
- Data empowers people to make better decisions



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As our Arkansas School Boards Association team researched the issues of accountability, especially those of the Omnibus Quality Education Act, we kept coming back to ASBA's first premise. It is the premise with which we always begin: Is it good for kids?

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* published an article on July 31 of this year entitled, "Tiny school districts all over exam chart." In that article a list of school districts was published with scores on the eleventh grade literacy end-of-course exam and on the literacy and mathematics **exams** for grades four, six, and eight. The list did not include every school in the state nor even all of the scores for the schools that were listed; however, we used the data as it was printed since it represented what the public saw. We took an earlier map that we had that geographically plotted the eleventh grade literacy scores from 2002. We used red dots to represent the schools that were identified by the article as the "bottom." We used green dots to represent those schools identified in the article as "top." **Each** red or green dot was labeled with a code to indicate the test that it represented. For example "4L" is for fourth grade literacy and "6M" is for sixth grade mathematics. We used our dots to locate each district that was listed in the article. The results are here.

Although we might have predicted the pattern that we see, it is no less distressing that we could draw a line along the 1-30/Highway 67-167 corridor and find that the schools that are represented with red dots fall mostly south and east of the line and those schools that are represented with green dots fall mostly north and west of the line.

These districts in the Delta are characterized in the article **as** the "bottom" and are likely to be described as academically distressed. These are the ones that are likely to be reorganized. If they are consolidated, is it possible that they might be attached to a district that is struggling to stay out of academic distress and

EXHIBIT
"D"

would this not cause a larger academically distressed district? What kind of support would be available to this newly formed district? Could the expense of trying to improve student achievement in this larger struggling district throw that district into fiscal distress also? What about the logistics of combining the **two** entities? What impact would that have on that newly formed district's ability to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for No Child Left Behind (NCLB)? Would they receive special compensation for the difficulties that they face because of the additions? How will we address the effects on a succeeding school district that annexing a failing district to it would have? We feel that these concerns have yet to be addressed. We know that some districts will not be able to meet standards and will have to be annexed, reorganized, consolidated, etc. What help could the receiving districts or the newly formed districts expect?

At ASBA we support a rich curriculum for all students in Arkansas, but wouldn't a **rich** curriculum be a moot point in districts that are struggling academically? How can students who have deficit skills in literacy, mathematics, technology, and problem-solving begin to access a rich curriculum? It seems to us that first we must address the achievement gap and plan extensively and work intensively to provide these children with the skills that they will need to be able to access that rich curriculum.

This requires long-range planning not only for those districts that are represented on the map, but for all districts. We need to decide what we want for our schools not just in three to five years, but **also** in ten years, and fifteen years, and in twenty years. We can't simply think of what we have now, but what do we want, what will it take to get there, and how do we make that happen.

School districts must be crystal clear about the expectations for them. The ADE must also be crystal clear. If the ADE is to have **two** functions — support and accountability — then communication is critical both internally for the ADE as well as externally for the districts.

If we are going to improve academic achievement, we must intensify our professional development programs at all levels. The Smart conferences are excellent and we need to build on the firm foundation that these have laid. However if we are to serve 36,000 educators in this state, we must provide more resources to do that. This will also take time. **I**f we know that it takes three to five

years even for a small organization to turn around, how long will it take to change the behaviors of 36,000 people? It takes about 40 miles to turn an ocean liner **around**. Professional development in Arkansas is a pretty big ship. And yet, when it comes to professional development, we expect every teacher in Arkansas to be on board immediately, to know all of the latest instructional strategies immediately, to be able to disaggregate data immediately, to be able to diagnose every child's deficit skills and **fix** those immediately. We must think in terms of long-range planning for teachers and proceed with that plan.

We have been guilty in education of trying a new idea and then dropping it before we could determine if it worked. In other words, before we can get our ship turned and steered in another direction, we have changed our course and were heading to yet another new port. This time we need to stay the course, gather data, and determine what impact our efforts will have on education.

To make an impact on test scores, educators must learn how to interpret the test data and to identify the deficit areas of the students, and then they must select the best instructional strategies to address those deficit areas. Many teachers need specific intensive training in how to deliver these strategies. In order to assure the effectiveness of these strategies and the delivery of these strategies, intensive classroom support must follow.

This kind of professional development requires skilled professionals who can deliver the training and skilled classroom observers who can follow **up** on the implementation of the skills in the classroom. More resources are needed to train all teachers. Currently, we don't have enough trainers and facilitators to accomplish the job. We must build capacity as we go. We must find those teachers who are experts at these skills and utilize their talents and their experience to teach others. We must think on a much larger scale than we have done before.

