

# REPORTER

MARCH 2003

Volume 21, Number 7

## **NCLB—Between a rock and a hard spot**

By Ron Harder

There's a saying that describes where the road paved with good intentions leads. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) may be the pavement to which the saying is referring; its intentions are certainly honorable, but its ultimate impact on public education may be very different than the authors of the Act envisioned.

That being said, this is no time to play ostrich and stick our collective heads in the sand. The only reason NCLB isn't center stage at the present moment is because of the Lake View decision and how we should fund an adequate and equitable education system.

NCLB is a huge act (670 to over 1000 pages depending on the published source) which is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It contains legislation that covers nearly every aspect of education (including a grant program for a cultural exchange between coastal towns of Massachusetts and Alaska and Hawaii—Sections 5521-5526) and gives the federal government much

greater authority than it has ever had.

As a board member it is important that you understand some of the provisions of NCLB and how these will affect your patrons' perceptions of their school (remember, perception is reality). One of the most important provisions

*Arkansas has set high standards for student achievement and that is something for which we can all be proud. The Lake View decision clearly agrees with this. Unfortunately, it makes attaining 100% proficiency, as required by NCLB, more difficult for us than it does for a state with lower standards.*

is called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This is the amount of improvement students across the state need to make on assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to achieve 100% "proficiency" by 2014. Each

school in the state is required to make AYP or the jaws of the law begin to close.

The consequences for not attaining AYP begin when a school fails it for two consecutive years and increase in severity until, after five years of failing to make AYP, the school will no longer exist as you have known it.

Prior to NCLB, the state had been working toward reaching 100% proficiency by 2012, but some of

the categories of students required to be included in NCLB were not previously included by the state (hence the term No Child Left Behind). Under the law, AYP has to be attained by each of four different categories, *i.e.*, students with limited English proficiency, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.

Failure of a school to make AYP for two consecutive years in each of the categories of students (there is an exception, but it begins to get complicated) requires the state to identify the school to be in need of improvement. This can happen even if the school is improving, but not fast enough or it could be improving dramatically in two of the

See *Arkansas* on page 12

### SCHOOL BOARD BRIEF CASE

- ▲ April 1 - ASBA Scholarship Application Deadline
- ▲ April 5-8 - NSBA Annual Conference in San Francisco
- ▲ May 1-4 - ASBA Key Work Academy Seminar

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# Numeracy or “Why can’t Johnny add?”

As literacy slowly improves among our students, we now hear the cry for numeracy. Now we can’t simply ask, “Why can’t Johnny read?” We also must ask, “Why can’t Johnny add?”

Let’s define literacy simply as proficiency in reading and writing, And let’s define numeracy as proficiency in mathematics.

In the Dec. 15 issue of the Boston Globe, Correspondent Agnes Blum wrote about an interview that she conducted with aresh Sharma, provost and executive vice president of Cambridge College. Sharma has been a professor of math education for 28 years. He grew up in Rajasthan, a state in northwest India, and first came to the United States in 1965. He has written and spoken extensively about the state of math education. He works with schools to improve math education and collaborates with textbook publishers and designers of educational curricula.

Sharma cited three reasons why he believed American children are failing mathematics. In American

society, literacy is more important than numeracy. No one will admit they can't read, but they will readily admit they can't do math. It's almost like a badge of honor to not be able to do math. Secondly, the expectations of school-children are low. In Asian and European countries, it's quite common for students to know their facts by age 7. Here we have students in the ninth grade who are still counting on their fingers. And, third, the focus here is procedural. But there are three parts to learning math: the language of the problem; the model of it; and how to get the answer. If students don't have the concept of the model, they are not prepared for higher-order math education.

Sharma explained Americans dislike for math by comparing the importance of numbers to the importance of reading. Historically, it was very important for a person to be able to read a book. Numbers were not as important. The greatest research in mathematics has been done in the last 150 years,

but only by a few people. The number of books an American person reads is much greater than in most other countries. Sharma notes that he came from a village in India where only 50 percent can read and write. But he stated that few people in his village didn't know numbers. He said that they do mental arithmetic in their heads and that this is a cultural and social phenomenon.

