



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AGENDA **STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

January 9, 2015

Arkansas Department of Education

ADE Auditorium - Special Committee on Parent Communication

11:00 AM

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Consent Agenda

C-1 Minutes - November 14, 2014

Presenter: Deborah Coffman

Action Agenda

A-1 Consideration of Summary Report for Special Committee on Parent Communication

The committee will review draft documents and make a final presentation to the State Board of Education in February 2015.

Presenter: Alice Mahony, Chair

Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee on Parent Communication
Meeting
Friday, November 14, 2014

The State Board of Education Special Committee on Parent Communication met Friday, November 14, 2014, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Chair Alice Mahony called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Present: Alice Mahony, Chair; Mireya Reith

Absent: Joe Black

Committee Members Attending: Jerri Derlikowsky, Lisa Haley, Sherri Thorne, Mary Perry, Deborah Coffman, Kimberly Friedman, Elbert Harvey, Bobby Lester, Andre Guerrero, Jonathan Crossley, and Melinda Kinnison

Consent Agenda

Ms. Reith moved, seconded by Ms. Sherri Thorne, to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Items included in the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes - August 15, 2014

Work Session

Consideration for Next Steps for My Child/My Student Campaign

Ms. Mahony said the questions are helpful for parent teacher conferences.

Ms. Gayle Morris said the social media has increased by 700 viewers.

Ms. Deborah Coffman reported that Ms. Kimberly Friedman presented My Child/My Student to several organizations and a local television station. Ms. Coffman also reported that Ms. Angela Duran wrote a professional development course for My Child that will be available on Arkansas IDEAS before Christmas break.

Ms. Reith encouraged the ADE staff to reach out to schools and ask them to include the My Child information in their district newsletters. Ms. Reith will send Ms. Friedman contact information regarding northwest public television.

Ms. Reith encouraged all members to reach out to organizations (AEEN, Teach for America, Grade Level Reading, Co-op list servs, PTO, and other) about posting My Child to their website or including information in their newsletters.

Identify next steps for offline implementation

Committee members recommended consideration for printing fliers for job fairs including QR codes and URL to webpage; securing a booth at conferences; designating a week to celebrate parent/teacher communication; and involving businesses, foundations, organizations to include information in their communications, bills, and newsletters.

The State Board signed a resolution recognizing November 20 as National Parent Involvement Day. Committee members recommended the Communications Team design a press release highlighting My Child/My Student. Ms. Morris said that Ms. Reith videotaped a new video for the My Child campaign.

Ms. Derlikowski and Ms. Coffman are working on a document, *How Arkansas Schools Work*. Ms. Reith recommended the final document be translated into Spanish and Marshallese for advocates to distribute. Committee members recommended sharing the final document with the Joint Education Committee.

Ms. Reith challenged each member to reach out to a potential partner. Ms. Coffman committed to reach out to the ForwARd Initiative. Mr. Crossley committed to reach out to Teach for America about a grass roots campaign for parents.

Ms. Kinnison recommended the communications team prepare fliers for the participants' bags at the annual Convention PTA in Fort Smith in May. The fliers will be needed by April and could focus on recommendations for the summer.

The Special Committee on Parent Communication will meet January 9, 2015 at noon in the ADE Auditorium. The meeting will focus on members' commitments to reach out to partners to share My Child.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman



Summary Report and Sustainability Plan – January 9, 2015

BACKGROUND

On Thursday, April 10, 2014, State Board of Education Chair Ms. Brenda Gullett appointed Ms. Alice Mahony, chair; Ms. Mireya Reith; and Mr. Joe Black to the Special Committee on Parent Communication. The committee members were directed to work with Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) staff to increase parent and teacher communication that focused on ensuring students are college and career ready. The committee included members from supporting organizations. The committee met June 13, 2014; July 11, 2014; August 15, 2014; November 14, 2014; and Friday, January 9, 2015.

The committee outlined a plan for monthly communication topics that could improve communication between teachers and parents. The committee oversaw the development of a webpage on the ADE website that includes a monthly newsletter, social media postings, and helpful links:

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

In addition, a professional development course was developed and posted on Arkansas IDEAS:

IDEAS-ADE - My Child, My Student: Parents and Teachers Communicating - Reducing Chronic Absenteeism is now LIVE on the portal. To visit the course, click here: <http://lms-1.aetn.org/?redir=course&id=1004224>.