The face of professional development in Arkansas must change.

Researchers may not be able to pinpoint THE factor that is the key to changing learning in the classroom, but they do agree that the most important factor for improving learning in the classroom is the teacher. Then the only way to make real change in student learning is at the classroom level. The **only** way to

change what goes on the classroom level is through the targeted, quality professional development that I have described.

ASBA has intensified its training for school board members by adding instructional components to its already existing training program of finance, governance, operations, and law. This new component is in response to the need for school board members to understand the complexities of instruction so that they can make sound decisions about allocation of resources to meet these needs.

Our current system of criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) based on Arkansas standards, we believe, is a sound one. When Arkansas began its standards-based teaching and learning campaign in the 1990s, we believe that this caused educators to focus on that body of knowledge that students should know and be able to do. Our CRTs measure the proficiency of students with those skills and that knowledge. The old Minimum Performance Test (MPT) was exactly that—a measure of the minimum that a student should know. The open-response items that we find on our current CRTs, measure not only what a student knows, but also what that student can do with that knowledge. It measures whether or not that student can apply what he or she has learned. That is a more difficult standard to meet than simply minimums. In other words, it is a bigger ship and takes more skill to steer it.

The Arkansas Frameworks were originally designed based on national curriculum models—the same models that were used by other states to develop their state curricula. The Frameworks are solid and the CRTs that measure those Frameworks are solid. Two years ago, I researched other state CRTs in an effort to find sample items that I could use with middle school science teachers at the Smart Step conference. As I researched, I noted that the Arkansas Benchmark exams were high level tests—not watered down, as some may believe. If anything at all, our tests were as demanding as those in states that are highly touted for their testing prowess. As I researched the Texas test, TAAS, it paled in comparison to our test. In fact, it was much more similar to our old MPT. Interesting to note that Texas is moving to a more rigorous CRT.

It is important for Arkansas to maintain norm-referenced tests (NRTs). These tests yield data that tell us how our students compare with students from other places in the nation. We need to know how our kids stack up to those other

kids. The NRTs should not be viewed as being in conflict with the CRTs, but in concert with them. Both yield valuable data. Both should be used.

As we reviewed the Omnibus Act, another issue arose for our team. The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has many tasks to accomplish. We cannot see how they can accomplish those tasks with the current staff. Many of the requirements appear to need additional staffing. We see this as a concern that has not been mentioned before.

In conclusion, we believe that we have to be more far-sighted as we plan for the children of Arkansas. We must educate the children for the future—all of the Children and we must go about it systematically **and** systemically. If we only plan and execute the short-term plan, then kids will be left out, the achievement gap will widen and rather **than** having a state that is progressing economically, we will continue to flounder at the bottom of the heap. With long-range planning—including financial planning—we can make education better for **the** kids. If you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you always got. We need to break the cycle and do it right this time.

Tiny school districts all over exam chart

Best, worst turn up on Benchmark

BY CYNTHIA HOWELL

AND KIMBERLY DISHONGH
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT GAZETTE

Some of Arkansas' smallest school districts reported the best results in the state on the Benchmark Exams, but other tiny districts had some of the worst results.

And in a handful of cases in a state where consolidation of small school districts is notly debated, some little districts produced the best statewide results in one grade while another grade dwelled near the bottom.

The state Department of Education on Wednesday released results by school and by district on the state-mandated Bench-

TOP, BOTTOM performers by school and grade. Page 7A.

mark tests in math and literacy. About 110,000 fourth-, sixth-, eighth- and 11th-graders took the test in April.

J.M. Edington III, superintendent of the 211-student Biggers Reyno District in Randolph County, was jubilant over the scores of his 17 fourth-graders — 100 percent of whom scored at proficient or better levels on both the math and literacy sections of the test.

"It just helps make my case that it's not the number that determines whether a school is

See BENCHMARK, Page 7A

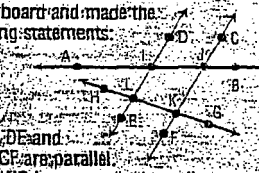
Benchmark sample questions

Nearly 170,000 Arkansas students in grades 4, 6, 8 and 11 took the state Benchmark Exam in April. The following are test questions released by the Arkansas Department of Education.

5th grade math

8) Which of the following expressions is equal to 2×10^3 ?
 A. 0.0203
 B. 200.03
 C. 2000
 D. 20.30
 NOTE: 31.1% of the 28,763 test takers answered correctly.