Sharma noted that many American teachers feel that they are not equipped to teach mathematics at the elementary level. He noted that the training of elementary school teachers includes a great deal of language arts and social sciences and very little mathematics and natural sciences. On average, they take no more than one undergraduate course in math. They themselves are afraid of math. The second part is that in high school, the students who took more math and science went on to study fields such as engineering and advanced mathematics, not teaching. Sharma also stated that one attitude is: What was good enough for me should be good enough for my children. But when you hire a third-grade reading teacher, you don't hire a teacher who has a sixth-grade reading level. You want a teacher with a college reading level. “So why do we hire math teachers who only know their grade? They should know their grade, plus and minus three grades.”

When asked what could be done to remedy the situation, Sharma replied that an elementary school teacher should know at least up to Algebra I, or ninth-grade math. Middle and high school teachers should have a degree at the university level. The school systems should provide genuine learning

See **Improved Math** on page 9

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# ASBA Board endorses Precision Retirement Plan

The ASBA Board of Directors has endorsed a FICA alternative plan that is approved by the federal government allowing school districts an opportunity to save 6.2% of payroll for all your part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees.

## Alternative Retirement Plan

Precision Retirement Group's FICA Alternative Retirement Plan allows your district by board action to create a retirement plan in place of social security for all part-time seasonal and temporary employees. Mandatory "after-tax" 6.2% Social Security contributions are replaced with mandatory 7.5% "pre-tax" employee contributions. The matching portion that you would normally pay to Social Security is available for use in your current budget.

Another benefit to your district is that the plan can be implemented in 30 days or less and does not cost your district any money.

The ASBA Board has endorsed Precision Retirement Group, Inc. after having reviewed the program in depth and being completely satisfied that the firm is committed to work for the best interest of the schools in Arkansas. We believe that it is important for your districts to save money where you can while offering quality benefits for your employees.

This plan greatly benefits your employees in that it belongs to them and with current tax law changes allowing greater flexibility in transferring qualified account balances, employees have more choices. Employees can withdraw their money after leaving your district and can carry it with them to another district. The employee has complete control of his/her account with on-line access. It is a great way for employees to supplement their retirement.

## Myths

### ▲ Employers are taking away a benefit for part-time employees.

The employer is not taking away

any benefit from part-time, seasonal or temporary employees. Social Security is based on an average of thirty-five years of earnings. In all but a few cases, employees who are enrolled into a Social Security Alternative plan will retire on benefits from both Social Security and contributions from their Social Security Alternative Plan, thus providing an enhanced retirement benefit combination. In addition, recent studies indicate that an employee who participates in a Social Security Alternative Plan will ultimately receive more retirement benefits than Social Security alone.

### ▲ Implementation affects Social Security disability.

In order to determine what affect (if any) this Plan has on Social Security disability benefits you first have to look at how disability benefits under Social Security are calculated. First of all, you generally need 20 credits (5 years) of work in the 10 years before your disability started (younger workers age 24-31 need less credits). In 2002, you can earn one credit for every \$870 of earnings up to a maximum of four credits per year. Secondly, in addition to the earnings requirement, to receive disability benefits the law defines disability as the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. Since this plan only includes individuals with lower salary schedules, it is our experience that these individuals will not qualify for disability benefits even if they were "not" enrolled into the plan because of the low earnings limitations of part-time workers and the strict definitions of disability. These in-

dividuals, in most cases, will either have earned the necessary credits while working full-time with a prior employer or will in the future with full-time employment.

