



EDUCATION POLICY NEWS

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Special Points of Interest:

- Arkansas lawmakers wrapped up the 2005 Regular Session by approving \$104 million for school facility upgrades and some new construction in high growth districts.
- School funding issues continued to dominate the legislative session, and in the wake of level foundation funding, 48 districts support the move to reopen the *Lake View* case in an effort to force enhanced funding.

SCHOOL FACILITIES TOP LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

When the Arkansas 85th General Assembly convened on January 10, 2005, lawmakers were prepared to focus on the issue of upgrading school facilities as part of the ongoing effort to address the mandates of the *Lake View III* decision made by the Arkansas Supreme Court in November 2002. Their task was to determine which of the recommendations in the *Arkansas Statewide Education Facilities Assessment* to implement, and how to fund them. Indeed, the Education Committees in both chambers spent many long hours over the course of the 14-week session deliberating, and their recommendations spurred some lively

floor debate about school facilities. Nevertheless, by the time the General Assembly recessed on April 13, 2005, legislators had approved a series of measures to address the needs of Arkansas students with respect to school facilities and had enacted measures to fund facility improvements as well.

Near the end of March, both the legislature and the Governor approved a package of five measures which address the recommendations of the facilities assessment. The specific measures are detailed in the following paragraphs.

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DISTRICT FUNDING ISSUES LOOM LARGE

School funding has been at the forefront of the education discussion since the Arkansas Supreme Court handed down the *Lake View* ruling in November 2002. Since the Supreme Court's decision, school and state officials have discussed numerous plans to address the inequalities outlined by the Court.

During the 2003 Special Legislative Session, Arkansas' legislature made public education a top priority. In fact, the legislature passed legislation to allow reduced funding for other state programs and agencies in order to ensure that public education would always be fully funded. Furthermore, the legislature passed a sales tax increase to provide nearly \$380 million for education and reduced the number of school districts from 308 to 254 in order to increase efficiency.

Between the 2003 special session and the 2005 regular session, the legislature and school officials developed new plans to

address the funding challenges in the state's education systems. The 2005 legislative session began with several goals, one of which was to rectify the funding problems plaguing school districts.

Throughout the 2005 legislative session, the legislature submitted, debated, and passed many bills addressing the deficiencies mentioned in the original *Lake View* case. Governor Mike Huckabee has indicated that he is pleased with the legislature for addressing the needs of Arkansas' schools. Jim Argue, Senate President Pro Tempore, also, has stated that the legislature has done much to satisfy the requirements of the court's ruling and to help students across the state. During the session, the legislature decided to

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LAWMAKERS ENHANCE STUDENT SAFETY

Arkansas lawmakers sought to enhance school health and safety this session with these measures:

Student Identity Protection

Schools are prohibited from publishing a student's Social Security Number as part of any school report, identification card or badge, or other documents that might be made available to the public. This change was enacted as Act 246.

Limiting Access to School Buses by Unauthorized Adults

Under Act 246, unauthorized adults are restricted from entering school buses. Specifically, anyone over 18 who enters a school bus with criminal intent, disrupts the driver, or refuses to leave is committing a Class B misdemeanor. Also, it requires each school district to post a warning sign next to the school bus entrance notifying passengers of this policy.

Honor Roll and Academic Recognition: Choosing Anonymity

School districts may establish or continue honor roll or academic achievement recognition programs under Act 390. However, this measure enables the parent of a student or a student to request in writing to the school principal that the student's name be excluded from such listings to protect student privacy.

Expanded Visual Screening Requirements

In Act 1438, legislators have expanded access to eye and vision screening to include students at the Kindergarten, second, fourth, sixth, and eighth grade levels for all public and charter school students. Qualified low-income school districts may have access to financial assistance for this purpose, which is available from the Arkansas Commission on Vision Care of School Age Children.

