

# State names faltering schools

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08/19/2005

Tulsa World (Final Home Edition), Page A1 of News

## **The state's School Improvement List includes 35 TPS schools.**

The Oklahoma State Department of Education on Thursday declared that 124 schools are in need of improvement this year, down from 142 in 2004.

Schools named to the Oklahoma School Improvement List represent 7 percent of all public schools in the state.

"All public schools are being held to high accountability standards, yet 93 percent of Oklahoma's schools met or exceeded those federal benchmarks," State Superintendent Sandy Garrett said.

Officials said the list released on Thursday will be considered preliminary until the end of September, when the district appeals process will be complete.

Districts in the Tulsa area with schools on the improvement list include Tulsa Public Schools, which has 35, and Sand Springs and Sapulpa, which have one each.

Two Tulsa schools -- Bryant and Mark Twain elementary schools -- were among 89 in the state to be removed from the School Improvement List on Thursday.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to make "adequate yearly progress," or AYP, in reading and math test scores, the number of students who take standardized tests and attendance or graduation rates. Schools are expected to have 100 percent of students demonstrating proficiency in reading and math by 2013-14.

If schools do not make AYP for two consecutive years, they are named to the Oklahoma School Improvement List. Likewise, it takes two consecutive years of making AYP for a school to be removed from the list.

Diane Hensley, principal at Mark Twain, said she couldn't wait to announce to her school that it was off the improvement list -- especially because they had been very close to doing so for three years.

While being in need of improvement forces schools to pay close attention to the basics -- reading and math -- Hensley said her faculty found it just as essential to sustain and even add new enrichment activities for students.

"Enrichment, such as fine arts and service-learning projects, keeps them in school and focused because then they enjoy school," she said.

Hensley also called the School Improvement List process "excellent," despite its downsides.

"It certainly adds to the stress of public schools, but the process keeps us all focused on achievement and success," Hensley said. "This just proves that at-risk populations are as capable of achievement as any other population. That satisfies us immensely -- that we know we can compete with any school in the state or the nation."

Of the 35 School Improvement List schools in Tulsa Public Schools, 21 made AYP, so they could be removed from the list if they do so again next year.

TPS officials said they were disappointed to learn that another six schools on the improvement list would have made AYP if their attendance or graduation rates had been higher.

"We're making it academically at many of our schools, and we're not making AYP due to attendance. I don't think a lot of people understand that will get a school on the list by itself, so we're asking for parents' help," said Roberta Ellis, executive director of state and federal programs for TPS.

Both Tulsa and Sapulpa hired consultants with the Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Evans Newton Inc. to introduce a curriculum alignment program called TargetTeach in 2004-05 at schools on the improvement list last year.

Sapulpa Assistant Superintendent Mary Webb said she gives a lot of credit to the program for helping Washington Elementary School make AYP this year.

"A key factor were the TargetTeach consultants that came into the school. They provided our teachers with some additional strategies that they may not have used before," Webb said.

Of the 24 Tulsa schools participating in the TargetTeach program, 14 made AYP and another six met all of the state's academic requirements, but failed to make AYP because they didn't have adequate attendance.

Tulsa will be expanding the TargetTeach program to every school in the district this year.

Sand Springs' Charles Page High School was named to the School Improvement List for the first time, but district administrators there will appeal the state's decision.

"This was aggravating news for us because it was a big surprise," said Superintendent Lloyd Snow.

Robert Franklin, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, said the state included the test scores of about 10 to 15 students at a treatment facility for troubled youth for which Sand Springs provides educational programming.

"Those students come from so many varied school sites and it's a totally different program from our high school, but the public looks at the scores and says, 'Well the high school didn't meet the standards,' and we don't think that's fair," Franklin said. "The black eye comes at our high school and our community and that's dangerous."

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## **Tulsa-area School Improvement List 2005 (pending appeals)**

### **Year 1**

- \* Washington Elementary School, Sapulpa
- Charles Page High School, Sand Springs
- \* Academy Central Elementary, Tulsa
- \* Burroughs Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Cherokee Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Cooper Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Disney Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Hawthorne Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Houston Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Kendall-Whittier Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Lindbergh Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* MacArthur Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* McClure Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Roosevelt Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Sandburg Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Whitman Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Edison Preparatory School (middle and high), Tulsa
- \* Webster High School, Tulsa

### **Year 2**

- \* Celia Clinton Elementary School, Tulsa
- Eugene Field Elementary School, Tulsa
- Newcomer International School, Tulsa
- \* Cleveland Middle School, Tulsa
- Clinton Middle School, Tulsa
- Foster Middle School, Tulsa
- \* Gilcrease Intermediate School, Tulsa
- Whitney Middle School, Tulsa
- Central High School, Tulsa
- East Central High School, Tulsa
- Hale High School, Tulsa
- Rogers High School, Tulsa
- TSST, Tulsa

### **Year 3**

- Hamilton Middle School, Tulsa

### **Year 4**

- Anderson Elementary School, Tulsa
- \* Springdale Elementary School, Tulsa

### **Year 5**

Monroe Middle School, Tulsa

**Year 6**

Madison Middle School, Tulsa

\* Denotes schools that made Adequate Yearly Progress

*Source: Oklahoma State Department of Education*

Related Photos & Graphics



Mark Twain Elementary School first-graders Keye Smith (left), Christine Acree and Donnel England work on writing skills on Thursday at the school, which was one of two Tulsa schools taken off the state's School Improvement List.  
SHERRY BROWN / Tulsa World

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