



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release
January 8, 2009**

**Contact: Julie Johnson Thompson
(501) 683-4786 / (501) 580-6508
julie.thompson@arkansas.gov**

LITTLE ROCK: The United States Department of Education approved Arkansas' proposal to apply a "differentiated accountability" model to its adequate yearly progress determinations under No Child Left Behind, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) learned today in a letter received from USDOE Assistant Secretary Kerri L. Briggs.

"We are thrilled with this approval as it will allow us to better target our resources in ways that will best help schools improve the performance of their students," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education. "We consider Smart Accountability to be another integral aspect of our Smart Arkansas initiative as it dovetails perfectly with ongoing efforts to focus all of the state's learning and teaching strategies on mastery of knowledge required to succeed in today's global economy."

Smart Accountability will allow the ADE to identify schools more appropriately, so that those schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress because of low scores among one or two subgroups will be placed into "targeted" improvement categories, while those dealing with low scores system-wide will be placed into "whole school" improvement categories.

The ADE submitted its first differentiated accountability proposal to the USDOE in May. Only six of 17 states applying at that time were approved. Arkansas was told its plan needed more specifics in terms of interventions and consequences for schools that continually failed to make adequate yearly progress, and the state was asked to re-apply in the fall.

"Staff here reworked the proposal to be very clear about how the state can help schools build capacity, select professional development, focus on curriculum, and even restructure if necessary to enable their students to reach proficiency," Dr. James said. "While a school is required to incorporate more corrective actions the longer it has failed to meet adequate yearly progress, this proposal also focuses the state's efforts on intervening earlier in the process so schools are able reverse the trend and hopefully pull themselves out of improvement status before the situation reaches a critical level."

Under the current structure of No Child Left Behind, a school failing to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years is placed into "school improvement" status. A school can fall short of adequate yearly progress if enough students in only one

subgroup fail to score proficient on either the mathematics or the literacy Arkansas Benchmark exam. A subgroup is identified anytime a school has 40 or more test-taking students in one of six demographic groups: white, Hispanic, African-American, economically disadvantaged, English language learners or students with disabilities.

The state’s Smart Accountability model divides the schools into “achieving,” “targeted” or “whole school” improvement statuses based on the following criteria:

Label	Selection Criteria
Achieving Schools	Meets Standards
Targeted Improvement	Schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the annual measurable goal (AMO) for <u>25 percent or fewer groups</u> and <u>do not</u> miss the AMO for combined population resulting in school improvement years one through three (1-3) will be labeled as in “Targeted Improvement” TI-1, TI-2 and TI-3 Corrective Action
Whole School Improvement	Schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for combined population and/or <u>more than 25 percent of groups</u> resulting in school improvement years one through three (1-3) will be labeled as in “Whole School Improvement” WSI-1, WSI-2 and WSI-3 Corrective Action
Targeted Intensive Improvement	Schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for <u>25 percent or fewer groups</u> and <u>do not</u> miss the AMO for combined population resulting in school improvement for four (4) or more years will be labeled as in “Targeted Intensive Improvement” TII-4, TII-5: Restructuring
Whole School Intensive Improvement	Schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy and miss the AMO for combined population and/or <u>more than 25 percent groups</u> resulting in school improvement years four (4) or more years will be labeled as in “Whole School Intensive Improvement” WSII-4, WSII-5: Restructuring
State Directed	Schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in math and/or literacy after TI-5 or WSII-5 will be labeled as in “State Directed” status

When schools are in Targeted and Whole School Improvement status, the state will provide guidance to them in terms of deciding which interventions to incorporate into its Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan that will best address the deficiencies. However, once schools have advanced to Targeted Intensive or Whole School Intensive levels, the state transitions from a more collaborative approach to a more directive one in the selection and application of interventions. After year five in either category, the state has the authority to appoint a school improvement director to steer the school to improved student performance.

The approved Smart Accountability model will go into effect with the spring 2009 test scores, to begin implementation with the 2009-2010 school year.

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.

