Smart Course to Success: Arkansas's Race to the Top

submitted by
Arkansas Department of Education

June 2010

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT SERVICE

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Commissioner

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May 28, 2010

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We've been running a challenging academic course in Arkansas for many years now. The starting line was less a place or point in time than it was a fusion of will and ways to set out on our Smart Course to Success. The pages of this application, the substance of our expanded plans, trace the arc of our progress and the trajectory of our future, accelerated by Race to the Top.

By moving well outside the boundaries of stale thinking and into an arena of bold action, we've been challenging our children with a demanding curriculum that's leading them beyond narrow borders and low horizons. We've set the bar high with standards that ready students to clear the hurdles they'll face in college and throughout their lifetime of careers.

We expected the broader opportunities and tougher courses to take our children to new heights of performance, and that's a climb they're making: students are advancing on many measures of school success, and we're proud of their accomplishments.

But we have no place for complacency. The imperative of progress is to continuously improve, to constantly push aside *impossible* and rethink *possible*, searching out smarter ways, refreshing ourselves with new ideas, fortifying our commitment with the energy of coalition, and always, always asking the core question, *Is this the best we can do for our kids?*

In the pages of our plans, we've laid out a smart course knowing that demanding top performance in our students demands the same thing of *us*, their leaders, teachers, mentors, and role models. Creating the backdrop for reform also requires a foundation for it, and we have them both. We've embraced visionary ideas and plans, but our heads aren't in the clouds: our stance is solidly grounded in our resolve to keep children at the center of our work.

We've come far along our smart course, but the goals are still in the distance. With Race to the Top, our momentum continues to build. Together, we're taking our children to the top.

Sincerely,

Tom W. Kimbrell, Ed.D
Commissioner of Education

Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR
72201-1019
(501) 682-4475
ArkansasEd.org

RACE TO THE TOP APPLICATION ASSURANCES
(CFDA No. 84.395A)

Legal Name of Applicant (Office of the Governor): Office of Governor Mike Beebe	**Applicant's Mailing Address:** Office of Governor Mike Beebe State Capitol, Suite 238 Little Rock, AR 72201
Employer Identification Number: 71-0847443	**Organizational DUNS:** 159784664
State Race to the Top Contact Name: **(Single point of contact for communication)** Heather Gage	**Contact Position and Office:** Arkansas Department of Education Policy Director
Contact Telephone: 501-682-3667	**Contact E-mail Address:** heather.gage@arkansas.gov

Required Applicant Signatures:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information and data in this application are true and correct.

I further certify that I have read the application, am fully committed to it, and will support its implementation:

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name): Governor Mike Beebe	**Telephone:** 501-683-6424
Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor:	**Date:** 5/28/2010
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Dr. Tom Kimbrell	**Telephone:** 501-682-4201
Signature of the Chief State School Officer:	**Date:** 5-28-2010
President of the State Board of Education (Printed Name): Dr. Naccaman Williams	**Telephone:**
Signature of the President of the State Board of Education:	**Date:** 5/28/10

ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, REPORTING AND OTHER ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

Accountability, Transparency and Reporting Assurances

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures that the State will comply with all of the accountability, transparency, and reporting requirements that apply to the Race to the Top program, including the following:

- For each year of the program, the State will submit a report to the Secretary, at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require, that describes:
    - the uses of funds within the State;
    - how the State distributed the funds it received;
    - the number of jobs that the Governor estimates were saved or created with the funds;
    - the State's progress in reducing inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers, implementing a State longitudinal data system, and developing and implementing valid and reliable assessments for limited English proficient students and students with disabilities; and
    - if applicable, a description of each modernization, renovation, or repair project approved in the State application and funded, including the amounts awarded and project costs (ARRA Division A, Section 14008)

- The State will cooperate with any U.S. Comptroller General evaluation of the uses of funds and the impact of funding on the progress made toward closing achievement gaps (ARRA Division A, Section 14009)

- If the State uses funds for any infrastructure investment, the State will certify that the investment received the full review and vetting required by law and that the chief executive accepts responsibility that the investment is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds. This certification will include a description of the investment, the estimated total cost, and the amount of covered funds to be used. The certification will be posted on the State's website and linked to www.Recovery.gov. A State or local agency may not use funds under the ARRA for infrastructure investment funding unless this certification is made and posted. (ARRA Division A, Section 1511)

- The State will submit reports, within 10 days after the end of each calendar quarter, that contain the information required under section 1512(c) of the ARRA in accordance with any guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget or the Department. (ARRA Division A, Section 1512(c))

- The State will cooperate with any appropriate Federal Inspector General's examination of records under the program. (ARRA Division A, Section 1515)

Other Assurances and Certifications

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures or certifies the following:

- The State will comply with all applicable assurances in OMB Standard Forms 424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs) and to the extent consistent with the State's application, OMB Standard Form 424D (Assurances for Construction Programs), including the assurances relating to the legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards; flood hazards; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and the general agreement to comply with all applicable Federal laws, executive orders and regulations.

- With respect to the certification regarding lobbying in Department Form 80-0013, no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; the State will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix B); and the State will require the full certification, as set forth in 34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.

- The State will comply with all of the operational and administrative provisions in Title XV and XIV of the ARRA, including Buy American Requirements (ARRA Division A, Section 1605), Wage Rate Requirements (section 1606), and any applicable environmental impact requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), as amended, (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.) (ARRA Division A, Section 1609). In using ARRA funds for infrastructure investment, recipients will comply with the requirement regarding Preferences for Quick Start Activities (ARRA Division A, Section 1602).

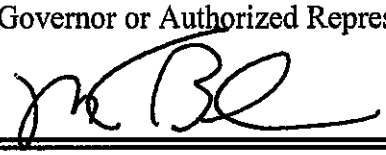
- Any local educational agency (LEA) receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State a set of assurances that meets the requirements of section 442 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232e).

- Any LEA receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State (through either its Stabilization Fiscal Stabilization Fund application or another U.S. Department of Education Federal grant) a description of how the LEA will comply with the requirements of section 427 of GEPA (20 U.S.C. 1228a). The description must include information on the steps the LEA proposes to take to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers (including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age) that impede access to, or participation in, the program.

- The State and other entities will comply with the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), including the following provisions as applicable: 34 CFR Part 74–Administration of Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations; 34 CFR Part 75–Direct Grant Programs; 34 CFR Part 77– Definitions that Apply to Department Regulations; 34 CFR Part

80– Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, including the procurement provisions; 34 CFR Part 81– General Education Provisions Act–Enforcement; 34 CFR Part 82– New Restrictions on Lobbying; 34 CFR Part 84–Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance); 34 CFR Part 85–Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

SIGNATURE BLOCK FOR CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name): Mike Beebe	
Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor: 	Date: 5/28/10

State Attorney General Certification

I certify that the State's description of, and statements and conclusions concerning, State law, statute, and regulation in its application are complete, accurate, and constitute a reasonable interpretation of State law, statute, and regulation.
(See especially Eligibility Requirement (b), Selection Criteria (B)(1), (D)(1), (E)(1), (F)(2), (F)(3).)

I certify that the State does not have any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers at the State level to linking data on student achievement (as defined in this notice) or student growth (as defined in this notice) to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.

State Attorney General or Authorized Representative (Printed Name):	Telephone:
Ali M. Brady	501-682-1319
Signature of the State Attorney General or Authorized Representative:	Date:
	5/24/10

Glossary of Terms

A

Achieve, Inc: Created by the nation's governors and business leaders, Achieve, is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary success. At the 2005 National Education Summit, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, a coalition that has grown to 33 states, educating nearly 80% of public school students in the United States. The ADP Network is committed to aligning high school expectations with the demands of college, career and life.

ABC Program –Arkansas Better Chance Program: State funded early care and education program that serves educationally deprived children, ages birth through 5, excluding kindergarten programs. A top priority are districts where 75 percent of students score below proficient in literacy and math on the benchmark exams, as well as those children in schools that have been designated on school improvement status. Any willing provider may apply for funding as long as they meet the State Quality Approval and ABC Standards.

ACSIP – Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan: A plan developed by a local school team that is based on student performance data and other information and provides a plan of action to address areas where students are not scoring well on the benchmark tests. The local school team members should include teachers, parents, and community members. The plan includes professional development, technology, materials, and resources needed to carry out the plan. This plan determines how federal funds will be used at the school.

ACTAAP – Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program: The blueprint for education in Arkansas which includes the state's Smart Start Initiative (focuses on grades K-4), Smart Step Initiative (focuses on grades 5-8), and education for grades 9-12. ACTAAP represents the result of extensive planning and discussion by Arkansas educators, policymakers, and school patrons. The authority to implement ACTAAP began with legislation by Act 999 of 1999. ACTAAP is a comprehensive system that focuses on high academic standards, professional development, student assessment, and accountability for schools.

ADE - Arkansas Department of Education: The state educational agency (SEA) designated in state law as responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

AIP - Academic Improvement Plan: A plan that is to be developed for each student who fails to meet the satisfactory pass levels on any portion of the criterion-referenced tests and for students in grades K-2 on the state mandated NRT for those grades. This plan is to have a detailed description of supplemental and/or intervention and remedial instruction used to help a student in the areas where he/she is not achieving. The AIP is developed by teachers, school personnel, and the student's parents and describes the parent's roles and responsibilities as well as the consequences for failure to participate in the plan. Students who do not participate in their remediation program are retained.

AP – Advanced Placement: A high school level college preparatory course administered by the College Board that students can take to earn college credit. Students must master a generally higher level of coursework and pass an accompanying test to earn college credit.

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress: The minimum level of academic performance schools must achieve each year in reading and math (and eventually science) on the state-mandated criterion-reference assessment (Benchmark Exam). Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), each state sets the yearly performance levels every school must meet to reach 100 percent proficiency by 2014. Parents will be notified if their child's school has not met AYP requirements.

Academic Content Standards: The written documents that outline what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level. The state testing system is based on (aligned with) these content standards.

Academic distress: A classification assigned to any public school district in which 75 percent or more of its students perform at the "below basic" performance level on the criterion-referenced assessments.

Alternative school: Schools that are set up to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems are provided an opportunity to achieve in a different setting, often with more flexible schedules, smaller teacher-to-student ratios, counseling support, and modified curricula.

America Diploma Project: The American Diploma Project (ADP) Network includes 35 states that are dedicated to making sure that every high school graduate is prepared for college or careers. Together, network states have committed to four policy actions that, taken together, can restore value to the high school diploma:

- Align high school standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school.
- Require all high school graduates to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma assures a student is prepared for opportunities after high school.
- Build assessments into the statewide system that measure students' readiness for college and careers.
- Develop an accountability system that promotes college and career readiness.

America's Promise: Founded in 1997, America's Promise Alliance is a cross-sector partnership of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups that are passionate about improving lives and changing outcomes for children. It is their top priority to ensuring that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life. Their work involves raising awareness, encouraging action and engaging in advocacy to provide children the key supports called the Five Promises: Caring adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education and Opportunities to Help Others.

Annexation: The joining of a school district or parts of a district with a receiving district.

Arkansas Benchmark Exams: A type of augmented criterion-referenced test that Arkansas administers to students once a year in grades 3 through 8.

Arkansas Career Pathway: The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative is a program that enables local two-year colleges to offer those who qualify career training and college classes. The Pathways program helps students overcome the barriers that have kept them from getting the training and education they need. To qualify a person must be an adult caretaker, parent or relative of a child under the age of 21 -- AND

- are receiving Transitional Employment Assistance(TEA) now, or have received TEA in the past --- OR
- are receiving food stamps, Medicaid, or ARKids --- OR
- have annual family income below 250% of federal poverty level (about $44,000 annually for a family of three).

Arkansas Center for Executive Leadership: The Arkansas Center for Executive Leadership (ACEL) at Arkansas Tech University is a provider of advanced leadership training for school administrators. The ACEL Superintendent Academy is a yearlong, advanced leadership development program for exemplary school superintendents. It provides superintendents with opportunities for self-assessment, self-renewal, and leadership skill enhancement so they can build on what has made them successful leaders. This is being funded through a Walton Family Foundation grant in association with Arkansas Tech University.

Arkansas Education to Employment Initiative (AEETT): The focus of AEETT is to make available data that have been previously missing when school policies and instructional programs are being considered in relationship to students' divergent needs and preparing them for the world of work beyond their schooling. Information obtained from this initiative will foster changes in curriculum, scheduling, and student support resources to better prepare every student to enter the workforce.

Arkansas IDEAS: Developed and maintained by Arkansas Education Television Network (AETN – Arkansas's Public Broadcasting System) and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), the *ArkansasIDEAS* portal allows teachers in Arkansas to purse their professional development online with multiple options of Arkansas Department of Educational approved courses available to them at no charge. This is an anytime, anywhere educational tool designed with teachers' busy schedules in mind.

Arkansas Leadership Academy: Established in 1991, the Arkansas Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 15 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 educational cooperatives; the Arkansas Departments of Education, Higher Education, and Career Education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network; Tyson Foods, Inc; Wal*Mart Stores, Inc.; 2 superintendent representatives; the Office of the Governor; and the State Board of Education, a total of 49 Partners.The Academy, through the use of research and best practices, designs creative and innovative approaches to establish learning communities in public schools by developing human resources and by modeling and advocating collaboration, support, shared decision making, team learning, risk taking, and

problem solving. Partners commit to changing their organizations to support system improvement.

Arkansas Research Center (ARC): The Arkansas Research Center (ARC) was founded in 2009. The ARC's mission is to foster effective educational data use and to serve as a clearing house for state agency educational data needed to benefit Arkansas schools.

Arkansas Works: Arkansas Works: Arkansas's College & Career Planning System
The College and Career Planning System helps equip students and adults with the skills and education required for the opportunities that await them. This online resource provides tools and new information that will guide your career and college plans. Whether a student is looking for career ideas, or an adult is looking for a new career or a business searching for qualified employees, all Arkansans can find help here. This online tool provides career and educational resources to make it happen.

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center: In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education selected WestEd, in partnership with National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), to operate the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC). The AACC implements, evaluates, and improves assessment and accountability systems so that states and districts can reach the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goal of academic proficiency for all students.

B

Bill and Melinda Gates Reform Foundation: Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.

BMI - Body Mass Index: A popular method used to gauge whether or not a person is overweight. BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight (in kilograms) by his or her height (in meters, squared). Schools are required to provide a student's body mass index as part of an annual student health report to parents.

C

Career Readiness Certificate: An Arkansas CRC is a portable credential based upon the WorkKeys® assessments that demonstrates to employers that an individual possesses the basic workplace skills required for 21st century jobs. Getting a CRC will allow an individual to show prospective employers that he or she possesses the basic skills they are looking for.

CELT: Founded in 1991 as the *Center for Education Leadership and Technology*, CELT serves school districts, intermediate units, and state education departments in the following areas: technology planning; procurement support, project management, technology facilities decision support, learning management, school improvement support, and curriculum and technology integration.

Concurrent enrollment: Courses or coursework that satisfy both college and high school credit hours.

Consolidation: The joining of two or more school districts or parts of districts to create a single new school district.

D

Dashboard: A dashboard is a visualization tool used to gain an overall perspective of how a district or school is performing. Dashboards may show key performance indicators, metrics, charts, trends and data visualizations. It often used to view multiple areas of interest simultaneously and provide a quick and easy method to decipher valuable yet often complex information.

Data Quality Campaign: The Data Quality Campaign is a national, collaborative effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the collection, availability and use of high-quality education data and to implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. The campaign aims to provide tools and resources that will assist state development of quality longitudinal data systems, while also providing a national forum for reducing duplication of effort and promoting greater coordination and consensus among the organizations focusing on improving data quality, access and use. The DQC has 14 Managing Partners and numerous Endorsing Partners.

E

Education Counsel: Education Counsel is an innovative law, policy, strategy, and advocacy organization committed to strengthening education systems, closing achievement gaps, and expanding access to educational opportunities. The firm collaborates with education leaders from across the country, including state and local leaders, higher education officials, associations, and pioneering private and public entities to improve educational outcomes for all students. Education Counsel's multidisciplinary team seeks creative, research-based solutions to the complex challenges facing the education community. The firm's collaborative approach helps clients effectively address every educational stage, from birth and pre-school through elementary, secondary and higher education.

Education Fund: The Education Fund consists of funds for support of various state agencies dedicated to the education of the K12 students of Arkansas, including the Arkansas School for the Blind, Arkansas School for the Deaf , and Educational Facilities Partnership Fund for distribution of grants for programs providing academic school facility and transportation assistance to the public school districts.

Education Service Cooperative: There are 15 education service cooperatives throughout Arkansas. The cooperatives serve to provide support to the school districts in their region, as well as provide professional development opportunities and act as a consortium for purchasing certain services and supplies. The cooperatives also provide technical computer support services to the schools in their area

Education Trust: The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels—pre-kindergarten through college. Their goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people—especially those from low-income families or who are black, Latino, or American Indian—to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.

Educational Adequacy Fund: This fund was created by Act 108 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. Funding was provided by a 7/8 cent sales and use tax increase. The fund was created to insure that funds were available to fulfill the financial obligation of the State to provide an adequate education system as enacted by the Second Extraordinary Session of the 84th General Assembly.

Educational Excellence Trust Fund: This fund was established by Act 10 of 1991 and consisted of funds generated by a sales and use tax increase of .5%. The fund was created to provide salary increases required to be paid by school districts for certified personnel.

Equity: The right to treatment without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, gender, handicap, lifestyle, or age. Within the educational arena, equity implies that children are treated fairly by receiving services according to their individual strengths and needs.

I

IEP – Individualized Education Plan: A written instructional plan for students with disabilities designated as special education students under federal law (IDEA).

IDEA - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A federal law that requires states to provide all eligible children who have disabilities with a free, appropriate public education, from infancy through age 21 years, consistent with state law age provisions for making education available.

Instructional Improvement System (IIS): An IIS includes technology-based tools and other strategies that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with meaningful support and actionable data to systemically manage continuous instructional improvement, including such activities as: instructional planning; gathering information (*e.g.*, through formative assessments (as defined in this notice), interim assessments (as defined in this notice), summative assessments, and looking at student work and other student data); analyzing information with the support of rapid-time (as defined in this notice) reporting; using this information to inform decisions on appropriate next instructional steps; and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken. Such systems promote collaborative problem-solving and action planning; they may also integrate instructional data with student-level data such as attendance, discipline, grades, credit accumulation, and student survey results to provide early warning indicators of a student's risk of educational failure.

Institutions of Higher Education - Four-Year: Postsecondary education entities that offer four-year degree programs and are administered by the Department of Higher Education. There are currently eleven four-year institutions.

Institutions of Higher Education - Two Year: Postsecondary education entities, most of which are affiliated with a four-year institution, that offer two-year degree programs and are administered by the Department of Higher Education. There are currently nineteen two year institutions.

IRI – Intensive Reading Instruction: An intervention program for any K-2 student identified with substantial reading difficulties.

J

Jobs for the Future: Jobs for the Future creates strategies for educational and economic opportunity. We develop promising education and labor-market models, expand successful models in communities across the country, and shape the policy environment that enables American families and companies to compete in a global economy.

L

LEP – Limited English Proficiency: A student who does not speak English as a native language and is in the process of learning English.

LEA - local education agency: A public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, school district, or other political subdivision of a state.

Longitudinal tracking: A system that uses test scores to keep up with the progress of the same student from year to year and from grade to grade, regardless of whether the student moves from one school to another or one district to another. Educators can use the system to help students who aren't making appropriate academic gains. Longitudinal tracking can also be used to help develop site specific, targeted, quality professional development for educators.

M

Metis Associates: Metis Associates is an employee-owned consulting group offering a full range of research, evaluation, program development and information technology services to educational institutions, government agencies, foundations and community-based organizations.

Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3): The Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3) is one of a national network of 21 federally funded centers designed to assist state education agencies (SEAs) increase capacity to provide sustained support to districts and schools as they implement the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). MC3 provides high quality research-based technical assistance (TA) to the SEAs of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. MC3 builds SEA capacity by collaborating with SEA staff members, TA providers, and other partners to identify, broker, leverage, and deliver information resources

and services. This enables SEAs to receive customized professional development and information on best practices and research-based improvement strategies.

N

National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST): Founded in 1985, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) is a leading research organization contributing to improved learning for American children and adults. As part of UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies and the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, CRESST conducts rigorous research studies and evaluates educational programs. While known for our work on assessment systems and program quality, the center is equally committed to the use and impact of technology in virtually all of our activities.

National Information Exchange Model: NIEM, the National Information Exchange Model, is a partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security. It is designed to develop, disseminate and support enterprise-wide information exchange standards and processes that can enable jurisdictions to effectively share critical information in emergency situations, as well as support the day-to-day operations of agencies throughout the nation.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices: Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit www.nga.org.

National Math and Science Initiative: The National Math and Science Initiative was formed to address one of this nation's greatest economic and intellectual threats - the declining number of students who are prepared to take rigorous college courses in math and science and equipped for careers in those fields. To flourish in the 21st century, the United States must continue to generate intellectual capital that can drive the economic engine of our future prosperity. This crucial project was initiated as a public-private partnership, led by private donors such as Exxon Mobil Corporation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES): The establishment of the National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES) addresses the immediate need for improved student assessment and evaluation practices in school systems. NORMES uses interactive technology to identify best educational practices and curriculum interventions that contribute to increased student achievement. NORMES provides an improved system for early detection of those students at-risk academically and the specific information necessary for educators to respond. NORMES transcends geographical obstacles in bringing educational resources to academically distressed and/or isolated school systems.

National School Lunch state funds: This program provides state funding for those students from low socio-ecomonic backgrounds, as indicated by the eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals un the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), as reported on October 1 of each year and submitted to the ADE.

P

Professional Development: Intentional, ongoing, and systemic processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators to achieve specific objectives. The goal is increased student learning and continuous improvement for all staff.

Public School Fund: The Public School Fund consists of funds made available for the support of the K12 public schools of Arkansas, including charter schools, workforce education programs, and funds supporting equity and equality.

S

School Report Cards: The Annual School Performance Report Card, commonly referred to as the Report Card, is produced annually by the Arkansas Department of Education. While the Report Card does not grade or rank Arkansas schools, it does provide parents and school patrons with a wide variety of statistical information about schools and school districts.

Smart Arkansas: Arkansas's Smart Initiatives was launched in 1998 to focus on standards, professional learning, student assessment, and accountability

State Board of Education: The policy-making body for public elementary and secondary education in Arkansas. The Arkansas State Board of Education is a nine-member group of business and community leaders. The board is to be composed of two members from each of the state's four congressional districts, and the remaining member is to be selected at-large. The Governor appoints members for a single seven-year term. The board meets on the second Monday of each month.

Southern Regional Education Board: SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with 16 member states to improve public pre-K-12 and higher education. Founded by the region's governors and legislators in 1948, SREB was America's first interstate compact for education. Today it is the only regional education compact that works directly with state leaders, schools and educators to improve teaching, learning and student achievement at **every** level of education.

Stepwise Framework: STEPWISE© is a teaching and research project aimed at encouraging and enabling students to use their science and technology education, including their own primary and secondary research findings, to take sociopolitical actions to address 'socioscientific' (also called 'STSE') issues.

T

Technical Institutes: Technical Institutes are two-year postsecondary education entities that are administered by the Department of Career Education. There are currently three.

Technical Colleges: Two-year postsecondary education entities that offer two-year degree programs. These entities are administered by the Department of Higher Education. Most of these entities resulted from the merger of technical institutes and community colleges. There are currently five technical colleges.

U

Uniform Rate of Tax: "Uniform rate of tax" means a uniform rate of ad valorem property tax of twenty-five (25) mills to be levied on the assessed value of all taxable real, personal, utility, and regulated carrier property in the state to be used solely for the maintenance and operation of the public schools as required by Arkansas Constitution, Article 14, § 3, as amended by Arkansas Constitution, Amendments 11, 40, and 74.

V

Value-added: Among educators, the term refers to the increase of learning that occurs over the time of a course or program that is provided to a student. For example, the difference between a students reading ability from the beginning of a certain program to the end of it can be considered the value-added result.

(A) State Success Factors (125 total points)

(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEAs' participation in it *(65 points)*

The extent to which—

(i) The State has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulates its goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA and improving student outcomes statewide, establishes a clear and credible path to achieving these goals, and is consistent with the specific reform plans that the State has proposed throughout its application; *(5 points)*

(ii) The participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) are strongly committed to the State's plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas, as evidenced by Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (as set forth in Appendix D) or other binding agreements between the State and its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) that include— *(45 points)*

(a) Terms and conditions that reflect strong commitment by the participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to the State's plans;

(b) Scope-of-work descriptions that require participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plans; and

(c) Signatures from as many as possible of the LEA superintendent (or equivalent), the president of the local school board (or equivalent, if applicable), and the local teachers' union leader (if applicable) (one signature of which must be from an authorized LEA representative) demonstrating the extent of leadership support within participating LEAs (as defined in this notice); and

(iii) The LEAs that are participating in the State's Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for—*(15 points)*

(a) Increasing student achievement in (at a minimum) reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;

(c) Increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice); and

(d) Increasing college enrollment (as defined in this notice) and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion, as well as projected goals as described in (A)(1)(iii). The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(1)(ii):

- An example of the State's standard Participating LEA MOU, and description of variations used, if any.
- The completed summary table indicating which specific portions of the State's plan each LEA is committed to implementing, and relevant summary statistics (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b), below).
- The completed summary table indicating which LEA leadership signatures have been obtained (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c), below).

Evidence for (A)(1)(iii):

- The completed summary table indicating the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(iii), below).
- Tables and graphs that show the State's goals, overall and by subgroup, requested in the criterion, together with the supporting narrative. In addition, describe what the goals would look like were the State not to receive an award under this program. Evidence for (A)(1)(ii) and (A)(1)(iii):
- The completed detailed table, by LEA, that includes the information requested in the criterion (see Detailed Table for (A)(1), below).

Recommended maximum response length: Ten pages (excluding tables)

(A)(1)(i) The State has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulates its goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA and improving student outcomes statewide, establishes a clear and credible path to achieving these goals, and is consistent with the specific reform plans that the State has proposed throughout its application.

What do we stand for?

That's a question we all ask ourselves, as individuals and in groups, at some time or another. Answering that question may take some time to mull: the response requires thoughtful reflection, sorting out options that level with our experiences, rest on our values, spring from our aspirations and expectations.

What do we stand for when it comes to our children? we've asked ourselves many times in Arkansas, in various ways and in scores of settings around the state, as we've gathered to explore for answers.

And during that search, we've discovered companion inquiries as well: *"Taking this stance, where do we want to go from here? And how?"*

Long before Race to the Top came our way, we've been considering such questions to illuminate and guide ourselves as a thoughtful, caring people who dare to wrestle tough issues into workable resolutions. In communities all over Arkansas, we've learned how to gather in study circles[1] for constructive dialogue about matters that demand our attention. We know how to focus on a central inquiry and search out workable answers, whether the issue has been taxes, early childhood education, race, high school reform, poverty, teen pregnancy, child health, afterschool care, and many more subjects. So, as we'll recount later, when Race to the Top presented us with more challenges to our thinking and our vision, we gathered together again.

As we deliberated, we focused on the central core of inquiry: *"What do we stand for when it comes to our children's education?"* Distilling the many answers, we solidified a unifying stance that connects us—and that threads—throughout this document, this embodiment of our communal vision: *"We stand for taking the collective action that transforms our schools into the very best education experience for our children so all of them achieve their very best."* When the children grow into college students and follow adventure into their careers as adults, we want them to be the best *for* our state and *for* our nation. Our collective prosperity depends upon it.

Engendered by this stance and in concert with it, we present the roadmap for our children's journey, which is ours as well. We're responsible for nurturing them, challenging them, leading them to success. That requires the very best of *us* in our comprehensive plans for reforming our school system to bring out the best in all children.

Foundation Our application narrative will explain the new-millennium background events that marked seminal turning points in our progress, propelled us forward, and now shape our further plans. Let's begin with a sense of the foundation upon which we take our stand for our children's education. Then we'll progress to consider the four essential pillars of our plans, and conclude with our statement of commitment.

[1] Study circles are a deliberative dialogue model in which trained organizers and facilitators convene groups of citizens to address various issues through constructive conversation.

Our goals reflect our vision of an education system that:

- believes a child's education begins at birth and encompasses nurture of the whole child throughout the school years.
- supports all students to graduate well prepared to succeed in higher education and the workforce.
- challenges students with demanding courses of study and supports them to successful completion.
- prioritizes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in teacher preparation and student instruction and achievement.
- identifies struggling students and intervenes early to redirect their progress and forestall dropping out of school.
- ensures the insights, skills, and effectiveness of all school staff are enhanced with stimulating, interactive professional development directly correlated to strengthening instruction and promoting students' success.
- enables educators to capably shape and assess student performance according to readily accessible data that drives decisions.
- fairly evaluates educators according to their performance and effect on student achievement.
- turns low-performing schools around, applying customized resources to build the schools' capacity for high performance that prepares students for college and the workplace.
- encourages institutions of higher education to develop teacher preparation programs that graduate highly effective educators.
- examines itself in a spiral of continuous improvement so the status quo is never the accepted norm.

Standards and assessments Our state's cohesive Smart Arkansas Initiative is the integration of curriculum, standards, assessment, and accountability, created to furnish all educators the basis and resources for high quality instruction from pre-kindergarten through graduation. The Smart Arkansas continuum is a comprehensive system of reform initiatives that is tightly interrelated, correlated to professional development, and standard in all schools throughout the state. A student in the most remote school can be assured of access to the same curriculum scope and high standards as students in a sophisticated urban setting.

In *Tools in the Tool Box Revisited,* Clifford Adelman (1998/1999/2006) identified “academic resources,” particularly rigorous mathematics courses, as among the most important variables in his model of college completion indicators, accounting for 43% of the variance in completing a bachelor's degree based on longitudinal data. For 21st century college and career readiness, students

must be adept problem-solvers and critical thinkers who can contribute and apply knowledge in novel contexts and unforeseen situations. This level of readiness, as well as the academic resources to support this readiness, requires *both* preparation for and access to a rigorous high school curriculum.

Smart Arkansas meets such rigorous curriculum requirements, including requiring the completion of the Smart Core curriculum for graduation:

- four units of mathematics, including algebra I and II, geometry, and a fourth unit of higher-level mathematics, such as calculus or statistics;
- four units of English;
- three units of laboratory-based science; and
- three units of social studies.

Smart Core **is** the foundation for college- and career-readiness.

We're a full partner in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) and fully committed to them. Upon release of the Common Core Standards, anticipated this summer, we're positioned to adopt them through existing policy and procedures defined in the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP). We're also pursuing common assessments through consortia as a member of the American Diploma Project (ADP) and also our membership in *Balanced Assessments of Common Core Standards Consortium,* which includes over 36 states.

We intend for college and career readiness in Arkansas to stretch beyond preparation for success in entry-level courses at two-year and four-year colleges and universities; it must extend to completing postsecondary academic and technical degree programs and then entry onto career pathways. As our narrative will relate, our plans build on the foundation of our comprehensive system to more fully develop the capacity for sustaining reform already initiated through Smart Arkansas.

Data systems In this application, we'll thoroughly review a point of pride in Arkansas: our ability to collect and report data and support classroom instruction with our comprehensive data systems, which are wholly consistent with the elements and actions of the Data Quality Campaign. Although our systems are already well developed, we continue to enhance them and, through an impending "systems alignment," combine them into a unified, readily accessible data bank, decision making resource, and instructional toolbox for every classroom

The breadth of student data in our Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) with be interfaced with tools in our Instructional Improvement System (IIS). Together, their menu will expand into a

data smorgasbord of students' academic history (ensuring that pertinent history follows them throughout their school years) and information that targets student performance. The history allows measuring students' growth and correlating their progress with subjects and teachers. The system will host tools in a format that enables the classroom teacher to quickly plan (and share with other teachers anywhere in the state) lessons. Structuring interim and formative assessments can be aimed directly at each student's instructional needs, then processed quickly for prompt feedback to both teacher and student, with appropriate follow up.

The integrated data systems will enable alignment of specific professional development throughout all educator ranks. Face-to-face and online professional development courses will be suggested to the teacher based on multiple measures of student achievement for sensitive differentiation to both teachers' and students' needs.

The scope and ready availability of the tools and data will enable us to develop a strong culture of data-driven decision-making by sharing data throughout *and* across K-12, higher education, and ultimately, workforce thresholds.

Teachers and leaders Effective educators lead children to effective learning, and all students deserve talented, highly qualified teachers and principals. Arkansas is a land of many isolated areas and also regions of acute economic distress where recruiting and retaining teachers is a perennial challenge. We've opened routes to alternative licensure and are expanding our Teach for America Corp, whose well-prepared teachers are willing to serve in hard-to-staff areas. Colleges of education are our partners in recruiting teachers, increasing efforts to draw their students into pathways to licensure in hard-to-staff subjects, including the STEM areas, special education, and teaching English to non-native speakers.

Improving the quality and fairness of evaluating our teachers and principals is a new area of emphasis, long overdue, in which we're making quick progress. Our Teacher Evaluation Task Force (membership balanced among teachers, principals, and stakeholders) has worked intensively with a noted expert in educator evaluation to develop a rigorous, transparent, and just evaluation process for all teachers. The process includes observations and requires *evidence* of teaching that leads to students' learning. The system reveals teachers' strengths and also identifies weaknesses, prescribes targeted professional development, and entails a professional growth plan. Principals are also rated

similarly, with their professional grown plan and development based on observations and feedback. When teachers or school leaders fail to reverse their deficiencies, even with the evaluation plan's three-track assistance elements, those educators face removal from their role.

Equitably distributing teachers is addressed thoroughly in our 2010 Arkansas Equity Plan (see *Appendix D-3-1*), as are other areas and aspects of teachers and leaders: salaries and alternative pay plans; recruitment and retention incentive plans, including our excellent Pathwise mentoring process for new teachers; and others. We're committed to ensuring that poor and minority children aren't taught by inexperienced teachers or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. Our monitoring shows a high rate of success in this aspect of equity.

Turning schools around Our plans will broaden the scope of support and interventions to turn around our targeted persistently lowest-achieving schools and districts by not only building on the state's Smart Accountability program, but also helping schools implement the models of school turnaround, closure, restart, or transformation. We expect all children to learn in an environment that prepares them for college and careers, and we recognize our responsibility to ensure all schools support students with that learning environment. When schools don't meet this expectation, decisive intervention is in order.

Our plans include building our capacity—and that of the districts—to more deeply analyze school problems and develop a system to address them fully. Our Smart Accountability plan is grounded in the Arkansas Standards and Indicators of School Improvement that allow for assessing a school's systemic performance with an evidence-based approach to three inclusive areas: (1) academic performance (curriculum, classroom evaluation and assessment, instruction); (2) learning environment (school culture, student-family-community structure, professional growth); and (3) efficiency (leadership, organizational structure, comprehensive planning).

We also use the scholastic diagnostic audit in distressed schools to identify what's working and what isn't. The audit report that's shared with the school offers successful, research-based interventions and other recommendations to help improve overall performance, particularly student achievement. We want to accelerate the positive effects of the audit by expanding the number of trained auditors.

Our most intensive turnaround intervention is from the well established and highly respected Arkansas Leadership Academy. Its Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Institute targets low-

achieving schools and districts with professional development that then builds local capacity to create positive learning environments, improve systems within the districts, and develop the skills and tools that unite staff into teams that share ownership for improving themselves and their students' achievement.

Our commitment In Arkansas, we have the know-how and the network, the means and the muscle. We understand how to work bottom up, top down, and sideways. We've learned what works and how to pull together in the traces toward it. We talk to one another, share ideas, discuss and sometimes fuss, but then we turn together in the same destination. We've engraved the goals for children's achievement on our compass. And most importantly, we've learned to always ask the central questions over and over again: Is this particular decision best for kids? How does our plan keep the focus on the children's success? How are we building bridges to a preferred future, the place our children will live but we'll never see? Are we keeping children at the center of all we do? Our plan tells us, yes we are!

(A)(1)(ii) The participating LEAs are strongly committed to the State's plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas, as evidenced by Memoranda of Understanding.

Our new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Tom Kimbrell, is a leader who personifies his convictions that it takes a team to get to the top. In his countless conversations with other education leaders around the state, he elevates the central role of teamwork toward continuous quality support for the state's 258 local education agencies (LEAs). His discussions center around strengthening the teaming and the trust between the State Education Agency, school districts, and charter schools, so their triangulation ensures children's success is always at the apex—and the base is grounded in the shared vision of all children at their best.

Educators have placed their trust in the vision of Race to the Top and the plans we've drawn up together. Within a very short time, 244 of the state's 259 LEA superintendents and charter school directors, along with their board presidents and 105 teacher association leaders, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (*Appendix A-1-1*) committing them to the plans and the work. The signatories represent 97% of our public school students and 96% of our teachers.

During the last several months, LEAs in Arkansas have demonstrated their commitment to investing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds in meeting the goals identified by the U.S.

Department of Education (USDOE) in Standards and Assessment, Data Quality, Teacher Effectiveness, and Intensive Support and Effective Interventions. For every ARRA dollar the LEAs spend, they must document how that dollar contributes to progress toward at least one of the goals. That level of intention and transparency will prevail throughout the realization of our plans.

We're making an all-out commitment to speeding our children toward success. The tools are ready and crews are at attention; the engines are revved and the track is open before us: with Race to the Top in our tanks, we're ready to roll onto our *Smart Course to Success*.

See *Appendix A-1-2* for Summary Table (A)(1)(ii)(a).

Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b)

Elements of State Reform Plans	Number of LEAs Participating (#)	Percentage of Total Participating LEAs (%)
B. Standards and Assessments		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	247	100%
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction:		
(i) Use of local instructional improvement systems	247	100%
(ii) Professional development on use of data	247	100%
(iii) Availability and accessibility of data to researchers	247	100%
D. Great Teachers and Leaders		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance:		
(i) Measure student growth	247	100%
(ii) Design and implement evaluation systems	247	100%
(iii) Conduct annual evaluations	247	100%
(iv)(a) Use evaluations to inform professional development	247	100%
(iv)(c) Use evaluations to inform tenure and/or full certification	247	100%
(iv)(d) Use evaluations to inform removal	247	100%
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals:		
(i) Quality professional development	247	100%
(ii) Measure effectiveness of professional development	247	100%
E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	13	93% **

** The percent of participating LEAs is listed at 93% because only 14 LEAs are eligible for services in this section. The LEA that is not participating is consolidating with another school next year.

Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c)

Signatures acquired from participating LEAs:			
Number of Participating LEAs with all applicable signatures			
	Number of Signatures Obtained (#)	**Number of Signatures Applicable (#)**	**Percentage (%)** (Obtained / Applicable)
LEA Superintendent (or equivalent)	247	258	96%
President of Local School Board (or equivalent, if applicable)	247	258	96%
Local Teachers' Union Leader (if applicable)	104	191	54%

Summary Table for (A)(1)(iii)

	Participating LEAs (#)	**Statewide (#)**	**Percentage of Total Statewide (%)** (Participating LEAs / Statewide)
LEAs	247	259	96%
Schools	1,047	1,094*	96%
K-12 Students	453,960	466,391*	97%
Students in poverty	207,336	258,816**	80%

* Based on 2009-10 data.

** Based the number of public school students who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

(A)(1)(iii) The LEAs that are participating in the State's Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups, increasing the college enrollment and increasing the number of students who complete at least a years worth of college credit.

In the fall of 2008, Arkansas was invited to be one of eight States to participate in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute. The institute was sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and was coordinated by our partners at Achieve, Data Quality Campaign, Education Counsel, Jobs for the Future and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

The Institute is designed to build upon prior reform efforts, and those efforts are focused on our vision to provide students with the course rigor that will prepare them for careers and college and a system to intervene with districts, schools, and students who fall off track. A significant part of our effort is the articulation of 10-year college and career ready stretch goals that will be used to provide transparent public information, through our college and career ready web-site, Arkansas Works, on how districts and schools are performing against these goals.

Our goals include biennial improvements in **high school graduation rates**; the percentages of students graduating after having completed the Smart Core Curriculum; the percentage of students graduating after having **completed the Smart Core Curriculum along with an AP, IB, or Concurrent Credit course; or having successfully completed a CTE program of study/career focus**; the percentage of students not requiring college remediation; percentage enrollment in postsecondary institutions for specified periods and for adults 25 years or above; and **percentages of public school graduates and adults 25 years or above receiving a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree.** (*See Appendix A-1-3.*) All the while, Arkansas continues to focus its efforts on closing the achievements gap (see *Section A-3* for success in this area).

Our Race to the Top Proposal will allow us to accelerate our goals that have been clearly defined in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute. Since 97% of our K-12 students attend participating schools, our proposal will certainly have broad statewide impact, allowing us to reach these goals.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans *(30 points)*

The extent to which the State has a high-quality overall plan to—

(i) Ensure that it has the capacity required to implement its proposed plans by— *(20 points)*

(a) Providing strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement the statewide education reform plans the State has proposed;
(b) Supporting participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed, through such activities as identifying promising practices, evaluating these practices' effectiveness, ceasing ineffective practices, widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary;
(c) Providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant in such areas as grant administration and oversight, budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting, and fund disbursement;
(d) Using the funds for this grant, as described in the State's budget and accompanying budget narrative, to accomplish the State's plans and meet its targets, including where feasible, by coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other Federal, State, and local sources so that they align with the State's Race to the Top goals; and
(e) Using the fiscal, political, and human capital resources of the State to continue, after the period of funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success; and

(ii) Use support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans, as evidenced by the strength of the statements or actions of support from— *(10 points)*

(a) The State's teachers and principals, which include the State's teachers' unions or statewide teacher associations; and
(b) Other critical stakeholders, such as the State's legislative leadership; charter school authorizers and State charter school membership associations (if applicable); other State and local leaders (*e.g.*, business, community, civil rights, and education association leaders); Tribal schools; parent, student, and community organizations (*e.g.*, parent-teacher associations, nonprofit organizations, local education foundations, and community-based organizations); and institutions of higher education.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. The State's response to (A)(2)(i)(d) will be addressed in the budget section (Section VIII of the application). Attachments, such as letters of support or commitment, should be summarized in

the text box below and organized with a summary table in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(2)(i)(d):

- The State's budget, as completed in Section VIII of the application. The narrative that accompanies and explains the budget and how it connects to the State's plan, as completed in Section VIII of the application.