### ▲ Every part-time, seasonal, and temporary employee has to participate.

The program allows an employer an option of offering a choice for employees. Offering a choice is "strictly" up to the employer. The greatest savings will come from the greatest number of participants. An employer has the option of making this plan mandatory. The best option for employer and employee is offering a choice for those employees who wish not to participate. A letter is sent out to all part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees notifying them of the implementation of the Social Security alternative plan. If a employee does not want to be included in the plan then they have to notify the school district. If they do not notify the school district, then they are automatically enrolled. All new hires are enrolled in the plan as part of their part-time employment.

### ▲ Part-time workers don't have access to their money.

Contributions are made by the employer for the employee at a rate of 7.5% of wages pre-tax. The 7.5% pre-tax contribution is equal to the 6.2% Social Security after tax contribution. Employees see little of no change in their paycheck, and depending on state income tax, most employees see a increase in their checks. All account values are available upon retirement, separation of service, death or disability.

Employees have on-line access for any necessary forms and statements are mailed annually.

### ▲ Does this plan cost the school district any money?

Precision Retirement Group's FICA Alternative Retirement Plan is implemented at no cost to the employer and employee.

## Organization offers computers for students who meet criteria

Amid many discussions of overhauling the Arkansas public school system, a nonprofit group officially has launched a web site that provides information on how elementary students can qualify for a personal computer by meeting certain academic, attendance, and behavioral criteria.

The Arkansas Committed to Education Foundation's site, [www.committedtoeducation.org](http://www.committedtoeducation.org), gives parents, educators, businesses, and community leaders information on this unique way they can contribute

to the educational future of the state's children by obtaining a Committed to Education specialty license plate, which funds the program.

"In light of the recent Supreme Court decision regarding Arkansas school funding, our program can positively impact education, both in and out of the classroom," said Guy Wade, a founder of the Committed to Education Foundation.

"A license plate is a necessity for everyone who owns a vehicle," Wade continued. "By choosing the Committed to Education license plate, you are not only showing your support for education in Arkansas, but you are investing in the long-term success of our state by giving our children a firm educational foundation. To compete economically, Arkansas must look to its children for the state's future success."

Established in 2000, the Arkansas Committed to Education Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization designed to provide a meaningful and measurable impact on the primary education of Arkansas's children. The foundation's mission is to improve education statewide by offering students technology incentives to do well in school and creating a positive public focus on education in Arkansas.

To obtain a Committed to Education license plate, contact the Department of Finance and Administration's Special License Unit at (501) 682-4692. For more information regarding the Committed to Education program, call Heather McCutcheon at the Committed to Education Foundation co-ordinator at 501-375-3003 or visit the web site.

### Delegates adopt ASBA Standards

The ASBA Delegate Assembly adopted standards for school boards at the annual conference in December.

These standards were the result of input from over 800 school board members and superintendents across our state. A team of school board members, a superintendent, and ASBA staffers reviewed the results of brainstorming carousels and wrote the ASBA Standards.

School boards across Arkansas are encouraged to adopt these standards as their own. The standards can serve as a guide for school boards to serve the needs of the students with whose education they are charged to oversee.

The Standards for Arkansas School Boards were published in the January edition of the Reporter. If you would like to review a copy of these, you may contact us at (800) 482-1212 or (501) 372-1415 or you may download these from the ASBA web site at [www.arsba.org](http://www.arsba.org). If you have any questions, contact Kathy Morledge at the ASBA office.



*ASBA Federal Relations Network Program Team visited members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation. Pictured above are Gwen Wells, Leland Wells, Rep. Marion Berry, Carol Brown, and Jack Gardner.*

**LELAND WELLS ASBA PRESIDENT**

## Committee mounts effort to influence delegation

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the annual NSBA Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. How interesting it was to see that many other states are facing the same concerns that we here in Arkansas face.

NSBA President Mossi White appointed me to serve on a committee to draft the new beliefs and resolutions for the national association. This document will be presented to the Delegate Assembly at

the NSBA conference in San Francisco in April. The work was challenging and provided even more insight into the problems faced by other communities in our country.

