



Act 1373: Improving Parents' Access to Public School Information

The Issue

Arkansas has done a great deal to improve data collection and fiscal and academic accountability requirements for public schools in recent years. However, the system has been ineffective in broadly disseminating much of this information to parents, or to researchers and taxpayers. Effective communication between schools and parents is critical to ensuring children's academic success. But it's hard for parents to get involved if they have difficulty gaining access to basic information about their children's schools. We need to make it easier for parents to obtain information about their children's schools and to get involved. We also need to make it easier for researchers and taxpayers to hold our public schools accountable and help them improve. Transparency will lead to improved accountability, and greater accountability will lead to overall improvement in our public schools.

Act 1373

Act 1373, sponsored by Senator Joyce Elliott, will make it easier for parents and the public to stay informed and get involved by requiring each district to post the following information on its website:

- The comprehensive school improvement plan (ACSIP) for each school;
- Descriptions of the uses of the National School Lunch (NSLA) poverty funding for the current and previous years;
- The annual report cards for the district and each of its schools;
- Parent-friendly explanations of the improvement status of the district and each school in the district, including any supplemental education services available; reasons for academic distress, school improvement, or financial distress, and what actions the district is taking to remove such problems;
- The district's parental involvement plan and the parental involvement plan and informational packets of all of its schools as required under § 6-15-1702 and under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; and
- Teacher qualifications for all public schools in the school district.

(more on back)



~LEGISLATIVE BRIEF~



The Research

When armed with current and complete information, parents are better able to make informed decisions regarding their children's learning and development and are more likely to get involved in their children's schools.

- According to a 2008 report by Drs. Jay Barth and Keith Nitta, a vast body of literature clearly shows that parental engagement in education results in increased student achievement. See *Education in the Post-Lake View Era: What is Arkansas Doing to Close the Achievement Gap?*, available online at: http://www.aradvocates.org/_images/pdfs/2008Education_AchievementGap.pdf
- Research by Lewis and Henderson (1998) shows that achievement gap interventions not involving parents are less likely to be successful.
- A 2007 study by researchers at the University of Washington found that low- to moderate-income parents use the same methods to research educational options as wealthier parents do—including the internet. Parents who are more engaged in gathering information and who involve their children in the decision-making process reported greater satisfaction with their choices.

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