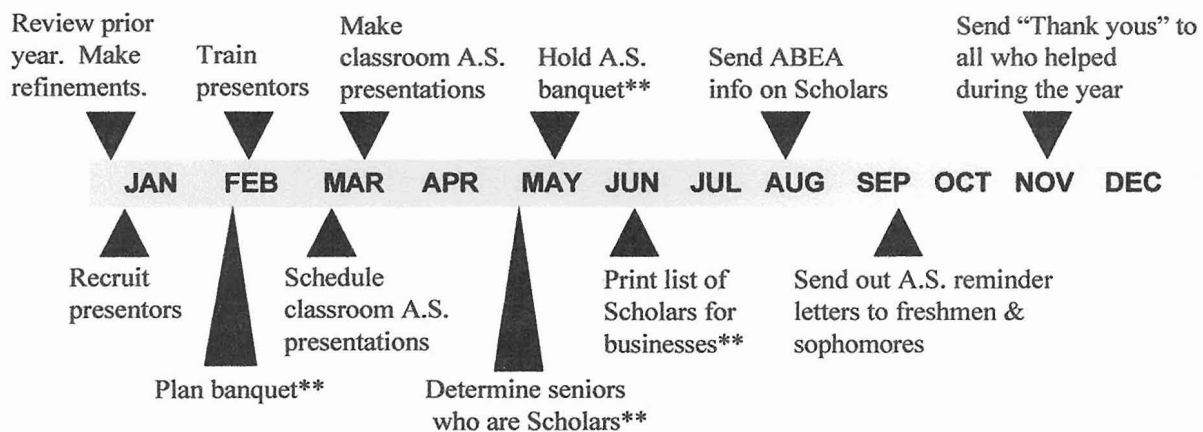


ABEA's Guide to Implementing Arkansas Scholars™

Once the local Chamber of Commerce (or other business leadership group) and school districts have adopted ABEA's Arkansas Scholars™, there are many several important steps to ensure that the program gets off to a strong start.

The diagram below depicts a general calendar of events timeline. It displays the key activities for the management of the Arkansas Scholars program. The pages that follow provide a more detailed checklist of the actions required to fully implement Arkansas Scholars.

The Arkansas Scholars Program Year*



*All dates are approximate.

**Applies only after schools have a graduating class to recognize.

Arkansas Business & Education Alliance

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These responsibilities and tasks are arranged in a what-needs-to-be-done format. While we recommend these steps be executed as presented, they may be modified. Communities are unique and sometimes adjustments are necessary.

Hopefully, the school districts (school boards and superintendents) within the county are already *partners* in the program. If not, key business leaders should arrange to introduce them to Arkansas Scholars. It is important to have the participation, support, and cooperation of key school district officials.

Additionally, the leaders of the business community must recognize that this is a business program in support of education. The leadership and enthusiasm of the community or region's employers are fundamental to the success of Arkansas Scholars.

Business Responsibilities for Arkansas Scholars:

- Chamber of Commerce Establishes an Arkansas Scholars committee. Business leaders should form an Arkansas Scholars committee for management of the program. A community business leader should chair the committee. The committee's activities should be supported by the Chamber of Commerce or similar group. See the suggested diagram (last page) for organizing this committee and sub-groups.
- Business leaders canvass membership and other businesses. The objective is to explain the program and build interest. It is important that businesses (1) recognize Arkansas Scholars for employment purposes, (2) contribute to program costs, (3) agree to ask for transcripts as part of employment process, and (4) participate in presentations. The local newspaper can help with a feature story on the program. The Chamber must convey the message that local and regional business support is *essential*. Civic club presentations are a good opportunity to invite participation.
- The Arkansas Scholars committee meets with participating school principal(s), counselors, and a few teachers. The purpose is to explain the program, make these people comfortable, answer questions, and schedule in-class presentations. Schools are *partners* in this effort and the support of teachers, counselors, and principals is essential.
- Program presenters are recruited. As an example, if there are 250 eighth-graders in the district then, at an average of 25 per class, there will be ten presentations to be made. That means either ten presenters deliver one presentation or five people deliver two

programs, etc. As an option, it is possible for business leaders make classroom presentations in teams of two.

Presenters are typically plant managers, company presidents, bank officers, small business owners, human resource managers, hospital administrators, utility company staff, and similar business leaders in the community.

Presenters should be mature, responsible, and comfortable in front of young teenagers, and should understand the difference between informing and lecturing. They must be positive, interesting, and flexible. The ability to interact with the students and respond to their questions is important.

- Presenters are trained. Pick a Tuesday morning, Thursday lunch, or some other time and allow an hour and a half for training. The Arkansas Scholars committee will coordinate training. Initial training, provided by ABEA, will include a detailed review of the Arkansas Scholars slides and explanation of key points to emphasize. **No one should make the presentation to students without formal training.** A refresher training session should be held each year for experienced trainers. Remember, presenters will be talking with *13 year-olds* for 30 to 40 minutes. Be prepared.
- Classroom presentations are scheduled in March or April. Presentations are made to **all** second semester 8th graders in city/school district. One way to accomplish this is to cover all of the English classes. Make the presentations within a three-day period.