Following the Leadership Conference, NSBA President-elect Carol Brown, ASBA President-elect Jack Gardner, and I attended the Federal Relations Network Program. At this event, representatives from state school board groups met to identify issues that are com-

mon across the country and to mount a concerted effort to influence our Congressional delegations. The issues identified for the year are:

- ▲ reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA),
- ▲ increasing the federal investment in education to reflect the growing student enrollments and increased costs in education for all children,
- ▲ preventing the enactment of

See **Issues** on page 8

**DAN FARLEY ASBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

## Let's talk about the changes that are coming

Whether you like it or not, change is on the way. The mandates of the Supreme Court ruling must be met because we have an obligation to adequately educate all the children of Arkansas as equitably and efficiently as possible.

Although, as I write this, there are no numbers yet fixed in concrete about school district reorganization. One plan calls for 1,500. Another plan calls for 4,000. We have preferred a standards-based approach, believing that if districts can voluntarily work out arrangements with other districts, their potential for success can be far greater. If local folks can come together and have a hand in shaping their own destinies, outcomes can be more positive and change

actually has a chance of lasting.

All of you know how strongly I believe in democratic dialogue. You've heard me talk about it and I've written here about it many times over the years. Study circles is a process fostering democratic dialogue and shared problem solving that leads to action. A number of communities engaged in conversations last fall. The same discussion guide we used in the fall is just as valid today as it was then. It might just be the very thing needed to get your community engaged in the issues and focused on the broader mission: to educate all the children of our state.

I continue to give the Governor credit for raising the level of public awareness about our education

problems. His proposal has created more discussion about education than I can remember in many years. The trick now is to get through the initial emotions and try to get to the hard part: meaningful talk about meaningful change.

We have the tools available for those communities that are ready to sit down and wrestle with the issues. The discussion guide is ready and the staff of the Arkansas Study Circles Project is prepared to help you organize, train your facilitators, and launch a series of conversations to bring diverse groups together to talk about education through the lens of the Rose standards, which were used by both Judge Kilgore and the Arkan-

See **What's best** on page 8



# REPORTER

Vol. 21, Number 7

ISSN 1041-6757

MARCH 2003

Published 10 times each year by the  
Arkansas School Boards Association.

*Championing excellence in public education  
through training, advocacy, and service  
for local school boards.*



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## PAUL BLUME ASBA GENERAL COUNSEL

# Coaches—What isn't a transfer, and other Spring themes



Ya know, I've told you now and then that a lot of what goes into this column is inspired by some of the phone calls we get here at the good ol' ASBA from administrators and/or Board members. Sometimes, Mary Margaret the Wonder Pooch will make a suggestion, garnering her a Nutro Max Bone if her idea is a good one. She's motivated.

So, this month is no different. It's different from last month's column, in that, I'm down off of my soap box (Death to vouchers! Death, you hear! And, about the First Amendment!). But this month, we're back in our Heloise mode, giving useful tips on how to turn an empty milk jug into something groovy. Or some such.

Actually, this month, with spring on the way, we're going to talk about things associated with spring. Like whether we may transfer a coach into another coaching position, or out of coaching altogether.

To quote a former First Lady of our fair State and of the United States, "Okey-dokey, artichokey!" Here we go.

You've got a head football (or basketball) coach, and his record is zero and one zillion. His teams couldn't win a game if the other side didn't show up. Can we "transfer" him out of coaching into the classroom if we pay him what we're paying him as head coach? Can we take him out of his coaching position and make him head coach of the extemporaneous speaking team? And we'd pay him as head football coach, of course.

No. I repeat: No.

A.C.A. §6-17-303 allows a school board to "assign, reassign or transfer" a teacher on the recommendation of the superintendent. What that doesn't tell you, though, is that any reassignment must be genuinely lateral, that is, equivalent to his previous position. In most schools, there is nothing remotely equivalent to the head basketball or football coaching position. And the Arkansas Supreme Court made it clear that they don't think that most other positions, even if they pay the same, are equivalent. So, if you "transfer" one of your coaches out of his big-

See **Detailed** on page 9

# Issues are summarized and explained

*Continued from page 6*

voucher legislation and tuition tax subsidies, and

▲ implementation concerns about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA).

