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The 2010 NCEA Higher Performing Schools List Highlights Arkansas Schools that Are Beating the Odds in Student Achievement

The National Center for Educational Achievement's annual list released this week recognizes schools that are having more success than their peers at preparing students for college and careers.

(Austin, TX–February 15, 2011) The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA), a department of ACT, released its 2010 NCEA Higher Performing Schools List for Arkansas on its public website www.nc4ea.org this week. The list identifies NCEA Higher Performing Schools—those elementary, middle, and high schools that have consistently outperformed their peers that serve similar student populations—and recognizes their achievement in bringing more students to college and career readiness than expected.

The 2010 Higher Performing List conveys a strong message to schools and districts across the nation that all students can achieve at high standards and school improvement is possible no matter the zip code. Several schools with high poverty levels, defined as those with at least a 50% low-income population, appear on the list. Richland Elementary School in West Memphis School District in West Memphis, Arkansas is one such school and has consistently made the list in all state-tested subject areas for the last three years (2008, 2009 and 2010).

“Making the list, and especially in all subjects, is a great achievement for these schools. With education reforms focused on higher standards and higher accountability measures such as the Common Core State Standards Initiative, these higher performing schools show us that all students can, and will, get there,” says Efrain Mercado, Director of Outreach at NCEA. “Our Arkansas educators are doing great work, but if we want every student to graduate with the skills to be successful beyond high school, there’s still more work to do. The schools on this list show us that Arkansas is making college and career readiness a priority.” Notably, for the spring 2010 Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Examinations (ABE) testing, fewer than 2%, or 17 of the state’s public schools, were higher performing in all grades and tested subjects.

Schools on the list are identified by one of two measures: academic growth of students at the school and/or absolute achievement of students at the school using the ABE’s advanced performance level. The measures exemplify not only those schools that are able to improve their student performance from previous years but also those schools that push their students beyond the proficient level—a level that is typically too low to accurately measure student preparedness for postsecondary learning. NCEA’s identification of Higher Performing Schools is selective and comprises approximately 8% of public schools in the state.

NCEA (formerly known as Just for the Kids) began identifying Higher Performing Schools in Arkansas in 2000 and continues to annually release these lists as well as College and Career Readiness Charts for every public school in the state.

To view the 2010 NCEA Higher Performing Schools List for Arkansas, please visit www.nc4ca.org/HPschoolsar.

To learn more about how NCEA identifies Higher Performing Schools in Arkansas, please visit www.nc4ca.org/arHPfaq.

About NCEA

The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a department of ACT, Inc., a not-for-profit organization committed to helping people achieve education and workplace success. NCEA builds the capacity of educators and leaders to create educational systems of excellence for all students by providing research-based solutions and expertise in higher performing schools, school improvement, and best-practice research that lead to increased levels of college and career readiness.

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