

Hi poverty districts	86.40%	12.61 yrs	96.30%	13.57 yrs	96.94%	13.60 yrs	95.02%	13.76 yrs	98.02%	13.52 yrs
Lo poverty districts	84.53%	12.42 yrs	99.20%	13.86 yrs	98.97%	13.90 yrs	98.34%	14.21 yrs	98.95%	14.15 yrs

All of the initiatives and programs described below are planned and interconnected to build equity in our public education system. The plan components are ongoing and constantly monitored to determine how well they are working and how we can improve them. The three major strands the state has identified to ensure a plan of equity in our public schools are addressed below in turn.

1. **Facilities** - Even before The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), school facilities were a priority in the state. Students, teachers, and community leaders take pride in their schools when they are attractive learning environments with classrooms that are safe, dry, and healthful. Under the Continuing Adequacy Evaluation Act of 2004 (*Arkansas Code Annotated [(A.C.A) §§ 10-3-2101]*), the General Assembly committed to make biennial assessments of “adequacy” as it pertains to the particulars of public school education *and* the facilities in which that education is delivered. Since that time, approximately \$750 million has been appropriated to improve school facilities in the state's 244 school districts (including conversion charter schools). Facility projects are approved by the state-level Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, which guides and supports development of each school district's master facility plans according to mandated construction standards. School districts with the least wealth, greatest enrollment growth, and poorest condition of facilities are the state's funding priority for improving the local school facilities. The intense school upgrading began in 2004 as a ten-year project and is on schedule. At this time, all approved projects have been funded, and additional funding requests will be made by LEAs again during summer 2010.

2. **Beginning Salaries and School Funding** In 2004, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the state didn't have a suitable and efficient system of funding public education. The court declared that it is the state's duty to provide a general, suitable, and efficient system of free public schools to the children of the state under the Arkansas Constitution, Article 14. The General Assembly is obligated to ensure the provisions of an adequate and equitable system of education, the court ruled. Ever since, lawmakers have been passing multiple laws to fulfill their charge and reform the state's education ethic and school system. Included in the new statutes and embodied within other initiatives are our plans for equity in beginning teacher salaries and school funding:
 - a. During the 2003 Second Extraordinary Session, Acts 59 and 74 were passed and became *A.C.A. §§ 6-17-2403*, known as the Minimum Teacher Compensation Schedule. The legislation established a minimum base salary for beginning teachers; a minimum annual increment; a minimum salary for teachers with a Master’s Degree; a requirement that teachers receive credit for their total years of experience, when they maintain a valid Arkansas license; and the mandate that teachers be compensated for any additional days of work at their daily rate of pay (DRP). The minimum salary schedule has been modified periodically to establish a more competitive base salary. Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, the minimum salary for teachers with a Bachelor’s Degree is \$29,244 and \$33,630 for beginning teachers with a Master’s Degree. At this time, the state average for a beginning teacher with a bachelor’s degree is \$31,899; with a Master’s Degree, it is \$35,693. This legislation has promoted parity across the state and particularly in the economically depress Delta region of the state.

- b. Act 57 of 2003 determined what is needed to fund an adequate education opportunity for children in Arkansas. Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, a report from consultants Picus and Odden determined that districts should be funded at the rate of \$5400 per pupil. For the next biennium, legislators conducted a self-study and determined that the funding rate per pupil should be increased as indicated in the table below. A recalibration study was presented by Picus and Odden in an adequacy study approved by legislators in 2007. In that study, findings regarding both salary and staffing needs were presented as equity issues and subsequently addressed by law. The per-pupil funding base is adjusted for each fiscal year and, to maintain equity, certain "categorical" funds and other monies are added. These categories include allotments for staff professional development and for students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, those who are learning English, and others in alternative learning environments. Equitable adjustments are also made for districts that are gaining enrollment and for those that are losing it. As a result of amending and continually monitoring the state's funding formula, Arkansas school districts are funded equitably.

School Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Per-Pupil Base	\$5400	\$5528	\$5662	\$5719	\$5789	\$5905	\$6023

Table 1 State equalization funding per pupil

- c. The Arkansas Teacher Housing Development (A.C.A. §§ 6-26-301 et. seq.) and The Teacher Housing Fund (A.C.A. §§ 6-26-305) were passed in 2003. The mission of the office is to identify reasonably priced housing for highly qualified and experienced teachers to relocate to hard-to-staff areas of the state, particularly the Delta region.

