

Handout D2

State and Federal Accountability Programs

2022 ADEQUACY STUDY

June 2022

Prepared for the Interim Senate Committee on Education
and the Interim House Committee on Education



2022 ADEQUACY REPORT



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Introduction

In accordance with the adequacy statute (A.C.A. § 10-3-2102), this report examines the federal and state structures for holding Arkansas schools accountable. This report examines three state systems: the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Program, the Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Program, and facilities distress. Furthermore, the report addresses two federal accountability measures: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, and state compliance with Part B of the Individual with Disabilities Act.

Academic Accountability

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in 2015, was a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), and provided states with additional flexibility to design accountability systems tailored to state needs while addressing the needs of low-performing schools.

Each state education agency was required to submit an ESSA plan to the United States Department of Education. Plans had to be developed with input from governors and members of the state legislatures and board of educations, as well as teachers, principals, parents, and others. The U.S. Department of Education approved Arkansas's ESSA plan on January 16, 2018, with an amendment changing long-term goals approved on March 11, 2019, and a revised addendum relating to COVID-19 approved August 20, 2021. The 2019 amendment was to accommodate for ACT Aspire cut score changes. The 2021 addendum allowed the state to skip the 2020 data reporting requirements, since no assessments were given in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arkansas's ESSA plan provided more autonomy and flexibility to districts, more support from the state, and multiple measures for districts and schools to prove success with students.

Arkansas's ESSA plan was codified in Act 930 of 2017, which repealed the previous accountability system that had been in place since 1999, and replaced it with the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (which will be discussed in further detail below).

ESSA covers several broad areas: standards and assessments, accountability, public reporting, teachers, and school funding.

ESSA provisions related to school funding deal with federal Title I funding. Since this is not within the purview of the House and Senate Education Committees, this report does not address this portion of ESSA.

Standards and Assessment

Standards

Under ESSA, states are required to adopt challenging statewide academic content standards and statewide academic achievement standards that apply to all public schools and public school students in the state. States must adopt standards for math, reading or language arts, and science, but may also adopt standards for other subjects. States are allowed to set alternative achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. States must also have standards for English-language proficiency that address speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Assessments

States are also required to have statewide, annual assessments aligned with academic standards. States must assess students in reading and math annually in grades three through eight, as well as once in high school. States must assess students in science at least once in grades three through five, once in grades six through nine, and once in grades ten through twelve. States may also assess other subjects.

Assessments must involve multiple measures of student achievement, including measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding, which may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects, or extended performance tasks.

States may administer alternate assessments for students with the most significant disabilities, but no more than one percent of students across the state may be assessed using the alternate exams.

In addition, ESSA sets a requirement that schools test at least 95 percent of their students each year.

Accountability

States are required to have a statewide accountability system based on the state academic standards. The accountability system must establish long-term goals for all students and each subgroup of students in the following areas: proficiency on the annual assessments, high-school graduation rates, and percentage of English language learners making progress in achieving English language proficiency.

The accountability system must establish a system for meaningfully differentiating all public schools in the state. ESSA requires several indicators:

- Academic achievement (proficiency on state assessments)
- Another academic indicator (for high schools, four-year graduation rate)
- English proficiency
- At least one other indicator of school quality of student success (must be valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide).

Each of the academic indicators (the first three indicators on the list above) must carry substantial weight.

Arkansas's ESSA plan sets goals over a 12-year time period, based on stakeholder feedback and the recommendation of the Arkansas Technical Advisory Committee for Assessment and Accountability. According to the plan, setting goals over a 12-year period encourages districts and schools to focus on all students, not just those close to achievement level cut points. Goals in the Arkansas ESSA plan are intended to be aspirational.¹

Arkansas's long-term achievement goal is 80 percent of students achieving a test-based grade-level proficiency score. For graduation rates, the long-term goal for the 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate is 94 percent, and the long-term goal for 5-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate is 97 percent. The goal for English language proficiency is 52 percent of students on track to English Language proficiency; English Language proficiency is based on a number of factors, including students' test scores

¹ Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas Plan, retrieved at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126142803_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_Final_rv_January_30_2018.pdf.

on the ELPA21, when students were identified as English language learners, and whether students have excused English language learner status.²

The accountability system must also have a process for identifying Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools, Targeted Support and Improvement Schools, and Additional Targeted Support Schools.³

Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools are Title I schools that are in the lowest performing five percent of Title I schools in the state, and all high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students.⁴

Targeted Support and Improvement Schools are schools that are consistently underperforming for one or more student groups. Additional Targeted Support Groups are schools that, for any student subgroup, meet the criteria for the lowest performing five percent of Title I schools in the state for students overall.⁵

ESSA sets out specific requirements for state education agencies about the kinds of support that must be provided to each category of schools.⁶

Public Reporting

ESSA requires that states must describe the state's accountability system, list the schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Support and Targeted Support and Improvement, and include results of assessments, graduation rates, other indicators, progress toward goals, assessment participation rates, and number and percentage of English learners achieving English-language proficiency.

Teachers

State ESSA plans must describe how the state will ensure low-income and minority students are not taught at a disproportionate rate by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.

ARKANSAS EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (AESAA)

The Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (Act 930 of 2017) repealed the state's previous accountability system and replaced it with a new accountability system that conformed to the Every Student Succeeds Act. Under the new system, the state is to provide needed support for school districts so they can assist their schools in improving student performance. The Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive accountability system that does the following:

- Establishes clear academic standards that are periodically reviewed and revised
- Maintains a statewide student assessment system that includes a variety of assessment measures

² Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas Plan, retrieved at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126142803_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_Final_rv_January_30_2018.pdf.

