

Little Rock School District



Progress Report

Presented to SBE Subcommittee for
Academically Distressed Schools

January 7, 2015

Progress Report for the Little Rock School District Schools on Academic Distress

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What has been accomplished as of 01/07/2015:

- Training was provided to building administrators, instructional facilitators and teachers on rituals and routines, lesson planning, and classroom observation with feedback.
- Expectation was shared by the superintendent for all teachers to construct daily lesson plans with 8 required components.
- Expectation was shared by the superintendent for all principals to monitor daily lesson plans and to make observing instruction and giving quality feedback to teachers a high priority.
- Data on classroom observations and evidence-based feedback has been and continues to be collected. Senior district administrators who supervise the principals sent memos of concern/warning to principals who were not sufficiently implementing the observations with feedback.
- District assigned a curriculum staff member to serve as a school improvement specialist in each school on academic distress; the SISs send weekly reports to ADE that include barriers/concerns, progress made and next steps.
- Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) were purchased for all AD schools.
- Training (SREB module) was provided to building administrators on leadership team structure and function.
- Academically distressed schools restructured their leadership teams; training was and continues to be provided to the leadership team members.
- Scantron® was selected as a provider of CCSS test bank questions for grades 6-12; it is being used for interim assessments and is also an option for pre/post assessments at the secondary level.
- Data from pre/post tests and interim assessments are being used to plan Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 (RtI) interventions.
- Board holds monthly work sessions to monitor activities and data related to academically distressed schools. Board asked for and received an update on how distressed schools are responding to barriers/concerns identified by SISs.
- District identified Curriculum Management Systems, Inc. to audit the alignment of the district's curriculum to CCSS.
- District SISs were trained on Indistar® and have helped schools to utilize the tool.
- AD Schools identified their plan for addressing ADE Evaluation Team recommendations; the schools also identified the 2-3 major research-based strategies/innovations that they will focus on this year. The IMOs are being realigned to address these strategies/innovations.
- Seventeen staff members from the district, including the principals at the AD schools, took a full-day visit to the Springdale School District to learn about their ESL program.
- The district is in the planning stages of reconstituting Hall High School to improve programming and outcomes for students. (The final plan will be presented to the LRSD Board for consideration.)

Next Steps:

- Leadership team training will continue. Additional training will occur on Jan 15, Feb 17, Mar 17, April 7 and May 7.
- Curriculum alignment audit will start in January; curriculum maps will be revised once the recommendations are received.
- Training in Using Data/Getting Results will be provided to the leadership teams, who will provide training for the staff.
- Observation Tool data will continue to be monitored by senior administrators at the district level and used to improve leader performance in observing instruction and providing high quality feedback to teachers.
- Additional training and support will be provided to AD schools in using the Indistar® system as a tool to guide their work.
- LRSD Board will continue their monthly work sessions to monitor AD school activities and progress.
- Pre/post unit tests will be used by all math and literacy teachers at the AD schools.
- The second interim assessment developed by TLI (elementary) and from Scantron® (secondary) will be given.
- Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) will continue to be used to track student growth on the continuum toward college and career readiness (initial assessments have already been given).
- LRSD Board will consider the plan to reconstitute Hall High School.

Progress Report for the Little Rock School District Schools on Academic Distress

January 7, 2015

Introduction

The Little Rock School District (District) presented an improvement plan for schools in academic distress (AD) to the State Board of Education (SBE) in advance of a meeting before the SBE subcommittee on academically distressed schools that was held on October 14. In that plan the District identified five goals and related objectives that incorporated feedback from the ADE Evaluation Teams. The district plan addresses the key components of the familiar curriculum, instruction, and assessment triangle (Figure 1). In order for an aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment program to work, a governance structure for decision making and action taking in the school is essential. This structure is the school leadership team. In addition students must have a safe and orderly environment within which learning can occur.