DATA

- The My Child/My Student campaign has experienced moderate success since its launch in August 2014. With the official announcement of the campaign, newspaper, television, and radio outlets provided opportunities for the promotion of the campaign at no cost.
- In a little more than four months, the ADE's social media reach has been extended to include nearly 1,100 new followers and likes. Analytics from the ADE's Facebook and Twitter accounts show that the messages are reaching the campaign's key demographic, women ages 24-54, but the numbers also show that most of the social media followers are geographically located in the central Arkansas area. Aggressive pursuit of increasing ADE's presence on social media has allowed the agency to build a collective community of over 10,000 followers.

- In August 2014, ADE's Facebook page had 2,495 likes. This number surged to 2,844 on December 2014, which shows a growth of 349 new followers.
- The ADE's Twitter following has seen a similar growth. In August 2014, the Twitter page had 6,496 followers. In December 2014, the number of followers had grown to 7,234 followers, which is a growth of 738 followers.

MESSAGE EXPANSION

- The My Child/My Student campaign's core mission remains focused on increasing and improving communication between Arkansas public school teachers and parents/caregivers to improve the academic success of Arkansas public school students.
- Emerging issues that impact Arkansas students, coupled with the need to increase the awareness of the campaign and its messages, requires expansion of the campaign's scope and message delivery systems. The campaign's messages for the 2015-16 school year will be expanded to include parent and educator communication that does the following:
 - Prepares students to be college and career ready; and
 - Raises public awareness concerning student safety including anti-bullying and school bus safety for students and Arkansas motorists.

KEY AUDIENCES

External audiences:

- Parents and caregivers
- Teachers
- Principals
- District superintendents and other district level administrators
- Education organizations
- Legislators
- Media
- General public

Internal audiences:

- Members of the Arkansas State Board of Education
- Arkansas Department of Education staff members

BRANDING

- The My Child/My Student brand and slogan were utilized on the webpage and all social media postings. To support brand identification and increase awareness, all outreach efforts will:
 - Display the My Child/My Student brand and slogan; and
 - Direct follow up to the My Child/My Student webpage or to the ADE website.

WEBSITE

- The ADE communications unit designed the My Child/My Student page on the ADE website. The Communications unit will continue to maintain support of the webpage and promote the webpage by
 - Utilizing the promo header on the home page to bring attention to the My Child/My Student webpage.
 - Utilizing a promo header on the parents' page and teachers' page to bring attention to the My Child/My Student webpage.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- The ADE communications unit aggressively promotes the My Child/My Student campaign on Facebook and Twitter. The unit will continue to search for current and active media to promote the My Child/My Student campaign in addition to
 - Expanding the use of ADE's YouTube channel. Market trends indicate that the use of video will continue to grow as a means of content delivery.

NEWSLETTERS

- A communications firm was hired to develop monthly newsletters that were linked on the My Child/My Student campaign. Beginning in December 2014, the ADE Curriculum and Instruction unit took control of the creation of monthly newsletters to parents and teachers focused on communication topics identified in the My Child/My Student campaign. The curriculum and instruction unit will continue to develop monthly newsletters that will be
 - Posted on the My Child/My Student webpage; and
 - Promoted on social media.

HANDOUTS

- My Child/My Student handouts were provided during monthly State Board meetings. The handouts are also available on the My Child/My Student webpage in English and Spanish. Additional handouts will be designed to
 - Celebrate teachers and parents who are communicating about college and career readiness and student safety.
 - Promote My Child/My Student communication topics.

VIDEO

- The ADE Communications unit has created three videos for the My Child/My Student campaign. The unit will continue to create collections of short videos, with the content focused on the My Child/My Student campaign, and post them on the ADE website and YouTube channel. Video messages will be posted in English and Spanish. Also, the unit will promote outreach by
 - Encouraging schools to videotape messages related to My Child/My Student and post them on their websites and/or social media. The video links will be shared via ADE social media and the My Child/My Student webpage.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The ADE Communications unit, Arkansas IDEAS, and Special Committee Member Ms. Angela Duran produced a professional development program for Arkansas educators focused on student attendance, one of the topics in the 2014 My Child/My Student campaign. The unit will continue to collaborate and design professional development for Arkansas educators on My Child/My Student topics for communication by
 - Enlisting the assistance of supporting organizations to design and develop quality professional development.

