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## High-Growth Middle Schools in Arkansas Based on Performance on the ACT Aspire Examinations

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**OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE AWARDS:  
HIGHLIGHTING HIGH-GROWTH ARKANSAS SCHOOLS, 2021**

**HIGH-GROWTH MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN  
ARKANSAS BASED ON PERFORMANCE ON THE  
ACT ASPIRE EXAMINATIONS**

**November 10, 2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Office for Education Policy is to examine educational issues through the lens of academic research and disseminate our findings to educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders around Arkansas. Annually, we highlight excellent schools around the state in our **Outstanding Educational Performance Awards**, or the OEP awards.

This edition of the **OEP Awards** highlights schools in Arkansas based on student growth on the ACT Aspire exams in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA).

We choose to focus on student growth for these OEP awards because we think it is a better reflection than proficiency rates of how the school is impacting students. Growth is calculated at the student level, and essentially reflects how much a student improved his or her score from the prior year compared to what was predicted based on prior achievement history. In this case, as there was no testing in the prior year due to COVID-related school closures, the calculations are based on the 2018-19 scores. Proficiency rates, even those that move beyond the ‘percent proficient’ like our OEP GPA and Arkansas’ weighted achievement score, are more correlated with student demographics than growth scores. This means that schools can demonstrate high student growth regardless of the characteristics of the students that they serve.

In the 2020-21 academic year, ACT Aspire examinations were administered to students in grades 3 through 10 in Math, Reading, Writing, English, and Science. The scores obtained in Reading, Writing, and English were combined to create a combined ELA score.

For the purposes of these awards, we are using the content-area growth calculated and reported by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). Note that we used only growth for math and English Language Arts, excluding the growth score for English Learner progress to English Language Proficiency). In addition, we identify the highest growth schools by school level as identified by the ADE under Arkansas’ ESSA Plan: Elementary, Middle, and High school level. In this report, we present a list of the top 20 schools in the state for Overall growth (average of Math and ELA growth), Math growth, and ELA growth. In some cases, these “top 20 lists” will contain more than 20 schools as some schools’ growth scores will be identical.

In the following weeks, we will focus on high-growth elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in the various regions across the state. We will conclude this edition of the report by highlighting schools that are beating the odds (that is, schools that have high levels of student growth while serving a high percentage of low-income students).

We are pleased to be able to highlight how students are growing academically in schools across the state, and hope the information will spark discussion among stakeholders about how to ensure all schools are growing the knowledge of Arkansas students.

## **II. 2021 OEP AWARDS: HIGH ACHIEVING MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN ARKANSAS BASED ON CONTENT GROWTH IN THE ACT ASPIRE EXAMS**

This section highlights elementary schools across the state whose students demonstrated high growth on the Arkansas ACT Aspire exams. The ACT Aspire was administered to students in grades 3 through 10 in April 2021 in Math and ELA courses which include English, Writing, and Reading.

Each table in this section presents the Top 20 schools for the noted subject area and school level. In addition, these tables include the region in which the schools are located, the grades served at the school, the weighted achievement score, and the content growth score in that particular subject.

The level of the schools, namely Elementary, Middle, and High, have been based on the school allocation given through the [My School Info](#) portal of the Arkansas Department of Education website.

## D. Middle School Overall ACT Aspire Growth Scores, 2021

Table 19: Top 20 *Middle Schools* in Arkansas based on *Overall ACT Aspire Growth*