Evidence for (A)(2)(ii):

- A summary in the narrative of the statements or actions and inclusion of key statements or actions in the *Appendix*.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages (excluding budget and budget narrative)

(A)(2)(i)(a) Providing strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement the statewide education reform plans the State has proposed.

Through dramatically increased state funding for public K-12 education, coupled with the Smart Arkansas curriculum continuum, we've shown we can carry out coherent, systemic reforms. The results are the evidence: more students are meeting literacy and mathematics standards, not only on state tests, but national assessments as well.[2]

Despite the success of our early reform efforts, we're still moving uphill to reach the goal of all students graduating high school ready and eager for college, technical programs, and careers. Less than 19% of our citizens have a college degree, despite an above-average high school graduation rate and a 65% college entry rate. We struggle to keep an adequate education force in remote locations, in small towns that are separated by miles of forests or fields, and in economically fragile areas. Restructuring and revitalizing our school system has confronted us with some difficult alternatives, and consolidating our schools to concentrate our resources and our attention has often been painful. The education landscape is changing, but some of the pruning hasn't been easy, and a lot of thorns are still left to blunt.

Collaborative leadership and support At the same time, even with these challenges and others, we've made significant headway against strong currents. As we'll show in this application, we're confident in the power of collaboration to create change, joining forces with others to share our strength, whether those others are sister states in broad-based consortia or here at home with partners at both state and local levels.

[2] National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

For example, our education system begins with children in their very early years, preparing youngsters for school success with a whole-child emphasis (*see Invitational 3*), because prevention minimizes the need for intervention later on. We dedicate over $111 million in state funds every year to high-quality pre-school programs serving over 25,000 children in our comprehensive Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC) program. ABC has flowered within the shared support of two Arkansas state agencies: the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS)

On the other end of the schooling continuum, ADE, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), and all postsecondary institutions have agreed on a threshold ACT score as a primary indicator of college readiness to minimize the need for freshman remedial courses. In that same vein, Arkansas was among the first states to join others in the America Diploma Project[3] to fully align and solidly cement the connection between our schools' standards and curriculum and readiness for college and careers.

We've been quick to join in other national collaboratives as well. As we developed our statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS), Arkansas soon met all ten elements recommended by the Data Quality Campaign (DQC)[4] to ensure pertinent data follow students to measure their growth and correlate progress with subjects and teachers. Participation with our DQC colleagues continues to deepen as we work with a number of national and regional partners to enhance the quality of data dissemination systems.

Through continuing partnership with the National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES) at the University of Arkansas, we've been able to identify, monitor, and address potential barriers to students' college and career-readiness. With NORMES, we've

[3] The American Diploma Project (ADP) Network now includes 35 states dedicated to making sure every high school graduate is prepared for college or careers. Together, member states are responsible for educating 85% of all U.S. public school students. ADP Network states have committed to four overarching actions that target alignment between high school curriculum, standards, assessments, and accountability to promote college and career readiness.

[4] The Data Quality Campaign is a national collaborative effort to encourage and support states in improving collection, availability, and use of high-quality education data and to implement quality longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. Our participation with DQC and developing our SLDS is thoroughly explored in *(C).*

developed accountability measures from kindergarten through graduation that reveal the points at which any school veers from alignment with our rigorous state academic standards.

Our strongest single coalition builder is Governor Mike Beebe, who readily and warmly invites leaders, legislators, and others to join him as teammates for reform. For example, very early in his administration, he established the Governor's Workforce Cabinet in 2007 to connect leaders of seven key agencies[5] of reform to work for better economic and education opportunities statewide. The leadership group meets monthly to stay abreast of their partners' perspectives, leading to big-picture awareness and opportunities to leverage change. The results have been as basic as a guide to employment and training resources for the public and as broad as helping increase financial support for education adequacy *(Ark. Code Ann. § 19-5-1227)* and significant federal stimulus funds that followed.

Confident in the power of connection, this year the workforce cabinet is facilitating cross-training among its member agencies so the staff of each are familiar with the work of all. Such awareness leads to the understandings and relationships that build strong but nimble teams that are spurred to action by a down-to-earth governor who deeply understands the interdependency between education vitality and economic viability.

The ease and eagerness with which we seek to collaborate with others, whether in national or state alliances or community committees, is deeply rooted in our citizens' commitment to Arkansas and what's good for her people. With a strong tradition of speaking up for change and showing up to work for it, this Race to the Top plan is evidence of that commitment, the product of broad-based input from all across the state. More than 300 people attended community forums held around the state to offer their ideas and input for ways to make our schools the best they can be for our children. Then a group of 30 stakeholders got to work refining the input, adding to it, and coordinating it into a vision and a guide for growth. Among the 30 were representatives from the state's departments of human services, education, career education, and higher education, including two-year and four-year colleges. They were joined by K-12 education leaders; delegates from the formal associations of teachers, administrators, and school boards; and people from businesses and non-profits. Together,

[5] Those agencies are the state's departments of education, career education, higher education, and workforce services; Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges; Arkansas Economic Development Commission; and the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority.

we've agreed to "team it" to the top, and once we're at the summit, we intend to stay together to sustain the altitude.

Other core strengths and conditions in Arkansas continually help us move education forward. Consider these two:

- Our **small size**, just 2.7 million people, is a plus. Nothing's too big, too far, too overwhelming in Arkansas. We can get our arms around our problems, and we have the grit to tackle them and the tenacity to turn them around. That means we can take a risk, try something new, and keep at it until it works. We're a rural state, with long stretches of central prairies and Delta bottom farmland, thick pine and hardwood forests down south, and hills and mountains that crown our northern reaches. That means we rely on our state leadership to pull us all together, so we listen carefully to one another, and we long ago learned the power of collaboration. From our capitol hill to hamlets in the hills, we stay connected via the latest technology, so innovation is an everyday adventure. When it comes to our children and their schools, we're passionate about them. Taken altogether—our respect for leadership and innovation, our willingness to take calculated risks and link arms to do hard work with hearts afire for kids—Arkansas is fertile ground for growth.
- **Strong education ethics and actions** write a stunning history of revived commitment to public education that stands as tall and sturdy as any in our nation. Our executive and legislative leaders have set reform-friendly laws and policies in motion to revitalize our education system and revolutionize its level of funding: their single overriding priority is adequate and equitable funding for our schools. The list below is merely partial evidence of that priority, action begun in the early years of this decade, with the context and consequences explained in later sections of this document:

    - The Arkansas Supreme Court has ruled that the state assures access to an adequate education for all Arkansas children.
    - Funding steadily increases for K-12 education: $1.2 billion more between 2004 and 2009, fully 75% of the state's growth in total state revenue during the period.
    - Arkansas Educational Adequacy Fund (*Ark. Code Ann. § 19-5-1227)* ensures the state meets its financial obligations for an adequate education system.
    - Tiered per-pupil funding, for schools to educate students in poverty, progressively increases as do the proportion of those students.

- Schools are assured extra funds to educate special-needs students, including non-English speakers and those educated in alternative environments.
- Some $750 million has been invested to upgrade public school facilities since 2005 and more on the way.
- Spending tops $111 million annually for high-quality early childhood education.
- Numerous financial incentives entice teachers and principals to relocate to high-need, high-poverty areas.
- Educators must accrue at least 60 hours of professional development annually, and monies are appropriated for schools to underwrite the training.
- The state's longitudinal data system for integrating education data is recognized by the Data Quality Campaign as among the best anywhere.
- Funding ensures that all 11th graders can take the ACT free of charge.
- Legislation requires Advanced Placement (AP) in the four core areas along with state appropriations to pay for the AP exams.

Why haven't our core strengths created success for all students? Through the collective vision and relentless work of all sectors—the governor, our legislature, business community, educators, professional associations, parents, and students—we've proven that, with increased resources, we can achieve significant results. After all, the state has infused an enormous amount of money into our school system to support high standards matched to a rigorous curriculum taught by many talented teachers in up-to-date classrooms. Academic indicators are on the rise.

But, with all we've got going for us, coupled with the renewal of commitment and the financial investments of recent years, *all* our children should have climbed to higher rungs by now. Yet too much of the data are disappointing. Traditionally, only 16% of our ninth graders have graduated from college, and of those who do, fully half of them had to take remedial courses as college freshman. In 2008 alone, that remediation cost the state over $53 million.

The comprehensive, foundational plan for reaching ambitious academic goals has been developed at the state level. But the state doesn't have direct contact with students. Broadening the view from the top doesn't do much good until everyone sees the vision from the base of the pyramid, believes it, wants it, and knows how to go after it. Merging the ownership and action may yield a trickle before it’s a river, but we don't have time to wait for it drop by drop. If reform is to make a genuine difference in what happens for our kids, it's got to happen in their classrooms.

Infusing core strengths throughout our school system requires deployment through state and regional infrastructures and targeted strategies that connect state, regional, and local leadership capacity. Such

strategies must specifically effect what happens in the classroom, not just the committee room. Many state policies established over the past decade haven't been deployed systemically to the local level due to the state's limited resources for meeting the needs of its diverse districts. Thus, for some school districts, what should have been comprehensive reform efforts have been instituted piecemeal as isolated or mechanical implementation of various programs or interventions with little or no effect on the system as a whole.

How can Race to the Top make a difference? Education reform can often break down at the local level, due in part to a shortage of human capacity to support schools and school districts in their efforts to implement state reforms. Although rigorous standards may apply to all schools, instruction must be responsive to the needs of the learner, whether that learner is below grade level, on it, or above it. Supporting schools' varying needs within a comprehensive system requires highly qualified personnel who can analyze local strengths and weaknesses and guide schools as they implement reforms that harmonize with statewide efforts but are responsive and customized to local circumstances.

For example, Arkansas is second in the nation in the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses, largely due to legislation in 2004 that mandated multiple AP courses at all high schools, reinforced with funding for the AP exams and for AP teachers' professional development. These were obviously the policies of a state serious about education reform and willing to challenge their children with genuine rigor. The National Math and Science Initiative, funded by Exxon Mobil, was so impressed that it chose Arkansas as one of six states to receive a $13.2 million grant to further AP access and performance. On the whole, from a statewide perspective, these initiatives have been successful, because AP participation has increased dramatically. Yet, too many students don't make qualifying scores on their AP exams. But, as part of our Race to the Top plan, we have strategies to reverse that trend, as we'll show in *Section D-4-ii*.

A similar disconnect has cropped up in the statewide longitudinal data system initiative (SLDS). Although we met all ten of the Data Quality Campaign's essential elements as early as 2007, data at the school level are still limited and have been fragmented among numerous systems. Most school and district administrators believe they use data to support decisions, yet in too many instances, data analysis may be little more than perusing figures mechanically summarized for compliance purposes.

Data-driven decision making demands thoughtfully studying a rich data array to formulate and test hypotheses about what's working and what isn't working.

So, we have a well-conceived plan to integrate our powerful data technology into the everyday experience of every classroom teacher. Through our longitudinal data systems, the Race to the Top plan will integrate data and decision making with standards, assessment, and instruction. New funds will allow us to strengthen statewide capacity by equipping users in the schools and regional support centers with the skills and materials to move from islands of success to a continent of coherent reforms.

(A)(2)(i)(b) Supporting participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed, through such activities as identifying promising practices, evaluating these practices' effectiveness, ceasing ineffective practices, widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary.

Office of Innovation We have a strong reform foundation in Arkansas, and we've been steadily building on it, especially over the last several years. Our scaffolding reaches far beyond ground level, but we've not yet raised a skyscraper. So, we're elevating our thinking and our planning, and in the process, we've been taking a hard look at ourselves.

Our conclusion? We need to refocus our reform, or rather, refocus *ourselves* on growing the reformed future we envision. Reform isn't a one-time event, but an ongoing awareness and way of thinking about what people *do* every day, perpetually seeking to do even better and always asking the central question: Is this the best we can do for the children? Reform is a process that requires us to learn from our experiences, study the ideas of others, research cutting-edge models, rethink the tried-and-true, court innovation, invite input, and remain ever curious about *what if?* So . . .

What if we design a quasi-autonomous engine that keeps us revved for reform? Not a regulatory authority, but a catalytic, entrepreneurial center of innovation with connectors that radiate to every school in the state.

We have a vision, and a plan, to do exactly that.

We envision an Office of Innovation to foster a fresh, inventive approach to sparking and sustaining education reform. The office will work in close collaboration with a broad slate of stakeholders and with all school levels, not only to identify successful reform efforts, but to create them as well. Its mission will be to disseminate innovative ideas and approaches that build on what we already know and do well to get *all* children to peak performance.

Race to the Top will fund the office, which will be housed and coordinated within ADE in partnership with our department of higher education and many institutions of higher learning. We picture a small staff to ensure support, technical assistance, and communication. But beyond that, we'll reach out to education associations, nonprofit research institutes, the business community, and parents. To broaden the base even more, we'll hook into the expertise and energy of our national partners, such as the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3), the Southwest Regional Education Lab (REL), the National Alliance of Charter School Authorizers, Achieve, the Center on Innovation and Improvement, and the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA). The office will be the hub of collaboration and cooperative efforts aimed directly at *what works* to make our education system ever better for our kids.

Among the critical areas the office will initially address is networking teachers, instructional leaders, administrators, and the entire community into critical conversations about the revolution that's off the drawing board and on its way to every one of our schools: the new Common Core Curriculum and meaningful assessment systems that include the effects principals and teachers have on their students' progress. And that's just the beginning.

The work of the office will be action oriented, digging deep into substantive ground to not only surface the issues, but inspire us to apply ideas that energize our reform resolve. The Office of Innovation will evolve as it gathers momentum, and its actions will include:

- gathering an **advisory group**, not a staid or stuffy "board," but a collection of energetic forward-thinkers who'll supply support for the office, pinpoint priorities, and create the initial action plan..
- **reaching out** to stimulate and facilitate deliberative dialogue with stakeholders all over the state, asking meaningful questions about substantive reform and really *listening* to the answers. Such respectful conversations will lead not only to consensus, but create the relationships that are the bedrock of the information and action highways we'll travel together, as a people who care about their kids. Some critical areas of inquiry will target:

- comprehensive planning to support school turnaround, including governance; a technical assistance network for schools; communication between and among all players, including those who work in the schools, both paid and volunteer; allotting money and other resources; data systems; and creating the climate for change.
- plans for finding *what works* models (with an intense focus on persistently low-performing schools), such as:
    - compensation, promotion, recruitment, and retention programs for teachers and principals who have top-notch track records;
    - more time for teaching and learning;
    - connecting community and social-emotional services for the whole child;
    - weaving student data into the warp and the woof of every decision;
    - uncovering issues that drive and those that hinder education reform;
    - devising responses to critical educational reform issues;
    - networking among stakeholders within their own communities, across co-op regions, and out into the state;
    - coordinating interagency support for action plans;
    - ensuring data, research, policy, and technical resources for educators; and
    - removing barriers to implanting new approaches and practices that work.

- **broadcasting a Solutions Showcase** via the state's CIV (compressed interactive video) network every month during the school year to demonstrate creative ideas and successful practices. Blogs and "wikis" will connect participants for follow-up activities and discussions.
- **holding forums on reform** as sharing centers that throw wide the doors to a broad knowledge base that stimulates sharing, spreads the word on successful education practices, and leverages developing trends.
- **crafting a plan for communication** that reaches into every corner of the state so all of us keep connected and current on developments, data, trends, successes, and hot issues around reform.
- **offering resource allocation and alignment services** from the office to help LEAs address key issues around implementation of fiscal support services.
- **recognizing innovative excellence** will be integral to publicizing, rewarding, and encouraging successful reform practices. Honors and awards will go to individuals and teams whose programs, methods, concepts, experiments, trials, and all sorts of bright ideas have helped transform schools into stimulating learning centers.

(A)(2)(i)(c) Providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant in such areas as grant administration and oversight, budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting, and fund disbursement;

The dollar value of our Race to the Top application represents a significant opportunity for school districts to move more confidently toward their local vision for meeting academic needs with adequate funding. This opportunity, however, must carry with it substantial accountability consistent with four key components:

1. Conduct periodic reviews, LEA by LEA, that match the scopes of work detailed in their MOUs, use of funds, and quantitative academic data that indicate the outcomes achieved.
2. Perform periodic qualitative reviews of other state-level projects outlined in the Race to the Top application that match the intent of the described work.
3. Make available tools, processes, feedback loops, and other structural levers to coordinate gathering, reporting, reviewing, and acting upon data.
4. Design and transfer this project management capacity to an internal team of seasoned ADE experts to ensure ongoing accountability well beyond the four-year Race to the Top span.

ADE doesn't have the internal capacity to carry out the level of evaluation required to meet the four components. Effectively launching our Race to the Top program and ensuring it stays on track will necessitate the services of an independent provider experienced in large-scale project management. We intend to invest a portion of our grant allotment to outsource a Project Management Office (PMO) function to an expert provider, competitively selected. Objectives for the PMO will be to:

1. assist in vetting and validating LEA Scopes of Work detailed in their MOUs.
2. monitor and manage implementation of Race to the Top funds consistent with the LEA Scopes of Work and other objectives in the state’s plan.
3. monitor and manage implementation of Race to the Top funds at the SEA level and provide independent, objective feedback on how the SEA can increase capacity for investments based on LEA feedback.
4. develop, cross-train, and eventually transfer the PMO capacity from the provider to an internal team of ADE staff, including the tools, processes, data tracking systems, and protocols necessary to continue monitoring and managing the reform processes with internal funds after the Race to the Top grant period concludes.

The four objectives will be clearly specified in the scope of a Request for Proposal (RFP). A reputable, experienced agent with documented success in fiscal management of K-12 public education, training programs, analysis, and integration of funding sources will weigh heavily in the RFP selection criteria.

The PMO Request for Proposal will be issued within mere days of a Race to the Top grant award, so we can be underway without delay. As the grant processes unfold, the PMO's objective reports on LEA's and SEA's management of Race to the Top funds, training, capacity building, and sustainability will be made available to USDOE and the public.

(A)(2)(i)(d) Using the funds for this grant, as described in the State's budget and accompanying budget narrative, to accomplish the State's plans and meet its targets, including where feasible, by coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other Federal, State, and local sources so that they align with the State's Race to the Top goals.

Our Race to the Top budget and budget narratives are attached in *Appendix A-2-1.* The budget reflects the support we need to reach the goals that embody our aim to:

- continuously improve our education system with the impetus and support of best practices identified and disseminated by our new Office of Innovation;
- effect a smooth transition to the new national Common Core Standards and common assessments, including a well correlated system of formative, interim, and summative assessments;
- prioritize science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in teacher preparation and in the curriculum and instruction teachers deliver to students;
- furnish incentives to encourage schools to help students complete our rigorous Smart Core course of study that prepares them for college and careers;
- strengthen our instructional improvement system so its continuum of students' performance data are readily available for educators to use in planning daily instruction and also in identifying their own professional development needs;
- continue to enhance our statewide longitudinal data system to communicate smoothly across time and agencies for a cohesive approach to tracking students' records and performance data through Pre-20 and on into the workforce;
- ensure our education system is characterized by a meaningful growth model defined by students' achievements that are based on multiple measures;
- promote educators' effectiveness with a fair evaluation process clearly connected to evidence-based performance objectives and adequately supported with ongoing professional development and specialized assistance when needed;
- study various options for comprehensive differentiated compensation plans that can be tested in our schools;
- concentrate on ways to ensure that highly competent teachers comprise the faculties of all schools, including those in hard-to-staff locations as well as high-need subject areas;
- use new tools to measure how well our colleges of education prepare teachers so we can cooperatively improve teacher training and expand alternative routes to licensure;
- recruit and retain effective teachers using creative strategies, incentives, and rewards that can be extended into the next generation of educators;
- restructure ADE's organization and support network for troubled school districts so we can more readily detect early signs of distress and assist quickly and decisively;

- build the leadership capacity and expertise in all school districts to prevent low-achieving schools and to effectively intervene and turn around schools entangled in a pattern of low achievement;
- equip persistently low-achieving elementary schools with math specialists to prepare students for higher-level math, and place college and career coaches in all chronically low-achieving secondary schools to advise and encourage students toward their progression into higher education and the workforce;
- intensify our focus on persistently low-performing schools by mobilizing a turnaround network that stretches from ADE to local expertise and other resources for enduring systemic revitalization;
- remain fully accountable for all Race to the Top grant funds and their appropriate expenditure for each plan component by contracting with a project management office; and
- institutionalize our Race to the Top reforms as our everyday procedural norms and values, so sustaining them will be an organizational priority we share well into the future.

Commissioner Kimbrell is committed to prioritizing the goals that we, as a people, have set for ourselves throughout the collaborative process of creating our plan. The PMO will work with state agencies and school districts to determine how best to coordinate, reallocate, and repurpose education funds to align with Race to the Top monies. We intend to ensure that all funding is targeted toward steadily unfolding the plan, meeting the goals, and avoiding funding overlaps and gaps. School boards and staff throughout every district will need initial awareness and ongoing training in prioritizing local Race to the Top funds, in conjunction with their other revenue sources to meet their Race to the Top commitments. Our partner agencies will help us design the appropriate professional development approach and schedule so we're well prepared to work cohesively toward our goals.

(A)(2)(i)(e) Using the fiscal, political, and human capital resources of the State to continue, after the period of funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success.

Throughout our planning, we've kept in mind that the grant funding will sunset. But Race to the Top isn't a sprint to a dim end; it's a springboard toward the much brighter journey we'll continue. No expiration date applies to what we learn and accomplish along the way.

As we'll show throughout these pages, our history is replete with commitment to working in collaboration with partners both inside and outside the state. That interconnection is the lifeblood of our ability to think broadly and long-term; it's also the collective energy that propels us forward. *Our partnerships are integral not only to education reform, but to advancement on all state fronts*. None

of us acts in isolation. Just like the human body, the health of one part affects the health of the whole, for good or for ill. So, as we think, plan, and act, we focus on how the work influences our collective vitality. The relationships of our leaders--governor, education commissioner, state agencies, lawmakers, businesses, nonprofits, professional associations, and in schools and communities—all are characterized by agreement that education reform is integral to economic vitality and our collective welfare in every aspect of Arkansas life.

Thus, our scaffolding for change upholds a broad vision for our schools and state, along with a strong network of durable support that won't weaken or crumble when the grant is gone. The Race to the Top launch—and its four years of fuel—enables us to infuse our plan throughout our school system and learn what works; what doesn't work, and trim, reshape, or remake into valuable assets. As we gauge progress, we'll drop ineffective approaches and resources, replacing them with those that do the job. Through attrition and efficiencies of scale, skill, and process, we'll be able to smooth operations and tighten budgets to continue gaining ground. We'll keep our partners closely involved to ensure their continued input, investment, and close-up view of progress.

The connections we maintain are a continuing harvest of many benefits, including political, financial, and human resources. As a matter of fact, those elements have been aligned to meet our goals for quite some time. The relationships we've built are durable, but sturdy and elastic enough to tailor action to changing needs and fluctuating resources. The collective commitment to education reform and our state's prosperity will carry us well beyond the term of Race to the Top. We're all on board, and all of us—leaders, partners, schools, and communities included—have signed on for success.

(A)(2)(ii) Use support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans, as evidenced by the strength of the statements or action of support from: (10 points)

Working in coalition is an ingrained preference and pattern in Arkansas. It's a core life value, and it's a central element of showing respect for others. It's also highly practical: As a small state, we've been depending on one another since our great-granddads were raising barns together and their neighbors' quilting bees were piecing covers against the cold.

We've learned a lot about what works, and collaboration makes all the difference. Engaging others in our efforts broadens the perspective, multiplies the energy, and keeps us going in new directions instead of around in worn circles. When we readily and steadily communicate our needs and goals to

one another, we gain insight and awareness; with that understanding, we're able to recognize our shared concerns and common vision. Then we're ready to connect it all in commitment to move forward together. We get commitment, and we give it too. That's the power of collaboration; that's true alliance for change.

We have that alliance in Arkansas, and the letters of affirmation and support, referenced below, attest to it. (See *Appendix A-2-2.*) They represent the core of the network that enables us to reach all across Arkansas with the energy and determination we kindle in one another. The old saying is, *"None of us is as smart as all of us,"* and our partners are not only a brain trust, but they represent the countless hearts and hands that reach out with us to our children and their schools.

- Arkansas General Assembly, House and Senate Education Committees
- Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
- Arkansas Department of Career Education
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Southern Arkansas University, Educational Renewal Zone Office
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- Arkansas Science and Technology Authority
- Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science
- Arkansas Education Association
- Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators
- Arkansas School Boards Association
- Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives (15)
- Arkansas Leadership Academy
- Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
- Walton Family Foundation
- Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center
- Susan Wagner, Arkansas Teacher of the Year, 2009-10
- Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
- Arkansas Public School Resource Center
- Volunteers in Public Schools
- KIPP Charter School
- Camden-Fairview School District
- Siloam Springs School District

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps *(30 points)*

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its ability to—

(i) Make progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and used its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms; *(5 points)*

(ii) Improve student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003, and explain the connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to — *(25 points)*

(a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA;

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA; and

(c) Increasing high school graduation rates.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(3)(ii):

- NAEP and ESEA results since at least 2003. Include in the *Appendix* all the data requested in the criterion as a resource for peer reviewers for each year in which a test was given or data was collected. Note that this data will be used for reference only and can be in raw format. In the narrative, provide the analysis of this data and any tables or graphs that best support the narrative.

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

(A)(3)(i) Make progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and used its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms.

During the last decade, we've taken dramatic steps to increase our students' academic achievement. These steps were more akin to the solid beat of a rumba than meandering motions, as the patterned moves formed a focused whole with delightful results: our students' performance measures have been climbing!

In 2003, the governor's office took the lead in the statewide choreography, quickening the pace and adding partners. Joined by the Arkansas General Assembly and strong support from ADE, the business arena, education associations, and encouragement from educators, community leaders, and citizens at large, new laws swept in to systemically reform the state's public education system. The goal? To graduate students ready for the careers and college demands awaiting them in the new century's global economy. The means? Well-paid, highly-effective educators delivering data-driven instruction in high-tech facilities for *all* students, no matter which rung they've reached on the learning ladder.

Our undertakings, though in place well before ARRA was an acronym, are squarely aligned with the four ARRA pillars. We greatly expanded funding for education–investing more than $500 million in 2004 alone with subsequent increases to ensure adequacy never slips. Then we added unprecedented accountability measures to ensure the money is well spent. Because change is never easy, especially change at this scale, concerted efforts to maintain and improve upon these reforms have been sustained by all stakeholders.

The changes are paying off handsomely. The underlying culture of education in Arkansas is shifting, and more and more of our children are reaching new performance heights. On both state and national standardized test measure, our trend lines are edging up. Not only are all students marking gains, but for the first time, the gap between subpopulations is narrowing. Reform genies and giants, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Reform Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Math and Science Initiative, have recognized and rewarded our progress. Their sizable grants attest to their faith in our undiminished drive to deliver.

In a 2007 newspaper editorial, former Education Commissioner Ken James was quoted: "Over the decades, we have become so used to falling on the low end of the scale when it comes to education achievement measures that we find it hard to believe we can do better. Well, it's time we begin lifting our chins, throwing back our shoulders, and expressing pride in what's being accomplished in our state. We are doing better."

Progress has continued in the years since those encouraging words. We've enjoyed unprecedented momentum for improving education for our young people, an energy emanating foremost from Governor Mike Beebe, who consistently delivers the message that education and economic

development are his top priorities, noting that one depends upon the other. To that end, for example, the governor created the Workforce Cabinet, which includes directors from six state agencies that are related to workforce development, with the charge of creating a cohesive school-to-work system that builds a workforce second to none.

For years now, we've been laying a rock-solid foundation as the footing for the four ARRA pillars. Consider these accomplishments:

College and Career Readiness

- One of the first two states to adopt a college- and career-ready curriculum (Smart Core) that requires algebra I and II, geometry, and a fourth higher-level math course. Graduates in 2010 and beyond will have the Smart Core curriculum under their belt: four years of grade-level English, three sciences, three social studies, and six career-focus classes.
- Our rigorous English and mathematic standards meet the American Diploma Project and Achieve "college- and career-ready" level of rigor. In 2006, we adopted these standards, which, because of their rigor, will make the transition to the national Common Core a natural progression for us.
- One of the first 13 states to join the American Diploma Network's Algebra II consortium. We helped develop the Algebra II exam and were one of 15 states to administer the exam this spring; we'll report the results in the fall.
- Among the first states to sign on to the 2010 state-led, voluntary Common Core initiative.
- Since 2004-05, all public high schools must *teach* (not just offer) a minimum set of 38 courses so all students can take the same courses no matter wherever they're enrolled.
- All new teachers are mentored through the Pathwise induction program, which is raising the retention rates among new teachers, according to analyses of teacher employment data.
- All of our high schools must offer at least one AP course in each of four core subject areas: math, English, social studies, and science, but many schools teach between four and twenty-five AP courses, many of them with multiple sections. The impetus of the law raised AP participation by 108% in 2005, the largest leap in College Board history. Moreover, in 2007 we won a $13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative to raise the number of AP takers and their scores over a six-year period. The funding, which created the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science, supports 31 schools. Others can replicate the model and training on their own.
- High-stakes testing began in the 2009-10 school year with Algebra 1 and will be augmented in 2014 with a 10^{th} grade end-of-course literacy exam.
- In 2009, our legislature's Taskforce on Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates set a goal to increase the proportion of our citizens holding a bachelor's degree and defined steps toward that goal.

- Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship and Arkansas Scholarship Lottery legislation, enacted in 2009, makes scholarships of $5,000 to qualifying students attending four-year colleges and $2,500 to those qualifying students attending two-year colleges available to all our residents regardless of race, gender, family income, or course of study. Both scholarships promote academic rigor by requiring completion of Smart Core to apply for funds. *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-85-101 et. seq. and §6-85-201 et. seq.).* Arkansas is one of the first states to include non-traditional students within the lottery scholarship.

- Started the Arkansas Career Pathway Initiative (collaboration among ADHE, Career Education, Workforce Services, and two-year colleges). To coordinate the initiative coordinates education and training programs, along with support services, that enable adults to find work in a specific industry or occupational sector. It helps students advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Since 2005, individuals have earned 7,147 certificates, which they can present to potential employers to document their employment skills. In 2007, Governor Mike Beebe expanded the initiative to all 22 two-year colleges in Arkansas.

- Implemented the Career Readiness Certificate, which is a portable credential based on a "WorkKeys" assessment so Arkansas employers are assured prospective employees have the basic workplace skills. More than 18,000 certificates have been awarded since 2008 with nearly 2,400 employers hiring CRC employees. Hino Motors reports that hiring CRC employees has reduced turnover rate from over 20% to less 1% within two years.

- Under the leadership of Governor Beebe, the state held its first Arkansas Works Summit in 2008 to unite 1,500 education, economic development, civic, and business leaders into community teams to develop strategies to improve citizen's education acuity. As a result, about half of Arkansas's 75 counties created Arkansas Works committees to craft plans for moving their communities forward, proudly sending them to the governor.

- Enacted several pieces of legislation to help prepare students for college:

    - Voluntary Universal ACT (college entrance exam) gives 11th graders a chance to take the ACT. Beginning in 2009, students who might have avoided the ACT due to its cost, their lack of motivation, or low confidence in their performance level, now have a door opened to higher education. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-1601 et. seq.* The law also guarantees parents have access to public school data and every school's plan for closing the achievement gap. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2202.*

    - The Arkansas College and Career Readiness Planning System was expanded in 2009-10 as a statewide initiative to equip students and adults with the education and skills required for employment in a variety of local businesses and industries. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-441*.

    - The Arkansas Project Graduation Commission was created in 2009 with three targets in its sights: (1) investigate high school dropout prevention strategies; (2) analyze the relationship between high school graduation rates and the state's economy; and (3) recommend strategies to increase graduation rates by helping parents, schools, and students identify academic warning signs of dropout. The commission will deliver its first report in fall 2010. *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-1-501 et. seq.).*

- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Centers are located in universities that fund and house them. Professional development money from the state underwrites one math specialist and one science specialist position in each center to deliver quality training, coaching, and on-site technical support to schools.

Data Quality

- In 2005, with a $3.3 million grant from USDOE, we continued expanding our longitudinal data system for education linkage. By 2008, Arkansas had all ten of the essential elements recommended by USDOE and the Data Quality Campaign, earning recognition as one of two states (along with Texas) leading the way in using data to boost academic performance.

- In 2008 and 2009, ADE signed memoranda of understanding with the state's departments of higher education and career education to link data systems and expand the longitudinal capabilities or our data system.

- In 2009, Arkansas's Workforce Cabinet started building the system to link even more information into a longitudinal education-to-workforce data system.

- Arkansas launched the public Hives Website in 2010, which allows the general public to create graphs and charts to illustrate school performance. One user commented, "This is the best source of information that is easy to understand and graphically depicts what is going on in schools and classrooms across the state. Thank you for making this available to us!" A password-protected area of the site allows educators to drill down to classroom data to drive instruction.

Effective Teachers and Equitable Distribution

- Smart Start was introduced in 1998 along with professional development and resources so K-4 teachers prepare students to perform at grade level in math, science, and literacy and are bound for college- and career-readiness. In subsequent years, Smart Step for grades 5-8 and Smart Future for grades 9-12 joined in the state's Smart thrust.

- In 2003, the law revised the minimum teacher salary schedule that all LEAs must meet or surpass. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403.* The state's average teacher salary has since risen from the bottom of the Southern Regional Education Board's salary rankings for its 16 member states.

- We've offered an alternative licensing plan since 1987, a two-year path for individuals leaving other professions to begin teaching while taking classes to gain pedagogy skills. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-409*.

- Since 2000, those teaching outside their subject area have up to three years to obtain proper credentials for the courses they teach. The school administrator monitors progress toward plan completion and ensures the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. (The *ADE Rules Governing the Addition of Areas of Licensure or Endorsemen*t can be found in *Appendix A-3-1*.)

- Since 2005, 60 hours of professional development are required for educators each year, or 300 hours every five years, for licensure renewal. (*ADE Rules Governing Professional Development and ADE Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts* can be found in *Appendix A-3-2 and A-3-3.)*

- Since 2005, some $4 million of state funding has underwritten online professional development via a dedicated portal to our public television network (Arkansas IDEAS, a partnership with the Arkansas Educational Television Network). In 2009, 16,963 registered users earned 64,388 hours though this avenue.

- Since 1995, the state has funded Advanced Placement training for AP teachers at all high schools. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-1201 et. seq.*

- The Rewarding Excellence in Achievement program began as a pilot in 2007 to recognize excellent teachers through an alternative pay plan. To date, two school districts have restructured their pay schedules under this act. *Ark. Code Ann.§ 6-15-2601 et. seq*.

- Our Master Principal Program dates to 2004, a voluntary program spanning three years that awards bonuses to practicing principals achieving Master Principal status. The rigorous program is administered by the Arkansas Leadership Academy (see glossary for more information about the ALA) under the auspices of the University of Arkansas. In spring 2009, the first Master Principal graduated, accepted the bonus, and agreed to relocate to a high needs area. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-1601 et. seq*.

- Since 2003, financial incentives have helped recruit and retain high-performing teachers in high-priority districts. The incentives go to those who are licensed, teach the entire school year in a high-priority district, and complete all contractual obligations. About 500 teachers participate in the program every year. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-811*.

- The state benefits from two nationally recognized leadership programs: The Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA), noted earlier, and the Arkansas Center for Executive Leadership. ACEL, located at Arkansas Technical University, provides advanced leadership training for school administrators. ACEL is in its third year and offers the Superintendent Academy III, a year-long advanced leadership development program for exemplary superintendents who seek opportunities for self-assessment, self-renewal, and leadership skill enhancement.

Supports and Interventions

- Our Arkansas Better Chance for School Success program (ABC) serves over 25,000 three- and four-year-olds every year. In its *State of Pre-K 2009 Yearbook*, the National Institute of Early Education Research ranked Arkansas among the top 10 programs, with plaudits for achieving nine out of ten quality benchmarks. *Ark. Code Ann. 6-45-101 et. seq.*

- Smart Accountability is the state's differentiated accountability plan approved by USDOE in January 2009 and is in effect this school year (2009-10). Through Smart Accountability, the state works with LEA leaders to deliver the appropriate systemic or targeted interventions to improve student achievement. The first school improvement director was placed in a school district last fall. Already, that district is showing significant improvement in school culture and student achievement. The first set of school improvement teams was assigned in the 2009-10 school year to 91 elementary schools, 48 middle schools, and 90 high schools.

- NSLA "categorical" funding is additional state money for school districts in direct relation to the percentage of free- and reduced-lunch students within the district. Intended to address the academic needs of lower socio-economic students, schools must spend the money to target those

children's academic progress. Our legislature created the funding pool in 2004. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2305.*

- School districts receive categorical funds on a per-capita basis for English Language Learners. Since 2004, schools must use the money to expand those children's learning opportunities. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2305.*
- Alternative Learning Education (ALE) is another 2004 funding source, distributed per capita for school districts to support the progress of ALE students. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2305.*
- Beginning in 2004, remediation is required for all students in grades three through eight who do not score at the proficient or advanced level on the state's literacy or math benchmark exams. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-433*.
- A strong Coordinated School Health program now operates in 33 school districts. This model involves other community organizations to address the needs of the whole child. Research is clear that healthy children perform at higher levels.
- In 2009, the Arkansas Project Graduation Commission began its research of early warning systems to spot potential dropouts in time to intervene. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-1-501 et. seq.*
- Education Service Cooperatives in 15 regions of Arkansas work closely with their member schools, on hand with top-notch professional development, technology assistance, and curriculum development and alignment, along with expertise and support in many critical areas.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds for LEAs

Because Arkansas was one of seven states that hadn't suffered serious budget sinkholes, we had the luxury of steering all of our 2009 ARRA money—more than $500 million—toward advancing education. In 2004, we'd had dramatic success in using an equivalent influx of money from our legislature to prompt reforms that boosted students' scores on both state and national exams. Confident that money spent wisely would yield even more impressive results, ADE issued detailed guidelines to ensure LEAs used ARRA money to support the four pillars. Districts and open-enrollment charter schools devised plans, and state officials worked with them to round out promising strategies. The pay-off for students is already manifested in enhanced facilities, such as top-of-the-line science and computer labs, and training for teachers to embrace concepts like learning communities and embed state-of-the-art teaching tools like Smart Boards.

(A)(3)(ii)(a-c) Improve student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003, and explain the connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA; decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA; and increasing high school graduation rates.

Over the last decade, the force behind our systemic approach to bolstering scholastic achievement has been both legislative reform efforts and academic initiatives led by ADE. Those actions, many of which are among the elements of the four pillar areas, resulted largely from Act 35 in 2004 and the "Omnibus Act" in 2003. The acts were two sides of the same gold coin, spent to help schools find both the way and the will to meet students where they are and as they are, in subgroups or not, and then lead all of them toward success. The laws allow for no spendthrift waste or excess, holding educators strictly accountable for using the resources to support classrooms all across Arkansas.

To wrap the schools in systemic support, we got smart! The **Smart Arkansas** initiative is a strong fabric of "Smart" components, a tightly interwoven academic tapestry that enfolds both educators and students. **Smart Start** (grades K-4), **Smart Step** (grades 5-8), and **Smart Future** (grades 9-12) are rich with professional development, materials, and methodologies for teachers. Each grade level is marked by rigorous academic standards and expectations for students' learning and, for secondary grades, each subject area. Rigorous assessments are aligned with stringent standards for literacy, mathematics, and science.

Educators keep track of the data so they know how well their pupils are doing, where children need more help, and what must come next. A longitudinal data system follows each student from grade to grade and from school to school so teachers can better individualize instruction to keep the kids on grade level or buoy them beyond it. Other Smart Arkansas components include **Smart Leadership**, an initiative to train principals as instructional leaders first and building managers second. Also in the lineup is **Smart Accountability**, our differentiated accountability model that allows the state to intervene more directly in chronically under-performing schools, with guidance and support at the ready where it's needed most.

When short-term intervention isn't enough for underperforming schools, Omnibus legislation authorizes the state to intervene when LEAs fall short of academic, financial, facilities, or accreditation standards. State actions can range from warnings to complete takeovers. Since the law

was enacted, six school districts have lost local control for financial issues, and one forfeited it over accreditation issues. The state has provided technical assistance to many others to enable them to turn around troubling situations under all four areas of the law.

These changes mark the evolution of a new culture that embraces the value of education and permeates schoolhouses and classrooms across the state. We are proud witnesses to our children's impressive gains. Over the past ten years, Arkansas students have kept improving on the state's benchmark exams (administered for ESEA purposes), as well as on NAEP exams (National Assessment of Educational Progress). (*See Appendix A-3-4).* In 2009, more than 60% of students scored at the proficient level in every grade and on both the secondary-school math and literacy end-of-course tests. Our standards are well aligned with NAEP, and in 2007 a USDOE study named Arkansas one of the top ten states for scholastic rigor compared with NAEP performance trends. In 2005, we raised the cut score for proficiency on the 4th grade literacy exam to intensify the test's rigor. Comparing the percentage of students scoring in proficient and advanced categories on the benchmarks between 2005 and 2009 shows the striking improvement:

Grade	Math		Literacy	
	2005	2009	2005	2009
3	58	81	50	67
4	50	78	51	70
5	41	70	47	68
6	43	79	57	67
7	43	68	50	63
8	33	61	57	71

Arkansas was one of the first seven states approved for a growth model that targets schools falling short of AYP under the status model. Schools can be credited for meeting AYP if enough of their students show sufficient growth on exam results from the previous year that the trajectory will enable them to reach proficiency within four years. In 2007, 69 schools made AYP as a result of individual students' academic growth. In both 2008 and 2009, the growth model lifted 53 schools to AYP.

Arkansas also has a gains model created by the legislature in Act 35 of 2004. That model examines the growth of individual students from one year to the next, based on their benchmark exam performance, and combines that into an index. Based on the resulting indices, schools fall into one of five categories ranging from "schools in need of immediate improvement" to "schools of excellence

for improvement." State funding totaling $5 million will be used to distribute financial incentive awards to schools, with 80% for gains and 20% for excellence, based on a single year's performance on the benchmarks.

