

ARKANSAS' EQUITY PLAN
Updated October 2008

Arkansas has many legislative and research projects that are working to ensure poor or minority children are not taught by inexperienced teachers or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. When reviewing the data tables under IIIB.1.b (restated below) regarding minority and poor students and the HQT status of their teachers, it is evident that Arkansas' Equity Plan is working. While there is a small difference in these populations, most would agree that this difference is insignificant.

III.B.1.b Data for Minority Students and HQT Status of Teachers and Poverty Students and HQT Status of Teachers

	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	% HQT	yrs experience	% HQT	yrs experience	% HQT	yrs experience
Hi minority districts	86.22%	12.75 yrs	96.12%	12.33 yrs	98.00%	12.10 yrs
Lo minority districts	85.16%	12.19 yrs	98.21%	12.13 yrs	98.36%	12.08 yrs
Hi poverty districts	86.40%	11.72 yrs	96.30%	11.14 yrs	96.94%	11.01 yrs
Lo poverty districts	84.53%	11.55 yrs	99.20%	11.90 yrs	98.97%	11.52 yrs

The resources, which the state has identified to ensure that there is equity in Arkansas' public schools, are: 1) Facilities, 2) Salaries and 3) Teacher Recruitment and Retention. These are addressed below:

1. Facilities- Under the Continuing Adequacy Evaluation Act of 2004 (Arkansas Code Annotated (A.C.A) §§ 10-3-2101) the General Assembly committed to make biennial assessments of the concept of "adequacy" as it pertains to public school education. The facilities in which a public school education is delivered are a part of that concept. Since that time, approximately \$700 million has been appropriated to improve school facilities in Arkansas' two hundred forty-five (245) school districts (excluding charter schools). Projects for facility funds are approved on need. For the 2005-2006 school year, all projects meeting the criteria, as defined in the law, were funded. In the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 school year, projects were funded were still funded on need but since there was not enough revenue to fund all projects the state established a "priority of need." (Therefore, there were many projects approved that were not funded.) All of the safe, dry and healthy projects outlined in Arkansas' adequacy study were funded. Additional funding requests will be made again during summer 2009.

2. Salaries

- a. In 2004, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in the Lake View School District vs Huckabee (Arkansas Governor at that time) case that Arkansas did not have a suitable and efficient funding system of public education for its students. The Arkansas Supreme Court declared that it is the duty of the state of Arkansas to provide a general, suitable, and efficient system of free public schools to the children of the state under the Arkansas Constitution, Article 14. The General Assembly is obligated to ensure the provisions of an adequate and equitable system of education. Therefore, in the First Extraordinary Session of 2006 legislators implemented revisions to Arkansas laws. Those revisions to the laws included the *Minimum Teacher Compensation Schedule*, funding provided under the public school funding act of 2003, and a clarification of the nine percent (9%) foundation funding for maintenance, repair and renovation to all public school facilities.
- b. During the 2003 Second Extraordinary Session, Acts 59 and 74 were passed and became Arkansas Code Annotated §§ 6-17-2403, or the *Minimum Teacher Compensation Schedule*. The legislation established a minimum base salary for beginning teachers, a minimum annual increment, a minimum salary for teachers with a Master's Degree, a requirement that teachers receive credit for his or her total years of experience if they maintain a valid Arkansas license and the requirement that teachers be compensated for any additional days of work at their daily rate of pay (DRP). This minimum teacher salary schedule has been modified periodically to establish a more competitive minimum salary. During the 86th General Assembly in 2007, legislation updated the minimum salary schedules. As a result and beginning with the 2008-09 school year, the minimum salary for teachers with a Bachelor's Degree is \$29,244 and \$33,630 for beginning teachers with a Master's Degree.
- c. Act 57 of the Secondary Extraordinary Session in 2003 determined what is needed to fund an adequate education opportunity for children in Arkansas. Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, a report from the consultant group Oden-Picus determined that districts should be funded at the rate of \$5400 per pupil. For the next biennium, the legislators conducted a self-study and determined that the funding rate per pupil should be increased as indicated in the table below. Every two years the funding ratio is recalibrated for the next biennium. A recalibration study was presented by Picus and Associates to the legislators and their new study was approved during the Legislative Session of 2007. In the Adequacy Study findings regarding both salary and staffing needs were presented. (See document in the evidence notebook.)The recommended funding for the 2006-07 and the 2007-08 school years was made in order to maintain adequacy after the Lake View hearing. As a result of amending the state's funding formula all school districts are funded equitably.

School Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Per Pupil Funding	\$5400	\$5528	\$5662	\$5719	\$5789

Table 1 State equalization funding per pupil

- d. The Arkansas Teacher Housing Development (A.C.A. §§ 6-26-301 et. seq.) and The Teacher Housing Fund A.C.A. §§ 6-26-305 were passed during the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. As part of this act an Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Board was created, however only after the passing of Act 2004 of 2005 were funds appropriated to fund the positions of Director and Administrative Assistant, as well as the funds to manage an office. During the 2005-06 school year staff positions were filled and the staff has begun working with community leaders to organize and develop this housing program. The mission of this office is the identification of reasonably priced housing for highly qualified and experienced teachers to relocate to hard-to-staff areas of the state, particularly the Delta region of Arkansas.

During the 2006-07 school year, twenty Arkansas counties and their respective school districts were designated as eligible under this legislation. This list of counties and school districts was reviewed and the number of counties eligible was reduced to fourteen (14) in October 2007. Since that time approximately eight-one (81) applications for the housing program have been submitted. Eighteen (18) teachers have received funds to assist with homeownership via the incentive program and another twenty-eight (28) teachers have received rental incentive funds in these districts. (The 2006 and 2008 annual reports are in the evidence binder.)

- e. The Traveling Teacher (A.C.A. §§ 6-13-808) was passed during the 86th General Assembly of 2007. The purpose of this act was to assist school districts in providing appropriately licensed teachers to teach required courses in grades nine through twelve (9-12). The Rules Governing the Traveling Teacher Program explains the application process (including the Highly Qualified Status of the teacher), the incentive bonus and selection process including general policies and procedures relating to the traveling teacher program.

School Year	Number of Districts	Number of Teachers
2007-08	1	1
2008-09	2 (to date)	2 (to date)

Table 2 Data on Traveling Teachers

- f. The Alternative Pay Plan (A.C.A. §§ 6-17-119) and the Rewarding Excellence in Achievement Program –R.E.A.P. (A.C.A. §§ 6-15-2601 et. seq.) are two alternative pay plans which afford public school districts and public charter schools the opportunity to develop teacher compensation plans tailored to the needs of public school districts and/or public charter schools. (Those needs may be as simple as recruiting the best teachers to work in the districts because the all teachers in these district may be compensated for advancing student growth.) The rules governing both the Alternative Pay and REAP plans describe the purpose and permissions of the two laws. In addition the application process for the REAP plan, which is a competitive program, awards additional money to funded schools/districts is contained in its rules.

School Year	Number of Districts awarded a REAP grant
2008-09	2

Table 3 Number of Districts Awarded a REAP grant

3. Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- a. Teacher Shortage: In August of 2006, the *Bureau of Legislative Research* submitted a report to the Joint Education Committee in which it was stated that Arkansas does not have a teacher shortage problem, but a “sorting problem”. In other words the demographics of where the teachers looking for employment are located is different than where the job openings exist. The Arkansas Department of Education has been working via the other initiatives in this section to assist school districts in locating highly qualified teachers. Economic development and housing are both issues that need to be addressed in order for teachers to relocate in the Delta and Southeastern quadrant of the state. The plan includes continued dialogue with business and school leaders in this region as well as the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.
- b. Retention Data: In Spring 2008, the Office of Teacher Quality compiled longitudinal data on the retention rate of new teachers in AR public schools. It showed that Arkansas’ retention rate is much higher than the national average. In the research, the numbers show that 25%-35% of teachers quit teaching after their first year and 50% of these teachers quit by the end of five years. Arkansas’ data shows that the efforts of our legislators to improve teacher salaries and the Pathwise mentoring program in the state has a major impact on teacher retention for the state.