³ National Conference of State Legislatures, Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act, retrieved at https://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/ESSA_summary_NCSL.pdf.

⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures, Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act, retrieved at https://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/ESSA_summary_NCSL.pdf.

⁵ National Conference of State Legislatures, Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act, retrieved at https://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/ESSA_summary_NCSL.pdf.

⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act, retrieved at https://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/ESSA_summary_NCSL.pdf.

- Assesses whether all students have equitable access to excellent educators
- Establishes levels of support for public school districts
- Maintains information systems composed of performance indicators that allow DESE to identify levels of public school district supports and generate reports for the public.

The Educational Support and Accountability Act has multiple components, which are discussed in further detail below.

Academic Standards

DESE is required to establish academic standards that define what students shall know and be able to demonstrate in each content area. This report does not address academic standards, since the Learning Expectations report previously addressed academic standards.

Student Assessment

The Educational Support and Accountability Act requires a statewide student assessment system, which must contain the following:

- Developmentally appropriate measurements or assessments for kindergarten through grade two in literacy and mathematics;
- Assessments to measure English language arts, mathematics, and science as identified by the state board;
- Assessment of English proficiency of all English learners; and
- Assessments to measure college and career readiness.

Currently, the state uses the ACT Aspire test as the statewide assessment. However, ACT has announced that the ACT Aspire assessment for grades three through ten will no longer be available after 2023. DESE, working with the Office of State Procurement, completed a Request for Proposals to develop a new statewide assessment to begin in the 2023-24 school year. DESE selected Cambium Assessment Incorporated to develop, administer, and report on a statewide summative assessment in ELA, math, and science for grades three through ten.

Arkansas received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education for conducting assessments in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Arkansas did conduct assessments in the 2020-21 school year, with DESE allowing districts flexibility to reduce the risk of COVID-19 while still meeting the goal of testing at least 95 percent of students.

In 2021, the State Board of Education granted waivers to 56 districts, and 111 schools received waivers who tested less than 95 percent of their eligible students. Ten of those districts had campuses that also tested less than 95 percent of eligible students in the 2018-19 school year. Those districts submitted plans to DESE for increasing the number of test-taking students.⁷

Levels of Support

Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-15-2913 sets out the levels of support that DESE is required to provide to districts. The levels are further described in DESE Rules.

In determining levels of support, DESE considers schools' ESSA designations (which are determined by the ESSA School Index score), fidelity of implementation of school-level improvement

⁷ The following schools submitted plans to DESE: Arkansas Virtual Academy Middle School, Decatur High School, Fayetteville High School, Gravette High School, North Little Rock High School, Conway High School, Arkansas Consolidated High School at Alexander and Mansfield (part of the Arkansas Division of Youth Services), Graduate Arkansas Charter High School, Lee High School, and Premier High School of Little Rock.

plans and district support plans, school and district level data, and fidelity of implementation of DESE directives. Districts may request a certain level of support.⁸ For the 2020-21 school year, the levels of support for each district were based on the 2019 assessments, since there were no assessments conducted in 2020 and no ESSA School Index scores for the 2019-2020 school year.

Act of 1082 of 2019 added some specific requirements for levels of support beginning in the 2019-20 school year. DESE must provide level 3 support to districts in which 40 percent or more of the district's students score "in need of support" on the state's prior year summative assessment for reading. Additionally, DESE must provide level 4 support to districts in which 50 percent or more of the district's students score "in need of support" on the state's prior year summative assessment for reading.

In Level 1—General support, DESE provides guidance and tools to assist districts; districts have access to contacts at DESE for questions. Schools must have school improvement plans, including a literacy plan. School and district improvement plans are discussed further below. In the 2020-21 school year, 180 districts were in Level 1 support.

In Level 2—Collaborative support includes minor or temporary technical assistance of a department initiative or state expectations. Level 2 is required if the district is receiving a federal 1003 grant. Schools in Level 2 districts must have school improvement plans (including literacy plans) and DESE may require districts to have district support plans. In the 2020-21 school year, 3 districts were in Level 2 support.

In Level 3—Coordinated support districts receive technical assistance and monitoring. This level of support requires both school and district improvement plans. In the 2020-21 school year, 46 districts were in Level 3 support.

In Level 4—Directed support DESE provides direct guidance on the development and implementation of school-level plans, resource allocation, monitoring, and evaluation. This level of support also requires district and school improvement plans; DESE must approve district improvement plans. In the 2020-21 school year, 28 districts were in Level 4 support.

Level 5—Intensive support requires State Board approval (though districts may request to receive Level 5 supports). Once a district is classified as being in need of Level 5—Intensive support, DESE creates a district improvement/exit plan in collaboration with district leadership and the local school board. Districts in Level 5 make quarterly reports to the State Board. The State Board must vote to remove districts from Level 5. In the 2020-21 school year, 5 districts were in Level 5 support.

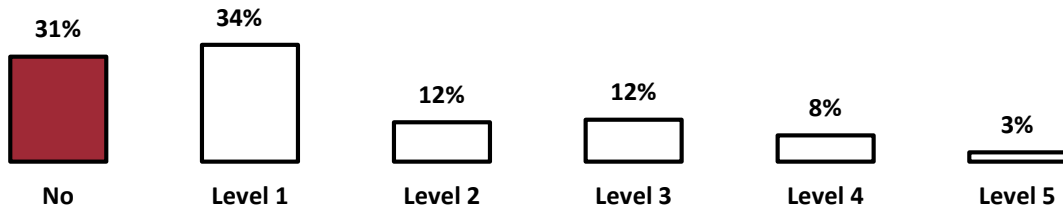
Additionally, if a district is classified as being in need of Level 5—Intensive Support, the State Board may take other actions, including assuming authority of the public school district (excluding open-enrollment charters).

The Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) included questions about the levels of support in the superintendent survey, which was completed by all superintendents and directors of open-enrollment charter schools. The charts below show the superintendents' responses to the questions about levels of support and DESE assistance.

⁸ DESE "Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA)" Rule 8.02.

Superintendent Survey

Question: The accountability system assigns “Levels of Support” to school districts. Do you know which level of support your district is considered to be in?

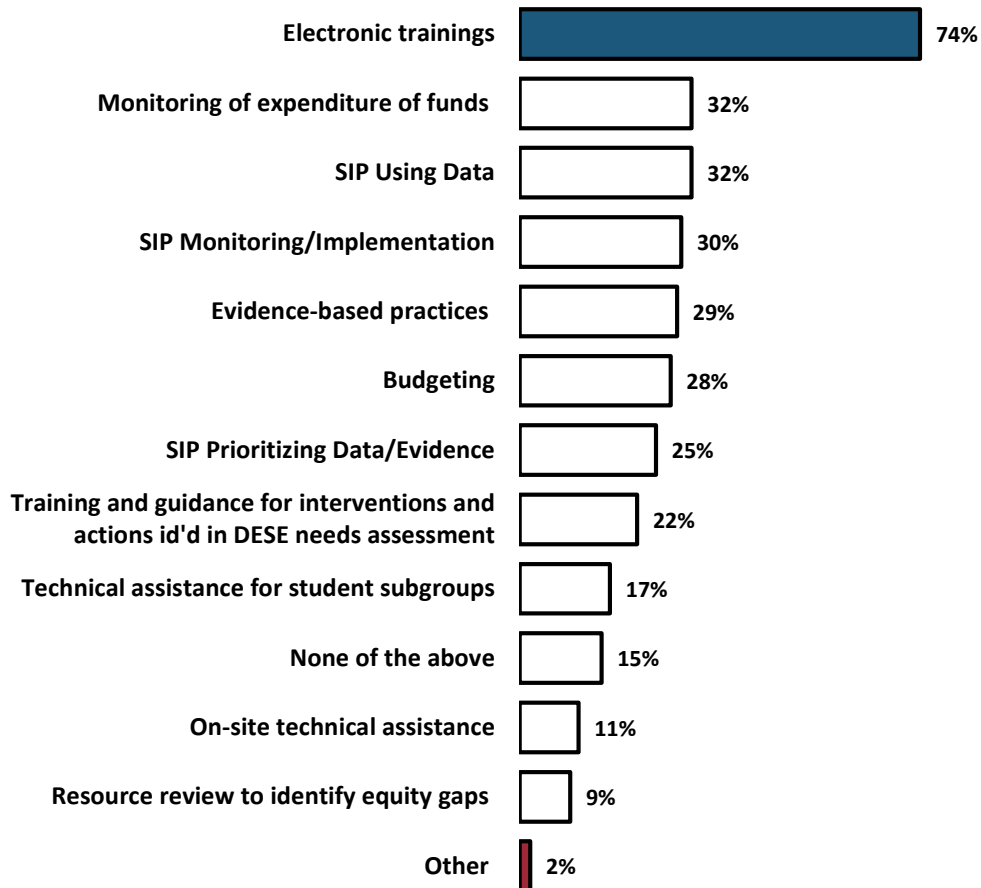


The chart shows that 31 percent of superintendents and directors of open-enrollment charter schools do not know which level of support the district is supposed to be receiving from DESE. In addition, only 34 percent of superintendents indicated that their district was receiving Level 1 support; in the 2020-21 school year approximately 69 percent of districts were classified as being in need of Level 1 support.

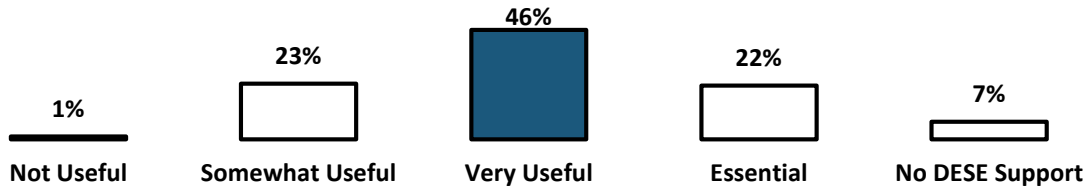
Superintendent Survey

Question: DESE provides various methods of support for districts. Which of the following did your district use in 2020-21? Check all that apply.

Superintendent Survey



Question: How useful is the support your district receives from DESE?



School Improvement Plans and District Support Plans

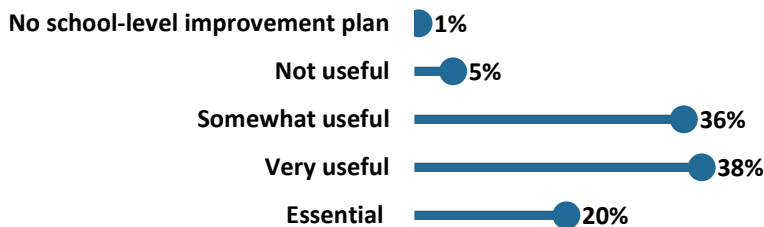
Each school in the state is required under Act 930 to develop a school-level improvement plan by May 1 of each year. The school-level plan is to be submitted to the district and posted on the district website by August 1 of each year. The law also requires all school districts to continually monitor and assess their schools' improvement efforts.