NEWSPAPER

- The majority of newspapers in Arkansas are published once a week, usually on Wednesdays or Thursdays. Readership is typically older but this population tends to thoroughly read the local newspapers. The Communications unit will seek to utilize more print media by
 - Producing a monthly column on an issue related to My Child/My Student.
 - Exploring the availability of a monthly column in *Hola! Arkansas* to reach a broader Spanish-language audience.

CONFERENCES/MEETINGS

- Statewide conferences serve as a way to reach Arkansas educators, school administrators and school board members. These gatherings represent a high percentage of the core audiences for the My Child/My Student campaign. The Communications unit will encourage more engagement from organizations by
 - Requesting to provide a display booth at the conferences to promote the My Child/My Student campaign.

ADE STAFF

- There are approximately 440 ADE staff members, with a demographic breakdown of approximately 70 percent women and 30 percent men. The Communications unit will encourage staff members to promote the My Child/My Student campaign by
 - Distributing e-mail messages to staff about the My Child/My Student campaign and encouraging staff to like/follow the campaign on Facebook and Twitter.
 - Encouraging staff to share information about the My Child/My Student campaign with colleagues, friends and family.

TELEVISION

- Free media coverage by the state's television stations focused on the kick-off announcement of the My Child/My Student campaign. However, as the campaign progressed, wide-spread television coverage of the campaign, its topics and overall goals has been difficult to achieve.
- The ADE Communications unit will pursue sponsorship to allow the My Child/My Student campaign to reach a larger audience and have a constant on-air presence.
 - Possible opportunities exist on "Daybreak," the local morning program on KATV-Channel 7. The station performs very well among women viewers, and Daybreak has tripled the number of female viewers over the past year.
 - Possible opportunities exist on KTHV-Channel 11's evening news broadcasts at 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. The station currently produces the segment, "A Place to Call Home" in partnership with the Division of Children and Family Services of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. The segment features Arkansas children who are available for

adoption. During the television segments, Dawn Scott, the station's news co-anchor and segment producer, conducts interviews with foster children in venues where their stories about the importance of a permanent home can be heard and seen. KTHV's 6 p.m. newscast is in second place behind KATV. However, with strategic social media by ADE and KTHV, as well as a robust segment promotional effort, an education segment could experience the success being experienced by the A Place to Call Home segment.

- Additionally, Maura Lozano-Yancy, owner of the Hola Media Group, which publishes *Hola! Arkansas*, announced in October that the Hola Media Group will take over two Telemundo affiliates in Arkansas. The affiliates will be located in Little Rock and Fayetteville. By forming a partnership with these affiliates, the My Child/My Student campaign would have an opportunity to reach a larger, Spanish-speaking audience, which has been a challenging demographic to reach.

SUSTAINABILITY, EVALUATION and REPORTING of PROGRESS

- The work done by the Special Committee on Parent Communication will be continued under the direction of the ADE Communications unit. The Communications unit will be responsible for the following:
 - Organizing a communication cabinet to consist of teachers, parents and organization membership who will meet quarterly (in person or electronically) to review progress and make recommendations regarding the My Child/My Student campaign;
 - Continuing to collaborate with the Curriculum and Instruction unit to provide current newsletters on My Child/My Student communication topics;
 - Continuing to support the My Child/My Student campaign by updating the webpage and social media postings;
 - Continuing to pursue opportunities for support to bring awareness to the My Child/My Student campaign;
 - Examine data regarding the outreach to parents and teachers; and
 - Report periodically to the State Board of Education.