9) Mr. Patterson drew these lines on the board and made the following statements:



- Line DE and line CF are parallel.
- Line BC is perpendicular to line DE and line CF.
- Line AB intersects line DE and line CF.
- Angle $\angle C$ is a right angle.

Which of the following angles could complete Mr. Patterson's fourth statement?
 A. $\angle AID$
 B. $\angle CJB$
 C. $\angle KJI$
 D. $\angle KJI$

NOTE: 62.4% of the 28,763 test takers answered correctly.

8th grade writing

Topic 1

Your social studies class has been discussing problems kids your age will face when you become adults. Your teacher has asked you to write an essay about the biggest problem your generation will face when you become adults.

Before you begin to write, think about a problem that your generation will face. What is the biggest problem and what can you do to handle it?

Now write an essay about the biggest problem your generation will face when you become adults. Be sure to tell what it is and explain how your generation can deal with it. Give enough specific detail so that your teacher will understand.

Top and bottom in Benchmark proficiency

Continued from Page 1A
 performing as it should," said Edington, who is outspoken against consolidating school systems on the basis of enrollment.

"It's the performance of the kids and your efficiency. Can we afford to shut down something that is performing and move it someplace where we don't have the same results?"

Gov. Mike Huckabee, who could not be reached for comment on the scores Wednesday, has proposed consolidating districts of under 1,500 students although small districts with records of high achievement could be exempted.

Most Arkansas fourth-graders scored at their grade level or better. While the results in all grades and all subjects improved compared with 2002, most sixth, eighth and 11th-graders did not reach the proficient mark, which is considered grade-level.

The Benchmark results will be used as fodder not only in the politics of improving public education but also for developing individual academic improvement plans for students who scored at basic or below-basic levels on the tests.

Over the next two weeks, the results also will be used to identify Arkansas schools that have a history of low achievement.

Those poorly performing schools, to be named around Aug. 8 by the Education Department, are required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to give their students the opportunity to transfer to other, higher-performing schools at the expense of the sending school.

In rarer cases, the schools will not only have to release their students to other public schools but also offer after-school tutoring to those students who remain at the school.

Last year 25 Arkansas schools were labeled as academically troubled. That number is expected to grow this year. The federal requirements call for improvements among students grouped on the basis of race and special-education needs.

A disparity in the achievement levels between black and white students on the Benchmark tests remains.

On the 11th-grade literacy test, for example, 17 percent of black students and 46 percent of white students scored at grade level or better.

State education leaders released this year's Benchmark results at a time when state policy-makers and lawmakers are searching for ways to comply with a November 2002 Arkansas Supreme Court order that declared the state's school funding system unconstitutional and directed that changes be made in the system by Jan. 1.

Huckabee offered his consolidation proposal as a way to afford and ensure greater consistency in educational opportunities statewide.

Edington acknowledged that there are small, low-achieving school systems.

"I have said all along, it's not a big-small issue," he said. "It's about 'Are you doing what you need to be doing?' There are schools that are not performing

Arkansas schools showed varying degrees of success on the state Benchmark Exams given in grades 4, 6, 8 and 11 in reading, writing and mathematics. Results from the state-mandated test were released Wednesday by the Arkansas Department of Education. The test, made up of multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions, is intended to measure students' knowledge of material that Arkansas teachers say they should know. Students who score at a proficient or advanced level on the tests are considered to be achieving at their grade level.

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DISTRICT	SCHOOL	PROFICIENT/ADVANCED
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4TH GRADE

TOP IN MATH		
Biggers-Reyno	Biggers-Reyno	100%
Holly Grove	Holly Grove	100
Leslie	Leslie	100
Scotland	Scotland	100
St. Joe	St. Joe	100
West Memphis	Wedlock	100
Weiner	Weiner	100
Wilburn	Wilburn	100
Horatio	Winthrop	100
Witts Springs	Witts Springs	100
Harrison	Woodland Heights	100

BOTTOM IN MATH		
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville	0
Pine Bluff	Sam Taylor	7
West Memphis	Wonder	9
Parkin	Parkin	10
Hughes	Hughes	13
Marvell	Marvell Primary	13

TOP IN LITERACY		
Biggers-Reyno	Biggers-Reyno	100
Scotland	Scotland	100
West Memphis	Wedlock	100
Weiner	Weiner	100
Horatio	Winthrop	100
Harrison	Woodland Heights	100
Fort Smith	Euper Lane	100
Pleasant View	Pleasant View	100
Hot Springs	Park Magnet	100
Bruno-Pyatt	Bruno-Pyatt	100

