



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell  
Commissioner

May 23, 2012

State Board  
of Education

Dr. Ben Mays  
Clinton  
Chair

Jim Cooper  
Melbourne  
Vice Chair

Joe Black  
Newport

Brenda Gullett  
Fayetteville

Sam Ledbetter  
Little Rock

Alice Mahony  
El Dorado

Toyce Newton  
Crossett

Mireya Reith  
Fayetteville

Vicki Saviers  
Little Rock

Office of the Governor  
Attn: Mike Beebe  
State Capitol Room, 250  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Governor Beebe,

On behalf of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, we would like to thank you for all of your support in not only continuing to nominate members to our Commission, but also in encouraging our efforts as we continue to work in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education in addressing this vital issue.

On May 10-11, 2012, we hosted our first educational symposium, entitled *Bridging the Gap: An Educational Symposium with the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap*, in Blytheville, Arkansas. Our mission for this educational outreach was to invite all those educators from this part of the state who work first-hand in addressing the academic achievement gaps in their local schools. As a Commission, we are ready to work along-side school districts to ensure that all students are given the support they need to succeed in school. Additionally, we as a Commission are committed to provide any assistance we can on the state level to make real progress in closing the academic achievement gap in Arkansas.

Our plans are to make *Bridging the Gap* the first of many symposiums we can offer across the state. Since we are already mandated by recent legislation to interface with the local achievement gap task forces in each of the four congressional districts, we plan on continuing to host these symposiums on an annual basis.

Attached you will find a copy of our program, as well as a bookmark that was made as a keepsake for our attendees. Again, thank you for your continued support of our efforts and if your schedule permits, please consider speaking at our next symposium.

Respectfully,

Dr. Dawn Tirado Simpson  
Chairman

Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap

Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR  
72201-1019  
(501) 682-4475  
ArkansasEd.org



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Arkansas Department of Higher Education  
Attn: Interim-Director Shane Broadway  
114 East Capitol Avenue  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Director Broadway,

On behalf of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, we would like to thank you for all of your support in not only encouraging our efforts as we continue to work in addressing this vital issue, but also in sending us your dedicated staff to serve as ex-officio members on our Commission. Dr. Karen Wheeler, and more recently, Mr. Brooks Harrington, have both been committed to coming to our meetings and have added valuable input on behalf of Higher Education.

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Arkansas Department of Education  
Attn: Commissioner Tom Kimbrell  
4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dr. Kimbrell,

On behalf of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, we would like to thank you for all of your support in not only encouraging our efforts as we continue to work in addressing this vital issue, but also in allowing us the use of so many of your resources at the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). From the use of your conference room space, to your support in allowing so many of your staff to make presentations to our group, your efforts have been greatly appreciated. We could write an entire page or two just listing all of the ways that Ms. Dorothy Gillam has been of assistance to us each and every month that we have hosted a meeting - what a great team of professional and dedicated staff you have at ADE.

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Enclosed you will find a copy of our program, as well as a bookmark that was made as a keepsake for our attendees. Thank you again for allowing Mr. John Hoy to speak on behalf of ADE during our Opening Session - he did a terrific job and motivated the audience to think outside of the box in addressing this issue. Again, thank you for your continued support of our efforts, and if your schedule permits, please consider speaking at our next symposium.

Respectfully,

Dr. Dawn Tirado Simpson  
Chairman

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Arkansas House of Representatives  
Attn: Senator  
Capitol Room, #350  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Senator,

On behalf of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, we would like to thank you for all of your support in not only encouraging our efforts as we continue to work in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education in addressing this vital issue, but also in giving us the time to address our Annual Report with you when need be.

On May 10-11, 2012, we hosted our first educational symposium, entitled *Bridging the Gap: An Educational Symposium with the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap*, in Blytheville, Arkansas. Our mission for this educational outreach was to invite all those educators from this part of the state who work first-hand in addressing the academic achievement gaps in their local schools. As a Commission, we are ready to work along-side school districts to ensure that all students are given the support they need to succeed in school. Additionally, we as a Commission are committed to provide any assistance we can on the state level to make real progress in closing the academic achievement gap in Arkansas.

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# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell  
Commissioner

March 9, 2012

State Board  
of Education

Dear Superintendents and Education Service Center Directors:

Dr. Ben Mays  
Clinton  
Chair

We wanted to update you on the recent reorganization of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap. Originally created by Act 1777 in 2003, Act 1314 of 2009 revised the makeup and scope of the Commission and stipulated that the Commission interface with local achievement gap task forces. The purpose of both activities is to elevate the vital importance of this issue to the prosperity of the state, and help in the work to be done in closing the gap here in Arkansas.

Jim Cooper  
Melbourne  
Vice Chair

Blytheville Public Schools has agreed to host our first local educational outreach forum entitled *Bridging the Gap: Educational Symposium with the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap* on May 11, 2012. We would invite you to send representatives from your district who work first-hand in addressing this issue, such as teachers, instructional facilitators, and/or building principals. As part of this symposium, we will offer a general session, as well as 4 rotating breakout sessions, by key educational leaders. For registration information, feel free to contact GAP Commission Member Jon Fulkerson at 870-762-0127 or [jfulkerson@blythevilleschools.net](mailto:jfulkerson@blythevilleschools.net). You may also visit our website link at [arkansased.org/programs/gap](http://arkansased.org/programs/gap). It is our hope that our *Bridging the Gap* symposium will be one of a series of symposiums that we could offer throughout the state in order to shed more light on this very important issue.