School districts are to incorporate school improvement plans into their strategic planning for the school year, but not all have to develop an actual support plan. Districts receiving support categorized as Level 2 and higher must develop districts plans of support by September 1 and post them on their websites within 10 days. Districts in Level 2 must submit plans to DESE at the request of the Secretary; Districts receiving Level 3, 4, or 5 support must submit plans to DESE. In the 2020-21 school year, DESE asked all districts to submit district-level plans including "Ready for Learning" plans that described how districts would use COVID-19 mitigation strategies to protect students and staff. Two hundred fifty eight districts and open-enrollment charter schools submitted district-level plans for 2020-21.

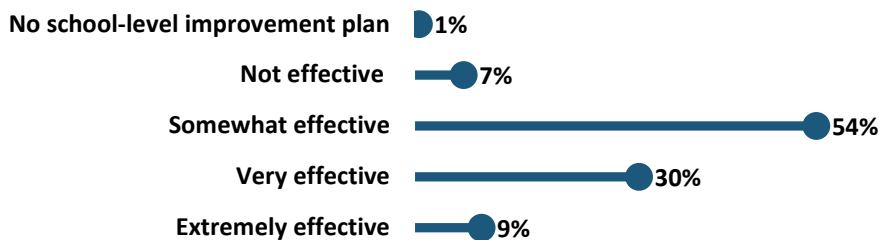
A district in which 40 percent or more of the students scored "in need of support" on the state's prior year summative assessment for reading shall develop a literacy plan as part of its district support plan. The literacy plan must include goals for improving reading achievement throughout the district and information regarding the prioritization of funding for strategies to improve reading.

BLR asked principals about the impacts of school-level improvement plans on their schools.

How useful is your school-level improvement plan in helping your school plan strategies for improving student achievement?



How effective has your school improvement plan been in improving student achievement?



Note: Due to rounding, the responses do not equal 100%.

Student Success Plans

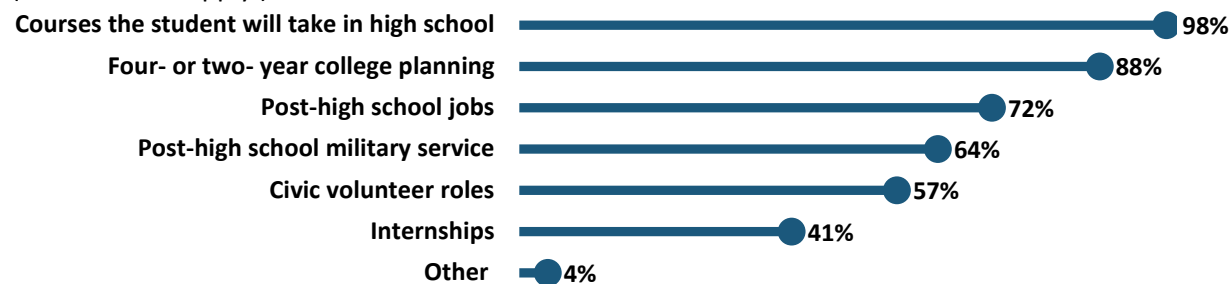
Under Act 930 of 2017, the DESE “shall collaborate with public school districts to transition to a student-focused learning system to support success for all students.” As part of that system, beginning with the 2018-19 school year, each student, by the end of eighth grade, must have a student success plan, developed by school personnel in collaboration with parents and the student. Success plans must be reviewed and updated annually.

Success plans must: 1) guide the student along pathways to graduation (required coursework, courses of interest, consideration for student’s postsecondary plans using multiple measures to inform decisions about a pathway); 2) address accelerated learning opportunities (could include Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, concurrent credit, career pathways, apprenticeships, internships, courses based on identified areas of academic strength, extracurricular activities, and other opportunities); 3) address academic deficits and interventions (courses based on identified areas of academic deficit, point-in-time remediation, credit recovery, tutoring, additional learning supports, transitional coursework, and other opportunities); and 4) include college and career planning components (College and Career Readiness Assessment data, interest inventories, college and career planning tools, industry-recognized credentials or technical certifications, and other postsecondary preparations). An individualized education program for a student with a disability meets the requirements of a student success plan if it addresses academic deficits and interventions for students not meeting standards-based academic goals at an expected rate or level and includes a transition plan that addresses college and career planning components.

Principal Survey Results

BLR included questions on student success plans in the principal survey. Principals indicated which elements were included in success plans in their schools, and who participates in the process.

Please indicate which elements are included in the student success plans in your school?
(Check all that apply.)



Other, please specify:
Our plan addresses every facet of post-high school life
Aptitudes and Interests; Resumes
Self-awareness surveys
CTE Completer/Concentrator
Student quality of life, school climate/culture, real world application
Goals
Club participation, offices held, volunteer service hours
Career assessment, baseline reading and math data, grades, goals
Assessment scores & reflections, career inventories, learning style inventories, social and emotional learning (SEL), College and Career Readiness lesson, enrichment activities
College and Career Interests, Academic Intervention and Aid, Orientation to Xello

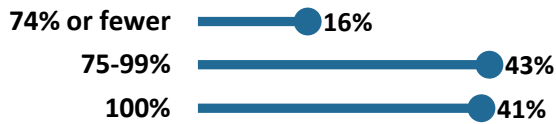
Who is involved in creating the individual student success plans? (Check all that apply.)



