

# Chalkboard

By

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2007. Another calendar year is just day's old and the slate has only tiny writing in the upper left hand corner. The remaining empty space patiently awaits the passage of each day for the record to continue. What lies ahead in the days to come for the Gentry School District until the ball drops again for 2008? Only He Who is outside the river of time knows what will be written on the empty lines.

The Gentry district operates on a fiscal year, like the majority of schools within the state, rather than a calendar year thus the district records have been dated FY 07 since July 1, 2006. This present school year will end on June 30, 2007 not December 31, 2007. Keep that in mind for playing *Trivial Pursuit- The Arkansas School Edition* if they ever make that version.

As I have noted in an earlier *Chalkboard*, school resumed for staff yesterday, January 2, 2007, for professional development activities and students returned to class today on January 3, 2007. Also noted earlier, the end of the first semester is January 12<sup>th</sup>.

Two really important dates to mark on your calendar are January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. These two nights are when the Gentry School Board and the Arkansas Leadership Academy are hosting community meetings as the board seeks a unified opinion as to what the district's mission should be for the next several years. Zones 1 and 2 will meet at 5:30 and 7:00 on Monday night, January 8<sup>th</sup> and Zones 3 and 5 will meet at the same times but on Tuesday night, January 9, 2007. The meeting places are still not confirmed but will be announced on the district's website at

<http://www.gentrypioneers.com/> by Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>. Parents will also receive a "flyer" sent home next week via their child(ren) with a posting of the meeting times and places. Zone 4's meeting will probably coincide with the Board's regular January meeting later in the month.

How is the Arkansas Leadership Academy involved in the process? For a complete picture of their involvement in Arkansas public education, log on to their website at <http://www.arkleadership.org/>. For time's sake I will "cut and paste" some key points found at their site.

"Established in 1991, the Arkansas Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 13 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 educational cooperatives; the Arkansas departments of

Education, Higher Education, and Workforce Education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network, Tyson Foods, Inc; Wal\*Mart Stores, Inc. and the Walton Family Foundation for a total of 44 Partners.

For its stated purpose, the “Academy, through the use of research and best practices, designs creative and innovative approaches to establish learning communities in public schools by developing human resources and by modeling and advocating collaboration, support, shared decision making, team learning, risk taking, and problem solving. Partners commit to changing their organizations to support system improvement.”

The ALA’S own mission statement reads, “To develop and sustain a cadre of leaders in public education in Arkansas through collaborative governance by Academy partners resulting in an expanded vision, statewide system change initiatives, synergy among stakeholders, and leadership development institutes.”

Finally the core beliefs of the entity are these four statements, “People support what they help create. Diversity is embraced and valued. To change others, change yourself. The greatest leaders are known by the number of leaders they create.”

Compare that list to the school board’s four core beliefs that I have shared with you on several earlier articles, “Opportunities must be provided for all teachers and all students to excel by maximizing their respective abilities. All stakeholders are responsible for student success. All student success must be objectively and quantifiably measured. A safe and healthy learning environment is conducive to learning.”

Why are the ALA and the Gentry board working together? Look at the board’s second statement, *All stakeholders are responsible for student success*, and compare it to the ALA core beliefs of *People support what they help create* and *Diversity is embraced and valued*. There is the connection that does not require further explanation.

Please plan to come to the meeting in your zone. Your ideas about the district’s future direction are important to both the people who represent you and to the staff of the district.