School Year	% of first year teachers not returning	% of teachers not returning after five years
2001-02	19.72%	31.17%
2002-03	18.40%	30.49%
2003-04	9.07%	26.52%
2004-05	6.26%	NA
2005-06	6.42%	NA
2006-07	7.11%	NA
2007-08	Data for 08-09 not concluded	NA

Table 4 Retention Data on teachers after years one and five

- c. Equity Assistance Center (EAC) – A.C.A. §§ 6-17-1902 established an Equity Assistance Center at the Arkansas Department of Education. The center is to provide technical assistance to school districts in developing a recruitment plan. Some of the stipulated goals of this statute are that each LEA:
- i. shall designate an employee to coordinate implementation of its recruitment plan
 - ii. establish a goal to recruit minority teachers and administrators for the next ten (10) years, including steps and progress made
 - iii. encourage minority students to seek a career in education
- d. District Minority Recruitment Plans – Beginning in the 1992-93 school year, each school district in the state with more than five percent (5%) minority student population was required to prepare a minority teacher and administrator recruitment plan and file it annually with the Equity Assistance Center (EAC) of the Arkansas Department of Education pursuant to A.C.A. §§ 6-17-1901. The table below outlines the number of districts in the state with 95% or more white students who were not required to submit a Minority Teacher and Administrator Recruitment Plan. (For the past three years Arkansas has had approximately 245 school districts.)

School Year	2004-2005	2005-06	2006-07	2007-2008
Number of AR Districts with 95% or more white students	100	91	80	76

Table 5 Number of Arkansas public school district with 95 percent or more white students

- e. Since the 2006-07 school year, the Arkansas Department of Education has a yearly Memorandum of Understanding with the Teach for America Corporation (TFA) to assist the state in staffing teachers in the Delta Region. Arkansas has been a partner with TFA for the past eighteen (18) years. During the first nine (9) years the number of TFA teachers in the state ranged from three (3) to twenty-two (22). As outlined in the table below that number has grown. For the past eight (8) years the number of Highly Qualified teachers employed in Arkansas through annual contracts with TFA is substantially higher as illustrated:

Year	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
1 st Yr	11	18	38	24	38	39	39	35
2 nd Yr	10	11	18	29	24	37	33	36
Total in AR	21	29	56	54	62	76	72	71

Table 6 Data on Teach For America (TFA) teachers in public schools in the Arkansas Delta

The state believes this growth in highly qualified teachers in the Delta region is an asset to the state and evidence of efforts to bring equity to students in this geographic region.

- f. In 2003, Act 101 established *High Priority Districts Bonus Incentives* (A.C. A. §§ 6-17-811) which provided the state with a three (3) year pilot program. During the 86th General Assembly in 2007, the statute was revised from the original pilot format. For this program, a high priority district is defined as one in which over eighty percent (80%) of the students qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. In this program, teachers were offered \$10,000 as a recruitment and retention bonus to teach in one of the eleven (11) school districts which were designated as high-needs districts. These teachers would receive \$4000 the first year and \$3000 for the second and third years. Teachers who were currently employed in the district received an annual \$2000 bonus. The major revision in the law is that the incentive is paid at the end of the school year rather than at the beginning of the year. The state has appropriated over four (4) million dollars each biennium through this bonus incentive program to recruit teachers in high-priority districts. Table 7 illustrates the number of teachers who have benefited from this program each year. It is important to observe the large jump in the number of current teachers, therefore those teachers retained, for the 2007-08 school year.