SEVERAL CURRICULUM CHANGES ENACTED THIS SESSION

Art and Music Education Expanded

Elementary school students in grades 1-6 will have expanded requirements for visual art and music education beginning in the 2005-2006 school year under Act 245. This is an increase from the previous requirement of one hour per week of either visual art or music to 40 minutes of art and 40 minutes of music each week. These classes are to be taught by certified art and music teachers and are to comply with the state curriculum frameworks for those areas.

High School Physical Education Credit Available to Student Athletes

High school students are required to complete ½ credit (one semester) of physical education (PE) in order to graduate. Act 660 allows student athletes to meet this requirement through participation in a sport, provided that the semester is structured to enable the student to complete the state curriculum framework guidelines for physical education, and provided that the course is facilitated by a qualified PE teacher. This change will

enable student athletes to complete an additional ½ credit (one semester) of academic work in another discipline because their PE requirement will be met through their athletic endeavors.

Student Services Expanded to Include Career Development Counseling

Under Act 1949, the General Assembly amended the student services portion of education statutes to include career development among the responsibilities of school counselors. The specific parameters of the new law are:

- (a) Each school counselor will provide a career planning process for each student to include career awareness, employment readiness, career information, and the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve career goals; and
- (b) School counselors will also encourage parents, during regular parent conferences, to support partnerships in their children's learning and career planning process.

CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZATIONS EXPANDED

Lawmakers made several changes in the parameters for charter schools under Act 2005. What follows is a summary of those changes:

- The maximum number of open-enrollment charters allowed in the state was increased from 12 to 24, to be phased in over a 3-year period with an equal distribution across the state's four congressional districts.
- Charter schools may enter into public-private partnerships with school districts to lease existing school buildings at a district's discretion.
- Charter schools will not be authorized where such authorization would have a negative impact on desegregation.
- The maximum term for a charter school's authorization was extended from 3 to 5 years.
- The charter schools' open enrollment deadline was extended from April 15 to July 1. The enrollment figures available on this date are used to determine initial funding estimates for each charter school.
- The State Board of Education will hold hearings as needed to approve modifications in a school's charter or to monitor charter schools on probation.
- Recognizing the effectiveness of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), and specifically, of the KIPP Delta College Preparatory Charter School in Helena, the legislature authorized the State Board of Education to issue additional licenses (beyond the 24 noted previously) to any open-enrollment KIPP charter school that satisfies the basic requirements of KIPP, is sponsored by KIPP, and has not been subject to disciplinary action.

DISTRICT FUNDING ISSUES LOOM LARGE (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

subsidize teacher insurance and increase funding for school facilities improvements, preschool education, and teacher salaries. State officials, however, see things differently than do school administrators and school officials.

By the end of April, numerous school districts had joined the effort to reopen the *Lake View* school funding case. The suit claims that lawmakers, the authorities responsible for school funding in the State of Arkansas, have betrayed Arkansas' children and taxpayers by claiming they have enacted significant education reform, when they have not. These districts contend that public education did not remain a top priority during the 2005 Regular Session since the legislature approved \$100 million in new funding for other state programs and agencies, along with an annual 2.5 percent salary increase for legislators.

The main stipulation for reopening the suit concerns the per pupil foundation funding level, which is the amount assured to each district across the state. The districts enjoined in the petition contend that the base

funding level should be increased from \$5,400 to \$5,497 for the 2005-2006 school year; however, the State does not plan to increase the base formula until the 2007 school year. Districts claim they are required to offer many more courses and services than before, but they are not receiving the resources necessary to meet these demands. Also, many school districts will receive less money than last year because of declining enrollment. Though the per pupil formula remains the same as last year, fewer students will result in reduced funding in these districts. Notwithstanding, legislators believe that even though 112 of the 254 school districts will receive less money next year, the new funding formula is fair and appropriately distributes money across the state.

As the legislature adjourned on May 13, support for reopening the *Lake View* suit was growing and the Arkansas Supreme Court heard oral arguments concerning the petition on May 19, but had not yet decided whether there were legitimate grounds for the request at press time for this newsletter. Also, 24 districts had filed a new suit questioning the constitutionality of existing school funding policies.

