Creating a Smart Arkansas

Smart Accountability is setting the tone for a coherent and sustained statewide system of support. The goal is not solely School Improvement but interventions for a transformational education change.

Not only must we change from the slow lane into the fast lane; we literally must change highways. Perhaps we need to abandon the highways altogether and take flight, because the highest goals that we can imagine are well within reach for those who have the will to excel (Bamburg, 1994, p. 20).

Arkansas' journey has gone from the slow lane to the fast lane.

Introduction

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is one of nine states receiving approval from the United States Department of Education (USDE) to be part of the Differentiated Accountability Pilot. Arkansas' approved Differentiated Accountability Model, Smart Accountability, is being granted under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This allows ADE to better address federal requirements and utilize funds as a lever for building district and school capacity to improve student achievement. Arkansas' Smart Accountability will be a four year agreement with the USDE.

The U. S. Department of Education identified 10 Core Principles that states are to meet in their proposals. The proposal and model adheres to the Core Principles of Differentiated Accountability.

Overview of Arkansas' Model

Under ADEs No Child Left Behind, a school failing to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years is labeled as in "school improvement" status. A school can be identified as in need of improvement (not making AYP) if enough students in only one subgroup fail to score proficient on either the mathematics or the literacy Arkansas Benchmark exam. A subgroup is identified anytime a school has 40 or more test-taking students in one of six demographic groups: white, Hispanic, African-American, economically disadvantaged, English language learners or students with disabilities.

The Arkansas Smart Accountability model allows the ADE to identify schools more appropriately, so that those schools that fail to make AYP progress because of low scores among one or two subgroups will be placed into a differentiated category that best represents the reason for the identification. This also allows districts to better differentiate interventions and resources to schools most in need. The model distinguishes among schools by applying different labels, interventions and consequences to schools appropriate to their actual school improvement status based on Arkansas Benchmark Scores.

The state's Smart Accountability model divides the schools into three main categories "achieving," "targeted" or "whole school". Schools making AYP are labeled as "achieving"; schools not making AYP in one or two subgroups are labeled as "targeted" improvement; while those dealing with low scores system-wide will be labeled as "whole school" improvement. Additional labeling categories have been implemented to indicate the level and intensity of interventions required. These labels are "targeted intensive" improvement, "whole school intensive" improvement and state directed. (*Figure 1*)

Figure 1
Method of Differentiation

Achieving	Targeted Improvement TI Years 1 – 2 & 3 (Corrective Action)
Applied to schools that • meet standards as required for AYP or • Alert status did not change	Applied to schools that make the required AMO for combined populations but failing to make • AYP in math and/or literacy for and • AMO for 25 % or fewer groups
Whole School Improvement, WSI Years 1 – 2 & 3 (Corrective Action)	Targeted Insensitive Improvement TII Year 4 (Planning) & TII Year 5 (Restructuring)
Applied to schools failing to make • AYP in math and/or literacy • AMO for combined population and/or • more than 25 percent of groups	Applied to schools that make the required AMO for combined populations but failing to make • AYP in math and/or literacy and • AMO for 25 % or fewer groups
Whole School Intensive Improvement WSII Year 4 (Planning) & WSII Year 5 (Restructuring)	State Directed SD Year's 6 >
Applied to schools failing to make • AYP in math and/or literacy • AMO for combined population and/or • more than 25 percent of groups	Applied to schools failing to make • AYP in math and/or literacy after TII-5 or WSII-5.

When schools are in Targeted and Whole School Improvement status, the state will provide guidance to them in terms of deciding which interventions to incorporate into its Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) that will best address the deficiencies. However, once schools have advanced to Targeted Intensive or Whole School Intensive levels, the state transitions from a more collaborative approach to a more directive one in the selection and application of interventions. After year five in category, the school advances to State Directed status and the state has the authority to appoint a school improvement director to steer the school to improved student performance.

The state's accountability plan does not distinguish between Title I and non-Title I schools. Therefore, Arkansas ensures that all Title I schools, as with all other schools identified for improvement, will receive the same level of interventions that increase in intensity over time.

