

Chalkboard

By

Dr. Randy C. Barrett, Superintendent
Gentry Public Schools

Guest Author: *Dr. Don Rose, Principal, Gentry Intermediate School*

Following is the second of a five part series authored by one of the school district's four principals or the assistant superintendent. If you make a commitment to read all five articles, you should end the series with a both a general understanding of the programs that drive our curriculum and the perspectives of the people who implement them.

“Gentry Intermediate School was proud to make this year’s Report to the Public at the September school board meeting. Fourth graders met the challenge and scored well on the state benchmark testing and fifth graders scored above average on the Stanford 9 test. There is always room for improvement and we will strive to show a steady improvement in test performance.

Fourth Grade Benchmark Exam (Criterion Referenced Test – CRT) results for the 2002 – 2003 school year were as follows: 102 students were tested; in literacy - sixty-three percent (63%) scored proficient and eleven percent (11%) scored advanced. In Math – twenty percent (20%) scored proficient and fifty-one percent (51%) scored advanced. The state requires schools show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) over a three-year period. This was the first year for AYP on the state system. The AYP cut-off for literacy was 37.48% and Gentry Intermediate’s AYP was 58.3%. The AYP cut-off for math was 34.18% and Gentry Intermediate’s AYP was 63%. Gentry’s students are performing well above the AYP expected by the state at this time.

Fifth Grade Stanford 9 testing (Norm Referenced Test – NRT) results for the 2002 – 2003 school year were also above the state average. Gentry’s students scored in the 55 percentile in total reading and in the 65 percentile in total math. Gentry fifth graders have been making steady progress on the Stanford 9 test.

The Intermediate School’s Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Process (ACSIP) Committee has identified two Priorities for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Priority 1 states “Students in the Gentry Elementary School will perform at grade level in the curriculum area of Math.” Priority 2 states “Students in the Gentry Elementary School will perform at grade level in the curriculum area of Literacy.” Gentry Elementary uses the Gentry Elementary Direct Instruction (GEDI) models to help focus efforts in our reading and math programs.

Some parents are concerned that the public schools of Arkansas are “Teaching the Test” and ignoring the basics of education. The state has a complete set of curriculum frameworks that has the standards that all children must receive. Gentry’s Elementary teachers and staff have developed a comprehensive set of skills check sheets which are aligned closely with the frameworks for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. There is a distinct difference in “Teaching the Test” and “Teaching to the Test.” We have used “Step-up-to-Writing” and “Reading Strategies” to develop our students analytical, organizational, and writing skills. These skills they are learning during these writing classes will help them perform better across the curriculum. In addition to the

writing, the children are learning all the skills they were learning before Benchmark testing. The students use their writing skills in every subject area. Their writing skills help them understand all subjects better.

Please make plans to attend as many activities as possible at the Intermediate School. We have already had many activities for parents to get involved with the school. We had our open house the week before school. This is a great time for the children and parents to meet their new teachers and friends. Third grade has already had a “Grandparents Day” and a play on Johnny Appleseed. The children were so excited to have their grandparent visit the school. On September 17th and 18th we had our first Parent/Teacher conferences. Gentry Intermediate has a very active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The PTO had a successful fundraiser in September. The children did well and were rewarded with a MEGA-Party. Three huge activities were set up in the gym. There was a large bounce room; a huge 25 foot inflated slide; and a 100-foot obstacle course. It was hard to tell who had the most fun, the students or the adults. October 6th the fourth grade had hot dogs in the city park. The teachers discussed grade rules and the Benchmark test for fourth graders. We look forward to seeing you at the next event at our school. Please come see the great things happening at Gentry Intermediate School.”