Other, please specify:
Career Coach
I do not have to complete student success plans.
Instructional Facilitator
College and Career Coach
Career Coach
College Career Coach
Student Mentors and Career Coach
Career Coach
If a child is pulled for Speech, Special Education, or Occupational Therapy, that person is included.

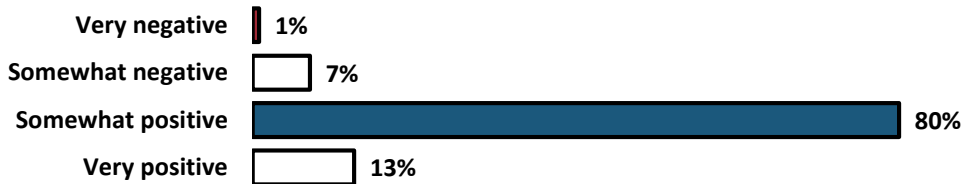
Eighty-four percent of responding principals indicated that at least 75 percent of their rising ninth through twelfth grade students had a student success plan.

Please indicate the percentage of rising 9th- through 12th- grade students who have a student success plan.



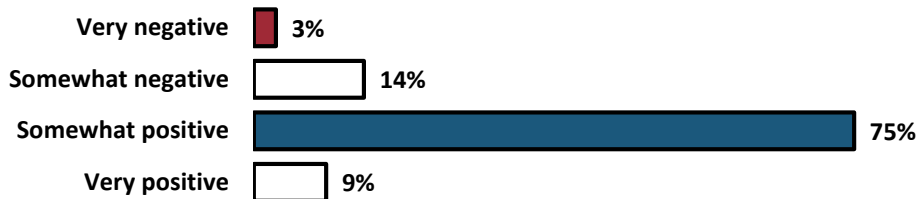
Finally, the survey asked principals about the impact of creating student success plans on students and school personnel.

Overall, how would you characterize the impact on **students** of creating student success plans?



Note: Due to rounding, the responses do not equal 100%.

Overall, how would you characterize the impact on **school personnel** of creating student success plans?



Note: Due to rounding, the responses do not equal 100%.

Educator Excellence

The Educational Support and Accountability Act allows the State Board to promulgate rules that promote the state’s goal of providing all Arkansas public school students with qualified and effective educators. Under the current rules, districts are responsible for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing effective teachers and leaders by using programs provided by DESE, including TESS (the state’s teacher evaluation system)⁹, LEADS (the state’s leader evaluation system)¹⁰, and other DESE resources.

Districts and schools must report information to DESE, including professional qualifications, teaching assignments, professional development, and performance evaluation information. Districts with data reflecting disproportionality must develop and implement strategies for equitable access in the district’s support plan.

DATA REPORTING

DESE has multiple methods of communicating data to districts, schools, parents, and the public. One method are the annual school report cards.¹¹ Report cards are published on each district and contain data on achievement, enrollment, college readiness, school environment, accreditation, graduation rates, remediation rates, retention, teacher quality, and school expenditures.

LETTER GRADE RATING SYSTEM

Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-15-2101 *et seq.* lays out the state’s school rating system (also known as the letter grade system). The school rating system must be a multiple-measures approach including:

- Academic achievement on the annual statewide student assessment;
- student growth on the annual statewide student assessment;
- school-level graduation rate or rates; and
- English-learner progress or growth in acquiring English.

In addition, the rating system must consider at least one of the following indicators:

- Closing the achievement gap;
- academic growth of student subgroups (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, English learners, and students with disabilities);
- the percentage of grade 9 cohort with on-time completion of credit attainment at the end of grade 9;
- equity in resource allocation;
- the percentage of students who earn;
 - Advanced Placement credit;
 - concurrent credit;
 - International Baccalaureate credit; or
 - industry-recognized certification that leads to articulated or concurrent credit at a postsecondary institution;

⁹ See “Teacher Excellence and Support System,” Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-17-2801 *et seq.*

¹⁰ See Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-17-2809 (requiring the DESE to “design a system of administrator leadership support and evaluations,” which is done with the DESE “Rules Governing the Leader Excellence and Development System,” Rule 5.01, and known as the “Arkansas Leader Excellence and Development System (“LEADS”).

¹¹ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-15-2202.

- student access to multiple flexible learning continua;
- student access to preschool offered by the public school district;
- the proportional percentage of qualified educators who hold a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification or have an advanced degree beyond their bachelor’s degree;
- public school district and community partnerships.

The statute directs DESE to promulgate rules to implement the rating system. Under DESE rules, the School Rating System uses the ESSA School Index, which consists of the following indicators:

- Weighted achievement;
- School Mean Growth plus English Learner Growth:
 - Content growth (ELA and math growth scores combined for each student);
 - English Learner progress to English Language Proficiency at a rate that is proportional to number of English Learners;
- Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate:
 - Four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate;
 - Five-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate;
- School Quality and Student Success.