Smart Accountability Priorities aligned to School Improvement Standards

The Arkansas Smart Accountability aligns ALL interventions to the *Arkansas Standards and Indicators for School Improvement*. These Standards and Indicators were approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education in 2006 and allow the assessment of systemic performance of a school by taking evidence based approach of three inclusive areas. These are academic performance, learning environment and efficiency. *(Figure 2)*

The Standards and Indicators provide meaningful insight as educators make decisions about how best to lead their schools. By tying a diagnostic phase of the Standards and Indicators to the interventions necessary to reach these standards, the proposal creates a seamless, comprehensive system to drive meaningful academic

Arkansas Standards and Indicators for School Improvement

Academic Performance: Provide professional learning for collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data such as Root Cause Analysis and data driven decision actions and planning. Ensure that each student experiences a rigorous curriculum aligned to the Arkansas Curriculum Framework. Implement targeted research-based practices that address the specific needs of the subpopulation identified for math and literacy.

Learning Environment: Build school staff capacity through quality professional development and intensive guidance of the professional development standards. Assist schools in developing and posting math and/or literacy AIP or IRI on-line. Implement a quality instructional coaching model with trained educators in math and/or literacy. Assist in developing educators' individual professional development plans based on student data and classroom observations.

Efficiency: Provide intensive leadership training and development to support the Arkansas Standards and Indicators of School Improvement and provide ongoing support and guidance in developing research based higher performing schools leadership skills. Provide statewide "classroom walk through" training

and observations to monitor classroom instruction. Provide technical assistance in the review of policies, procedures and practices that may present barriers to all students' achievement.

School Support for Interventions

A key component of Arkansas' accountability model is the provision of technical assistance. Support is provided through the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Planning (ACSIP) process, the scholastic audit review, and specialized intensive support.

ACSIP

School Improvement Planning (ACSIP Leadership) Teams are required for all schools to assist in the planning and development of the school improvement plan based on the Audit and other relevant data. The team is comprised of a network of stakeholders including parents, community/business representatives, highly qualified educators and pupil services personnel. Other members of the team represent content specialists and all services offered by the school including but not limited to special education, health, migrant, English language learners, technology and equity. ADE ACSIP Supervisors provide additional technical assistance during the development and amendment period.

Scholastic Audit

Audit Teams assist schools in corrective action and restructuring by examining a school's learning environment, efficiency and academic performance. The team reviews all aspects of the school's operation, including the design and operation of the instruction program. The team reviews all documents collected for the school portfolio, classroom observations, and formal/informal interviews with educators, parents and community representatives. The recommendations from the Scholastic Audit guide the school improvement planning process. Audit teams are comprised of highly qualified teachers and administrators, pupil services personnel, university faculty, education service cooperatives and

Intensive Support – School Improvement Year 3>

State Specialty Teams provide technical assistance and guidance to schools that have been identified as in improvement, giving priority to districts with schools identified as having high need and/or schools within districts with limited capacity to assist with school improvement

Figure 2
Arkansas Standards and Indicators for School Improvement

Academic Performance	Learning Environment	Efficiency
Curriculum	School Culture	Leadership
Classroom Evaluation & Assessment	Student/Family/ Community Structure	Organizational Structure
Instruction	Professional Growth	Comprehensive & Effective Planning

initiatives. Team members include school improvement supervisors and regional mathematics, science and literacy specialists representing general education, higher education and education service cooperatives. Based on the differentiated needs of the school; other members of the team may include: special education supervisors, data-analysis specialists, intervention specialists, parent involvement coordinators, leadership coordinators, ELL coordinators, gifted and talented coordinators, finance specialists, pupil services, ALE advisors, or early childhood specialists.

In addition, schools classified as corrective action or restructuring are assigned a highly qualified educator "School Improvement Specialist" to assist the school leadership and the staff with school improvement initiatives.

State Special Teams

The State Specialty Teams may;
1) Conduct a needs assessment through an appraisal process
2) Collaborate with parents, school staff and the LEA in the planning process and development of a school improvement plan including the development and implementation of the required interventions
3) Provide assistance in the development and implementation of a school leadership team that focuses on the needs of the targeted subpopulations,
4) Assist teachers with the identification of research-based methods that can improve classroom instruction practices and provide information and direction on best practices

5) Provide opportunities for leadership training to school leadership teams

6) Provide or arrange for professional development to build the capacity of the faculty and staff in improving student achievement

7) Identify and recommend distinguished educators within the school

8) Evaluate the effectiveness of the ACSIP plan with members of the school community

9) Work with district leaders to target resources more effectively and provides linkages to local, regional state and federal resources. (School Improvement Supervisors and Federal Grants Management review school improvement plans, grants, and budgets and provide technical assistance to school improvement sites.)