Since 2007, twenty Arkansas counties and their respective school districts were designated as eligible under this legislation. This list of counties and school districts was reviewed and the number of eligible counties was reduced to 14 in October 2007. Since that time, approximately 130 applications for the housing program have been submitted. Thirty-five teachers have received funds to assist with home ownership via the incentive program and another 62 teachers have received rental incentive funds.

- d. The Traveling Teacher (A.C.A. §§ 6-13-808) became law in 2007 to help school districts staff their schools with appropriately licensed teachers for required courses in grades 9-12. The Rules Governing the Traveling Teacher Program explain the application process (including the Highly Qualified Status of the teacher), the incentive bonus, and selection procedures, along with general policies and procedures relating to the program. Over the three-year span of the plan, very few teachers have taken advantage of the program, so we are studying how to improve the initiative.

School Year	Number of Districts	Number of Teachers
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2007-08	1	1
2008-09	2	2
2009-10	2	2

Table 2 Data on Traveling Teachers

- e. The Alternative Pay Plan (A.C.A. §§ 6-17-119) and the Rewarding Excellence in Achievement Program–R.E.A.P. (A.C.A. §§ 6-15-2601 et. seq.) are two alternative pay plans that afford public school districts and charter schools the opportunity to develop teacher compensation plans tailored to local needs. Those needs may be as simple as recruiting the best teachers to work in the districts because those teachers can be compensated for advancing student growth. The rules governing both the Alternative Pay and REAP plans describe the purpose and permissions of the two laws. The application process for the REAP plan, which is a competitive program, awards additional money to funded schools and districts according to its rules. The program is only two years old, but its limited success warrants examination to determine where programmatic changes are needed.

School Year	Number of Districts awarded a REAP grant
2008-09	2
2009-10	2

Table 3 Number of Districts Awarded a REAP grant

3. **Teacher Recruitment and Retention** Arkansas needed a plan to encourage teachers to move into hard-to-staff areas. In August 2006, the *Bureau of Legislative Research* submitted a report to the Joint Education Committee noting that Arkansas didn't have a teacher shortage problem, but a "sorting problem." In other words, the demographics of where teachers seek employment differ from where jobs are open. ADE has been working via the initiatives described in this section to assist school districts in locating highly qualified teachers. Economic development and housing are both issues that need to be addressed in order for teachers to relocate in the economically hard-pressed Delta and southeastern quadrant of the state. The plan includes continued dialogue with business and school leaders in this region, as well as the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, to expand strategies for staffing such areas.
- a. Pathwise Mentoring to Enhance Arkansas's Retention Data In spring 2008, the Office of Teacher Quality compiled longitudinal data on the retention rate of new teachers in our public schools. The data showed that Arkansas's retention rate is much higher than the national average. The research revealed that 25% to 35% of teachers quit their jobs after their first year, and 50% of them quit by the end of five years. Arkansas' data shows that the efforts of our legislators to improve teacher salaries and the Pathwise mentoring program in the state has a major impact on teacher retention for the state. Pathwise ensures that new teachers have a mentoring support system to help orient and guide them throughout the transition into their new

positions and responsibilities. Note that for both retention categories, first year and after five years, Arkansas' data is considerably better than the national average cited above.

School Year	# of 1 st year teachers	% of first year teachers not returning	% of teachers not returning after five years
2001-02	2262	19.72%	31.17%
2002-03	1886	18.40%	30.49%
2003-04	1863	9.07%	26.25%
2004-05	1789	6.26%	32.92%
2005-06	2304	6.42%	29.86%
2006-07	2504	6.91%	NA
2007-08	2507	13.64%	NA
2008-09	2284	14.71%	NA
2009-10	2413	NA	NA

Table 4 Retention Data on teachers after years one and five

- b. Equity Assistance Center (EAC), A.C.A. §§ 6-17-1902, established an Equity Assistance Center at ADE. The center provides technical assistance to school districts in developing an inclusive staff recruitment plan. Some of the specific goals of this statute are that each LEA:
- i. designate an employee to coordinate implementation of its recruitment plan
 - ii. establish a goal to recruit minority teachers and administrators for the next ten years, including steps and progress made
 - iii. encourage minority students to seek a career in education.
- c. District Minority Recruitment Plans Beginning in the 1992-93 school year, each school district in the state with more than a 5% minority student population was required to prepare a minority teacher and administrator recruitment plan and file it annually with the Equity Assistance Center (EAC) pursuant to A.C.A. §§ 6-17-1901. The table below outlines the number of districts in the state with 95% or more white students who were not required to submit a Minority Teacher and Administrator Recruitment Plan. (For the past three years Arkansas has had approximately 244 school districts.)