The **School Quality and Student Success indicator** is based on the chart below:

Indicator	Grade Level or Cohort for Points Available	Points for Student
Student Engagement	Grades K -11	Point based on Chronic Absence (CA) risk level: CA<5% = 1.0 Point 5<=CA < 10% = 0.5 Point CA >=10% = 0.0 Point
Science Achievement	Grades 3 – 10	Ready or Exceeds = 1.0 Point Close or Not Ready = 0.0 Point
Science Growth	Grades 4 – 10	Using ACT Aspire Science Value-Added Score Percentile Rate VAS PR ≥ 75 = 1.0 Point 25 ≤ VAS PR < 75 = 0.5 Point VAS PR ≤ 25 = 0.0 Point
Reading at Grade Level	Grades 3 – 10	Ready or Exceeds = 1.0 Point Close or Not Ready = 0.0 Point
ACT	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	Best ACT Composite Score ≥ 19 = 1.0 Point Use best ACT score from prior 3 years.
ACT Readiness Benchmark	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	ACT Reading ≥ 22 = 0.5 point ACT Math ≥ 22 = 0.5 point ACT Science ≥ 23 = 0.5 point Use best ACT score from prior 3 years for ea. subject
GPA 2.8 or better on 4.0 scale	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	High school final GPA ≥ 2.8 = 1.0 Point
Community Service Learning Credits Earned	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	1 or more SL credits earned = 1.0 Point Act 648 of 1993 course #496010 or other state approved courses Credits earned at any time during grades 9 - 12

Indicator	Grade Level or Cohort for Points Available	Points for Student
On-time Credits	Grades 9 -11	Grade 9 completed ≥ 5.5 credit = 1.0 Point Grade 10 completed ≥ 11.0 credits = 1.0 Point Grade 11 completed ≥ 16.5 credits = 1.0 Point
Computer Science Course Credits Earned	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	Credits earned ≥ 1 = 1.0 Point Credits earned at any time during grades 9 - 12
Adv. Placement / Intl. Baccalaureate or Concurrent Credit Courses (ACE included)	Grade 12 Cycle 7 Enrollment	Credits earned ≥ 1 = 1.0 Point Credits earned at any time during grades 9 - 12

After each of the indicators is calculated, they are weighed according to this chart:

Component	Weight of Indicator within Index Grades K – 5 & 6 - 8		Weight of Indicator within Index High Schools
Weighted Achievement Indicator	35%	Weighted Achievement and Academic Growth	70% total with Weighted Achiev. accounting for half (35%) and School Growth Score accounting for half (35%)
Growth Indicator Academic Growth English Language Progress	50%		
Progress to English Language Proficiency	Weight of indicator in School Value-Added Growth Score is proportionate to number of English Learners	Progress to English Language Proficiency	Weight of indicator in School Value-Added Growth Score is proportionate to number of English Learners
Graduation Rate Indicator 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate 5-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate	NA		15% total 4-Yr = 10% 5-Yr = 5%
School Quality and Student Success Indicator	15%		15%

The result is the ESSA School Index for the school. To figure the letter grades, the Department uses the following rankings:

Letter Grade	Elementary	Middle School	High School
A	79.26 <= Score	75.59 <= Score	73.22 <= Score
B	72.17 - 79.25	69.94 - 75.58	67.96 - 73.21
C	64.98 - 72.16	63.73 - 69.93	61.10 - 67.95
D	58.09 - 64.97	53.58 - 63.72	52.95 - 61.09
F	Score < 58.09	Score < 53.58	Score < 52.95

DESE is required to prepare the reports annually.¹² Annual performance reports must be made available in hard copy to parents or guardians upon request, posted on the DESE website, and posted on the local school district’s website.¹³

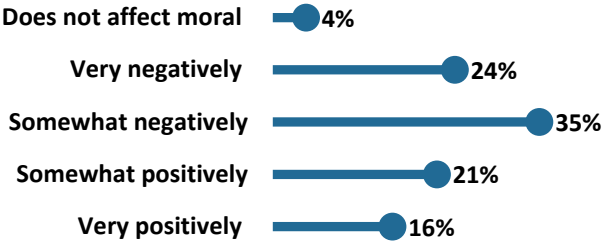
Annual reports must also list student performance on statewide student assessments, student academic growth based on statewide student assessments, and the school’s graduation rate (if applicable).¹⁴

The United States Department of Education granted Arkansas a waiver from the assessment, accountability, and reporting ESSA requirements for the 2019-20 school year. Because Arkansas did not conduct its annual assessments in the 2019-20 school year, DESE was unable to calculate ESSA School Index scores. Since the state’s letter grade system is based on the ESSA School Index scores, no schools received letter grades for the 2019-20 school year.

Arkansas did conduct its annual assessments in the 2020-21 school year, and calculated and published schools’ ESSA School Index scores. However, Act 89 of 2021 suspended the public school rating system for the 2020-21 school year; therefore, DESE did not issue letter grades for the 2020-21 school year.

BLR asked principals about the letter grade system and its effect on morale of staff and students.

The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education assigns a letter grade to each school based on the school’s ESSA School Index score. How does the school letter grades affect morale among STAFF at the school?

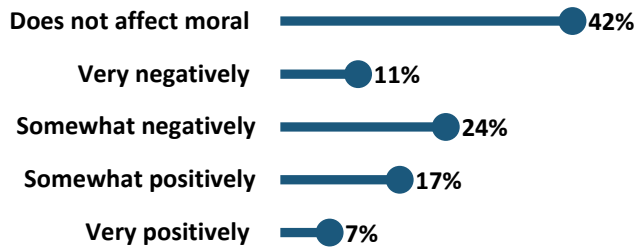


¹² Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-15-2101(a)(1).

¹³ *Id.* at § 6-15-2101(a)(3)

¹⁴ *Id.* at § 6-15-2101(c).

The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education assigns a letter grade to each school based on the school’s ESSA School Index score. How does the school’s letter grades affect morale among **STUDENTS** at the school?



Note: Due to rounding, the responses do not equal 100%.