My Child/My Student
Parents and Teachers Communicating

Communication Topics



2015-2016

Month	College and Career Readiness Topic	Parent: Sample questions to consider when communicating with your child's teacher	Teacher: Sample questions to consider when communicating with parents	Student Safety Topic	Parent: Sample questions to consider when communicating with your child's teacher	Teacher: Sample questions to consider when communicating with parents
August	Back to School/ School Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way to communicate with my child's teacher? • What is the best way for my child's teacher to communicate with me? • What is the best time for me to contact my child's teacher? • What can I do to help my child attend school every day? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way to communicate with my students' parents? • What is the best way for parents to communicate with me? • What is the best time to contact my students' parents? • What can I do to promote good attendance? 	School Bus Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should I tell my child about getting on and off the school bus? • What should I tell my child about walking to and from the school bus stop? • What can I do to remind Arkansas motorists about school bus safety? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way to communicate with my students' parents about school bus safety? • How can my school get involved in the Flashing Red. Kids Ahead. campaign? • What are some helpful tips I can give to my students' parents about school bus safety?

September	School Involvement: Student Goals for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will my child learn this year? • What learning goals will we set together? • What programs should my child be involved in at school? • How much homework will my child have? • What supports are available to me as I assist my child with homework? • How can I be involved in my child's learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I explain the standards and assessments for my students? • What online grading system is available to parents? • What educational opportunities are available for students? • What are homework expectations for my students? • How can I involve parents in ways that support learning? • How can parents get involved in school programs? 	National Preparedness Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does my child know what to do in case of an emergency? • Does my family have an emergency supply kit? • What does my child need to know about natural disasters? • Does my child know how to get in touch with family members if we are not together when an emergency occurs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do my students know about our school's emergency plan? • How do I help my students' parents discuss natural disasters with their children? • What information can I give parents' about preparing for disasters?
October	Parent/Teacher Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is my child progressing? • What can I do to help my child? • What questions should I ask my child's teacher? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the student progressing in relation to the learning standards? • Is the student prepared to move to the next level of learning? • What support can I offer to a struggling student? • What questions will parents have about ACT and college registration? • What can parents do to help their children? 	National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I know if my child is being bullied? • How do I know if my child is a bully? • How can my child's teacher help if my child is being bullied? • How can I protect my child against cyberbullying? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can I do to prevent bullying in my school or classroom? • How can I help a student who is a victim of bullying or is a bully? • What recommendations can I give my students' parents on preventing cyberbullying?

November	Helping My Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I help my child be a better reader? • How do I help my child learn math? • How can I use math in my home? • How can I help my child to read 30 minutes per day? • How can I encourage other children in my neighborhood to be strong readers and mathematicians? • What courses will my child need to take to graduate on time and be college and career ready? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What recommendations can I give parents for supporting reading and mathematics? • How can I remove the barriers that are blocking a particular student's success? • What should parents know about college and career readiness? 	National Diabetes Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I communicate with the school if my child is a diabetic? • What supplies should I send to school with my child if he or she is diabetic? • What can the school nurse do to help my child? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I help my student who is diabetic? • Do I have the correct contact information for parents/guardians in case of an emergency? • Where can I learn more about diabetes?
December	Serving the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can my child get involved in community service? • Why is community service important? • How will community service help my child get into college? • How will community service help my child get scholarships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What community service opportunities are available for my students? • What community service opportunities are available for parents to participate with their children? • What learning opportunities are available through community service? • How will community service help my students get into college and get scholarships? 	Safe Toys and Gifts Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I make sure my child's toys are safe? • What does it mean when a toy is labeled "supervision required"? • What are some ways I can have safe toys for my child? (This question is a little vague.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best way to communicate with my students' parents about toy and gift safety? • What resources can I share with parents about making safe toy and gift purchases?
January	Goals for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is my child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is my student 	Flu Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I keep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I

