



Arkansas Recovery Hotline: 1-877-682-1515

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LITTLE ROCK: The superintendents of four Arkansas school districts learned Thursday that they will receive school-improvement grants for seven schools totaling approximately \$9 million to be used in 2010-2011 to enhance student achievement. These awards represent a portion of the \$40,196,637 American Recovery and Reinvestment money awarded to Arkansas to improve outcomes in those schools that are persistently among its lowest-performing 5 percent.

"This is so exciting because all of the schools receiving this first round of school-improvement money have submitted plans showing that they are truly going to transform the educational culture in their schools," said Laura Bednar, Arkansas Department of Education assistant commissioner for learning services. "With these very substantive efforts, reaching high-learning standards will not only be a goal but a true possibility for all of their students. This infusion of resources definitely makes reform possible for schools at a level they've not had before."

In addition to the activity at the school level, department staff will put in place a strong monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that the schools are fully implementing their plans, according to Bednar.

Fifteen of Arkansas's nineteen eligible schools applied for funding in 2010-2011. Department staff members are still calculating the exact amounts of the awards for the seven selected schools according to assessed needs. The schools that were approved for school-improvement grants for the 2010-2011 school year and the amounts they requested are as follows:

- **Cloverdale Middle School**, Little Rock School District, \$1,987,834
- **Hall High School**, Little Rock School District, \$1,987,282
- **J.A. Fair High School**, Little Rock School District, \$1,970,121
- **Osceola Middle School**, Osceola School District, \$665,000
- **Osceola High School**, Osceola School District, \$695,000
- **Rose City Middle School**, North Little Rock School District, \$991,451
- **Trusty Elementary**, Fort Smith School District, \$990,135

The grants, awarded to the schools through a competitive grant application process, must be used this year to implement one of the four school-improvement models required by the federal government. All Arkansas schools receiving the grant money this year are incorporating the "transformational model," which calls for replacing the principal and improving the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extended learning time and other strategies. According to Bednar, some of the innovative features in the schools' applications are the hiring of firms that specialize in school improvement; before- and after-school teaming of staff for instructional planning; additional support staff, such as social workers; interventions to specifically address out-of-school suspensions and drop-outs; partnering with higher education to highlight careers in science and mathematics; earlier school-year start dates for certain grade levels; technology initiatives; and Saturday morning tutoring programs supporting college- and career-readiness.

Because the turn-around time to apply for 2010-2011 funding was so short, Bednar said schools not funded this year will have more time to submit and refine their applications for 2011-2012 school-improvement grants. Department staff will provide technical assistance to all schools working on applications. The next application deadline is in October for funding in the 2011-2012 school year.

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