Our next step in the process was to meet with the Arkansas Congressional Delegation. We scheduled appointments with all of our Congressmen. One of them had to cancel due to a late plane arrival.

As we met with each individual, we state our views concerning IDEA, NCLBA, and vouchers. Our comments were met with open minds and sincere interest in our input.

On Feb. 14, the ASBA Board of Directors met with the staff in Little Rock to discuss issues currently before the Arkansas General

Assembly. The ASBA staff works very hard to stay abreast of each new bill that is filed that may have an impact on educating our children. They do a great job.

As a board we agreed that we must support local control of our school districts. We thoroughly discussed issues concerning standards, local control, and reorganization. The staff will continue to keep all of us informed through email and through the weekly Legislative Update.

I encourage you to read the weekly Legislative Update. So far all four of the plans for reorganization have been outlined there. Issues that face school districts are summarized and explained. It is a great source of information.

I also encourage you to check the

*Bill Tracker* on the ASBA web site at [www.arsba.org](http://www.arsba.org). The *Bill Tracker* is updated several times weekly. You can see each bill and its progress through the process as well as ASBA's position.

If you would like to contact the ASBA staff, the best way to find them is via email. Their email addresses are listed below. They spend a great deal of time at the Capitol working for our children and would like to hear your ideas.

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## What's best for kids?

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as Supreme Court in regard to the Lake View case. Having those standards frame the conversations will help people in your community to begin to see the forest and the trees.

Engaging people in real dialogue is far more important than in demonstrating our emotions. I don't discount the emotions, but we must not let them override the most important question: What's best for kids?

The stakeholders to whom we owe the most are the 450,000 public school kids of this state. As board members, you are in a position to help create avenues of discussion and dialogue within and among your communities. That's something that really needs to be happening throughout the state. I know in some places that has begun. I urge you to make it happen in your community. I urge you to work with your neighbors and make it happen among multiple communities.

In the meantime, I'd like to remind

you that the ASBA Delegate Assembly unanimously adopted a set of standards for Arkansas school boards in December. It's time now for local boards to adopt those standards and to follow them. If local governance is important—and we believe it is—then, your board should be doing everything it can to perform well and to support higher levels of student achievement. Adopting and living by those standards is a step in the right direction.

## Brown assumes NSBA presidency at Conference

Make plans to attend the annual NSBA conference in San Francisco April 5-8. Once again NSBA plans to engage speakers and breakout presenters to keep school board members and educators be on the cutting edge of education issues, programs, and ideas.

As you make your plans, be sure to attend the General Session on Monday morning during the conference. At that session, former ASBA President Carol Brown of Wynne will accede to the presidency of the national organization. Let's fill the hall with Arkansans and show her our support!

ASBA is very proud of Carol and her leadership. Be sure to attend the Monday morning General Session in San Francisco!

# Detailed documentation supports transfers

*Continued from page 7*

dog position, it's a termination.

What that means is, if you have a coach who isn't getting the job done, you have to treat him as you would a teacher who isn't teaching: BEFORE AND DURING THE SEASON, have the athletic director (or someone else who can evaluate the technicalities of coaching the sport at hand) put the coach in his cross-hairs and document his shortcomings. As much as necessary. Evaluate his practices and games, his sideline activities and behavior. Worrying about all of this after the season is too late.

Remember, while all of this is going on, the purpose is not to fire the guy, but to turn him into a successful coach. Send him to coaching clinics. Et cetera. The AD should be making recommendations for improvement. And the AD (or whoever is doing the evaluation) must put everything in writing. Everything. And all of the writings must be very specific as to what the problems are and what he must do to improve. Everything must be dated and offered to the coach for signing, with a copy going to the coach and the original in his file.