Our students' NAEP scores have climbed dramatically over the past decade for most of the tested subject grades, putting Arkansas at or near the national average for public school students for the first time in the our history. (See *Appendix A-3-5.)* The rate of progress has garnered us recognition from national organizations, including, Education Trust and the Center for Education Policy. Some highlights include:

- Fourth grade math: a 22 point jump in eight years. The average score was 216 in 2000, but 238 in 2008.
- Fourth grade reading: a seven point increase over nine years. The average in 1998 was 209, up to 216 in 2009.
- Eighth grade math: 19 points more in nine years, from 257 in 2000 to 276 in 2009.
- Eighth grade reading: two points better in 2009 (258 average) than in 1998 (256).
- Eighth grade writing: a 14 point rise in 10 years. In 1998, the average score was 137, but in 2008, the average was 151.

The 2003 legislative push for reform compelled all public high schools to offer at least four AP classes, one in each of the core subject areas of mathematics, English, social studies, and science. State monies make the AP exams free for all students enrolled in those courses. As a result in 2005, Arkansas set a record in AP's 50-year history with a 108% increase in participation rates over those of 2004. Since then, the rate of participation and the proportion of students scoring a 3, 4, or 5 on the exam have continued to climb. (*See Appendix A-3-6.)*

In 2007, scores on the statewide benchmark examination rewarded the hard work of teachers and their students. For the first time, the gap between the scores of that year and the one before showed signs of shrinking. The same trend—an overall continued narrowing—continued between the 2008 and 2009 test scores. (The single exception was the 2008 spread between Caucasian and Hispanic students, likely the result of the federal mandate to eliminate portfolios and include non-English speaking students in the benchmark exams after a year in U.S. schools.)

While the achievement gap didn't shrink nearly as dramatically or consistently in NAEP scores, some narrowing was evident. At the same time, scores for all groups rose, with the exception of Hispanic reading scores at both grade levels. A case in point is the 4th grade mathematics NAEP exam.

Between administration of NAEP in 2003 and in 2009, the gap between whites and blacks narrowed by two points, from a spread of 36 points in 2003 to 34 in 2009. A rising tide lifts all boats, so white students' scores have continued to climb. But the tide is slowly turning, and the achievement gap between groups of children is closing.

For years, we've been able to boast a graduation rate above the national average, so the state has focused on adding rigor to the curriculum: high school diplomas must mean graduates are indeed ready for college and careers. Even so, until all students march to Pomp and Circumstance, we continue to enact measures and policies that will raise the number of students who graduate high school on time. To that end:

- In 2005, we were one of the first states to adopt the high school graduation rate of the National Governors Association, allowing us to validly compare our graduation rates with that of other states.

- We used a grant from America's Promise in 2008 to stage a series of workshops that year and in 2009 for LEAs with the lowest graduation rates. Teams of community members from 16 of those districts (in which graduation rates among minorities particularly lagged) learned strategies to intervene with potential dropouts. Graduation rates will be measured over time to determine results and adjust strategies.
- Legislation passed in 2009 allowing for financial incentives to increase the percentage of students graduating with Arkansas's college- and career-ready Smart Core curriculum while ensuring the school's graduation rate doesn't decrease. Our Race to the Top application includes funds for these incentives.
- We initiated a study with Johns Hopkins University this year to determine behavior or characteristics associated with drop-outs in Arkansas to prime us for work on a dropout early-warning system so prevention precludes intervention later.

The focus of such programs, policies, and processes, coupled with Smart Accountability and the statewide support system, show our firm intention to diminish the dropout rate, erase the achievement gap, and propel all our children to prosperity in the exciting world that awaits them.

(B) Standards and Assessments (70 total points)

State Reform Conditions Criteria

(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards *(40 points)*

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to adopting a common set of high-quality standards, evidenced by (as set forth in *Appendix* B)—

(i) The State's participation in a consortium of States that— *(20 points)*

(a) Is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation; and

(b) Includes a significant number of States; and

(ii) — *(20 points)*

(a) For Phase 1 applications, the State's high-quality plan demonstrating its commitment to and progress toward adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State, and to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way; or

(b) For Phase 2 applications, the State's adoption of a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State in a high-quality plan toward which the State has made significant progress, and its commitment to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (B)(1)(i):

- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a standards consortium.
- A copy of the final standards or, if the standards are not yet final, a copy of the draft standards and anticipated date for completing the standards.
- Documentation that the standards are or will be internationally benchmarked and that, when well-implemented, will help to ensure that students are prepared for college and careers.
- The number of States participating in the standards consortium and the list of these States.

Evidence for (B)(1)(ii):

For Phase 1 applicants:

- A description of the legal process in the State for adopting standards, and the State's plan, current progress, and timeframe for adoption.

For Phase 2 applicants:

- Evidence that the State has adopted the standards. Or, if the State has not yet adopted the standards, a description of the legal process in the State for adopting standards and the State's plan, current progress, and timeframe for adoption.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Arkansas is a full partner in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). The Memorandum of Agreement is in *Appendix B-1-1*. We've joined 47 other states, two territories, and the District of Columbia in a shared commitment to common standards, beginning with English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. The partners are:

> Alabama; Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Missouri; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Carolina; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virgin Islands; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming**.**

The Common Core Standards (CCS) define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed both in college and in workforce training programs. Internationally benchmarked, the standards ensure that America produces workers well prepared to compete successfully in the global arena and contribute to the welfare of the world. *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education (see Appendix B-1-2)*, a 2008 report by the National Governor's Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc., helped states that were developing the CCS take the next steps toward ensuring that American students receive the education that springboards them to college and career.

The report outlines five action steps needed to help states build a globally competitive education system. The first of these steps calls for states to upgrade standards by adopting K-12 CCS in math and language arts that are internationally benchmarked. Additional steps address states' alignment of materials, such as textbooks, digital media, curricula, and assessment to the common core; revision of policies for recruiting, preparing, developing, and supporting teacher and school leaders to reflect international practices; accountability of schools and systems through monitoring, intervention, and

support to maintain high performance; and developing of a measure for comparing student achievement within an international context.

We've participated early and eagerly in the thrust for CCS, initially under the leadership of former Arkansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Ken James. In 2009, he chaired the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) as thoughtful conversation about shared standards turned to carefully crafting them. Our current Commissioner, Dr. Tom Kimbrell, energetically continues the commitment to embed the standards in our state's education ethic and practice. Dr. Kimbrell has been consistently involved in meetings with National Governors Association (NGA) and CCSSO to discuss the adoption of CCS. Furthermore, Dr. Kimbrell sent two state content specialists from Arkansas to serve on the Common Core Writing Group, which works to craft student learning expectations and supporting documents under the direction of the vetting groups (CCSSO, NGA, and Achieve).

Our State Board of Education (SBE) strongly supports the initiative, too. In the fall of 2009, the board sent one of its members to join in the search for common standards. That board member represents the state on a number of work groups under the auspices of CCSSO and NASBE (National Association of State Boards of Education), which bring their broad national perspective and input to the standards initiative. Our board's representative keeps her sleeves rolled up and regularly reports progress to her fellow board members. Thus, the board maintains a sense of shared investment in the evolving standards.

Arkansas was also chosen by Achieve, Inc. (an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization dedicated to raising academic standards, and approved by the CCSSI partners to join the teams that are directly developing the K-12 standards). Two top Arkansas specialists, one in math and the other in language arts, are hands-on emissaries and CCSSI co-workers. In the whole-hearted spirit of transformation, we've postponed any revision of the state's current English language arts and math curriculum frameworks, our state standards designed to facilitate learning from grade to grade, until we can fully align them with the new standards.

Upon release of the CCS (the draft standards are in *Appendix B-1-3*), anticipated in this early summer of 2010, we're primed to quickly adopt them no later than August 2, 2010. The enabling policies and procedures as directed in *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-401* and subsequent subsections are firmly in place

within the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) and the Academic Distress Program. The ACTAAP Rule is in *Appendix B-1-4.* Our timeline for deploying the new standards is in *Section B(3).*

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments *(10 points)*

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of its assessments, evidenced by (as set forth in *Appendix* B) the State's participation in a consortium of States that—

(i) Is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice); and
(ii) Includes a significant number of States.
In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (B)(2):

- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a consortium that intends to develop high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards; or documentation that the State's consortium has applied, or intends to apply, for a grant through the separate Race to the Top Assessment Program (to be described in a subsequent notice); or other evidence of the State's plan to develop and adopt common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice).
- The number of States participating in the assessment consortium and the list of these States.

Recommended maximum response length: One page

The common core equation isn't whole without its complement of common assessment. In the fall of 2005, Arkansas joined with eight other states to participate in the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, a coalition of states supported by Achieve, Inc., which is dedicated to raising high school standards, assessments, and curriculum to meet the expectations of post-secondary education and the workforce. As a member of the ADP, in January 2010, we joined with the National Governor's Association and CCSSO in an Achieve, Inc., consortium focused on developing a common summative assessment. This memorandum of understanding is attached in *Appendix B-2-1*. Currently, 26 states and the District of Columbia are committed to the Achieve consortium: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New

Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

The Achieve consortium is committed to building a high quality, rigorous, and internationally benchmarked assessment system that will squarely align with the Common Core Standards. Each state in the consortium agrees to support common assessments that meet the consortium's principles:

- aligned to the common core standards;
- anchored in college and career readiness;
- allow for comparison of student results across a maximum number of states;
- enable to the maximum extent possible benchmarking performance against NAEP and international standards;
- cover grades 3 through 8 and high school, including college/career ready measures at the end of high school;
- address three overarching goals: measuring student proficiency, ensuring accountability, and improving teaching and learning;
- enable measurement of student achievement and growth;
- are summative in nature but designed in a manner consistent with more comprehensive assessment systems that also include interim and formative assessments;
- provide valid and reliable measures of student knowledge, understanding of, and ability to apply crucial concepts through item types and formats;
- leverage technology and economies of scale in order to minimize costs and create assessments that accurately measure student performance;
- provide for timely release of results to better inform practice and support decision-making; and
- include the assessment of students identified with disabilities and English language learners; and to the extent feasible, use universal design principles.

Arkansas, in collaboration with its partners, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Testing, and WestEd, has agreed to serve as the lead state on a consortium applying for an Enhancing Assessment Grant through the USDOE. This grant will focus on developing a formative assessment system for all students that will help teachers, principals, and parents build the best education plan for their students. The proposal will specifically focus on developing formative assessments in English language arts and math. The assessments will be culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities and for English language learners in all content areas. The goals of the grant include:

- to increase teachers' capacity to use formative assessment to improve student achievement;
- to increase teachers' understanding of academic language development and to use formative assessment to meet the academic language learning needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, primarily in the context of general education classrooms; and
- to research the effects of the proposed intervention on teachers' content knowledge and use of assessment.

Reform Plan Criteria

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments *(20 points)*

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, and high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) tied to these standards. State or LEA activities might, for example, include: developing a rollout plan for the standards together with all of their supporting components; in cooperation with the State's institutions of higher education, aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments; developing or acquiring, disseminating, and implementing high-quality instructional materials and assessments (including, for example, formative and interim assessments (both as defined in this notice)); developing or acquiring and delivering high-quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and engaging in other strategies that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, including high-need students (as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments.

In Arkansas, we've had lots of practice honing our education focus and overhauling its support systems. We've known how to plan our work and then work our plan. Consider the recent history of how we've learned to mobilize for change that keeps school children at the center of our work.

In 1998, Arkansas launched the Smart Initiative, a comprehensive plan to boost student achievement and strengthen accountability throughout the school system. It emphasizes well defined, high standards in English language arts and math, with assessments aligned to those standards.

We redesigned the state's professional development (PD) to connect it directly to the Smart Initiative and to target both teachers and principals. Expanding the dimensions of the PD toolbox, we filled it with new-and-improved tools, such as up-to-date subject-matter content and how-to's: aligning

curriculum for continuity and reinforcement; using assessments to reveal teaching-and-learning strengths and gaps; translating data into information for effective decision making; and building a broad repertoire of instructional strategies to engage children and enliven classrooms. We recruited local and national experts in standards, curriculum, and assessment, linking them with top-notch facilitators to deliver sequenced professional development throughout the state. Arkansas law (Ark. Code Ann. *§ 6-17-704*) requires all Arkansas educators to be equipped with a professional development plan aligned with the schools' comprehensive plan to improve student achievement. Such a plan includes the Smart Arkansas Initiative roadmap and a professional development pathway for continually expanding their competence and acuity.

We know how to muster the collective will and harness the talent to change direction and create the capacity to reach new destinations. Consider the following example of how much we've matured over recent years.

In January 2007, one of our regional education service cooperatives (co-op) in northwest Arkansas, which serves as a resource to provide and improve services and programs to students, and its 16 member school districts saw a need and mobilized to meet it. Many of their economically disadvantaged students were highly mobile, frequently moving from one school or school district to the next. In their new classroom, these children too often faced curriculum out of sync with their previous studies. Catching up frequently overwhelmed the students—and their teachers. Troubled by the inequity, co-op members set out to develop a common curriculum and pacing guide grounded in the theory and practice of the well-ingrained Smart Arkansas Initiative. Their aim was to sufficiently link curricula to ensure equitable access to it for all students, no matter where they moved within the region.

So, in coalition with ADE, the co-op contacted Lisa Carter, the nationally noted instructional-alignment expert and consultant who had shepherded the Smart Initiative start-up. She facilitated a Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) process to clarify and align, both horizontally and vertically, the state curriculum frameworks in K-12 English language arts and mathematics. That initial process took more than three days. One hundred sixty-eight teachers and academic coaches from 124 schools in the co-op's region participation.

Next, literacy and math specialists from the 16 participating districts and ADE used online collaborative tools to refine the work. Ultimately, the realignment produced comprehensive curriculum guides for K-12 English language arts and math. Teachers throughout Northwest Arkansas used the guides to deliver consistent standards-based curriculum to their students. The success was contagious, and by the following year, the entire state network of 15 co-ops had adopted the TIA curriculum guides and initiated statewide implementation.

Well-practiced in the TIA process and confident in its results, we subsequently applied TIA to clarify standards and align curriculum in other content areas, including social studies, science, and career and technical education. Every year we fine tune alignment across the curriculum breadth, basing revisions on student achievement data and deliberative feedback from teachers across Arkansas.

Today, from one area of the state to another, TIA is a job-embedded model of professional development and application for all strata of school-based educators. It's a solid footing upon which teachers squarely set standards-based instruction. TIA-savvy superintendents, principals, and other supervisors are equipped to lead, support, and evaluate curriculum work. From one end of the educator continuum to the other—and from one school district to another—we share a common frame of reference, speaking the same curriculum language, communicating it confidently, and trusting in our ability to collaborate for change.

This story has another chapter. When the Smart Arkansas Initiative elevated our professional development network, educators regularly interfaced with assessment experts, and we quickly recognized that we needed a comprehensive assessment continuum to round out the work. We know that summative assessments measure bottom-line learning, but it's the interim and formative measures that allow us to keep our fingers on the pulse of children's learning pace. A summative reading can reveal that students missed a stepping stone, but assessments along the way will catch the misstep early to keep the kids on track.

Flush with TIA success and strong in the relationship between ADE and the co-ops, we moved to mate the standards with a tightly correlated comprehensive assessment system. Our membership in the CCSSO Multi-State Consortium on Formative Assessment since its inception in October 2006 affords us access to national and international researchers and leaders in formative and interim

assessments. With that awareness and those contacts, many of our school districts adopted standards-based interim assessments the co-ops developed with teams of content and assessment consultants.

To advance the effective use of data for improved learning, in 2008 ADE collaborated with top-notch expert in data use, Margaret Heritage, Assistant Director for Professional Development at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA. In partnership with two co-ops, she designed and tested professional development aimed at boosting students' learning via the immediacy of school-based data for diagnosis and for guiding educational decisions. Blending interim information with summative feedback, teachers could quickly identify any missing building blocks and remedy the deficiency. Just as fast, they could gauge the children's readiness to move ahead. In the program, teachers also learn to use formative assessment data during the course of instruction so they could keep student learning on track to meet the lesson goals. The professional development program is currently being put into an online format and undergoing pilot testing. This process of focusing on summative, interim, and formative data is one the ADE would like to implement statewide (see Activity 2). The online materials are designed to support scale-up.

Our strong foundational work in curriculum and assessment permeates our education system and propels us forward. We're positioned and eager to embrace the common core standards (CCS) and assessments. Through TIA, we'll translate the new standards into clear curriculum guides, and we'll fully develop a comprehensive assessment system of formative, interim, and summative methods and measures. Our teachers will be primed to deliver consistent, rigorous daily instruction to all students, no matter where they live.

Below is the outline of our transition plan, with its goals and the activities that support them, the people who are responsible for the action, and the timeline they'll follow.

Transition Goals

1. Ensure a seamless transition from the current Arkansas curriculum frameworks to the CCS and the Consortium-developed Curriculum Frameworks, beginning with K-12 English language arts and mathematics. Other subjects will follow as additional CCS are developed.

2. Provide, for each grade level and course in K-12 English language arts and math, a high-quality, technology-enabled curriculum guide that is aligned with the new standards and frameworks. The guides will include:

- Clarification of each standard by grade level and learning expectation through clear objectives, task analyses, required vocabulary and prerequisite skills, sample assessment items, and supporting resources. (The format can be modified depending on consortium-developed curriculum frameworks.)
- Lesson plans and assessment items for each of the core standards, which will be added within two years by the ADE.
- Vertical alignment from grade-to-grade and course-to-course, including alignment to Advanced Placement courses and to those college freshman-level courses in which our high school graduates have been least successful.

3. Implement a comprehensive, coherent assessment system (formative, interim, summative) as integral to the Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) process.

4. Launch high-quality professional learning focused on examining student work, curriculum and assessment integration, moderated scoring, and performance-based assessment. All of these elements are to be integral to the curriculum. Teachers are to collaborate in assessing students' work samples, based on pre-determined assessment criteria, to improve student achievement (including on AP exams) and to better alignment assessment and instruction.

5. Partner with post-secondary institutions in the TIA process in order to structure a cohesive P-20 system of student learning.

6. Provide LEA incentives to encourage students to enroll in and complete the Smart Core curriculum.

Activity 1

Hire a program director and staff sufficient to implement and oversee the following work:

- Use the Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) process to identify areas of congruence and difference between our current curriculum guides (and other relevant curriculum materials) and the new standards and frameworks.
- Use TIA to fully align curriculum guides and infuse them with up-to-date model units and lessons, along with recommendations for formative assessments as provided through the FAST SCASS collaborative, including videos of best-practice teaching.
- Integrate the new standards and frameworks into existing curriculum guides, resources, model lessons, assessments, and student learning data into the Instructional Improvement System. (See *Section C3*.)

Activity 2

Partner with Margaret Heritage to take to scale the above referenced professional development program:

- Integrate formative assessment into the TIA process, including curriculum guides and lesson plans.
- Integrate the professional development program into Activity 1 and 3.

- Launch online programs for school-based teams of teachers, administrators, and student support personnel and our 15 service cooperatives that include virtual opportunities for sharing effective practices in the Instructional Improvement System, which is described in *Section D*.
- Hold summer institutes for school-based teams, focusing on the purposes and uses of formative, interim, and summative assessments
- Present guidance to schools and educational service cooperatives for implementing a complete assessment system.

Activity 3

Issue a Request for Proposal to develop professional training modules and all associated materials (including those that are technology-based) to support Activities 1 and 2, above.

- The training modules will address the Common Core Standards (CCS), curriculum frameworks, curriculum materials, and assessment concepts and skills.

- Once developed, the modules will be deployed to every co-op as a trainer-of-training package to accelerate professional learning throughout the educator network. It will be the responsibility of the education service cooperative to provide training to the various school stakeholder groups addressed below:
    - superintendents, central office staff, and the service co-ops who share responsibility for their own learning and that of the staff throughout their own school systems,
    - principals, assistant principals, school-site supervisors, and lead teachers who guide and facilitate collaborative learning teams of teachers,
    - teachers in the learning teams to create professional development modules for training to all LEAs on CCS and TIA, including curriculum guides and model lessons.

Over the four-year grant period, each of the stakeholder groups addressed above will experience six facilitated sessions. This schedule will provide enough funding for each trainer to train all Arkansas teachers of English language arts and math over the course of four years. The state's grant funds will underwrite the training content and design, and LEAs will fund teachers' attendance.

Timelines Dates are our current best estimate. Upcoming decisions on the release of the CCS and decisions of the Achieve Assessment Consortium may cause us to adjust the timeline accordingly.

- June 2010: Present the CCS and the implementation plan to the State Board of Education.
- June 2010: Initiate partnership with Margaret Heritage to implement the professional development program. The entire process will take four years.

- July 2010: ADE will form a committee of practitioners from the five different regions of the state to advise Race to the Top work.

- July 2010: State Board of Education adopts CCS.

- July 2010: Pursuant to state procurement laws, initiate the process for purchasing the goods and services that will underpin the transition to CCS. The resources will enable us to review the CCS; develop TIA aligned to the CCS; plan the appropriate professional development; and design materials and training to support the CCS and TIA.

- September 2010 - September 2012: develop the first edition curriculum guides containing model lesson plans, resources, and assessments for English language arts and math.

- January 2011: Ongoing professional development training opportunities for understanding CCS and TIA.

- June 2011: Ongoing Trainer of Trainer CCS/TIA professional development.

- August 2011: Ongoing district/school CCS/TIA professional development.

Responsible Parties

- **Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)**
    - ADE will hire a program director and two staffers to oversee statewide CCS implementation, whose sole responsibility is to serve as liaison between ADE and the teacher center coordinators (who are highly qualified, seasoned professionals, already integral staff at all 15 Education Service Cooperatives) to support their region's schools as they translate the plan into action. ADE will maintain these positions, as needed, at current staff levels.
        - Criteria:
            - Leadership experience
            - Demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction
            - Leader of curriculum work at the district, co-op or state level
            - Demonstrated knowledge and experience in successfully planning and delivering research-based professional development
    - Provide resources and support to educational service cooperatives.
- **Education Service Cooperatives (15 throughout all regions of the state)**
    - Serve as the communication conduit to their member districts.
    - Establish and maintain a network of practitioners who develop a set of criteria to assess deployment of the CCS with rubrics defining quality implementation and standards for all documents that would be shared across the state.
    - Align local resources to support implementing the new standards and frameworks.

- Collaboratively develop common professional development to support fidelity in implementing the new standards and curriculum frameworks.
- Twice a year, convene superintendents, curriculum leaders, and principals from the member districts so they can discuss their schools' progress, share best practices, and suggest how to best resolve any problems.
- Work with districts to develop a strong parent component that will not only educate parents about the significance of the new standards and frameworks, but also furnish complementary home-use materials for total support of the children's learning.

- **School Districts**
  - Reallocate people-time-and-money resources to focus the district on deploying the new standards and frameworks throughout the organization.
  - Align the work of all departments and staff to target students' learning needs.
  - Evaluate all programs and practices for their contribution to student achievement; eliminate or redesign those that bring little or no value to learning.
  - Use all district meetings as opportunities to model collaboration that's focused on student achievement.
  - Deliver the service and support that will be required for teachers to implement the new standards, frameworks, and assessments.
  - Keep the community and media abreast of the transition in the school district, furnishing the facts about the effects of the changes on students and how those changes promote the viability of the whole community.
  - Ensure that parents have meaningful ways for full partnership in the transition, keeping them fully informed of impending changes, involving them in decisions when appropriate, and supplying them with materials and approaches to reinforce their children's learning at home.
  - Adopt an interim assessment system that includes these characteristics:
    - Qualitative insights about the student's understandings and misconceptions, rather than merely a numeric score.
    - Immediate implications for what to do next, besides re-teaching every missed item.
    - Rich representation of the content standards students are expected to master.
    - High quality test items that are directly linked to the content standards and specific teaching units.
    - A good fit within the curriculum, so the test is an extension of learning rather than time away from it.

- Synchronization with curriculum pacing so that students are tested on content that's been taught.
- Clear reporting that provides actionable guidance on how to use the results.
- Validation of the uses of and information provided by the assessment.
- Administration features (speed, availability of normative information, customization, timing flexibility; adaptive) that match the assessment purposes.
- Professional development to ensure teachers know how to effectively use interim assessments in their classrooms.

- **Principals**
  - Frequently visit classrooms to monitor how completely new standards and frameworks are in place, spot "best" practices and find ways to share them, and pinpoint where coaching and professional development are needed.
  - Visit AP classrooms often to monitor the thoroughness with which the College Board syllabus is followed and students are being prepared for their Advanced Placement exams.
  - See that teachers get the coaching and professional development they need, and follow up to make sure it's been adequate.
  - Schedule ample time for teachers and ancillary staff to collaborate with one another.
  - Join teachers in professional development sessions, and create opportunities for substantive sharing, actively listening to their insights, frustrations, triumphs, and suggestions. Then respond accordingly, both as their leader and colleague.
  - Model best instructional practices at every opportunity, transforming routine meetings into "anytime, anywhere" opportunities for growth.
- **Teachers**
  - Use TIA-revised model units and lessons to teach according to the tenets of the CCS and Consortium-developed Curriculum Frameworks.
  - Use formative assessments to quickly adjust and personalize daily instruction.
  - Develop and apply appropriate interventions based on assessment data.
  - Use interim assessment data as a basis for self-reflection, as well as recommendations for curriculum revisions and professional development.
  - Collaborate with teacher colleagues to share and support one another.
  - Stay in touch with parents, helping them understand how to help students at home. Keep them posted on their children's progress.

The Arkansas Smart Core Incentive Program Research shows that the skills and knowledge gained through Arkansas's more rigorous Smart Core curriculum are the same as those required for high school graduates to succeed in their first year of college or in jobs that promise a well-paying career track.[6]

Background While the proportion of students who begin Smart Core is high, a significant number don't complete that curriculum. Students decide to opt out or drop out of Smart Core for various reasons, including insufficient academic support, an unclear vision of the school-career continuum, time constraints, peer pressure, and other factors. Our incentive plan, outlined below, is targeted at the districts themselves, which bear the responsibility for urging and supplying capable students to *opt in* and *stay in* Smart Core. Taking part is voluntary for all LEAs, with no penalty for nonparticipation.

Incentive Plan Monetary incentives will be awarded to high schools on a per-Smart-Core graduate basis, according to the following guidelines:

- The percentage of graduates starting and completing Smart Core will be based on ADE data rather than schools' self-reported figures.
- All awarded funds must be used to underwrite expenses related to the extra support students may require to successfully complete Smart Core.
- Schools' Smart Core graduation rates will earn the following incentives:
  - 100% Smart Core graduates earns the school $125 per graduate.
  - 95% to 99.99% Smart Core graduates earn $100 per graduate.
  - 90% to 94.99% Smart Core graduates earn $50 per graduate.
  - Schools with less than 90% Smart Core graduates earn no incentive money.
  - The population of students with an IEP that excludes any student from participating in Smart Core is excluded from these calculations.
- Eligibility for the full incentive requires that the school's graduation rate not fall below the average graduation rate of the preceding three years.

Safeguards While furnishing an incentive to graduate more students with Smart Core under their mortar board, schools may not take actions counter to ensuring that all students achieve a high school diploma, with or without Smart Core.

[6] Achieve, Inc. "Out of Many, One: Toward Rigorous Common Core Standards From the Ground Up." 2008.

- Award calculations don't include students whose IEP excludes them from Smart Core, so schools have no incentive to push students into an IEP as a result of this proposal.
- A school's total graduation rate must not fall at the same time Smart Core graduation rates rise. Strict state monitoring will curb any temptation for schools to encourage students to take inappropriate alternative routes around a high school diploma, such as dropping out to earn a GED.
- Federal law around IEPs is very specific, so schools can take no action to protect against more students pursuing an IEP.

Funding Our high school graduates are expected to number between 25,000 and 30,000 over the next few years, so an annual appropriation of $3 million will underpin the incentive program. In order to reach our goals, all of our schools must ultimately incorporate Smart Core into their education culture sans a tangible incentive, so a phase-out plan is envisioned. Districts will need time to "plug any leaks" in their Smart Core pipeline, so four years should suffice for norming Smart Core expectations.

School districts must devote the incentive money to help students not only *start* Smart, but *stay* Smart by tailoring expenditures to fit individual circumstances and needs. For example, the money can underwrite tutoring or after-school and summer programs, support hiring elementary math and science specialists, or fund professional development for math, science, foreign language, and AP instruction.

(C) Data Systems to Support Instruction *(47 total points)*

State Reform Conditions Criteria

(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system *(24 points – 2 points per America COMPETES element)*

The extent to which the State has a statewide longitudinal data system that includes all of the America COMPETES Act elements (as defined in this notice).

In the text box below, the State shall describe which elements of the America COMPETES Act (as defined in this notice) are currently included in its statewide longitudinal data system.

Evidence:

- Documentation for each of the America COMPETES Act elements (as defined in this notice) that is included in the State's statewide longitudinal data system.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Since 2005, we've made significant progress in creating a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) to effectively gather, manage, analyze, disaggregate, and use individual student data to improve our K-12 education system, consistent with the definitions, calculations, and reporting requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended. Before 2005, reporting was based on disparate, district-level databases that primarily supported fiscal and personnel reports. From an operational perspective, these systems were generally satisfactory, as the gathered data sufficiently met reporting requirements, including those associated with No Child Left Behind. But we found that the value of the stored information was diminished by the considerable effort required to use the system to design and conduct cross-system analyses.

We started working under a three-year grant from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) that led us to construct a longitudinal data system to fill existing gaps and deliver comprehensive, readily accessible information. We aimed to transform our original system into a sleek instrument for collecting, managing, analyzing, and disaggregating data about all P-20 public school students. It had to ensure that facts are always at hand to guide decisions at every level: state, district, school, classroom, and for parents, too. As we'll show in this section, we've built an enterprise-wide data retrieval system and storage warehouse to integrate a broad swath of fiscal, student, and staff data from across the state.

Below, in relation to the 12 data elements the America Competes Act of 2007 requires, we describe our data system that fills across-the-board needs for current data.

Twelve Required Data System Elements		
Required Elements	**Arkansas SLDS Includes Element**	**Current Status**
With respect to preschool through grade 12 education and postsecondary education		
E1. A unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system (except as allowed by federal and state law)	✓	In September 1992, we launched the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN), the first statewide computer system to collect and organize data throughout our education arena. As required by law *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-11-128*), it linked all the state's public school systems with ADE. Since 2005, APSCN has contained random, unique ten-digit student identifiers that are automatically linked to each student's record. The identifier allows us to share data for valuable research and reporting purposes without transmitting personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers.
E2. Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information	✓	We collect a variety of data about students through ADE's Statewide Information System (SIS), which was developed for sharing the information collected through APSCN. Information about students' enrollment levels, daily attendance, demographics, and their programs of study is gathered throughout the school year, usually at monthly intervals known as "cycle submissions." SIS is annually updated with any new types of needed data we haven't previously collected from the schools. The changes are published online and in a SIS manual delivered to all LEAs in March so they can confidently report new and continuing data requirements.
E3. Student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P–16 education programs	✓	When students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P-20 programs, that information is captured in our data systems. K-12 data resides in ADE's longitudinal data system (LDS); most 13-20 data is collected and held in the ADHE (Arkansas Department of Higher Education) system, to which we can link and exchange data. To ensure that we can easily share the gamut of P-20 data, a memorandum of understanding connects ADE, ADHE, and the state's pre-kindergarten program, Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC). The ease of exchange keeps information moving between users. For example,

		ABC uses the ADE database to evaluate the how well their programs prepare pre-schoolers for grade school; ADE's data furnish ADHE the basis for awarding college scholarships and making the connections for remediation and success-rate reports.
E4. The capacity to communicate with higher education data systems	✓	Since 2005, data have flowed ever more smoothly back and forth between K-12 and higher education, as noted above. ADE, ADHE, and individual institutions of higher education have steadily ratcheted their data-sharing network into student-centered service and support systems. For example, each year every high school receives the High School-to-College Success Report (a cooperative effort between ADE and ADHE). The report details where the high school's previous year's graduates enrolled in college and highlights the achievements they've attained there. As another example, ADE shares students' history of high school course completion, grade point average, and test scores with ADHE so the agency can electronically assess students' qualifications for scholarships. The immediacy of the shared system translates to a smoother transition for students as they matriculate: technology-assisted support from higher-ed professionals helps the fledglings successfully navigate the maze beyond graduation. To each college, ADE furnishes data about their graduates' subsequent employment within the state's education system, specifying the grade levels and courses they're teaching. Armed with this information, both ADE and ADHE analyze teacher employment data, retention rates, and survey the graduates for research purposes. The data and research follow-up guide initiate changes in many areas: teacher recruitment strategies, teacher education programs, and professional development for all educators.
E5. A state data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability	✓	Arkansas law requires school districts to certify the data they submit to the state in each of the nine SIS cycle submissions explained earlier. All district superintendents must sign a certification of accuracy, validity, and quality. Additionally, APSCN personnel, in collaboration with Arkansas Legislative Audit units, regularly audit the cycle data as it progresses from school district databases into the statewide longitudinal data system. We subscribe to the Total Quality Management approach to data quality, meaning we're continually improving the quality and reliability of the data by building quality-check processes into the system. During each cycle of SIS submissions, APSCN programming staff carefully inspect the data to detect errors and correct them. The built-in checkpoints reveal any inconsistencies, and no data are entered into the system outside the accuracy screens. APSCN programmers continuously send data quality-assurance reports to the schools during the database updates until the repeated two-way scrutiny has achieved high standards for accuracy and completeness.

With respect to preschool through grade 12		
E6. Yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965	✓	The state's annual testing system (explored thoroughly in *Section B* of this document) complies with all the requirements of section 1111(b) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b) and includes all the identified subgroups. We test all children, accommodating students who have disabilities or speak limited English. State assessments have been developed to ensure valid and reliable assessments for those students. Through our data systems, we collect test records for all the required demographic populations and subgroups, integrate that information into our databases, and report it annually to the public in a comprehensive, statewide School Performance Report. The report has a broad array of information, including test data, graduation rates, drop-out levels, school board training, enrollments, financial figures, and much more.
E7. Information on students not tested, by grade and subject	✓	We employ a simple but effective means for identifying students who miss the required standardized testing or alternative testing. The state sends to each school district test labels for every pupil enrolled in a grade or course that requires a state test. After testing, students' answer sheets are compared to the labels and to the current student enrollment file. The school identifies and reports the "untested student" and why any test was missed. ADE evaluates the reports for accuracy and the reasons for missed tests and takes any necessary action.
E8. A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students	✓	APSCN maintains a student-teacher link by mapping each student and teacher to a master course schedule within each school district's information management system. The state's electronic transcript system tags each teacher and each student with unique identifiers, as explained in the first element, above. The same identifier is automatically generated and remains with the student and teacher, even if the child changes schools or the teacher has a break in service.
E9. Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned	✓	ADE contracts with the Triand company to electronically transfer students' complete transcripts. Each transcript includes the student's course-taking history, grades attained in each subject area, the enrollment history for every school attended, and scores on all state-required tests. The electronic transcript is accessible at multiple role-based levels within the school district: Transcript data give the superintendent and district-level administrators a detailed overview of their district's student population; principals gain a sense of where incoming students should be placed within the school; and teachers study the transcripts to immediately appraise their new students and plan instruction accordingly.

		When a student leaves a school, his or her transcript is automatically available within minutes at the receiving school, which notifies the sending school when the child has completed the transfer process. The electronic immediacy promotes a smooth transition for students and school personnel alike: staff have the necessary background information, students are enrolled in the correct classes, and parents are confident their child's records are in the right hands.
E10. Student-level college readiness test scores	✓	In conjunction with our participation in the College and Career Readiness Policy Institute (CCRPI), we've extended our efforts to ensure our data systems can determine student readiness as they enter post-secondary education. The scores students make on all state-required assessments and the ACT are analyzed each year. Then the results are used to raise the minimum scores required to meet the college entry-level threshold, thereby reducing the number of entering students whose low readiness levels would place them in remedial courses. Every high school is notified of its students' college-readiness test scores. That information is also a part of the school performance report posted on the ADE Website and mailed to parents. Two years ago, ADE and ADHE begin cooperating to publish an annual High School-to-College Success Report (*Appendix C-1-1)* that answers for each public high school in the state, "How well is your school preparing students for success in Arkansas colleges and universities?" The report shows students' remediation rates, the number of college credit hours they go on to earn, and the grades they achieve. The data confirm that students taking higher level courses in high school (which is the state's Smart Core curriculum) score higher on the ACT and are more successful in college. Every high school and college in the state gets a CD with the data, which is also posted on the ADE's website.
With respect to postsecondary education		
E11. Data that provide information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial	✓	As noted earlier, ADE and ADHE share longitudinal data for a number of purposes. Among them is researching how well students transition from secondary to post-secondary education and the extent to which they require remediation in college. Our participation in the College and Career Readiness Policy Institute escalated our resolve to ensure data systems can indicate graduates' readiness to enter college.

coursework		
E12. Data that provide other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education	✓	In 2003, we designated a list of high school courses as Smart Core, a rigorous foundation for both college and career readiness. A fourth year of higher mathematics after algebra II and three years of laboratory-based science set it apart from the state's core curriculum. The courses are aligned with those our graduates will take in college, so Smart Core is a sturdy bridge between high school and post-secondary success. Research by ACT and other groups has shown that students achieve higher scores on college-placement tests and are more likely to succeed in their first year of college or in a career when they've mastered the courses required in Smart Core. The broader Smart Core curriculum isn't mandatory, and parents may choose for their children to opt out. But the proportions that do not initially enroll in Smart Core are low: only about 10% of parents sign the opt-out form. Our challenge now is to keep students on the Smart Core path once they've chosen it, and we have a strategy: the Smart Core Incentive program is explained in *Section (B)(3).*

Reform Plan Criteria

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data *(5 points)*

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan to ensure that data from the State's statewide longitudinal data system are accessible to, and used to inform and engage, as appropriate, key stakeholders (*e.g.*, parents, students, teachers, principals, LEA leaders, community members, unions, researchers, and policymakers); and that the data support decision-makers in the continuous improvement of efforts in such areas as policy, instruction, operations, management, resource allocation, and overall effectiveness.

(Successful applicants that receive Race to the Top grant awards will need to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including 34 CFR Part 99, as well as State and local requirements regarding privacy.)

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Statewide Longitudinal Data System: SLDS We're continuing to energetically expand the scope and usefulness of our well-established SLDS. As early as 2007, our system had already met all ten essential elements of the Data Quality Campaign (DQC)[7]. Those elements, which focus on data collection, are the core components of a robust longitudinal data system that ensures pertinent data follow students throughout their school years. In addition to the ten elements, DQC also recommends ten actions states should take to use that information to target student performance. Together, the history allows for measuring the children's growth and correlating their progress with subjects and teachers.

The *elements* ensure that longitudinal systems deliver timely, valid, and relevant data to inform decisions, and the *actions* ensure that the data are actually used, all for the sake of students' success. In 2009, DQC's survey of progress found Arkansas had completed more of the actions than all other

[7] DQC is a national collaborative to encourage and support states in making available high-quality education data that is timely, valid, and relevant to inform decisions that promote student achievement.

states but one. Recently, DQC has identified three overarching imperatives for changing the culture around data use and maximizing the return on states' data infrastructure investments.

Those three imperatives, which encompass the essential elements and actions, include: (1) expanding the ability of state longitudinal data systems to link across the P-20 education pipeline and across state agencies; (2) ensuring data can be accessed, analyzed, and communicated to all stakeholders to promote continuous improvement; and (3) building the capacity of all stakeholders to use longitudinal data for effective decision making. As we'll relate in this section, our drive for data systems that makes a difference for our kids is entirely parallel to the imperatives.

ADE is aggressively pursuing a broad range of new initiatives, described in this section, with the primary focus on using SLDS resources effectively. Our objective is to engage educators and the entire research community in a strong culture of data-driven decision-making (DDDM) throughout the state by sharing data across the K–12, higher education, and workforce thresholds.

Earlier this year, we executed a statewide site licensing agreement with IBM/Cognos. Scorecards will provide weekly information such as student attendance, discipline issues, and other data elements identified by classroom teachers and school administrators. Initial versions of scorecards and dashboards built using the suite of Cognos tools (a set of report-generating software applications) are now being deployed. Another state-developed application available to anyone without charge is an open-source, visual analytic, and collaboration tool known as Hive, and is explained in *Section (C)(3)(ii)* more fully.

Central to ensuring that data resources and tools are used most effectively, we recently completed the first phase of a strategic effort to engage institutional partners and educators throughout Arkansas around a common, defined set of best practices, methods, and curriculum components to promote a DDDM culture. We're collaborating with the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC),[8] The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST),[9] and the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3).[10] Together we developed a

[8] In 2005, the U.S. department of Education created AACC to implement, evaluate, and improve assessment and accountability systems to aid all schools in reaching NCLB goals.

[9] CREST contributes to scientifically based evaluation and testing techniques, encourages validation and use of sound data for improved accountability and decision making, and explores technological applications to improve assessment and evaluation practices.

stepwise framework[11] and protocol to guide educators as they analyze data and make decisions in schools and classrooms. We're now working with our institutional partners (including the Arkansans Department of Higher Education, the Education Service Cooperatives (ESC) and some colleges, universities, and school districts) for further collaboration on ingraining data-driven decisions as a central element in education practice throughout the state. In 2009, Governor Beebe established a statewide multi-agency data-sharing consortium, which has reinforced ADE's parallel efforts to strengthen the framework for sharing data across K-12 and beyond to workforce thresholds and other organizational boundaries. See AEETT in *Section (C)(3)(iii)* for further information.

National Office for Research, Measurement, and Evaluation Systems: NORMES Our line of electronic data gathering and reporting has been unbroken since the late 1990s when NORMES was established at the University of Arkansas in coalition with ADE. Initially, NORMES was developed to support gathering and reporting data to assess for federal programs. Since 1998, the office has expanded to serve as the storehouse of complete student-linked records for all the standardized tests used in our schools.

Presently the NORMES data system holds over eight million records, among them some 450,000 active longitudinal K-12 records that include each student's cumulative test data. NORMES is a rich repository for various raw data files accessible by educators and researchers for almost limitless applications, including school-based reports, NCLB computations, and trend analyses. The transparency and reliability of the data, records, and reports are a durable strength of the ADE-NORMES partnership. NORMES statisticians constantly test and confirm the accuracy of the data and statistical models. And at ground level, the professional development experts at NORMES ensure data are presented to teachers and school leaders in user-friendly format that's readily usable in classrooms throughout the state.

