



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release
March 31, 2009**

**Contact: Julie Johnson Thompson
(501) 683-4786 / (501) 766-7976
julie.thompson@arkansas.gov**

LITTLE ROCK: Copies of the 2008 Arkansas School Performance Report Card are in the mail, soon to be delivered to parents across the state. The Arkansas Department of Education, working with Gov. Mike Beebe, releases copies of Arkansas School Performance Reports annually as required by state law to provide members of the public with accurate information about the performance of their schools. This is the eighth year the report has been distributed.

“Parents of children in our public schools deserve to know how their schools are measuring up,” said Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education. “This report provides a way for parents to compare their individual school to other schools in their district and their district to other districts in the state. Furthermore, the decision by legislative and educational leaders to be transparent in this way raises educational accountability to a higher level.”

A new feature on this year’s report card is a “Gains Rating.” This measure is an index representing the academic growth of a school’s students. The Gains Model uses students’ scores on Arkansas’ benchmark exams over a two-year period to determine growth. Benchmark exam scores are divided into four categories or “performance levels” – Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced.

The Gains Model divides each performance level into two sublevels: Below Basic 1, Below Basic 2, Basic 1, Basic 2, Proficient 1, Proficient 2, Advanced 1 and Advanced 2. Each level is given points – ranging from 1 for Below Basic 1 to 4.5 for Advanced 2.

For each student, movement from one level to the next counts for .5 point in the Gains Model calculations. For example, if a student scored Advanced 2 last year and only Advanced 1 this year, the value assigned to that change would be a -.5. If a student scored Basic 1 last year and Advanced 1 this year, a value of 2.0 would be assigned. After all of the individual student score changes on both the mathematics and literacy benchmark exams are assigned values, they are added together and then divided by the number of students to obtain the average Gains score for the school. This is called a school’s Gains Index score.

Act 35, the legislation calling for the Gains Model, specifies that these scores will be divided into 5 ratings for a school:

- Level 1: Schools in need of immediate improvement
- Level 2: Schools on alert
- Level 3: Schools meeting improvement standards
- Level 4: Schools exceeding improvement standards
- Level 5: Schools of excellence for improvement

The complete list of schools with their ratings is attached. Also, a PowerPoint with a full explanation of the Gains Model may be found at ArkansasEd.org.

The school performance reports are being mailed to every parent or legal guardian of the 450,000 students in the state's 1,000-plus public schools, "We hope that the information will empower parents and community leaders to become more involved in helping local schools provide quality education for students," said Dr. Charity Smith, ADE Assistant Commissioner of Public School Academic Accountability, whose office is responsible for issuing the reports.

In 1999, Arkansas School Performance Reviews, an Act passed by the Arkansas General Assembly, committed to producing a complete accountability report customized for each school in the state and mailing the report to every student's parent or guardian.

Parents, administrators and others interested in their school's performance may view their school's report by visiting the Arkansas Department of Education Web site at ArkansasEd.org.

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.