

Performance Audit UPDATE

Legislative Joint Auditing Committee

June 7, 2007

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

INTRODUCTION

This report updates the status of the recommendations included in our original Teacher Recruitment and Retention report issued on April 11, 2002. Additionally we reviewed the State Teacher Assistance Resource (STAR) program, which was created by Act 1804 of 2003, subsequent to the issuance of our original report.

OBJECTIVES

Our main objectives in conducting this review were to follow up on specific recommendations in our original report and to determine if progress had been made in those areas, which included the following:

- *Continued development of a central teacher recruitment office by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE);*
- *Expanded participation in the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program, possibly including the development of a state placement assistance office;*
- *Establishment of future educator programs at school districts throughout the State;*
- *Development of agreements between two-year and four-year colleges and universities that would eliminate any barriers prohibiting a student from transferring to a four-year teacher preparation program; and*
- *Establishment of record keeping procedures to better enable ADE and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) to evaluate programs they are currently utilizing to address the teacher retention and recruitment problem in the State.*

A further objective of this report was to research and review the State Teacher Assistance Resource (STAR) program and evaluate if the program is meeting the purposes for which it was established. STAR provides loans for future teachers willing to work in geographical shortage areas of the State or teach certain designated subjects such as mathematics, science, special education, or foreign languages.

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

172 State Capitol, Little Rock, AR 72201

Phone: 501-683-8600 Fax: 501-683-8605

www.legaudit.state.ar.us

Report ID: PSPE00506 Report Date: March 13, 2007



SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This audit, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2006, was performed in accordance with the applicable standards contained in Government *Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. In conducting the audit, we interviewed representatives from the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and Arkansas Teacher Retirement System. We also reviewed appropriate Arkansas laws and regulations and obtained information on-line related to national programs and other information relevant to this update.

BACKGROUND

Teacher recruitment and retention is one of the most notable issues facing education in Arkansas today. Many factors contribute to this problem, such as rising student enrollments, teacher retirements, the supply of new teaching graduates, and issues concerning geographic and subject area teacher shortages. ADE and ADHE, with assistance from the General Assembly, have taken steps and implemented several programs to address these issues, some of which were addressed in our original report. The related recommendations from our original report and updated information are discussed on the following pages.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT OFFICE

ORIGINAL REPORT: In our original report, we recommended the ADE, through the professional service contract with The New Teacher Project, continue to develop a central teacher recruitment center to meet the specific needs of Arkansas' educational system.

UPDATE: Act 1745 of the Regular Session of 2003 established the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention, which operates as a program within the Office of Teacher Quality of ADE. The purpose of the office is to recruit and assist school districts in retaining teachers for Arkansas schools in order to ensure the children of Arkansas are taught by highly qualified professionals. The office is currently

staffed with a Grade 21 Program Advisor and a Grade 17 Administrative Assistant II. Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-17-310 provides the duties and responsibilities of the office may include, among other things, the following:

- Provide leadership and assistance to schools for developing Teachers of Tomorrow programs and future teacher clubs;
- Coordinate an annual teacher-recruitment event;
- Coordinate teacher recruitment activities with ADHE;
- Train school districts in methods of recruiting teachers; and
- Provide assistance to local school districts in identifying and locating specific teacher needs.

A.C.A. § 6-17-310 also requires ADE to annually provide a report to the Governor and the

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *The State Teacher Assistance Resource (STAR) program has grown since inception from 226 recipients in academic year 2004-05 to 388 recipients for the 2005-06 academic year. (Page 7)*
- *The number of two-year Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degrees awarded has increased from 23 in 2001 to 116 in 2005. (Page 4)*
- *Over five hundred (500) licensed educators attended the Educators Career Fair that was held on May 13, 2006. (Page 6)*
- *The Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), which was implemented on December 1, 2006, will allow teaching candidates to transfer between two-year and four-year colleges and universities. (Page 4)*
- *As of March 2006 over 7,800 licensed non-Arkansas residents indicated a preference to teach in the state using the online education job search tool at www.teachers-teachers.com. (Page 8)*

House and Senate Interim Committees on Education regarding the activities of the office and the progress made in improving teacher recruitment. Some of the promotions and programs used by the office during the 2005-06 year are briefly described below:

- **Teachers-Teachers.com** - an online education job search tool which allows school districts to recruit licensed personnel and allows licensed teachers to apply for Arkansas teaching positions online.
- **www.teacharkansas.org** - website used to promote and provide information on the various programs and events throughout the year. It allows the general public and school district personnel, as well as current and prospective teachers, to view information relevant to becoming a teacher in Arkansas.
- **High Priority Recruitment Pilot Program** - a pilot program of six (6) ADE designated High Priority Districts launched in 2006. Recruiting personnel from the participating districts were provided with specific professional development training on best practices and policies of recruiting teachers for hard-to-staff districts.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS

The Troops to Teachers (TTT) program was established in 1994 to assist military and Department of Defense and Department of Energy civilian personnel affected by military reductions to begin a second career in public education and to help relieve teacher shortages, especially in the areas of math and sciences.

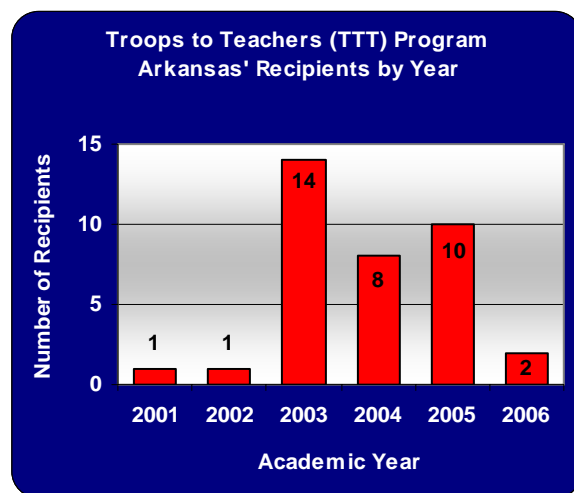
ORIGINAL REPORT: We recommended representatives from the Arkansas Department of Education contact the Troops to Teachers (TTT) national headquarters to inquire about the establishment of a state placement office.

UPDATE: The initial Memorandum of Agreement between ADE and TTT was signed September 17, 2003. It supplied ADE with funds to

oversee a half-time recruiter. The funds provided for travel, marketing, and conference fees. A half-time recruiter was hired on October 31, 2005; however the position was expanded to full-time on June 14, 2006. The Troops to Teachers coordinator operates under the Office of Teacher Quality within ADE.

Exhibit I below illustrates the number of participants in the Arkansas Troops to Teachers program over the past six (6) years.

Exhibit I



Source: Arkansas Department of Education

As shown in **Exhibit I**, the number of participants in the program has decreased since its inception; however, this appears to be a national trend. According to a report issued in March 2006 by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), interviews with several state placement assistant offices indicated that recruitment has been negatively affected by recent overseas deployments.¹

FUTURE EDUCATOR CLUBS

ORIGINAL REPORT: Students in Arkansas are our future teachers, and clubs that promote education as a career should be available to all schools. In our initial report, we recommended

¹ GAO, *Troops-to-Teachers - Program Brings More Men and Minorities to the Teaching Workforce, but Education Could Improve Management to Enhance Results*, 2006, p. 15.

ADE explore options for obtaining funding to establish future educator clubs at school districts throughout the state, with priority given to school districts in rural areas.

UPDATE: In 2002, the United States Department of Education awarded ADE's Teachers of Tomorrow (TOT) program through a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant administered by ADHE. The grant provided \$47,400 over the course of three (3) years. This covered approximately forty (40) percent of the overall project cost. The grant expired in 2005.

Currently, forty (40) Arkansas school districts have at least one school with a future teacher's organization, and thirteen (13) districts have at least one Orientation to Teaching program. Orientation to Teaching is a program of study in which high school students who express a desire to pursue a career in education receive up to 4.5 graduation credits and are provided experiences in the methods of teaching. It includes a practicum and some districts have partnered with a local community college to provide concurrent enrollment toward an Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree.

Workforce Education governs and funds the Orientation to Teaching program. It costs approximately \$30,000 to begin a new program in a district. Due to limited funds, there are only thirteen (13) districts approved to teach the course for the 2006-07 school year.

TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

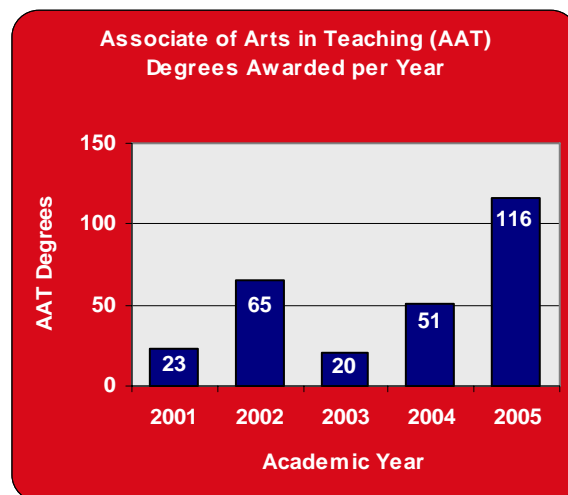
ORIGINAL REPORT: We recommended the two-year and four-year colleges and universities work together to develop agreements eliminating any barriers which might prohibit a student from transferring to a four-year teacher preparation program.

UPDATE: The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) was awarded a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant by ADHE in 2002 to support the development of an Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree. This work was in cooperation with the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges.

The AAT degree places an emphasis on middle school math, science, language arts, and social studies. It is a two-year fully transferable degree designed to introduce students to the profession of teaching and to maximize the hours taken at the two-year colleges. Currently, all public two-year colleges and the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith offer the AAT degree.

Exhibit II below illustrates the number of AAT degrees awarded each academic year since 2001. As shown, the number of degrees varied from year to year but drastically increased in 2005.

Exhibit II



Source: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

In addition to the AAT degree programs, the implementation of Act 672 of 2005 began the process of allowing seamless transfers between two-year and four-year colleges and universities. This Act enabled ADHE to develop the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), which was completed in December of 2006.

Chief academic officers from six (6) public universities and eight (8) colleges were involved in the development. The Statewide Transfer Committee, formed in the fall of 2004, worked to implement a transfer system comprised of the State Minimum Core Curriculum. This project published a listing of courses that will be accepted for full credit transfer at all Arkansas

public institutions. Eighty-eight (88) courses met the criteria to become core courses. ACTS was implemented on December 1, 2006 for the state's 22 public colleges and 11 public universities.

OTHER PROGRAMS

ORIGINAL REPORT: In our original report, we recommended adequate and accurate records be maintained concerning the successes and failures of all teacher recruitment and retention related programs being utilized by educational agencies in Arkansas. We recommended these records include at minimum the following:

- Number of participants for individual programs;
- Job placements within Arkansas when applicable;
- Funding and expenditures;
- Feedback from participating school districts and individuals; and
- Success or failure rates.

UPDATE: ADE has either established or continued record keeping procedures for the following recruiting programs which can be used to track the growth and/or success of the programs.

Pathwise Classroom Mentoring/Observation System

The Pathwise Classroom Mentoring/Observation is designed to support novice teachers during the critical first year(s) in the classroom by providing them with a mentor to help guide their professional development. The number of Pathwise mentors has grown from the 6,500 reported in our original report to approximately 12,000 Pathwise mentors trained to service novice teachers in Arkansas schools during the 2005-06 school year. Every district is required to report, no later than September 15th of each year, the pairing of new teachers employed for the year with a trained mentor.

School districts must also submit a year-end report indicating the successful completion of the year's mentoring experience.

Additional Pathwise trained monitors are contracted by ADE for the purpose of auditing each school district once a year for the quality of mentoring for novice teachers. The mentor teachers are required to document observations and hours spent providing formative feedback to the novice teacher.

Nontraditional Licensure Program

The Nontraditional Licensure Program allows individuals who hold a college degree in a non-education area to become a fully licensed Arkansas teacher. An extensive database has been established for the program. It tracks all facets of a candidate's progress through the program. ADE has more rigorous standards now in place for program candidates, and trained facilitators at each of the eight (8) regional sites within the State oversee standards enforcement. Facilitators closely monitor absenteeism and link required makeup work assignments to the session missed. Absences are excused only for extreme extenuating circumstances.