BOTTOM IN LITERACY		
Carthage	Carthage High	0
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville	0
Pine Bluff	Thirty-Fourth Avenue	12
South Mississippi	Dyess	13
Parkin	Parkin	14

6TH GRADE

TOP IN MATH		
Pleasant View	Pleasant View	93
Danville	S. C. Tucker	93
Mount Judea	Mount Judea	91
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant	85
Lynn	Lynn	82

BOTTOM IN MATH		
Cotton Plant	Cotton Plant	0
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville	0
Gould	Gould	0
Grady	Grady	0
Hot Springs	Hot Springs Summit	0
Lake View	Lake View	0
Parkin	Parkin	0
Waldo	Waldo	0
West Memphis	Weaver	0
Hamburg	Wilmot	0

SOURCE: Arkansas Department of Education

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	PROFICIENT/ADVANCED
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6TH GRADE

TOP IN LITERACY		
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant	85%
Pleasant View	Pleasant View	79
Paron	Paron	78
Quachita	Quachita	75
Norfolk	Norfolk	73

BOTTOM IN LITERACY		
Cotton Plant	Cotton Plant	0
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville	0
Lake View	Lake View	0
Waldo	Waldo	0
Imboden Charter	Imboden Area Charter	0
Fort Smith	Harry C. Morrison	0
Bright Star	Bright Star	10
St. Joe	St. Joe	0

8TH GRADE

TOP IN MATH		
Kingston	Kingston High	83
Benton County	School of the Arts	68
Valley Springs	Valley Springs High	66
Mount Holy	Mount Holy High	64
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant High	59

BOTTOM IN MATH		
Altheimer Unified	Altheimer-Sherrill High	0
Blytheville	Blytheville Charter	0
Lake View	C. V. White High	0
Cotton Plant	Cotton Plant High	0
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville High	0
Fountain Hill	Fountain Hill High	0
Fourche Valley	Fourche Valley High	0
Gillett	Gillett High	0
Gould	Gould	0
Grady	Grady	0
Holly Grove	Holly Grove High	0
Oark	Oark High	0
Osceola	Osceola Junior High	0
Palestine/Wheatley	Palestine-Wheatley Junior High	0
Parkin	Parkin High	0
Plainview-Rover	Plainview-Rover High	0
Saratoga	Saratoga High	0
Stephens	Stephens High	0
Waldo	Waldo High	0
Walker	Walker High	0

TOP IN LITERACY		
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant High	91
Batesville	Batesville Junior High	89
Fayetteville	Woodland Junior High	89
Alpena	Alpena High	88
Bruno-Pyatt	Bruno-Pyatt High	87

BOTTOM IN LITERACY		
Blytheville	Blytheville Charter	0
Cotton Plant	Cotton Plant High	0
Parkin	Parkin High	0
Walker	Walker High	0
Carthage	Carthage High	0

11TH GRADE

TOP IN LITERACY		
School for Math & Science	School for Math & Science	96
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant High	87
St. Joe	St. Joe High	86
Sparkman	Sparkman High	85
Sulphur Rock	Sulphur Rock High	83

BOTTOM IN LITERACY		
Arkansas City	Arkansas City High	0
Lake View	C.V. White High	0
Carthage	Carthage High	0
Crawfordsville	Crawfordsville High	0
Pine Bluff	First Ward	0
Gould	Gould High	0
Holly Grove	Holly Grove High	0
Saratoga	Saratoga High	0
Westside Cons.	Westside Middle School	0

ball, or they need to be shut down."

Charley Smith, the Education Department's assistant director for accountability, agreed that the successes and failures of small districts can be confusing to a public trying to decide how to structure districts.

"In small and in large schools alike you have some who do well and some who do less well," said Smith. "I do think we have the political will in our state to assess all these issues and do what is best for the children of Arkansas."

Arkansas' 11th-graders take a Benchmark Exam in reading and writing only. Forty-seven

percent of test-takers scored at proficient or advanced levels in math, up two points. A total of 48 percent of students scored at proficient or better levels on the literacy test, up 11 points.

Every fourth-grader tested in the St. Joe School District in Searcy County scored at or above grade level on the math Benchmark exam.

"I'd like to tell you I had something to do with that," said James Trammell, superintendent of the 219-student district. "But the fact of the matter is I didn't. That was the kindergarten, first-, second-, third- and fourth-grade teachers."

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Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

scored at proficient or better on the literacy exam.

That compares with only 47 percent statewide.

But none of the district's 10 sixth graders scored at grade level on the literacy section.

