

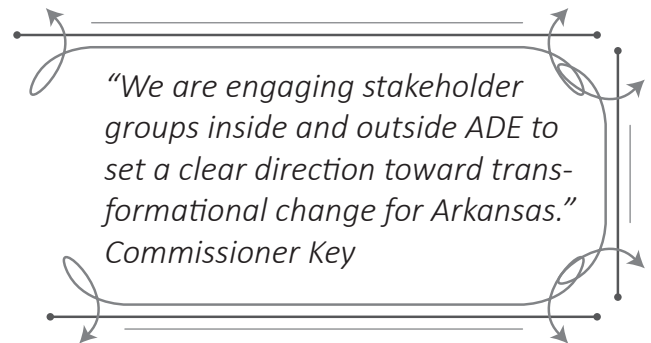
# Arkansas Out Front With Every Student's Success

Spring 2016

## ***Building State Capacity and Productivity Center & South Central Comprehensive Center***

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) didn't wait for Congress to pass the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which the Wall Street Journal ("No Child", 2015) called "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter century." Beginning months before the passage of the landmark education bill, ADE began an intensive examination of Arkansas's education future and ADE's role relative to districts and communities in shaping that future. Commissioner Johnny Key and the ADE executive team has met for a full day each month, with much work in between, to formulate a strategic direction for the agency, sharing their ideas with staff, teacher groups, district superintendents, charter directors, co-op directors, education and parent organizations, business and community leaders, legislators, and other state agencies, getting feedback, going back to the drawing board, and revising. The ADE strategic direction is the foundation for the agency's bold move into performance management as a way to improve the quality and responsiveness of its service.

Commissioner Key explains: "We are engaging stakeholder groups inside and outside ADE to set a clear direction toward transformational change for Arkansas. We are taking a long view and applying proven quality management strategies that have helped top organizations develop cultures of success. We see ADE working closely with innovative districts and schools to implement more and more effective ways to provide an education suited to the interests and needs of each and every student. We see families, community organizations, and businesses as critical partners working with their schools to give every student a solid foundation and abundant opportunity. In five years, schooling will look different than it does today, and in 10 years it may be unrecognizable when compared to most current educational experiences. I firmly believe that 20 years from now Arkansas will be a national leader in student-focused learning, and researchers and authors will be writing about the 'Arkansas education miracle.' We can't even imagine the challenges and opportunities that are in store for us, but we will remain resolute in our goals, our values, and our sense of mission. ADE is a strong and capable partner in student-focused learning, and we will continue to build our own expertise to provide valued service to our state."



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### **Setting the Direction**

The process ADE is following to set its strategic direction was developed by the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center, a Texas-based technical assistance center associated with Westat that works with state education agencies (SEAs) across the country, without cost to the states. The BSCP Center's Strategic Performance Management process was recently minted to overcome a common problem with strategic plans—lots of thinking that ends up as a paper report with little impact. The Center brought together experts on strategic planning and performance management from the education and business sectors to devise a methodology that culminates in the SEA's implementation of an ongoing management system based on performance management principles.

The BSCP Center (2015) describes it this way: "Strategic Performance Management (SPM) draws everyone in the SEA into a smoothly operating, open system that recognizes their contributions and encourages their innovation" (p. 3). "Strategic Performance Management (SPM) weds *strategic planning* with *performance management* in a living system that provides direction for people's work while allowing for innovation and adjustment in course to

produce better results more efficiently. SPM includes elements of strategic planning and connects them to performance measures, productivity considerations, and ongoing processes for gauging progress, improving practice, and exceeding expectations” (p. 4).

Other features of the BSCP Center’s approach are: (1) the SEA’s relationship with district, schools, communities, and taxpayers is carefully articulated; (2) the SEA’s way of doing business is rooted in clearly identified values—expectations that it holds for itself; and (3) the SEA’s goals begin with a consideration of what is best for every student in the state. Further, the BSCP Center’s consultants work alongside consultants from another cost-free technical assistance service—the South Central Comprehensive Center—that will continue to support the SEA long after the strategic direction is adopted and the performance management system is put in place.

ADE’s performance management system, rooted in its new strategic direction, will go into full effect July 1, 2016, with every unit in the agency aimed toward annual, strategy-aligned milestones. On June 2–3, 75 unit leaders and key personnel met together to develop action plans aimed at the strategy-aligned milestones. SPM’s online planning and reporting system will track progress while encouraging teams to consider innovative ways to achieve better results more efficiently.