These presentations should be closely coordinated with schools. Also, check with principals and/or counselors regarding the course selection process for the 9th grade. Ideally, Arkansas Scholar presentations should be made before students select 9th grade classes. Print a simple brochure or flyer that outlines the Arkansas Scholars program and criteria. Teachers may offer extra credit or points to students who have the flyer signed by a parent and return it to school. Make sure students are clear about Arkansas Scholars criteria.
- Presentations are made in schools. Presenters are assigned, arrangements for equipment are made, and presenters head for the classrooms. This schedule is closely coordinated with the school(s). Teachers and counselors should be informed and involved in advance. Make sure the room has a screen or white wall and correct equipment and software will be in place. THANK the teacher. Suggest coordinating the Arkansas Scholars presentation with a classroom writing assignment or some other academic activity. *Help teachers see it as a useful experience, not a lost class period.* Be sure to check in at the school office before going to classroom.

Note: Some communities have chosen to make the Scholars presentations in September of students' ninth grade year. If handled correctly and if it doesn't impact students' ability to take the necessary courses, the practice is acceptable.

- Arkansas Scholars recognition event is planned and held. This is the event at the end of the school year recognizing seniors who have met all of the Arkansas Scholars criteria. The event includes parents and is financed by local businesses, sometimes with help from civic groups and school districts. *Many communities find ways to conduct an appropriate event for not a lot of money. Be imaginative!*

Everyone should be a winner and a scholar at this event. Avoid singling out a percentage of the group. In a *brief* presentation, strongly encourage graduating seniors to continue their education somewhere after high school. Remind graduates that they should consider a range of two and four year colleges, technical training institutes. As an Arkansas Scholar, these students have proven they can do it.

Whether you hold a banquet, spaghetti supper, or a fish-fry luncheon, the event should emphasize recognition, be kept simple, and be focused on the seniors. Award Arkansas Scholars certificates to each senior. Thank parents for their support. Remind students that area employers will recognize their Arkansas Scholars status. Details and event atmosphere are determined locally.

- Publish list of each year's graduating Arkansas Scholar students. Based on determination from the high school(s), the names of students meeting A.S. status will be submitted to the Scholars committee for publication in a simple booklet and in the local newspaper. All local businesses are to be provided with copies. Arkansas Scholars status should be used as part of employment application evaluation. Sponsoring businesses should be listed in the booklet and newspaper. Promote the program.
- Plan follow-up letters and other activities for 9th, 10th, and 11th graders. Recognizing that four years is a long time to most eighth graders, regular reminders to students about the program are important. Personal letters are one approach. 25 businesses can divide up classes and each send a handful of letters to those students who continue to meet the criteria. These letters praise the students for their efforts, as well as remind them of the Arkansas Scholars program and recognition criteria.

Some school districts provide barbeques, picnics, or pizza parties for beginning sophomore and junior students who continue to qualify.

Also, as you establish the program, community leader may wish to not wait four years for the first banquet. School districts may “grandfather” in current freshmen and sophomores, and that would allow you to have the first banquet in two years. Simply indentify those who met the criteria over their four years of high school.

- Send thank you letters. In the fall, the Arkansas Scholars committee should send thank you notes to all business, education, community leaders who helped with the Arkansas Scholars program. Open the door to next year.
- Each summer, send ABEA a brief, one report on how to many students were reached (in each district), how many presentations, how many Arkansas Scholars graduated (once you have a participating graduating class), and similar data. Give some thought to the program and tell us what works and what needs improvement.
- Evaluate the program. Your planning/implementation team should meet three or four times per year to provide continuity for the program. Every component of the program should be reviewed. The committee structure diagram on the last page of this document can serve as a guide. Recognize your successes and identify what can be done better next year. Business, parent, and student awareness of Arkansas Scholars will make the most difference.
- Arkansas Scholars Gold Seals and Red Stickers. ABEA provides the gold Scholars seals for recognition certificates. We also provide the red stickers for H.S. transcripts.
- Additional information. Training is always available. More ideas, suggestions, and information on Arkansas Scholars will be provided as experience grows. Please share your experiences, success, and problems with us in order to help others.

Questions? Need help? Call the Arkansas Business & Education Alliance at 501-514-5556

Information available at www.arkansas scholar.org

Alternative contact: Diane Tatum, ABEA Chair at 870-541-4752

REMEMBER: As with any successful program, Arkansas Scholars requires leadership. Someone or some small team in your community must say: “This is our program, we will make it happen, and it will be a success.” Then, a wide range of people should be involved to get things done. Share the work and fun...