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Outstanding Educational Performance Awards: Highlighting High-Achieving Arkansas Schools, 2015

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OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE AWARDS: HIGHLIGHTING HIGH-ACHIEVING ARKANSAS SCHOOLS, 2015

HIGH-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS IN ARKANSAS BASED ON PERFORMANCE ON THE END OF COURSE BIOLOGY EXAM

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INTRODUCTION

Since our founding in 2003, the mission of the Office for Education Policy has been looking at pressing issues through the lens of academic research and disseminating our findings to educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders around Arkansas. Every once in a while, however, we think it is okay to stray from issue analysis and simply share some good news!

In this Arkansas Education Report (AER), we aim to highlight excellent performance and offer our congratulations. To that end, we are happy to highlight many excellent schools around the state in our now-annual AER, entitled the **O**utstanding **E**ducational **P**erformance Awards, or the OEP awards.

In the 2014-15 academic year, Arkansas students have undergone a change in their assessment of student performance to better operate in collaboration with the Common Core Standards. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) replaced the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) for literacy and math exams for most students in the state. Although results from the PARCC exams have not yet been released, results are available for science exams in grades 5 and 7 and the End-of-Course Biology exam.

This fall, **OEP Awards** begin by highlighting high-performing schools in Arkansas on the Benchmark Science and End-of-Course (EOC) Biology exams.

In 2012, we first introduced an academic performance indicator, the **"GPA" rating system**, to rank the highest-performing schools. In the past, the rankings were created based on the percentage of students scoring at the proficient or advanced level on each assessment. Generally, when discussing academic achievement on state exams, policymakers focus on this figure. The proficiency indicator, however, suffers from being an "all-or-nothing" measure, in which a student is either proficient or not. The proficiency measure disregards real information provided by student scores that are placed into the four different performance categories: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Additionally, this mark does not differentiate between a school in which 100% of students score proficient and a school in which 100% of students score advanced. Both of these schools would show 100% of students performing at proficient and advanced levels; however, in the latter school, students actually performed at a significantly higher level.

Thus, a more informative indicator gives the most credit to students who score at the advanced level and the least credit to students who score at the below basic level. For such purposes, we have created the "GPA" rating system. In this GPA measure, parallel to the familiar grade point average for individual students, we treat the Benchmark test scores in a similar way, whereby a 4.0 is a perfect score. The GPA measure, we believe, is a better representation of student achievement on statewide standardized exams.

Category	GPA Points Awarded
Advanced	4.0
Proficient	3.0
Basic	2.0
Below Basic	1.0

In this report, we are presenting a list of the top 25 schools in each area. In some cases, these "top 25 lists" will contain more than 25 schools as some schools' GPA scores will be identical. This is not a new phenomenon, as we also exceeded 25 schools in previous reports when using the percent proficient and advanced metric as an indicator for student achievement; however, there are fewer ties using the more precise GPA measure.

Science exams were only administered in grades 5, 7, and to students completing Biology. There are very different performance patterns by grade: Fifth graders are more likely to be proficient in science than seventh graders and students in Biology. In light of these varied performance trends, we are presenting science reports separately for each level. After we present our high-performing schools, we will release subsequent reports focusing on different subsets of schools. In the following weeks, we will feature schools that are beating the odds (that is, schools that have high levels of student achievement while serving a high percentage of low-income students) and the schools with the greatest improvement in test scores. We will release similar reports when math and literacy scores become available. Our release schedule is:

- **High Achieving Schools based on performance on the 5th Grade Benchmark Science Overall and by Region**
- **High Achieving Schools based on performance on the 7th Grade Benchmark Science Overall and by Region**
- **High Achieving Schools in Arkansas based on performance in End-of-Course (EOC) Biology exam**
- **Beating the Odds: High-Achieving Schools Serving Low Income Communities.**
- **Most Improved Schools**

III. 2015 OEP AWARDS: HIGH-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS IN ARKANSAS BASED ON PERFORMANCE ON END-OF-COURSE (EOC) BIOLOGY EXAM

This section highlights high performing schools across the state based in the Arkansas End-of-Course Biology Exam administered in January and April of the 2014-15 academic year.