Major district initiatives related to each component of the triangle:

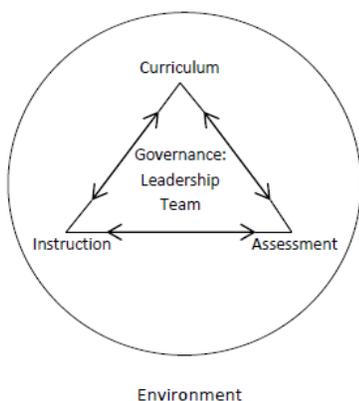


Figure 1: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Triangle

- Curriculum – External curriculum audit will be conducted beginning in January, 2015 (Goal 4)
- Instruction – Lesson plan requirement and classroom observations with feedback (Goal 2)
- Assessment – Interim assessments and Pre/Post unit assessments
- Leadership Team – Restructuring and training for leadership teams (Goal 3)
- Environment – Establishment and enforcement of school-wide rituals and routines (Goal 5)

Progress Report

Progress toward each of the five goals and associated objectives is listed below in abbreviated form. Goal 1, an overarching goal, is for the six academically distressed schools to meet the criteria to be removed from that designation within three years. The other goals are listed as headings for the progress report.

Goal 2: The principal at each school on academic distress will become the instructional leader of a faculty that plans and implements quality, rigorous lessons that engage students and lead to improved student achievement.

Objectives (paraphrased) for this goal are for all teachers to develop lesson plans that are aligned with the district's curriculum, for the lesson plans to include eight required components, for principals to hold teachers accountable for producing and implementing the lesson plans, and for principals to observe instruction and give teachers multiple levels of high quality feedback. Principals are expected to place teachers who do not meet expectations for lesson planning and quality instruction on an improvement plan.

Progress toward goal 2: Administrators at the academically distressed schools conducted classroom observations for the purpose of giving teachers high quality feedback on their instruction (Figure 2). Although all schools had the same training, the academically distressed school administrators made drop-in observations in classrooms and gave feedback at a higher rate than six comparison schools (King, Dunbar, Mann, Pulaski Heights Middle, Central and Parkview).

The decreasing number of observations over the three time intervals was expected because the time per observation went up (Figure 3). The academically distressed school administrators, as a group, were in classrooms giving feedback to teachers 153 minutes/day more than the administrators at the comparison schools.

The third variable in the improvement initiative concerning classroom observations with feedback is the quality of the feedback. The district’s Curriculum and Instruction department scored randomly selected feedback provided to teachers at the academically distressed schools during three time periods during the fall semester. The scorers used a rubric with three scales: basic, proficient and distinguished. Each set of feedback was scored by two raters, and a third rater was used if the first two didn’t agree on a score. The results for the quality of the feedback are displayed in Table 1.

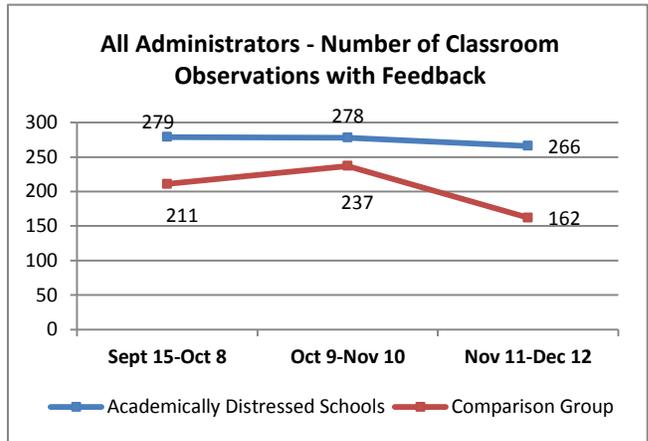


Figure 2: Classroom observations with feedback completed by administrators in academically distressed schools with an equal number of comparison schools.

