



ARKANSAS  
DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION

**EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT**  
***DRAFT CONSOLIDATED STATE PLAN***  
***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

FULL DRAFT PUBLISHED: MAY 22, 2017



[www.ArkansasESSA.org](http://www.ArkansasESSA.org)

## Introduction

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is pleased to provide a draft version of its Consolidated Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This document represents a year's worth of stakeholder engagement, department planning, and writing and revising to create a coherent plan for the U.S. Department of Education.

The plan is not an exhaustive list of everything going on in Arkansas education. Instead, it is a description of the actions and policies ADE will take to help schools and districts gauge their performance, identify solutions for improvement, and target resources and support to help all students be successful in a pathway beyond K–12 education.

ADE is particularly focused on ensuring districts, schools, and communities have the supports they need to help students succeed in college and careers, regardless of their background. This executive summary identifies the key components of the department's plan, in an easy-to-read, concise manner. ADE seeks stakeholder feedback on the direction and vision laid out in the plan and this executive summary, as it is working diligently to incorporate public stakeholder feedback into the next version of the plan.

To inform the process, stakeholders may:

- Review the [full plan](#).
- Read [each section of the plan](#).
- Take [the survey](#).
- Review the stakeholder feedback process and input informing this draft [here](#).
- View the [“Understanding ESSA” Facebook Live series](#) on each component of the plan.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ESSA stands for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- ESSA replaces No Child Left Behind.
- With ESSA, each state can have a more flexible and unique accountability system.
- The change is a positive shift for Arkansas educators, students, and citizens.



## Background

The passage of ESSA in December of 2015 created unprecedented opportunity. Arkansas can now reframe state support and accountability within its own unique context, personalizing its approach to ensuring equity, access, and opportunity for all students.

The purpose of the federal legislation’s Title I is to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps” (§ 1001, ESSA, 2015). At the state level, Article 14, § 1 of the Arkansas Constitution requires Arkansas to provide a general, suitable, and efficient system of free public schools to children of the state.

Additionally, the Arkansas Supreme Court in *Lake View School District No. 25 v. Huckabee*, 351 Ark. 31 (2002) noted it is the absolute duty of the state to provide all public school children with a substantially equal opportunity for an adequate education. With this history, Arkansas’s response to state and federal requirements has focused on ensuring equity within the dominant “adequacy” mindset. The new plan capitalizes on the unique opportunity that the ADE and local education agencies (LEAs) have to reimagine a coherent support and accountability system that integrates federal, state, and local efforts and resources to enhance equity and access to opportunities to benefit all students in Arkansas.

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*Reflecting the ongoing need to improve and leveraging new flexibility offered by ESSA, the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System is a welcome new approach.*

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## Vision for Excellence in Education

Arkansas’s [Vision for Excellence in Education](#) moves beyond adequacy to excellence. The ADE is transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education so that every student graduates ready for college, career, and community engagement.

There are five goals supporting the Vision for Excellence in Education. Among these goals:

- The first four are student-focused, and
- The fifth goal sets the tone for the leadership, support, and service the ADE will provide to LEAs through development of the personnel within the agency.

**The new vision, mission, and associated goals are provided in Figure A on the next page.**





Figure A. Vision for Excellence in Education

Looking beyond the traditional education paradigm, the vision sets a course to prepare Arkansas students for a future that may be different from today’s college and career paradigm. Already, the lines between college, technical, and career postsecondary readiness have blurred. The academic content and skills that students must acquire and demonstrate for success must dive more deeply into complex thinking and learning, creative problem-solving,

synthesis, and design. Students need to develop internal motivation and the tenacity to persist in adversity in a future where change and innovation will be the norm.



**The ADE established key values to anchor and support the vision and inform the theory of action for support and accountability (Figure B).**

The vision sets a new course for ADE leadership, as well as its support and service to LEAs. As noted in Act 930 (2017), it falls to the state to provide the framework to ensure that all students in Arkansas public schools have a substantially equal opportunity to achieve and demonstrate the following:

- Academic readiness;
- Individual academic growth; and
- Competencies through the application of knowledge and skills in core subjects, consistent with state academic standards through a student-focused learning system.

To move toward this vision, the educational support and accountability system must drive the desired changes by including multiple measures of student success and school quality in a coherent system which will support state and local decision-making to create and enhance effective student-focused learning systems.

The vision for ADE and Arkansas LEAs represents a significant shift in the way the state and schools think about student learning and supporting systems. To achieve this, ADE has honored the work of the past by applying lessons learned to the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System.

