



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Johnny Key, Commissioner

November 12, 2015

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Letter to Parents from ADE Commissioner Johnny Key

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I know preparing your child for success beyond high school is one of your greatest priorities. The Arkansas Department of Education, as well as your child's teachers and principal, are focused on helping your child achieve college and career readiness. In order to prepare students for the future, strong educational standards have been implemented and are driving teaching in the classroom. These standards identify what your child needs to learn by the end of each grade level.

To measure the progress of learning under these standards, a new statewide assessment, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, was given to students in grades 3 through 12 during the 2014-2015 school year. The PARCC test replaced the Arkansas Benchmark and End-of-Course tests given in previous years.

As a state, we have raised the bar with higher academic expectations to ensure your child is prepared to compete and succeed in the modern world. A predictable result of raising the bar on learning standards, however, is that the initial testing may reflect lower results than what you are accustomed to seeing from your student's previous results on the Benchmark exam.

You will soon be receiving your child's Individual Student Report for the PARCC math and English language arts tests. Your child will receive a level of performance ranging from 1 to 5 for each PARCC assessment. The table below gives a brief description of these scores.

Table 1. PARCC Performance Level Descriptions

Level 1	The student performance demonstrated at this level did not yet meet academic expectations for the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the standards assessed at their grade level or course.
Level	The student performance demonstrated at this level partially met academic expectations

2	for the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the standards assessed at their grade level or course.
Level 3	The student performance demonstrated at this level approached academic expectations for the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the standards assessed at their grade level or course.
Level 4	The student performance demonstrated at this level met academic expectations for the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the standards assessed at their grade level or course.
Level 5	The student performance demonstrated at this level exceeded academic expectations for the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the standards assessed at their grade level or course.

Students who score at Level 4 met grade-level expectations, and those who score at Level 5 exceeded expectations. These students are performing at a level that demonstrates the likelihood that they will be prepared for success in college and careers. If your student scores at these levels, you can provide support and encouragement and stay engaged with your child’s school to make sure the learning continues at these high levels.

Students who score at Level 3 are approaching academic expectations. These students are demonstrating some success but need improvement to fully attain the standards for college and career readiness. With your continued support, as well as assistance from teachers, these students can be successful. Your school may be contacting you regarding an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) for your child. An AIP includes interventions that assist your child in reaching academic expectations. Many students who may not have previously had an AIP may be asked to participate in a plan.

Students who score at Levels 1 and 2 will need more focus from parents and intensive interventions from teachers to reach college and career readiness. If your child scores at this level, please contact your child’s school to assist in the development of an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP).

You may be asking, “What are these interventions? What does that mean to my child?” Those are great questions. Examples of interventions may include computer assisted instruction, extended school day, tutoring, learning labs within the school day, Saturday school, and double blocks of instruction in the subject area where assistance is needed. Please visit with your child’s teacher to learn more about the interventions that are available and could be most helpful for your child’s success.

This is a critical point that I urge you to remember. Having an AIP does not mean your student is being labeled in a negative way. Having an AIP does mean that you and your child’s teachers will have a roadmap for helping your child grow academically and become college and career ready.

You may find it of value to visit the Understand the Score website at www.understandthescore.org. This

site provides additional information about the PARCC results and what they mean for your child. I think you will find the video Understanding the Score Report on the website very helpful. To learn more about statewide results, go to <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2015>.

Real educational success for your student and for Arkansas requires your involvement. I encourage you to become engaged in the conversations in your communities about setting high expectations for students and how your schools are increasing the quality of instruction and providing appropriate interventions to meet these expectations. I encourage you to find out how you can support your child's learning or volunteer to help other children learn.

Please join me in continued conversations about moving Arkansas education to excellence. I encourage you to visit the ADE website at <http://www.arkansased.gov> or ADE social media at <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/communications> for the latest updates.

Respectfully,

Johnny Key, Commissioner

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