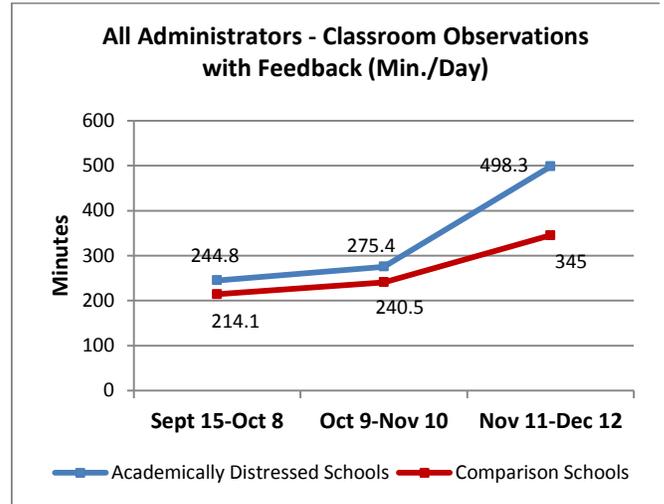


Figure 3: Average time spent per day observing instruction and giving feedback (includes an equal size group of comparison schools.)

Table 1: Assessing Quality of Leader Feedback*

	August 20 - September 31				October 1 - November 4				November 5 - December 12				No current observation
	# of Tchrs	Basic	Prof	Dist	# of Tchrs	Basic	Prof	Dist	# of Tchrs (# Scored)	Basic	Prof	Dist	
Baseline	5	60%	40%		5	60%	40%		10	70%	30%		
Cloverdale	10	100%			9	89%	11%		21 (13)	46%	54%		8
Henderson	9	89%	11%		8	50%	50%		18 (14)	57%	43%		4
Hall	19	84%	16%		18	78%	17%	6%	20 (13)	38%	31%	31%	7
J. A. Fair	15	80%	13%	7%	15	73%	20%	7%	21	29%	24%	48%	
McClellan	12	83%	17%		9	100%			19 (17)	77%	24%		2

*Feedback was scored using a three point rubric with possible ratings of basic, proficient, and distinguished.

Goal 3: The schools on academic distress will establish and/or maintain a team structure that includes effective leadership teams that share in decisions of real substance pertaining to school improvement and professional development needs. (Note – this was a key recommendation from ADE Evaluation Teams.)

Objectives (paraphrased) for this goal are for schools on academic distress to have a leadership team that consists of the principal, teachers that are reflective of the various grades and/or subject areas, and other key professional personnel; that meets at least twice monthly for an hour or more; and that uses school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data to develop innovations/strategies to improve teaching and learning.

Progress toward Goal 3: Training was provided to the principals and assistant principals at the AD schools on October 28 and November 6 for a total of 6 hours on “Building Effective Leadership Teams that Make a Difference”, an SREB training module that was led by district leaders, Dr. Lloyd Sain and Ms. Shoutell Richardson. Following that, the principals restructured their leadership teams to conform to the models provided by SREB and *Wise Ways* from Indistar®. The newly formed leadership teams were trained on December 2 for 3 hours with additional training dates scheduled for January 15, February 17, March 17, April 7 and May 7.

The principals in the schools on academic distress have taken or will take advantage of Leadership Training provided by the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA) (Table 2). Frank Williams, principal at Henderson, and Larry Schleicher, principal at Hall, have registered for the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA) Master Principals Program that will begin summer, 2015. Jeremy Owoh, principal at Fair, Katina Ray, principal at Baseline, and Wanda Ruffins, principal at Cloverdale, all completed phase I during summer, 2014. Henry Anderson, principal at McClellan, has completed phases I and II of the Master Principals Program and has an assistant principal who attended the ALA Assistant Principals Institute.

