

AN A FOR EFFORT, AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

If you are looking for promising - or discouraging - news about your community, examine the report card on Arkansas's 1,050 public schools for 2013-14. The Marvell-Elaine Elementary School was one of the state's top-performing schools. When the state for the first time converted all the statistical measurements of school performance into traditional letter grades, Marvell-Elaine earned an A.



Only 162 of Arkansas schools got an A when the state calculated how they did on all the measurements of performance in reading and mathematics. Those schools tend to be in communities with few children from low-income families. Ninety-eight percent of Marvell-Elaine's elementary children are in that category.

Marvell-Elaine High School earned a C, respectable for a school where nearly all the children qualify as needy by income standards.

School performance is as good a predictor as there is for a community's future. In Marvell-Elaine's case, the A is a testament to the diligence of the schools' teachers and staff, but it is also a tribute to the whole community and the organizations and individuals that got involved with the schools. We would include the Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center, which has expanded its work with the schools over 30 years through programs such as the Campaign for Grade-level Reading, summer enrichment programs that help children retain their knowledge and skills through the vacation period, and after-school programs and structured activities year-round.



"We've watched pretty proudly as the children in the summer programs become avid readers," said Beatrice Shelby, executive director of BGACDC.

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