SCHOOL FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

ACT 1426 – Academic Facilities Program Act

This is the primary act addressing the school facilities issue. It provides a system of state oversight of public school academic facilities so that each school district has facilities that will provide the opportunity for each student to have an adequate education. The key provision of the measure requires each school district to submit a facilities improvement plan and a facilities master plan, indicating immediate, short-term, and long-term needs. Using this information, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) will develop a State Master Plan and will make annual recommendations concerning upcoming facility needs, projected expenses, and the state portion of these expenses based on an established formula that considers the financial resources of each district. Further, the ADE will develop manuals delineating standards for construction or purchase, maintenance, and repairs of school facilities and equipment, and will develop a plan for unannounced site visits to schools to measure compliance with these standards.

If the ADE's Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation determines that a particular school facility or district is "in distress" (that is, out of compliance with state safety and adequacy standards), the school or district must submit a facilities improvement plan within 30 days. When a school district is identified to be in facilities distress, the ADE has several options for working with the district:

- Providing on-site technical evaluation and assistance regarding the distressed facility;
- Requiring the superintendent to relinquish all administrative authority with regard to the district;
- Appointing an alternative superintendent to administratively operate the district under the supervision of the ADE and direct the district to pay that individual out of district funds;
- Suspending or removing a school board with a call for the election of a new school board or requiring the district to operate under the direction of the ADE;

- Requiring additional training of district employees related to areas of concern (re: facilities);
- Requiring districts to cease immediately all expenditures on activities not directly related to educational adequacy and divert such funds to an escrow account until the facility is sufficiently repaired or improved;
- Establishing a deadline by which facility deficiencies must be corrected;
- Petitioning the State Board of Education for the consolidation, annexation, or reconstitution of a school district in facility distress; also, the State Board may take these actions automatically if a district has been in facility distress for two consecutive years; and
- Taking any other action allowed by law that is deemed necessary to assist a school or district in correcting facility deficiencies.

Collectively, lawmakers expect that these measures will create parameters for assuring the adequacy of school facilities and pave the way for the appropriations bills that will fund these measures.

Funding School Facility Improvement

Having developed a plan for school facility improvement, lawmakers spent the last weeks of the session wrestling over how to fund the cost of these measures. Most of the new law concerning facility management (discussed in the previous section) addresses the *future* facility needs of districts, but many districts are concerned about the cost of debt service and maintenance on *existing* facilities.

Act 69, passed in the special session on education in 2003, had provided districts with \$45.5 million a year for debt service. Some of these payments will continue until the school district's debt on these bonds is discharged. Other payments will be cut by 10 percent. In order to continue receiving that 10 percent, a district will have to certify that it is paying for academic, rather than athletic, facilities. Under the new facilities funding plan, however, these funds will be phased out over time and debts will be subsumed into each district's facility need plan.

SCHOOL FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS (CONT.)

As for repair of existing facilities and new construction in high growth areas, lawmakers approved an appropriation of \$104 million over the next two fiscal years. These funds will be used to address the highest priority needs—those that could threaten the health and safety of students and staff—in order to bring them up to adequacy standards. The General Assembly promises additional monies in future legislative sessions to fund other upgrades ordered by the Arkansas Supreme Court in its landmark *Lake View III* school funding mandates.

The percentage of state funding that school districts receive to fund facility improvements is based on a wealth index. Local wealth is measured by the amount of revenue a district's property taxes generate, divided by the student population. Thus, districts in areas that have a strong economic base from which to generate property taxes will receive less funding than will districts with greater financial need.

While the implementation of a wealth index was intended to provide more equitable funding to districts

based on need, ultimately the measure that was passed was not universally popular. There are some districts which generate a high level of property tax revenue, thus will receive a relatively small share of the facilities funding. Some of these districts are struggling because they have a declining student population (Pine Bluff, for example). Other districts with a high wealth index will receive significant funding because they are growing and need funds for new construction (Springdale, for example). Still other districts, such as Little Rock, will receive no facility funding because their needs, as compared with their rating on the wealth index, comprise a break-even proposition.