Integrating SLDS ADE is also moving forward with many other SLDS initiatives. For example, we'll integrate into the system teacher licensure data, such as state-required tests and the teacher

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[10] MC3 is one of the 21 federally funded centers that assist SEAs in supporting school districts and schools as they implement NCLB. MC3 provides high quality research-based technical assistance to Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

[11] A stepwise framework affords a progressive view of data. A researcher can start at a lower, more basic level of information and then "step up" to a more complex frame for more sophisticated data analysis.

education program attended; professional development records; district-level data, such as teacher attendance rates; researcher access; and systems documentation that will include systems business rules and calculation formulas. In December 2008, we contracted with Metis Associates[12] to evaluate our SLDS. Surveys of some 5,000 Arkansas teachers, principals, and other educators revealed significant use of the system and a high level of user satisfaction. Moreover, Metis documented that, between schools that used the SLDS system resources heavily and those that used it less, students in the heavier-use school achieved academically at higher levels. Integrating the SLDS program into the daily business of teaching and learning is significantly boosting teachers' effectiveness and children's performance.

Comprehensive SLDS needs assessment Continuous improvement is an unending process of uncovering developing needs and moving quickly to fill them. To that end, we're aiming a comprehensive needs assessment at the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The assessment program will help us tailor changes in the SLDS to the needs of its users, making data and reports readily available to school personnel.

As a result of the 2008 Metis study, noted above, part of our DDDM initiative is to interconnect dashboards, scorecards, and visual analytics, and to conduct a more comprehensive needs assessment that includes in-depth interviews of people who need a wide range of current information at hand every single day. We'll start with input from specialized administrative units (such as special education, facilities, distance learning, and so on) both at the state and district level, as well as with our partner institutions. Then we'll elicit thorough feedback from school-based educators. The broad-based input will round out our assessment so we can accurately target information needs and meet the learning objectives of field users in the cycle of continuous improvement.

We constantly size up our SLDS implementation against the standards of the seven capabilities and the twelve elements prescribed in the America COMPETES Act. Constant scrutiny keeps our data system attuned to other states' best emerging practices, which we adopt or adapt to ensure continuous improvement. We're confident SLDS has the heft to lift all learners toward ever higher horizons.

[12] Metis is a national consulting group, founded in 1977, that specializes in research and evaluation, strategic planning, information technology, and program development services.

Further SLDS enhancements. Several other activities and projects are nearing completion that will enhance SLDS and ensure the system's rich database is readily accessible and a regularly used tool. We've organized these initiatives in three categories, below. The eight outlined improvements are at various stages of completion and aren't dependent upon Race to the Top funds.

I. Accelerate Arkansas's DDDM, policy research agendas, and evaluating teacher effectiveness.

1. Establish easy-to-use dashboards and scorecards at school, district, and state levels so educators have daily access to student data that enable decisions based on hard evidence.

2. Use the university-based Arkansas Research Center (ARC) to strengthen research capabilities. The immediacy and broad scope of SLDS will enable ARC researchers to complete better studies and finish them faster.

3. Use the established data links between teachers, students, and courses to target teacher evaluation through an "advance alert" data system. This alert mechanism will enable school leaders to assess each teacher's effectiveness in relation to student performance. Thus informed early on, supervisors can identify teachers needing to improve their skills and prescribe the needed professional learning or other support.

II. Expand enhanced cross-agency data sharing.

4. Use the Arkansas Education-to-Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative (AEETT) to conduct the necessary research and development to implement advanced technology solutions that will smooth interoperability of data systems, including adopting the NIEM exchange model[13] for interagency data exchange. AEETT is discussed fully in *(C)(3)(iii).*

5. Stretch the data continuum by grounding it in pre-school data via a file exchange process with the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC) program, adding the ABC file as a regular data feed to the SLDS. ABC is the state's pre-K program and is further explained *below* and in *Invitational 3*.

III. Restructure ADE's SLDS technical and data architecture.

6. Improve the technical architecture (that is, its design and organization), the quality of data, (meaning how current and correct it is), and ease of reporting. The improvements will result from restructuring the current SLDS "staging-areas" to create a new operational data storage function. It will accept daily "batch" loads from the ADE transactional systems to keep data current.

[13] NEIM is a national data-information model that allows electronic systems to "communicate" more accurately and efficiently via standardized definitions and displays. An example is whether or not a certain series of numbers is to contain a dash.

7. Enhance our technical architecture by including an eSchoolPLUS upgrade, SIF, and SOA Migration, and upgrading the current Pentamation district transactional systems to SunGard eSchoolPLUS. All of these terms refer to particular software packages that are upgrades to improve data collection.

8. Synchronize a NEDM-compliant database with the current SLDS production and storage environments so the two systems can easily merge their longitudinal data and promote researchers' analysis. NEDM is the National Education Data Model that specifies which education data need to be collected.

Linking to Pre-K and Early Childhood How well are very young children prepared to start school? The information we have is thin, especially for youngsters not enrolled in public pre-school or kindergarten. Though such data are currently available in independent "silos," it's often inaccessible once the child enters the K-12 system. We want to eliminate that data deficiency by incorporating early childhood data into our SLDS, stretching the record of children's growth from one end of their school years to the other.

Information deficits can too long delay appropriate instruction and support services for youngsters. Although we've routinely gathered information about Pre-K children in the public schools along with those in the upper grades, data about Pre-K children entering public schools from other programs isn't resident in our record system. Thus, connecting Pre-K data with K–12 data for longitudinal analysis has been limited.

A considerable amount of data pertaining to early childhood and Pre-K programs are contained in systems maintained by agencies other than ADE. A number of matches and special studies have crossed the Pre-K and K–12 divide, but we've not achieved the cross-agency data sharing in this domain that we now want to establish.

ADE plans to take a giant step beyond these limitations by way of a data-sharing arrangement with the state's Pre-K program, Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC), administered by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education which operates within the state's Division of Human Services. ABC serves three- to five-year-olds in Pre-K programs run by 318 providers. These include 145 school districts and co-ops and 173 private providers in either center-based classrooms or our home-based avenue, HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters). Placement is allocated to children in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty

threshold, with priority funding for programs in low-performing school districts. By all measures, ABC is of exceptionally high quality, including teacher qualifications, standards, class sizes, and support services.

ABC serves over 25,000 children, about a third of the 79,000 Arkansas children in this age group, including about 9,000 children not currently known to ADE. ABC maintains a comprehensive data roster on all Pre-K enrollees, including demographics; screenings to identify physical, emotional, health, or developmental problems; records of the early interventions triggered by such problems; information on the education background of the teachers and paraprofessionals; and much more. These data represent an excellent basis for traveling a number of avenues toward valuable research, all of which are not being pursued at the present time.

To expand the number of Pre-K children whose records are available in the SLDS, ABC will send ADE the full roster of Pre-K information twice a year, which is sufficiently regular for the intended purpose. The data will include demographics, screening-related information, and the teacher and paraprofessional education profiles. ADE will apply its unique identifier system to generate an ID for each child. The roster will then be unduplicated for students already known to ADE, and all new Pre-K students will be added to the SLDS, specifically to the data warehouse.

As a result, as school-age children previously unknown to ADE enter our public schools, they will already have a record of their Pre-K experience. Thus, ADE will be able to extend its longitudinal view for a much larger percentage of its students back to Pre-K. The screening and early-intervention data will help us understand the efficacy of early interventions resulting from the ABC screenings, determine the effect of Pre-K teachers' education attainments, and evaluate other dimensions of the Pre-K programs in relation to how the students progress throughout their K–12 years.

ADE is also obtaining historical Pre-K rosters back to 2005 to allow more comprehensive studies. Unlike some data from cross-agency sharing, these Pre-K children will enter K–12 schools, so the children's core data elements will already be stored in SLDS.

Over time, it's likely that a broader range of data collected in Pre-K, childcare, and related early childhood programs will be most effectively handled through a data federation approach as previously described in this section. Our longer term objective is ultimately to collect a broad range

of information on Arkansas children from their earliest years to fully understand the relationship between their childhood experiences and their future education success.

Hive Education data have value according to the extent we understand the facts and use them to improve teaching and learning. All of us—educators, parents, community leaders, citizens at large, and students themselves—have to be able to access data and analyze it, draw conclusions from it, and make decisions based on it. Without a common set of shared facts, we can't effectively collaborate for change.

So, we've established a fascinating new open source tool, called Hive, which is now available to the general public online. Hive has many innovative analytical and colorful visualization capabilities that bring information alive. The website is designed as a venue for collaboration, so Hive is helping expand knowledge and understanding about student achievement throughout the state. The tool allows users to explore local test scores at the state, district, school, and individual levels, with filter options for program participation, demographics, and socio-economic status. At the public level, all data is anonymous, but authorized users can view individual student's data under a secure sign-on procedure.

In Hive, users can place growth measures on one axis and test scores on another to see how scores have changed over time. The busy Hive has data for everyone's interest. For example, parents can compare schools to make informed choices about their child's enrollment; teachers can discern patterns of students' performance to judge which instruction practices pay off; and principals can zero in on the weak *and* strong instructional achievement spots in their buildings. Users can post their analyses, comment on others' work, and offer up ideas in threaded discussions.

Hive will be expanded to incorporate teacher-student links so the information is fully integrated into the system. Such information can be an integral part of Hive's interactive applications for many enriching purposes, including integration into the state’s scorecard and dashboard environments.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction *(18 points)*

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan to—

(i) Increase the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness;

(ii) Support participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) and schools that are using instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) in providing effective professional development to teachers, principals and administrators on how to use these systems and the resulting data to support continuous instructional improvement; and

(iii) Make the data from instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice), together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students (*e.g.*, students with disabilities, English language learners, students whose achievement is well below or above grade level).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note the location where the attachment can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages

(C)(3)(i) Increase the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness.

As a vital element of local instructional improvement systems, we aim to enhance our ability to link and share essential student data within all levels of every school district, especially with teachers. Connecting such information is fundamental for educators who must ground their decisions and adjust direction based on information that's both current and comprehensive. Effective teacher-pupil links must include students' progress as a component in measuring their teachers' effectiveness. Forging those links has become a priority over the last year and a half, with the support of our USDOE grant. In this section we describe two compatible technological systems that will deliver a world of data and electronic capabilities to educators throughout Arkansas.

Our customized, electronic **instructional improvement system** (IIS) will deliver to every classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment design and support; facilitate collecting and analyzing student achievement data; support teacher and principal evaluation, and provide prescriptive suggestions for online and other professional development avenues. The system will offer all teachers dashboard accessibility to curriculum documents and instructional tools, including unit and lesson plans and video streaming.

We will seek a software-based IIS that supports our Race to the Top goals, so the system must meet a prescribed list of specifications and include all of the capabilities and functionality required to support progress. IIS will allow customized features to be added and to incorporate information from the state's longitudinal data system (SLDS, explained earlier in this section and referenced again, below), Arkansas IDEAS (Arkansas's on-line professional development portal), and others, based on criteria determined by ADE. The system will use unique student identification numbers to permit access to various levels of student information.

The teacher-student interaction feature will be comprised of four main components: assessment engine, writing engine, digital instruction, and a community of learning portal.

1. The assessment engine will enable classroom teachers to quickly construct and assign to students custom assessments (formative, interim, and summative) that are tied to the state frameworks. The process will give students immediate feedback on assessment items, each linked to a particular learning objective. This feature will be tied into the state's existing data systems, so each teacher and student will have a unique ID that will facilitate tracking an individual student's performance.

2. Teachers can use the writing component to assign and grade writing prompts; the feature will also allow them to share prompts, grading rubrics, and resources with other teachers throughout the state. Student performance over time will be tracked electronically. The system can promote a peer-review process. Students' essays can be distributed anonymously to any number of pupils in a particular class for grading and comment, based on the teacher's grading rubric, before the teacher's final review. Involving students in the review process will help them understand the performance expectations inherent in the Common Core Standards.

3. Digital instruction will seamlessly connect existing state resources to this system based on state frameworks. For example, a student struggling with measurement concepts can directly link to a tutorial on the subject on ADE's iTunes U site or other such resources. Students and teachers alike will be encouraged to create and submit related content to such sites.

4. The fourth component will be developing a community of learning around this system, facilitated through both a student and teacher forum. Subdivided according to grade and content area, ideas and questions can be discussed and shared in a searchable format.

Our **Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)**, explained in *Section (C)(2)* collects information about teachers, students, and the programs of study in which the students are enrolled, and these data provide the basis for analyzing teacher effectiveness. Arkansas uses a student growth percentile model *(see Section (D)(2)),* also proven effective in many other states, to assess the contribution teachers and schools have made to students' growth. However, before now, most of these analyses were aggregated at the district and school level without drilling down to classroom bedrock. Local educators see the schoolhouse figures and instantly want to read the inscriptions on each building block so they know how they stack up in their own classrooms—and in those next door. Data are the mirrors of self-reflection, and our educators recognize the value of teacher-level analysis. Teachers themselves are digging for data not only for grading their pupils, but for upgrading themselves. Arkansas is responding to the demand for better data, as explained further below.

Currently, our data warehouse (records repository) captures teachers' planned schedule of courses twice each year, in October and June. On the other hand, twice every week a second system logs more detailed information about teacher, class, and student placements as they change throughout the year. This data is invaluable for selecting the appropriate classes for students when they transfer between school districts. Once previous test scores, courses, and grades are transferred, the data are available to the new teacher and other staff to complete a seamless transition. This same system also catalogs the detailed year-end test results of individual students so the data are available to educators.

Additional enhancements are coming in the 2010-11 school year, as we move toward a software solution that will result in much more frequent uploads to the SLDS from the data management system used by our APSCN reporting system. ADE will be able to pull the requisite teacher, class, and student assignment data from one or, if needed temporarily, both the SLDS and APSCN databases at regular intervals to load an appropriate table within the data warehouse. Coupled with year-end test results, these data enable growth model analyses and generate a variety of reports and visuals for a rich display of data for educators. With more reliable and timely information about the actual teacher-student-course relationships over the school year, we can analyze data at the teacher level with greater confidence that it will accurately reflect the specific contributions identifiable teachers make to the progress of their pupils.

Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership Just this year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded us a grant under the terms of its Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership. The grant extends over two years and underwrites our collaboration with Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Ohio. This group's goal is to determine how to best measure teacher effectiveness by answering a broad range of questions about enhancing our technology systems, the processes for applying that system, and policy questions around how to most effectively measure teacher effectiveness.

The project will give us the critical big-picture context for how to most appropriately collect, validate, and apply data. Then we'll narrow the focus to deliberate how to better collect, verify, report, and analyze the data that reflects the close connection between teachers and their students. Our project emphasizes data that's high quality, comparable across the member states, and validated by teachers, who are full participants in the process design. (Our six-member Arkansas team includes two ADE representatives, two teachers, a school principal, and an assistant superintendent.)

Part of the collaborative work involves defining terms so we communicate about our work with a common vocabulary we all understand. We aim to agree on what constitutes a "teacher of record," and to adopt a standard business process for linking and validating data about teachers, their students, and the state's standardized tests.

The first phase of the project, which started in April this year and extends through June 2010, involves a detailed needs assessment of each state and its participating LEAs. The assessment evaluates each state’s relevant data definitions, systems, and processes to find the gaps between current capacity and process in relation to the project’s goal. Next the states and school districts will develop the common definitions and a common process for collecting data and enlisting teachers to validate them. Then, between July 2010 and October 2011, each state will test implementation with its participating LEAs. That collaboration will promote teacher buy-in and ensure that the models work on the ground. Those experiences will be factored into the states' collective decisions to ensure that a single, common definition and set of business processes are the product.

CELT (Center for Education Leadership and Technology)[14] and the Data Quality Campaign will be actively involved in coordinating the work of the foundation grant, serving as project managers and meeting facilitators. In 2013, ADE anticipates using other grant sources to take the model fully to scale in statewide implementation of teacher-student linkage.

Unified Resource Portal Arkansas educators have access to numerous information systems and professional learning resources to add to their knowledge and skills and that of their students. But these opportunities too often go underused when potential participants just don't know about them. Online resources can be underused, too: difficulty locating computer applications or complexities in accessing secured confidential records can constitute barriers to ready navigation. Stumbling blocks on the way to the wider world of information have no place here.

So, we want to remove the barriers by creating a Unified Resource Portal—the first one in the nation –as a consolidated platform from which educators have ready access to databanks, online professional development resources, and Internet content. This innovative portal to Web-driven state and local resources will serve as model methodology for other states to emulate.

Educators at every level (school, district, and state) frequently ask for better coordinated access to the data they need. To illustrate, consider the time a teacher might need to devote to serial data systems within the span of mere hours: look up a student's records on the state's electronic transcript system; obtain classroom and student-level performance indicators via a set of dashboards or scorecards in the business intelligence suite; administer a formative test on the target testing system; and then enter daily grades and attendance on their student management system. Though all useful and value-proven systems, educators are often challenged to fit them into a day's many demands.

The Unified Resource Portal will integrate multiple system components via a consolidated directory and authentication system from which users can access the disparate systems described below.

- **Student and financial information systems:** The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) furnishes financial and student data-sharing software throughout the state's public school network. APSCN experts support and train school district personnel in how to collect, enter, report, and share data via the system.

[14] CELT helps K-12 leaders develop and implement IT strategies and systems that align technology with the core mission of today's schools: achievement, accountability, and staff development.

- **Business Intelligence Data Warehouse** is a longitudinal data system designed to allow PK-20 educators, researchers, and policy makers to base decisions on valid longitudinal data. Educators may use dashboard and scorecard-styled "heads-up" displays to continually monitor student performance and identify areas where extra emphasis is needed.

- An **electronic transcript system** allows teachers to access the confidential records of their current students. In addition to typical transcript data, the system shows the schools students previously attended, up-to-date course histories, state and local test results, and the current schedule. This system also introduces a networking feature so educators can help one another across the state. Teachers can collaborate to ensure lesson plans are aligned to state standards, share lesson plans, or search for them in the database.

- **Streaming video and content on demand** is in place as a statewide system for creating and using educational media via a distributed podcasting system. Students, teachers, administrators, the service co-ops, state cultural and education institutions, ADE staff, and others are creating digital media for students, teachers, and parents to download and use in classrooms and beyond. This exciting service taps the creativity and innovation of both students and educators, promotes the value of digital media in teaching and learning, and makes learning accessible anytime, anywhere.

- **Hive** is Arkansas's leading-edge interactive visualization application, incorporating social networking to allow educators and the public to collaborate in data analysis using colorful data displays. At the public level, all data is anonymous, but authorized users can view individual student's data under a secure sign-on. A variety of visualizations are supported, including both aggregated and student growth percentiles. The system is extensive, and users continually suggest improvements. Hive is discussed more fully in *Section C2*.

- Our **professional development portal** is the state's Internet-Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools (IDEAS) portal, furnished by a joint initiative between ADE and the Arkansas Educational Television Network. The IDEAS portal offers web-based professional development resources to Arkansas's teachers in an innovative online PD portal available to all certified Arkansas teachers free of charge and at their convenience.

- Our customized, electronic **instructional improvement system** (IIS) will deliver to every classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment design and support; facilitate collecting and analyzing student achievement data; support teacher and principal evaluation; and provide prescriptive suggestions for online and other professional development avenues. The system will offer all teachers dashboard accessibility to curriculum documents and instructional tools, including unit and lesson plans and video streaming.

We strive to continually enhance education through technology and to empower teachers with relevant, useful, and creative tools for their classrooms. But we face ever-increasing challenges in developing systems that control access to sensitive data while making sure educators have the information they need. The revolutionary Unified Resource Portal will have a directory and authentication architecture that allows all levels of educators—in and out of the classroom—easy, organized admission to valuable information systems, professional development resources, and Web-driven content.

(C)(3)(ii) Support participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) and schools that are using instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) in providing effective professional development to teachers, principals and administrators on how to use these systems and the resulting data to support continuous instructional improvement.

Professional development is a priority in Arkansas and providing quality training for educators on how to use the instructional improvement system (IIS) and the resulting data is a priority for this Race to the Top application. Arkansas's data system already provides a significant source of strength and capacity for the state. The IIS will allow us to implement rigorous reforms that focus our efforts on helping teachers, principals, and administrators use the resulting data to support continuous instructional improvement.

ADE will work with an external vendor (through an RFP process) to develop professional learning opportunities on the implementation and continued use of the IIS. This will also include a capacity building train-the-trainer model that will be implemented at our Education Service Cooperatives (ESCs). Those that go through this model training will become IIS Master Trainers and will then deliver scalable professional development to local schools and districts focused. Trainings will cover how to use the IIS tools, how to use data to understand student needs and inform instruction, and how to use instructional data in professional learning communities to support continuous improvement.

Professional development will give educators the capability to better analyze, draw conclusions from, and collaborate around student data. In addition, the teacher and principal evaluation system will be linked to the IIS, allowing for alignment and decision-making in crafting individualized supports for improving practice. The MOU for LEAs requires teachers and principals to participate in professional development on using the IIS and on how to effectively use the data extracted from it.

To all extent possible, we will customize professional learning specific to the needs of individual districts and schools.

Race to the Top will also supply us with the funds to put together a team of expert technology educators. This team will provide support to all training groups for the developing customized training materials and on-line supporting courses and documents. This team will consist of technical writers, experts in the field of professional learning and adult learning theory, and technology experts in the field of on-line Web-based experiences. They will ensure incorporation of 21st century learning skills in all trainings and supporting documents. This work will allow for customized training opportunities to be shared within the Unified Resource Portal.

(C)(3)(iii) Make the data from instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice), together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners, students whose achievement is well below or above grade level).

Arkansas Education-to-Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative The focus of **AEETT** is to make available data that have been previously missing when school policies and instructional programs are being considered in relationship to students' divergent needs and preparing them for the world of work beyond their schooling. Information obtained from this initiative will foster changes in curriculum, scheduling, and student support resources to better prepare every student to enter the workforce. (See Appendix C-3-1 for the Project Agreement.)

In August 2009, Governor Mike Beebe directed that the AEETT consortium be established under the lead of the state's Department of Information Systems (DIS) and operate under the direct oversight of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet. The initial signatories to the agreement are ADE, ADHE, the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), and the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ADCE). We anticipate that several other agencies, such as the Department of Human Services (DHS), will join us in the near future.

AEETT's charge is to coordinate cross-agency data sharing that will be able to track and report the progress of students after they enter the workforce. Analysis of that data and the statistical results

will illuminate the education-employment-workforce continuum and inform how to better forge strong links along that progression.

The signatories approved a detailed work plan and budget to carry out the initial phase of work, including implementing a "data mart" data repository. This storehouse will contain selected education and employment data files from ADHE, ADE, DWS, and also the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (income tax system). The data will be matched and merged for analysis, but without personally identifiable results. Data will be included only after official approval by each agency's data owners. Also, once completed, the repository will be available only by authorized users to access approved custom reports.

Phase I will include such preliminaries as determining data sources and storage means, missing data, and the reports to be produced in this phase. The effort will also involve defining the scope of Phase II work, including involving more agencies.

The AEET project plan is the basis for major advances in cross-agency data sharing in Arkansas. We recognize that a great deal of work beyond what is currently envisioned or explicitly discussed in Phase I will need to be addressed in both the short and longer terms to ensure that solutions are robust, fully protect privacy, and are capable of meeting a broad range of data-sharing needs. Those needs include those that bear on improving education outcomes for workforce preparation, along with devising forward-looking data-sharing strategies. The methods must be flexible, efficient, and consistent with both the spirit and letter of FERPA, HIPPA, and all other state and federal laws concerning individual privacy.

TrustEd Working in the Arkansas Research Center (ARC), ADE will focus on helping DIS and other AEETT partners implement a set of technology solutions to achieve AEETT’s goal of robust, widespread data sharing while also protecting the privacy of individuals.

In addition to its data-driven decision making tools and research focus at the University of Central Arkansas, the ARC will expand its work by engaging ERIQ at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock as an additional ARC partner. ERIQ has already been deeply engaged in planning a statewide facility to address the need for secure FERPA-compliant cross-agency information exchange. Of immediate concern is the need to address FERPA and related privacy concerns where student data are to be shared within a consortium under the direction of entities other than ADE and ADHE.

To address both FERPA and general privacy concerns, the ARC Trusted Broker unit, **TrustEd**, will operate as a service bureau to the AEETT consortium by establishing a highly secure TrustEd registry of individuals known to AEETT partner agencies that will include linkages between agency-specific client IDs (CIDs). TrustEd will use the industry standard master data-management approaches to ensure the very high integrity level of its registry index (something not achievable with social security numbers or other deterministic matching methods). It will receive requests for matched data from an external agency, perform a lookup within its registry to find the corresponding CID for the receiving agency, and send only the relevant set of CIDs to the receiving agency along with the request for matched data. The receiving agency will return the set of CIDs to TrustEd along with the requested data, and TrustEd will remap the data set back to the requesting agency CIDs, returning the requestor's original requested file with the additional data, as long as policy and regulation allows. If not allowed, TrustEd will return anonymized data that are still at a unit level if it does not compromise the privacy of individuals.

This procedure will accomplish the necessary exchange of data, but no personally identifiable data will move between the agencies that are party to the exchange. The process will also support returning de-identified data or aggregates back to the originating agency, depending on what policy and regulation allows. ARC will work with the AEETT consortium to undertake the research, development, and testing activities necessary to move these TrustEd solutions forward so appropriate technology transfer can occur and the solutions can be migrated into regular, ongoing use by the AEETT consortium.

The consortium's data exchanges, including operation of TrustEd, will initially rely on traditional data-exchange mechanisms such as the physical exchange of data files and storage of the matched data in the receiving agencies' data repositories or a central AEETT repository. But a truly robust data-sharing environment with the capacity to accommodate substantial amounts of data exchanges among different agencies requires a more forward-looking strategy that builds on best practices and emerging trends in data-exchange methodology. The system must be able to handle everything from the large data sets exchanged less frequently for policy and research to exchanges involving real-time access to cross-agency data in the course of transaction processing.

To address these requirements, the consortium will likely need to migrate over time to a more federated approach, based on using service-oriented architecture (SOA), Web services, and other

technologies in which data from two or more agencies are linked virtually on an on-demand basis. The solutions described in this section are very much in the category of emerging practice and have scarcely begun to be considered, much less implemented, in other SEA environments.

On the whole, this significant initiative to link data sets and create public and researcher portals to improve data accessibility will provide detailed information with which to evaluate effectiveness of instruction, strategies, and differentiation of appropriates for educating all students for college and career.

Timeline for Implementing Activities in *Section C3:*

Linking to Pre-K and Early Childhood

Actual
- Minimal data sharing between the Pre-K and Early Childhood programs has taken place at this point in time.

2010-2011
- Information will be gathered on all ABC programs among school districts and private providers.

2011-2012
- Data will be collected and aggregated on the approximately 80,000 students served in Pre-K and Early Childhood programs.

2012-2013
- The linking system will be fully implemented including the designation of a unique identifier that will be used to determine significant data on each child in the program.

2013-2014
- An evaluation of the system will be conducted to determine appropriate modifications and improvements and modifications will be made to improve the system and simplify it for use by teachers and school administrators.

Instructional Improvement System Customization

2010-2011
- Request for Qualifications (RFQ) released for a customized IIS system.
- Selection of IIS system.
- Committees organized to input and link Arkansas data, curriculum, and professional development.

2011-2012
- Develop training modules for IIS.
- Pilot the IIS with select schools.

2012-2013
- The IIS will be fully functional and linked with other data sources on the Unified Resource Portal.

2013-2014
- An evaluation of the IIS will be conducted to determine appropriate modifications and improvements to the system.
- Appropriate revisions (identified in the evaluation) will be implemented.

Arkansas Education to Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative (AEETT)

Actual
- The proposed activities will begin in the 2010-2011 school year.

2010-2011
- Short-term staff will be obtained and an assessment of the agency data bases will be conducted.

2011-2012
- Plans will be completed and processes implemented to begin cross-agency matches of data elements.

2012-2013
- The data mart repository will be implemented and data sharing will be functional and in full compliance with FERPA, HIPAA and other state and federal laws.

2013-2014
- An evaluation of AEETT initiative will be conducted to determine appropriate modifications and improvements to the system.

TrustEd

Actual
- A TrustEd brokerage system development plan has been completed in cooperation with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

2010-2011
- Agreements will be developed in conjunction with the agencies involved in the AEETT agencies. The system will become functional on a limited basis.

2011-2012
- The system will become fully functional and serve as a conduit for data sharing and matching with other agencies in the state and researchers inside and outside the state.

2012-2013

- An evaluation of the system will be conducted to determine appropriate modifications and improvements.

2013-2014
- Appropriate revisions of the system that identified in the previous evaluation will be implemented.

Great Teachers and Leaders ***(138 total points)***

State Reform Conditions Criteria

(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals *(21 points)*

The extent to which the State has—

(i) Legal, statutory, or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education;

(ii) Alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) that are in use; and

(iii) A process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (D)(1)(i), regarding alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals:

- A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents, including information on the elements of the State's alternative routes (as described in the alternative route to certification definition in this notice).

Evidence for (D)(1)(ii), regarding alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals:

- A list of the alternative certification programs operating in the State under the State's alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice), and for each:
    - The elements of the program (as described in the alternative routes to certification definition in this notice).
    - The number of teachers and principals that successfully completed each program in the previous academic year.
    - The total number of teachers and principals certified statewide in the previous academic year.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

(D)(1)(i) Legal, statutory, or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education.

State law *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-409)* authorizes ADE to offer alternative routes to licensure. (Many years ago, state law changed the term *certificate* and *certification* to *license* and *licensure* in relation to professional educators.) ADE has offered a nontraditional licensure program (NTLP) since the

1987-88 school year, making it one of the oldest such programs in the nation. We can offer grants toward the licensing process to give financial assistance to individuals who will teach high-need subjects or locate in regions anxiously searching for more teachers.

The table below outlines the number of teachers who received these grants each year.

High-need grants issued to NTLs

	2006-07		**2007-08**		**2008-09**		**2009-10**	
	#	$	#	$	#	$	#	$
Location & Subject	34	$17,000	20	$10,000	17	$8,500	9	$4,500
Location	27	$6,750	38	$14,250	42	$13,650	16	$6,800
Subject area	181	$18,100	110	$22,000	39	$12,675	65	$27,625
Totals	**242**	**$41,850**	**168**	**$46,250**	**98**	**$34,825**	**90**	**$38,925**

This second table outlines the specific subject areas taught by teachers that received these grants during the past four years.

	2006-07	**2007-08**	**2008-09**	**2009-10**
Subject area only	**181**	**110**	**39**	**65**
Art	20	10	2	
French	4	1	1	2
German	1			
Life/Earth Science	19	15	9	
Physical/Earth Science	6	11	4	
High School Science				11
High School Math	25	28	12	16
Middle Childhood	94	35	11	28
Spanish	12	9		6
Business		1		
Drama/Speech				2

The annual grant authorization is $50,000 and, since tuition is $1,200, many candidates can receive full or partial tuition every year.

Arkansas colleges and universities offer advanced licensure programs via their Master of Education (M.Ed.) and Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) programs.[15] Arkansas has defined all post-baccalaureate pathways that qualify a teacher candidate for licensure as an alternative program. An additional pathway is via Teach for America (TFA).[16] We've been a partner with TFA for the past twenty years, as further explained later in this section. Our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TFA, which is reviewed annually to update the partnership, is in *Appendix D-1-1.* State law allows for alternative routes to licensure for both teachers and principals *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-409)*. Current options are primarily designed for teachers, but aspiring administrators can choose our Administrator Licensure Completion Plan, which is explained below. Some of our alternatively-trained teachers pursue principalships and other administrative roles with advanced study toward a Master's degree. One alternatively-trained teacher is now in the Arkansas House of Representatives and is serving on its Education Committee. ADE's rules governing the non-traditional licensure program (NTLP) are in *Appendix D-1-2.*

(D)(1)(ii) Alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) that are in use.

In Arkansas, prospective teachers have three alternative pathways to licensure: the Non-Traditional Licensure Program (NTLP); Teach for America (TFA); and Masters in the Art of Teaching (M.A.T.) or the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program. In this section, we'll each address each of these programs in turn, following an overview of the NTLP umbrella, below.

Overview Our alternative licensure programs are offered by providers that combine to create several alternative pathways toward a license: local school districts, colleges and universities, many of our 15 educational service cooperatives, and (in the instance of TFA) a vendor independent of Arkansas. Regardless of the particular route, the criteria are the same: a bachelor's degree, a specified grade point average, and satisfactory grasp of content knowledge evidenced by passing the appropriate test: Praxis I assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics; Praxis II in content knowledge and basic skills.

All participants in any of the three licensure programs are assigned to a local school district. There, a seasoned mentor supports the candidate through the state's induction process, which includes

[15] Such post-baccalaureate programs qualify as alternative route under a definition endorsed by the Council of Chief State School Officers

[16] Teachers qualified through TFA preparation programs are eligible for an Arkansas license.

completion of the masterfully designed *Pathwise* mentoring program[17] as a capstone performance-based assessment. Embedded throughout this period are further training and reinforcement. Monthly Saturday classes are a nonthreatening opportunity for sharing successes and frustrations, discussing problems and options for addressing them, and general reflection on progress. The understandings, camaraderie, and trust that develop through this process help the candidates successfully transition into classroom leadership and cements relationships that are central to a strong staff core.

For licensing all secondary candidates, the NTLP and TFA programs require Praxis II content knowledge testing as evidence of mastering content-specific coursework. Similarly, P-4 and middle-level candidates are tested for their content areas, too. However, six hours of reading courses are required for these teachers to ensure they don't inadvertently impede their students' developing reading skills due to insufficient training in diagnosing their reading weaknesses.

The same level of licensure awaits all educators who successfully meet the state's requirements. No distinction is made between the license awarded those who attain it through traditional college preparation and those who complete any of the approved alternative licensure programs and induction period.

The table below illustrates that approximately half of all new Arkansas teachers are prepared in colleges and universities; the remainder are prepared equally by the non-traditional programs and through reciprocity from other states. All of these programs are integral to supplying teachers in high-need geographic and subject areas.

Pathways for AR Teacher Candidates		**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Total**	%
Data is inclusive of all licensure areas	Traditional Baccalaureate	1491	1509	1485	4485	**47%**
	Alternative Pathways:					
	a) Master Art Teaching	169	226	205	600	**6%**
	b) Non-Traditional(NTLP)	829	682	547	2058	**22%**
	c) Teach for America	72	63	98	233	**2%**
	Reciprocity	919	819	393	2131	**22%**
	Totals	**3480**	**3299**	**2728**	**9507**	**100%**

The chart below shows the number of new secondary science and math teachers and their credentialing route over the last three years.

[17] *Section (D)(2)* explains Pathwise and other programs developed by Charlotte Danielson, who is nationally noted as an expert in teacher preparation.

Pathways for AR Teacher Candidates		2007	2008	2009	3-Year Total	% per Track
Physical/Earth Science	Traditional Baccalaureate	8	8	9	25	16%
	Alternative Pathways:					
	a) M.A.T.	9	12	3	24	16%
	b) Non-Traditional	21	20	17	58	38%
	c) Teach for America	3	4	5	12	7%
	Reciprocity	18	13	4	35	23%
	Total	**59**	**57**	**38**	**154**	**100%**
Life/Earth Science	Traditional Baccalaureate	25	22	15	62	27%
	Alternative Pathways:					
	a) M.A.T.	8	14	11	33	15%
	b) Non-Traditional	23	23	15	61	27%
	c) Teach for America	4	3	4	11	5%
	Reciprocity	26	25	8	59	26%
	Total	**86**	**87**	**53**	**226**	**100%**
Mathematics	Traditional Baccalaureate	42	46	43	131	31%
	Alternative Pathways:					
	a) M.A.T.	18	15	14	47	11%
	b) Non-Traditional	35	35	33	103	24%
	c) Teach for America	7	9	15	31	7%
	Reciprocity	59	32	24	115	27%
	Total	**161**	**137**	**129**	**427**	**100%**

In our **Nontraditional Teacher Licensing Program (NTLP)**, which is administrated by ADE, participants are issued a provisional license to work as a classroom teacher while completing their credentials. The program entails two years of intensive preparation that's delivered by master educators from colleges and the state's education co-ops. An on-site induction period follows, in which seasoned mentors coach the new teachers for up to three years, closely monitoring progress, so any faltering can be immediately identified and addressed.

The table below displays how many nontraditionally licensed teachers (NTLs) have elected to serve in high-need subjects and geographic areas over the last five years. The % is of the total NTL program.

	2005-06	% NTL	2006-07	% NTL	2007-08	% NTL	2008-09	% NTL	2009-10	% NTL
Total in NTL	**503**		**436**		**345**		**333**		**258**	
Delta LEAs	**51**	**10%**	**54**	**12%**	**72**	**20%**	**74**	**22%**	**57**	**22%**

All high-need subject area:	**252**	**50%**	**206**	**47%**	**153**	**44%**	**135**	**41%**	**217**	**84%**
Mathematics	32	6%	29	7%	32	9%	36	11%	39	15%
Science	30	6%	30	7%	48	13%	41	12%	50	19%

One of the highest-need sectors noted is the Mississippi River Delta region of Arkansas, a rural, high-poverty area. Recruiting teachers into the Delta is especially challenging.

We have a long history with another type of alternative route to bolstering our teaching force through **Teach for America (TFA)**, a well-known independent, non-profit organization on a mission is to build a national movement to promote equity in education by enlisting services of promising future leaders in the effort. TFA recruits outstanding recent college graduates from all backgrounds and career interests, elicits their two-year commitment to teach, and places them in urban and rural public schools in low-income localities throughout the nation. Entry requirements include a bachelor's degree and a minimum 2.50 grade point average. TFA furnishes training and ongoing support to ensure their teachers are successful.

The table below shows the past nine years of TFA's contributions to our state's teaching force by year.

TFA Corp Year	Number of new first-year participants	Number of continuing second-year participants	Total number of TFAs licensed and teaching in Arkansas each year
2001-02	18	11	29
2002-03	38	18	56
2003-04	25	38	63
2004-05	39	25	64
2005-06	39	39	78
2006-07	39	39	78
2007-08	41	39	80
2008-09	35	41	76
2009-10	98	35	133

The third licensing option is offered by seven of our universities via **Master's degree programs** that lead to a teaching license. These programs are designed for individuals who have a baccalaureate degree and want a fast track to their teaching credentials. M.A.T. and M.Ed. programs encompass about 40 credit hours and are tailored to accommodate most working students' schedules. Candidates can usually complete this course of study within 12 to 18 months.

One of our most exciting and innovative initiatives is the Arkansas **Professional Teaching Permit (PTP),**[18] launched early in 2008. Throughout the state's business network, we've distributed our "Bring Your World to the Classroom" brochure (a copy is in *Appendix D-1-3*). It invites professionals into their community's high schools to enrich the curriculum from their seasoned perspective. For example, under the program's auspices, the local pharmacist could teach a high school chemistry class or a judge could teach a history class. PTP brings people with specialized expertise into the lives of school children who may have limited experience with "outsiders." The program not only strengthens the relationship between school and community, but also the partnerships with local community colleges or four year institutions of higher education. College professors are often eager to teach in a grade school, either for extra income or for the experience of connecting with "feeder" schools. College recruiters know that building relationships opens doors to enrolling new students. Business leaders who participate in the PTP are encouraged to offer internships to outstanding students over the summer and follow up by awarding them college scholarships.

Although still an endeavor in its infancy, the program's win-win possibilities are limitless. The relationships that blossom between the children and adults constitute a two-way mirror: for youngsters, it's a look through a window on the wider world that awaits them beyond their campus; and for adults who long since left the schoolhouse, it's a return to their roots and a connection with the generations who are following them into colleges and careers. Race to the Top funds will also us to market this program so more children can reap its benefits.

For principals and other school administrators, the **Administrator Licensure Completion Plan** is an alternate route to administrator licensure. ALCP, begun in 2001, enables candidates to be employed at a school district in their target role while they're completing requirements for their administrator licensure at a college or university. ALCP allows educators up to three years to stay in their jobs while completing their academic studies. The state grants waivers that extend through this period.

[18] The permit is issued after the applicant passes a content exam and a background check.

The table below shows the number of waivers granted over the last four years for the three levels of administrators.

Waivers for Administrator Licensure	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10*
Building Level Administrators	3	19	30	35
Curriculum/Program Administrators	2	5	27	17
District Level Administrators	1	1	5	11
Total	**6**	**25**	**62**	**63**

* Data to date

(D)(1)(iii) A process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage.

State law *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309)* prevents any class from being taught for more than thirty consecutive days by an individual who isn't licensed to teach the children's grade level or subject matter. LEAs must seek a waiver from ADE for any educator who isn't fully licensed. That waiver allows the individual to remain employed for up to three years while completing an Additional Licensure Plan (ALP) or Administrator Licensure Completion Plan (ALCP).

Educators who fall short of steady progress in any year are denied waivers to stay in their jobs the following year. The rules governing the addition of areas of licensure or endorsement are in *Appendix A-3-1*.

The Human Resource and Licensure Division of ADE maintains data on all granted waivers. Each year, the division identifies the licensure areas with the highest numbers of waivers, designated "areas of shortage." The identifications aren't based on an isolated year of data, but longitudinal records that ADE monitors closely to keep the shortage list current. A spreadsheet outlining the different shortage licensure areas for the past few years can be found in *Appendix D-1-4*. These programs and the oversight process have helped LEAs employ fully licensed educators in the shortage areas.

The table below organizes the number of waivers granted for the nine largest areas of teacher shortage in Arkansas for the past four years.

Shortage Areas	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Foreign Language	43	16	34	26
Mathematics - Secondary	42	38	64	39
Middle School Math and Science	37	45	10	33
Middle School English/Social Studies	24	42	16	32
Science - Secondary	72	50	95	59
Special Education	279	329	422	460
Library Media	32	44	80	123
Guidance & Counseling	37	55	81	92
Gifted and Talented	43	56	80	138
Totals	**609**	**675**	**882**	**1002**

Arkansas law *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-81-608 and Ark. Code Ann. § 6-81-609)* enables us to offer three-year financial incentive programs to entice educators to return to college for dual licensure in any of the shortage areas. We annually report shortage areas to USDOE, so teachers in those areas can procure loan forgiveness based on the federal guidelines. Then we make sure all LEAs have the loan forgiveness information and can encourage their teachers to take advantage of it.

A list of all shortage areas and high-priority LEAs is made available to participants in the Non-Traditional Licensure Program (NTLP) at their initial orientation to explain those shortages and the resulting job opportunities. Candidates are counseled about the geographic and subject areas in which they would most likely find jobs. They are encouraged to license in subject-shortage areas and are subsequently heavily recruited to teach in high-priority LEAs. Most of the physical science teachers entering the school workforce each year come from NTLP. All NTL math teachers find jobs every year, and LEAs stay in close touch with the NTL office for help in filling out the complement of math teachers.