Despite that showing, Trammell defended the district's educational program. Of the 12 graduates in 2002, nine went to college. And of the nine, only three of them had to take remedial classes. Statewide, more than 50 percent of public school students who enroll in college have to take remedial classes.

George Lawson, superintendent of the 259-student Paron School District in Saline County, said he hopes legislators will take note of the success in his small district, but he's not sure they will.

"It seems to me like how we're doing doesn't make any difference," he said. "It seems to me like how big you are is what's important. That's what they're concerned about."

Seventy-eight percent of the sixth graders in Paron scored at or above proficiency in literacy, putting them in the top five scoring schools.

Lucretia Walker, assistant superintendent and testing coordinator for the 818-student Horatio School District in Sevier County, credits small class size at Winthrop Elementary School with pupils' achievement there.

All Winthrop fourth graders scored at grade level or better in both math and literacy.

Winthrop Elementary was part of another district, which was annexed to Horatio about 10 years ago, said Walker, who was principal at Winthrop until this summer.

Horatio agreed to keep Winthrop open as long as the enrollment supported it, she said.

Enrollment there has stayed at or just below 100 since then.

Kindergarten through sixth-grade classes at Winthrop are usually made up of about 12 pupils each, which Walker says is ideal for young learners.

"It just stands to reason that the smaller the group, the more individual help you can give students to help them overcome and bring them up," she said.

Also to benefit children this year, the district started a "masters class" for third through sixth graders, adding an extra period to every day of school.

"The teachers prep them for [the Benchmark] at that time," said Walker. "That way they get a double dose of math one week and a double dose of literacy the next week. We really try to zero in on teaching everything that enables them to think for themselves at a higher level, and no matter what they throw at them on the test, they'll be prepared for it."

Walker said she expects sixth and eighth grade scores to rise in the coming years.

"Those kids that got 100 percent last year will have moved up by then and should do just as well."

Information for this article was contributed by Daubne Trenholm of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

AEA PRESENTATION TO ACCOUNTABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share the thoughts of practicing teachers on the current K- 12 accountability system in Arkansas.

AEA's presentation will focus on the following areas:

- A review of what we believe an effective accountability system should look like and how it should be used
- Some thoughts on our current accountability system with some suggestions on what changes are needed and what changes are undesirable

Testing and accountability are not necessarily synonymous, although you might not think so after reading much of what is written today on the subject. Certainly, the recent passage by Congress of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has increased the belief that student testing and accountability are basically the same. That is not the case. There are a number of different ways to show accountability.

Accountability is the means by which individuals or organizations take responsibility for their actions. Accountability in education is not just one thing. There must be systems in place for setting standards and assessments for what students should know and be able to do. There must be systems to prepare, hire, retain and continually improve the knowledge and skills of teachers, administrators and other school employees. There must be systems for parents and taxpayers to know that their money is being spent appropriately – and that their expectations for student achievement are in line with the investments states and communities make.

Why is educational accountability important? Public education is funded through federal, state and local taxes. As a public function, citizens deserve a system that satisfies their expectations and provides an appropriate education for all students.

Teacher associations are frequently accused of being opposed to accountability and standards. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Teachers welcome high standards and strong accountability systems. We just believe the standards and systems must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholders.

As we already mentioned, any discussion about educational accountability must take into account the significant impact of NCLB on this area. There is no question that this federal

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law imposes substantial new requirements on states with regard to student performance. We don't believe that all the requirements imposed by NCLB are desirable. In fact, we are working with the National Education Association (NEA) to bring about substantial changes in the federal law. Of course, we recognize that Arkansas must meet the provisions of the law as they currently exist. But we also believe that the state can supplement the NCLB requirements with some of the characteristics of an effective accountability system that we will reference in this report.

Balanced Assessment: The Key to Accountability and Student Learning

Teachers support effective and fair school accountability systems. We believe that these systems must promote high levels of student achievement and ensure that the best teaching practices are supported and utilized. We also believe that the focus of the accountability system must be on the school, not on individual stakeholders, as the unit for evaluation and improvement of student learning. Development and implementation of the accountability system must ensure that stakeholders at the school, school district, state and national levels share the responsibility for establishing clear goals, adapting high standards for student achievement, and providing adequate and equitable funding and support systems.

For your further study, we have provided for you a complete statement of the National Education Association Resolution on School Accountability.