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*The ADE will help LEAs as it transitions from the former statewide system of support, which focused on the school as the unit of analysis and thus the focus of support, to shift toward supporting and empowering LEAs to improve their struggling schools and make significant progress toward closing long-standing achievement gaps.*

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Figure B. Values Anchoring the Vision for Excellence in Education



Through data-informed design, leadership, service, and support, the ADE has meaningfully consulted, and will continue to engage, with stakeholders to reimagine and iteratively design a coherent system using an evidence-based theory of action. The new system:

1. Honors where students and schools currently are;
2. Recognizes the important input characteristics of schools and LEAs; and
3. Leads LEAs to personalize their pathway to an aspirational vision of the future (i.e., state long-term goals) by a coherent, comprehensive support and accountability system responsive to stakeholders' input and lessons learned from prior state and federal accountability systems.

## Theory of Action

A coherent support and accountability system is guided by clearly defined goals and indicators of success that are congruent with a state's theory of action and the logic underlying the design of the system to incentivize and support goal attainment (Hall, Domaleski, Russell, Pinsonneault, 2017).

The selection of indicators and how they are used and weighted within the support and accountability system should align and support the overarching goals of the system. Mindful of the student-focused goals of the vision, the support and accountability system serves as a mechanism to promote transparency in the progress and outcomes of LEAs' and their schools' continuous inquiry and improvement efforts to achieve or make progress toward expected outcomes.

Figure C illustrates the intended shift this represents for supporting school quality and student success.



Figure C. Shifting from Adequacy to School Quality and Student Success



A primary goal of the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System is to inform educators and stakeholders about school quality and student success as well as the progress and outcomes of schools’ and districts’ continuous improvement efforts. Transparent communication about school quality and student success is an active expression of leadership that values and earns public trust by ensuring quality and accountability in fulfilling its primary function as the state education agency. Another goal is to identify struggling schools and notify LEA leaders when schools within their systems are most in need of LEA support to achieve immediate and continuous improvement.

**Figure D illustrates ADE’s high-level theory of action for the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System.**

