

# Impacting Instruction: Arkansas and ADP

## FACTS ON DROPOUT PREVENTION

Existing to help states better prepare students for college and careers, the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, launched by Achieve, Inc., works toward an aim that parallels that of dropout prevention efforts. The ADP Network focuses on bringing value to the high school diploma by raising the rigor of high school standards, assessments and curriculum and aligning expectations with the demands of postsecondary education and work. Likewise, one grouping within the 15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention is “Making the Most of Instruction.”

As a member state in the ADP Network, Arkansas has begun making the most of instruction by restructuring its core requirements. As a result, the state has become recognized as one of the states leading the way in developing rigorous education standards in English and mathematics that will prepare students to succeed in an increasingly global economy.<sup>6\*</sup>

### A National Model

Arkansas is one of 34 states that are a part of the ADP Network joining efforts to improve education policy in America. Since joining the ADP Network, Arkansas has been reported as a leader in several

categories. For instance, according to a 2006 report from Achieve, Arkansas is one of only a few states in the nation adhering to a college preparatory curriculum. This curriculum, known as “Smart Core,” is what has made Arkansas one of the frontrunners in a movement to institute more challenging coursework.<sup>7</sup>

Another area Arkansas has been marked as a national leader is in Advanced Placement (AP) testing. The state had an increase in students taking AP exams during the 2004-05 school year—an increase reported to be the largest single-year increase in the 50 year history of AP.<sup>9</sup> More recently, in 2008, 17,037 public school students took AP exams, representing a 5.5 percent increase over the 16,153 students who took the exams the previous year. What’s more, there was a 6.2 percent increase in the number of exam scores of 3 or higher from last year for public school students with 8,005 of the total 28,231 exams taken being scored 3, 4 or 5.<sup>4</sup>

### The Challenge

When the state joined the ADP Network, four goals were developed to improve education in Arkansas, based on a challenge issued



### About Achieve, Inc.

Achieve, Inc., is a bipartisan non-profit—created by the National Governor’s Association and business leaders—that helps raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work and citizenship.

Currently 34 states participate in the Achieve movement, which began in 1996 at the conclusion of a national education summit in Washington. These states now comprise the Achieve Diploma Project Network (ADP Network).

A 27-page Achieve document entitled “An Action Plan for Improving America’s High School” outlines how to ensure that high school graduates are prepared for postsecondary education. Each network state has a set of goals within the framework outlined.

More information available at:  
[www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org)

by Achieve. The challenge cited alarming 2005 statistics, such as:

- Only 30% of high school students who took the ACT demonstrated readiness for college mathematics (College Algebra). Within that group, less than 10% of African American students reached college-ready standards (22 on Act Mathematics); and
- Approximately 25% of high school students who took the ACT demonstrated readiness for college biology. Within that group less than 5% of African-American students reached college ready standards.<sup>3</sup>

## ADP GOALS

Four goals were developed to improve education in Arkansas as a result of this challenge. Now, Arkansas has teams that work to accomplish these goals. These teams are composed of staff from the Arkansas Departments of Education, Higher Education, and Workforce Education, as well as other stakeholders. The four goals they work to accomplish include to:

- Align high school standards and assessments with knowledge and skills required for success after high school;
- Require all graduates to take rigorous courses aligned to college- and career-ready standards to prepare them for life after high school;
- Streamline the assessment system so that the tests students take in high school also serve as placement tests for college and hiring for the workplace; and
- Hold high schools accountable for graduating students who are

ready for college or careers, and hold postsecondary institutions accountable for students' success once enrolled.<sup>3</sup>

## ADP TEAMS

### The College and Career-Ready Policy Institute (CCRPI) Team

The College- and Career-Ready Policy Institute was established in 2008 to help build upon foundations established in the 2005 National Educational Summit on High Schools and the sustained work of numerous states that are part of the ADP Network.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of these efforts is to guarantee that state education policies are designed and implemented in ways that ensure that every student graduates from high school ready for college and productive careers. To move the state to the next level, Arkansas' team, working with national experts, will work to build valid and aligned next-generation assessments and accountability systems that address several issues, including:

- Setting the right college- and career-ready goals for system and student achievement, and what constitutes success;
- Establishing valid and reliable accountability measures (e.g., graduation rates, assessment systems) and metrics (e.g., status, growth, subgroup accountability) of performance aligned with those goals, along with broader and deeper systems of data reporting and diagnostic analysis (likely linked from state to region to district) to fully inform the nature and degree of actions that follow, and

- Establishing a system of differentiated supports and interventions (from light-touch to turnaround) for schools and students targeted by accountability determinations and deeper evaluations of performance, as well as more public school options and models for underserved and underperforming students to facilitate these improvement efforts.<sup>2</sup>

### The Algebra II Team

In 2005, a consortium of nine states, including Arkansas, joined forces to launch a new, common Algebra II end-of-course exam based on common standards. Since then six additional states have joined the partnership, bringing the total number of participating states to fifteen.<sup>1</sup> Algebra II is a “gate-keeper” course in high school that research indicates can be a significant predictor of college-readiness and success.<sup>1</sup> Two landmark U.S. Department of Education studies have indicated that the highest level of math taken in high school is the most powerful predictor of whether a student will ultimately earn a bachelor's degree, and that students completing Algebra II in high school more than doubled their chances of earning a four-year college degree.<sup>8</sup>

The first implementation of the Algebra II exam was in May 2008. The Algebra II Team continues to work on the goals and purposes for implementing the common exam.<sup>8</sup>

*For more information, visit [arkansased.org](http://arkansased.org)*