Joe Black  
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While we do want to applaud the significant gains Arkansas schools have made in improving student academic achievement in recent years, it is essential that we address the persistent achievement gap that exists among minority and low-income students. The Commission, backed by recent legislative requirements to 1) strengthen monitoring and reporting of money spent on programming for low-income students, 2) expand access to school improvement data and 3) improve interventions for underperforming schools, is ready to work along-side school districts to ensure that all students are given the support they need to succeed in school.

Thank you for considering this request.

Tom W. Kimbrell, Ed.D.  
Commissioner of Education

Dawn Tirado Simpson, Ed.D.  
Chairman, GAP Commission

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## ***Bridging the Gap: Educational Symposium with the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap May 10-11, 2012***

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Employer

### **AGENDA**

#### **Thursday, May 10th (Optional)**

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

- Meet & Greet with the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap!  
*Holiday Inn, 1121 Main Street; Light hours devourers served*

#### **Friday, May 11th (Professional Development available)**

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM

- Bus tour of Blytheville Community
- Return to auditorium for Opening Session

8:45 AM – 9:00 AM

- Welcome by Superintendent Atwill
- Introduction of Commission Members

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM: Opening Session

- Opening Remarks
  - The Gap Commission Welcomes you to our First Educational Symposium  
*Dr. Dawn Tirado Simpson, Chair of the GAP Commission*
  - The Impact of Legislation on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap  
*Dr. David Rainey, Former Arkansas State Representative*
- Keynote Speakers
  - Greetings from the Arkansas Department of Education  
*Mr. John Hoy, Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Academic Accountability*
  - Bridging the Gap: Common Core  
*Dr. Jesse Hargrove, GAP Commission, & Ms. Kathy Powers, 2011 Teacher of the Year*

10:10 AM – 11:00 AM: Breakout Sessions

- Breakout Session I
  - Achievement Gaps in AR  
*Dr. Debbie Davis & Ms. Denise Airola, Arkansas Leadership Academy*
  - The Link between Parental Involvement and Closing the Achievement Gap  
*Ms. Teryn Spears, Blytheville District Parental Involvement Coordinator*

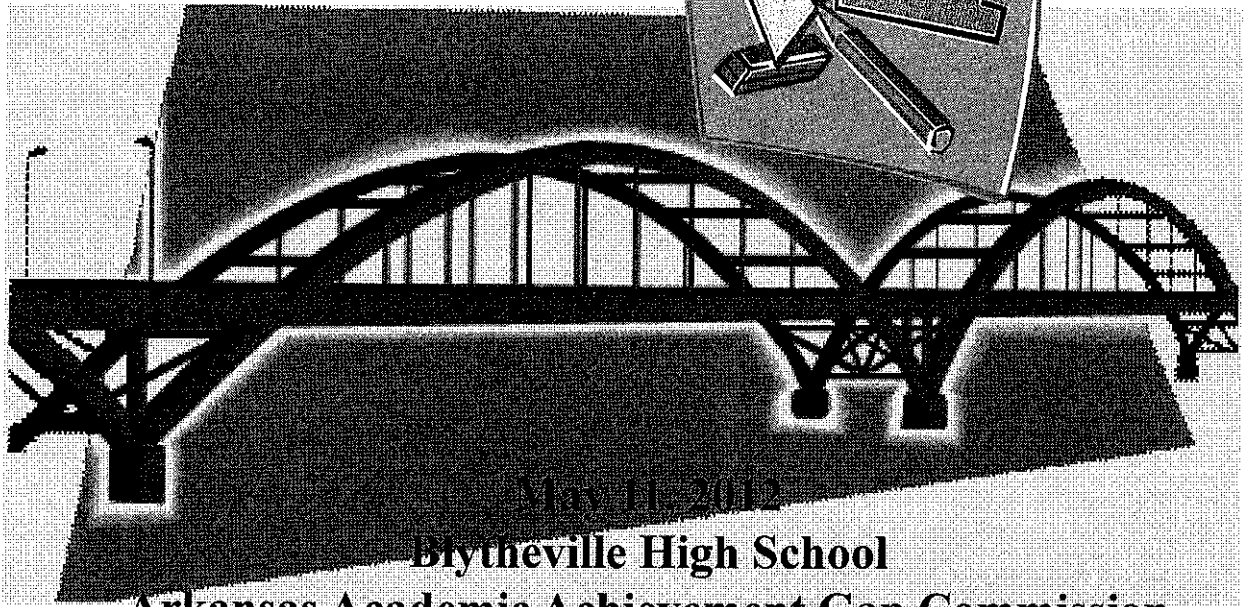
11:10AM – 12:00 PM (Breakout Sessions Rotate)

- Breakout Session II

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Luncheon & Roundtable Discussion with Commissioners (Optional)

- Luncheon and Panel Discussion with GAP Commission, students, and conference attendees  
*The Nuts & Bolts Approach to Local Gap Task Forces: the How To's*

# BRIDGING THE GAP SYMPOSIUM



May 11, 2012

**Blytheville High School**

**Arkansas Academic Achievement Gap Commission**