		<p>progressing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my child meeting the expected learning goals? • Is my child actively engaged in learning? • How can I be involved in my child's learning experience? • What are the homework goals for this semester? • What supports are available to me as I help my child with homework? • Is my child on track to graduate on time? 	<p>progressing to meet grade-level standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the homework provide appropriate practice for skills that have already been taught? • How can parents get involved in school? • How can I help parents assist their children with homework? 		<p>my child healthy during flu season?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should I do if my child gets the flu? • What are some precautions my family can take to avoid getting the flu? 	<p>communicate with parents about flu season?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should I do if a child has flu-like symptoms during the school day? • What can I do to help my students stay healthy during flu season?
February	Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I tell my child about state testing? • What can I do to limit test anxiety? • How can I help my child be prepared for testing? • When will I receive my child's results? • What will I learn about my child from the test results? • When does my child need to take the ACT or SAT? • Is my child on track to be eligible for scholarships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is my student progressing in relation to the standards? • Is my student on track for college and career readiness? • What can I do to reduce test anxiety? • What do I need to tell my students about the tests? • How do I help my students prepare for the ACT or SAT? 	National School Counseling Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I know who my child's school counselor is? • What kind of assistance can my child's school counselor give me? • When should I contact my child's school counselor? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the school counselor help my students' academic progress? • When should I contact the school counselor about my student? • What services can the school counselor provide to my students? • How can my students' parents reach the school counselor?

March	Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I talk with my child about college and careers? • How can I help my child apply what they learn in school to everyday activities? • How do I help my child utilize mathematical problem solving? • How do I help my child become a proficient reader? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do my lessons show how students will use their knowledge in college and careers? • How can my students apply what they learn to everyday life? • How can my students use math at home? 	National Severe Weather Preparedness Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does my child know what to do if severe weather occurs while he/she is home alone? • Does my family have regular tornado drills? • Does my family have a prepared disaster kit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there resources I can give my students on being prepared for severe weather? • Does my school have regular tornado drills? • Do my students know what to do if a tornado strikes during the school day? • Do my students' parents know the school's plan in case of a tornado?
April	Goals for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will I know if my child is making progress? • If my child is not making progress, how can I help? • What learning goals have been met? • Is my child actively engaged in learning? • Is my child meeting homework goals? • What plans is my child making for the future? • Is my child college and career ready? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is my student progressing to meet grade-level standards? • Are students meeting homework expectations? • How can I help parents become involved in school (PTO, PTA, Booster, athletic events, classroom helpers)? • Are my students college and career ready? 	National Child Abuse Prevention Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I do if I suspect a child is being abused? • How can I become involved in local child abuse prevention programs? • What are some of the signs that a child is being abused? • How should I communicate with my child's teacher if I suspect a student is being abused? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who should I contact if I suspect a child is being abused? • How can I support child abuse prevention programs in my community? • What are some signs of child abuse that I can share with parent?

May	Maximize Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I keep my child engaged in learning activities this summer? • Does my child have reading materials for the summer? • Does my child have engaging math activities at home? • Where can I find summer reading programs? • What summer courses are available for my child? • What summer experiences are available for my child? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What learning activities can I recommend for summer? • What summer reading programs are available? • How can my students use math this summer? • What summer experiences are available to my students (Boys and Girls State, Arkansas Governor's School, summer school programs, Upward Bound, STEM opportunities, local library reading programs, ACT/SAT prep)? 	National Allergy/Asthma Awareness Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I communicate with the school about my child's food allergies? • Does my child's school have my correct contact information in case of an emergency? • Who do I contact if my child has to have medication during the day for his/her allergies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I have the correct parent contact information in case of an emergency? • What do I do if my student has a severe allergic reaction during the school day? • Do I know my school district's policy about dispensing medication? • What questions can I ask my student's parent about allergy triggers?
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The Local School