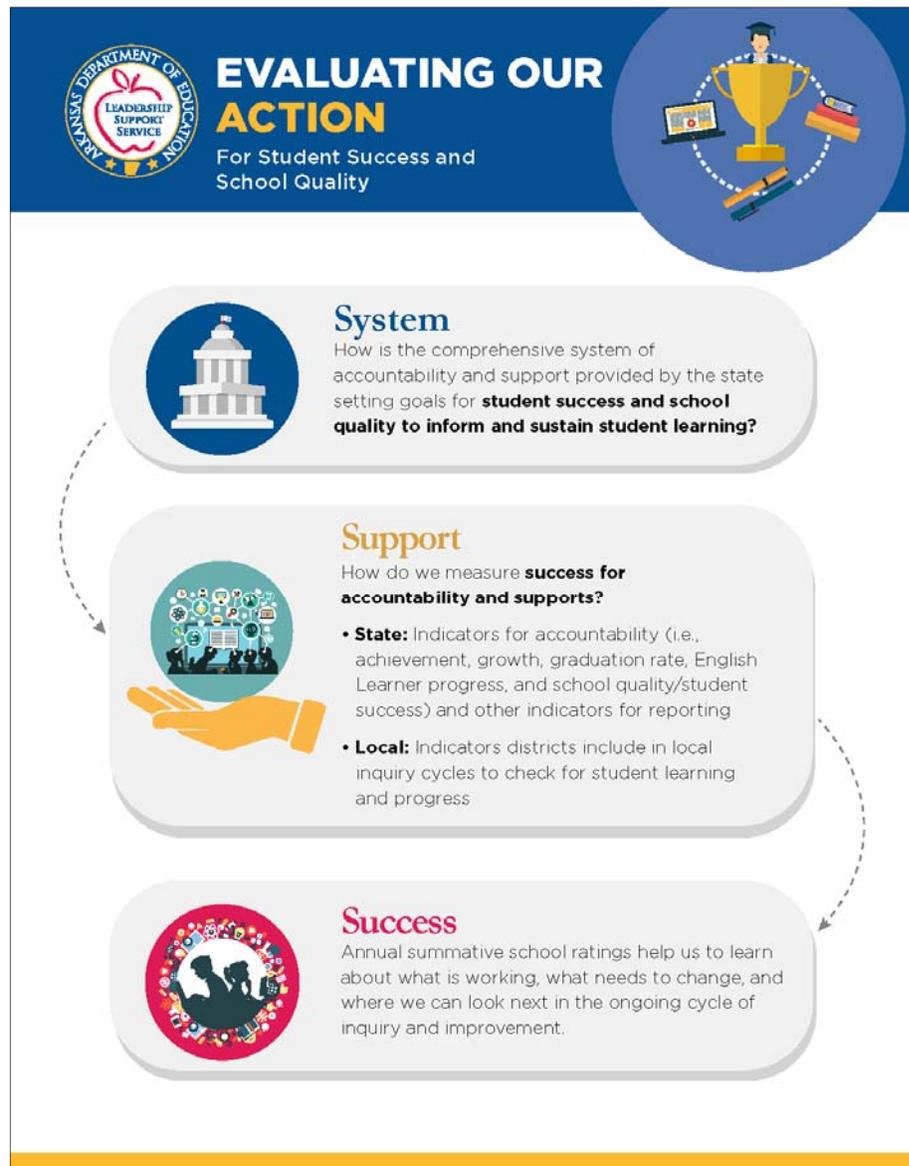


Figure D. Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System Theory of Action



## Support and Accountability

A coherent theory of action clarifies important inputs in the system that provide the resources and supports to carry out the actions theorized to achieve the intended outcomes. Arkansas’s Educational Support and Accountability System changes the focus of ADE’s efforts from directly intervening in struggling schools to empowering and enabling LEAs to harness local, state, and federal resources to enhance outcomes for all students, particularly those in struggling schools and those historically underserved.

To achieve this end, LEAs will need to play the central role in leading their local system through continuous inquiry and improvement cycles, supported in varied degrees by the statewide system of support based on data-informed needs. A central concept in the theory of action is an intentional shift in the expected state inputs and the expected LEA inputs—both the focus at each level—and the role of support to ensure schools can focus on what matters most for student learning.

The annual meaningful differentiation system will provide summaries of robust indicators to include these five elements of the School Performance Rating:

- Achievement,
- Growth (50% for all but high schools; 45% for high schools because graduation rate is included),
- Graduation rate,
- English Learner progress in English proficiency (weight to be determined), and
- School Quality/Student Success indicators for each grade span responsive to stakeholders and state and federal requirements.

This school performance rating system for annual meaningful differentiation of schools, along with measures of interim progress that are transparent, ambitious, yet achievable landmarks, provide information to ADE and

LEAs to steer the course toward achieving long-term goals. The indicators in the school performance rating, while robust for high-stakes accountability use, are not intended to be the sole focus of LEA and school efforts for continuous improvement. The school performance rating provides a snapshot of the outcomes of school quality and student success. A focus on these outcomes alone would short-circuit true continuous inquiry and improvement.

**Both ADE and LEAs are shifting from focusing narrowly on the annual snapshot of school quality and student success to promoting deeper review of the inputs and strategic efforts needed to ensure all students have access to opportunity for success (Figure E).**



*Figure E. Moving from Snapshot Data to Comprehensive Approach to Support and Accountability*

### Key Points to Remember

- Accountability informs support and provides transparency for outcomes of the learning system.
- The theory of action describes how support and accountability are intended to work together to improve outcomes for students.
- The school performance rating will determine level of support for schools.
- The new system has a focus on long-term learning versus one-time snapshot test scores.
- Long-term goals reflect the vision—reflecting ADE and LEA dreams for all students’ success.
- Checkpoints for interim progress are for LEA and school self-reflection and for pacing their progress toward the vision.

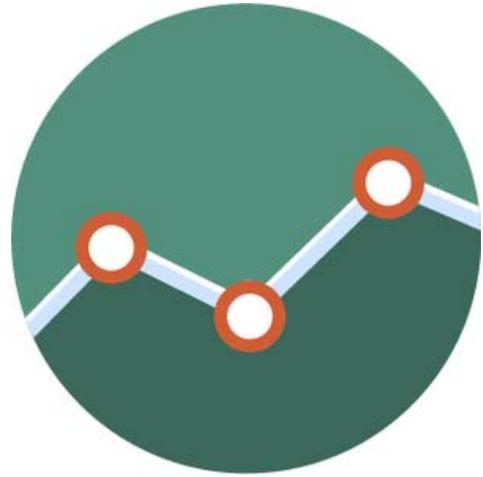
## Assessment

The state adopted high-quality assessments to measure college- and career-readiness based on the recommendation from the Governor’s Council on Common Core. The council conducted numerous hearings and received public feedback regarding standards and assessments. They proposed recommendations to the Governor’s office to revise the math and literacy standards and change the state assessment to ACT Aspire for the 2016–2017 school year.