State Professional Development

Arkansas' professional development will include meaningful, well recognized and research based strategies for increasing student achievement. Training and professional development will be provided schools in the areas of

- Principles of Teaching
- Principles of Learning
- Principles of Curriculum

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) will adhere to the Smart Accountability Learning Environment priority by providing opportunities for leadership training and facilitate school leadership teams. This training will be a systemic training provided over the school year for administrators and leadership team leaders. All school improvement schools must participate or implement a leadership component. The ADE leadership professional development is optional for school improvement 1, 2, 3, & 4.
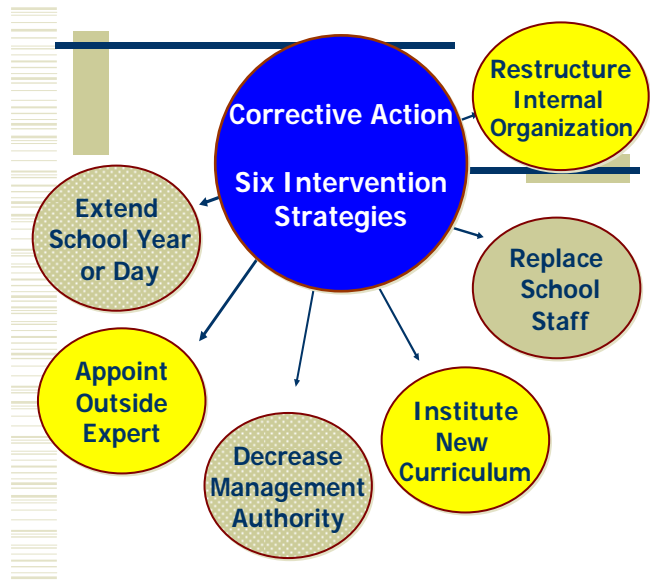
Whole School Intensive Improvement 5 and beyond may participate but must additionally implement a more intensive on-going leadership component.

Smart Accountability Timeline

Level One

The first step in the plan requires schools in Year 1 to make AYP for two consecutive years, as AYP is defined by the state's accountability system, or be identified for improvement. A school can be identified at this level in two categories, *Targeted* Improvement or *Whole School Improvement*. A school identified for improvement must make AYP as defined in the state's accountability system for two consecutive

school years in order to exit school improvement status. If a school does not meet AYP for two consecutive school years and cannot exit school improvement status, it then remains at the *Targeted Improvement* or *Whole School Improvement* status. If the school receives Title I Part A funds, it must participate in the state's corrective action. The plan requires the SEA to take corrective action if a school does not make adequate progress by the end of the second full school year it has been identified for improvement.


Level Two

The next level of schools designated as needing improvement will be those schools in Years 4 and 5. At this level the categories are *Targeted Intensive Improvement* or *Whole School Intensive Improvement*. Schools entering this level will participate in a restructuring phase, which is a two-step process. When a school is designated as a school in need of restructuring, the LEA has one school year to prepare a restructuring plan for the school and arrange to implement it. If, during the school year in which the LEA is formulating the restructuring plan, the school still does not make AYP, the LEA must implement the ADE approved plan no later than the beginning of the following school year.

Level Three

If a school continues to go through the restructuring phase and does not make AYP by the end of Year 5 of *Targeted Intensive Improvement* or *Whole School Intensive Improvement*, the school will be identified as *State Directed.* During this third and last level in the Differentiated Accountability Proposal, the state shall

direct the school using the same interventions and sanctions regardless of previous *Targeted* or *Whole School* status. Schools will exit this level if and only when the state deems the school has made adequate progress which means they have made AYP for two consecutive years.
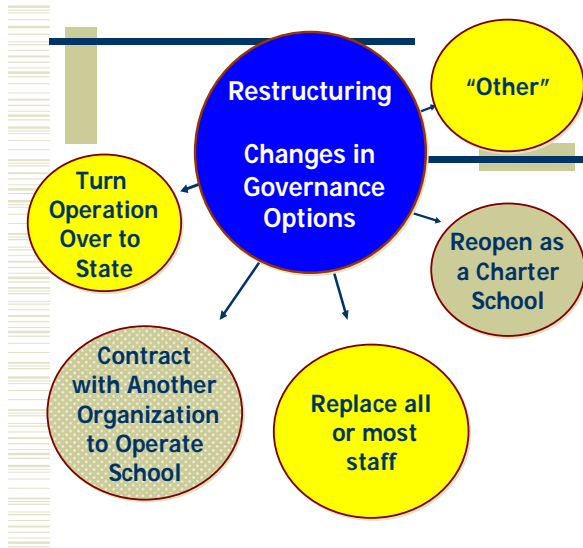