REWARD SCHOOLS

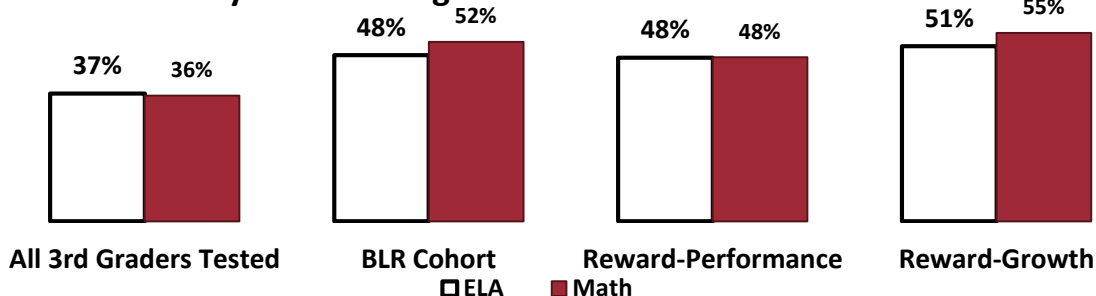
The Arkansas School Recognition Program, or Reward Schools, was created under Act 35 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2003 (now codified at A.C.A. § 6-15-2107). The program was created to provide financial awards to public schools experiencing high student performance and those with high student academic growth, including high school graduation rate comparisons for secondary schools.

Currently, the program authorizes up to \$100 per student who attends a public school or public charter school in the top 5 percent of all Arkansas public schools in student performance or student academic growth, including high school graduation rates for secondary schools (under criteria set by the State Board of Education). The program also authorizes up to \$50 per student for public schools or public charter schools between the top 5 percent and the next 5 percent of all public schools in Arkansas in student performance or student academic growth, including high school graduation rates for secondary schools.

In the 2021 school year, the total amount awarded was \$6,871,250.¹⁵ Awards may be distributed on a pro-rata basis based on available funding.

The chart below shows the percentages of third graders scoring Ready or Exceeding on the ACT Aspire English language arts and math assessments. The chart shows the percentages for all third graders tested, BLR Cohort schools, DESE Performance Reward schools, and DESE Growth Reward Schools.

3rd Grade Ready or Exceeding



¹⁵ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-15-2107(e) requires that school recognition awards be used for: (1) nonrecurring bonuses to faculty and staff; (2) nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials to assist in maintaining and improving student performance; or (3) temporary personnel for the school to assist in maintaining and improving student performance.

SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE

Schools on the Move is a DESE program that “celebrates schools that demonstrate improvement on recent state and federal accountability reports.”¹⁶ For 2020-21, DESE identified schools that improved their overall ESSA score by more than ten points, schools that improved their overall ESSA Index Score, schools that improved their Weighted Achievement Score, and schools that improved their Value Added Growth Score. Act 89 of 2021 suspended school ratings (letter grades) for the 2020-21 school year, meaning that DESE was unable to identify schools that improved by one or two letter grades for the 2020-21 academic year.¹⁷ For the 2021 report, DESE looked at improvement from 2019 to 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DESE did not calculate ESSA Index Scores for the 2019-20 school year.

Special Education

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) annually assesses whether each state meets the requirements of Part B of the IDEA. Part B of the IDEA relates to the provisions of services and federal funding for states to provide a FAPE in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities ages three to 21. This is determined by looking at multiple pieces of information: educational results and functional outcomes of students with disabilities, whether the data provided by the state is valid and reliable, and the percentage of the compliance with federal special education requirements.¹⁸

The following tables show the indicators used in this assessment. The first table shows results from the Part B Results Matrix and the second table shows results from the Part B Compliance Matrix. The Results Matrix looked at student performance on academic assessments from the 2019-20. Since Arkansas students were not tested due to COVID-19, those elements are excluded below. Part C, infants and toddlers birth through age 2, indicators are not included. The full results for Arkansas’s 2021 Matrix Results are shown in Appendix A.

Part B Results Indicators
Percentage of 4 th Grade and 8 th Students with Disabilities Participating in Regular Statewide Assessments (Math and Reading)
Percentage of 4 th Grade and 8 th Grade Students with Disabilities Included in Testing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Math and Reading)
Percentage of 4 th Grade and 8 th Grade Students with Disabilities Scoring at Basic or Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Math and Reading)
Percentage of who Dropped Out
Percentage of who Graduated with a Regular High School Diploma

¹⁶ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>.

¹⁷ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>.

¹⁸ 20 USC Chapter 33 § 1411.

Part B Compliance Indicators

Indicator 4B: Significant discrepancy, by race and ethnicity, in the rate of suspension and expulsion, and policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with specified requirements.

Indicator 9: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services due to inappropriate identification.

Indicator 10: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories due to inappropriate identification.

Indicator 11: Timely initial evaluation

Indicator 12: IEP developed and implemented by third birthday

Indicator 13: Secondary transition (Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, and annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition services’ needs.

Timely and Accurate State-Reported Data

Timely State Complaint Decisions

Timely Due Process Hearing Decisions

Longstanding Noncompliance (Special Conditions and Uncorrected identified noncompliance)

Source: U.S. DOE¹⁹

Based on results from the above Part B Results and Compliance Matrices, each state receives a determination from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in regards to meeting the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requirements. Those determinations include the following:

IDEA Determinations	Technical Assistance or Enforcement Actions Taken by the U.S. DOE
Meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA	N/A
Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA	For two consecutive years: At least one of the following, but not limited to: Requiring the State to access technical assistance, designating the State as a high-risk grantee, or directing the use of State set-aside funds to the area(s) where the State needs assistance.
Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA	For three consecutive years: At least one of the following, but not limited to: Requiring a corrective action plan or compliance agreement, or withholding further payments to the State.
Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA	Anytime: Must take immediate enforcement action, such as withholding funds or referring the matter to the Department’s inspector general or to the Department of Justice.