School Year	2004-2005	2005-06	2006-07	2007-2008	2008-09	2009-10
Number of districts with 95% or more white students	100	91	80	76	79	76

Table 5 Number of Arkansas public school district with 95 percent or more white students

- d. Since the 2006-07 school year, ADE has entered into a yearly Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Teach for America Corporation (TFA) to assist the state in placing teachers in the Delta region. However, Arkansas has been a partner with TFA for the past 20 years. During the first nine years, the number of TFA teachers in the state ranged from three to twenty-two teachers per year. As outlined in the table below, that number has grown. For the past ten years, the number of Highly Qualified Teachers employed in Arkansas through annual contracts with TFA is substantially higher, as illustrated below. The growth in HQT in the Delta is a significant asset and evidence of efforts to ensure equity to student in the region.

Year	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
1 st Yr	11	18	38	24	38	39	39	35	35	98
2 nd Yr	10	11	18	29	24	37	33	36	41	35
Total in AR	21	29	56	54	62	76	72	71	76	133

Table 6 Data on the number of Teach for America (TFA) teachers in pubic schools in the Arkansas Delta

- e. In 2003, Act 101 established High Priority Districts Bonus Incentives (A.C. A. §§ 6-17-811) as a three-year pilot program. The program met with success, so the statute was changed for full implementation beyond the pilot stage. Presently, the program defines a high priority district as one with fewer than 1000 students and in which over 80% of the students qualify for the free- or reduced-price lunch program. Teachers in any of the qualifying districts receive \$5000 as an incentive bonus for the first year of service, then \$4000 for the second year, and \$3000 for all teachers in their third year and beyond. The bonus is paid upon completion of the contract for that school year. The state has appropriated over \$4 million each biennium through this incentive program to recruit teachers in high-priority districts. Table 7 illustrates the number of teachers who have benefited from the program for the past five years. Note the jump in the number of current teachers, therefore those teachers retained, for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. The data for the incentives paid at the conclusion of the 2009-2010 school year will be collected later in June 2010.

Years	# of New Teachers	# of Current Teachers	Total # of Teachers Receiving Incentive funds	Total dollars distributed
2004-05	127	423	550	\$1,282,000
2005-06	90	414	530	\$1,257,558
2006-07	39	335	374	\$ 910,516
2007-08	92	461	553	\$1,415,952
2008-09	88	552	640	\$1,609,388

Table 7 Distribution of the high-priority district bonus incentives

- f. The Troops to Teachers (TTT) program in Arkansas is working hand-in-hand with the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention. In the spring of 2006, ADE employed a new program advisor to ensure that this program reaches its full potential. Arkansas entered into a MOU with the Dantes Troops to Teachers program, which works to recruit military personnel, who are leaving the service, into teaching. The teachers hired through TTT will all be highly qualified: they must pass the content-knowledge Praxis examination for the licensure area before they are admitted into the program.

School Year	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Number of military personnel recruited to AR schools through the TTT program each year	6	5	7	17	4

Table 8 Number of Recruits through the TTT program

- g. During the 2005-06 school year, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) implemented the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP) pursuant to A.C. A. §§ 6-81-610. Legislation appropriated two million dollars a year to fund this project. The maximum a teacher can receive is \$3000 per year (\$2000 from the ADHE and \$1000 from the local school districts). This dual-licensure incentive program provides loans to teachers who return to college to obtain an additional licensure in a subject matter declared a shortage area by the state. The teacher must be currently employed as a classroom teacher in an Arkansas public school and have been employed by the same district for at least three years immediately preceding the application. ADHE will forgive the loan if the recipient receives the additional license within the first three of receiving the funds *and* teaches in an Arkansas public school for three consecutive years immediately after obtaining the additional license. As evident from Table 9 below, the program which began in 2006-07 needed more publicity the first year; and the publicity worked as evidenced that the number of teachers participating in TOP doubled the second year. This program not only helps teachers achieve full licensure, in many instances it also promotes highly qualified status as teachers increase their content knowledge for the licensure area.