	School (District)	Region	Grades Served	Overall Content Growth
1	Gravette Middle (Gravette)	NW	6-8	85.80
2	Washington Junior High (Bentonville)	NW	7-8	85.74
3	Vilonia Middle (Vilonia)	CN	7-8	85.64
4	Lincoln Junior High (Bentonville)	NW	7-8	85.54
5	Hellstern Middle (Springdale)	NW	6-7	85.50
6	Bright Field Middle (Bentonville)	NW	5-6	85.47
7	Lisa Academy Springdale (Lisa Academy)	NW	K-8	85.38
8	Helen Tyson Middle (Springdale)	NW	6-7	85.25
9	Northridge Middle (Van Buren)	NW	6-8	85.08
10	Pinkston Middle (Mountain Home)	NW	6-7	85.03
11	Valley Springs Middle (Valley Springs)	NW	5-8	84.85
12	Huntsville Middle (Huntsville)	NW	6-8	84.63
13	Swifton Middle (Jackson Co.)	NE	5-7	84.25
14	DeWitt Middle (DeWitt)	SE	6-8	84.03
15	Gary E. Cobb Middle (Genoa Central)	SW	5-8	84.01
16	J. William Fulbright Junior High (Bentonville)	NW	7-8	83.98
17	Beebe Junior High (Beebe)	NE	7-8	83.96
18	Ardis Ann Middle (Bentonville)	NW	5-6	83.83
19	Heber Springs Middle (Heber Springs)	NE	6-8	83.48
20	Siloam Springs Intermediate (Siloam Springs)	NW	5-6	83.45

Tables 20-24: Top 5 *Middle Schools* in Arkansas by Regions, *Overall Growth*



Table 20: Top 5 schools in *Northwest* Region based on *Overall Middle ACT Aspire Growth*

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Overall Content Growth</b>
1	Gravette Middle (Gravette)	6-8	389	85.80
2	Washington Junior High (Bentonville)	7-8	603	85.74
3	Lincoln Junior High (Bentonville)	7-8	577	85.54
4	Hellstern Middle (Springdale)	6-7	699	85.50
5	Bright Field Middle (Bentonville)	5-6	507	85.47



Table 21: Top 5 schools in the *Northeast* Region based on *Overall Middle ACT Aspire Growth*

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Overall Content Growth</b>
1	Swifton Middle (Jackson County)	5-7	181	84.25
2	Beebe Junior High (Beebe)	7-8	461	83.96
3	Heber Springs Middle (Heber Springs)	6-8	324	83.48
4	Cave City Middle (Cave City)	6-8	259	82.92
5	Paragould Junior High (Paragould)	7-8	388	81.83



Table 22: Top 5 schools in the **Central** Region based on **Overall** Middle ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Overall Content Growth</b>
<b>1</b>	Vilonia Middle (Vilonia)	7-8	438	85.64
<b>2</b>	Bethel Middle (Bryant)	6-7	644	82.98
<b>3</b>	Jessieville Middle (Jessieville)	6-8	176	82.88
<b>4</b>	Lisa Academy North Middle (Lisa Academy)	6-8	306	82.81
<b>5</b>	Greenbrier Middle (Greenbrier)	6-7	513	82.32



Table 23: Top 5 schools in the **Southwest** Region based on **Overall** Middle ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Overall Content Growth</b>
<b>1</b>	Gary E. Cobb Middle (Genoa Central)	5-8	333	84.01
<b>2</b>	Mena Middle (Mena)	6-8	324	81.38
<b>3</b>	North Heights Jr. High (Texarkana)	7-8	565	81.24
<b>4</b>	Paulette Smith Middle (Fouke)	6-8	234	80.98
<b>5</b>	Hope Academy Of Public Service (Hope)	5-8	214	80.80





Table 24: Top 5 schools in the *Southeast* Region based on *Overall Middle ACT Aspire Growth*

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Overall Content Growth</b>
<b>1</b>	DeWitt Middle (DeWitt)	6-8	250	84.03
<b>2</b>	Star City Middle (Star City)	6-8	303	82.40
<b>3</b>	Dumas Junior High (Dumas)	7-9	246	81.74
<b>4</b>	Warren Middle (Warren)	6-8	357	81.32
<b>5</b>	Meekins Middle (Stuttgart)	5-6	221	79.80