ADE is focusing assessment efforts on those that inform the local cycle of inquiry in schools, bringing real information to the classroom for student benefit. Currently, ADE is exploring additional measures of School Quality and Student Success based on stakeholder input, including Pre-ACT or PSAT for grade 10 and WorkKeys for grade 12 to measure career-readiness.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ACT Aspire will remain for grades 3 through 9/10.
- ADE is exploring how to expand assessment options for the future.
- There is heightened focus on career readiness for high school levels.
- ADE is focusing on grade-level reading for grades K–2. Schools will have new options for grades K–2 assessments that will allow for interim and summative measurements of reading, language, and math.



## Educator Equity and Effectiveness

The ADE will focus Title II, Part A funds on key activities to address our workforce priorities of attracting, preparing, supporting, and developing effective teachers and leaders. Through stakeholder feedback, the state developed definitions for reporting, data analysis, and decision-making and will work within a structure of tiered district support.

These actions are timely given the status of Arkansas’s teacher pipeline and changes in the workforce. Over the past five years, enrollment in educator preparation programs has declined by more than 50%. The state is taking action now to enhance the skills of educators, grow its own talent, and honor the profession that works with students and schools every day.



### *Key Points to Remember*

- There is a clear focus on equity, meaning equal access to effective teachers.
- Effective and ineffective definitions are included to help inform equitable access to effective teachers.
- Novice teachers (i.e., those in years 1–3) will no longer do summative evaluations.
- Summative evaluations will only take place every four years.
- ADE is developing a career continuum. Educators will have the opportunity to move up a career ladder, receiving additional certifications on their licenses.
  - High School Cadets will have opportunities to receive micro-credentials through the Educators Rising Program.
  - Educator Preparation programs will be encouraged to provide a variety of internship opportunities.

## English Learners

The department has worked to develop a statewide education long-term plan for English Learners who are in our K–12 education system. The plan addresses gaps and unequal outcomes by examining and applying culturally appropriate best practices. Arkansas Title III currently serves 42 districts which are collaborating with ADE to improve outcomes for their English Learners.

Some of the supports provided include:

- State funding,
- Coaching,
- Specialized professional development,
- District-identified needs assessment, and
- Culturally responsive support.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ADE has new entry and exit criteria that are common across the state for all districts.
- ELPA 21 is a new annual assessment and will also be entry criteria.
- Former English Learners are counted for accountability for four years.
- For recently arrived English Learners (first year in the U.S.), the first year they take any state assessment will be used as a baseline score. The second year, data will be used for growth. In the third year, data will be used for both growth and proficiency.
- The timeline to proficiency takes into account grade level and proficiency level.
- The English Learner indicator is incorporated into a school's performance rating as one of the five indicators.



## School Support and Improvement

ADE will help LEAs as the state transitions from its former statewide system of support, which focused on the school as the focus of support. Now, the state is shifting toward supporting and empowering LEAs to improve their struggling schools and make significant progress toward closing long-standing achievement gaps.

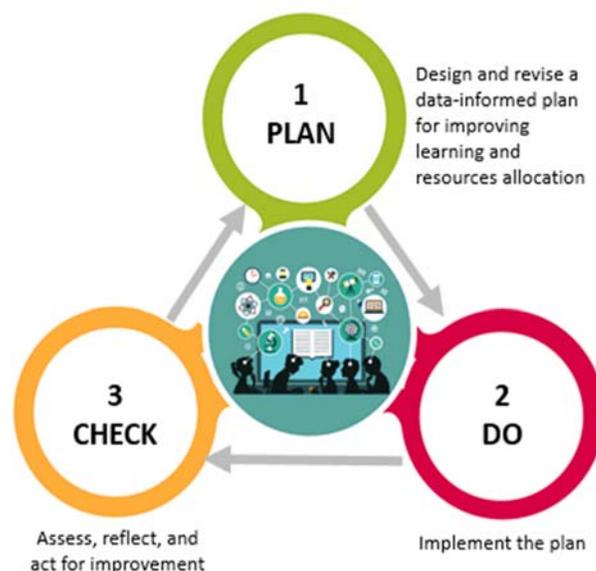
ADE will collaborate and coordinate with the Educational Service Cooperatives to more efficiently and effectively support and monitor LEA school improvement planning and implementation.

ADE will sponsor department-wide regional conferences to disseminate key information regarding:

- Support,
- Services,
- Requirements, and
- Effective evidence-based strategies designed to raise achievement, etc.