Assuming that the coach does not improve, you should have enough documentation of your efforts to help him—to no avail—to decide whether you want him to move on. You'll have the documentation to justify a dismissal. And you won't have to worry about whether the football-to-extemporaneous-speaking transfer is one which will pass judicial muster.

As a rule of thumb, when a judge is looking at what you earnestly want him to believe is a legitimate transfer, he looks at two things: Pay and position. That is, he'll look to see whether the pay is lower in the new position than in the old position, and he'll look at whether the new position is some sort of demotion. If he answers "yes" to either one of those questions, you lose.

All of this does not mean that you don't have any way of moving the coach. There's always the possibility (usually very remote) that the coach is even more unhappy than you are, and he'll agree to a change. If he's willing to sign a contract for a new position, fine. But remember, the pay for that position will have to be consistent with the stipend schedule for the

new position, even if lower than his previous position. But you can't force him to sign the contract, and, unless your AD, or someone, has done his documentation homework, your coach with the zero and one zillion record will be yours for all eternity.

Any questions? If not, I have to go find a Max Bone.

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# Improved math skills require changed attitudes

*Continued from page 3*

experiences for the teachers of mathematics. A genuine "Aha!" should take place, not just going to attend a workshop, but sustained, intensive learning. They should be exposed to good models for teaching, from university instructors or master teachers. Elementary school teachers should have three math courses at the undergraduate level. One should be focused on how to take students

from arithmetic to algebra. The second should be looking at patterns and relationships in math, the third should be applications: statistics, geometry. Seventh-graders will ask, "Where am I going to use this?" Teachers should be shown hundreds of examples of where middle-school math is used.

Learning to read and learning to perform mathematics are very different according to Sharma. "Look at the reading skill. Once you ac-

quire it, you read more complex sentences and longer passages. You have acquired that skill. But with math, once you can add and subtract, then they add fractions, then real numbers, then negative numbers. It is not automatic. More and new concepts are constantly added. The larger concept subsumes the previous concept."

*This story was adapted from an article that ran on page B18 of the Boston Globe on 12/15/2002.*

# The Challenge: To Continue the Conversation

By Heather Gage

Citizen participation can be traced back to Ancient Greece when major decisions were made through public dialogue. It was thought that since these decisions affected the public the people should be given the right to have a voice. This concept is not new in the United States and, in fact, it has always been our right and responsibility to be involved. Even with a long history of citizen participation in this country, however, there has been a constant trend of disengagement by the American public from civic life in general. This has been equally true in the state of Arkansas, but things are beginning to change.

Arkansas School Boards Association Executive Director Dan Farley states, "If we don't do it, who will? One of the guiding tenets of the ASBA is its responsibility to foster strong community ties to its schools." ASBA sets out to accomplish this goal by bringing the Study Circles model into Arkansas communities. The Study Circles model is a national project that is

research based and allows citizens to be a part of their democracy. ASBA has been using the model with great success over the past three years. The purpose of the Study Circles sessions is to foster understanding through deliberative, democratic dialogue. The belief is that with understanding, productive action can take place.

Due to the ever-increasing concern over education in Arkansas, a conversation continued last fall that began with *Speak Up! Arkansas* in April 2002. *The Conversation Continues* was used at nine sites around the state—Rogers, Waldron, Pine Bluff, Springdale, Mena, Marianna, Bryant, Beebe, and Paragould. A report, *Helping Arkansas Students Succeed—School and Communities Working Together*, will provide the research results that were garnered during the Study Circles sessions. This report can be found on the ASBA web at [www.arsba.org](http://www.arsba.org). This information may be helpful as you consider study circles for your community.

