

Teacher February Newsletter

Teachers all across Arkansas are working each day to ensure their students are learning grade-level education standards and are prepared to graduate college and career ready. How can educators know if students are on target and reaching appropriate goals? One tool that schools use to measure students' academic achievement and growth is standardized tests. With the test results, teachers can adjust instructional strategies and practices to meet the educational needs of students.

Beginning this spring, Arkansas schools will administer the ACT Aspire to all students in grades three through 10. This assessment will show a student's progress in five subject areas – English, reading, writing, math and science. The results of the test can be used as a guide when deciding where a student may need additional help or be challenged academically. The information will also be helpful in planning coursework and setting goals for the future.

For ninth- and 10th-grade students, the ACT Aspire will additionally serve as a bridge to the ACT exam. Students in these two grades will receive a predicted ACT score, which can be used to decide if students are on target to attain the desired ACT score or if there are subject areas where additional courses are needed to prepare them to be college and career ready.

For the first time in Arkansas, this spring all 11th-grade students will be given the opportunity to take the ACT college entrance exam for free. The ACT test is an educational and career planning tool that assesses a student's academic readiness for college. Most colleges in the state use the scores from the ACT exam to determine acceptance, need for remediation and scholarship eligibility.

The Arkansas Department of Education has provided resources for teachers to use to prepare their students for spring testing. The resources, including links to exemplar test items, can be found at <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/assessment>.

Look for ways to communicate with parents throughout the year about the purpose of the testing program, testing dates, and the meaning and use of their child's test results. Additionally, share information with parents about how they can help their child prepare for the test.

As the testing window approaches, consider the following questions:

- What do I need to tell my students about the tests?
- What can I do to reduce test anxiety?
- How do I help my students prepare for the ACT or SAT?
- How are my students progressing in relation to the learning standards?
- Are my students on track for college and career readiness?

National School Counseling Week

National School Counseling Week 2016 is celebrated the first week of February. Use this time to educate parents about the many resources available through their child's school counselor. When sharing information about school counselors, use these questions as a guide.

- How can parents contact the school counselor?
- How can the school counselor help students and parents?



<http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/communications/my-childmy-student>