A Pathwise mentor is assigned to each novice, nontraditional teacher for the two-year program. The mentor monitors the teaching progress of the novice teacher and assists when needed. Participants in the Nontraditional Licensure program must successfully complete each instruction module in order to complete the program and earn a recommendation for an initial teaching license. As shown in **Exhibit III on page 6** the number of candidates licensed through the program has increased from 192 in 2003 to 757 in 2006.

Licensure Reciprocity

Regulations were adopted in 2001 establishing the option of accepting professional exams required for out of state or out of country teaching licensing as meeting the professional exam requirements for Arkansas. In our original report ADE was unable to provide the number of

individuals who took advantage of the licensure reciprocity program.

For purposes of this report ADE reported in 2005, 849 licenses, of which thirty-eight (38) were administrators, were issued through the program. In 2006, 857 were issued (80 administrators).

Teacher Recruitment/Retention Events

A **Minority Teacher Recruitment conference** was held on August 29, 2005. It was a collaborative effort of the ADE Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention, the Office of Academic Accountability, the Office of Teacher Quality, the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs, and the Minority Teacher Recruitment Advisory Council.

The conference highlighted the need for minorities in the Arkansas education workforce. A.C.A. et. seq. § 6-17-1901 requires school districts with more than five (5) percent minority students to prepare and submit a minority teacher and administrator recruitment plan to ADE.

The **Displaced Teachers Event** was held on September 21, 2005. It was a job fair designed for educators unemployed due to Hurricanes

Katrina and Rita. Over 300 educators from Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi attended. Over forty (40) recruiters from Arkansas' educational service cooperatives and school districts attended. Professional licensure, fingerprinting, and reciprocity advisement was provided on-site.

The **Pathways to Teaching - A Recruitment Event** was held on January 21, 2006. Over 1,000 attendees received information on becoming a teacher. Thirty (30) exhibitors represented ADE units and programs, ADHE financial aid, schools of education, community college AAT programs, and critical shortage areas.

The **Educators Career Fair**, which was held on May 13, 2006 in Little Rock attracted five hundred (500) licensed educators from Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Texas, Nevada, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Indiana. Educators met and interviewed with school district personnel.

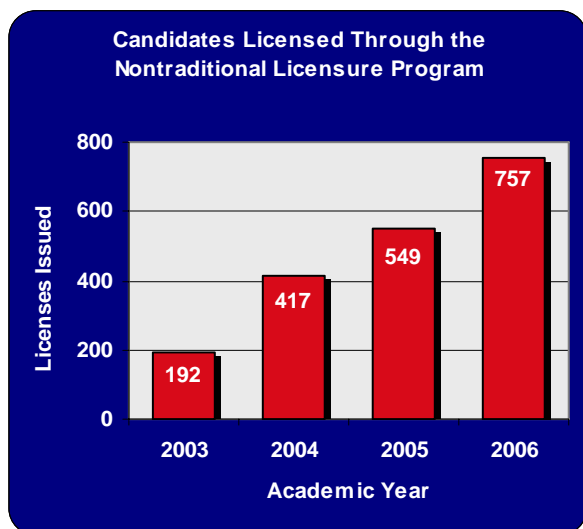
Ninety (90) exhibitors were present, including school district recruiters, ADE units and programs, ADHE financial aid, schools of education, critical shortage areas, Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Foundation, and educational organizations and vendors.

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, records are maintained of the number of attendees, exhibitors, and recruiters for the various job fair type of events; however, prior to the 2006-07 school year, ADE did not conduct follow-up surveys with participants of the events to evaluate the success of the events.

Beginning in 2006-07, ADE began compiling useful information from both prospective teachers and employers attending events including but not limited to:

- Satisfaction of prospective teachers with the individual events; and
- Satisfaction of school districts or other employers in attendance.

Exhibit III



Source: Arkansas Department of Education

STATE TEACHER ASSISTANCE RESOURCE (STAR) PROGRAM

ORIGINAL REPORT: At the time of our original report, the STAR program did not exist. The program was created through Act 1804 in 2003.

UPDATE: The State Teacher Assistance Resource (STAR) program, which is administered by ADHE, provides loans for future teachers willing to work in geographical shortage areas of Arkansas or teach certain designated subjects such as math, science, special education, or foreign languages.