The AEA recognizes that, more and more, state and federal legislators and education policy makers are relying on standardized tests to measure student achievement and hold schools accountable for student progress. Certainly, the provisions of NCLB accelerate this trend. It is safe to say that accountability is going to remain test-based for the short-term future. However, there certainly is a danger that we can require too much testing and put too much emphasis on test-results as the sole indicator of whether a school is successful or not. It is also a fact that standardized tests don't give teachers the day-to-day information they need to improve student performance.

Given this scenario, we believe that it is important that large-scale testing be used in conjunction with ongoing classroom assessment to produce a better picture of student achievement and school quality. Therefore, we are providing you with a copy of a report, ***Balanced Assessment: The Key to Accountability and Improved Student Learning***, published by NEA, which describes how this can be accomplished.

Classroom assessment is a range of methods – including direct observation, checklists, teacher-made tests, projects, portfolios and performances – that teachers use to determine student progress on a daily and weekly basis. Substantial research, summarized in ***Balanced Assessment***, shows that classroom assessment actually raises student achievement.

We are providing for you a copy of an article by a history teacher in Portland, Oregon. This article, *The Straitjacket of Standardized Tests*, will give you an idea of why we believe accountability must be more than the results on a particular test.

The AEA believes that creating such a balanced assessment system is absolutely necessary. It will require considerable investment in teachers and their classroom assessment methods, but it is an investment worth making. Additional resources will be needed, for example, to provide current teachers with professional development in the best classroom assessment methods.

In addition, we want to share with you a guide for policymakers called *Building Tests To Support Instruction and Accountability*. The Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment, convened by the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Education Association and the National Middle School Association, developed this guide.

This guide identifies nine requirements for the development of responsible state assessment systems, including tests that improve both learning and accountability.

Arkansas' Current K-12 Accountability System

In critiquing our current accountability system, we must look at it both in light of NCLB mandates and what we believe constitutes a good accountability system. As I indicated earlier, AEA believes that there are some serious problems with the accountability system mandated by NCLB, but we recognize the state's obligation to be in compliance with the law.

AEA believes that our current accountability system appears to meet the requirements of NCLB. However, we have only recently received an analysis by NEA's Student Achievement Division of all the state NCLB accountability plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education. As we review the analysis of the Arkansas plan as compared to other state plans, we will share that information and any suggestions for modification of the plan with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and with you.

We are also in the midst of a review of the current tests used in the state's accountability program to determine whether they meet the requirements set forth by the Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment. We will also share the results of this review with the ADE and with the legislature.

A number of issues related to accountability are being discussed right now and we want to share with you our thoughts on these issues.

As you know, AEA supported the Omnibus Quality Education Act of 2003. We still support this law and would be opposed to its repeal. We did not support the

accountability system proposed in HB 2528 which we felt overemphasized standardized testing and provided for what we believe are inappropriate uses for such tests.

The appropriate use of longitudinal tracking from tests is an issue being discussed. We believe that such data should be used at the school and school district level as a tool for monitoring student performance and developing an individual progress plan for students needing additional help. It can also be used, along with other data, in the development of each school's professional development plan to ensure that teachers are getting appropriate and useful professional development. We believe that data from the longitudinal tracking should be available to the public at the school level, but not at the individual teacher level.

The question of norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced tests is also the subject of much debate right now. AEA believes that both types of tests have a role to play in accountability. As we indicated earlier, we think we need a more balanced approach to accountability that reflects the value of other types of assessment.

In any case, the reality is that right now our high-stakes testing component must be, as mandated by NCLB, a criterion-referenced test. AEA strongly opposes adding an additional high-stakes test (a norm-referenced standardized test) at every grade level, in addition to the benchmark tests. The Omnibus Education Act provides for a norm-referenced test at least once in grades 5 and 9. We think this is sufficient. We know that the State Board of Education yesterday voted to include in the new Accountability Rules and Regulations, a provision that would have the state pay for voluntary norm-referenced tests at any grade level where a school district would want to implement the test. Frankly, we think the state can find better uses for this money. Providing resources to schools so that they can correct deficiencies identified by the tests makes more sense than spending money on another test at every grade level.

Which brings us to our last point, the cost of accountability. The AEA believes that in determining the cost of developing and implementing an adequate and effective accountability plan, we must not only look at the actual costs of the tests and the reporting of results. We must also include the additional resources needed to help schools appropriately use the results of the tests. Simply implementing a balanced testing and reporting program by itself will not do the job.

**Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce
Associated Industries of Arkansas, Inc.
June 27, 2003
Education Position Statement**

Education of our citizens should be the highest priority of our state. Because the economic prosperity and economic development of Arkansas is dependent upon the educational attainment and development of our citizens, education and economic development cannot be isolated from one another. Today's businesses - whether existing or looking to relocate to a new geographic region - demand an educated and well-trained workforce.