State Directed Schools
After Year 5 in either Targeted Intensive Improvement or Whole School Intensive Improvement, if a school has implemented its interventions and still has not been able to meet AYP, the school shall go into **State Directed** status. This status requires schools to implement the WSII Interventions which shall include a School Improvement Specialist. In addition a district may be required to employ a (state-appointed) School Improvement Director to oversee the administration

of the infrastructure, learning environment and instruction. It is recommended that State Directed schools that do not have a School Improvement Director hire and contract with a School Improvement Specialist for at least 3 days a week or as approved by ADE.

The School Improvement Specialist will assist the school principal by monitoring compliance with state and federal requirements; providing overall assistance, coordination and direction to staff in school improvement strategies; facilitate research-based instructional practices; facilitate data driven decision; and ensuring the full implementation of the school's ACSIP. In accordance with Smart Accountability, the School Improvement Specialist will provide direct guidance in decision making and recommendations for school improvement.

The School Improvement Director will be selected and will answer directly to the Commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education. This individual will oversee the school's building administrator/s and, if deemed necessary by the Commissioner, the superintendent. The position will assure and monitor compliance with state and federal requirements, as well as provide overall supervision, coordination and direction to staff. The School Improvement Director will direct the school administrator and staff in reaching goals by designing and implementing a planned program of accountability and other student related implementations. Funding for this position will be the responsibility of the school.
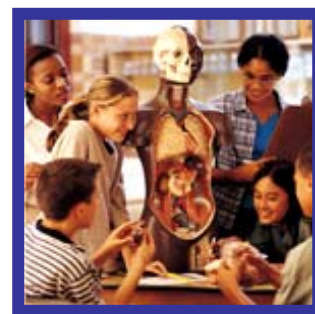
Smart Accountability Support Categories and Intervention Levels						
	A	TI	WSI	TII	WSII	SD
District and School						
Academic Performance						
Ensure that each student experiences a rigorous curriculum aligned to the Arkansas Curriculum Framework		√	√			
Analyze test data and secondary indicators to determine school improvement plan		√	√			
Identify content, subpopulations and secondary indicators to be continually monitored for growth; using a math and literacy "Assessment Wall" to track grade level, classroom and student growth		√	√			
Implement targeted research-based practices that address the specific needs of the subpopulation identified for math and literacy		√				
Assess student learning frequently with standards-based assessments			√			
Implement targeted research-based practices that address the specific needs of all students identified as below proficient			√			
Provide additional time on task by implementing quality after school, before school, and/or summer school for the purpose of alternative instruction, small group intervention, one-to-one intervention or acceleration for schools in WSI Year 3			√			
Assess progress and continue implementation of best instructional strategies listed in *Targeted Improvement or Whole School Improvement as applicable*				√	√	
Learning Environment						
Provide targeted student services:						
Provide state-approved SES and/or offer PSC as required by state and federal regulations		√	√	√	√	
Post math and/or literacy AIP or IRI on-line		√	√	√	√	
Provide quality professional development						
Participate in professional development on how to analyze and effectively use data		√	√			
Implement a quality instructional coaching model with trained educators in TI Year 3 for math and/or literacy		√	√			
Require teachers to make individual professional development plans based on student data and classroom observations		√	√			
Efficiency						
Require documentation of daily "classroom walk through" observations by the building administrator to monitor classroom instruction		√	√			
Report school improvement plan progress to the superintendent quarterly, who in turn will report the progress to the school board		√	√			
Notify parents that the school is identified as (TI Year 1, 2, or 3), (WSI Year 1, 2, or 3) (TII Year 4 or 5), (WSII Year 4 or 5) or (SD) in accordance with state and federal regulations		√	√	√	√	√
Review policies, procedures and practices that may present barriers to all students' achievement		√	√			
Conduct an audit of time resource allocation for the principal and increase the amount of time for instructional leadership			√			
Schedule and participate in a scholastic audit				√	√	
Additional Options – Schools must implement at least one of the following additional interventions based on the year or consecutive years of improvement.						
Schedule and participate in a scholastic audit – TI/WSI Year 3 Only		√	√			
Provide preschool opportunities within the district and/or campus – TI/WSI Year 3 Only		√	√			
Extend learning time for students on topics and skills that lack sufficient progress in math and/or literacy – TI/WSI Year 3		√	√			