Students qualify for this loan for up to three (3) years or until the teacher licensure requirements are completed. It offers a maximum of \$3,000 per year if students commit to teaching in a public school in a geographical shortage area in Arkansas or in a subject area designated to have a critical shortage of teachers. Recipients qualify for \$6,000 per year by agreeing to do both. ADHE forgives one (1) year of the loan for each consecutive year the recipient teaches full-time in the designated geographical and/or subject area.

In addition, students may qualify for federal student loan repayments of \$3,000 per year for every year the student teaches in a geographical or subject shortage area or \$6,000 per year for every year the student performs both. To qualify for federal student loan repayments, students must have completed the teacher licensure program after April 1, 2004. The term of repayment may not exceed three (3) years. In order to be eligible to participate in the STAR program, applicants must:

- Be an Arkansas resident for at least six (6) months prior to the application deadline;
- Be a citizen of the United States or a permanent resident alien;
- Be actively pursuing or admitted to an approved program in an approved Arkansas institution resulting in teacher licensure

AND be enrolled full-time (minimum of twelve (12) semester hours excluding correspondence courses) and be entering the sophomore, junior, or senior year or be in a Master of Arts in Teaching program in an approved institution;

- Have a minimum 2.75 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale; and
- Plan to teach in a public school in Arkansas located in a geographical area of the state with a critical shortage of teachers OR in a subject area with a critical shortage of teachers for at least one (1) year for each year of STAR assistance.

Any prior recipient of the former Emergency Secondary Education Loan (ESEL) program, which was repealed by Act 1804, may qualify for STAR by meeting all of the above qualifications. All applications are due by June 1 of every year.

ADHE will renew loan awards for an additional year to students who were prior recipients of STAR or ESEL, completed twenty-four (24) semester credit hours per academic year if an undergraduate or eighteen (18) semester credit hours per academic year if a graduate, and maintained a minimum 2.75 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

The STAR forgivable loan may be terminated if the recipient withdraws from school or does not meet any of the above qualifications. If this occurs, the forgivable loan converts to a fully payable loan.

The STAR program has grown since inception. There were 226 recipients for the 2004-05 academic year and 388 recipients for the 2005-06 academic year, an increase of seventy-two percent (72%). **Exhibit IV on page 8** illustrates the number of STAR recipients currently teaching in a critical subject shortage area, a critical geographic shortage area, or both. As shown in **Exhibit IV**, the number of STAR recipients teaching in these critical shortage areas dramatically increased from academic year 2005 to 2006.

CONCLUSION

Most of the recommendations in our original report have been addressed through the implementation of programs and policies by ADE, ADHE, and the General Assembly. Additionally these programs and policies, some of which are briefly highlighted below, have had a positive influence on the recruitment, retention, and placement of teachers in Arkansas.

- ◆ **STAR Program** - As shown in **Exhibit IV**, the STAR program in 2005-06 placed thirty-six (36) teachers in either a critical subject or geographical shortage area. Additionally, the number of STAR recipients increased dramatically over the same period of time (See page 7).
- ◆ **Nontraditional Licensure Program** - As shown in **Exhibit III (page 6)** the number of candidates licensed through this program has increased substantially from 192 in 2003 to 757 in 2006 (See page 5).

- ◆ **Arkansas Course Transfer System** - This system should ease the process for possible teaching candidates to transfer from a two-year teaching program to a four-year program (See pages 4 and 5).
- ◆ **Teachers-Teachers.com** - As of March 2006, over 2,000 licensed Arkansas teachers had registered and over 7,800 licensed non-Arkansas residents had indicated a preference to teach in the state through this online education job search tool (See page 3).

With these programs, and others such as the Pathwise Classroom Mentoring/Observation System, licensure reciprocity, and the continued efforts of ADE's Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention, steps are being taken to address teacher shortage areas. However, some programs are relatively new, and it is too early to evaluate their full impact.

Exhibit IV

**Number of STAR Recipients Teaching in Critical Subject and/or Critical Geographic Shortage Areas
State Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006**

STAR Recipient Teachers	2004-05	2005-06
Subject Shortage Areas	1	18
Geographic Shortage Areas	0	7
Subject and Geographic Shortage Areas	0	11
TOTAL	1	36

Source: Arkansas Department of Higher Education