Lawmakers have committed to review progress on facility improvement in 2007. During the next regular session of the General Assembly, when this system has been in place for two years, lawmakers will revisit the facility funding formula and address some of the longer term needs identified in the *Arkansas Statewide Education Facilities Assessment*.

ACTS RELATED TO OVERSIGHT OF SCHOOL FACILITIES:

ACT 1327 – Administrative Oversight

This act creates a Commission on Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation and revises the responsibilities of the Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, which is part of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and provides administrative oversight of the program.

ACT 1424 – Legislative Oversight

This measure provides legislative oversight of facility adequacy and equity through a newly created Academic Facilities Oversight Committee and an Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities; they will monitor compliance with the mandates of the *Lake View* decisions.

ACT 1368 – Contracting to Meet School Facilities Obligations

This measure authorizes the development of “public-public partnerships,” enabling a school district to enter into a contractual arrangement with another governmental agency, political subdivision, or institution of higher education to meet a clearly defined need for facilities, infrastructure, or goods and services. Specifically, a school district “may use a public-public partnership as a project delivery method for the building, altering, repairing, improving, maintaining, or demolishing of any structure, or any improvement to real property owned by the school district.”

ACT 1425 – Coordinating Distance Learning

This act provides for the development of a statewide Distance Learning Coordinating Council to evaluate distance learning activities for grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12) to facilitate a collaborative process that maximizes the utilization of the state's technical and educational resources. (Though not related directly to facilities, this measure is part of the group of facility-related reforms, as more coordinated distance learning programs can enhance curricula without building new facilities.)

POLICYMAKER'S CORNER: GOV. MIKE HUCKABEE

Governor Mike Huckabee is recognized as a national leader in education issues and is the current chair of the Education Commission of the States. We asked for his thoughts about this legislative session and its impact on education in Arkansas.



Which education issues do you wish the legislature would have addressed during this session?

I found it disappointing that we did not pass legislation to deal with postsecondary opportunities for children of undocumented residents. These students have been in our Arkansas K-12 education system for most of their lives, but upon graduation, we treat them as outsiders. I believe we are leaving a growing segment of our state's population without hope for a bright future by not addressing this issue.

Overall, how would you “grade” the work of lawmakers this session with respect to education policy?

I was very impressed with the dedication and effort put forth from our legislators this year to try to resolve some very difficult issues. Many of them work tirelessly with the different education entities to find common ground to fix the problems with our education system. While there is always room for improvement, I'd give this session a “B”.

As you consider all of the work done in the special session and the regular session that just ended to

equalize educational opportunities for all Arkansas students, what changes do you expect to see at the school and classroom level for students and teachers?

The intent of most of the legislation passed was to produce students who are adequately prepared for college or the workforce upon completion of an elementary and secondary education in our public schools. I expect to see student performance improving, teachers' salaries increasing, and an improvement in our ability to retain and attract high quality teachers to Arkansas classrooms.

Given the work you have done during the 2005 session to address inequities and deficiencies in school facilities, what would you say to superintendents who suggest that the wealth index funding formula selected is not equitable?

It is impossible to find a facilities funding formula that will make everyone happy. I think the wealth index that the Legislature developed is as fair a distribution as possible.

Which education issue(s) do you think will be most important to address between now and the 2007 session?

I think it is important for policymakers to fully understand the impact the new funding formula is having on our schools. We are just now completing our first school year under this formula, and it would be beneficial for policymakers to know how an increase of more than \$400 million has improved student performance.

ARKANSAN IN THE SPOTLIGHT: RAY SIMON PROMOTED

Raymond Simon recently was named Acting Deputy Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). Formerly the Director of the Arkansas Department of Education, Simon left that post in 2004 when he was tapped by President Bush to become a senior staff member at USDE.