Year	Number of teachers participating in TOP		Funds Expended	
	(Dual Licensure)	(Reimbursement)	(Dual Licensure)	(Reimbursement)
2006-07	33	423	\$64,559	\$522,965
2007-08	41	750	\$53,456	\$980,294
2008-09	44	709	\$62,500	\$1,024,462
2009-2010*	35	NA	\$62,064	NA

* preliminary data

Table 9 Data on TOP

- h. Since 2004, we have maintained a partnership with Teachers-Teachers.com to recruit teachers and administrators for any school district in Arkansas. The table below illustrates the number of unique “hits” on the Arkansas site. The online application system makes applications and job announcements a viable part of the state’s equity plan. The following statistics illustrate the effect of this program:
- 32,129 users indicated they were licensed educators interested in Arkansas education positions
 - 82 registered as Arkansas users (school districts, education co-ops, ADE, Arkansas Correctional Schools)
 - 2,114 new candidate's names were added to the prospect lists in all subject areas
 - 3,096 candidate names were added for special education
 - 335 jobs were posted in all subject areas
 - 25 jobs were posted in special education
 - 424,841 e-mails were sent to candidates on behalf of the state's school districts
 - 4,193 individual candidates viewed at least one Arkansas job posting
 - 387 candidates viewed at least one special education job posting
 - At the end of the year, school districts reported that 32% of their hires used Teachers-Teachers.Com
 - 92% of these candidates were not Arkansas teachers during the previous (2008) school year

This last statistic is impressive, reflecting genuine new recruitment rather than mere shuffling of existing Arkansas teachers. The state is optimistic that, though this continued partnership, it will gain mobility data to enter into the warehouse of our Comprehensive Data Plan to help all school districts with recruitment. (The number of participating districts decreased during the last two years due to the loss of grant funding by the special education unit which resulted in interested districts being asked to pay a prorated fee for utilization.)

- i. The Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention is a program within the ADE designed to address the shortage of teachers in Arkansas and increase the pipeline of potential teachers. For persons interested in education careers, the office informs them of available incentives for those who will work in high demand areas as well as assist school districts in the Delta with recruitment and retention. Note several of the innovative initiatives emanating from the office:
- i. Since 2002, the SEA has held an annual job fair to assist current Arkansas teachers in adding areas of licensure, especially in hard-to-fill and other shortage areas. On May 1, 2010, the job fair was held at a large metroplex in Little Rock, where almost 400 teachers attended, as did 5 universities, and 54 school districts. Turnout was quite high, especially considering the number of tornadoes in the state throughout the previous night.
 - ii. Realistic rules and procedures for reciprocity have allowed 22% of all newly licensed Arkansas teachers, coming from other states, to teach in Arkansas each year.
 - iii. In 2007, the state began providing \$1000 as an annual recruitment incentive for each College of Education to recruit teacher candidates into their programs. Additional grant funds will help us expand the recruitment initiative.

iv. The Office of Recruitment and Retention conducted a unique recruitment campaign in 2009 that included special job fairs centering on 12 selected Delta school districts that had recruitment challenges. Some teacher candidates were hired on the spot. These twelve districts will be able to interview teacher candidates at the Non-Traditional Licensure Program Orientation in June 2010, and all fees for one NTLP candidate from each of the school districts will be waived. Booth fees will be paid by the Office of Recruitment and Retention for every in-state job fair these districts attend at Arkansas colleges and universities. Further, each school district will receive financial incentives: \$1000 for recruitment advertisements and \$2500 for recruitment materials to use at job fairs.

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v. Colorful recruitment billboards, placed prominently on highways and interstates in the Delta, are inviting individuals into the teaching profession. Three of those billboards are shown below:

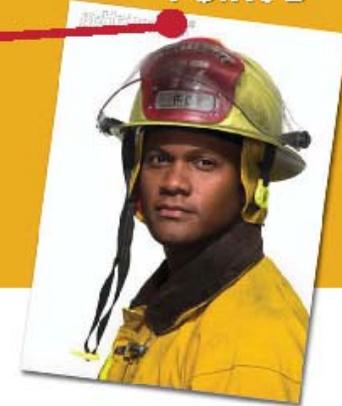
Help him get from
Point A to Point B.

Point A



Become a
teacher!

Point B



Learn more at
TeachArkansas.org

Want to build better lives?
Become a Teacher!



Learn more at
TeachArkansas.org



SECO

APPROVAL: _____
DATE: _____

SECO OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENT
DESIGN: PAIGE BRADFORD



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DATE: _____

SECO OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENT
DESIGN: PAIGE BRADFORD