Reform Plan Criteria

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance *(58 points)*

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to ensure that participating LEAs (as defined in this notice)—

(i) Establish clear approaches to measuring student growth (as defined in this notice) and measure it for each individual student; *(5 points)*

(ii) Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in this notice) as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement; *(15 points)*

(iii) Conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback; as part of such evaluations, provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools; *(10 points)* and

(iv) Use these evaluations, at a minimum, to inform decisions regarding— *(28 points)*

(a) Developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development;

(b) Compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities;

(c) Whether to grant tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures; and

(d) Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Ten pages

(D)(2)(i) Establish clear approaches to measuring student growth (as defined in this notice) and measure it for each individual student.

Evaluating students Arkansas employs two growth models throughout the state. One is a response to the Arkansas Student Assessment and Accountability Act; the other is to meet the federal No Child Left Behind requirements for pilot growth models to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). (*Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-401 et. seq.*) The two models function for different, but complementary, accountability purposes.

Both models reflect students' yearly performance on the Arkansas criterion-referenced benchmark exams in grades 3-8. Also, they both credit schools for students who achieve grade-level proficiency, as well as for those making incremental progress toward proficiency. But NCLB measures of AYP also include changes in the vertically moderated scale scores on the exams.

The state growth model consists of two indices: a performance index and a gain index. Both are based on a value table structure with values for attained performance in the prior year based on performance levels (performance index) and values for transition within and between performance subcategories within the table (gain index). The performance index is an aggregated score based on values assigned to each student in the performance categories of Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced that can be earned on the exam. Values for each category are aggregated and schools receive a rating based on five school performance levels. The gains index is an aggregated school score based on the performance of a cohort of students with scores from the Arkansas Benchmark Exam for two consecutive years. A positive value is assigned to students moving from a lower subcategory to a higher performance subcategory; a zero value is assigned to students maintaining the same performance subcategory; and a negative value is assigned to students moving from a higher performance subcategory to a lower subcategory. Values for each transition cell are aggregated and schools receive a rating based on five school improvement levels.

Our growth model for NCLB AYP accountability meets USDOE specifications for pilot growth models. The current model for evaluating AYP is a status-plus-growth model, wherein students are expected to achieve a year's growth as determined by the vertically moderated scale developed for the state benchmark exams. This curvilinear scale represents the annual growth, in scaled-score points, that a proficient student must achieve to maintain a proficient performance level, beginning in

3rd grade and ending in 8th grade. Expected growth for students below the proficient score at baseline is calculated by projecting a path to proficiency by 8th grade. That path is based on the student's distance from proficiency in 8th grade and weighted by the proportion of distance expected in one year to the scaled score distance between proficiency at the current grade level and proficiency at 8th grade. A proficiency threshold is calculated for each student at or above the proficient score at baseline to represent the point below which a student is no longer on a path to proficiency. Schools receive credit for AYP based on an aggregation of students who are at the proficient or advanced levels, as well as students who aren't proficient but meet the annual growth target described above.

We recognize that students' growth is the primary indicator of how well educators are doing their job. The state will require LEAs to use a comprehensive evaluation system that includes student progress as a critical measure of effectiveness, as it also points to where instructional approaches and monitoring must improve. From standardized tests to student portfolios and teacher-made quizzes, we will ensure that a rich array of formative, interim, and summative checkpoints and electronic data systems keep each child's learning barometer in plain view of professionals for quick intervention when progress falters. The pixels of children's progress will combine into a rich, multi-dimensional picture of student growth over time. This robustly comprehensive gauge of student growth will be the state's defined measure.

As we transition to that gauge of students' progress, we'll adjust our current NCLB growth model. Fairly applying assessment scores requires stability and defensibility in the statistical models used to measure educators' effectiveness.

(D)(2)(ii) Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in this notice) as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement; and:

(D)(2)(iii) Conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback; as part of such evaluations, provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools.

Evaluating teachers Quality teaching begins with a teacher's formal education, but it grows through a process of continuous improvement gained through experience, targeted professional development, and the insights and direction of thoughtful, objective feedback about the teacher's effectiveness.

At ADE, we took a hard look at our own performance to promote teacher quality and found ourselves lacking. Our technical assistance to infuse effective teacher evaluation had been lax far too long. Because teachers are the direct service link to children, the quality of their service has to be superior. So in 2008, two units within ADE sought to help ensure that quality by focusing on teacher evaluations: the Office of Professional Licensure and the Office of Teacher Quality.

In early 2008, four sizable school districts, one located in each quadrant of the state and staffed with varying degrees of union-organized teachers, joined The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to assist with research on teacher evaluations. Below is a brief overview of the study and its findings. It helps explains why the research has had such a profound effect on us in Arkansas, prompting us to accelerate progress toward meaningful teacher evaluation.

In a report, *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness,*[19] the authors examine the pervasive and longstanding failure to recognize and respond to variations in the effectiveness of America's teachers. At the heart of this matter is the system for evaluating teachers. For two years, researchers from the New Teacher Project collected data from four Arkansas LEAs: El Dorado, Jonesboro, Little Rock, and Springdale.

The "widget" effect is characterized by institutional indifference to variations in teacher performance. The five indifferences reflected in the report are:

1. All teachers are rated good or great: a binary system with more than 99% of teachers receiving a satisfactory rating.
2. Excellence goes unrecognized: truly exceptional teachers are not being identified.
3. Inadequate professional development: Failure to assess variations in instructional effectiveness precludes identifying specific needs of teachers.
4. No special attention to novices: Teachers are usually less effective in their beginning years; however, over 66 % were scored as "satisfactory."
5. Poor performance goes unaddressed: While both teachers and administrators recognize ineffective teachers are in the schools, districts confirm the scarcity of formal dismissals based on poor performance.

[19] *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness: A research document by The New Teacher Project* is by Daniel Weisberg, Susan Sexton, Jennifer Mulhern, and David Keeling.

The data from one of the studied districts showed that none of the probationary teachers were non-renewed for performance in five years, and 99.7% of tenured teachers received a satisfactory rating or equivalent. Similarly, data from another district showed that 100% of tenured teachers received a satisfactory rating or equivalent. (While Arkansas does not have the designation of "tenure teachers," this is the language used in this research report by TNTP.) The data on the Arkansas LEAs that participated in this research project and the resulting report are representative of most districts in Arkansas.

Given the research-confirmed prevailing pattern of teacher evaluation, LEAs were eager to improve their evaluation processes. Even so, they lacked the time, personnel, expertise, and money to mount the research leading to better evaluations. The needed funds appeared in a grant from USDOE *Title II A - Improving Teacher Quality* to fuel the work, fund pilots, and support implementation of the final model.

With that impetus, a Teacher Evaluation Task Force formed in the spring of 2009 with 36 positions filled with an even balance among teachers (named by the teachers' association), principals, and individuals representing diverse stakeholders: ADE, the co-ops, college deans of education, businesses, legislators, school boards, superintendents, and LEA human resource professionals. (A list of the task force members and their affiliations is in *Appendix D-2-1*.)

The group undertook the two-year research project and targeted a quasi-random sample of LEAs, both large and small, rural and urban, as well as some from each geographic region in the state.

In April 2009, the Office of Teacher Quality began analyzing the teacher evaluation instruments school districts were using across the state and 171 LEAs submitted their standard teacher evaluation forms. The following chart shows what analysis of those forms revealed. The various instrument components are listed along with the corresponding number and proportion. The center column shows the number of districts that included each component in their instruments, and the right-hand column show the proportions of respondents those numbers represent.

Number of LEAs Respondents			171
	Component	**Number of LEAs with the component in their instrument**	**Percentage of LEAs with the component in their instrument**
*	Evidence	25	14.6%
	Check-list	150	87.7%
*	Professionalism	133	77.8%
*	Professional Development	76	44.4%
*	Criteria	165	96.5%
*	Rubric	37	21.6%
*	Pathwise © Domains	49	28.7%
*	Student Data	6	3.5%
	Attendance	46	26.9%

*Components included in Charlotte Danielson's evaluation model.

The data revealed that, while over 96% of responding LEAs had established evaluation criteria, most used a checklist tool (87.7%), and few required evidence (14.6%), a rubric (21.6%), or data about students' learning (3.5%). The feedback confirmed what many Arkansas educators knew: we needed a new teacher evaluation system.

Danielson models To set the evaluation renovation in motion, Ms. Charlotte Danielson was contracted in October 2008 to lead and facilitate the work of the task force toward its goal. Danielson is a nationally noted expert in teacher evaluation and co-author of three highly successful programs that are well integrated into our state's teaching framework: the intense new-teacher induction program centered on the Pathwise© model; the Praxis III assessment for the state's standard teaching license; and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which our legislature supports through both funds for the program and annual incentives for teachers who achieve the designation of National Board Certified Teacher.

Moreover, the 22 components detailed within Danielson's *A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition* convey a clear expectation of professional learning. ADE's rules regarding teacher evaluation, approved in 1997, make Danielson's model a natural fit for us. (Those rules are found in *Appendix D-2-2.*) Two subsections of these rules are of special interest: *Local districts shall develop a teacher evaluation system that reflects a sound professional development program that promotes continuous growth of teachers; and a set of teacher competencies descriptive of the local district's expectations*

aligned with teacher licensure principles. These criteria are strongly reflected in the Danielson models.

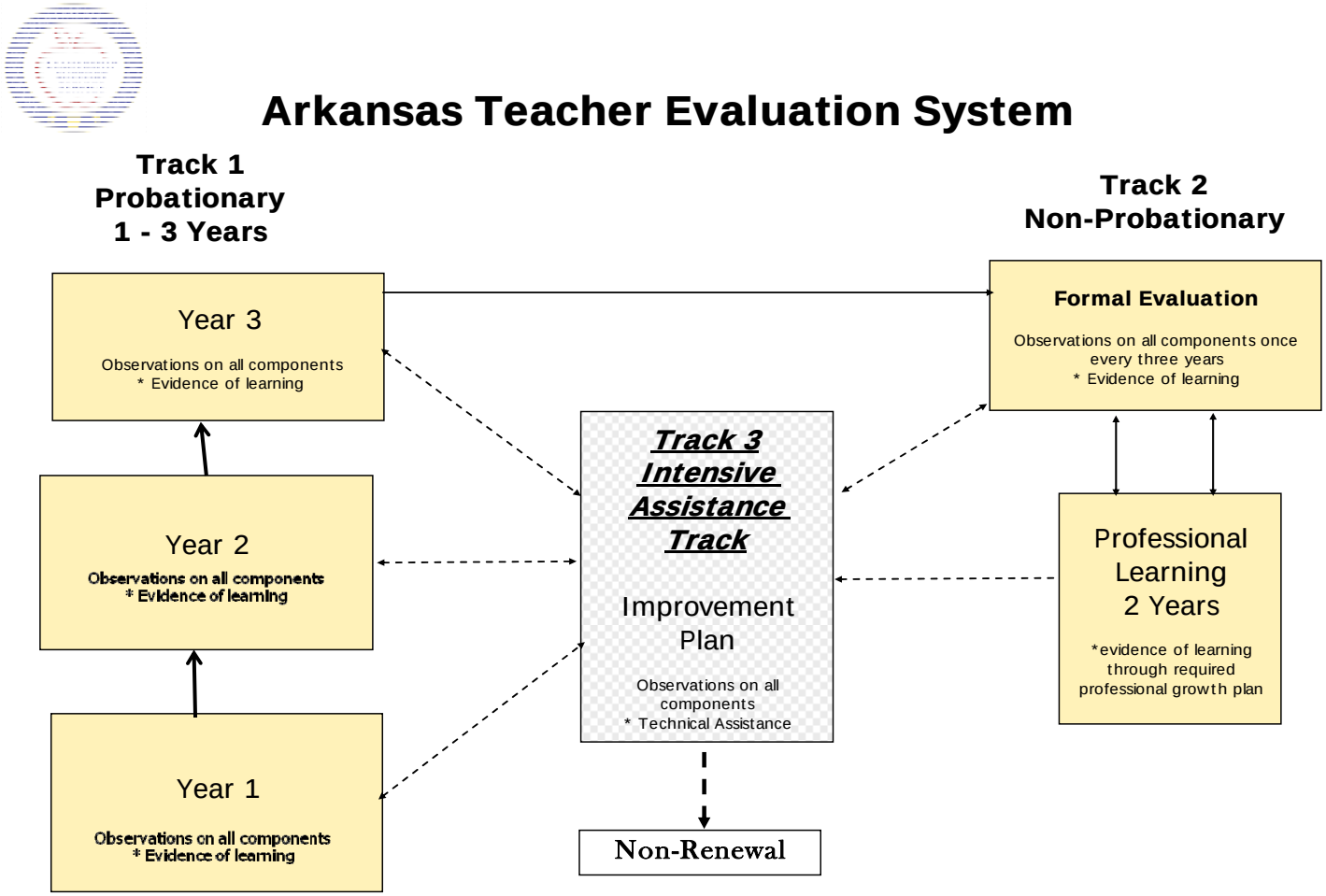
Teacher Evaluation Task Force The group first met in July 2009 and began by adopting the standards and criteria for effective teaching. At this first meeting, members were asked to share a positive or negative experience they recalled from a previous evaluation either as the evaluator or the evaluated. Throughout their deliberations, the task force worked to fashion a process that would keep the positive experiences alive and neutralize the negative experiences. At the end of the first two days, a unanimous vote was cast to adopt the four Danielson domains: (1) planning and preparation; (2) classroom environment; (3) instruction; and (4) further professional responsibilities. The group also adopted the 22 components from *A Framework for Teaching* as the Arkansas standards for effective teaching and the new teacher evaluation instrument. The four domains and 22 components comprise the "framework for teachers" are listed below:

DOMAINS			
Planning & Preparation	**Classroom Environment**	**Instruction**	**Further Professional Responsibilities**
COMPONENTS			
Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy	Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	Communicating With Students	Reflecting on Teaching
Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	Establishing a Culture for Learning	Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	Maintaining Accurate Records
Setting Instructional Outcomes	Managing Classroom Procedures	Engaging Students in Learning	Communicating with Families
Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources	Managing Student Behavior	Using Assessment in Instruction	Participating in a Professional Community
Designing Coherent Instruction	Organizing Physical Space	Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness	Growing and Developing Professionally
Designing Student Assessment			Showing Professionalism

A fair and effective system The task force is developing a rigorous, transparent, and just evaluation system for all Arkansas teachers. All applications of the process require *evidence* of teaching that results in students' learning. To ensure that feedback about their effectiveness is fair and meaningful, teachers must be fully aware of what is expected of them beforehand and how their approaches must be targeted to teaching and learning concepts, processes, and outcomes. That awareness allows

teachers to plan accordingly and align their performance with clear expectations for themselves as well as their students.

The new teacher evaluation system incorporates student growth data as a significant factor and includes the following performance levels: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, distinguished. Drafts have been completed for implementing the evaluation procedures and the various tracks for any teacher (probationary or non-probationary) who is encountering difficulty or performing unsatisfactorily. A graphic representation of the Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System is below, followed by descriptions of the three tracks.



- Track 1 – Probationary and novice teachers will be observed several times throughout the school year. The observer will record evidence in domains 2 and 3, which is the *art* of teaching, but may also examine artifacts in the non-observed areas, which are domains 1 and 4, or the *science* of teaching. In Track 1, the evaluation consists of observing teachers' performance and their **impact on student growth**. In addition to the formal and informal observation requirements, the teacher supplies examples of lessons related to the domains and components for discussion during the pre- and/or post-observation conferences. Moreover, the teacher is to furnish the following: a unit plan and evidence of components 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, and 4f (s*ee Appendix D-2-3)* which is **evidence of student growth**.

- Track 2 – On multi-year cycles, experienced teachers will rotate between the professional learning model and the formal evaluation, which is based on the domains and accompanying components. Experienced teachers are presumed to be competent with the expectation they will continue to improve by enhancing their professional learning as their evaluation criteria. This professional learning is self-directed and should be centered on school-wide initiatives and their role as a classroom teacher.

  This track requires one formal observation with prescriptive professional development for each teacher, even if scoring is high. Teachers will have a formal observation at year's end, with informal walk-through observations often during the year. In addition, teachers in Track 2 will collect the following artifacts for discussion with their evaluator: a unit plan; and evidence of components 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, and 4f (s*ee Appendix D-2-3),* which is **evidence of student growth**. During the Professional Growth years of Track 2, teachers will establish a growth plan for their professional learning and engage in appropriate activities. The growth plan must be related to their teaching responsibilities and designed to **improve student growth**. If at any time the experienced teachers encounter difficulty or perform unsatisfactorily, they are assigned to Track 3.

- Track 3 (Intensive Assistance) – Track 3 is designed for probationary and non-probationary teachers who need intensive assistance to improve their teaching skills and to enhance their **impact on student growth**. Teachers may be assigned to this track for one of the following reasons: (1) unsatisfactory rating(s) in one or more areas as described in the domains or components of the evaluation rubric; (2) a **pattern of inadequate student growth** in learning or regression in students' learning over time; (3) judgment of the evaluator based on initial discussions that include anecdotal student record keeping, artifact or observable data reflecting remediation efforts, or failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress in the evaluation levels of performance.

  This track is customized to the needs of the individual teacher and is designed to offer support and assistance. The goal of placing teachers in this track is to bring their performance

> up to standard through awareness of their deficiencies and help to overcome them. Failure of the teacher to perform at a satisfactory level will result in disciplinary action and could include non-renewal or termination.

All teachers will be prescribed specific professional development to counter any areas of weakness. Each teacher's professional growth plan will be based on the outcome of observations and drive subsequent PD. Periodically throughout the year, the evaluator and teacher will meet to discuss progress. At the close of the school term, teachers performing as *proficient* or *distinguished* will self-evaluate and report their experiences and growth over the year to their evaluator. Evaluation results will be compared to the academic achievement of the teacher's students, which is data gathered via the statewide data collection system. Evidence of student growth must be demonstrated before a teacher is designated as proficient or distinguished.

The goals of the Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System are to assure quality teachers and to promote teachers' professional growth within a clearly described, fairly executed process. The new system is research based, reflecting proven practices that have been shown to boost student learning. It uses clear, concise evidentiary data for professional growth and development to increase students' growth, too. Evidence of the students progress is a significant part of the system, carefully analyzed at every level to help illuminate teachers' effects on their students. The process highlights teachers whose successful strategies can be celebrated and shared, while it uncovers weaknesses that can be addressed and turned around.

Launching the new system ADE's Professional Development Office will design professional development (PD) for each of the components in the Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System. Rigorous and streamlined training in the evaluation process will be tailored for the evaluators (usually principals) who will be using the tools.

Five school districts have volunteered to pilot the new Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System. Resources have already been made available to them and their training began in mid-January 2010. We intend to expand the pilot to ten LEAs with Race to the Top funding. Districts endorsing Arkansas's Race to the Top application will be required to adopt the new teacher evaluation model unless they can demonstrate they are implementing a comparable evaluation system.

Evaluating principals Our goal is to develop both a teacher and a principal evaluation model. By law, an annual, written evaluation is required for all principals and assistant principals. A Principal Evaluation Task Force is scheduled to convene in summer 2010 to establish the framework that defines effectiveness in principals and the appropriate rubric, evaluation tool, and evaluation procedures. This task force will be structured similarly to that of the teachers' task force: the group will consist of 12 building-level administrators, 12 superintendents, and 12 stakeholders representing various organizations similar to those who served on the teacher task force. ADE and the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) are working together to appoint members to the task force. Copies of the invitation letter and nomination forms can be found in *Appendix D-2-4*.

A research-based set of standards will form the framework for the group's deliberative discussion. National consultants who are leaders in this initiative, such as Vanderbilt University, will be sought to facilitate the work. A focal point will be the performance indicators outlined in the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLIC) Standards.

In 2007, the General Assembly approved an interim study to consider how to develop school leaders across the state. For the next two years, representatives from ADE, ADHE, AAEA, legislators, the Arkansas Leadership Academy, and legislative staff met regularly to draft a proposal for the 2009 General Assembly, which eventually became Ark. Code Ann. *§ 6-1-401 et. seq.* and created a School Leadership Coordinating Council. One of the council's purposes is to "aid in the development of model evaluation tools for use in the evaluation of school administrators." The verb "aid" was used because the initiative was already underway. The complete statute is in *Appendix D-2-5*.

Evaluation design The evaluation task force will consider the following elements in designing the new Principal Evaluation System:

- research-based methodology for the evaluation design process;
- student growth as evidenced by multiple measures over time;
- job-embedded performance activities;
- principal interaction with individual teachers (a number to be determined) with whom the principal has elected to work during the course of the year for teacher professional growth;
- feedback to the evaluated principal;
- scoring by at least two trained scorers, including supervisors and peers.

In conjunction with their evaluation scores, principals will be prescribed professional development for any area where growth is needed. Their professional growth plan will emanate from the evaluation outcomes that indicate the thrust of the principals' PD throughout the year. Principals will be directed to invest time in reflection and self-evaluation and to report that self appraisal, along with the year's activities in relation to it, in terms of advances achieved by the close of the school year. Throughout the year, an evaluator will meet periodically with each principal to talk over progress. Principals' observation results will be compared to the academic achievement of their student's data gathered from the statewide data collection system. Principals with consistently high evaluation scores, plus continuous high student achievement scores over a period of time, may be honored as distinguished leaders and encouraged to mentor other administrators.

Again, the ADE Professional Development Office will design training aligned to the evaluation system. Streamlined but rigorous training in using the evaluation tools will be mandatory for evaluators.

Those LEAs who choose to participate in our Race to the Top application will be required to adopt the state's principal evaluation model unless they can document implementation of a comparable evaluation system.

(D)(2)(iv) Use these evaluations, at a minimum, to inform decisions regarding - (a) Developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development;

Since 2001, an induction program has helped beginning teachers and school administrators transition into their new positions. As previously noted, the new teacher evaluation and the existing mentoring program have the same criteria for effectiveness. All novice teachers are mentored for at least one year before they sit for the Praxis III assessment. New teachers licensed through a non-traditional program are mentored for the duration of the NTL program (from one to two years) and are further supported with mentoring during the initial months of their first year on the job. The administrator's induction program features job-embedded professional development and mentoring from experienced administrators.

(D)(2)(iv)(b) Compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities.

Summary of Instructional Facilitators by categories for 2006-07 through 2009-10 (as reported by LEAs)						
School Year	**Mathematics**	**Literacy**	**Science**	**Social Studies**	**Generalist**	**Number of positions**
2006-07	**242**	**652**	**21**	**6**	**N/A**	**921**
2007-08	**284**	**728**	**26**	**6**	**N/A**	**1044**
2008-09	**267**	**603**	**27**	**8**	**11**	**916**
2009-10	**368**	**826**	**44**	**12**	**50**	**1300**

The table above shows the number of Arkansas teachers identified as instructional facilitators in various subjects. (Some states may refer to these educators as a teacher leader, coach, or mentor, but our legislators requested the title, *Instructional Facilitators*.) To further support this cadre of teachers, the Instructional Facilitator licensure endorsement was created in April 2009. The endorsement standards were based on the 2008 ISLLC Standards and a job description followed. Race to the Top funds will help some 1,300 instructional facilitators obtain their endorsement.

Our progress in elevating support for teachers in all school districts resulted in an invitation to unite with other states to create standards for teacher leaders. In 2009, Arkansas was selected as one of 11 states to join the Teacher Leadership Consortium to draft national standards, which are in *Appendix D-2-6.*

The draft standards embrace performance indicators in seven domains that reflect the work of teacher leaders as facilitators to support the work of their colleagues in the schools. The seven domains underscore the highly professional level of knowledge and skill teacher leaders must embody: (1) understanding adults as learners to create communities of learning; (2) accessing and using research to improve practice and student outcomes; (3) promoting professional learning for continuous improvement; (4) facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning; (5) using assessments and data for systemic improvement; (6) improving outreach and collaboration with families and communities; and (7) advocating for student learning and the profession.

Teacher and principal compensation plans We're committed to a strong accountability system for student performance and school improvement. As we escalate our reform thrust, we'll explore ways

to pair it with a comprehensive differentiated compensation plan for principals and teachers. The plan could include differentiated pay for principals and teachers who serve in hard-to-staff subjects or geographic areas of the state or for those who teach in the STEM fields.

Many in Arkansas support a research-based compensation model linked to student growth, using multiple measures and a collaborative model for teaching and learning. An effective differentiated compensation model provides built-in support for helping principals and teachers improve instruction and professional practices.

Currently, two teacher compensation programs are available to Arkansas schools:

- **REAP: Rewarding Excellence in Achievement Program** (*Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2601 et. seq.*) Individual schools or entire districts can implement a restructured pay plan for their teachers as part of a state pilot program. Approval to participate in the program requires applicants to document how the school will pay teachers based on knowledge, skills, and performance, with the cumulative factors accounting for between 40% and 60% of the individual's salary. LEAs may design a model within those parameters that weigh factors, such as education level and years of experience, and reflect other criteria, such as students' performance gains and evaluations by peers and supervisors. In order to initiate the program, 70% of the teachers must sign their support of the REAP plan, and 50% of them must elect to participate. Rules for this program are in *Appendix D-2-7.* After the 2010-11 school year, we will have enough data on the two programs currently operating to do a quality study on the legislation.

- **Alternative Pay** (*Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-119)* LEAs can design an alternative pay program for both licensed and classified personnel. Salary levels may reflect added responsibilities, mastery of new knowledge and skills, raising student achievement, professional development exceeding state minimums, attracting highly qualified teachers, or advancing career capabilities. The program must be funded from local school and or district revenues, as no additional state funds have been appropriated for the program as yet. Rules for the program are in *Appendix D-2-8.*

Another approach currently available in our schools is the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) from the Milken Foundation that promotes teachers' advancement up the ladder of competency and effectiveness. TAP is more than a salary initiative, as it builds a collaborative workplace culture to improve instruction among colleagues who are all aiming for their individual and collective success as professional teachers. The four major components of the program, termed “Elements of Success,” are: Multiple Career Paths, Ongoing Applied Professional Growth, Instructionally Focused Accountability, and Performance-Based Compensation.

Teachers in the Advanced Initiative for Math and Science schools receive incentives of $100 for each student who makes a qualifying score on AP math, science, and English exams. Moreover, three levels of goals for students' AP scores and may earn the subjects' teachers an additional $1,000 to $3,000, depending upon how many scores are earned.

Arkansas also has two open-enrollment public charter schools that have developed differentiated compensation programs, eSTEM in the capitol city of Little Rock, and KIPP, which presently serves a community in the southern Delta region and will next year open a second licensed charter in the northern reaches of the Delta.

Through the Race to the Top grant, we will bring together a task force, representing ten LEAs to consider various options for differentiated compensation and study how a statewide model could work. Participants may include our *persistently low performing school*s along with those experienced in implementing differentiated compensation.

A strong evaluation model, such as the system we're developing for teachers and principals, is essential. At the same time, it's just as important to reward the performance of those educators who do an exceptional job of moving students forward. A strong compensation program, not simply a salary scale, is a valuable component of the sturdy infrastructure that supports teaching and learning. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) outlines other areas the state must focus on in regard to developing a comprehensive differentiated compensation program (December 2009, *TQ Research and Policy Update)*. The task force will consider differentiated compensation plans that could help:

- provide incentives for teacher and principal recruitment;
- build on or redesign the state’s current incentives or benefits for teaching or being a principal in rural areas of the state;

- develop recruitment strategies for aspiring teachers and principals through a “grow-your-own” program;
- develop a teacher exchange program between high-performing and low-performing schools and provide incentives for participation;
- target local paraprofessionals and community members to earn teacher licensure or participate in the Professional Teaching Permit program; and
- build a program of compensating teachers differently based on subject area shortages or on STEM-related instruction.

This compensation study and pilot can provide the framework for helping more schools in Arkansas to replicate this program.

(D)(2)(iv)(c) Whether to grant tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

Arkansas does not have tenure status for principals or teachers. *Teacher* includes all educators who are employed in a public school except those serving as the superintendent. We classify new teachers as probationary during the time they are employed by the same LEA for three consecutive schools years. They enter non-probationary status when they are offered and accept the fourth-year contract.

Arkansas uses the Praxis III Performance Assessment as the capstone for obtaining the Standard Teaching License. Since the novice teacher works toward completing the Praxis III during the first year of teaching, and because Praxis III is the foundation of our evaluation process, the Teacher Evaluation Task Force decided the novices' first teaching observation would be performed like a Praxis III observation: with rigor, transparency, and fairness. After the first year, novice teachers will be evaluated according to Track I, which calls for three formal observations with informal and "walk-through" observations, which are to be determined by policies of the individual LEA.

Race to the Top funds will speed infusion of the Teacher Evaluation System into 258 LEAs (including open-enrollment charters for the coming school year), should all of them commit to this system. It will also support development and dissemination of the proposed Arkansas Principal Evaluation System, which will be designed to enable LEAs to monitor the performance of their administrators and also assure that any needed mentoring or intensive assistance is readily available (see *Section D5*).

(D)(2)(iv)(d) Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

The Arkansas Teacher Fair Dismissal Act (ATFDA) (outlined in *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-1501 et seq.*) is relevant to all educators employed in our public schools except those serving as superintendent. Therefore, building level administrators are well aware that poor performance unimproved over time, even with ample assistance toward a turnaround, may be grounds for reassignment to a different job or termination. The ATFDA allows an LEA to modify the terms and conditions of the employment contract with proper notification to the employee. Those experienced teachers assigned to Track III (Intensive Assistance Track, explained earlier) won't be recommended for non-probationary status until the educator's level of performance has improved.

Performance Measures Notes: Data should be reported in a manner consistent with the definitions contained in this application package in Section II. Qualifying evaluation systems are those that meet the criteria described in (D) (2)(ii).		Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
Criteria	**General goals to be provided at time of application:**	**Baseline data and annual targets**				
(D)(2)(i')	Percentage of participating LEAs that measure student growth (as defined in this notice).	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(D)(2)(ii)	Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems for teachers.	<10%	75%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(ii)	Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems for principals.	<10%	<10%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(iv)	Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems that are used to inform:					
(D)(2)(iv)(a)	• Developing teachers and principals.	<10%	75% / <10%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(iv)(b)	• Compensating teachers and principals.	<10%	**	**	**	**

(D)(2)(iv)(b)	• Promoting teachers and principals.	<10%	75% / <10%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(iv)(b)	• Retaining effective teachers and principals.	<10%	75% / <10%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(iv)(c)	• Granting tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals.	<10%	75% / <10%	85%	95%	100%
(D)(2)(iv)(d)	• Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals.	<10%	75% / <10%	85%	95%	100%

** Arkansas will bring together various LEAs to participate in a differentiated compensation study and pilot. The benchmarks for this section will be set after that time.

General data to be provided at time of application:	
Total number of participating LEAs.	247
Total number of principals in participating LEAs.	1,047
Total number of teachers in participating LEAs.	32,763

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals *(25 points)*

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—

(i) Ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals by developing a plan, informed by reviews of prior actions and data, to ensure that students in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools (both as defined in this notice) have equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) and are not served by ineffective teachers and principals at higher rates than other students; *(15 points)* and

(ii) Increase the number and percentage of effective teachers (as defined in this notice) teaching hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, and special education; teaching in language instruction educational programs (as defined under Title III of the ESEA); and teaching in other areas as identified by the State or LEA. *(10 points)*

Plans for (i) and (ii) may include, but are not limited to, the implementation of incentives and strategies in such areas as recruitment, compensation, teaching and learning environments, professional development, and human resources practices and processes.

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (D)(3)(i):

- Definitions of high-minority and low-minority schools as defined by the State for the purposes of the State's Teacher Equity Plan.

Recommended maximum response length: Three pages

(D)(3)(i) Ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals by (both as defined in this notice) have equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) and are not served by ineffective teachers and principals at higher rates than other students, including evidence. (15 points)

Arkansas children live in sprawling suburbs, and they live down dusty country lanes. Some live in high-rise flats and others in rusting mobile homes. Some live along the right-angle roads that hug checkerboard fields, others at the edge of pine forests that older generations harvested and then

replanted. Our children live among the rolling hills and on the river-rich soil of the Delta plateau. They live in vibrant cities, tiny towns, racially-identifiable enclaves, and economically depressed swaths of land. Wherever our children are growing up in Arkansas, every one of them matters, and all of them are the future.

Our vision *and* conviction of equity compel us to ensure that all our children are busily learning in schools staffed by those who bring out the best in the youngsters: talented teachers in bright buildings led by highly competent principals who are proud to serve. We've made significant investments in resources to promote equitable distribution of teachers and principals. Some of the actions we've taken and continue to support include these:

Master School Principal Program State law created the master principal program in 2004 as a voluntary three-phase program that takes about three years for candidates to complete. The program is administered by the Arkansas Leadership Academy, which is supported by ADE. The two entities jointly admit candidates, guide them, review individual performance, and oversee the rigorous assessments that are the capstone of the course. Those who attain the master principal status receive bonuses, along with the distinction of their accomplishments. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-1601 et seq.*

ASU Online came alive during the 2007-08 school year when Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro expanded its administrative licensure program to include online delivery. The syllabus, curriculum, and faculty remained unchanged, but this expansion was marketed to teachers in rural areas who would otherwise have a two-hour or longer commute to the master's program at any university campus. ASU brings the college campus to many isolated communities that would otherwise go without.

Distance learning is an academic avenue 230 of our school districts make available so that all students have access to a complete roster of advanced courses.

Satellite sites have been developed by over half of our colleges and universities to serve rural communities scattered across the state. Numerous students achieve their bachelor’s degrees in these remote locations and then educate children in Arkansas’s outlying LEAs.

Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees can be earned in any of the 22 two-year institutions located in the state’s more rural communities. These campuses serve hundreds of students by offering the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree. Through articulation agreements, this degree is transferrable to four-year institutions toward a baccalaureate degree in education.

Teacher recruitment grants began in the 2006-07 school year when ADE offered a $1,000 reimbursement to any of Arkansas’s 18 colleges of education that agree to accelerate their student recruitment processes. Recruitment focuses on sophomores in the academic areas of mathematics, science, English, social studies, or foreign languages. Also targeted are students who may have dropped out of college before completing their degree in these academic areas.

Professional Teaching Permit, explained in *Section D1*, was created in 2008 so working professionals could use their expertise to teach one or two high school classes a semester in a subject area related to their field. We will more vigorously market this program to businesses and school communities, using Race to the Top funds. The PTP brochure is in *Appendix D-1-3.*

Teach for America, reviewed in *Section D1*, placed 133 TFA teachers in Arkansas during the 2009-10 school year. Below, in a separate section, is further information about plans to expand TFA service in the state.

Incentives to recruit and retain teachers in high-priority districts (see definition in the glossary) are guaranteed by law. The annual incentive pay is $5,000 for a new teacher in the district; $4,000 for a second-year teacher in the district; and $3,000 for returning teachers in their third year in the district, and then every continuing year of service thereafter. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-811.*

The **Arkansas Equity Plan**, initially approved by USDOE in 2006, has recently been updated with many details and is attached in *Appendix D-3-1.* It addresses equity in facilities and school funding (which is extensively reviewed in *Section (F)(1)*); teacher salaries; teacher recruitment and retention; and many subsections within those categories. It is based on our definition of high poverty and high minority schools:

All Arkansas schools are ranked by the percentage of their students who are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch ("FRL," a poverty measure) and by the percentage of their minority students. The top quartile (25%) of all our schools (those with the largest percent of FRL students) are identified as high poverty. Conversely, those schools in the bottom 25% are identified as low poverty. Similarly, all Arkansas schools are ranked according to the proportion of their minority enrollment. Those schools within the top 25% are identified as high minority, and those schools in the bottom quartile are identified as low minority.

(D)(3)(ii) Increase the number and percentage of effective teachers (as defined in this notice) teaching hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, and special education; teaching in language instruction educational programs (as defined under Title III of the ESEA); and teaching in other areas as identified by the State or LEA.

Just this May, we were awarded a grant from the Brookhill Foundation to explore licensure for the designation of Elementary Mathematics Specialist (EMS) through the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators (AMTE).

We're determined to build stronger capacity among our elementary educators, both in math content knowledge and pedagogy. Beginning with the Arkansas Statewide Systemic Initiative in 1993-1998 and continuing with a Math and Science Partnership Grant today, two math-intensive college courses have been developed for elementary math specialists: "Mathematical Thinking for K-8 Teachers," and "Geometry, Measurement, and Their Applications." We know more courses are needed to complete a program of study for elementary math specialists, so our emphasis continues, as noted below.

For the past three years, the Math and Science Partnership Grant has enabled us to partner with the Arkansas Educational Television Network to extend a professional development outreach for elementary teachers who serve as mathematics specialists. At seven locations around the state and other sites via compressed interactive video (CIV), over 200 educators have been involved so far. As a result, interest in teaching math is on the rise among teachers of the early grades. Thus, the next step is expanding the scope of our aim toward endorsing elementary teachers in this important field.

In other sections of this application, we explore additional ways in which we are intensifying our emphasis on ensuring talented teachers are on the job in specialty areas throughout the state. See *Priority 2* for more about how we are stressing STEM and additional math and science emphasis.

Adding to the programs and actions described above, which the state funds, Race to the Top monies will be aimed at unrolling the plans explained below.

Principal Professional Development of Effective Recruitment and Retention Strategies As evidenced in our policies outlined in the Arkansas Equity Plan (Attachment D-3-1), the state is committed to ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers. To increase the number and percentage of effective teachers placed in our children’s classrooms; the state is committed to providing quality professional development for principals in the area of recruitment and retaining effective teachers. This is especially important in our persistently low-performing, high minority and high poverty schools.

Through Race to the Top funding, Arkansas will provide professional learning opportunities for principals that will focus on key strategies to ensuring all schools are staffed with highly effective teachers. The state will contract with experts to help principals:

- build communication and marketing plans for their school (using data and incentives);
- establish criteria that the school and district are seeking in an effective educators and develop a rubric to measure the educator on the continuum to ensure quality hiring practices and mutual consent between the school and district;
- understand their role in quality induction of new teachers; and
- support new and veteran teachers with quality professional development planning and implementation.

We will invite all principals to participate in these professional learning opportunities; however we will focus our recruitment efforts on those principals serving in persistently low-performing, high minority and high poverty schools.

Increasing the numbers of effective special education teachers ADE has identified special education as a critical area of licensure shortage. To reverse the shortage, we have a plan to increase the number and percentage of effective special education teachers in the state:

1. **Reimburse tuition** for general education teachers who complete the required coursework for their special education endorsement. In a sense, we'll "grow our own" out of the ranks of professionals who are already seasoned in the classroom and want to qualify to teach children with disabilities or other special needs. For those veteran teachers who add the special education endorsement, we'll apply Race to the Top funds to expand our new-teacher mentoring program to promote retention via extra support during at least the first year in this challenging area.

2. **Hire a specialist** A Special Education Recruitment Specialist will serve in ADE's Office of Teacher Recruitment in the Division of Human Resources and Licensure. This professional will work with the Dean's Symposium[20] and also visit college campuses to encourage education majors to aim at special education credentials. The specialist will work closely with the board of the Arkansas Association of Special Education Administrators (AASEA), a leadership group from around the state that meets monthly to carry out its responsibility as the voice and action arm of the field. The specialist will work with other special education administrators to ensure that children with special needs are taught by effective teachers in all areas of the state, paying particular attention to the Delta and other regions that face a perennial challenge keeping an adequate force of special education teachers. Funding from Race to the Top will help us continue to fully implement actions established by state and federal laws, along with special education regulations promulgated by the state's board of

[20] The quarterly symposium gathers deans and special education coordinators from all Arkansas colleges of education. There, ADE presents all the new laws, materials, and teaching techniques for special needs children.

education. If the program is successful. ADE will maintain these positions in four years at current staff levels.

3. **Expand the scope and delivery of courses** As we encourage more teachers to take special education coursework, colleges will need to expand their curriculum and their means for delivering it. New funding will not only underwrite more online courses accessible from all areas of the state, but also make classes available to working adults in the evenings and on weekends for those who prefer face-to-face instruction. More training programs will mean more general education teachers can complete their special education endorsement. At the same time, an avenue for broadening knowledge and skills opens up for all teachers who work with special-needs students, such as those with autism, dyslexia, and other disabilities.

4. **Financially assist school districts in recruiting and retaining** special education teachers. State law *(Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-308)* allows reimbursement for moving and other relocation expenses teachers incur when they move to districts in the Delta region and other areas short of special education teachers. Funds will be used for incentives to recruit licensed special education teachers to work in those districts and also in schools identified as needing improvement.

5. **Hire personnel** as administrative assistants or due process clerks for support to help retain special education teachers and improve their effectiveness. Schools will hire and train assistants to complete the required paperwork associated with due process procedures and activities. Teachers relieved of a paperwork overload will have more time for the instruction and interaction that lifts their students to new achievement heights. We plan to test this approach in a limited number of districts, measure its success, and encourage districts to maintain the assistance.

   We expect this approach to greatly increase the number of special education teachers who stay in their field. Currently the state has a number of educators who are licensed in special education, but they aren't teaching in the special education classrooms. So, encouraging these professionals to remain in special education classrooms is our aim.

Increasing the number of effective English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and administrators The number of children whose home language isn't English has increased over 100% during the last ten years in Arkansas's public schools. Currently, 40,081 language minority students (about 9% of our total state enrollment) attend schools in 163 districts, with 30,000 of this group limited in their English proficiency. The children represent 88 home languages other than English: 88% speak Spanish, with Marshallese, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian representing the next largest groups. Recent immigrants, arriving with minimal English skills, are a large percentage of the limited-English speakers.

Currently, we don't have enough teachers and administrators trained to teach and supervise ESL and core content subjects to non-English speakers. This year school districts reported they needed 900

more teachers trained to address these instructional areas: teaching and assessment strategies for ESL; effective teaching methods for core content-based instruction; and aligning state standards-based curriculum with effective ESL instruction. Arkansas will use Race to the Top funds to finance the training to fill half this need, and state money will fund the remainder.

The grant funds we seek will underwrite the ESL endorsements that are required for preparation in each of these areas. Summer training programs, including ADE's ESL Academy, and graduate-level course work leading to ESL endorsement will be available for the hundreds of additional teachers and administrators the school districts are requesting. Online professional development and consultants, as noted in *Section D5*, will ensure on-going professional learning opportunities and support.