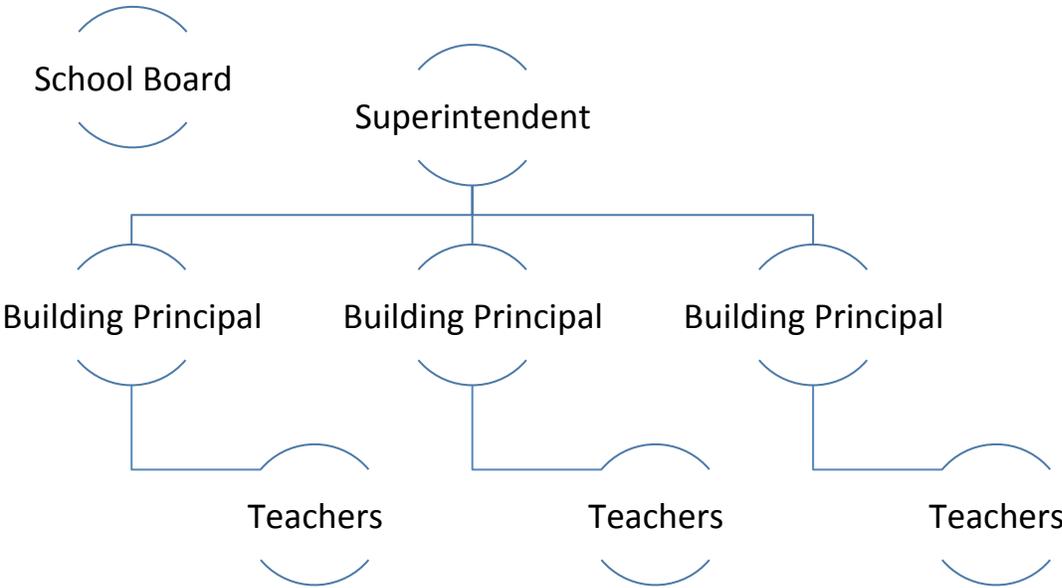
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INTRODUCTION

Parents need to understand how the overall school system in Arkansas fits together in order to participate more fully in school business and interact more successfully with school officials. This document is designed to provide an outline of the structure of the school system and explain the roles of officials at each level.



The National Role in Education



U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is responsible for the federal government's role in education. ED's ability to influence education policy and practice is actually very limited by both the U.S. Constitution and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), originally passed in 1965. ESEA specifically prohibits ED from directing local school districts' actions related to specific curriculum, personnel, or budget.

ESEA was last renewed in 2001 with a version termed "The No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. Under this version of ESEA, the federal role in education was greatly expanded by requiring states to adopt academic standards and to periodically assess students on those standards, with the goal being to more closely monitor student achievement and progress toward closing the achievement gap between racial/ethnic groups. (It was more than race/ethnic. I believe it also included special ed, etc. Maybe say sub-groups such as ...) The law has not been updated since 2001; however, ED is using a waiver process for states to make adjustments for the current school setting.

For more information about the ESEA Flexibility Waiver approved for Arkansas, go to the Arkansas Department of Education website:
<http://www.arkansased.org/esea-flexibility>.

The State Role in Education



Public education is primarily a state responsibility. The Arkansas Constitution Article 14 says the following:

Intelligence and virtue being the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a free and good government, 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. The specific intention of this amendment is to authorize that in addition to existing constitutional or statutory provisions the General Assembly and/or public school districts may spend public funds for the education of persons over twenty-one (21) years of age and under six (6) years of age, as may be provided by law, and no other interpretation shall be given to it. [As amended by Const. Amend. 53.]

The Arkansas Supreme Court further emphasized this in its ruling on the Lake View School District case. In 2002 the court defined the state's responsibilities for education. The ruling was in conflict with the long-established practice of strict local-control for education. The court stated that it is the state's responsibility to define adequacy, assess, evaluate and monitor the entire spectrum of education. The court went further to say that the state must know how state revenues are spent and whether true equality in education is being achieved.

- **Arkansas Legislature**

The state legislature sets laws, policies, and administrative codes on a range of issues, generally including the following:

- Education goals and standards;
- Graduation requirements;
- Teacher certification standards and professional development requirements;
- Assessment programs and other accountability measures to ensure that school districts and schools perform at acceptable levels;

- Teacher evaluation standards and guidelines;
- Days or hours required for students per school year;
- School closure in the event of a public health emergency; and
- Time requirements for certain subjects, such as physical education.

The legislature is also responsible for authorizing funds to be used to meet educational needs at both the state and local school district levels. The legislature does this by passing an act that outlines the amount of money the state can use or send to districts. The Regular Session of the 90th General Assembly convenes Monday, January 12, 2015. Information is available on the Arkansas State Legislature website:

<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Pages/Home.aspx>

- **State Board of Education**

Arkansas law has established the State Board of Education as the group responsible for oversight of education in Arkansas. There are nine voting members of the board who serve seven-year terms.

6-11-105. Powers and duties.