## E. Middle School Math ACT Aspire Growth Scores, 2021

Table 25: Top 10 *Middle Schools* in Arkansas based on ACT Aspire *Math* Growth

	School (District)	Region	Grades Served	Math Content Growth
1	Washington Junior High (Bentonville)	NW	7-8	89.36
2	Swifton Middle (Jackson County)	NE	5-7	88.98
3	Gravette Middle (Gravette)	NW	6-8	88.39
3	Helen Tyson Middle (Springdale)	NW	6-7	88.39
5	Vilonia Middle (Vilonia)	CN	7-8	88.24
6	Lincoln Junior High (Bentonville)	NW	7-8	87.60
7	Lisa Academy Springdale (Lisa Academy)	NW	K-8	87.19
8	Northridge Middle (Van Buren)	NW	6-8	86.58
9	Valley Springs Middle (Valley Springs)	NW	5-8	86.35
10	Pinkston Middle (Mountain Home)	NW	6-7	86.28

Tables 26-30: Top 5 *Middle Schools* in Arkansas by Regions, *Math Growth*



Table 26: Top 5 schools in *Northwest* Region based on Middle *Math* ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Math Content Growth</b>
1	Washington Junior High (Bentonville)	7-8	602	89.36
2	Gravette Middle (Gravette)	6-8	389	88.39
2	Helen Tyson Middle (Springdale)	6-7	567	88.39
4	Lincoln Junior High (Bentonville)	7-8	577	87.60
5	Lisa Academy Springdale (Lisa Academy)	K-8	124	87.19



Table 27: Top 5 schools in *Northeast* Region based on Middle *Math* ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Math Content Growth</b>
1	Swifton Middle (Jackson County)	5-7	181	88.98
2	Heber Springs Middle (Heber Springs)	6-8	324	84.91
3	Beebe Junior High (Beebe)	7-8	461	84.65
4	Cave City Middle (Cave City)	6-8	259	84.60
5	Paragould Junior High (Paragould)	7-8	388	83.44



Table 28: Top 5 schools in **Central** Region based on Middle **Math** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Math Content Growth</b>
1	Vilonia Middle (Vilonia)	7-8	438	88.24
2	Benton Middle (Benton)	5-7	1,162	84.67
3	Lisa Academy North Middle (Lisa Academy)	6-8	305	84.53
4	Bethel Middle (Bryant)	6-7	644	84.21
5	Cabot Junior High North (Cabot)	7-8	739	84.04



Table 29: Top 5 schools in **Southwest** Region based on Middle **Math** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Math Content Growth</b>
1	Gary E. Cobb Middle (Genoa Central)	5-8	333	85.93
2	College Hill Middle (Texarkana)	6-6	285	83.86
3	Mena Middle (Mena)	6-8	324	82.62
4	Barton Jr. High (El Dorado)	7-8	620	81.88
5	North Heights Jr. High (Texarkana)	7-8	563	80.79



Table 30: Top 5 schools in *Southeast* Region based on Middle **Math** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>Math Content Growth</b>
<b>1</b>	DeWitt Middle (DeWitt)	6-8	250	85.47
<b>2</b>	Star City Middle (Star City)	6-8	303	83.83
<b>3</b>	Warren Middle (Warren)	6-8	357	83.13
<b>4</b>	Dumas Junior High (Dumas)	7-9	245	81.44
<b>5</b>	Meekins Middle (Stuttgart)	5-6	221	80.62

## F. Middle School ELA ACT Aspire Growth Scores, 2021

Table 31: Top 10 Middle Schools in Arkansas based on ACT Aspire ELA Growth

	School (District)	Region	Grades Served	ELA Content Growth
1	Decatur Middle (Decatur)	NW	5-8	86.83
2	Bergman Middle (Bergman)	NW	5-8	85.55
3	Hellstern Middle (Springdale)	NW	6-7	85.49
4	Bright Field Middle (Bentonville)	NW	5-6	84.98
5	Siloam Springs Intermediate (Siloam Springs)	NW	5-6	84.45
6	Jessieville Middle (Jessieville)	CN	6-8	84.20
7	Bob Courtway Middle (Conway)	CN	5-7	84.05
8	Huntsville Middle (Huntsville)	NW	6-8	83.86
9	Pinkston Middle (Mountain Home)	NW	6-7	83.77
10	Northridge Middle (Van Buren)	NW	6-8	83.61