Biology is generally taken during the tenth grade; however, some students may elect to take the course earlier if they have taken prerequisite classes. This typically results in the most advanced students taking the exam in 8th or 9th grade. Because of the likely academic differences between students who take biology in earlier grades, junior high schools tend to have higher proficiency levels than do schools which serve only 10th grade students. For this reason, schools have been split into two groups:

- High School: primarily 9th -12th grades (includes Comprehensive High Schools serving 7th-12th grades)
- Junior High School: primarily 8th-9th grades (and/or any grades below)

The first table in this section presents the top 20 high schools for the Biology EOC, while the second table presents the top 5 junior high schools. The subsequent tables present the top 5 high schools on a region-by-region basis. Junior high schools are not presented by region because there are so few. In addition, these tables include the region in which the school is located, the grades served at the school, the percent of students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels in 2015, and the GPA of the school.

M. EOC Biology Performance, 2015

*Table 13: Top 20 High Schools[1] based on **EOC Biology** Achievement*

	School (District)	Region	Grades Served	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Haas Hall Academy (Haas Hall Academy) ♦	NW	8-12	95%	3.62
2	Taylor High (Emerson-Taylor-Bradley) ♦	SW	7-12	86%	3.54
3	Viola High (Viola) ♦	NE	7-12	95%	3.27
4	Dardanelle High (Dardanelle) ♦	NW	9-12	85%	3.23
5	Greenbrier High (Greenbrier) ♦	CN	10-12	79%	3.18
6	Valley View High (Valley View)	NE	10-12	81%	3.12
6	Norfork High (Norfork)	NW	7-12	79%	3.12
8	Bentonville High (Bentonville) ♦	NW	9-12	76%	3.09
9	Omaha High (Omaha) ♦	NW	7-12	81%	3.03
10	Fayetteville High East (Fayetteville) ♦	NW	9-12	74%	3.01
11	Emerson High (Emerson-Taylor-Bradley)	SW	7-12	69%	3.00
12	Marshall High (Searcy County)	NW	7-12	76%	2.99
12	Searcy High (Searcy)	NE	9-12	76%	2.99
14	McCrory High (McCrory)	NE	7-12	73%	2.96
14	Valley Springs High (Valley Springs)	NW	9-12	61%	2.96
16	Horatio High (Horatio)	SW	7-12	72%	2.95
16	Lakeside High (Lakeside (Garland))	CN	8-12	68%	2.95
16	Acorn High (Ouachita River)	SW	6-12	63%	2.95
19	Academics Plus High (Academics Plus) ♦	CN	6-12	73%	2.89
20	Foreman High (Foreman)	SW	7-12	72%	2.88
20	White County Central High (White County Central)	NE	7-12	66%	2.88

*Table 14: Top 5 Junior High[2] Schools based on **EOC Biology** Achievement*

	School (District)	Region	Grades Served	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Ramay Junior High (Fayetteville)	NW	8-9	96%	3.41
2	Southwest Junior High (Springdale)	NW	8-9	96%	3.40
2	Central Junior High (Springdale) ♦	NW	8-9	90%	3.40
4	Conway Junior High (Conway) ♦	CN	8-9	90%	3.38
5	Batesville Junior High (Batesville)	NE	7-9	89%	3.29

[1] A school was designated High School if it primarily serves students in grades 9-12
[2] A School is designates a Junior High School if it serves students in grades primarily 7-8 (maximum grade of 9)
Note: ♦ indicates schools that were presented the same award in the 2013-14 academic year

N. Northwest Region, EOC Biology, 2015

*Table 15: Top 5 High Schools in the **Northwest** region based on the EOC Biology Exam*

	School (District)	Grades Served	# of Test Takers	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Haas Hall Academy (Haas Hall Academy) ♦	8-12	61	95%	3.62
2	Dardanelle High (Dardanelle) ♦	9-12	103	85%	3.23
3	Norfork High (Norfork)	7-12	29	79%	3.12
4	Bentonville High (Bentonville) ♦	9-12	1,093	76%	3.09
5	Omaha High (Omaha) ♦	7-12	27	81%	3.03

O. Northeast Region, EOC Biology, 2015

*Table 16: Top 5 High Schools in the **Northeast** region based on the EOC Biology Exam*

	School (District)	Grades Served	# of Test Takers	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Viola High (Viola) ♦	7-12	19	95%	3.27
2	Valley View High (Valley View)	10-12	198	81%	3.12
3	Searcy High (Searcy)	9-12	275	76%	2.99
4	McCrory High (McCrory)	7-12	46	73%	2.96
5	White County Central High (White County Central)	7-12	47	66%	2.88