Table 2: Participation of Principals of Academically Distressed Schools in ALA Master Principal Program

Building Leader	Phase of Arkansas Leadership Academy’s Master Principal Program Completed
Katina Ray, Principal at Baseline Elementary	Completed phase I
Wanda Ruffins, Principal at Cloverdale Middle	Completed phase I
*Frank Williams, Principal at Henderson Middle	Has registered for training during summer, 2015
*Larry Schleicher, Principal at Hall High	Has registered for training during summer, 2015
Jeremy Owoh, Principal at J. A. Fair High	Completed phase I
Henry Anderson, Principal at McClellan High	Completed phases I and II

*Mr. Williams is new to Henderson this year and Mr. Schleicher became principal at Hall too late last year to enroll in the Program

Goal 4: The district-approved curricula (literacy and math) for grades K-12 will be fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards both in content and rigor.

Objectives (paraphrased) for this goal are to contract with an external provider to conduct an alignment audit of our grades K-12 math curriculum and 6-12 literacy curricula. Note—The Council of Great City Schools conducted an audit of our K-5 literacy curriculum a few years ago. Recommendations from the audit will be used to revise the curricula during the summer of 2015. The District’s Testing and Evaluation Department will develop a tool for checking instructional alignment and assessment alignment with the revised curricula during the 2015-16 school year.

Progress toward Goal 4: Nine providers of curriculum alignment audits responded to the District’s Request for Qualifications: American Institute for Research, McREL, CORE, Houghton-Mifflin, Curriculum Management Systems, Pearson, Evans Newton, Educational Policy Improvement Center, and Barnes Technologies. Their responses were scored using a rubric. Three providers, American Institute for Research, McREL, and Curriculum Management Systems, were finalists. The finalists were asked to provide more detailed information and to submit their best and final offer. The provider that was ranked first by the review committee was Curriculum Management Systems. Approval by the board is pending.

Work on the audit will begin in January and will be finished in May, 2015, if not before. The mathematics and literacy staff members, working with teams of teachers, will use the recommendations from the auditors to revise the written curriculum over the summer to be ready for the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. Training will be provided to building administrators and teachers on the revised curriculum during the pre-school conference.

Goal 5: A safe, orderly and academically productive environment will exist in each classroom and the school as a whole through establishing and enforcing rituals and routines throughout the school.

Objectives (paraphrased) for Goal 5 are that the district-assigned school improvement specialists and the principals at the AD schools will report that all classrooms have established and enforced rituals and routines.

Progress toward Goal 5: District central office staff had an extensive oral interview with the principals about their school. One question was about rituals and routines (Table 3).

School	Response to Question: How has the school implemented school-wide and classroom-level rituals and routines?
Baseline	The rituals and routines were established by our school climate committee. The school climate committee created the school climate handbook which outlines our school-wide rituals and routines. The school climate team included various stakeholders (i.e. classroom teachers, specialists, mental health providers, etc). Teachers have the autonomy to address their own individual classroom rituals and routines. This includes class meetings, student behavior plans, incentives and rewards.
Cloverdale	Some teachers have implemented rituals and routines with complete fidelity; this has been observed by administrators during classroom observations and campus walks. High implementation is evidenced by teachers who are standing at their doors during transitions, are visible in the hallways, have do-nows and objectives posted and students adhere to expectations. Universal rituals and routines were established by grade-level teams, as an off-shoot of classroom rules. Professional development regarding rituals and routines is on-going. Beginning with the first teachers PD day and every discipline conversation. Teachers have latitude to develop classroom rituals and routines, as long as they are in alignment with Cloverdale's Universal Rituals and Routines.
Henderson	The focus of whole school at beginning of school was ritual and routines. Administrators visited and focused on inspecting these. The administrative staff worked out the basics, and the staff contributed to the school wide rules. Then teachers developed their own classroom rituals and routines. Students seem more aware of expectations in halls with behavior and dress code and tardies. Most teachers are visible in halls during transitions. Administrative team is always present and visible and focused on rules.
Fair	Each teacher created and posted their rituals and routines. The 9th grade academy developed rituals and routines they all will follow . We have school-wide rituals and routines for being in the halls, cafeteria, and outside at lunch.
Hall	The school-wide rituals and routines are related to a school-wide tardy policy (and scanning technique) that has reduced the number of tardies for the year. Teachers develop rituals and routines for their own classrooms. For the most part, the use of rituals and routines has been very good.
McClellan	Teachers have not been implementing rituals and routines consistently at McClellan? The school leadership team met on October 28, 2014 and addressed this issue. New rituals and routines have been established with input from all departments for the entire school.