### **ADE’s Role in Arkansas’s Education Future**

Although ADE is still putting the finishing touches on its strategic direction, its working draft reveals the directions the agency sees for itself and for education in the state. The proposed vision statement for ADE states: “The Arkansas Department of Education is transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education.” The mission statement succinctly describes ADE’s work at hand: “The Arkansas Department of Education provides leadership, support, and service to schools, districts, and communities so every student graduates prepared for college, career, and community engagement.”

ADE’s value statements express its expectations for itself and its relationship with the public:

- Leadership
  - ◇ Striving to be a model of excellence that is dedicated to professional and ethical standards, the whole child, and effective results.
  - ◇ Driving action toward excellence through informed risk-taking.
  - ◇ Preserving the public trust by ensuring quality and accountability.
- Support
  - ◇ Collaborating with others through mutual respect, trust, and professionalism.
  - ◇ Communicating in an open, honest, and transparent manner.
  - ◇ Fostering new ideas and promoting effective practices.
- Service
  - ◇ Providing quality service in a respectful, effective, and professional manner.
  - ◇ Administering agency programs and services with integrity, honesty, and transparency.
  - ◇ Leveraging state resources in an efficient and productive manner.

ADE’s goals foreshadow the state’s heightened emphasis on student-focused education—attention to the progress, aspirations, and interests of each student.

**Goal 1:** Each student will meet or exceed readiness benchmarks along the pathway to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement.

**Goal 2:** Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually.

**Goal 3:** Each student will develop and apply personal competencies that promote learning and success in life.

**Goal 4:** Each student will be actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation.

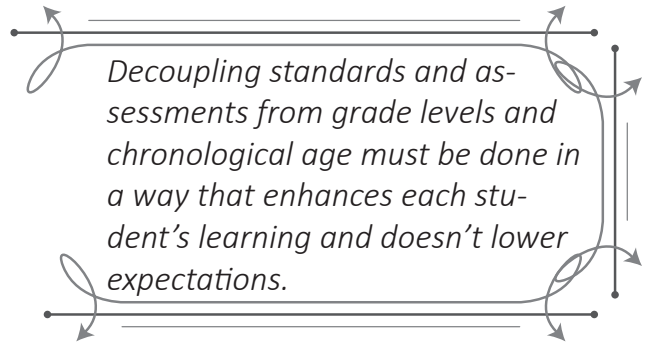
**Goal 5:** The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves all stakeholders.

## More Than Words

In case at first blush the vision, mission, values, and goals look all too familiar, take another look. Especially note terms and phrases that do not typically appear in the strategic plans of state education agencies. These terms and phrases signal Arkansas's leadership in the future of American education and in government service.

### Leadership in Education

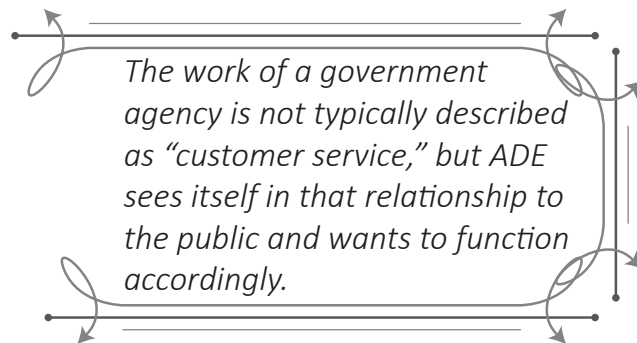
- **Student-focused education:** In some ways, it is true that in education there is nothing new under the sun. Kids are kids. Algebra is algebra. But in other ways, all is new. The Internet, learning technologies, and advances in learning science enable us to focus on each student's education as never before. The research literature is alive with strategies to personalize learning, adapt instruction, apply learning analytics, tap into each student's interests and aspirations, enrich the curriculum, target supports, and design learning pathways suited to each student (see, for example, Baker, in press). Many Arkansas educators are already riding the crest of this exciting work, and ADE will showcase them, assist them, and enable others to learn from them.
- **Readiness benchmarks:** Students learn at different rates, but they all must master certain content (knowledge and skill) before successfully moving on. These learning benchmarks do not coincide with grade levels, and students arrive at them at different times. Academic standards array the sequence of learning in an orderly fashion and are useful in identifying key benchmarks throughout the years of schooling, leading to graduation and success beyond. Standards-based assessments are a tool in determining each student's progress. A benchmark approach, however, decouples standards and assessments from grade levels and chronological age.
- **Expected individual growth:** Decoupling standards and assessments from grade levels and chronological age must be done in a way that enhances each student's learning and doesn't lower expectations. For students progressing at a comparatively rapid rate, the expectation is that they will continue on this elevated trajectory. For students lagging behind, supports and accelerated learning strategies are employed to catch them up in time. In every case, each student's growth rate is targeted to optimize their learning and ensure their readiness to meet benchmarks.
- **Personal competencies:** Some kinds of knowledge and skill are foundational to learning in all subject areas and at every level in the education system. These same "personal competencies" not only underlie academic success but are fundamental to meeting all of life's challenges. What a student knows, how well the student directs his or her own learning, the student's persistence in pursuing a goal, and the student's emotional well-being, social skills, and sense of responsibility are critical to learning and to life. Intentionally building these competencies is the work of teachers, coaches, and counselors, and ADE will support them in that important work (see ACT Research Report, 2015; Redding, 2014).
- **Success in life:** Ask parents about their hopes for their children, and they will certainly include doing well in school. But they are also likely to want more, including good health, happiness, contribution to society, responsibility to their families and communities, satisfying careers, and self-reliance. ADE knows that a good education is a key component of all these definitions of success.
- **Community engagement:** Preparation for continued education and job success are certainly important goals of a public school system, but parents and educators alike sense that there is more they want in the adult lives of students than school and job. Contributing to and finding satisfaction in community life is an equally worthy goal, both for the students themselves and for the communities in which they are engaged.
- **Military service:** Again, most state plans forget that many students find their path to success in military service, where they give of themselves in defense of our nation and gain skills and habits of life that benefit them and their families.