Simon's new pivotal role in education policymaking places him alongside Secretary of Education, Margaret Spelling, in consulting with lawmakers and key education leaders on the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and other federal education programs.

A native of Conway, Simon has been a professional educator and administrator in Arkansas schools since 1966. He began his career as a math teacher at North Little Rock High School and served in a number of teaching and administrative roles in the Conway School District, where he was superintendent from 1991 to 1997. Additionally, he has served as an adjunct faculty member of several Arkansas colleges and universities, teaching education technology and school finance.

POLICYMAKER'S CORNER: SENATOR JIM ARGUE

Senate President Pro Tempore Jim Argue, who chairs the Senate Committee on Education, has played a prominent role in education reform throughout his tenure in the legislature. We asked for his reflections on this legislative session and its impact on education.



As you reflect on the legislative session that just ended, with which piece(s) of education policy or legislation are you most pleased?

I'm pleased with our response to the facilities mandate from the *Lake View* decision, our significant move to improve teacher health insurance, our continuing to expand pre-K opportunities, and our rejection of numerous proposals to retreat from various accomplishments in 2003-2004.

Which other education issues do you wish the legislature would have addressed during this session?

We need a better solution to the issue of extraordinary funding for geographically isolated districts. We need to improve the delivery and quality of professional development opportunities for teachers. We need a better handle on the relationship between uncompetitive teacher salaries and districts serving a high percent of impoverished students.

Overall, how would you "grade" the work of lawmakers this session with respect to education policy?

I think we "stayed the course." Major progress was made in 2003-2004, and we successfully defended those changes.

As you consider all of the work done in the special session and the regular session that just ended to equalize educational opportunities for all Arkansas students, what changes do you expect to see at the school and classroom level for students and teachers?

School reform in Arkansas is a long-term effort. Key elements include adequate financial resources, efficient use of financial and human resources, and good management at the district, school, and classroom levels. Over time we should see greater priority placed on academic achievement, improved instruction, and improved results.

Given the work you have done during the 2005 session to address inequities and deficiencies in school facilities, what would you say to superintendents who suggest that the wealth index funding formula selected is not equitable?

"School reform in Arkansas is a long-term effort. Key elements include adequate financial resources, efficient use of financial and human resources, and good management at the district, school, and classroom level."

-Senator Jim Argue

It could not be more equitable. The formula is simply...revenue per student per mill, converted to an index that ranks every district's wealth as compared to the 95th percentile. The lower the score on the index, the greater the state contribution to facility needs. *Lake View* requires the state to level the wealth differences among the districts. If a district, based on its property tax base, receives very little on a per student basis from its property tax receipts, it receives proportionally more state

funding. If a district, like Little Rock, is at the 95th percentile or above, it receives no state funding; its facilities needs are met entirely from its property tax collections.

Which education issue(s) do you think will be most important to address between now and the 2007 session?

Updating our adequacy study based on data from the 2004-2005 school year.

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the legislative session?

School improvement is not a painless process. The bureaucracy naturally wants more and more money, and to some degree, more money helps avoid hard work and difficult choices. Given our state's comparative poverty, we simply can't afford to squander our limited resources in this fashion.

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POLICYMAKER'S CORNER: DR. KELLAR NOGGLE

Dr. Kellar Noggle serves as Executive Director of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, an umbrella association with nine education administration constituencies. We asked him about the impact of this legislative session on education.



As you reflect on the legislative session that just ended, with which piece(s) of education policy or legislation are you most pleased?

The most significant legislation affecting education enacted in the past legislative session involved the development of a program to address the issue of school facility equity and adequacy. Seventeen acts related to school facilities were enacted. While the funding for school facilities for the next biennium is small compared to the projected needs of the State, the General Assembly has made the first step toward making significant improvements in school facilities over the next decade. Other significant legislation affecting the public schools was the provision of an additional \$20 million in funding for early childhood education programs and an addition of \$35 million in funding to strengthen the state health insurance program for school employees.

Which other education issues do you wish the legislature would have addressed during this session?