*Rituals and routines was one of several questions on an oral interview with the principal during the first semester.

Also, the district-assigned school improvement specialists have provided information on the school-wide and classroom level rituals and routines for the school to which they are assigned. Generally, the SISs report that school-wide rituals and routines are in place and are working well. Orderliness in common parts of the building are in place the vast majority of the time. Most classrooms have good management and instructional rituals and routines; however, there are exceptions. The exceptions are areas where the building administrators must provide training and support for teachers to maintain good classroom-level rituals and routines.

Student Outcomes:

Unit Pre/Post Assessments

One of the key recommendations from the ADE Evaluation Teams was for teachers to jointly plan instructional units that last 2-4 weeks and develop pre/post tests to determine if students are making adequate progress. If progress is not sufficient, teachers can use the pre/post test data to differentiate instruction to reteach components that students did not master. The pre/post test data can also inform certified staff that provide tier 2 and tier 3 interventions.

Progress toward unit development with pre/post-tests: All the schools on academic distress are using unit pre/post-tests. The implementation of this recommendation has been recent enough that the district has not collected pre/post results from individual teachers on a large scale at this time. By the end of January data on pre/post test results will have been collected at the district level and can be shared.

Interim Assessments

The district is using The Learning Institute (TLI) as the interim assessment provider for math and literacy at the elementary level. A new platform for interim assessments was adopted for grades 6-12. After evaluating various providers, Scantron® was selected to provide a test bank for our use and to provide many levels of data disaggregation and display. Scantron® assessment results will not be available in literacy until mid-January.

Progress measured using TLI interim assessment given in grades 2-5 math and 3-5 literacy and the Scantron® assessment for secondary mathematics are provided below (Table 4). The scores of traditionally high performing schools are included for comparison purposes. The scores reported are raw percent scores. Since the PARCC Assessment has not been given yet, the district doesn't have a valid method of determining what raw percentage score would represent proficiency.

Table 4: Module 1 Interim Assessment Results (average percent correct)

School	Assessment			For Comparison— High Performing School:	For Comparison— High Performing School:
		School Avg.	District Avg.		
Cloverdale Middle School	6th Grade Math	46.5	52.6	52.7 (Mann)	61.0 (PHMS)
	7th Grade Math	38.3	38.4	35.0 (Mann)	43.6 (PHMS)
	8th Grade Math	39.0	37.2	38.7 (Mann)	37.5 (PHMS)
Henderson Middle School	6th Grade Math	46.6	52.6	52.7 (Mann)	61.0 (PHMS)
	7th Grade Math	37.7	38.4	35.0 (Mann)	43.6 (PHMS)
	8th Grade Math	31.5	37.2	38.7 (Mann)	37.5 (PHMS)