To achieve its vision, ADE will need to provide focused support to LEAs as LEAs take responsibility for directly supporting and improving struggling schools within their systems. LEAs will need to think holistically about their system and strategically about human/fiscal resource allocation for their struggling schools. LEAs' continuous inquiry and improvement processes will play a critical role in focusing educators' efforts on what matters most for learning in order to achieve long-term improvement outcomes.

**Figure F illustrates the intended local inquiry and improvement cycle.**



*Figure F. LEA Local Continuous Inquiry and Improvement Cycle*

The continuous inquiry and improvement cycle will build on prior analyses of improvement efforts and/or prior needs assessments, where LEAs and their schools are not starting from scratch; rather, LEAs will intentionally build on and integrate new efforts with existing improvement processes. The local inquiry and improvement process is enhanced when teachers and leaders focus on key factors that are closely connected to student learning, for example, instructional and learning strategies, classroom and school routines that support and enhance deeper learning, and administrative structures impacting students' time, place, path, and pace of learning.

By examining factors close to the work of improving student learning, and supporting struggling schools in addressing these factors, LEAs will be laying the groundwork to achieve better outcomes on the school performance rating. The ADE will focus on supporting LEAs to ensure these processes are evidence-based, high-quality, and high-impact.

The school performance rating system for annual meaningful differentiation will enable ADE to identify struggling schools based on multiple indicators, notify LEAs of struggling schools or student groups within their schools, and collaborate with them to support their work in improving school outcomes. Data from the differentiation system will enable the ADE to design and provide strategic, data-informed support to LEAs. Through the annual school performance rating, stakeholders will have transparent information for critical indicators of school quality and student success.

State reporting of schools' interim progress toward long-term goals, accompanied by state-supported reporting of more expansive information, will enable LEAs to use a rich set of information on important indicators, as well as factors closer to the learning to drive significant improvements at both the student and classroom levels.

ADE will use this rich set of information on important indicators to monitor and adjust its support inputs to LEAs, enhancing support where most needed, and moving out of the way of the work of LEAs where only general supports are needed. When the school performance ratings and other data signal the need for enhanced support, the ADE will work collaboratively with LEAs, first through deeper needs assessment, then, on planning and strategic resource/support provision.

LEAs' needs assessments results, their responsive local improvement plans, and their reports of progress on outcomes relevant to the plan will inform the ADE's continuous inquiry and feedback cycle for adjusting and continuously improving support at all levels, and in particular, for LEAs with struggling schools. The theory of action integrates LEA-level supports as described in Act 930 of the 2017 Arkansas General Assembly where most LEAs' entry points will be in the general, collaborative, and coordinated levels of support.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- In general, ADE will support districts versus individual schools.
- Through this support, districts will gain strategies to better support their schools.
- ADE will notify LEAs of any schools within their LEA identified (through multiple indicators of success, including growth) for a level of support.
- The three key levels of support under ESSA are:
  - **Comprehensive Support:** Lowest 5% of Title I schools.
  - **Targeted Support:** Schools with subgroups not performing at expected levels over time.
  - **Additional Targeted Support:** Schools with subgroups performing below the lowest 5% of all students.
- Schools will have three years to show improvements.
- ADE will approve funding for Comprehensive Support schools and Targeted Support schools.
- ADE will approve improvement plans for Comprehensive Support, and LEAs will approve improvement plans for Targeted Support.
- Stakeholders must be involved in the development of all improvement plans.



## Next Steps

Arkansas’s new Theory of Action is a significant shift in focus—from labeling schools and applying sanctions to identifying, notifying, and prioritizing LEAs’ needs with regard to supporting their schools. This system will transition and improve over time as ADE and LEAs learn about additional school quality and student success indicators are developed, validated, and used to replace or augment initially proposed indicators.

Ratings will be accompanied by more expansive, visually intuitive reporting of key indicators, including measurements of interim progress toward long-term goals, and related information to enhance interpretation of reports. Performance ratings will signal to LEAs the extent to which schools within their system are achieving important student success outcomes.

Figure G provides a mockup of the school report card that will be improved based on stakeholder input and federal guidance.

### Key Points to Remember

- Public input will continue to be collected through June 30, 2017.
- ADE will submit the final plan to the U.S. Department of Education in September 2017.
- Federal feedback is expected by the end of the year, and ADE will implement aspects of the plan beginning in the 2017–18 school year.



Figure G. Draft Mockup for the School Report Card

