



Bureau Brief

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Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP)

The **Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP)** is an annual planning and budgeting document that all Arkansas public schools and school districts are required to create (A.C.A. §6-15-419). The ACSIP serves both a state and federal function. Under state law, the ACSIP helps guide the creation of school-level and district-level strategies for improving student achievement, and it serves as a budget tool for certain state restricted-use funds. The ACSIP also serves as districts' application and budget for all federal programs administered by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (also known as the No Child Left Behind Act). ADE's on-site monitoring of ACSIPs fulfills the state's obligation to ensure districts' compliance with federal regulations.

State law requires all ACSIPs to contain certain information (A.C.A. §6-15-426). The plan must include activities aimed at addressing the greatest needs as indicated by student test score data. State statute also requires the ACSIP to describe how the school or district intends to use each of the four state categorical funds (professional development, National School Lunch, English language learners, and alternative learning environment). At the end of each school year, districts and schools are required to assess the effectiveness of the interventions described in the ACSIP and include the assessment in the following year's plan. State law also requires low performing schools identified under ESEA to revise their ACSIPs to include any new requirements added due to their status. Districts are required to post their school ACSIPs on their website (A.C.A. §6-15-2202(b)(1)(A)).

ACSIP Development

Every Arkansas public school district and school is required to draft an ACSIP using

the uniform format specified by ADE. The format requires schools and districts to identify top priorities and goals. For example, priorities could include "School Climate" and a corresponding goal could be, "Students will improve behavior." The ACSIP requires schools and districts to set benchmarks, such as, "a 5% reduction in office referrals." The interventions and actions are then set for each priority. For example, "The counselor will attend the state conference to receive training on bullying." The ACSIP identifies the individuals responsible for carrying out each action, the timeline for implementation and the funding type and amount necessary for implementation (A.C.A. § 6-15-426).

Each school district creates its own ACSIP, but ADE must approve the plan prior to its adoption. ADE has a staff of 13 people who work with districts on ACSIP development. ADE staff also work on-site with schools designated as "Priority" schools (the state's lowest performing schools) and "Focus" schools (those with the largest achievement gap) to provide intensive support in the development and implementation of their plan. While ADE is responsible for approving district ACSIPs, districts are responsible for working with their individual schools to create and approve school-level ACSIPs.

Districts are not required to develop a brand new ACSIP each year. Once an ACSIP has been approved, districts are required to simply edit subsequent ACSIPs to reflect changes in funding, student achievement status, etc.

Compliance Monitoring

The General Assembly passed Act 807 of 2007 to require ADE to monitor school and district compliance with ACSIP implementation (A.C.A §6-15-426(i)). Under the law, ADE is required to monitor the use of public school funding for:

- State categorical programs
- Instructional facilitators

ADE must also review districts' implementation of programs for students whose academic achievement is below proficient, and department staff must evaluate the research the district cites as support for its selected strategies.

ADE has a monitoring staff of five employees who visit districts to determine their compliance with all applicable state and federal rules. ADE employees visit each district and charter school on a six-year rotating schedule, or about 45 districts each year. During the monitoring process ADE staff interview district program personnel and review documentation for evidence of district compliance. They use a monitoring checklist that includes:

- The legal requirements
- "Compliance indicators," which are framed as questions that seek to determine the district's compliance with each of the legal requirements
- Types of documentation that could serve as evidence the district is complying

Within 20 days of the monitoring visit, ADE staff complete a written report that specifies the extent to which the district is implementing each requirement and any corrective action needed. The district then has 30 days to correct any issues and submit relevant documentation. After allowing adequate time and discussion to resolve outstanding issues, ADE has the authority to withhold funding from districts that continue to be out of compliance.