Years	# of New Teachers	# of Current Teachers	\$ Distributed
2004-05	127	423	\$1,282,000
2005-06	90	414	\$1,257,558
2006-07	39	335	\$ 910,516
2007-08	92	461	\$1,415,952

Table 7 Distribution of the high-priority district bonus incentives

- g. The Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention is a program within the ADE designed to address a shortage of teachers in Arkansas, increase the pipeline of potential teachers and inform persons interested in careers in education of available incentives for those who will work in high demand areas. A draft of the long range plan for this office was attached to the Equity Plan in 2006. A report on the Pathways to Teaching event in November 2007 and the Annual Report for 2007-08 are attached to this document.
- h. The Troops to Teachers (TTT) program in Arkansas is working hand-in-hand with the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention. In the spring of 2006, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) employed a new program advisor to ensure that this program reaches its full potential. Arkansas entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dantes Troops to Teachers program. The teachers hired through TTT will all be highly qualified since they are required to successfully pass the content knowledge Praxis examination for the licensure area prior to admission into the program.

School Year	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number of military personnel recruited to AR schools through the TTT program each year	6	5	7	17

Table 8 Number of Recruits through the TTT program

- i. During the 2005-06 school year the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) implemented the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP) pursuant to A.C. A. §§ 6-81-610. In addition, the legislation also appropriated two million dollars a year to fund this project. The maximum a teacher can receive is \$3000 per year (\$2000 from the ADHE and \$1000 from the local school districts). This dual licensure incentive program is designed to provide loans to teachers who are returning to college to receive an additional licensure in a subject matter declared to be a shortage area by the Arkansas Department of Education.

The teacher must be currently employed as a classroom teacher in a public school in Arkansas and have been employed by the same district for at least three (3) years immediately preceding the application. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education will forgive the loan if the recipient receives the additional licensure area within three (3) years of first receiving funds under the program AND teaches or serves as a classroom teacher in an Arkansas public school district for three (3) continuous years immediately following receipt of the additional licensure area. As evidence from Table 9 below, this program needed more advertisement in first year. With the advertisement the number of teachers participating in TOP doubled in 2006-07. This program assists teachers in obtaining full licensure, and in many cases, highly qualified status as they increase the content knowledge for the licensure area.

Year	Number of teachers participating in TOP
2005-06	17
2006-07	34
2007-08	41

Table 9 Number of teachers participating in TOP

- j. Since 2004 Arkansas has maintained a partnership with Teachers-Teachers.com to assist local school districts and the state in the recruitment of teachers and administrators for any school district in Arkansas. The table below illustrates the number of unique “hits” on the Arkansas site. The utilization of the online application system makes applications and job announcements a viable part of the state’s equity plan. The following statistics illustrate the impact of this program in the state:
- 22,276 the total number of licensed educators interested in AR education positions
 - 338 registered Arkansas users (Districts, Co-Op, ADE, DOC)
 - 2,857 new candidates names were added to the prospect lists in all subject areas
 - 2,062 candidate names were added for special education
 - 997 jobs were posted in all subject areas
 - 195 jobs were posted in special education
 - 74,898 emails were sent to candidates on behalf of AR school districts
 - 6,618 “unique” candidates viewed at least one Arkansas job posting
 - 710 “unique” candidates viewed at least one special education job posting
 - At the end of the 1st year of the school districts which reported, they stated that 23% of their hires utilized Teachers-Teachers.Com

- 92% of these candidates were NOT Arkansas teachers during the previous (2004-05) school year

This last statistic is impressive. This is recruitment and not mere shuffling of existing Arkansas teachers. The state is hoping that through this continued partnership, it will have mobility data to enter into the warehouse of our Comprehensive Data Plan to assist all school districts in their recruitment efforts.

Arkansas' Equity Plan as revised for October 2008 is evaluated each biennium to assess which programs are working to meet the goals of the state. This evaluation will be continued via the data tables which currently exist in the equity plan. As Arkansas' schools strive for 100% of all teachers in core academic classes to be highly qualified, the current programs are in place which will enhance facilities, salaries and teacher recruitment and retention to assist each LEA in meeting all goals under No Child Left Behind and fulfilling Arkansas' goal for an adequate education for all of students.