The expected September 2003 second extraordinary legislative session of the 84th General Assembly will focus on education and, hopefully, result in legislation that will satisfy the constitutional issues raised by the state Supreme Court decision in the Lake View case. We firmly believe that if the legislature fails to take action sufficient to satisfy the court, the future economic growth and prosperity of Arkansas will be placed in serious jeopardy.

The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas (ASCC/AIA) Executive Committee met Thursday, June 26, and adopted the following position.

Adequacy: Our desire to see an out-of-state consultant hired to conduct an adequacy study was met when the legislature commissioned Lawrence O. Picus and Associates from California to conduct such a study. The firm's report is expected in August 2003, which will become the key component in the continued drive to reform education.

Efficiency: Our desire to see a Standardized Cost Accounting System, a reduction in administrative costs and pooled instructional resources are significant issues that must be considered. The business community demands that our education system operate continuously at its most efficient level to justify funding.

Accountability: To gain the business community's support for additional funding, there must be a substantial level of accountability applied to school districts, schools, and individuals. Act 1467 of 2003 accomplished many of our goals in the area of accountability, and we will likely try to expand this area with additional legislation in the fall. National tests for student assessment, longitudinal tracking and a tightening of the fiscal/academic distress laws were all addressed in Act 1467.

Curriculum: Consistent with the ASCC/AIA position, the state Board of Education has passed regulations requiring a rigorous standardized core curriculum of 38 units/courses on an annual basis at all schools. Act 1467 requires 100 percent compliance with curriculum standards. We would still like to see a requirement of standardized textbooks.

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Quality Teachers: The ASCC/AIA believes improvement in the overall quality of teachers must be addressed this fall. The issues we believe must be accomplished include:

- 1) Compensation for teachers at Southern Regional Education Board average
- 2) Multiple career paths
- 3) Expansion of alternative teacher certification
- 4) Incentive pay for high-poverty areas/ academic-shortage areas
- 5) Incentive pay based upon “value-added” performance assessment
- 6) More authority for hire/fire at school level

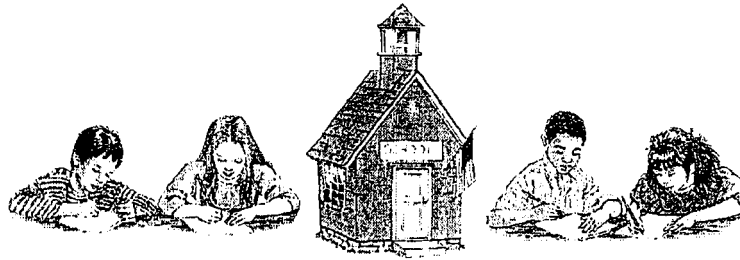
Giving Children a Sound Start: Act 1332 of 2003 established the structure for the state to provide high quality pre-kindergarten programs to low income three- and four-year-olds. The ASCC/AIA believes this is a critical component of ensuring academic success for at-risk children.

Facilities and Resources: The issue of proper facilities and resources was not addressed in the regular session. This fall the ASCC/AIA would like to see legislation passed that would close inadequate/under-utilized facilities, create a standard architectural school plan and place a moratorium on building new facilities. There must also be an emphasis on creating a technology infrastructure within every public school building that would require technology training for all students.

Innovation in Education: Act 1272 of 2003 accomplished a long-standing goal of the ASCC/AIA to expand public school choice to all schools. Our position statement suggested a pilot voucher program be implemented for failing schools. The regular session rejected a limited voucher program for special-needs children. We believe a pilot vouchers program for failing schools should remain a priority for the fall session.

Higher Education: None of the issues raised in our position paper related to higher education were accomplished. These ideas included developing a strategic plan for K-14 education, providing equal funding for two-year institutions, and restoring academic challenge scholarships. The role of higher education in the fall session is unclear. However, restoration of the scholarships would be beneficial to the state’s future, and we have long supported equalization of funding.

Funding: Every indication points toward additional revenue to ensure Arkansas’ public education system is constitutional. Without a strong public education system in Arkansas, jobs, growth and future economic development is only a dream. The ASCC/AIA believes every revenue source should be examined carefully to test its potential impact on those least able to pay and the ability of our business community to compete in a global economy. Arkansans should not be taxed at higher levels to support an unconstitutional education system and the ASCC/AIA opposes additional revenue sources without implementing the education reform measures as outlined above.



Education Reform Now.