(a) The State Board of Education shall:

(1) Have general supervision of the public schools of the state;

(2) Recommend courses of study for the public schools and teacher training institutions;

An example of an action by the State Board of Education that sets statewide policy is the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010. As a result of that state action, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) began a process to move the state forward in replacing the existing state standards (frameworks) with the new Common Core State Standards.

The law goes on to outline other powers and duties of the State Board of Education. One of these duties is to employ the state's top education leader—the Commissioner of Education.

6-11-102. Commissioner of Education.

(a) (1) Subject to confirmation by the Governor, the State Board of Education is empowered to employ a person to act as the Commissioner of Education and who shall be the administrative head of the Department of Education.

(2) The commissioner shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

The State Board of Education meets the second Thursday and Friday of each month. The agenda is posted on the ADE website, and the meeting is live streamed and recorded. The agendas and prior videos can be accessed at <http://www.arkansased.org/state-board>.

- **Arkansas Department of Education**

The Arkansas Department of Education is responsible for carrying out the state's laws related to education. ADE helps districts with meeting requirements for federal education programs, distributes state funding to school districts according to legislative requirements, and passes federal funds to school districts, such as Title I funding.

ADE monitors compliance with the State Standards for Accreditation. School districts must meet these standards for their schools to be considered accredited. ADE also collects data on school district budgets and expenditures and student assessment. This data is used to meet many state-level and federal reporting requirements.

Finally, ADE serves to insure that schools are performing well. When schools struggle with finances, or more importantly with poor academic results, ADE first provides additional supports and assistance to the district. In several cases, ADE has actually assumed control of the district to make sure the district can pay its bills and can better educate its students.

- **Arkansas Department of Education Website**

ADE maintains a state website with good information on state-level education activities. The website has information about school choice, efforts to improve broadband access, the meeting of the State Board of

Education, and the way schools are held accountable as part of the ESEA waiver process. The website address is <http://www.arkansased.org/>.

ADE also developed a campaign and section of the website devoted to parents, known as the My Child/My Student campaign. That web address is <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/communications/my-childmy-student>.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ROLE IN EDUCATION

The school district, also known as the local education agency (LEA), provides administration for schools within a legal school boundary. There are 236 school districts in Arkansas for the 2014-15 school year. The size of districts varies considerably, both in terms of their geographical size and the number of students they serve. By law the lowest number of students a district can serve is 350. The largest district in the state is Little Rock with approximately 24,000 students enrolled for 2013-2014. In addition to the geographically-defined districts, there are additional LEAs. These include open-enrollment charter schools and other state level entities such as the Arkansas School for the Blind and the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

- **School Board**

The school district is managed by the elected school board. The board hires the superintendent, sets district policy, and is responsible for the financial well being of the district. The board oversees facilities, personnel, and contract negotiation. It also determines curriculum and school discipline policies. Curriculum is the method of teaching (including textbooks) that the district's schools will use to make sure students meet the standards by the end of the school year.

Parents can get involved at this level in two ways: vote in the school board elections and attend their regular monthly meetings. Attending the meetings will help parents understand how the boards work, what policies they put in place, and how to interact with them.

School boards in Arkansas typically consist of either five or seven members, although a large district could have a nine-member board. In some districts, these board members represent only a specific zone; in other districts board members are elected across the entire district. The term of a school board member is between three and five years (although all members of a given board have the same length term). There are no limits on the number of terms a member may serve. School board elections take place the third Tuesday of September.

All meetings of the school board must be open to the public except for certain personnel hearings. Also, by law, board members are not to discuss board business outside of formal meetings.

- **School District Superintendent**

The school district superintendent is the chief executive officer of the local district. Superintendents are responsible for providing educational leadership, translating policy into practical operating procedures, managing district personnel, and serving as the district's public spokesperson. In an emergency or crisis, the superintendent is the official in charge.

School districts are typically supported by the "central office" staff who help develop and implement district policies and programs. The number of staff members depends on the district's size and resources and might include curriculum or instruction specialists in specific content areas.

- **School District Website**

Each school district is required to have a website. A lot of the information on the site is required by law. An example of a helpful parent tool that can be found on every school district website is the district's report card. Usually the district website has lists of school staff and the individual schools that make up the district. Important messages ranging from closed school dates and dates for school events, such as school plays and athletic events, are often included. Links to district websites can also be found on the ADE website:

<https://adedata.arkansas.gov/cpab/DirectoryDistrict.aspx>.