P. Central Region, EOC Biology, 2015

*Table 17: Top 5 High Schools in the **Central** region based on the EOC Biology Exam*

	School (District)	Grades Served	# of Test Takers	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Greenbrier High (Greenbrier) ♦	10-12	249	79%	3.18
2	Lakeside High (Lakeside (Garland))	8-12	255	68%	2.95
3	Academics Plus High (Academics Plus) ♦	6-12	30	73%	2.89
4	Ouachita High (Ouachita)	7-12	36	55%	2.85
5	Bryant High (Bryant) ♦	9-12	644	64%	2.83

Q. Southwest Region, EOC Biology, 2015

*Table 16: Top 5 High Schools in the **Southwest** region based on the EOC Biology Exam*

	School (District)	Grades Served	# of Test Takers	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Taylor High (Emerson-Taylor-Bradley) ♦	7-12	22	86%	3.54
2	Emerson High (Emerson-Taylor-Bradley)	7-12	16	69%	3.00
3	Horatio High (Horatio)	7-12	64	72%	2.95
3	Acorn High (Ouachita River)	6-12	32	63%	2.95
5	Foreman High (Foreman) ♦	7-12	32	72%	2.88

R. Southeast Region, EOC Biology, 2015

*Table 17: Top 5 High Schools in the **Southeast** region based on the EOC Biology Exam*

	School (District)	Grades Served	# of Test Takers	% Proficient/ Advanced	GPA
1	Des Arc High (Des Arc)	7-12	43	59%	2.75
2	Hazen High (Hazen)	9-12	48	52%	2.61
3	Rison High (Cleveland County) ♦	7-12	72	58%	2.58
4	Star City High (Star City) ♦	9-12	113	47%	2.42
5	Monticello High (Monticello) ♦	9-12	99	42%	2.34

APPENDIX

A. Methods

The Office for Education Policy strives to make all of our calculations and publications transparent to our readers. Thus, in this appendix we describe our data source, calculations performed on these data for the purposes of our reporting, and our method for determining a school's classification as an elementary, middle, or high school.

All data used in this report were obtained from the Arkansas Department of Education. Benchmark and End-of-Course exam scores were obtained from the testing section (http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment). Other data, such as the percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, were obtained from the Arkansas Department of Education Data Center (http://adedata.arkansas.gov).

All data were analyzed at the grade / course level.

As previously discussed in the introduction, in order to calculate the GPA measure we treat the benchmark and EOC test scores similar to the existing grade point system.

Category	GPA Points Awarded
Advanced	4.0
Proficient	3.0
Basic	2.0
Below Basic	1.0

We calculated the GPA measure for every Science score. The GPA measure is comprehensive in that it takes into account all of the test score levels (advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic), instead of lumping together advanced and proficient scores.

B. School Classification

For the OEP Awards, we classified schools based on the following rules:

- Elementary School: primarily grades 3-5 (minimum grade P, K, 1, 2, 3, or 4)
- Middle School: primarily grades 6-8 (minimum grade of 4, 5, or 6 and maximum grade of 7, 8, or 9)

There were also a few "comprehensive schools," such as K-8 or K-12 schools, that we included as either middle schools or elementary schools based on their enrollment numbers. The following table lists every grade configuration and their classifications.

Table A: School Classifications

Elementary Schools		Middle Schools
1-4		4-6
1-5		4-8
1-6		5-6
1-8		5-7
2-3		5-8
2-4		5-9
2-5		5-12
2-6		6
3-4		6-12
3-5		6-7
3-6		6-8
4-5		7-12
5		7-8
K-3		7-9
K-4		8
K-5		8-9
K-6		8-12
K-7		
K-8		
K-9		
K-12		
P-2		
P-3		
P-4		
P-5		
P-6		
P-7		
P-8		

C. School Classification – High School Awards

For the OEP High School Awards, we primarily classified schools based on the following rules:

- Junior High: primarily grades 7 – 9 (maximum grade of 9)
- High School: primarily grades 9 – 12

Table B: School Classifications

Junior High		High School
5-7		8-12
5-8		9-12
6-7		10-12
6-8		11-12
7-8		9-10
7-9		7-12
8		6-12
8-9		5-12
4-8		K-12
1-8		
K-8		