An education reform bill has been introduced in the Arkansas General Assembly. This is not a consolidation bill. We believe this bill, H.B. 2528 and S.B. 934, offers the best hope for improving student achievement for all students in Arkansas. This bill provides for:

- Testing annually in grades 1-10
- Nationally normed tests, such as the Standard 9, every year for all students
- Continuing ACTAAP state Standards tests
- Letter grades – A, B, C, D, F – for all K-12 schools
- Rewards for schools that get an “A or “B,” calculated at \$100 per student
- Public school choice for students in failing schools that get two years of “Ds” and “Fs”
- School districts get a letter grade – A, B, C, D, F – based on financial accountability

Top education reform experts from around the country have reviewed and recommended this bill. It follows best practices in other states where academic achievement has improved.

We urge you to support this bill. For Arkansas' future, we endorse it.

Dillard's

ALLTEL

SBC

MURPHY
OIL CORPORATION

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J. B. HUNT

EXHIBIT
"G"

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August 7, 2003

Senator David Bisbee
Room 151, State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Representative Jodie Mahony
Room 151, State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Accountability Subcommittee of the Joint Committee
on Educational Adequacy

Dear Senator Bisbee and Representative Mahony:

I appreciate very much the invitation to appear at your public hearing at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 12. I regret that a previously scheduled deposition in Rogers will prevent me from attending.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the accountability issues facing the public policy makers of our State.

I certainly believe the tax payers of Arkansas have a right to expect accountability from the various stake holders in the public education system. As we face significant increases in our tax burden, it is right and proper that we be able to hold people accountable for the spending of that money. With that said, I would caution you not to become so wrapped up in accountability that we lose sight of the fact that most of the failings of our present education system can be directly attributed to having too few resources applied to too many children. In my opinion, every person involved in the offering of public education bears some measure of accountability. Students should be held significantly accountable for their own efforts. Teachers should be held accountable for the failure of their student charges to progress. (They should also be rewarded for extraordinary achievement by their students.) Administrators should be held responsible for the failure to adequately address the identified failings of their students and teachers. (Likewise, administrators should be rewarded for extraordinary achievements.) School Boards should be accountable for the expenditures of tax payers' money for the failures (and successes) of administrators, teachers, and students.

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Communities (by that I mean tax payers and school patrons) should be accountable for the failures (and successes) of their school districts. The State (through the Arkansas Department of Education and the Executive and Legislative branches) should be given the ability to hold school districts, administrators, teachers, and students accountable for their efforts.

Technology is such today that the tracking of individual student's efforts should be relatively easy. I believe it would be an achievable goal to establish a baseline of knowledge and competencies for every student in Arkansas beginning with their first involvement in the public school system, be that pre-school, kindergarten, or a transfer into the system at a different grade. Once a baseline of competency is established for each child, the child's progress could be tracked. By tracking the progress of each and every child in Arkansas, we will be able to identify those school districts that succeed, those administrators who demand progress, and the teachers who are able to facilitate that progress. By the same token, we would be able to identify teachers who are not able to assist their students in progressing. By identifying teachers who have a succession of students who do not progress, the administrators should be able to identify the areas of improvement needed and/or remove that teacher from the classroom. Administrator's progress in that regard would be trackable as well. School district's relative success would be identifiable and the commitment of communities to support their school districts would be measurable. Most importantly, intervention on behalf of children could occur in a much more timely fashion than is presently available.

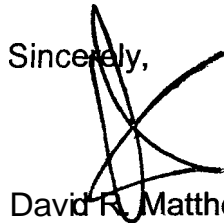
I am persuaded through the information gleaned during the preparation of the *Lakeview* case, as well as my service on the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission, that there are large sums of tax payer money **being spent** on sports related or other non-academic related functions. It may very well be that the people of Arkansas will support those expenditures but at a bare minimum a system should be implemented that requires all districts to report expenditures of that nature utilizing the same format so that an accurate and reliable accounting can be provided. That is one form of accountability that could be imposed immediately at virtually no additional cost.

The same is true for transportation expenses. At the same time, a uniform system of measuring the expenditures of money for teaching resources should be easy to implement. A uniform system of categorizing personnel as teaching or non-teaching, administrative or non-administrative, and certified or non-certified would allow us to

compare apples to apples. I do not believe that is the case under the present forms utilized for reporting expenditures.

These are a few random thoughts. I appreciate very much the opportunity to offer them to your Committee. I appreciate, more than you know, the personal efforts the two of you are making on behalf of the children of Arkansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David R. Matthews". The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with several overlapping loops and lines.

David R. Matthews

DRM:sah