ASBA is currently looking for communities that would like to be involved in this conversation. We

are looking for people who want to make a difference in the education of the children in their community. We know that the issue for many citizens around the state is not *if* they want to be involved; the issue is *how*. How can I, as a citizen, become meaningfully involved in discussions around education? ASBA believes in the power of deliberative dialogue and that Study Circles is a wonderful tool that truly answers the "how" question. We have seen communities come together in an honest and non-threatening environment that fosters understanding. This understanding leads to positive change. Once citizens take an active role in discussions around education, they become owners of the ideas fostered in their community instead of merely renters. Owners are far more powerful and will continue to be involved when given the chance.

The current legislative session has been marked by many as the most important session for education in Arkansas's history. Many communities are concerned about school consolidation, parent involvement, curriculum standards, and the reorganization of the State Board of Education. More importantly, it is the year to get involved. Why? Because being involved in the education of every child is your right and responsibility. When citizens are not actively involved, we risk having nowhere to go but down. The most critical step to improving our educational system and in turn improving all institutions in Arkansas is to get back to citizens taking responsibility and participating in decisions that effect them. I encourage you to bring the Study Circles model into your community and see what can happen when

**Our Arkansas delegation for NSBA in San Francisco is nearly 200 folks! We are looking forward to seeing each and everyone of you there. Watch your mailboxes for a letter from ASBA about the Arkansas Breakfast.**

**It will be at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 6, at the San Francisco Marriott. If you are planning on attending, please let ASBA know. We want to make sure that we plan for you! As soon as you receive your letter about the breakfast, please notify us if you are attending either by our toll free number at (800) 482-1212 or by email at [paulette@arsba.org](mailto:paulette@arsba.org). Or give us a call now!**



**Let's make a great showing in San Francisco and cheer Carol Brown as she assumes the national presidency!**

## ASBA welcomes Heather Gage

ASBA welcomes a new staff member. Heather Gage will be working with Diane Vibhakar to promote the Study Circles Project in Arkansas.

Gage comes to ASBA from UALR where she has worked with the Share America program since August of 1997. She has worked in many capacities in that project. Most recently she worked as the assistant to the director. In that capacity she was responsible for working with parents, schools, and staff to develop, plan, and monitor the requirements of the grant for the Share America Program at UALR.

Gage has coordinated the family services component of the UALR Share America Program as well as serving as a community liaison with the project.

During the summer of 1997, Gage supervised 26 adolescent girls in a residential setting as a part of the Upward Bound Project in Maine.

Gage received her bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Maine at Presque Isle and her master's degree in public administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

No stranger to community engagement, Gage helped train facilitators for Study Circles and facilitated community Study Circles before coming to ASBA. She is very



familiar with the project and is anxious to see it grow.

"As a public administrator, it is my responsibility to educate the public on how and why they should be involved in decisions that affect them. I believe that we must create conditions where citizens, policymakers and educators can deliberate together on important issues. The Study Circle's model is a wonderful tool to make this happen.

My vision for the Arkansas Study Circles project is to provide the opportunity for each and every citizen (not just primary stakeholders) in the state to come together and participate in honest, respectful conversation about education that will lead to action and change. When citizens are involved, when they are the change agents, research shows that they will take ownership of this action. Citizen involvement is at the very core of democracy and we must reestablish this responsibility. It is my belief that Study Circles is the method to make this happen.

My passion has always been to bring community and education together so that our children can succeed. This is a wonderful opportunity for me and I thank Dan and everyone at the ASBA for bringing me on board and making me feel so welcome," said Gage.

citizens start talking, understanding and taking ownership.

If you would like more information on Study Circles or to learn how you can bring this model to your community, please contact Heather Gage at [hgage@arsba.org](mailto:hgage@arsba.org) or you may contact Diane Vibhakar at [studycircles@arsba.org](mailto:studycircles@arsba.org). Our

telephone number is (800) 482-1212 or (501) 372-1415. We hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to bring citizens in your community together to discuss how we can make education better for each and every child in Arkansas.