THE LOCAL SCHOOL



No single, uniform model exists for a school's organization by grade or age. The most commonly used model arranges schools by clusters of grades, for example elementary schools (comprised of grades K-5), middle schools (grades 6-8), and high schools (grades 9-12).

- **Principal**

The principal is the key decision-maker at every school. This person supervises the school's instructional program; maintains order and discipline; enforces federal, state, and district rules, policies, and laws; evaluates and supports teachers; and represents the school to parents and the community. Some schools have one or more assistant principals. Ideally, principals are the instructional leaders of their schools rather than just managers who handle administrative issues.

- **Teachers**

Classroom teachers have the authority and responsibility for their own classrooms, how they deliver lessons, how they present the curriculum, and how they help students work toward learning state academic standards. Teachers receive a license from the Arkansas Department of Education that allows them to be hired by an LEA and that indicates they have expertise in a specific area of teaching, such as elementary education or, at the secondary level, in content areas such as English or Physics. Teachers serve as instructors and role models in the classroom and can rise as leaders in a school, community, and LEA. Teachers are the "front line," as they interact with students every day. They often know students' best learning styles and can promote healthy behaviors and positive social interactions. They can also be the first to detect when something is not on track with a student's progress.

School Choice

Based on the home address, a student will be assigned to a particular school in a school district. A variety of state laws, however, may provide additional choices in a child's public schooling. To aid in determining which school may be right for a student, data on each Arkansas public school is collected on school report cards that are available on the Arkansas Department of Education website: <http://adesrc.arkansas.gov/>.

- **Districts or Schools in Academic Distress**

If a school district has been declared in academic distress, parents have the legal right to send their child to any other public school in the state as long as that school has space and is itself not in academic distress. The school district has a responsibility to assist with that student's transportation to the new school – up to \$400 per year. If the original school is removed from the list of academically distressed schools, then all transportation costs would be up to the parents who choose to continue to send their child to the new school. At that point, parents must apply for a transfer under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act by July 30. This form, which is available through ADE, must be sent to ADE as well as both the school district the child is leaving and the new school district. The Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) and the Academic Distress Program for September 2014 is available on the ADE website:

http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/rules/Current/ACTAAP-FINAL_-_September_2014.pdf.

- **Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 2013**

Parents may also choose to send their child to another school district even if that child's school or school district is not in academic distress. This option is available through a different school choice law—the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 2013. Under this law, any parent may apply by June 1 for a transfer to a new district (although not to attend a different school within the home district). This application must be filed with the non-resident district (and a copy sent to the current district). The receiving district may refuse the transfer because of space limitations, as with the

previous school choice law. In addition, districts that have been subject to a past desegregation order by a federal court may exempt themselves from the law entirely.

- **School District Transfer Requests**

Students may request that their home district and the district to which they wish to transfer grant a legal transfer. The school boards of each district must vote for the transfer to occur, and the transfer must be reviewed by the two districts every four years to see if it should remain in place.

- **Additional Types of Public Schools**

Open enrollment charter schools are another option for students. These are state public schools at which any Arkansas student may attend. If too many students wish to attend a particular open enrollment charter school, the school is required to accept students based on a lottery. Charter schools may have permissions or exemptions from some requirements that other accredited schools must follow. They may also add requirements that typically include contracts with parents for specified levels of parent involvement, such as required attendance at parent and teacher conferences. Learn more about charter schools on the ADE website: <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/charter-schools>.

A traditional public school may also be a designated conversion charter school if it has received waivers to certain standards mandated by state law. Learn more about conversion charter schools on the ADE website: http://www.arkansased.org/contact-us/charter-schools/charter_school_categories/district-conversion.

Schools of innovation is another type of public school within an existing school district. These are schools that wish to experiment with an innovative theme but differ from a conversion charter in that along with the school board a majority of school personnel voted for the experiment. In this case, the school may be released from certain state requirements by approval from the Arkansas Commissioner of Education. Learn more about schools of innovation on the ADE website: <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/schools-of-innovation>.