More than 135 acts affecting elementary and secondary education were enacted during the legislative session. School administrators were very disappointed that a cost of living increase in base funding was not provided

in the first year of the biennium. This would have permitted school districts to provide cost of living increases in salaries for teachers and other school personnel.

As you consider all of the work done in the special session and the regular session that just ended to equalize educational opportunities for all Arkansas students, what changes do you expect to see at the school and classroom level for students and teachers?

There has been great progress in providing educational opportunities for students as a result of the special legislative session in 2004 and the regular session in 2005. It is anticipated that this progress will be reflected in a significant gain in student academic performance over the next few years.

Which education issue(s) do you think will be most important to address between now and the 2007 session?

It is expected that during the interim between the 2005 and 2007 legislative sessions, legislative committees and state policymakers will be heavily involved in conducting an adequacy study to determine the effectiveness of the state's efforts to provide an adequate educational system. During this time, school administrators and teachers will be focused on providing additional programs and resources that will enhance student learning. Special attention will be focused on ways to enhance learning for students who are at risk of failure. An emphasis will be placed on improving school leadership and instruction at the classroom level through stronger professional development activities and programs.

INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR JIM ARGUE (CONT.)

For example, if a district is losing enrollment, it must make the tough choices associated with shrinking staff and other expense items. We can't ignore the loss of enrollment as we fund schools; to do so would be at the expense of every other student in the state.

"...More money helps avoid hard work and difficult choices. Given our state's comparative poverty, we simply can't afford to squander our limited resources..."

-Senator Jim Argue

Our formula demands efficiency and compliance with standards, and our standards demand student performance. Our policies deserve constant scrutiny and revisions where appropriate, but we must avoid our historic penchant for retreating from reform, creating loopholes for districts that can't or won't meet standards, and moving the focus from student achievement to district survival.

IN THE NEWS

What Policy Questions Can We Answer?

A new report by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) examined how policymakers could more effectively use existing data in five states: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The report describes the data in each state, assesses the utility of each state's educational data, and makes suggestions for how the data could be improved. Specifically, the data related to Arkansas includes financial, staff, and student data from the Arkansas Statewide Information System (SIS); staff certification information from the Arkansas Professional Licensure System (APLS); and student performance data from the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP). To access the full report, visit <http://www.sedl.org/rel/IES-report.html>

Teacher Groups Fight Against NCLB

According to an April 20, 2005 posting on the *Education Week* website, the National Education Association (NEA) filed a lawsuit against the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The suit, filed in Detroit's U.S. District Court, states that the federal government should not be able to withhold federal money from states working to improve their education system even if they fail to meet NCLB standards. In addition, the suit claims a funding gap exists between what the federal government is requesting of states and the expenses for which they are willing to pay. The NEA is joined by the states of Connecticut and Utah, both of which have passed legislation in opposition to NCLB. To read the full story, visit http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/04/20/33suit_web.h24.html

Does District Size Impact Graduation Rate?

A new study by Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research examined the role of district size on graduation rate. According to the study, students in small and medium sized districts seem to have higher graduation rates than those in very large districts. Large high schools seem to have a detrimental effect on some students. Greene describes other benefits associated with smaller districts. To read the full report, visit http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_09.htm

Accelerated High School Programs

As researchers across the nation consider new ways to improve America's high schools, one answer may be to continue pushing students into the college world. According to an April 2005 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 71 percent of public high schools offer dual enrollment programs, in which students earn both college and high school credit simultaneously, 67 percent offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and 2 percent offer International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. The report describes some of the effects of these programs and how many students take part in them. To read the full report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005009>

More Information on the Charter School Debate

According to a new book released by the Economic Policy Institute, *The Charter School Dust Up*, charter schools are not as effective as claimed by many proponents. The new report indicates that students in some charter schools perform at lower achievement levels than do their peers in traditional public schools. This is the latest study to use the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data to examine the students in charter schools compared to students in regular public schools. Further, this report finds that students in charter schools are no more economically disadvantaged than their public school counterparts, the reason given by many charter school proponents to explain why their students performed lower than other students on the NAEP. To read the study, visit http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/book_charter_school.