- **One year after graduation:** For ADE, and all of Arkansas, graduation from high school is a goal, but not the primary goal for students. More important is that graduates are fully prepared for the next steps in life, whether college, career training, employment, or military service. One indication of how well the education system has prepared students for the next steps in life is to see how they are faring a year after graduation. That information will enable ADE and school districts to adjust their programs to better prepare students.

### Leadership in Government Service

- **Informed risk-taking:** A review of state education agency (SEA) change agency (Brown, Hess, Lautzenheiser, & Owen, 2011) concluded that SEAs are overly focused on compliance, lack transparency, are hindered by federal funding restrictions, and operate with bureaucratic policies that are obstacles to reform. ADE plans to combat these anchors of inertia. True innovation, especially in a human service like education, proceeds with caution, taking into account the possible effects on students and educators, but caution is not sclerosis, but a judicious assurance that the new way is likely to also be a better way.
- **Customer service:** The work of a government agency is not typically described as “customer service,” but ADE sees itself in that relationship to the public and wants to function accordingly. ADE’s personnel are a great reservoir of expertise that is a huge asset to the state, and ADE wants to be sure that the expertise accrues to the benefit of all Arkansans.
- **Team members:** ADE will operate with a team approach in which its personnel function as members of the all-ADE team and also as members of small units focused on specific areas of work. Teams count on the performance of each member and have a vested interest in building the capacity of each member to perform at higher levels. Teams are vehicles for amplifying the expertise and experience of each member as others learn from them. ADE’s team approach is similar to what schools employ for planning, improving, sharing, learning, and monitoring progress.



When it comes to focused attention to every student’s success, Arkansas is out front and plans to stay there. ADE’s strategic performance management is an advanced way of doing business and a model for state agencies. But ADE’s most salient message, conveyed through its strategic direction, is that the agency exists to lead, support, and serve, and it stands shoulder-to-shoulder with every district and school in the state. Educating every student for the challenges of life is a big job, and families, communities, and educators will find ADE a competent, thoughtful, and willing partner.

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## Consultants Assisting ADE With Strategic Performance Management

**Dr. Allison Layland** is currently a consultant with the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP) working on implementing a strategic performance management process with State Education Agencies. She has engaged in strategic planning in both education and business. Dr. Layland was formerly with the Colorado Department of Education and Maryland Department of Education, as well as a manager with AT&T Broadband. She is also an education specialist for Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS, providing technical assistance related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and has supported nine states on effective supports and services for students with disabilities.

Dr. Layland has more than 20 years of teaching and leadership experience in general and special education at the school, district, and state levels. As an adjunct professor, Dr. Layland facilitated special education teacher preparation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Layland received a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from Mount Saint Mary College in New York, a master's degree in special education from James Madison University in Virginia, and a doctorate in education administration and policy studies from the University of Denver.



**Dr. Sam Redding** is executive director of the Academic Development Institute, associate director of the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd, a senior learning specialist with the Center on Innovations in Learning at Temple University, and a consultant to the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center at Westat. Dr. Redding holds a doctorate in Educational Administration from Illinois State University, master's degrees in both Psychology and English, and is a graduate of Harvard's Institute for Educational Management.

