



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release  
January 20, 2009**

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LITTLE ROCK: Dee Cox has been named special assistant to the commissioner at the Arkansas Department of Education by Commissioner of Education Dr. Ken James. As such, she will become a part of the department's administrative team, and her duties will involve overseeing two new critical department initiatives: the Statewide System of Support and Smart Accountability.

"As we begin to roll out these two initiatives, I believe it will become apparent to everyone involved in Arkansas' public education system that these really will change the state's whole approach toward school improvement and the way we go about the business of education," Dr. James said. "The goal is to have a cohesive approach to providing schools with the leadership and technical assistance they need to be able to educate our children so they will be well-equipped to succeed in the increasingly technical and ever-changing economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

The Statewide System of Support represents the umbrella structure for all of the department's programs geared toward school improvement and student achievement. With technical help from the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma, ADE will evaluate all existing programs and then create a cohesive system that ensure all programs are working in tandem and toward the same goals.

Smart Accountability is the state's system of differentiated accountability approved by the U.S. Department of Education earlier this month that allows for varying labels and interventions for schools placed in "school improvement" status under the federal No Child Left Behind laws. The new approach will allow the department to support school administrators in choosing and applying interventions most effectively to address student achievement needs in their schools.

Cox has worked for the Arkansas Department of Education for approximately 10 years in multiple capacities and currently serves as state coordinator for special programs. In her new role, she will also supervise the department's professional development unit and will retain supervision of America's Choice, which is the turn-around model the department places in long-term school-improvement schools, the Coordinated School Health program, early childhood education and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers.

“In the past few years, I have seen such great improvements in our state and commend our school leaders for this achievement,” Cox said. “Smart Accountability, which I view as a ‘puzzle,’ will be a local and state partnership effort. Our goal is to assist in the search for the missing pieces of the puzzle. To find those pieces, there must be more of an emphasis on student learning and not just teaching because there is an obvious difference.

“We will be looking at meeting the needs of the whole child and not just a cookie-cutter delivery system, as well as supporting the educational leaders as changes are implemented in the schools. I look forward to great partnerships within the state as we work together for an effective educational system.”

Cox’s educational experience consists of early childhood, parental involvement, elementary education, special education, federal coordinator, educational examiner and curriculum specialist, as well as many administrative duties. She has served as an adjunct professor at Henderson State University and Pulaski County Technical Institute. She attended Henderson State University and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock where she completed her BSE, MSE, M.Ed. and educational specialist degrees. Cox will receive her doctorate of educational administration in May from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

***The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.***