

# Chalkboard

By

Larry Cozens, Gentry Middle School Principal  
Gentry Public Schools

On Sunday May 7, 2006, I meet with six members of the Arkansas Leadership Academy that would be conducting the Scholastic review of the Gentry Middle School. During the meeting we talked about the portfolio of information that was sent to each of them for their review. In the portfolio there was information about schedules, test scores, homework policies, teacher certifications, classes, and policies and procedures.

They were in the building for four days. They made 47 classroom observations, formal and informal discussions with 29 teachers 103 students, 37 parents 7 central office personnel, 16 support staff, the resource officer, Ozark Guidance counselor, and any one else that might have step through the front door during that week.

The standard instrument used for data collection was the Arkansas draft of *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement*. They came back with a 54-page report that offered recommendations for the school to help with the continued improvement that has started.

This is a three-year process for the school and teachers to gain knowledge of what to look for and what and how to gather data to see if what we are doing is working. The teachers have had 48 hours of intensive training the first few weeks of school. We have read two different books and have set aside more time to meet and look at the data we have and to learn more about what other material we can look at to find the best way to reach all the children we can.

Some of the recommendations from the Leadership team that we have started are:

- 1) That we needed to develop a more rigorous curriculum for our students. We needed to set our expectation higher for all students.
- 2) Teachers and Administrators should collaborate in develop an authentic assessment that are aligned with the content subject matter and he Arkansas Academic Content Standards.
- 3) School should form a school leadership team focused on improving teaching and learning.
- 4) Establish a system of monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum on a regular basis.

So as your children come home and say that it is different this year that we are wanting them to do more quality work. They are right. We are expecting them to work and do it correctly. If they do not we will have other way to help them get the work in and done right. Our 8<sup>th</sup> hour enrichment class has been a good time for all students to receive extra help in any class that they had problem in that day. We are expecting all student to take home their agendas every Friday and have is signed by a parent. That way you know what your child has done that week. When you sign it then on Monday we will know that you saw that information. It will help with the lines of communication between the school and the home. The bottom line is that both (the school and home)

want what is best for the children. We want to see that children are given the chance to do their best.

Let us look at the scores from last year from the benchmark test:

GRADE	NUMBER TESTED	% PRO&ADV	
		Literacy	Math
6 <sup>th</sup>	97	74	67
7 <sup>th</sup>	110	63	56
8 <sup>th</sup>	128	77	55

These are good scores that are very good. It is not as good as we can get. We are going to work to see that we are all doing the best we can. I will be working, the teachers will be working, and the students will be working. In the past just not doing may have been OK. But it is not going to work this year.

I am excited about the year. Changes are being made, improvements are being made and that can do nothing but improve the learning of your children.