Smart Accountability Support Categories and Intervention Levels

	A	TI	WSI	TII	WSII	SD
Reallocate funds for additional professional development in math and/or literacy – TI/WSI Year 3		√	√			
Hire a parent & community specialist to assist in community and parental support to accelerate community collaborations by bringing parents, students, educators, non-profit entities, foundations, and business interest together to focus on systemic improvements – TI/WSI Year 3		√	√			
Subcontract with recognized educators, such as National Board Certified Teachers, Milken Winners and/or Arkansas State Teacher of the Year Finalists to assist in data analysis, observations, and mentoring - TI/WSI Year 3			√			
Extend the school year or school day for the school – TII/WSII Years 4 & 5.				√	√	
Restructure the internal organization of the school - TII/WSII Years 4 & 5.				√	√	
Create a school within a school to address the needs of the targeted subpopulation (must be approved by the ADE) - TII 4/5.				√		
Reopen the school as a public charter school or multiple charters - TII 4/5.				√	√	
Replace all or most of the school staff, including the building administrator TII/WSII Years 4 & 5.				√	√	
Enter into a contract to have an outside entity operate the school (must be approved by the ADE) - TII/WSII Years 4 & 5.				√	√	
Arrange for the ADE to take over operation of the school - WSII Year 5.					√	
Any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement (approved by the ADE - i.e. School Improvement Specialist) - TII/WSII Years 4 & 5.				√	√	
State Technical Assistance						
Academic Performance						
Provide information and direction on best practices as noted in Scientific Based Reading Research (SBRR) and clearinghouses		√	√			
Implement a Response-to Intervention Plan (Arkansas' Closing the Gap Model) that address curriculum, instruction, assessments and appropriate student interventions				√	√	
Implement an ongoing, systematic and coherent assessment system				√	√	
Implement with high-fidelity, proven academic programs that will enable all students to meet academic objectives				√	√	
Analyze a complete data set that examines both early childhood services and higher education entry and retention					√	
Learning Environment						
Provide opportunities for leadership training to school leadership teams		√	√			
Provide professional development on how to analyze and effectively use data to build school capacity and improve student performance		√	√			
Provide professional development for all faculty members on higher expectations for all students in Year 3-4			√	√	√	
Provide leadership training and facilitate the leadership team process for all faculty members			√	√	√	
Provide training based on the scholastic audit results for all faculty members				√	√	
Assist with the design of a comprehensive instructional coaching plan that addresses classroom needs in deficit areas of math and/or literacy				√	√	
Efficiency						
Provide assistance in development and implementation of a school leadership team that focuses on the targeted subpopulation(s) missing the AMO. The leadership team would be responsible for reviewing progress monitoring data, making adjustments in student interventions monthly and overseeing the implementation of the school improvement plan.		√	√			

Smart Accountability Support Categories and Intervention Levels						
	A	**TI**	**WSI**	**TII**	**WSII**	**SD**
Assist in the development of a school improvement plan that follows the school improvement process and clearly outlines the necessary interventions and actions to move all students to proficiency by 2013-2014, (TII schools must develop a 3 year plan)		√	√	√		
Provide assistance in analyzing the "classroom walk through" data				√		
Assist with the reallocation of available funding, to include state and federal funds, to implement the school improvement plan				√		
Implement a state-approved school turn-around model/plan.					√	
Assist with the analysis of the "classroom walk through" data and design of effective intervention strategies					√	
Assist with establishing a progress monitoring plan developed to track quarterly achievement with a monthly meeting of the schools' leadership team to plan and review progress in meeting goals					√	
Assistance with analyzing the needs of the school and reallocating funds and resources (time, personnel, materials, etc) to meet improvement plans and a comprehensive turn around model of school reform					√	
State Directed**						
Direct a school team to participate in a leadership institute during the summer						√
Determine how federal and state school improvement funds will be used. The ADE may defer programmatic funds or reduce administrative funds, if necessary						√
Replace school staff relevant to the failure of students meeting their AMO's, if necessary						√
Reallocate resources and provide professional development to fulfill the school's mandated plan using school district funds, if necessary						√
Determine the future of the schools status (charter, consolidation, closure, etc)						√
At the discretion of the Commissioner of Education, the state may assign a School Improvement (SI) Director						