*Heather Gage works with the Arkansas Study Circles Project at ASBA.*

## JOB BULLETIN

**Superintendent**, Emerson School District. Deadline: Until filled. Apply to: Arthur Pharr, Interim Supt., P. O. Box 129, Emerson, AR 71740, (870) 547-2218

**Superintendent**, Weiner School District. Deadline: Until filled. Apply to: Charlotte Wright, Supt., 313 N. Garfield, Weiner, AR 72479

**Superintendent**, Lockesburg School District. Deadline: Feb.20 or until filled. Apply to: Gene Slaton, Supt., P. O. Box 88, Lockesburg, AR 71846, (870) 289-5161 or fax to (870) 289-5189

**Superintendent**, Hampton School District. Salary negotiable. Deadline: Until filled. Apply to: Rodney Strickland, Board President; Hampton SD, Rt. 2, Box 147, Hampton, AR 71744, 870-798-4826

**Superintendent**, Junction City School District. Salary negotiable. Deadline: March 11; Apply to: Randy Lyons, Board President; Junction City SD; 8558 Junction City Hwy; El Dorado, AR 71730; 870-924-4939

**Superintendent**, Manila School District. Salary negotiable. Deadline: March 10. Apply to: Robert Veach, Board Pres.; Manila SD; P.O. 670; Manila, AR 72442; 870-561-4410

**Superintendent**, Umpire School District. Salary negotiable. Deadline: Until filled; Apply to: Janie Krantz, Board Secty; Umpire SD; 236 Krantz; Dierks, AR 71833

## Fourth Key Work Board Academy Seminar in May

ASBA will sponsor the fourth Board Academy Seminar at Winrock International on Petit Jean Mountain May 1-4.

The seminar focuses on elements of the Key Work of School Boards. Teams of board members and their superintendents learn about developing vision and mission statements and how to engage their community in the process.

The only cost for school districts is

transportation to and from Petit Jean. Food, lodging, materials, and training are offered at ASBA's expense. The ASBA Board of Directors has voted to continue to offer this event free of charge to school districts.

To participate, a majority of board members plus the superintendent must agree to attend the full seminar.

The event begins late Thursday afternoon and continues through early afternoon on Sunday. Throughout the seminar, boards participate in activities as teams and also interact with

board members and superintendents from other school districts.

Boards who have participated in previous academies have come away from it with a stronger sense of unity as a board, a clearer vision for the district, a broader base of resources, and a network of other board members and superintendents on whom they rely for advice, ideas, support, and a sounding board.

Contact Paulette Walker at 800-482-1212 or (501) 372-1415 or [paulette@arsba.org](mailto:paulette@arsba.org) for more information.

## Arkansas standards are set high for our students

*Continued from page 1*

categories, but not in the other two and the school would still be identified as in need of improvement. If a school in your district was in such a situation, it could be difficult to explain to parents and the community that the school was actually making progress. It also wouldn't make a difference regarding the repercussions of the new federal law.

NCLB requires each state to define AYP on the basis of what the state's standards are and how the state has been progressing toward achieving those standards. The standards, however, are dictated by the individual states and not

by the federal government. This means that standards vary from state to state.

Arkansas has set high standards for student achievement and that is something for which we can all be proud. The Lake View decision clearly agrees with this. Unfortunately, it makes attaining 100% proficiency, as required by NCLB, more difficult for us than it does for a state with lower standards. This is another point that can be difficult for your patrons to understand.

In the best of times and with the best of intentions, consolidation is a difficult endeavor that disrupts the normal flow and routines of a

school and its students. However Lake View is ultimately resolved, once done, the movement of students from one school or district to another could really play havoc with the receiving school's AYP.

The goals of NCLB are honorable, but the timing for its effect on Arkansas' schools is unfortunate at best. Referring to NCLB, a legislator suggested recently that we learn to make lemonade out of the lemons and she's right. The trick is in finding the recipe.

*Ron Harder is the director of policy services for ASBA and has studied NCLB extensively.*

Arkansas School Boards Association



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