



# Arkansas Department of Education

Johnny Key, Commissioner

*Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education*

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## **Gov. Hutchinson, ADE Launch Reading Initiative**

**LITTLE ROCK** — Gov. Asa Hutchinson and the Arkansas Department of Education are excited to announce the R.I.S.E. (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence) Arkansas reading initiative. R.I.S.E. Arkansas will build a culture of reading through stakeholder collaboration and provide additional instructional support to current and future teachers.

"Reading and literacy skills are vital for success in the classroom and life in general," Gov. Asa Hutchinson said. "For students looking toward a degree or new career path, high-level literacy skills are essential. For these reasons, I am pleased to support Commissioner Key and the Department of Education's R.I.S.E. Arkansas campaign to increase student success and build a culture of reading throughout Arkansas."

Based on 2015 ACT Aspire results, 48.6 percent of Arkansas' students in grades three through 10 were proficient in English language arts. A total of 39 percent of Arkansas' graduating seniors met reading readiness benchmarks on The ACT in 2015. Nationally, Arkansas ranks in the lower third of states in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of students in grades three through eight who meet the ACT Aspire reading readiness benchmark by 10 percent within three years; rise above the bottom third in state comparisons within five years on the fourth-grade NAEP reading assessment; and increase the number of graduates meeting The ACT reading readiness benchmark by 10 percent within five years.

The R.I.S.E. Arkansas campaign will enhance and expand existing efforts by the Arkansas Department of Education and school districts to support literacy in schools. Many secondary schools across the state have adopted Literacy Design Collaborative practices as an instructional model. High schools also are providing transitional courses for students who need additional support in rigorous course work prior to graduation. Arkansas has adopted new English language arts and literacy standards for grades kindergarten through 12 and continues to provide support and additional resources for educators.

The state recognizes the need to do more in the area of literacy to accomplish these goals. R.I.S.E. Arkansas emphasizes the importance of building a culture of reading, educating parents about the importance of reading, and increasing access to books at home. In addition, the campaign will focus on increasing the depth of knowledge for teachers in the science of reading and expanding their understanding of phonics and phonological awareness, as well as how that knowledge impacts fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and writing. The science of reading, going beyond the five components outlined in the *National Reading Panel Report 2010*, provides educators with the scientific research and knowledge of how a student actually learns to read.

“I was blessed to be raised in a home where reading was emphasized and encouraged, and to this day I love to read,” ADE Commissioner Johnny Key said. “Reading opens doors to knowledge and enjoyment. Reading opens doors to our past, helps us understand our present and guides us to our future. Reading opens doors to a richer life. Through this initiative, we are committed to helping every student obtain the reading skills necessary to achieve success in school, but beyond that, giving them the opportunity to realize that richer life. Through placing the highest priority on reading instruction, teacher development and strengthening our partnerships, we will build a strong culture of reading in Arkansas and transform the state to lead the nation in student-focused education.”

## **Reading Conference**

In addition to partnering with other stakeholders to promote a culture of reading, ADE is hosting its 2nd Annual Reading Conference: A Focus on Dyslexia and the Science of Reading in Hot Springs. The free conference for educators will be held March 6-7 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. Districts are encouraged to send a team of educators. To learn more, visit <http://www.arkansased.gov/events/498/2017-ade-reading-conference-for-arkansas-schools>.

## **R.I.S.E. Academy**

Teachers in the primary grades must have an in-depth understanding of phonics and phonemic awareness to support beginning readers. Intermediate level teachers also need this knowledge to provide support to struggling readers and help independent readers decode multi-syllabic words and have a basis for understanding the English language. Reading professional development has focused on a general scope of basic reading skills; however, a strong foundation in phonics is necessary to move students forward in their reading. Students will rely on these foundational phonics skills, especially in the intermediate grades, to read fluently and comprehend complex text.

This summer ADE will launch the R.I.S.E. Academy to support kindergarten through second-grade teachers for the 2017-18 school year. Education service cooperatives and several school districts will host the academies. ADE is currently providing training to more than 80 literacy specialists to assist with the academies this summer. Forty of these specialists will become lead trainers who will facilitate the academies and provide support for approximately 1,000 educators who teach grades kindergarten through second for the 2017-18 school year. ADE specialists, higher education representatives, and state and district literacy specialists will provide regional support networks for each cohort group.

This year-long blended learning professional development will provide educators with in-depth information related to the science of reading, evidence-based instructional strategies and how to make data-based decisions for students. Participants will receive coaching and opportunities for

collaboration with other educators.

The R.I.S.E. Academy will expand to train educators in grades three through 12 in 2018-19. The academy also will include an administrator training. The administrator training will focus on reading supports and resources necessary to implement an effective reading program within the school, building foundational knowledge related to the science of reading and instructional components that should be evident during classroom observations.

## Continued Collaboration

ADE will continue to collaborate with community, business and education partners, including higher education, to improve instruction for future teachers to promote a deeper understanding of the science of reading. ADE also will collaborate with the DHS Early Childhood Division to promote the importance of early literacy instruction for students in preschool before entering kindergarten.

Literacy is not only for those in education but also for all Arkansans. Business and community partnerships are critical to promoting the culture of reading within the state and providing access to books in the home.

School districts are encouraged to begin planning local reading campaigns. Additional materials and resources will be provided this spring to school districts so they can launch their own campaign or build upon an existing reading campaign this fall.

For more information about R.I.S.E. Arkansas, visit [www.arkansased.gov](http://www.arkansased.gov) and #RISEArkansas.

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