	7th Accel	51.9	55.4	51.4 (Mann)	67.6 (PHMS)
	8th Alg 1	46.9	60.0	60.6 (Mann)	64.1 (PHMS)
Hall High School	Algebra I	28.6	40.8	49.9 (Parkview)	47.1 (Central)
	Algebra II	42.5	47.9	53.9 (Parkview)	51.6 (Central)
	Geometry	32.6	42.0	46.0 (Parkview)	47.6 (Central)
J. A. Fair High School	Algebra I	39.6	40.8	49.9 (Parkview)	47.1 (Central)
	Algebra II	33.0	47.9	53.9 (Parkview)	51.6 (Central)
	Geometry	39.7	42.0	46.0 (Parkview)	47.6 (Central)
McClellan High School	Algebra I	36.5	40.8	49.9 (Parkview)	47.1 (Central)
	Algebra II	39.0	47.9	53.9 (Parkview)	51.6 (Central)
	Geometry	34.1	42.0	46.0 (Parkview)	47.6 (Central)
Baseline Elementary	Grade 2 Math	70.3	74.8	81.0 (Terry)	79.9 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 3 Math	61.1	65.3	68.0 (Terry)	88.5 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 3 Reading	38.7	45.5	43.9 (Terry)	65.4 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 4 Math	50.2	49.7	52.7 (Terry)	67.2 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 4 Reading	36.5	52.8	53.5 (Terry)	65.6 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 5 Math	45.2	49.0	54.3 (Terry)	65.2 (Forest Pk.)
	Grade 5 Reading	38.8	51.4	55.2 (Terry)	64.8 (Forest Pk.)

Baseline Elementary also administered the Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) two times during the fall semester to grades K-5. The results show that students are making progress in mathematics (Table 5), especially at the early grades.

Table 5: Growth in Math Proficiency from SMI for Baseline Elementary (in percent of students at each level)

Grade	Below Basic - 1 st Time Period	Below Basic - 2nd Time Period	Basic – 1 st Time Period	Basic – 2nd Time Period	Proficient – 1 st Time Period	Proficient – 2nd Time Period	Advanced – 1 st Time Period	Advanced – 2nd Time Period
Kindergarten	76	29	18	40	4	29	2	2
First	93	51	5	40	2	9	0	0
Second	70	33	30	65	0	3	0	0
Third	95	73	5	27	0	0	0	0
Fourth	98	89	2	9	0	2	0	0
Fifth	89	82	11	18	0	0	0	0

Conclusions

Progress has been made toward all five goals that the district set for improving the schools on academic distress. The most effort to date from the district has gone into supporting the AD schools on goals 2 and 3 related to lesson planning, classroom observations with quality feedback, and leadership team development. Substantial progress has been made toward these goals. Building administrators are in the

classrooms observing instruction more than ever before. High standards exist for the feedback that they give to teachers, and the administrators are making the adjustment to giving meaningful, evidence-based feedback. Much training and guidance has been provided to AD schools related to leadership team structure and function. Support from the Arkansas Leadership Academy has been used and will continue to be a valuable resource for leadership training. The school leadership teams have been restructured recently at the AD schools, and additional support from the district will be needed to help the principals change them into decision-making bodies that lead the school improvement effort.

Training for goal 5 on rituals and routines was provided by the district, but implementation of this is essentially a building-level obligation. Feedback from district observers in the schools is that rituals and routines have been established and have improved the learning environment in the AD schools. We will continue to monitor implementation of school-level rituals and routines.

A curriculum auditor (goal 4) will be approved by the board in early January and work on the audit will begin immediately thereafter. Much of the focus on district central office administrators in the spring and summer will concentrate on the curriculum audit process. Ensuring a fully aligned curriculum that is available to all students is a key factor in improving student outcomes. The district believes that an aligned curriculum will help produce test scores that will help the AD schools make sufficient progress to be removed from the academic distress list in just a few years.

The district got a late start on pre/post unit testing and was delayed on interim testing at the secondary level while providers were evaluated. Scantron® was selected as a provider, and the district will use the Scantron® test item bank to produce interim assessments. Teachers at the secondary level can also use a separate item bank for the creation of short pre/post assessments or they can create their own pre/post assessments. These resources will support the AD distressed schools in getting “close to real-time” data for use in making instructional decisions.

Although much progress has been made, the district is fully aware that our role in supporting the AD schools is a top priority. We will continue to work with the administrators and teachers in these schools to get the improvement that must happen.