Expanding Arkansas's Teach for America Program We view Teach for America (TFA), both its corps members and alumni, as one of the best investments for transforming schools in the Arkansas Delta into models of success. For nearly two decades, we've witnessed the significant academic annual and longitudinal impact of the 460 TFA teachers who have taught in Arkansas classrooms over that period. Moreover, TFA alumni have assumed leadership roles at the forefront of education innovation and reform in the state. Their contributions include selection as Arkansas Teacher of the Year and founding and leading three different Arkansas charter schools. Among them is KIPP Delta College Preparatory Charter School, by far the highest performing school in the Delta Region. At KIPP, all four school leaders are TFA alumni, and two-thirds of the teaching staff are either TFA alumni or current corps members.

Our long, successful history with TFA will enable us to double the size of the TFA corps in Arkansas beginning in the 2010-11 school year. A couple of factors make this possible. First, TFA has established a new regional training center to serve the Delta, intending to attract more corps members to complete their service in that part of the state. Secondly, TFA has experienced an overall surge in high-quality applicants in conjunction with the recent economic downturn. Nationally, some 35,000 individuals applied to TFA this year compared to last year's record high of 25,000.

We'll encourage TFA teachers to remain in Arkansas to teach in high-need districts after their commitment period is up: TFA training and support, along with the state-mandated test (*Praxis*

Series) will be an acceptable alternative certification path for teachers, rather than other alternative licensure paths, such as those offered by the state or colleges and universities.

Our goal is to increase quality STEM programming in all school districts, integrating it thoroughly into the curriculum. School districts must implement at least one STEM program that focuses on professional development for their teachers or programs for their students, and we encourage both in tandem. Although not exhaustive, the following list of programs has successfully engaged students and teachers in the STEM fields. New Race to the Top grant funding will support a network of technical assistance to help school districts determine the type of program that best meets their local needs and circumstances. A district may also choose to build on its current STEM programming by personalizing a choice that matches their specific needs with a "Build-Your-Own" program, explained later in this section.

STEM Starters Systemic opportunities for learners in science, technology, and engineering have been less than optimal in our elementary schools. To address that deficit in the lower grades, a STEM initiative, **Project STEM Starters**, was developed and subsequently funded through the USDOE Jacob K. Javits Program. The project components, goals, objectives, and activities aim to increase science learning for all students in grades K through 6 and also to expand teachers' knowledge and skills in the STEM disciplines.

Project STEM Starters is a scale-up of two previous USDOE projects that demonstrated, through scientifically-based research and evaluation studies, two very important results: They increased teachers' skills via top-notch professional development; and they increased achievement in the core subject area of science for *elementary students from under-represented groups*. Those project components that boosted teachers' knowledge and students' success have been configured into the unique STEM Starters model.[21]

The program brings the excitement of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to students and teachers alike. In multiple studies, the inquiry-based science units native to STEM Starters have improved students' science achievement, critical thinking, and understanding of scientific investigation.[22] Additionally, the professional development components have demonstrated

[21] Cotabish, Robinson, MacFarlane, and Wood, 2010.
[22] Feng et al, 2005; VanTassel-Baska et al, 1998; VanTassel-Baska et al, 2007.

statistically significant results in increasing teachers' knowledge and skills in the focus areas.[23]

STEM Starters incorporates professional development for *all* teachers, whether they teach the general student population, instruct gifted and talented students, or serve as science specialists within schools or districts. For two consecutive summers, teachers attend training institutes conducted by professionals from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, who cover beginning through advanced subject matter. Institutes provide educators with content related to the STEM disciplines and STEM-related resources, including science curriculum units and supplemental materials developed through Project STEM Starters.

From the outset of STEM Starters, the Arkansas STEM Coalition, which is comprised of science experts, business leaders, and policymakers, has increased the vitality and scope of the initiative by recruiting others to jump on board. The project involves not only the Coalition, but the state's larger STEM community, including university STEM professionals. All of them combine to develop additional rich instructional materials to supplement the field-tested and validated science curriculum units; furnish intensive professional development; and focus on well-designed research and evaluation studies to document the project.

Race to the Top will enable us to offer STEM Starters for all grades K-6, responding to the need for an integrated K-12 STEM program. With its emphasis on the elementary grades, STEM Starters feeds smoothly into AAIMS, which serves secondary schools and is explained below. *(More information on Project STEM Starters is in the Invitational Priorities Appendix D-3-2.)*

AAIMS and APTIP On August 29, 2007, Governor Beebe announced that Arkansas was one of only seven states[24] to receive a $13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative to improve student's Advanced Placement scores. The coordinating organization, the **Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science** (AAIMS), is a non-profit corporation. It works with our schools and the private sector to maximize the number of students achieving qualifying scores on AP math, science, and English exams by planning, implementing, and incentivizing programs. The **Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program** (APTIP) replicates the highly successful

[23] Robinson, Cotabish, Wood, and Pearson, 2006; Cotabish and Robinson, 2007.
[24] Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington were initially named as grant recipients. Washington did not continue on as a grantee.

and nationally acclaimed AP Strategies Program originally implemented in the Dallas Independent School District. These training and incentive programs complement the Advanced Placement Program administered by the College Board. (See more information in *Appendix D-3-3*).

APTIP increases both the participation and performance of high school students in rigorous college-level work in math, science, English, and other AP courses. It also expands access to college-level courses for traditionally under-represented students. Research shows students who pass an AP course are three times more likely to earn a college degree than those who don't. The program's comprehensive approach increases both teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement through content training, support for teachers and students, vertical alignment among the progression of teachers, expanded enrollment, and incentives.

The overall goals of these training and incentive programs are to:

- increase the number of students taking AP tests;
- increase the number of students passing AP tests; and
- increase the number of students graduating from college.

This program has produced dramatic annual increases[25] in the number of students passing rigorous AP exams, and the program has sustained those increases for over a decade in other states. Further, results for African-American and Hispanic students outstripped those of majority-race students, closing the achievement gap at the most rigorous level.

Over the next four years, Race to the Top will allow us to *add 60 more schools* to APTIP alongside the 24 schools already operating it. The key elements of success for scaling and implementing APTIP are outlined below:

1. **Open enrollment for AP courses**

   A culture of exclusivity has grown up around who takes AP courses. That's a culture we aim to shift toward inclusiveness by encouraging reluctant students to enroll in rigorous courses. Too often, pupils must prove their way into challenging courses, limiting enrollment to a few top students and reinforcing stereotypes about what AP scholars “look like.”

   Many more high school students, tentative about the AP challenge, can stretch themselves to

[25] The *Invitational Priorities* section of the *Appendix* has more information on APTIP and its results in Arkansas.

succeed in strenuous AP courses with encouragement and support. When counselors and teachers express high expectations and confidence that youngsters can succeed at demanding levels, and then back up their invitation with solid instruction and sustained support, students can and do perform accordingly.

2. Incentives for teacher and student performance

Offering incentives for performance and extra pay for extra work sends a message to both students and teachers that AP success matters enough to merit rewards. The goal is passing a national performance benchmark, not just making a grade in a course; incentives help keep that end—and the accompanying recognition—in sight. Incentives encourage teachers to take the training necessary to teach more rigorous courses. After all, teachers as well as students take a risk when it comes to more demanding curriculum. Financial rewards for taking on extra work can go far toward easing trepidation.

3. **High quality, content-focused teacher training**

Many of today's high school teachers don't have sufficient content knowledge to successfully teach a rigorous AP math or science course. Intensive training has to build teachers' capacity. The College Board provides national quality control for teachers' AP preparation by approving professional development instructors who meet high standards of performance in teaching AP courses. Summer training, plus additional classes during the year, deepen teachers' content knowledge and equip them with the pedagogy required for the highest quality instruction.

4. **Teacher mentoring and vertical teaming**

Research has taught us that, to be effective, professional development has to include continuous support at the school level. Accordingly, each APTIP teacher is assigned a lead teacher for guidance, feedback, training, and other support to help the APTIP teacher reach his or her full potential right along with that of the students. The lead teacher also guides a team of same-subject teachers across vertical grade levels so elementary teachers learn how to prepare their pupils for rigorous AP courses in the junior and senior grades. This alignment creates a crucial, continuous pipeline of students who have the requisite background for AP success.

The **EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology) Initiative**, which began in a small Arkansas town in 1996, is now a national nonprofit organization that involves many thousands of students in hundreds of schools all over the nation. EAST presents new ways of learning for modern students, focusing on student-driven service projects using the latest technology. EAST labs (most of them in middle and high schools, but some are also in primary schools and colleges) feature state-of-the-art workstations, servers, software, and accessories, such as GPS/GIS mapping tools, architectural and CAD design software, 3-D animation suites, and much more. Students find problems in their local communities and then use these tools to solve them.

The focus isn't on technology itself, but on technology as a catalyst and vehicle for learning. EAST's central concept is based on the importance of students' responsibility for their own learning, with a focus on cooperative learning, individual accountability, and developing problem-solving, decision-making, and high-order thinking skills. In the unique EAST learning environment, students are responsible for creating their own lesson plans. No lectures, no tests, no lockstep standardized assessment and grading; rather, a facilitator (a teacher trained in the EAST process) guides the students as they identify problems and wrangle the solutions themselves. This radically different approach to learning submersion creates students who are better prepared for both college and the business world, where they're more eager to learn--and well versed in *how* to learn, both individually and in groups.

EAST's design has a powerful effect on students, leveraging outcomes that can be elusive among the general population of learners. EAST builds each child's intellectual muscle, problem solving skills, and ability to work effectively in teams. The youngsters learn to see themselves as a contributing member of a much broader community, and that they, too, own a portion of responsibility for its vitality. EAST engages students not only in their present learning, but in planning their future in college, vocational school, and the careers beyond. It raises students' aspirations *along with* their test scores in basic subjects.

The EAST experience works for everyone: both boys and girls and across ethnic, socio-economic, and academic groups, as well as other demographic distinctions that mirror the diversity of our world. When students help themselves and their cohorts reach proficiency with the tools of emerging technology and vocational fields, they also gain the confidence to lead and to contribute long after they leave the lab. (*See the Appendix D-3-4 for research on the EAST Initiative.*)

Race to the Top support will enable EAST to expand into some 60 additional schools in Arkansas, joining 185 others. Priority placement will go to our lowest performing schools and to expanding existing programs via EAST After Hours. When schools sign on for EAST, they aren't buying a program in a box; rather, the school, the program's facilitator, and students are investing significant time and energy in an educationally transformational process. All participating schools commit to sustain the program and strengthen it into an integral element of the relationship between students and community.

Real World Design Project We're pleased to participate in the Real World Design Challenge (RWDC) for the first time, a national education initiative that teams industry experts with high school students who gain engineering experience by solving a proposed challenge. This unique adventure encourages students to pursue math, science, and engineering fields, positioning them to enter the working world of STEM.

The RWDC connects the needs of industry with the future of education. It teaches hands-on innovation, creativity, and collaboration in concert with the expertise industry, government, and higher education have been perfecting for decades. This real-world approach to learning readily seeps into spongy young minds and eager hands, opening an attractive door to the exciting world of work and exploration that STEM has built. A large proportion of our STEM workforce is at the edge of retirement, so we're intensely interested in preparing a steady stream of new workers to step in as the elders' partners and then as their replacement. The Real World Design Challenge helps lay the pipeline by motivating students, building capacity in the state, and providing significant resources to enhance STEM education: participating schools receive not only direct online and phone-line support, but also sophisticated and powerful state-of-the art engineering software.

Entering the design challenge requires schools to encourage youngsters to investigate math, science, and engineering fields well before and after the experience. This year, students will join in the national challenge to design the tail section of an aircraft to maximize fuel efficiency. Scientists, engineers, and college and university faculty will evaluate the students' solutions. This event is a significant impetus to expand the STEM talent pool by pulling in students who might otherwise miss this kind of stimulating experience and the enticing possibilities it reveals.

Build your own STEM program Any of our school districts that aren't awarded a specific STEM opportunity, or choose not to take part in those described above, may build its own STEM program. The state requires that every program have a well developed plan to address all the following criteria:

- Barriers must be removed so all kids are exposed to STEM programs.
- An evaluation system must be developed at the onset to measure the program's effectiveness toward preparing all students for college and the workforce.
- Higher education is a required partner, and business and industry partners are also recommended.
- Delivery must include innovative teaching and learning methods.

- Professional development in the STEM areas is required for all teachers and principals who work with the program.
- The plan must include an explanation of how the program will effect the school district's entire P-12 system.
- Summer enrichment programs must be offered in the STEM areas.
- Hands-on, applied delivery of content must be integral.

Teachers and counselors must participate in professional development about STEM careers.

Performance Measures for (D)(3)(i) *Note: All information below is requested for Participating LEAs.*	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
General goals to be provided at time of application:	**Baseline data and annual targets**				
Percentage of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice).	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice).	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective.	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective.	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice).	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice).	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective.	**	**	**	**	**
Percentage of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective.	**	**	**	**	**
**Arkansas will set the baseline for teacher and principal effectiveness in these areas in fall 2010. The percent increase target each year thereafter will be 10 percent.					
General data to be provided at time of application:					
Total number of schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	63				
Total number of schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	6				
Total number of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	20,952				

Total number of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	2,153
Total number of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	63
Total number of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).	63

Arkansas used the number of students in poverty by using the free and reduced lunch rate count. The schools are the number in the highest or lowest quartile.

Data to be requested of grantees in the future:
Number of teachers and principals in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as highly effective (as defined in this notice) in the prior academic year.
Number of teachers and principals in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as highly effective (as defined in this notice) in the prior academic year.
Number of teachers and principals in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as ineffective in the prior academic year.
Number of teachers and principals in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as ineffective in the prior academic year.

Performance Measures for (D)(3)(ii) *Note: All information below is requested for participating LEAs.*	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
General goals to be provided at time of application:	**Baseline data and annual targets**				
Percentage of mathematics teachers who were evaluated as effective or better.	**	70%	75%	80%	90%
Percentage of science teachers who were evaluated as effective or better.	**	70%	75%	80%	90%
Percentage of special education teachers who were evaluated as effective or better.	**	70%	75%	80%	90%
Percentage of teachers in language instruction educational programs who were evaluated as effective or better.	**	70%	75%	80%	90%

* At the time this grant was written, Arkansas did not measure teacher effectiveness (based on the definition provided). However, this is our plan for next year and in the future. While Arkansas is not currently collecting this data, the data shared as part of The New Teacher Project is explained below:

The Widget Effect : Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness
The New Teacher Project: Daniel Weisberg, Susan Sexton, Jennifer Mulhern, David Keeling

The report entitled *The Widget Effect* examines the pervasive and longstanding failure to recognize and respond to variations in the effectiveness of Americas' teachers. At the heart of this matter is the system for evaluating teachers. For two years, researchers from the New Teacher Projects (authors of *The Widget Effect)* collected data from four Arkansas LEAs (El Dorado, Jonesboro, Little Rock and Springdale.)

The widget effect is characterized by institutional indifference to variations in teacher performance. The five indifferences reflected in the report are:

1) All teachers are rated good or great: A binary system with more than 99% of teachers receiving a satisfactory rating.
2) Excellence goes unrecognized: Truly exceptional teachers are not being identified.
3) Inadequate professional development: Failure to assess variations in instructional effectiveness precludes identifying specific needs of teachers.
4) No special attention to novices: It is widely recognized that teachers are less effective in their beginning years, however, over 66% were scored as "satisfactory."
5) Poor performance goes unaddressed: While both teachers and administrators recognize ineffective teachers are in the schools, districts confirm the scarcity of formal dismissals based on poor performance.

Jonesboro's data stated that zero percent of their probationary teachers were non-renewed for performance in five years and that 99.7% of tenured teachers received a satisfactory rating or equivalent. Similarly, Springdale data stated that 100% of tenured teachers received a satisfactory rating or equivalent. The data on Arkansas LEAs who participated in this research project and its resulting report is representative of most districts in the state.

General data to be provided at time of application:	
Total number of mathematics teachers. (licensed)	24,709
Total number of science teachers. (licensed)	25,594
Total number of special education teachers. (licensed)	6,510
Total number of teachers in language instruction educational programs. (licensed)	1,748

These numbers include those licensed in early childhood, middle level and secondary.

Data to be requested of grantees in the future:	

Number of mathematics teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year.	[redacted]
Number of science teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year.	[redacted]
Number of special education teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year.	[redacted]
Number of teachers in language instruction educational programs in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year.	[redacted]

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs *(14 points)*

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—
(i) Link student achievement and student growth (both as defined in this notice) data to the students' teachers and principals, to link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing, and to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the State; and
(ii) Expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: One page

(D)(4)(i) The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to link student achievement and student growth (both as defined in this notice) data to the students' teachers and principals, to link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing, and to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the State.

Linking student-teacher data Development to significantly enrich the value of the student-teacher data link is underway. At the same time, though, our APSCN basic data-collection and reporting system maintains a student-teacher link by mapping both student and teacher to a master course schedule within each school district's student management system. Though this linkage is currently developed, additional enhancements are planned to maximize utility of the linkage. (See *Section C*.) The state's electronic transcript system, Triand, assigns a unique identifier to each teacher and correlates it with data in the teacher licensure system to show which college education program granted the teacher's degree, along with and a limited record of subsequent professional development activities.

Arkansas has been awarded a Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Under this grant, we'll collaborate with Florida, Georgia,

Louisiana, and Ohio to address a broad range of system, process, and policy questions around how to best measure teacher effectiveness. Our experiences in this project will give us the critical broader context for how to most appropriately use data. Through this grant, which engages states that can already capture student-teacher course linkages, the Gates foundation is helping states improve the means for collecting, verifying, reporting, and analyzing linked teacher and student data, with a special focus on the need for high-quality data that are comparable across states and validated by teachers. The project is intentionally restricted to a small scale (with our limited group of states and just three pilot LEAs within each state) for focused study. The goal is to develop a common, best-practice definition of "teacher of record," along with a standard SEA business process for linking and validating teacher and student data (including state assessment data), that can be expanded beyond the grant's initial narrow borders. A team of educators is currently planning the criteria and target dates for implementation.

Report Card for Colleges of Education Programs The classroom teacher has the single most powerful school-based influence on student learning. Even if some teachers are “a natural,” all of them acquire grounding in current research, latest content developments, pedagogy, data and classroom management, and much more. As we work to expand the available corps of well prepared and highly effective teachers, we need to know which teacher preparation programs are most effectively preparing educators. ADHE, in partnership with ADE, will develop a "report card" for all 18 of our colleges and universities that offer approved teacher and administrator licensure programs. ADHE will bring together various stakeholders (representatives from the Dean’s Council, the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, the Arkansas Education Association, ADE, and others) to identify criteria and measures of success so the Arkansas Report Card for Colleges of Education can be published in summer 2011.

At a minimum, the report card will highlight the list below: (measurements and definitions will be defined by the stakeholders group referenced above):

- the graduation or completion rate from each of the teacher and administrator preparation programs which also takes into account differing missions, scopes, and sequences at the universities across the state;
- employment statistics on those who recently graduated from all programs, including alternative licensure avenues;

- survey results from program completers after their first year on the job (at least) in response to specific questions about their preparation from this program and its relevance to the classroom/school/workplace;
- growth of licensure programs in hard-to-staff content areas, especially STEM (measurement to be determined by the stakeholder group mentioned above);
- a measure of teacher and principal impact ("value-added") on student achievement over time;
- measures of teachers' and principals rates' of retention, attendance, and placement in high-poverty and high-minority schools (and the like) in relation to their preparation programs;
- educators' performance evaluations correlated to their preparation programs to reveal which programs are most and least effective (the stakeholder group shall determine the best way to handle the inconsistencies that may occur with the implementation of evaluations);
- a "checklist" to determine if the preparation programs are aligned to the curriculum being taught in the public schools;
- electronic publishing for user friendliness.

Once the report card is fully implemented and publicly reported, its transparency will allow us to initiate an accountability system: the state can set policy to attach consequences to consistently underperforming programs and rewards for programs that dependably produce quality educators. The state will support expansion of successful programs, intervene in those falling short, or withdraw approval of existing programs that don't meet high standards. The report card will also serve as a marketing tool for recruiting future students and courting funds. Students will be attracted to schools with exemplary programs.

Also, ADE is collaborating with the Arkansas Education Association and the Arkansas Chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in a research study to help determine the effectiveness of the state's teacher preparation programs. Included in the study will be teachers' perceptions of their preparation programs' effectiveness and level of support. The study will also analyze the relationship of teacher preparation programs to student achievement, teacher retention rates, and teacher placement rates.

(D)(4)(ii) The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable* annual targets *to expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals as defined in this notice.

Six-State Consortium We recognize the need to develop effective recruiting and retention strategies toward the next generation of teachers. Over the past ten months, we have been a member of a *Six-State Consortium* ("Revisioning the Professional Educator Continuum") that is envisioning a new system of educator recruitment, retention, preparation, development, and empowerment. Faced with

similar challenges, the consortium members committed to strengthening educator practice as a significant force in effecting this transformation. The state will include these consortium concepts as Arkansas launches innovative ideas to build great teachers and leaders. The chart below identifies the overarching issues of the consortium and how Arkansas's RTTT proposal addresses each of these issues:

Overarching Issues of the Consortium	Arkansas's Plan in RTTT on each Issue
Teacher Recruitment and Retention	Special Education and ESL, Teach For America, Revitalize Teacher Prep Programs
Job-Related Interests and Behaviors of Generation Y teachers	Technology Training for IHE and LEAs, Revitalize Teacher Prep Programs, College of Education State-Wide Report Card
21st Century Teaching and Learning Skills	Technology Training for IHE and LEAs, Revitalize Teacher Prep Programs
Career Continuum in Other Professions	College of Education State-Wide Report Card, Instructional Facilitators
Educator Assessment Instruments	Teacher/Principal Evaluations, Haberman Model (used for assessing disposition of new teacher – already used in non-traditional programs in AR)
Professional Learning for Professional Advancement	Professional Development, STEM Professional Development, Revitalize Teacher Prep Programs
Opportunities for Teachers to Remain in the Classroom and Assume Additional Responsibilities	Instructional Facilitators, Differentiated Compensation Pilot, STEM-Elementary Math Specialist

Through this process, Race to the Top funding will enable us to establish a task force to review, define, and outline effective teacher preparation programs as evidenced by the results of the College of Education report card. The group will focus on a few key questions such as those posed below:

1. Relevance of field experiences to the majority of our school districts:
   - Should the field experiences be expanded for all student interns to a variety of locations such as rural, urban, suburban, poor, and isolated school settings?
   - Should a teaching license be created for student interns?
   - Should the internship experience be expanded to a full school year with compensation, thus affording teacher candidates a realistic view of classroom development throughout the school year?

2. To what extent are the colleges of education:

- students who have an “undeclared” major during the freshman and sophomore years?
- identifying students on campus who are math/science majors and helping them seek dual degrees in their content area and education?

3. How will we ensure any needed 21st century technology training for:
- teacher candidates and IHE faculty?
- the K-12 staff currently in our schools?

4. How can we best build a strong, relevant elementary and middle level math - science program for those teacher candidates, thus build a strong foundation for math progression for all K-12 students?

5. How can we build a residency program model and partnerships between IHEs and LEAs where STEM teacher candidates will get training in different settings, such as the state's School of Mathematics, Science and Arts, and in schools with a high percentage of poor or minority students?

6. What is the relevancy of the coursework required for 7-12 teachers, and how do we ensure the essential alignment and balance between content knowledge and content pedagogy?

Finally, the consortium realizes these initiatives must be implemented in phases and is prepared to seek additional funding to carry out those phases at the conclusion of RTTT.

Arkansas’s role in the six-state consortium will also focus on our critical challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified STEM teachers. Through the RTTT application, we are providing funds for all LEAs to build STEM programming within their schools, including not only include STEM programs for students but also professional development for their teachers.

STEM To increase awareness of the needs and soliciting help, in September 2009, Governor Mike Beebe challenged the state's Council of Deans to improve STEM education in Arkansas. The deans wrote a warm response, agreeing that STEM education is vital and assuring the Governor of their willingness to help in any way to improve the quality and quantity of STEM education.

In an attachment addressing the governor's challenge, the council outlined the "good news," challenges, and recommendations in relation to the need for increasing the quantity and quality of STEM teachers. Many of their recommendations parallel actions we're already mustering. For example, the deans lamented the large number of high school students opting out of Smart Core math and science classes. The Smart Core Incentive Program, described in *Section B3*, is aimed directly at reversing this trend. The council cited the need to better prepare elementary math teacher candidates, another area we're addressing.

Among the cited strengths (good news) were: the growing number of graduate-level teacher preparation programs; partnerships with community colleges for expanding access to programs; increased work in the K-12 public schools to enhance teacher recruitment and retention; the colleges' high standards; and Math and Science Education Centers in colleges that cater professional development to STEM teachers.

The deans acknowledged the challenges of retaining STEM teachers; a shortage of college faculty with STEM experience in the public schools and the need to better prepare P-4 math teacher candidates. Some of the recommendations were to raise compensation for STEM faculty and focus on raising the number of teachers in high-need areas. Several of the ideas discussed in the Multi-State Consortium section are also commitments made by this council.

As discussed in *Section D3*, we are re-energizing our education system around STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as an economic engine for Arkansas. Governor Beebe leads from the central theme that education and economic development are inextricably bound, and the connective tissue is the workforce. He has directed us to shore up the infrastructure throughout our education system to ensure we're preparing students to succeed at the highest academic levels in the most demanding disciplines.

Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
General goals to be provided at time of application:	**Baseline data and annual targets**				
Percentage of teacher preparation programs in the state for which the public can access data on the achievement and growth (as defined in this notice) of the graduates' students.	0%	75%	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of principal preparation programs in the state for which the public can access data on the achievement and growth (as defined in this notice) of the graduates' students.	0%	75%	100%	100%	100%

General data to be provided at time of application:	
Total number of teacher credentialing programs in the state.	18
Total number of principal credentialing programs in the state.	9
Total number of teachers in the state. Licensed	57,597
Total number of principals in the state. licensed	7,046

The number of teachers and principals in the state is the number of licensed educators, not the number employed in Arkansas public schools.

The 7,046 number of licensed principals in the state may not be unique, since some principals are licensed in more than one grade span level.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals *(20 points)*

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan for its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to—

(i) Provide effective, data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals that are, where appropriate, ongoing and job-embedded. Such support might focus on, for example, gathering, analyzing, and using data; designing instructional strategies for improvement; differentiating instruction; creating school environments supportive of data-informed decisions; designing instruction to meet the specific needs of high need students (as defined in this notice); and aligning systems and removing barriers to effective implementation of practices designed to improve student learning outcomes; and

(ii) Measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of those supports in order to improve student achievement (as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages

(D)(5)(i) Provide effective, data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals that are, where appropriate, ongoing and job-embedded. Such support might focus on, for example, gathering, analyzing, and using data; designing instructional strategies for improvement; differentiating instruction; creating school environments supportive of data-informed decisions; designing instruction to meet the specific needs of high need students (as defined in this notice); and aligning systems and removing barriers to effective implementation of practices designed to improve student learning outcomes.

We've long understood the potential for change by back-mapping the differences expected in student achievement to the differences needed in the behaviors of students, teachers, and education leaders. To promote change in a positive direction, all educators must devote at least sixty hours to quality professional development every year to maintain their Arkansas teaching license. The state has allocated over $20 million in professional development funding every year since 2004.

To ensure that quality is, indeed, our hallmark, Arkansas's Smart Initiative was launched in 1998 to focus on standards, professional learning, student assessment, and accountability. In this section, we'll examine our concept of professional development, touch on what we've explained in other

sections, introduce other initiatives here, and conclude with a statement of our commitment to continuously learn how to be a better learning organization.

Philosophic grounding Professional development entails a philosophy as well as learning processes. We often think of training as instruction to expand knowledge and build skills or proficiency in a certain area, which it does include. But we want our professional learning to go beyond topical training; we want it to reshape attitudes and outlooks into a sense of mission to meet the goals; we want our learning interaction to build cohesiveness and a sense of shared responsibility for progress; and we want our experiences to reinforce our commitment to success for *all* our children.

When we embrace systemic reform, we acknowledge professional development as an essential component of thinking and acting *systemically*. If we define a system as a group of interrelated and interdependent elements that form a complex whole, then what happens in one part of the system affects the other parts of the system as well. If we want our children to learn and grown, then we have to grow right along with them, teaching them *how* to learn throughout their lifetime.

Growing school leaders The Arkansas Leadership Academy instituted the Master Principal Institute in 2004 to grow principals into exemplary school leaders through a demanding three-phase professional growth sequence that takes about three years to complete *(see Section D3).* More recently, coalescing professional development into a holistic thrust has led us to develop a state leadership plan under the guidance of Dr. Michael Fullan[26] and the Leadership Coordinating Council (*Act 222 of 2009*). Effecting school reform requires effective leaders throughout our education system. Our plan will enable us to identify the stages of growth in school leaders who make an authentic difference in school success. Promoting the progression from one stage to the next will enable leaders to develop into the change agents that align every facet of the organization toward student achievement.

Leadership Support Specialists Smart Leadership is our statewide initiative to ensure all school and district administrators are instructional leaders intent on creating the environment and the

[26] Dr. Fullen is a widely recognized and well respected international expert on leadership for education reform.

expectation for high-level learning. A broad-based collaboration of partners[27] create a network of professional learning and technical support to build that instructional leadership capacity, envisioned in the state-adopted Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards.

Part of that support for school leaders is furnished by Leadership Support Specialists, who are assigned to schools that purchase services from the ALA. But Race to the Top funding will enable us increase the number of these specialists, housing them in our 15 regional education cooperatives. There, each will join an experienced and energetic professional staff dedicated to delivering the technical support and training necessary to integrate our Race to the Top initiatives into everyday school life: the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) and the new teacher and principal evaluation process, for examples. In addition, the Leadership Support Specialists will serve as on-site coaches for school leaders as they plan and carry out all facets of school functions: resource allocation, instruction and assessment, coaching and feedback loops, evaluation, and more.

Support for technical professional development Our commitment to data-driven decision making *(refer to Section C)* entails technology that puts a wealth of information as close as the computer keyboard of every educator in the state. Our Instructional Improvement System and Unified Resource Portal are data powerhouses, and our Triand transcript-retrieval system and Hive interactive site are tools that readily extend the data scope. But such technological systems can be intimidating and slow to be integrated into the everyday business of instruction. To forestall any lag in fully using our rich array of data resources and communication processes, educators must be well trained in not only the mechanics of using the technology, but applying the data to improving students' academic success.

So, we'll assemble a team of expert technology educators to support all training groups as they collaborate to develop customized training and materials for face-to-face PD as well as online learning and trouble-shooting resources. The team will include experts in online and Website technology, technical writers, and professionals skilled in training adults to befriend technology and use it confidently. The team's skills will also translate into customized training opportunities available via such electronic avenues as ADE iTunes U and Arkansas IDEAS, below. The Technical

[27] They include ADE, the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA), education cooperatives, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA), Arkansas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (AASCD), and other stakeholders.

Professional Development Support team and Leadership Support Specialists will work in tandem with ADE, the co-ops, STEM centers, our technology partners, and school district technologists, trouble shooters, and trainers to ensure school staff can effectively use all the tools available to them *and* apply the harvested data to their decisions across the schooling spectrum.

Below are two examples of specific training on technology tools offered to our schools:

- Training specific to ADE's Triand transcript-sharing system and the Hive data visualization site is available online and in face-to-face training session at co-ops and individual school districts. A special training component will soon be added to Hive.
- Arkansas IDEAS, our professional development portal *(see Section (C)(3)(i))*, has a trainer on staff who is available for on-site training on how to access the portal and an overview of the available online courses. Three content specialists will tailor training for schools based on their ACSIP plans and also embed the portal training in any customized training. A help desk is available for users' questions, concerns, and assistance.

STEM emphasis Through Race to the Top, the state will fund *all* school districts to increase quality STEM programming. Professional development can focus on enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills in science, technology, math, or targeted programs. STEM Starters will be available to all elementary schools *(see Section D3)*, requiring professional development for every teacher in grades K through 6. In two consecutive summer institutes, teachers progress from basic to advanced training in STEM content and science-related curriculum, resources, and supplemental materials.

In secondary schools, the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP) increases the effectiveness of teachers in Advanced Placement math, science, and other subjects through high-quality, content-focused training for effective AP instruction. Mentors support AP teachers and facilitate teaming across vertical grade levels to ensure alignment from elementary to secondary schools.

A Math and Science Partnership Grant has enabled us to increase awareness and interest in teaching elementary math. In a professional development outreach to math specialists, through the Arkansas Educational Television Network and compressed interactive video (CIV) in locations around the state, over 200 educators have been involved. As a result, interest in teaching math is rising *(see Section (D)(3).*

Smart grants go to our 15 education cooperatives and 12 STEM Centers, which are regionally located across the state. The state-funded Smart grants underwrite literacy, math, and science specialists, who develop and deliver a range of comprehensive and sequential PD in their content areas and in associated pedagogy. They readily furnish on-site technical support and coaching to answer questions, facilitate effective implementation, and encourage their colleagues.

Other professional development for principals and teachers has been integral to all our Smart Arkansas initiatives and, as we transition to the Common Core Standards, it will be essential to support that shift *(see Section (B)*. The scope of associated professional development will be wide, its focus intense, and its quality high. For example, the state has contracted with a well respected expert to facilitate professional learning focused on performance-based assessment strategies embedded and integral to the curriculum. Trainer-of-trainers modules will be deployed via the co-ops to accelerate professional learning for all educators throughout the ranks, from teachers to superintendents.

As we transition to a new evaluation system for teachers and principals, *see Section (B)(2)*, learning to use the system fairly and accurately will require professional development for both the evaluated and the evaluators. Evaluation-revealed strengths can be capitalized upon for further professional grow, and weaknesses will be countered by prescribed professional development. For both principals and teachers, professional growth plans will be based on interim observations and evaluation outcomes.

Persistently low-achieving schools are targeted through our Smart Accountability thrust. School Improvement Grants enable us to aim at building instructional capacity within the school, focusing on research-based strategies, need-specific professional development, and alignment across subject matter, grades, school services, and accountability measures. The Arkansas Leadership Academy intensifies the focus on turning around low-achieving schools with its Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Institute *(see (E)(3).* The powerful professional development uses a team approach to increase the capacity to create positive learning environments, improve systems within the school and district, and develop the skills and tools to transform staff into teams.

(D)(5)(ii) Measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of those supports in order to improve student achievement

National research confirms that compensation is an important element in recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals, but the studies reveal it's not the most important one. Overall conditions—the climate and the culture—in which educators work are key factors in their deciding to stay at a particular school, continue in a certain role, or even remain in any aspect of education.

In 2007, education partners in Arkansas collaborated on a study of teacher working conditions. Sponsored by the Research and Advocacy Network, the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, the Arkansas School Boards Association, and the Arkansas Education Association, the study revealed five primary findings:

1. Working conditions can be important predictors of student achievement.
2. Working conditions can make a difference in teacher retention.
3. Leadership is critical to improving working conditions.
4. Many aspects of working conditions have a "ripple effect," and improving one domain will have a positive carryover to other domains.
5. Focusing on working conditions is a cost effective strategy to develop schools of the 21st century.

We'll use the Race to the Top opportunity to build on this research and commission a full study on the prevailing teaching and learning conditions throughout the state. In order to measure, evaluate, and continuously improve, we have to know where we're starting. So we want the study to show us:

- how school climate and conditions can be revealed by data, such as attendance records (both students and staff); frequency and types of disciplinary infractions and sanctions; drop-out rates; staff turnover; incidents of vandalism; employee assistance programs; sociograms; and the like.
- what the data tells us about the learning conditions in our schools, so awareness can help us change toward the climate and the culture that best promote effective teaching and eager learning.
- where we need to focus educators' professional development to ensure they understand all aspects of school conditions and climate, and how those conditions help or hinder a positive teaching-and-learning environment.
- how to ensure deployment of professional development that can promote the climate and conditions that improve teaching and learning.

We want nothing to impede the progress promised by our Race to the Top plans. Professional development must lead to internalized and institutionalized reform, so that every aspect of our

aspirations and behaviors—our everyday norms—are transformational. To that end, we'll use the guidelines of the National Staff Development Council's *Assessing Impact* to institute a process for measuring and evaluating how well our professional development suite and instructional improvement systems are moving us forward. Where we're missing the mark, we'll make adjustments to continuously improve as a learning organization that learns about itself.

(E) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools ***(50 total points)***

State Reform Conditions Criteria

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs *(10 points)*

The extent to which the State has the legal, statutory, or regulatory authority to intervene directly in the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (E)(1):

(c) A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

Recommended maximum response length: One page

ADE has the legal and regulatory authority to intervene directly in the state's lowest achieving schools. Act 1467 of 2003 *(see Appendix E-1-1),* commonly referred to as "The Omnibus Quality Education Act," authorizes the state to intervene when a school district fails to meet state accreditation standards or falls into academic distress. Interventions can range from technical assistance to state takeover of the district with removal of the superintendent and the school board. Act 35 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 *(see Appendix E-1-2)* mandates academic content standards, assessments, and an accountability system (which includes a "status" and a "gains" model), along with professional development for teachers and administrators.

Subsequent to these laws, the state developed a rule[28] with very specific language about the consequences for failing schools: "Should a school fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress in the fifth year (year 4 of school improvement), the Board shall advance that school into restructuring. In restructuring, the Department may require the school to dismiss staff and administrators, annex the

[28] *Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program and the Academic Distress Program* Rule (*Ark.Code.Ann. § 6-15-401*)

school to another school that is not in school improvement, and/or take other such action as deemed necessary by the Department and the Board."

The USDOE accepted Arkansas and eight other states into the Differentiated Accountability Pilot. Our model, "Smart Accountability,"[29] has allowed us to explore ways to correlate research-based interventions with the specific academic deficiencies that have led to a school's needed improvement. This flexibility allows us to be even more directive in the interventions necessary for persistently low-achieving schools or "high-priority schools." Smart Accountability is a more nuanced way to grade our schools: stronger measures can be applied to chronically underperforming schools, but we can take a more measured approach with episodic, non-trending underperformance, which this section later shows.

Arkansas has a strong commitment to high student achievement, but after several years of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many of our schools are in some stage of school improvement. Students in some schools are achieving across the board except for one subpopulation; other schools are failing with students across the whole population. Smart Accountability allows us to distinguish among schools by applying different labels, interventions, and consequences according to different school improvement statuses, which are based on the Arkansas Benchmark Assessment. This system divides our 1,094 schools into the six categories and correlating criteria below:

Label	Selection Criteria
Achieving Schools	Meets Standards ***In 2009, 498 (46%) schools were classified as Achieving; 176 (16%) were classified in Alert status – missing AYP for one year.***
Targeted Improvement	Schools that don't meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the annual measurable goal (AMO) for 25% or fewer groups and don't miss the AMO for combined population resulting in school improvement years 1-3 will be labeled, "Targeted Improvement." **TI-1, TI-2, and TI-3 Corrective Action** ***In 2009, 140 (13%) schools were classified in Targeted Improvement.***
Whole School Improvement	Schools that don't meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for combined population and/or more than 25% of groups resulting in school improvement years 1-3 will be labeled, "Whole School Improvement." **WSI-1, WSI-2, and WSI-3 Corrective Action** ***In 2009, 113 (10%) schools were classified in Whole School Improvement.***

[29] Granted under section 9401 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

Targeted Intensive Improvement	Schools that don't meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for 25% or fewer groups and don't miss the AMO for combined population resulting in school improvement for four or more years will be labeled, "Targeted Intensive Improvement." **TII-4, TII-5: Restructuring** ***In 2009, 32 (3%) schools were classified in Targeted Intensive Improvement.***
Whole School Intensive Improvement	Schools that don't meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for combined population and/or more than 25% groups resulting in school improvement years four or more years will be labeled, "Whole School Intensive Improvement" **WSII-4, WSII-5: Restructuring** ***In 2009, 64 (6%) schools were classified in Whole School Intensive Improvement.***
State Directed	Schools that don't meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy after TI-5 or WSII-5 will be labeled, "State Directed." ***In 2009, 58 (5%) schools were classified in State Directed status***. (*Some of these schools are seeing growth in their students but have been in school improvement for more than 5 years.*)

This classification system allows us to collaboratively support and directly intervene, if necessary, to assist schools struggling to meet their students' academic needs. For example, if a district is placed in State Directed status, a School Improvement (SI) Director may be assigned to oversee administration of the schools' learning environment. Other support measures have been designed to build on the legal foundations of Smart Accountability and are explained later in this section.

Reform Plan Criteria

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools *(40 points)*

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—
(i) Identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and, at its discretion, any non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) if they were eligible to receive Title I funds; and *(5 points)*
(ii) Support its LEAs in turning around these schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models (as described in *Appendix* C): turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model (provided that an LEA with more than nine persistently lowest-achieving schools may not use the transformation model for more than 50 percent of its schools). *(35 points)*
The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (E)(2) (please fill in table below):

- The State's historic performance on school turnaround, as evidenced by the total number of persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) that States or LEAs attempted to turn around in the last five years, the approach used, and the results and lessons learned to date.

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages

E(2)(i): Identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and, at its discretion, any non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) if they were eligible to receive Title I funds.

Arkansas's definition for identifying persistently lowest-achieving schools was approved by the USDOE on February 23, 2010. The definition is as follows:

The annual school performance data from our state assessments, required under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA for literacy and mathematics, were used to identify persistently lowest-achieving schools. Performance levels from annual assessments for 2007 through 2009 included all students who completed a full academic year, as well as those completing an alternate assessment. Tier 1 schools,

identified as persistently lowest-achieving, were determined from among 273 participating Title 1 schools that were in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

1. Schools were ranked based on 2009 academic achievement for mathematics and literacy combined, using an added-ranks method.
    a. Schools were sorted from highest to lowest for the percentage of students proficient in mathematics in 2009. Each school was assigned a rank based on this order with 1 representing the highest ranked performance.
    b. Schools were sorted from highest to lowest for the percentage of students proficient in literacy in 2009. Each school was assigned a rank based on this order with 1 representing the highest ranked performance.
    c. An overall rank for 2009 academic achievement was obtained by summing the ranks for mathematics and literacy.

2. Schools were ranked on progress by using the added-ranks method for 2007, 2008, and 2009 performance.
    a. Schools were sorted from highest to lowest for percentage of students proficient in mathematics for 2007 and 2008. Each school was assigned a rank based on this order for each year, with 1 representing the highest ranked performance.
    b. Schools were sorted from highest to lowest for percentage of students proficient in literacy for 2007 and 2008. Each school was assigned a rank based on this order for each year, with 1 representing the highest ranked performance.
    c. Overall ranks for 2007 and 2008 were obtained by summing the ranks for mathematics and literacy.
    d. A three-year progress ranking was obtained by summing the 2007, 2008, and 2009 rank values.