Why Teachers Avoid Becoming Principals

As many states across the nation begin to recognize that an administrator shortage looms on the horizon, school officials are beginning to question why teachers are avoiding the principal position. Aimee Howley, Solange Andrianavo, and Jessica Perry of Ohio University analyzed the reasons that teachers may avoid becoming principals. Their work indicates that many teachers believe that there are more disincentives associated with becoming a principal than incentives. Several of the disincentives discussed in the report include a gender issue (the number of males in administrator positions), the elaborate administrative licensure process, and the common practice of existing principals grooming certain teachers to become principals. To read the full report, visit <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=11819>

STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT: FACILITIES FUNDING

The School Facilities Task Force released its report earlier this year, in which facility issues were prioritized based on the immediacy of need. The priority of issues is as follows:

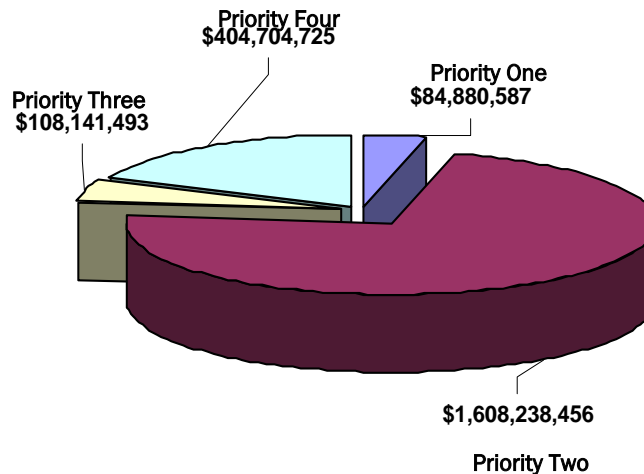
Priority 1 Mission Critical Concerns: conditions that directly affect the school's ability to remain open, or deliver the curriculum such as health and safety concerns that require immediate attention;

Priority 2 Concerns with an Indirect Impact on Mission: deficiencies that may progress to a Priority 1 item (e.g., deteriorating roofs, plumbing, electrical systems);

Priority 3 Short Term Conditions: improvements necessary to maximize efficiency and usefulness of the facility and to keep the school environment safe and healthy; and

Priority 4 Long Term Requirements: these items would be an enhancement to the instructional environment or require less immediate attention.

Priority School Facility Recommendations (School Buildings Only)



One of the most important issues facing the legislators at the 2005 regular session was school facilities. The legislature was charged with rectifying the school facility disparities found across the state and the priorities outlined in the facilities report. The legislature responded with the Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities Funding Act, Act 2206 of the 2005 General Session, which revised Arkansas' school facilities funding system. The graph illustrates the funding required for these priorities. Note that priority 2 funding is by far the largest need, which means the facility debate may be just beginning.

DISTRICTS PETITION TO REOPEN LAKE VIEW CASE

In the wake of the 2005 regular session of the Arkansas General Assembly, Rogers Public Schools led a group of 48 districts throughout the state in petitioning the Arkansas Supreme Court to reopen the *Lake View* school funding case. The court had exited the case in June 2004 following the close of the legislature's special session on education.

These districts are petitioning due to the lack of an increase to base-level public school funding for the coming fiscal year. The current \$5,400 per student guaranteed "foundation" funding will not increase until the 2006-2007 fiscal year, when it increases to \$5,497.

Attorney General Mike Beebe has asked the court to deny these petitions on the grounds that any complaint about school funding should take the form of a new lawsuit and be heard in circuit court. Nevertheless, the State Supreme Court heard oral arguments concerning the reopening of the case on May 19, 2005; it has not yet ruled on whether to open *Lake View* again. In the meantime, 24 school districts have filed a new lawsuit questioning the constitutionality of the current school funding mandates and alleging that some state revenues earmarked for schools have been misused. Clearly, the Supreme Court is not yet through considering school funding issues in Arkansas.