Tables 32-36: Top 5 *Middle Schools* in Arkansas by Regions, *ELA Growth*



Table 32: Top 5 schools in *Northwest* Region based on Middle *ELA ACT Aspire Growth*

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>ELA Content Growth</b>
1	Decatur Middle (Decatur)	5-8	147	86.83
2	Bergman Middle (Bergman)	5-8	284	85.55
3	Hellstern Middle (Springdale)	6-7	699	85.49
4	Bright Field Middle (Bentonville)	5-6	507	84.98
5	Siloam Springs Intermediate (Siloam Springs)	5-6	563	84.45



Table 33: Top 5 schools in *Northeast* Region based on Middle *ELA ACT Aspire Growth*

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>ELA Content Growth</b>
1	Beebe Junior High (Beebe)	7-8	461	83.26
2	Heber Springs Middle (Heber Springs)	6-8	324	82.05
3	Westside Middle (Westside Cons. (Craighead))	5-7	365	81.78
4	Oak Grove Middle (Paragould)	5-6	405	81.56
5	Riverview Junior High (Riverview)	7-8	158	81.49



Table 34: Top 5 schools in **Central** Region based on Middle **ELA** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>ELA Content Growth</b>
1	Jessieville Middle (Jessieville)	6-8	176	84.20
2	Bob Courtway Middle (Conway)	5-7	448	84.05
3	Flightline Upper Academy (Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter)	5-8	92	83.14
4	Ruth Doyle Middle (Conway)	5-7	499	83.13
5	Vilonia Middle (Vilonia)	7-8	438	83.05



Table 35: Top 5 schools in **Southwest** Region based on Middle **ELA** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>ELA Content Growth</b>
1	Paulette Smith Middle (Fouke)	6-8	234	83.42
2	Nashville Junior High (Nashville)	7-9	456	82.31
3	Gary E. Cobb Middle (Genoa Central)	5-8	333	82.08
4	North Heights Jr. High (Texarkana)	7-8	564	81.69
5	Hope Academy Of Public Service (Hope)	5-8	214	81.59





Table 36: Top 5 schools in *Southeast* Region based on Middle **ELA** ACT Aspire Growth

	<b>School (District)</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>	<b># of Test Takers</b>	<b>ELA Content Growth</b>
<b>1</b>	DeWitt Middle (DeWitt)	6-8	250	82.58
<b>2</b>	Dumas Junior High (Dumas)	7-9	246	82.11
<b>3</b>	Monticello Middle (Monticello)	6-8	390	81.66
<b>4</b>	Star City Middle (Star City)	6-8	303	80.96
<b>5</b>	Lakeside Middle (Lakeside (Chicot))	6-8	214	80.03

## APPENDIX

### A. Methods

All data used in this report were obtained from the Arkansas Department of Education via the link <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

We generated a statewide report for the 2020-21 school year, using the ESSA School Index report. Values included

- Grade Range
- Grade Span (School Level)
- Poverty Rate
- Combined Content Growth Score Current Year
- Combined Math Growth Score Current Year
- Combined ELA Growth Score Current Year

For more information about how school levels were assigned, see [http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/ESEA/Documents\\_to\\_Share/Grade\\_Spans\\_and\\_Grade\\_Configurations\\_rv.pdf](http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/ESEA/Documents_to_Share/Grade_Spans_and_Grade_Configurations_rv.pdf)

For more information about how growth values were calculated, see [http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/ESEA/Documents\\_to\\_Share/School%20Growth%20Explanation%20for%20ES%20and%20DC%20111017.pdf](http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/ESEA/Documents_to_Share/School%20Growth%20Explanation%20for%20ES%20and%20DC%20111017.pdf)