3. A final combined ranking was obtained by summing the weighted rankings for 2009 academic achievement and three-year progress. Three-year progress was weighted 1.0, and 2009 academic achievement was weighted 0.80.

4. The schools identified as persistently lowest-achieving were the bottom 14 schools when sorted by the final combined ranking. These schools had the 14 highest values for the final combined ranking.

5. No Title 1 schools in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring were identified based on a persistently low graduation rate of less than 60.0 over a number of years. Three years of graduation rates were examined.

Tier II schools were identified from among 46 Title 1 eligible (but not receiving Title I funds) secondary schools using the same method as Tier 1 schools. The bottom five schools had the highest final combined ranking values.

Arkansas's Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

School LEA	School Name	District Name	Tier I	Tier II
5403019	CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	Helena/West Helena School District	1	
6001061	CLOVERDALE MIDDLE SCHOOL	Little Rock School District	1	
901003	DERMOTT HIGH SCHOOL	Dermott School District	1	
3502010	DOLLARWAY HIGH SCHOOL	Dollarway School District	1	
3502009	DOLLARWAY MIDDLE SCHOOL	Dollarway School District	1	
1802007	EARLE HIGH SCHOOL	Earle School District	1	
6202024	HUGHES HIGH SCHOOL	Hughes School District	1	
6002060	LYNCH DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	No. Little Rock School District	1	
5404032	MARVELL HIGH SCHOOL	Marvell School District	1	
4713051	OSCEOLA HIGH SCHOOL	Osceola School District	1	
4713050	OSCEOLA MIDDLE SCHOOL	Osceola School District	1	
6002077	ROSE CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL	No. Little Rock School District	1	
6601019	TRUSTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Fort Smith School District	1	
1805021	TURRELL HIGH SCHOOL	Turrell School District	1	
6001002	HALL HIGH SCHOOL	Little Rock School District		1
6001063	J.A. FAIR HIGH SCHOOL	Little Rock School District		1
6003123	JACKSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	Pulaski County Special School District		1
6205028	PALESTINE-WHEATLEY SENIOR HIGH	Palestine-Wheatley School District		1
3505042	PINE BLUFF HIGH SCHOOL	Pine Bluff School District		1

E(2)(ii): Support its LEAs in turning around these schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models (as described in Appendix C): turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model.

Our mission is quality education for all children, so turning around low performing schools is our obligation and our firm commitment. In 2009, we took a bold step toward reversing failing schools with our Smart Accountability initiative (differentiated accountability), but the funds were insufficient for us to extend the intensive support we'd planned. Race to the Top, coupled with School Improvement Grants (SIG) from USDOE, will underwrite the resources necessary to accelerate turnarounds in persistently low achieving schools (PLA). Not only will we build on Smart Accountability, but we'll also help schools take resolute steps with intervention models: school turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation, discussed below. *(See Appendix E-2-1).*

Cohesive intervention Earlier, in *(D(2)(i),* we discussed our models for measuring students' growth and educators' effectiveness, data that will enable us to customize our approach to failing schools. Based on the school's identified weaknesses—as well as its strengths—we'll be able to target

interventions, appropriately correlate professional development, and make further adjustments throughout a process of continuous improvement.

Smart Accountability aims at not only turning around low performing schools but at preventing academic slippage in the first place. ADE has reorganized itself to better align and coordinate school support. Partnering with our 15 education cooperative service centers throughout the state ensures that diagnostic services, on-site technical assistance, and professional development are close at hand for schools needing specialized assistance. Quick-response team intervention not only reassures struggling schools that they won't be left languishing in distress, but that low performance isn't a tolerable norm.

Race to the Top funds, coupled with School Improvement Grants, will allow us to accelerate the Smart Accountability timeline with a cohesive push for improvement in concert with the entire staff of persistently low performing schools *and* powerful resources described later in this section. SIG funds will be targeted toward building instructional capacity within the school building itself, focusing on research-based strategies, need-specific professional development, and alignment across subject matter, grades, school service sectors, and accountability measures. At the same time, Race to the Top resources will be aimed at strengthening the complementary infrastructure, leadership, and support capacity of school districts, regional cooperatives, and state agencies.

Next, we explore the intervention options available to low-achieving schools and then introduce our specialized support for effecting turnarounds.

Intervention choices With state assistance, PLA schools and districts will determine the most appropriate intervention model, and we're open to all of them. All PLA schools will be required (as a part of the School Improvement Grant process through the USDOE) to clearly identify the intervention they propose to implement. They must include a timeline for implementation with benchmarks and clearly defined roles and responsibilities associated with the selected intervention. They must also include a clear justification for the selected intervention model based upon completing a required needs assessment developed by the Center for Innovation and Improvement. (See *Attachment E-2-2*). This tool is a roadmap for LEAs to assess school needs and school and district capacity. The deeper information will enable them to determine which of the four intervention models will produce the most immediate and substantial improvement in learning and

school success for the students. Schools will also use their scholastic audits (see *Invitational Section 6)* to help inform their decisions.

The 50% teacher turnover required in the **turnaround model** creates a particular challenge for us in the hard-to-staff areas of our rural state, particularly the Arkansas Delta. However, some schools are already contemplating this option. We already have significant experience in closing and consolidating school districts when their student enrollment falls below legal thresholds, so we can quickly assist schools choosing **the closure option**. We're well versed in all aspects of transitional planning, including preparing the necessary financial transfers, integrating staff and services, and supporting students and parents. Help for schools choosing the **restart model** will be available from our Charter School Office and its partners, such as the Arkansas Public School Resource Center,[30] along with the expertise and resources of outside charter and education management organizations.

If none of these three interventions is selected, the **transformational model** is the school's remaining option. Rural areas and very small towns often are home to the sole elementary or middle school within a large geographic area. Closing the school leaves few appealing alternatives when the nearest school is miles away down narrow roads: brokering the agreement, uprooting staff, students, and parents, and unifying distant schools is very difficult. As noted earlier, replacing half the staff of a turnaround-model school in an isolated or economically depressed area is highly problematic; and restart models face recruiting charter sponsors to remote locations where the qualified staffing pool is shallow. Thus, for persistently low-performing rural schools, the transformation model is a necessity, not from lack of political will, but from the practical perspective of what's sensible and workable.

Despite the inherent challenges, the transformation model musters the resources of the state-directed feature of the Smart Accountability plan. The model mobilizes the turnaround network, from the schools and school districts themselves to co-ops, state, and from other change agents, such as those described next.

Specialized turnaround support Commissioner Kimbrell is committed to a strong network of change support for PLA schools. Not only has he reorganized ADE to more quickly and cohesively mobilize support, but he's establishing a **School Turnaround Office** within our Division of Learning

[30] The Arkansas Public School Resource Center is an organization committed to working with charter and rural schools in the state.

Services. The office will coordinate statewide oversight and also ensure the right resources are in place for intensive work in low performing schools and districts.

Clear goals will drive the work of the turnaround office to support low-achieving schools. Those goals will be tied to the goals of each targeted school, in conjunction with specific performance measures and outcomes. The office's coordinator will work closely with specialty teams (such as those below) and school improvement directors in PLA schools to keep close watch on how thoroughly the chosen intervention model is being implemented, the pace of progress, and where problems are yielding to selected solutions.

The office will work in partnership with all local staff to generate an optimistic momentum for change that's not only infectious and energizing, but successful in elevating performance. With Race to the Top funds, we'll lose no time in getting the turnaround office on the ground and *onto* school grounds. The office will have plenty of allies, such as that explained next.

Established in 1991, the **Arkansas Leadership Academy** (ALA) is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 15 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 education cooperatives; the state's departments of education, higher education, and career education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network; Tyson Foods, Inc; WalMart Stores, Inc.; two superintendent representatives; the Office of the Governor; and the State Board of Education, a total of 49 partners.

From a base of research and best practices, ALA designs creative and innovative approaches to establish learning communities in our public schools. By developing human resources and by modeling and advocating collaboration, support, shared decision making, team learning, risk taking, and problem solving, ALA facilitates systemic improvement within an organization.

In sync with ALA for many years, we'll expand our relationship to build the critical human support structure at the state and regional level to effect purposeful change in schools and districts that struggle academically. The **Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Institute** will provide intense professional development for the state's specialty teams, school improvement directors, and ACSIP[31] leaders that are assigned to each district with a PLA school. Teams will learn to build the capacity to create positive learning environments, improve systems within the district, and develop the skills and

[31] Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

tools that coalesce staff into teams. The team-intensive approach begets shared "ownership" and responsibility for moving together toward significantly better learning and performance for students and adults alike.

The objectives of this approach are to:

- create cohesive teams with the state's specialty teams, school improvement directors, and ACSIP leaders.
- develop a common vision and purpose between teams and roles.
- build the leadership capacity of these teams, focusing on best practices in adult learning.
- provide facilitator training and effective meetings training for the teams that will translate into building the capacity at the district level to facilitate professional development and school improvement efforts.
- facilitate monthly regional meetings for ongoing data analysis and feedback.
- incorporate break-out sessions for role-alike groups to focus on the development of specific needs.
- continue each year to delve deeper into each of these five performance areas: Creating and Living the Mission, Vision, and Beliefs; Leading and Managing Change; Developing Deep Knowledge of Teaching and Learning; Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships; and Building and Sustaining Accountability Systems.

This training will focus on assisting the teams in building district capacity to support school turnaround, including: governance; technical assistance systems for schools; communication among the district, schools, and partners; human capital; resource allocation; and data systems and performance management. Professional development will also focus on helping districts design and implement successful models of school transformation and turnaround, including the following elements:

- teacher and principal evaluation systems;
- expanded learning time;
- recruiting, screening, and hiring new teachers and principals;
- strategies to retain the most effective teachers and principals;
- implementing high-quality, job-embedded professional development;
- providing community and social-emotional services for students;
- adopting and using a research-based instructional program; and
- promoting the continuous use of student data.

Turnaround takes a team to build the capacity for long-term, sustained change: we have no Band-aids in our tool kit. The infusion of ALA's insights, processes, and modeling helps rebuild not only low-achieving schools, but builds the capacity in all of us to support systemic change. We won't keep the light under a basket, rather ensure that lessons learned and best practices are shared throughout our networks in conjunction with our School Turnaround Office and Office of Innovation.

Personnel pipeline Schools are brick and mortar, but school systems are all about people. Their outlook, their convictions, their behaviors, their knowledge and skills—all weave into the system's climate and performance. Students are the reason for a school system, and what makes the system work effectively is the staff, especially those directly involved in instruction.

As explained in *Section D,* Arkansas has a plan for attracting effective teachers and school leaders into the state's low-performing schools. Through alternative licensing pathways, such as Teach for America, the troupe of local teachers is being expanded. Our Arkansas Equity Plan *(see Appendix D-3-1)* is replete with strategies to ensure all children learn under the leadership of effective teachers. Recruitment and retention initiatives, bonus incentives, relocation assistance, and traveling teachers are among the plan's elements that target PLA schools.

Moreover, our new comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation systems, also detailed in *Section D2,* will be leveraged within these schools to identify, reward, and retain effective educators. At the same time, the system will hasten dismissal of educators who don't perform effectively.

To expedite turnarounds, we'll dedicate other specialists to PLA schools, as described below.

Math Teachers Not all elementary teachers are comfortable teaching math, but grade-school children need a strong grounding in mathematics from teachers with a deep understanding of the content. To ensure top-quality math instruction, Race to the Top will fund math teachers in grade 3 at each of our PLA elementary schools. Skilled teachers whose sole focus is math will ensure students gain the basic knowledge and understanding that's the requisite foundation for steady progress in ever higher levels of math.

When these math teachers are effective at increasing math scores, and we're confident they will, more schools will seek elementary math teachers. To create a pipeline for them into our schools, the state is researching an elementary math endorsement that both practicing and new teachers can pursue. Likely candidates for such an endorsement include certifying existing elementary teachers who have a high interest in math or those with proven success in teaching math; college students pursuing STEM fields; and recent graduates with STEM-related degrees. As noted earlier in *Section (D)(3)(ii),* Arkansas received a grant in May 2010 from the Brookhill foundation to explore licensure for the designation of Elementary Mathematics Specialist through the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators.

College and Career Coaches Ensuring students have access to college and career coaches in low-performing schools is one component of our governor's Arkansas Works program. School guidance counselors are often overwhelmed with the scope of their myriad responsibilities: testing, family crisis situations, student behavior issues, college admission processes, and administrative duties. Bringing in additional support for counselors will help to ensure that students have access to college and career information. The objectives of the college and career coach initiative include:

- assisting secondary students with career guidance to prepare them for high school graduation, postsecondary education, apprenticeship or workforce training, or direct entry into the workforce or military.
- adopting and promoting quality career development for students from middle school through high school and beyond.
- working with school guidance counselors and students to explore career information and education and to identify training opportunities to improve rates of graduation, completing Career and Technical Education studies, nontraditional placement, and postsecondary placement in satisfying jobs.

The college and career coach initiative began in January 2010 as a three-year pilot program that places 45 college and career coaches at two-year colleges to serve high school students who live in high-poverty counties. Of our 17 PLA middle schools and high schools, 12 are in high-poverty counties and qualify for the coaches through Arkansas Works; but five of the schools are not located in the qualifying counties. Race to the Top will allow us to place college and career coaches to serve all PLA middle and high schools, insuring that information about colleges and careers is readily available to some of our most vulnerable students.

Evidence for (E)(2) (please fill in table below):

- **The state's historic performance on school turnaround, as evidenced by the total number of persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) that states or LEAs attempted to turn around in the last five years, the approach used, and the results and lessons learned to date.**

Approach Used	# of Schools Since 2004-05	Results and Lessons Learned
Transformational	52	In the past, ADE has contracted with America's Choice as the state's turnaround model to begin working with targeted schools during the 2006-07 school year. Since that time, America's Choice has worked with a total of 52 schools. During the 2009-10 school year, America's Choice worked with 39 schools in 17 districts. This means 13 schools served by America's Choice at one time are

		following categories: • Seven schools met their AMO for two consecutive years. • Three schools applied for and received a waiver from ADE. • Two schools were consolidated with another America's Choice school. • One school was replaced with another school that was in greater need of services from America's Choice. The academic performance of these 52 schools was evaluated according to the mean scale scores on the ACTAAP assessments administered at each of the schools. The mean scale score for all students in the state was used to compare the growth of students in America's Choice schools with students across the state. The performance of these 52 schools is listed below: • Six of the 52 schools showed more growth than for all statewide grades in both math and literacy since the spring of 2006. • Twelve of the 52 schools showed growth for all grades in both math and literacy; some growth exceeded the state's growth, while some was less than the state as whole. • Of the 52 schools, 34 showed mixed results with growth in some areas but at least one area where the mean scale score was lower in 2009 than in 2006. • None of the 52 schools showed a decline in the mean scale score for all grades in both math and literacy.

Please see *Appendix E-2-3 thru E-2-6* for more information concerning the work of **America's Choice**. We have also included information and results of three other school turnaround models that serve several of our school districts: **Arkansas Leadership Academy**, **Elbow to Elbow** and **JBHM**.

Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
The number of schools for which one of the four school intervention models will be initiated each year.	0	19	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing

These measures are estimates. The state will work with each persistently low-performing school as we develop its detailed scope of work (within 90 days of receiving the grant award) to determine the timeline for implementation.

(F)(1) Making education funding a priority *(10 points)*

The extent to which—
(i) The percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was greater than or equal to the percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2008; and

(ii) The State's policies lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs (as defined in this notice) and other LEAs, and (b) within LEAs, between high-poverty schools (as defined in this notice) and other schools.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(1)(i):
- Financial data to show whether and to what extent expenditures, as a percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice), increased, decreased, or remained the same.

Evidence for (F)(1)(ii):
- Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers.

Recommended maximum response length: Three pages

(F)(1)(i) The percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was greater than or equal to the percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2008. Includes evidence (F)(1)(i) .

Financing a first-rate education system is our top funding priority in Arkansas, as we'll explain below. As other portions of this narrative relate, 2003 was the seminal year that marked the nascent reformation of our collective thinking and combined action to squarely address the transformation of our schools.

In 2003, our General Assembly enacted a body of legislation that extensively augmented support of public education in Arkansas. Not only did new laws fill the funding fuel tank, but they set in motion new schooling vehicles fitted with multiple controls to keep them on the right track. Act 94 created a

Joint Committee on Education Adequacy, overseen by the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education. Act 57[32] mandated that the joint committee regularly study the education system and report their findings and recommendations in September before every regular session.

In Act 57, lawmakers acknowledged the state has an absolute duty to furnish Arkansas school children an adequate and equitable education *as an ongoing priority* for the state. The law establishes broad areas the lawmakers' education committees must review and report each biennium, including the highlights listed below. The mandates of Act 57 illustrate how serious we are about sufficiently underwriting an education system that meets the needs of *all* children:

- Assess, monitor, and evaluate the entire spectrum of public education across the state to determine that all school children have an equal opportunity for an adequate education.
- Continue to evaluate what constitutes equality of education opportunity and adequate education in Arkansas and the state's method of providing it.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of any program implemented at the ADE or in an LEA.
- Review the state's average teacher salary compared to those in nearby states.
- Evaluate the costs of an adequate education for all students in all conditions.
- Evaluate the per-student amount of state funds to be provided to school districts, and monitor the expenditures and distribution of state funds.
- Monitor the amount the state funds the education system *based on need and the amount necessary for an adequate education system, not on the amount of funding available.*

After investigating all areas of Act 57, the committees must bring forward recommendations for changes in those areas that are needed to keep pace with conditions that evolve over time.

The state's system for financing public schools is based on a per-student amount, known as foundation funding. *Ark. Code .Ann. §6-20-2301 et seq*. Each LEA receives the foundation amount multiplied by its student count, or average daily membership (ADM). Foundation funding is based on the prior year three-quarter ADM and is supplemented with student-growth funding for growing districts and with declining-enrollment funding for declining districts. Further supplements are explained in *(F)(1)(ii).*

In 2003, foundation funding for each student was $4,721.42, and the next year it was $5,400. By 2010, that amount had risen to $5,905 and will climb to $6,023 in 2011. A state budget surplus in recent years enabled the General Assembly to add, beyond the base amount, what is termed

[32] The legislature later refined Act 57 with Act 1204 of 2007. Acts 57 and 1204 are codified at *Ark. Code Ann. §10-3-2101 et seq.*

"enhanced" funding in the amount of $51 more per student in 2008, $87 more in 2009, and $35 in 2010. The legislature made clear that enhanced funding is temporary and is an amount beyond that required to meet the legal dollar amount that pays for an adequate education.

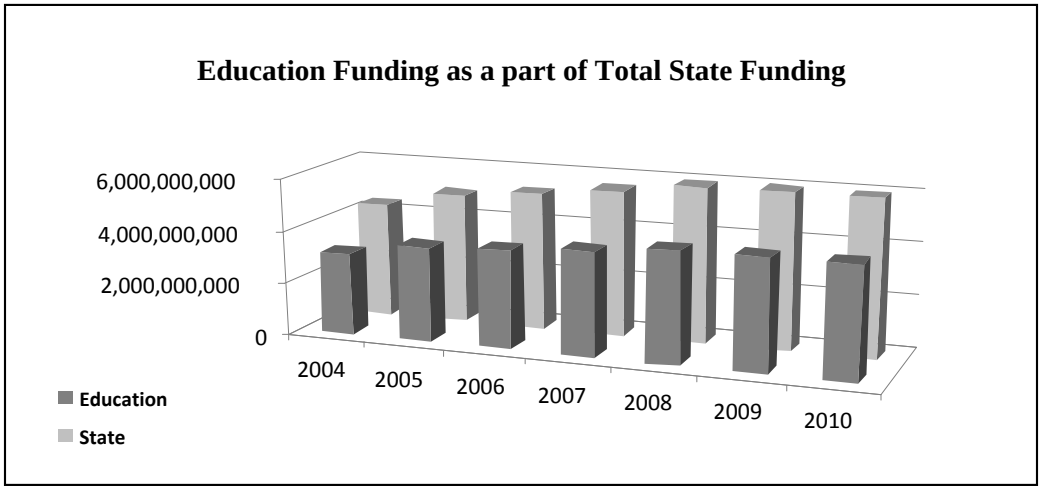
Charts below show education funding as a percentage of total state revenue for fiscal years 2004 through 2009. Over these seven years, funding for schools rose by nearly $1.2 billion, while total state revenue increased by about $1.6 billion. As a percentage of total state revenue, education monies have fluctuated to some extent every year between a low of 70.4% in 2004 to 71.7% in FY 2010. The proportion of funds for education started high and stayed high. Of the $1.6 billion growth in total state revenue over this seven year period, **75% ($1.2 billion) went to public education**.

The figures and graphs below extend from FY 2004 to FY 2010. They compare, year by year, the percentage of funding for education in relation to total state revenues. Terms specific to the descriptors in the first groupings of data can be found in the glossary.

COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGE OF STATE FUNDING			
K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION			
	EDUCATION	**STATE**	**% OF**
DESCRIPTION	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL**
FY2004			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,612,085,672		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$47,028,442		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$8,718,516		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$448,653,247		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$86,570,203		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$19,047,474	$3,525,966,225	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$233,933,182	$233,933,182	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$700,000	$700,000	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$645,483,860	$645,483,860	
TOTAL	**$3,102,220,596**	**$4,406,083,267**	**70.4%**
FY2005			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,612,811,937		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$47,028,442		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$8,718,516		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$460,683,558		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$88,827,523		

TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$19,047,474	$3,629,925,804	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$245,900,627	$245,900,627	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$449,987,043	$449,987,043	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$679,512,680	$679,512,680	
TOTAL	**$3,612,517,800**	**$5,005,326,154**	**72.2%**
FY2006			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,685,045,349		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$50,073,423		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$7,086,943		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$491,438,439		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$91,671,052		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$23,538,051	$3,825,053,006	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$265,366,217	$265,366,217	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$438,335,439	$438,335,439	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$716,036,162	$716,036,162	
TOTAL	**$3,768,591,075**	**$5,244,790,824**	**71.9%**
FY2007			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,719,500,377		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$86,012,449		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$7,268,514		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$521,522,828		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$96,241,606		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$26,358,021	$4,058,615,931	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$284,724,123	$284,724,123	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$464,567,099	$464,567,099	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$767,684,294	$767,684,294	
TOTAL	**$3,973,879,311**	**$5,575,591,447**	**71.3%**
FY2008			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,856,816,923		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$91,818,037		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$7,462,523		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$572,959,263		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$104,814,845		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$32,095,593	$4,352,672,063	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$298,427,153	$298,427,153	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$464,366,857	$464,366,857	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$818,811,969	$818,811,969	
TOTAL	**$4,247,573,163**	**$5,934,278,042**	**71.6%**

FY2009			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (FINAL)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	$1,894,773,275		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	$91,960,402		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	$7,603,891		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	$568,219,540		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	$104,628,251		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	$30,862,976	$4,411,009,647	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	$288,249,127	$288,249,127	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	$402,653,491	$402,653,491	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	$881,178,991	$881,178,991	
TOTAL	**$4,270,129,944**	**$5,983,091,256**	**71.4%**
FY2010 (Estimate)			
GENERAL REVENUE FORECAST (1-11-2010)			
PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND	1,813,257,145		
GENERAL EDUCATION FUND	92,672,419		
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES	7,470,070		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (FOUR YEAR)	561,502,177		
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TWO) YEAR)	104,634,923		
TECHNICAL COLLEGES	31,162,164	4,302,770,104	
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TRUST FUND	284,078,953	284,078,923	
EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY FUND	446,153,491	446,153,491	
UNIFORM RATE OF TAX	947,646,904	947,646,904	
TOTAL	**4,288,578,246**	**5,980,649,422**	**71.7%**



(F)(1)(ii) The State's policies lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs (as defined in this notice) and other LEAs, and (b) within LEAs, between high-poverty schools (as defined in this notice) and other schools.

The education clause in the Arkansas Constitution provides that, "The state shall ever maintain a general, suitable, and efficient system of free public schools and shall adopt all suitable means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education." In 2007, following many years of litigation, the Arkansas Supreme Court held that the state "has taken the required and necessary legislative steps to assure that the school children of this state are provided with an adequate education and a substantially equal educational opportunity."

Those steps have resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars infused into new education funding, led to sweeping changes in academic and accountability standards, and consolidated many small rural schools for efficiency of scale and wider academic scope. In 2007 alone, our legislature increased minimum state aid to public schools by $121 million and (as discussed separately below in *(F)(1)(ii)*) allocated millions to repair, renovate, and modernize schools throughout the state.

Every year, Arkansas academics remain our priority, propelled by mandates and mechanisms to ensure our children have an equitable and adequate education. As one means to that end, our state legislature has adopted a working definition of "educational adequacy" as the basis for identifying the annual amount of resources, and their distribution, needed to fund the schools.[33] That definition encompasses the state's standards for curriculum frameworks and the testing system, and it also specifies, "sufficient funding to provide adequate resources as identified by the General Assembly." Let's look at how our lawmakers work to keep adequacy paramount.

The court's 2007 ruling, referenced earlier, was predicated by numerous ground-breaking legislative acts. Primary among them was Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 (as amended), which addressed the issue of what constitutes an adequate education and how much the state would

[33] A Report on Legislative Hearings For the *2008 Interim Study on Educational Adequacy* (Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 and Act 1204 of 2007).

have to pay to sufficiently fund it, then and in years to come. In September 2003, an initial adequacy report recognized that, "the definition of adequacy is a dynamic, not a static concept . . ."[34]

Since that time, during every regular legislative session, lawmakers carefully examine adequacy and any issues surrounding it. In 360-degree circumspection, they invite the testimony of education leaders and experts to help them re-evaluate adequacy within its dynamic nature. With that input, coupled with strong legislative and executive leadership and an unswerving commitment to honor its legal and moral obligations, the legislature aims at the bulls-eye on the moving adequacy target: It fine tunes and verifies the funding formula, allots sufficient money to underwrite what the law requires school districts to do, and may adjust the funding distribution matrix. That matrix calculates the costs of providing adequate resources to schools in the form of staff, operations, and maintenance. It assures equity with added funds to serve the needs of students who need extra support, such as those of lower socio-economic means, children learning to speak English, or those studying in alternative environments. Those specifics are explored in the following section of evidence.

Over the years, the General Assembly has continued to address many challenging issues and made bold decisions to keep public education moving forward in Arkansas. But no one's resting on laurels. No "that-storm's-over" sigh of relief and return to business as usual. Today, our usual business all rests on the substance and strength of our commitment to public education, the propulsion system for thrusting our children onward to college and careers.

Foundation funding, discussed above, provides equal per-student amounts to each district for the purpose of base funding. But beyond equality, which we think of as evenness or sameness, we aim for equity, which is a matter of fairness and accommodation. One size doesn't fit all. We're obligated to scale state resources to meet the varying needs among and within school districts and between schools from one side of town to the other. We can't let those with greater needs lag behind because they're running uphill when others are sprinting on the flats toward the same goalpost.

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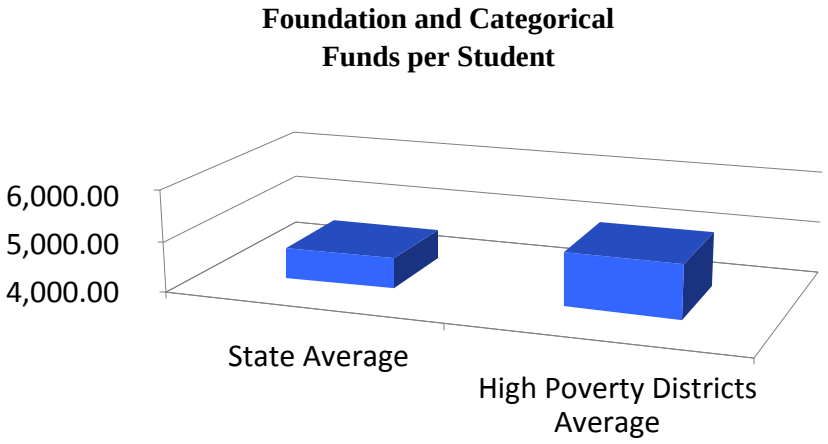
[34] An Evidence Based Approach to School Finance Adequacy in Arkansas. Final Report, September 1, 2003. Prepared for the Arkansas Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy by Allan Odden and Lawrence Picus.

So, beyond the base funding, the state has created categories of funds that ensure equitable support for high-need and high-poverty schools and other schools serving students whose particular needs require extra resources. In 2005, the state added special funding categories for Alternative Learning Environments (ALE), National School Lunch (NSL) students, English Language Learners (ELL), and Professional Development (PD) for school staff.



Below are tables that cover schools years from 2004-05 to 2009-10, showing the amount of money that was added, through each special funding category, to each year's foundation funding base.

Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) Financing for settings that are alternatives to the regular classroom is based on the number of students attending an ALE, which is taught by a licensed teacher, features a reduced pupil-to-teacher ratio, and includes the services of a school counselor, mental health professional, nurse, and other services as needed. Students are placed in ALE in consultation with an Alternative Education Placement team and an agreement with the parent or guardian, teacher or ALE director, and the student.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Per ALE student/FTE	$3250	$3250	$3250	$4063	$4063	$4063
Total (in millions)	$19.0	$14.2	$14.3	$20.0	$20.2	$20.5

National School Lunch (NSL) This funding category uses eligibility for free- and reduced-price lunches that is consistent with the criteria of the federal NSLA. State NSL funding is used to implement research-based programs to improve instruction and raise the achievement of children who score below grade-level proficiency or otherwise risk falling short of challenging academic standards. The funding is in three different tiers, with higher per-student amounts going to high-poverty LEAs.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
>90% NSL students	$1440	$1440	$1440	$1488	$1488	$1488
70%-90% NSL students	$960	$960	$960	$992	$992	$992
<70% NSL students	$480	$480	$480	$496	$496	$496
Total (in millions)	$147.6	$141.2	$149.1	$154.2	$157.8	$161.5

English Language Learners (ELL) A growing number of our students are new to the country, and they strive to learn English as their second language. We add funds for ELL children, who are identified by a state-authorized proficiency assessment. The money may be used to support teacher training, staff workshops, consultants, health and counseling services, program development, and language-appropriate instructional and supplemental materials.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Per ELL student/FTE	$195	$195	$195	$293	$293	$293
Total (in millions)	$4.2	$4.6	$5.3	$8.5	$9.1	$9.4

Professional Development (PD) While students are learning, the adults who support them in their schools have to be learning, too. The money in the PD category underwrites activities and materials aimed at extending the knowledge and skills of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, counselors—all those who line the children's schooling cocoon, including their bus drivers. Up-to-date instructional strategies, methods, and tools to ramp up professional practices are funded in escalating annual amounts.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Per student	$50	$50	$50	$50	$50	$50
Total (in millions)	$22.4	$22.6	$22.9	$23.0	$23.1	$23.0

School Facilities The tremendous amount of money, planning, and work invested in the state's school facilities has been so extensive in recent years that we examine this topic separately, below.

For many years in Arkansas, the schoolhouses that were our children's mainstay learning environments—their classrooms, libraries, gyms, cafeterias, auditoriums, and more—ranked at widely diverse points along a suitability continuum, many at the top; too many, nowhere close. Some buildings stood as sturdy gems of handsomely maintained historic architecture, while other old structures slumped under the weight of years. Some schools were sleek with air-tight contemporary design, and others were a drafty patchwork of ill-fitted structural odds and ends. Some hallways were bright with new paint; elsewhere paint was peeling under leaky roofs. In too many instances from

one end of the state to another, the contrasts among the schools' conditions were stark manifestations of inequity and inadequacy.

The disparities among the schools were sharply revealed during a statewide professional assessment of all academic facilities. The proactive legislature had mandated the massive project, begun and completed in 2005 at a cost of $10 million. The study revealed that as much as $4 billion could be needed to raise all schools to acceptable standards that would assure safe, dry, healthful learning environments. As a result, the state adopted construction standards and school suitability requirements as both guides and goals; it appropriated funds to support every school district's progress toward those goals; and it appointed a state-level Commission for Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation as overseers, along with a Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation as its operational arm. Since 2005, the Division's role has steadily deepened to provide school districts expert support and guidance in all matters related to school facility operation, helping them plan quality repair, renovation, and new building programs.

To ensure equitable distribution of facility resources among the schools, a "wealth index" was established as an integral element of the facilities program. That index is based on the amount of money a 1 mil tax will raise in a particular school district compared to the same value of that 1 mil in one of the wealthiest districts in the state. This wealth index essentially equalizes the value of a dollar, such that poorer school districts receive more funds for school facilities in relation to wealthier school districts, based against a standard of school construction. The wealth index becomes part of the equity equation, along with enrollment growth and general facility condition, in prioritizing construction projects. So, districts with the least wealth, greatest growth, and poorest condition of facilities become the state's facility-funding priority.

Since 2005, we've invested some $750 million in revitalizing our school facilities, and the total keeps mounting. Early on, experts envisioned at least a ten-year effort to complete the initial statewide upgrades. Work along that timetable is running apace, but the efforts won't stop at the ten-year mark. Education programs change, student populations shift, and teaching tools advance. As needs will vary, schools will, too. So improvements, additions, renovations, conversions, accommodations, and new facilities will always be on the drawing board.

We have wavered neither in vision, leadership, expertise, nor funding when it comes to the condition of our schools. Each LEA formulates individual master facility plans that state officials review and then approve when those plans are fully aligned with the requisite construction and suitability standards. Then both state and local resources are blended to bring those plans to life. Every one of our school districts is well along the improvement pathway, and not only academically. Teachers and their pupils have settled into facilities equal to the task of supporting challenging courses of study. We're ensuring that, in the realm of bricks, mortar, steel, and concrete, school facilities are the foundation of lively learning centers, the pride of communities across Arkansas.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools *(40 points)*

The extent to which—

(i) The State has a charter school law that does not prohibit or effectively inhibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State, measured (as set forth in *Appendix* B) by the percentage of total schools in the State that are allowed to be charter schools or otherwise restrict student enrollment in charter schools;
(ii) The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools; in particular, whether authorizers require that student achievement (as defined in this notice) be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal; encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students (as defined in this notice); and have closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools;
(iii) The State's charter schools receive (as set forth in *Appendix* B) equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, State, and Federal revenues;
(iv) The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools; and
(v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.
In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(2)(i):

- A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- The number of charter schools allowed under State law and the percentage this represents of the total number of schools in the State.
- The number and types of charter schools currently operating in the State.

Evidence for (F)(2)(ii):

- A description of the State's approach to charter school accountability and authorization, and a description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- For each of the last five years:
    - The number of charter school applications made in the State.
    - The number of charter school applications approved.
    - The number of charter school applications denied and reasons for the denials

(academic, financial, low enrollment, other).
  - The number of charter schools closed (including charter schools that were not reauthorized to operate).

Evidence for (F)(2)(iii):
- A description of the State's applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- A description of the State's approach to charter school funding, the amount of funding passed through to charter schools per student, and how those amounts compare with traditional public school per-student funding allocations.

Evidence for (F)(2)(iv):
- A description of the State's applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- A description of the statewide facilities supports provided to charter schools, if any.

Evidence for (F)(2)(v):
- A description of how the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

(F)(2)(i) The State has a charter school law that does not prohibit or effectively inhibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State, measured (as set forth in Appendix B) by the percentage of total schools in the State that are allowed to be charter schools or otherwise restrict student enrollment in charter schools. Includes evidence (F)(2)(i).

Since 1999, Arkansas has supported the innovations and options charter schools can offer.[35] State law currently provides for three types of charter schools: open-enrollment public charter schools; conversion public charter schools; and limited public charter schools.

An *open-enrollment* public charter school is a public school sponsored and operated by an eligible entity[36] that operates under the terms of a charter granted by the State Board of Education.[37] The

[35] The Arkansas General Assembly authorized establishing public charter schools in 1999. See generally the "Arkansas Charter School Act of 1999," codified at *Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-23-101* et seq. The documentation can be found in *Appendix F-2*.

[36] An "eligible entity" authorized to apply for an open-enrollment charter may be a public institution of higher education; a private nonsectarian institution of higher education; a governmental entity; or an organization that is nonsectarian in its program, admissions policies, employment practices and operations and has applied for tax exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code of 1986. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-103(4).*

[37] *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-103(8).* An "open-enrollment public charter school" under Arkansas law is a local educational agency under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 7801, and the

school can enroll students who live in any Arkansas school district. A *conversion* charter school is an existing public school converted to operate under the terms of a charter approved by the local and state boards of education. A *limited* charter school is also a public school that has local and state board approval to operate as a charter that will specifically accommodate alternative staffing and compensation programs. Such programs are designed to enhance the performance of both students and teachers while also improving employee's salaries, opportunities, and incentives.

Students living in a school district can attend its charters, and certain laws can allow children living outside the district to enroll in them, too. By contrast, open-enrollment schools aren't sponsored by a school district and can draw students from anywhere in the state. Thus, Arkansas's public charter schools are serving 11,065 students this year.

For all three types of charters, the contract is defined as a performance-based agreement between the State Board of Education and an approved applicant. It exempts the school from those state and local rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that have been specified in the contract.

School districts can operate both conversion and limited charter schools. As with other schools in the district, the charters may be subject to the customary control of the local school board and district administrators. Otherwise, the chartered campuses operate free from the otherwise-applicable limitations as specified by the charter contract.

Arkansas law doesn't limit or "cap" the number of conversion or limited public charters that can operate in the state, although the law currently contemplates no more than 24 open-enrollment charters. But that number isn't an inflexible boundary. Let's look at the history of this apparent limitation and how it operates in practice.

Since the launch of charter schools in Arkansas, our legislators have steadily raised the limit on open-enrollment charters as this category has grown. Initially cautious about how well charter schools would serve children, Act 890 of 1999 provided for just 12 open-enrollment schools. Of that number, no more than three could open in any one of the state's four congressional districts. Within six years, the General Assembly doubled the 12 permitted charters to 24 and eased restrictions on the number

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term possesses the same meaning as given the term "charter school" in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 7221i. See *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-103(8)(A)(iii) and (B).*

within any particular congressional district. *(Act 2005 of 2005, §8.)* Two years later, legislators no longer restricted the number of open-enrollment charters that could operate within any single congressional district. *(Act 736 of 2007, §15.)*

Presently, 18 open-enrollment charters grace the state, and no open-enrollment application has been denied by the 24-charter curb. One could anticipate that our legislature's past performance portends that of the future: As the number of open-enrollment charters edges up to 24, one can expect legislators (who've grown more confident in the efficacy of high-performing charters) will be inclined to expand or altogether eliminate the 24-school maximum.

Consider this, too: The cap doesn't equate to only 24 campuses with open-enrollment charters. Act 2005 of the same year allows any charter sponsor with a state-approved open-enrollment contract to petition the state board at any time to establish more of those schools at other locations. Such licenses can be approved if the original school has demonstrated gains in student achievement; hasn't been subject to any state disciplinary action or slipped into school improvement, academic, or fiscal distress; and has avoided the charter's probation, revocation, or suspension for cause. *Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-23-304(c)(2), (d)(3).*

Thus, those who already hold open-enrollment charters have a means for replicating their schools elsewhere without that expansion counting against the open-enrollment ceiling of 24. Last fall, a highly successful open-enrollment charter was licensed to launch its twin in the 2010-11 school year. That KIPP charter school (Knowledge is Power Program Delta College Preparatory Open-Enrollment Charter School) will replicate itself in another depressed area of the state. KIPP is discussed further in the following section.

In sum, Arkansas law provides for 24 open-enrollment charters but doesn't limit the number of licenses that allow for duplicating high-performing open-enrollment charters. Nor does the state restrict the number of conversion or limited charter schools a district can establish. As school reform continues to strengthen, conversion charters are a viable and appealing option, and LEAs are ripe for choosing to pursue reform through the charter gateway. New charter school contracts for the coming school year are finalized, so two more open-enrollment and two additional conversion charters will join the ranks. As a result, Arkansas school districts and other sponsors will host 19 charters with open enrollments, 1 licensed charter campus, 13 conversion charters, and no limited charters as yet.

(F)(2)(ii) The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools; in particular, whether authorizers require that student achievement (as defined in this notice) be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal; encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students (as defined in this notice); and have closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools. Includes evidence (F)(2)(ii).

The state's laws governing public charter schools are all aimed at opening various pathways for our children to travel toward success in school and beyond. Goals for charter schools include boosting the rate and level of students' learning, opening up opportunities for all youngsters (especially low-achieving subgroups), encouraging innovative teaching, fostering top-notch professional development for staff, broadening choices for public schooling, and holding schools accountable for doing their job to meet achievement standards. *Ark. Code Ann.§ 6-23-102.*

State statute requires that those eligible to establish a charter school follow a prescribed application process. Applications are performance-based contract proposals reviewed first by the local school board. After gaining that initial approval, the application proceeds to the state board for final authorization. If denied at the local level, an applicant has the right to a hearing about the matter before the state board. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-302 (d).*

The law encourages charters to serve children similar to those enrolled in the local schools, especially students with high needs. Thus, the state board can give preference to an open-enrollment charter that's to be located in a school district where the percentage of students qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunches is above the state average. Preference also can be extended to a charter proposed within a district classified as in academic distress or some form of school improvement or fiscal distress. *Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-304 (b).* All charter school applications must lay out a definitive plan for improving student achievement, along with performance-based objectives and criteria for the length of the contract. Also, they must describe how they'll involve parents, students, and community stakeholders in helping the school reach its goals. *Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-202 and 6-23-304.*

The emphasis on charter schools' service to high-need children is well established in our education ethic. In 2005, the General Assembly singled out the KIPP open-enrollment charter school (established in 2002), recognizing it as an effective model for reversing the low achievement that too often hobbles the stride of economically disadvantaged, racial, and ethnic subgroups. The school has

not only expanded opportunities for all students, using innovative ideas and techniques to boost achievement, but has placed particular emphasis on superior learning experiences for children previously identified as low-achieving. As noted earlier, KIPP's success opened the way for other schools to pursue licensed expansion for open-enrollment charters that elevate learning for all children along with their high-need classmates.

