

# Chalkboard

By

Gayla Wilmoth, Gentry Primary School Principal  
Gentry Public Schools

At Gentry Primary School, we have learned that in order to increase student achievement we need to address three factors: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These factors are key ingredients in the Gentry Primary School Improvement Plan. The Gentry Primary School Improvement Plan has three priorities: improving Literacy, improving Mathematics, and developing responsible citizens. Within these priorities are numerous interventions and actions to help ensure that all of our students are equitably educated.

At Gentry Primary School the state standards are used extensively to design curriculum and instruction, and assess student work. Though dictated by the state frameworks, the grade levels review our curriculum often in their efforts to increase student achievement. We have a fluid document that is updated annually. Each teacher has a copy of the curriculum for his or her grade level. The success of our curriculum is judged on the basis of achievement with a variety of measures. The teachers and I review standardized test scores, Arkansas Primary Benchmark results, and skills checklists, as well as teacher created materials to assess student achievement. We used this information to compare student performance to those same state standards in our efforts to stay focused on what is being learned at our school.

Our staff has focused on research-based instruction – especially in the areas of reading and writing. Our reading curriculum combines carefully designed systematic instruction in 5 areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Our staff has been trained in Step Up to Writing, Classroom Instruction that Works, and Bringing Words to Life. Our staff development this year will include Reading with Meaning and The Essential 55. The connection between reading and writing is taught on a daily basis. Students write daily. In our efforts to increase student achievement in literacy and mathematics, our students receive instruction in the area of critical thinking.

Students at the Primary School are assessed in a variety of ways: standardized tests, mastery checks, skills checklists, and teacher created assessments. The No Child Left Behind blueprint requires that schools be held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments. In March 2006, Gentry Primary School second grade students were tested with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills – a nationally normed standardized achievement test. Our kindergarten students scored at the 62% in Language and the 58% in total Mathematics. Our first graders scored at the 71% in total Reading, 72% in total Language, and 68% in total Mathematics. Our second graders scored at the 76% in total Reading, 72% in total Language, and 74% in total Mathematics.

In short, we are proud of what we do, and proud at what our students have accomplished. We think that the more you look at Gentry Primary School, the more you'll find to like and appreciate.