SPOTLIGHT: ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The New Law:

Under the recently passed Act 1229, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) may refer schools on the school improvement list to the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA), based at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville for support. The ADE may invite, encourage, or require a school or district to participate in the ALA Support Program, and may require the district to fund a portion of the cost of the program; the state pays the remainder of the cost.

The goals of the Arkansas Leadership Academy Support Program are as follows:

- To build the leadership capacity of the school and district personnel;
- To train a diverse school leadership team, including, but not limited to, the school principals and teachers;
- To provide a cadre of highly-experienced, trained performance coaches to work in the school or school district on a regular basis; and
- To work with the school, school district staff, school board members, parents, community members, and other stakeholders as necessary to provide a comprehensive support network that can continue the school's progress and improvement after completion of the Arkansas Leadership Academy's formal intervention and support.

ALA will work with each district or school for a minimum of three years, but may choose to work with them longer and/or be available for consultation beyond the three year commitment.

ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY HISTORY:

Established in 1991, the Arkansas Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 13 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 educational cooperatives; the Arkansas Departments of Education, Higher Education, and Workforce Education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network; Tyson Foods, Inc; Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; and the Walton Family Foundation, for a total of 44 partners. For more information, see this link: www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org.

The Process:

When the Arkansas Leadership Academy begins working with a school, it takes a team approach, working not only with a school's teachers and principal, but also with the community, including the school board, the superintendent, and community leaders interested in education.

The ALA approach is not to teach a formula for improvement, but rather to teach leadership skills to as many concerned participants as possible, so that the school community can generate ideas for improvement that fit their own particular context.

The ALA strategy for helping schools achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is to build the capacity of both schools and community partners to develop the culture, structure, and leadership needed to achieve specific student performance outcomes in a manner that fits their own school and community context. For example, ALA may work with a school on developing new vision and mission statements, and implementing them through extensive professional development, leadership training, and reflective learning experiences. At the same time, the ALA will work with parents and community partners to build a sense of mutual investment in a school's success and an enhanced capacity for sharing resources.

ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY BELIEFS:

- **People support what they help create.**
- **Diversity is a strength.**
- **Local people solve local problems best.**
- **Change takes place faster in groups.**
- **Change self, not others.**
- **It doesn't matter who gets the credit.**
- **The greatest leaders are known *not* by the number of their followers, but by the number of leaders they create.**

The ALA goal is to assist 3-6 additional schools each year in a quest to improve teacher confidence and competence in teaching math and reading in order to raise student achievement test scores, and thereby accomplish adequate yearly progress.

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IN OUR
NEXT
ISSUE...

*The next Office for
Education Policy
newsletter will be
published in Fall 2005
and will focus on
school finance issues.*

Visit our website for more info!
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OFFICE FOR EDUCATION POLICY MISSION:

*The Office for Education Policy seeks
to be a resource that aids state policymakers, educators,
administrators, and other leaders in thoughtful decision-making
concerning K-12 education in the State of Arkansas.*

THE EDITOR'S NOTES

Dear Readers,

When the 85th Arkansas General Assembly recessed on April 13, 2005, lawmakers had given significant time and attention to a variety of education issues and had made several important policy decisions. This newsletter provides a wrap-up of the 2005 legislative session focused on education policy issues. Among the issues addressed are the following:

- School facilities improvement;
- District funding concerns; and
- The petition to reopen the *Lake View* case

Also, we interviewed key leaders in education policy, including Governor Mike Huckabee; Senator Jim Argue, Chair of the Senate Education Committee; and Dr. Kellar Noggle, Executive Director of the Arkansas Association of Education Administrators, concerning their perspectives on the legislative session.

We invite you to help us in our role of providing information to education policymakers and practitioners across the State of Arkansas by letting us know how we can serve you most effectively.

Respectfully,
Gary Ritter



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