Because all of our charters are public schools, we monitor and evaluate them to be sure they're fulfilling their charge for students, staff, parents, and the community alike. That means the schools are subject to strict fiscal oversight and reporting requirements, both to the state and to the public. Charter schools must meet all state standards and report their students' adequate yearly progress. They have to maintain a comprehensive school improvement plan, establish a curriculum that aligns with the state frameworks, use the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) for routine operations and reports, and participate in the state-mandated testing program. Charter schools are also monitored by various federal programs for compliance and reporting.

When a charter is initially approved, the contract spans five years and is subject to renewal. Our oversight processes aim to catch budding problems before they fully blossom. If monitoring reveals fiscal mismanagement, failure to follow laws and regulations, or falling short of academic performance criteria, the state board may place a charter school on probation, modify the contract or deny its renewal, or revoke the charter altogether and close the school. The state board can renew a charter's contract, extending it from one to five years, depending on the school's past performance. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-307*.

This school year, our Commissioner of Education established a Charter School Review Council, charged with overseeing and guiding schools as they implement their charters—and with ensuring that diligent monitoring and evaluation promotes their progress.

To telegraph the importance Arkansas places on interweaving high-achieving charters into the education tapestry, the commissioner himself is heading the council, along with his senior ADE colleagues. Scrutinizing each new charter application in depth, the reviewers can pinpoint strengths and uncover weaknesses before passing the application on to the state's Board of Education. The council is both an initial and a continuing problem-prevention checkpoint, as it also regularly tracks how well each charter school is living up to its promises. For all schools, and particularly for our

bellwether charter schools, the focus is always better outcomes for kids. Together, the commissioner, council, and state board are tightening their grip on the lens to keep that focus sharp.

The table below shows charter school patterns for the five years since the 2004-05 school year.

YEAR	Number of charter school applications in Arkansas	Number of charter school applications approved	Number of charter school applications denied and reasons for the denials (academic, financial, low enrollment, other) *	Number of charter schools closed or not reauthorized.**
2004-05	5 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were submitted.	1 open enrollment and 1 conversion applications were approved.	4 open enrollment and 1 conversion applications were denied.	0 open enrollment and 0 conversion charter schools were closed.
2005-06	2 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were submitted.	0 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were approved.	2 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were denied.	2 open enrollment and 2 conversion charter schools were closed.
2006-07	13 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were submitted.	6 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were approved.	7 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were denied.	2 open enrollment and 0 conversion charter schools were closed.
2007-08	13 open enrollment and 1 conversion applications were submitted.	7 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were approved.	6 open enrollment and 1 conversion applications were denied.	1 open enrollment and 1 conversion charter schools were closed.
2008-09	8 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were submitted.	4 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were approved.	4 open enrollment and 0 conversion applications were denied.	1 open enrollment and 0 conversion charter schools were closed.
2009-10	8 open enrollment and 4 conversion applications were submitted.	2 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were approved.	6 open enrollment and 2 conversion applications were denied.	1 open enrollment and 0 conversion charter schools were closed.

*Reasons for denials include: lack of confidence that the charter will address needs of underserved students; lack of a sound management plan; no evidence of additional educational opportunity; potential negative impact on desegregation efforts in the local district; lack of availability of students; not meeting the definition of a charter school; potential negative impact of the charter school on a newly consolidated district; inadequate facilities; violation of state's limit of 500 students in virtual learning; lack of 501 (c) (3) status; application withdrawn.

**Charter schools have been closed or contracts not renewed for failure to meet accountability for state standards; financial insufficiency; loss of student enrollment; and merger with another charter school.

(F)(2)(iii) The state's charter schools receive (as set forth in Appendix B) equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, State, and Federal revenues. Includes evidence (F)(2)(iii).

We fund our charter schools as we do all other public schools, according to the per-pupil allocations of the state's funding formula *(Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-23-103, 6-23-501 and 6-23-502),* along with federal aid, grants, and private donations. State law also adds support for open-enrollment charters in the form of funding commensurate with the school's current-year enrollment; dispersing funds in twelve equal installments to forestall cash-flow dips; and the right to receive gifts and grants from private sources. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-501*.

As discussed earlier in the section, court rulings and state law mandate an adequate and equitable education for all children, and our state's funding formula undergirds that imperative. All Arkansas public schools, including charters, receive "foundation funding," which is a per-pupil amount of money that is adjusted annually in relation to state revenues and the enduring force of the adequacy mandates. Beyond the financial floor and depending on certain variables, all public schools and charters are eligible for special categories of funds. These include compensation for enrollment growth or loss of student membership, professional development, and special categories of children as explained in *(F)(1)* above, such as those learning English, those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), and students in alternative learning environments.

(F)(2)(iv) The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools. Includes evidence (F)(2)(iv).

Like the other schools in the host district, conversion and limited public charter schools are supported by their local LEA's funding, which includes bonds and mill levies in relation to school facilities. But, because open-enrollment charter schools don't collect local property taxes, they don't receive funding for facilities locally or from the state. However, the law allows facilities to be offered to open-enrollment schools through the right of first refusal to buy or lease closed or unused portions of

public school buildings and other facilities. Further safeguards prevent the district from leasing or selling property for more than fair market value. The restriction also applies to properties taken by eminent domain. *Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-501(d).*

Our open-enrollment charters often choose to do business with local and national financial institutions that specialize in obtaining funding for education facilities. In this way, an open-enrollment entity can apply for bond sources such as qualified school construction bonds (QSCBs) that yield a tax incentive to lenders; they can also access financing through conduit bonds guaranteed by municipal agencies.

Charters schools have the benefits of significant autonomy, so they tailor their contracts to their goals and means for meeting them. The schools are diverse in their student population, as well as all aspects of design and practice: education offerings and methodologies; class size; hiring practices, salary scales, and compensation differentiation; board policies and management practices; annual budgets; location in the state and community; and facilities. As a matter of fact, charter schools enjoy great flexibility in the type of facilities they can occupy and operate, well beyond that of traditional schools (although leniency never applies to health and safety regulations, ADA compliance, and accommodations for special education needs).

At the same time, charter schools are fellow travelers, not pariahs. For example, charter boards belong to the Arkansas School Boards Association. Throughout the year, together with school board members from across the state, they fulfill the requisite annual training hours that keep them current on legal developments, their governance role, and all aspects of effective boardmanship.

(F)(2)(v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools. Includes evidence (F)(2)(v).

Currently, state statutes give LEAs the ability to operate only a “traditional” school or a conversion or limited charter school. However, charters can embrace a break-the-mold approach to schooling, trying out new methodologies, promoting non-traditional experiences, and experimenting with environments that enliven learning. These schools can test their theories, adjust their models, and prove their merits, then export those innovations to other schools, traditional or charter, where the fit is customized to their own operation.

As noted earlier, the KIPP open-enrollment charter has proven that its innovative methods work, and the school is expanding its outreach into a new area of the state via the licensing option. The sponsors of LISA Academy, a highly successful open-enrollment charter in Little Rock, successfully petitioned for another charter contract to found a second LISA Academy in a different part of the greater metropolitan area. Thus, the original school's successful practices are being replicated for the benefit of still more communities. Carried by winds of change, charter school seeds are steadily spreading across the state where they are taking root and bearing fruit to nurture new generations of children.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions *(5 points)*

The extent to which the State, in addition to information provided under other State Reform Conditions Criteria, has created, through law, regulation, or policy, other conditions favorable to education reform or innovation that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(3):

- A description of the State's other applicable key education laws, statutes, regulations, or relevant legal documents.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

In this section, we describe two particular manifestations of our conviction that a transformational education system must constantly adapt and grow, not just as a learning organization, but as an organization that *keeps on learning*, right along with its students.

As an example of our journey to that understanding, we offer profiles of two distinctly different schools. They are ground-breakers for us, made possible by our forward-thinking legislature that has laid a broad foundation for school reform that keeps getting stronger and better. The success of these schools has been not only a beacon to follow, but a vital lesson to learn: We *can* and *do* break out of the box. Together, we're accomplishing so much more than we ever thought possible to promote positive learning environments that are making such a difference for our children—and for those who work on their behalf.

Arkansas Virtual High School Many of our high-school-age youngsters encounter barriers to completing or even continuing their high school education. Some attempt to juggle a school schedule and a job, and others are tethered by family responsibilities as they care for siblings or parents their own children. Some need to make up credits for graduation or are transitioning between school districts and face scheduling conflicts. Others are enrolled in homebound programs or want to take a course not offered on their school campus. Helping youngsters hurdle over those barriers is a job our educators take to heart.

In 1999, a Goals 2000 grant launched the Arkansas Virtual High School. AVHS is an online learning environment offering classes for public school students in 9th through 12th grades. Initially piloted with 50 students to test the scope of need, the school now serves more than 2,300 individuals each academic semester and about 300 each summer session. Tuition is free.

Any school in the state can use the program as long as it agrees to abide by ADE's distance learning rules, which can be found in *Appendix F-3-1*. The school must agree to accept AVHS credits, furnish a site coordinator, and make adequate Internet connectivity available for the students.

AVHS is the ideal partner for all schools, particularly those that are small or in isolated areas. In such circumstances, many classes are especially hard to staff, or only a few students may sign up for certain courses. Assuring adequate resources for special-needs students can be an issue, too, as can schedule flexibility and summer school options. For every school, regardless of size or location, the virtual high school increases opportunities.

AVHS reaches out to Arkansas families and schools, reassuring them of the virtual school's many advantages, starting with a long list of courses, including Algebra I and II on up to pre-calculus and trigonometry; English, history, and the sciences; four AP courses, Spanish I and II, journalism, art, health, economics, psychology, and many more. Schools don't have to buy new equipment, just supply an up-to-date computer and an Internet connection, routine resources in our schools.

All the virtual courses are aligned with state standards and taught by licensed teachers who instruct and communicate back and forth with their pupils via the Internet. Students complete their coursework anywhere they have access to the Internet, with school approval. Also, within certain timeframes, pupils can work at their own pace on a schedule that fits their needs. At the same time students are learning course content, they're also experiencing valuable multimedia exposure. Their computer skills improve as they learn the technology application and tools involved in their courses.

Initially, AVHS was an experiment for keeping kids in school, and it's proven itself many times over, prompting us to persist in thinking beyond conventional borders. The next school we describe is also a proud product of Arkansas's education reformation and our continuing push for improvement.

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts ASMSA continues to challenge our norms and change our concepts of *what works* in public schools. Back in the early 1990s, a

courageous but somewhat tentative Arkansas legislature[38] took a risk: lawmakers weren't sure setting up a residential high school for academically gifted juniors and seniors in an expansive facility (a former hospital) could succeed. Would parents send their children? Would the kids want to come? For almost twenty years now, the answer has been a resounding, yes!

ASMSA (the "math-science" school in local parlance) has been on a unique mission ever since its founding to "create, encourage, and sustain throughout Arkansas an education community of academically talented students and staff who pursue knowledge of mathematics, sciences, and the arts." The public school is one of only 14 residential high schools in the nation specializing in educating gifted and talented students who have the interest and aptitude for the math-science-humanities emphasis.[39] The school has distinguished itself not only in Arkansas, but as one of the nation's top secondary schools for superior students.

Some 230 students come from all over Arkansas every fall to experience the education innovation and impetus ASMSA offers: 64 of our 75 counties are represented on campus this year. Since the school is a state-funded education program, students don't pay for tuition, books, room, or board. Admission is by application according to criteria that include state residency, a minimum grade point average, and academic records that indicate readiness for a more challenging curriculum.

The top-quality faculty all hold masters degrees, and 27% are PhDs. The school has graduated a total of some 1,600 students who have been awarded more than $112 million in college scholarships. About 60% matriculate to Arkansas colleges and universities, and the remainder attend distinguished schools throughout the country.

Although ASMSA is nationally known for its math, science, and computer science programs (the school has more than 300 computers on campus in six labs and the library), it also offers a wide scope of studies in the arts and humanities, including foreign languages. Graduates are well rounded and ready for practically any college major, even those that aren't science or math oriented.

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[38] ASMSA was created by the General Assembly in 1991. Since then, the school has worked closely with lawmakers to better accomplish its mission. *Appendix F-3* contains the statutes that define key points in the school's history: *Ark. Code Ann. 6-42-301 – 6-42-310.*

[39] The school is a member of the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science, and Technology. The goal of the consortium is to foster, support, and advance the efforts of specialized schools with the primary purpose of academically preparing students for leadership in math, science, and technology.

The math-science school is exceptional, but not isolationist. The school's philosophy and practices reflect the inclusive values we want children to learn, and the student body represents the range of Arkansas citizens. A warm welcome awaits visitors, and through a shadowing program, prospective students spend a night on campus in the residence hall to see first hand what ASMSA life is like. Further, the school is well integrated into the local community and has a special relationship with Hot Springs High School that allows ASMSA students to join their sports teams.

On many levels, the school serves as a model for other Arkansas schools. Coupled with the state's increasing STEM emphasis on all campuses, ASMSA is increasing the public's awareness of how important advanced education in math, science, and technology is to the state and the nation. Like the virtual high school, ASMSA reaches out across the state via real-time electronic interface. Its Office of Distance Education offers courses and other experiences that improve math, science, and fine arts instruction for students and teachers throughout the state.

The school also shines as a center for teacher education and a real-life laboratory for all sorts of research. ASMSA hosts a number of professional development conferences and opportunities for teachers all across the southeastern and southwestern regions of the country. For example, every year the school hosts the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Advanced Placement Summer Institutes in math, science, and studio art. About 400 Pre-AP and AP teachers attend each year from Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and other states.

Priority 1: Absolute Priority -- Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria in order to demonstrate that the State and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform. The State must demonstrate in its application sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans; and it must describe how the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.
The absolute priority cuts across the entire application and should not be addressed separately. It is assessed, after the proposal has been fully reviewed and evaluated, to ensure that the application has met the priority.

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). *(15 points, all or nothing)*

To meet this priority, the State's application must have a high-quality plan to address the need to (i) offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; (ii) cooperate with industry experts, museums, universities, research centers, or other STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and (iii) prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The competitive preference priority will be evaluated in the context of the State's entire application. Therefore, a State that is responding to this priority should address it throughout the application, as appropriate, and provide a summary of its approach to addressing the priority in the text box below. The reviewers will assess the priority as part of their review of a State's application and determine whether it has been met.

Recommended maximum response length, if any: One page

STEM has created so much of our present and holds so much of our future. The interrelated fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics represent limitless opportunities and options for careers that strengthen us economically and stretch us to continually turn toward *what's possible.* Integral to our children's possibilities for their college years and the careers that lie beyond, STEM is

becoming more integral in our schools, as well. We've explained our STEM support plans in other sections of this application and also summarize them here.

Race to the Top funds will underwrite a STEM emphasis in *every* school district. Schools may choose to institute one or more programs, such as those outlined below, which are grounded on valid research and demonstrated effectiveness; or they may build their own STEM experience. In all instances, the program must adhere to the following criteria:

- Barriers must be removed so all students are exposed to STEM programs.
- An evaluation system must be developed at the onset to measure the program's effectiveness toward preparing all students for college and the workforce.
- Higher education is a required partner, and business and industry partners are also recommended.
- Delivery must include innovative teaching and learning methods.
- Professional development in the STEM areas is required for all teachers and principals who work with the program.
- The plan must include an explanation of how the program will effect the school district's entire P-12 system.
- Summer enrichment programs must be offered in the STEM areas.
- Hands-on, applied delivery of content must be integral.
- Teachers and counselors must participate in professional development about STEM careers.

Project STEM Starters fills the need for STEM in all elementary schools. The project is based upon two earlier USDOE programs, one proven to enhance science learning for all participating elementary students, and the other to enlarge teachers' knowledge of the STEM disciplines. The amalgamation of the two has produced the Project STEM Starters model, which is inquiry-based and engages students in grades K through 6 in exploration and discovery that sharpens their critical thinking and their understanding of scientific investigation.

The project's professional development, mandated for *all* elementary teachers, significantly increases educators' STEM knowledge and effectiveness. In two consecutive summer institutes, teachers progress from basic to advanced training in STEM content and science-related curriculum, resources, and supplemental materials. The Arkansas STEM Coalition, which includes scientists, policy makers, business leaders, and college and university professors, are solidly behind the initiative and *in* it too: they support the program with innovative science units, lead teachers through hands-on professional development, and evaluate all aspects of the program's implementation and results.

STEM Starter's elementary emphasis readies children for transition into secondary school, where

AAIMS and APTIP work to improve student's Advanced Placement achievement through a $13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative. **Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science (AAIMS)** is the coordinating organization, which plans, implements, and incentivizes programs through the **Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program. APTIP** aims to increase the number of students taking and passing math, science, English and other AP tests, and to raise the number of college graduates. The program increases both teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement through content training, support for teachers and students, vertical alignment among the progression of teachers, expanded enrollment (including traditionally underrepresented students), and incentives.

The key elements of APTIP success are: (1) extinguishing the perception of AP exclusivity by encouraging more students to stretch themselves toward challenging courses; (2) offering incentives for both teachers and students to accept the AP challenge; (3) ensuring high quality, content-focused teacher training for effective AP instruction; and (4) placing APTIP mentors to support AP teachers and to facilitate teaming across vertical grade levels to ensure alignment from elementary to secondary school for AP success. Over the next four years, we'll *add 60 more schools* to APTIP alongside the 24 schools already operating it.

The **EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology) Initiative** began in Arkansas 1996 and is now in hundreds of middle and high schools (and others) across the nation. EAST focuses on student-driven service projects using state-of-the-art hardware, software, and sophisticated accessories as a catalyst for learning. EAST is for everyone, and the inclusive program reflects the diversity of every school, where kids learn to work as a team and reach out to help their community. Students take responsibility for their own learning, guided by an EAST-trained teacher who facilitates the students' inquiries into problems in their local communities and then supports their search for solutions using the technology tools. The EAST experience builds students' confidence and bolsters their success in other courses as well. The students develop the problem-solving, decision-making, and higher-order thinking skills that will serve them well in both college and the world of work.

Race to the Top will place EAST into 60 more schools, joining 185 others. Priority placement will go to our lowest performing schools and to expanding existing programs via EAST After Hours.

This year Arkansas high school students will participate in the national **Real World Design Challenge (RWDC)** for the first time. They'll gain engineering experience by teaming with industry experts to solve a real-world challenge: designing an aircraft's tail section to maximize fuel efficiency. The hands-on creativity and collaboration motivates students to delve further into math, science, and engineering fields as they work as project colleagues with professionals. Moreover, the Challenge provides significant resources to enhance STEM education: along with real-time support from the pros, participating schools also receive state-of-the art engineering software.

Priority 3: Invitational Priority – Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes *(not scored)*
The Secretary is particularly interested in applications that include practices, strategies, or programs to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (prekindergarten through third grade) by enhancing the quality of preschool programs. Of particular interest are proposals that support practices that (i) improve school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive); and (ii) improve the transition between preschool and kindergarten.
The State is invited to provide a discussion of this priority in the text box below, but such description is optional. Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.
Recommended maximum response length, if any: Two pages

In Arkansas, we take nurturing our children to heart, and we're devoted to guiding their growth into fully realized, healthy, whole human beings. We aim to educate them for success in their school years that prepares them for all the years beyond in the ever-widening world they'll call home. That success is built upon balance: the equilibrium of healthy mind, fit body, and wholesome spirit of confidence in self and others. The sum is the well-nurtured, well-educated, thriving child.

This section will show how we've collaborated to build a solid base of progress. By keeping children at the center, concentrating on early prevention of failure, and addressing the needs of the whole child, we're gaining ground steadily—and garnering acclaim in the process. Who says we're exemplary? Not only does our long-term data confirm the growth we see at close range, but for the past seven years, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has consistently recognized Arkansas's high-quality early childhood programs. Just this spring, NIEER named our state-funded pre-K program, Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC), among the nation's ten best. Moreover, NIEER has noted that our longitudinal Pre-K data show growth for children who have attended state-funded Pre-Ks and are now in our public schools.

As the selected highlights below affirm, we have a strong framework for quality early care and education programs that encircle children and their families. We continue to search for ever better ways to nurture and educate the *whole* child for success today *and* tomorrow.

Legal foundation Arkansas leaders and lawmakers have acted decisively, passing legislation to direct attention and resources at the whole child, regardless of age or grade.

- Aimed directly at early childhood learning success, Act 35 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 requires:
  - **screening the basic skills of all children** who enter kindergarten or first grade. The screening (Qualls Early Learning Inventory) shows each child's progress on a basic learning spectrum. The data also enable teachers to make data-driven decisions about individual P-K focus and better assist the children's transition into kindergarten.

- Act of 1220 of 2003 aims at eliminating health barriers that impede children's readiness for school and their confident steps from one grade to the next. Some of the law's provisions address:
  - **improving nutrition standards** for school cafeterias so healthful foods are the norm.
  - **screening children's Body Mass Index** to increase awareness of obesity dangers.
  - **promoting physical activity** for children throughout their school years.
  - **eliminating vending machines** through the middle grades, limiting them in high schools.

- In the 2007 legislative session, Act 138 continued the momentum by mandating:
  - **vision screening** in grades Pre-K, K, and grades 1,2,4,6, and 8.
- Also in 2007, with strong support from Governor Beebe, Act 1593 established:
  - the **Arkansas Children's Behavior Health Care Commission** to develop a **System of Care** to review, evaluate, and recommend actions to support the health of all our children.

- Act 28 of 2009 mandated:
  - the **Arkansas Early Childhood Commission/Early Learning Council**, of which ADE is a member, to guide early childhood initiatives and oversight for the state. The council has recently submitted an application for State Advisory Council funding available through the Office of Head Start to support the continued coordination of early childhood programming in the state. The council has established five goals for the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and its partners to achieve:
    - Increase the number of infants and toddlers served in quality, licensed centers annually.
    - Increase parents' involvement in their child's education through research-based models and programs to enhance success in school.
    - Support state policies to integrate a professional development system that unites the early childhood sectors: child care, Pre-K, public schools, human services, early intervention, and special education services.
    - Support the Quality Rating and Improvement System to replace the current system. The QRIS indicators recognize a program's quality of services to children and families.
    - Expand partnerships with other agencies and organizations for connected action.

Support for early childhood education and the whole-child emphasis throughout the school years is manifested in many concepts and activities, such as those described below:

- **Coordinated School Health and Wellness Center Initiative (CSH and WCI)** are twin thrusts begun this year to promote integrated health, wellness, and academic achievement in

our public schools and their communities. School campuses are a logical setting for delivering quality health programs and services to students, staff, and families. The initiative's primary goals are to (1) implement the eight-component CHS model[40] to improve academic achievement, school health programs, and community support; (2) establish the Wellness Centers and CHS systemically; and (3) develop a quality **school-based mental health program** to serve all children, including Pre-K.

- **Specialized professionals** are accelerating infusion of CSH and the Wellness Centers. A School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Advisor is liaison between mental health providers, the schools, and state agencies to ensure seamless coordination of mental health resources. A School Health Director is slated to devote intensive time to technical assistance in developing ten identified Wellness Center schools and 34 other CSH sites. A Medicaid in Schools Advisor will help schools sustain local health services by billing Medicaid dollars that might otherwise go unclaimed.

- To ensure high quality educators for young children, our **early childhood professional development system** ("Traveling Arkansas Professional Pathways") uses a data tool to register the staff of early care and education programs and track their professional development from state-approved sources. Some 18,000 staff are registered, as are over 1,000 trainers. Training covers state frameworks for children birth-5, which aligns to K-4 frameworks, early literacy, math-science, social-emotional, and other areas relevant to early care and education. A reciprocal system between ADE and the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education helps teachers avoid duplicating and reworking professional development documentation.

- During the 2009-10 school year, both Arkansas School Curriculum Development and the Association of Educational Administrators focused their **state conferences on the whole child**, considering social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs. The number of schools calling for technical assistance has since mushroomed, as have requests for professional development around the whole-child concept as integral to academic success.

- In October 2009, Arkansas joined four other states (Illinois, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Oregon), selected via competitive process by the National Academy for State Health Policy, to form the **Assuring Better Child and Development Consortium** (ABCD III Consortium). The member states are committed to developing and testing sustainable models of improving care coordination and linkages across systems to support children's healthy development.

- During last year's flu epidemic, our norm of sharing data and mobilizing across agencies allowed us to be the **first state to provide a mass flu clinic for H1N1 immunizations** in every school district. With speedy interface between ADE and ADH, lawyers resolved HIPPA and FERPA concerns. ADE furnished ADH the last two years of school attendance data so contrasts would reveal pockets of higher absences that indicated a potential flu outbreak.

[40] The eight components are health education; physical education; health services; nutritional services; counseling, psychological, and social services; healthy school environment; health promotion for staff; family and community involvement.

Schools sent their daily attendance to a Web site ADH tracked every day. As a result, the epidemic was well contained.

- ADE is progressing with rule changes that, with official approval, will be ready next fall so schools can use more of their NSLA **state supplemental funds for children's health and wellness**. Based on local priorities, schools can fund services such as a SBMH specialist, a CSH specialist, a social worker, or another nurse to broaden and sustain health programs.

Cohesive action Arkansas's strong whole-child ethic grows out of the sustained communication and cohesive action of many collaborations that conscientiously sustain their connections:

- Recommendations from **The Governor's Task Force on After-School and Summer Programs** were closely allied with CSH to promote quality afterschool programs. To ensure the health and safety of our children, relevant stakeholders are establishing licensure standards for afterschool programs.

- For the last three years, a **Core Team** has gathered monthly for substantive sharing and discussion. Representatives of public and private agencies and organizations[41] share resources and explore opportunities for further supporting CSH. The group has radiated awareness and action all across the state, resulting in many grants to schools for resources that directly affect whole-child welfare: tobacco prevention and cessation programs; dental sealants for children; and safety and health resources, including bike paths, sidewalks, walking paths, and physical activity areas.

- **Natural Wonders Partnership Council** gathers multiple Arkansas agencies and healthcare providers[42] that share a common interest in improving children's health. The council is continually helping more and more people find ways to be involved in improving child health throughout the state. The council casts a wide net for data collection relating to the physical, emotional, and mental status that's needed for successful education and its relationship to economic development.

[41] Members include the state's departments of education, health, and human services; Arkansas Center for Health Improvement; Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program; early childhood specialists; afterschool program representatives; Community Health Professions; the American Cancer Society; Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention; Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; and others.

[42] The partners include Arkansas Children's Hospital; ADE; ADH; DHS; Arkansas Center for Health Improvement; Arkansas Dental Assn.; Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield; Arkansas Chapter of the America Academy of Pediatrics; University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; Clinton School of Public Service; Arkansas Education Assn.; Arkansas Minority Health Commission; Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, and many more.

Priority 4: Invitational Priority – Expansion and Adaptation of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems *(not scored)*

The Secretary is particularly interested in applications in which the State plans to expand statewide longitudinal data systems to include or integrate data from special education programs, English language learner programs, early childhood programs, at-risk and dropout prevention programs, and school climate and culture programs, as well as information on student mobility, human resources (*i.e.*, information on teachers, principals, and other staff), school finance, student health, postsecondary education, and other relevant areas, with the purpose of connecting and coordinating all parts of the system to allow important questions related to policy, practice, or overall effectiveness to be asked, answered, and incorporated into effective continuous improvement practices.

The Secretary is also particularly interested in applications in which States propose working together to adapt one State's statewide longitudinal data system so that it may be used, in whole or in part, by one or more other States, rather than having each State build or continue building such systems independently.

The State is invited to provide a discussion of this priority in the text box below, but such description is optional. Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.
Recommended maximum response length, if any: Two pages

Early Warning System High school diplomas signify that students have concluded a long preparatory course of study and reached a level of academic maturity that has equipped them for life's next steps. Whether those steps are taken directly onto a college or technical school campus, into the workforce or a military experience, or onto some other chosen pathway, high school graduation is a rite of passage that signals readiness to leave one stage of life and enter the next, ready to succeed.

We want all Arkansas students to attain their high school diplomas and then go far beyond it. But our state's graduation rate leaves too many of our youngsters short of the mark and destined to a life of fewer open doors and much lower earnings. Settling for less is less than we want to do for our students. Because a diploma is the admission ticket to college and the meaningful careers that lie beyond, our children must graduate with competence that compels them ever onward. To increase the number of high schools graduates, we need to make some changes. Among them is identifying a way

to recognize the signs warning us that a student is in danger of quitting school. Then we need to know how to help that student stay on track.

Our vision has been an early warning system that will increase graduation rates across the state by identifying students who may potentially drop out of school in time to effect a turnaround. We're already bringing that vision to life by developing such a system. It will dovetail with our powerful Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Planning (ACSIP) system that gathers and reports data. ACSIP already identifies “triggers,” meaning data that point to certain conclusions. For example, it currently triggers recognition of special education students so the local school can quickly establish plans and priorities to address those students' needs. We can enhance the ACSIP system to identify a different set of triggers that are drop-out "red flags," such as low attendance rates and high discipline numbers, collect the related data, and then configure it into an effective early warning system.

A substantial body of research has identified the factors that have the greatest effect on a student's decision to drop out of high school. Attendance patterns, grades, test scores, retention in a certain class or grade level, discipline issues, level of engagement in the learning process, and social issues profoundly influence youngsters' abilities or desires to stay in school. While all these indicators are viable, they don't tell us exactly why *Arkansas students* quit school or when they're most likely to do so. Without knowing the why and the when, we can't adequately detect the symptoms, the "early warning" that students are losing such ground that dropping out has more appeal to them than hanging in. Nor can we anticipate the best time to apply interventions or how to effectively mitigate the circumstances that require them. We need research specific to our state to identify the triggers and the points at which they gain sufficient weight to prompt a drop-out decision. Specific Arkansas data will make the triggers much more relevant to identifying our at-risk students sooner than later.

Based on an initial short-term study in partnership with Johns Hopkins University, ADE will identify these triggers and establish a relationship between them and the appropriate staff responses. Our goal is to increase graduation rates by sensitively using the early warning data system in conjunction with a "safety net" of interventions begun early for students at risk of developing into dropouts. The warning system also may illuminate changes needed in curriculum, academic programs, and policies at both state and local levels.

The predictive study with Bob Balfanz at Johns Hopkins University is underway. We've determined the study's *data elements*, that is, the factors that may prove to be potential warning signals, such as attendance patterns, and the like. We've also identified our subject parameters, using data stretching across the nine consecutive years between cohort groups of students, looking back at them as 4th graders and following their progression to the 12th grade (or the time they were slated to reach 12th grade). Our agreement with Johns Hopkins allows us to share confidential student-level data without violating FERPA. Our work is progressing on time, and we'll finish this phase of the study before the next school year begins.

Volunteering intermediate, middle, and high schools (between six to ten of them, varying in size and geographic location) will pilot the system and test the early warning signals. Those indicators will be added to the real-time information available on a data dashboard for use by teachers and others who regularly work with middle and high school youth. The system will enable us to track and assess which interventions are used most often and which of the support strategies are most effective in given situations. Once the system is integrated into everyday work with students, staff awareness has been heightened, and interventions are a non-threatening aspect of school and classroom management, we'll be able to use subsequent data to inform and evaluate a range of supports and interventions for students who are veering from a direct course toward graduation.

We plan to recruit a group of stakeholders from across the state as a think-tank to help us identify potential interventions and explore a network of support options. The group will also describe the elements of professional development needed to raise staff's awareness of the early warning signs and appropriate responses. We'll also ask our advisors to consider the wisdom of whether to prescribe a range of certain interventions that schools will be required to have in place, or to suggest options that schools can apply according to the circumstances of individuals, time, and place.

As with all initiatives that arise from state leadership, we'll offer technical assistance and help in coordinating services and planning local strategies, especially in the company of school counselors, social workers, nurses, and others who are trained to be particularly sensitive to troubled youngsters and their guidance. We'll also closely monitor how consistently staff use the system and the scope of their responses to the indicators. Keeping close to the system will reveal not only how well schools are remaining alert to the warning signs and applying intervention guidelines, but the extent to which the initiative is working to keep at-risk kids in school and effectively engaged in learning.

The state's current ACSIP data system will be modified to include new, real-time data (such as attendance records and the rates and types of discipline infractions) so the identifying triggers will be evident. For this type of data to be effective, districts must relay the proper information much more immediately and regularly than has been routine. A propitious opportunity to build support for the new system has been presented by Act 1306 of 2009 *(Ark. Code Ann., 6-1-501 et. seq.)* that created the Arkansas Project Graduation Commission, which is mandated to:

- investigate high school dropout prevention strategies;
- analyze the relationship between high school graduation rates and the state's economy;
- recommend strategies to increase the overall high school graduation rate of Arkansas students by helping parents, schools, and students identify the academic warning signs that indicate the threat of dropping out.

The system we test in a limited number of school districts in 2010-11 will be preceded by technical assistance and regularly fortified with professional development. Training will include how and when to input data, how to read the dashboard indicators, when to intervene with students, how to choose the appropriate interventions, and how to follow up with further procedures and resources to sustain youngsters' turnaround. Staff also will be taught how to track the various types of interventions they select and evaluate the effects.

While early warning will be voluntary for all districts in the 2011-12 school year, our schools are quick to latch onto effective approaches that support their students' well being and scholastic success. We anticipate that soon all secondary schools will opt to add the system to their effective-schools' tools to keep students on track toward college and careers.

Arkansas can become a national leader in early warning systems: The body of research has yet to consider the differences between urban and rural districts, and in our state of city-country contrasts, those differences are likely to surface in fairly sharp relief. Researching and refining our warning system will enable us to reach out to sister states to share the knowledge and experience we've gained. Boosting them on the way to their own early warning system helps keep more kids in school, which strengthens our entire nation in yet another win-win partnership.

Priority 5: Invitational Priority -- P-20 Coordination, Vertical and Horizontal Alignment *(not scored)*

The Secretary is particularly interested in applications in which the State plans to address how early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, workforce development organizations, and other State agencies and community partners (*e.g.*, child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice agencies) will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a more seamless preschool-through-graduate school (P-20) route for students. Vertical alignment across P-20 is particularly critical at each point where a transition occurs (*e.g.*, between early childhood and K-12, or between K-12 and postsecondary/careers) to ensure that students exiting one level are prepared for success, without remediation, in the next. Horizontal alignment, that is, coordination of services across schools, State agencies, and community partners, is also important in ensuring that high-need students (as defined in this notice) have access to the broad array of opportunities and services they need and that are beyond the capacity of a school itself to provide.

The State is invited to provide a discussion of this priority in the text box below, but such description is optional. Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.
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Commission to coordinate efforts To promote cross-agency awareness, facilitate communication, and coordinate well-aligned work to improve our schools, Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003[43] created the Commission for Coordination of Educational Efforts. The Commission is charged with studying and recommending policies that will improve coordination among and between education agencies and strata from Pre-K to the graduate level. (We informally refer to the group as our P-20 task force.) As will be shown below, the work of the Commission has resulted in opportunities and services on a scale that individual LEAs or agencies wouldn't have been able to create independently.

Commission members, who first met in 2004, are from a geographic cross-section of the state and representative of colleges, community colleges, universities, and their boards of trustees; teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards; business and industry; and directors of the state agencies responsible for education, higher education, economic development, child care and early

[43] *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-1-301, et seq.*

childhood education, and career education. Thus, this diverse group is a powerhouse of knowledge, skill, connections, and influence that enables it to move forward decisively and command the attention of leaders and lawmakers.

The law that produced the Commission is specific about the scope of the group's work, which is to propose policies that stem from careful consideration of topics that are interrelated *and* integral to the state's public education system. Listed below are some of the topics that have fallen under the Commission's scrutiny for recommended action:

- creating policies to coordinate high school students' concurrent enrollment in college courses;
- defining a common calendar for all public schools and institutions of higher education;
- increasing the efficiency of the state's distance learning delivery;
- finding ways to enhance the working relationships among the schools, ADE, ADHE, colleges, and universities for more effective teaching in the schools;
- making credit transfers easier from one higher education institution to another, including between and among two-year and four-year institutions;
- aligning the curriculum from kindergarten through the college years;
- forging a stronger link between education and economic development;
- prioritizing education funding;
- improving college scholarship programs;
- anticipating future needs for remediation of beginning college students;
- increasing the depth and scope of science, technology, engineering, and math education from kindergarten through college;
- expanding the use of educational technology; and
- any other improvements in education at any level to benefit students and the state.

The Commission meets quarterly to gather information and discuss various events and issues in the state's education system against the current political and economic backdrop. From this deliberation, the group shapes its studies and ideas into recommendations that go before lawmakers at the next legislative session. Several of those recommendations have led to statues and policies that have significantly strengthened the relationships and coordinated the vertical and horizontal interactions among all aspects of our education levels and sectors. Legislation such as that below was passed in 2007:

- To decrease the need for college remediation, Act 881 created the Voluntary Universal ACT Assessment Program to allow school districts to use NSLA funds to pay for the ACT test as a measure of college preparedness.

- Act 570 created the Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates to study what the data indicate is needed to increase students' success in college.

- Act 936 developed guidelines for endorsed concurrent enrollment courses that may be taught along with AP courses in high schools.

- Act 1024 created the 21st Century Task Force for the 21st Century Economy to study the role and scope of economic development in the state, along with the programs and services needed for the state and its communities to be globally competitive.

The Commission's also saw accomplishments during 2009 including**:**

- As part of the governor's legislative package, a new law was passed to provide financial incentives to school districts to keep more of their students enrolled in Smart Core. *(Ark. Code Ann. §6-15-215)*
- A universal Web-based application for financial aid for higher education has been created, which includes an application form for the new lottery scholarship. *(Ark. Code Ann. §6-85-205)*
- As part of the governor's legislative package, funding was increased for the College Preparatory Enrichment Program. *(Ark. Code Ann. §6-16-604)* Also as a continuation of Arkansas Works, grant funding recently has been secured to provide ACT training to several hundred rising juniors, seniors, and recent high school graduates in the counties where College and Career Coaches are located (see *Section E-2*). Students can earn up to $500 if they attend all the classes and bring up their ACT scores.
- Act 1405 of 2009 reviewed and revised current scholarship programs as a result of the Governor's legislative package.
- The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved all changes in scholarship levels and processes occasioned by the state's new lottery to fund scholarships.
- ADE has increased its focus on math scores and efforts to increase them, especially in older students.

For further consideration and preparatory work toward the next legislative session, the Commission has included these recommendations in its current legislative report:

- Review and revise requirements for career and technical education.
- Review the effectiveness of Smart Core incentives.
- Require foreign language courses in the Smart Core curriculum.
- Encourage the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education at the Department of Human Services to promote Smart Core in its public relations campaign to parents.

- Via the Education Renewal Zone initiative, require universities to work with secondary schools to create a five-year plan to reduce the need for remediation for students entering college.

Priority 6: Invitational Priority -- School-Level Conditions for Reform, Innovation, and Learning *(not scored)*

The Secretary is particularly interested in applications in which the State's participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) seek to create the conditions for reform and innovation as well as the conditions for learning by providing schools with flexibility and autonomy in such areas as—

(i) Selecting staff;
(ii) Implementing new structures and formats for the school day or year that result in increased learning time (as defined in this notice);
(iii) Controlling the school's budget;
(iv) Awarding credit to students based on student performance instead of instructional time;
(v) Providing comprehensive services to high-need students (as defined in this notice) (*e.g.*, by mentors and other caring adults; through local partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other providers);
(vi) Creating school climates and cultures that remove obstacles to, and actively support, student engagement and achievement; and
(vii) Implementing strategies to effectively engage families and communities in supporting the academic success of their students.

The State is invited to provide a discussion of this priority in the text box below, but such description is optional. Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length, if any: Two pages

Arkansas Scholastic Audit While students begin at very different points on the education continuum, the goal is the same for every one of them: readiness for college and careers. What happens between the starting line and the goal is largely up to the educators who guide students on their academic journey. Creating the conditions for learning requires our schools to reform and renew themselves in a process of continuous improvement that never settles for the status quo. Change is the very definition of life, and the lives of our children are always changing and growing; their schools must do the same.

A successful approach we're using to guide schools toward the changes they need to make is the Arkansas Scholastic Audit. The audit is a research- and evidence-based process that independent observers use to describe and evaluate how well each school is going about the business of educating its students: What's working well? What needs fine-tuning? Where is a major overhaul in order?

For the last four years, audited schools across Arkansas have recognized the process as extremely thorough and almost always helpful. Educators value the accurate results, which are sometimes eye-opening. Often the findings aren't surprising but confirm what was suspected, or they illuminate what was obvious but ignored until brought to the fore by an objective outsider.

A scholastic audit is a comprehensive review of the learning environment, organizational efficiency, and academic performance of a school or even an entire school district. Audit findings are used to determine the type and level of support necessary to continuously improve students' academic performance in each examined school and district. The audit process is grounded in the *Arkansas Standards and Indicators of School Improvement* (see attached ACTAAP Section 9.12 in *Appendix B-1-4).* These standards, adapted from those originally established in Kentucky, were approved by our state board of education in 2006. The standards guide assessment of an organization's systemic performance through an evidence-based approach to three inclusive standards and nine indicators:

Academic Performance	**Learning Environment**	**Efficiency**
Standard 1: Curriculum *The school develops and implements a curriculum that is rigorous, intentional, and aligned to state and local standards.*	Standard 4: School Culture *The school/district functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.*	Standard 7: Leadership *School/district instructional decisions focus on support for teaching and learning, organizational direction, high performance expectations, creating a learning culture, developing leadership capacity.*
Standard 2: Classroom Evaluation/Assessment *The school uses multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work.*	Standard 5: Student, Family, and Community Support *The school/district works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career and developmental needs of students.*	Standard 8: Organizational Structure and Resources *There is evidence that the school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.*
Standard 3: Instruction *The school's instructional program actively engages all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices to improve student academic performance.*	Standard 6: Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation *The school/district provides research-based, results-driven professional development opportunities for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning.*	Standard 9: Comprehensive and Effective Planning *The school/district develops, implements, and evaluates a comprehensive school improvement plan that communicates a clear purpose, direction, and action plan focused on teaching and learning.*

Currently we use the scholastic audit in schools that have been identified as in School Improvement, Year 3 or beyond. The comprehensive audit reveals the extent to which each of the indicators is

reflected in an individual school, uncovering where actions are absent or falling short, and also pointing out strengths that can be capitalized to correct deficiencies.

The process concludes with a report the auditors review with the school's leaders point by point, with an optimistic emphasis on the improvement pathway. The report includes a number of recommendations for planning approaches and research-based interventions tailored to the school's needs, strengths, and resources, with an overall view to enhancing the students' achievement. Energized by the audit process and equipped with its insights and advice, the school has the flexibility to adopt or adapt the recommendations within its subsequent plans for improvement.