A former high school teacher, college dean and vice president, and senior research associate at the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University, from 2005 to 2012 Dr. Redding was director of the national Center on Innovation & Improvement. He is a recipient of the "Those Who Excel" Award from the Illinois State Board of Education, the Ben Hubbard Leadership Award from Illinois State University, a Key Leader award from the YMCA, and in 2012 the Wing Institute's award for Exemplary Practice and Research in Evidence-Based Education. He has been executive editor of the School Community Journal since 1991. He has published books, chapters, and articles on family-school relationships, school improvement, statewide systems of support, personalized learning, innovations in learning, performance management, and school turnaround.

Dr. Redding has served on a variety of state committees, including the standards-writing committee for the Illinois State Board of Education; the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) Leadership Team and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Parent Leadership Team; and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. He has served on various civic boards, as well as the boards of the Effective Schools Institute and Superintendency Institute. Dr. Redding has been a member of Technical Working Groups for three regional educational laboratories and two research groups. He serves on the Research Council of the Illinois Center for School Improvement.

Dr. Redding served on the IES expert panel on school turnarounds and co-authored its 2008 report, "Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools", and in 2012 was a member of the U.S. contingent to Korea for an exchange on turnaround methods in the two countries. He was the founding leader of CCSSO's SCASS on state supports and interventions in 2013. Dr. Redding has consulted with more than 30 state education agencies (SEAs) on strategic performance management, systems of support, and turnaround.



**Dr. Jennifer Watson** is the Literacy Technical Assistance Coordinator for both the Central and South Central Comprehensive Centers at the University of Oklahoma. In this role she supports state education agency initiatives that advance literacy, as well as their broader work in standards and assessments implementation. Jennifer began her career as a middle grades language arts teacher in Oklahoma City Public Schools. She also has taught high school, college, and graduate level students. She supervised the language arts program in a large suburban Oklahoma City area school district for several years before becoming Director of Language Arts at the Oklahoma State Department of Education. She assumed the role of Team Leader for Curriculum and later Assistant State Superin-

tendent of Instruction at OSDE, overseeing the work of the curriculum staff on standards revision, as well as professional development in content areas and schoolwide improvement projects, including classroom walkthroughs, curriculum mapping, and teacher leadership. Prior to coming to C3/SC3, Jennifer was with Southern Regional Education Board (High Schools That Work, Making Middle Grades Work) as Project Director for SREB's Kentucky Middle Grades Schools of Innovation, a partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education and ten state school districts. The project's goal was to ensure that more students in Kentucky leave the middle grades prepared for challenging high school courses and more students leave high school prepared for post-secondary education and/or careers. Components included training and coaching in Literacy Design Collaborative and Mathematics Design Collaborative methods, advisory, counseling for careers, and school leadership.

Jennifer holds Master's degrees in English and in Language Arts Education. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Curriculum Supervision from the University of Oklahoma.



**Kerri White, Ed.D.**, is the Arkansas/Louisiana Technical Assistance Coordinator for SC3 at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. White's role is to support state education agency staff members by building their capacity to implement state and federal education priorities. Prior to coming to SC3, Dr. White was the Assistant State Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness at the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), where she previously served as the Mathematics Director and then Executive Director of High School Reform, for a total of almost 10 years of service.

After graduating from Oklahoma Baptist University, Kerri began her career in 2001 as a middle school and high school mathematics teacher at Deer Creek Middle School and then Putnam City High School in Oklahoma. She completed a master's degree in educational leadership at Southern Nazarene University and doctorate of education in school administration at Oklahoma State University.

Through her work with Educator Effectiveness, Kerri has found a deep interest in facilitating the professional growth and career pathways of teachers, administrators, content experts, and educational coaches. Modeling the meaning of being a lifelong learner, Kerri studies the development and implementation of professional learning opportunities, performance metrics, and professional rubrics designed to assist educators in improving their effectiveness with PreK-12 students.

Kerri is passionate about the use of technology, particularly social media and other Web 2.0 tools, for reshaping instruction and capitalizing on the effectiveness of educators. Students currently in the PreK-12 education system are digital natives who must be taught in their native language. Kerri's goal is to help educators discover the most effective tools for rethinking how children learn.

Dr. White's research interests relate to the role of school culture in school improvement planning and implementation. Key findings of her research include recognition that there is no single way to improve a school and acknowledgement of the critical importance of matching research-based strategies with the culture of the school to increase the likelihood of success.



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