Source: U.S. DOE²⁰

¹⁹ “2021 Determination Letters on State Implementation of IDEA.” Retrieved at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/2021-determination-letters-on-state-implementation-of-idea/#Part-B-Meets-Requirements>

²⁰ “2021 Determination Letters on State Implementation of IDEA.”

The last five determinations for Arkansas are shown in the table below, along with a summary of results from the results and compliance matrices.

Year Issued	Results-Driven Accountability Percentage and Determination		Results and Compliance Overall Scoring					
	Percentage	Determination	Results			Compliance		
			Total Points Available	Points Earned	Score	Total Points Available	Points Earned	Score
2017	75.00%	Needs Assistance	24	12	50%	20	20	100%
2018	72.50%	Needs Assistance	24	12	50%	20	19	95%
2019	62.50%	Needs Assistance	24	12	50%	20	15	75%
2020	80.83%	Meets Requirements	24	16	66.67%	20	19	95%
2021	70.00%	Needs Assistance	16	8	50%	20	18	90%

The following tables shows the IDEA Part B Determinations for the top NAEP, top SREB, and contiguous states.²¹ “For 2021 determinations, no State or Entity received a determination of “Needs Intervention” due solely to data impacted by COVID-19.”²²

Top NAEP States	IDEA Part B Determination	Top SREB States	IDEA Part B Determination	Contiguous States	IDEA Part B Determination
Massachusetts	Meets Requirements	Virginia	Meets Requirements	Missouri	Meets Requirements
New Jersey	Meets Requirements	Florida	Meets Requirements	Tennessee	Meets Requirements
New Hampshire	Meets Requirements	Maryland	Needs Assistance (Two or More Consecutive Years)	Texas	Needs Assistance (Two or More Consecutive Years)
Minnesota	Meets Requirements	No. Carolina	Needs Assistance (One-Year)	Oklahoma	Meets Requirements
Wyoming	Meets Requirements	Kentucky	Meets Requirements	Arkansas	Needs Assistance (One-Year)
Virginia	Meets Requirements	Georgia	Needs Assistance (One-Year)	Mississippi	Needs Assistance (Two or More Consecutive Years)
Vermont	Needs Assistance (One-Year)	Tennessee	Meets Requirements	Louisiana	Needs Assistance (Two or More Consecutive Years)
Indiana	Meets Requirements	Texas	Needs Assistance (Two or More Consecutive Years)		
Connecticut	Meets Requirements				
Utah	Meets Requirements				

Note: Please see the Methodologies and Definitions Report for a description of how the Top NAEP states were determined.

²¹ “2021 Determination Letters on State Implementation of IDEA.” Retrieved at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/2021-determination-letters-on-state-implementation-of-idea/#Part-B-Meets-Requirements>.

²² U.S. DOE. IDEA 2021 Part B Annual Determination – Arkansas.

Fiscal Assessment and Accountability

The Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Program²³, known more commonly as fiscal distress, is the state program used to identify and correct school districts that are struggling to maintain fiscal stability. Under state law, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) identifies districts in fiscal distress, and the State Board of Education approves or denies the identification and classifies school districts as being in distress. DESE, the Commissioner of Education, and State Board of Education have authority to take corrective actions in districts identified and classified in fiscal distress.

FISCAL DISTRESS PROCESS

As discussed in the adequacy study history report, the original fiscal distress program began in 1995, but the program has been modified significantly several times since 1995. Most recently, the General Assembly passed Act 929 of 2019, which mirrored the changes Act 930 of 2017 made to the academic distress program (now known as Level 5 – Intensive Support).

This section outlines the current fiscal distress process, which includes early warning, identification and classification, possible sanctions and corrective actions, and removal.

Early Warning

Under the early warning system (also known as early intervention), DESE is required to report to school district superintendents if DESE is aware that the school district has experienced two or more nonmaterial indicators of fiscal distress that DESE believes could put the district at risk without intervention before November 1. Superintendents are required to report the same information about their districts to DESE, also by November 1. Under DESE rules, a nonmaterial violation is something that does not directly jeopardize the fiscal integrity of a school district but has the potential to put the school district in fiscal distress.

Indicators of distress may be the indicators listed in the statute²⁴ or in DESE rules.

To help identify potential problems, DESE provides an early intervention checklist to school districts. This tool helps districts identify issues that could lead to a fiscal distress classification if left unaddressed. Districts are not required to complete the checklist. According to DESE, DESE reviews three years of districts' unrestricted fund balances, audits, and average daily membership records. If DESE has concerns about a district after the review, DESE sends the district the checklist.

A district may move into or out of early intervention at any time in any given school year. The districts currently in early warning are Blytheville, Forrest City, Helena, Huntsville, and Nevada.

If a district is experiencing fiscal distress at a nonmaterial level, the district must comply with all requirements of the state board in rules (including review of budget, reporting, and hiring and termination of staff), and receive written approval from DESE before incurring debt.²⁵

DESE may request that Arkansas Legislative Audit conduct an annual audit of a public school district determined to be experiencing fiscal distress at a nonmaterial level. According to testimony at the Senate Education Committee, an original draft of the bill that became Act 929 of 2019 required that Legislative Audit conduct the annual audits of public school districts determined to be experiencing fiscal

²³ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1901 et seq.

²⁴ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1904.

²⁵ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1904(b)(4).

distress at a nonmaterial level. The bill was changed prior to introduction in committee at Legislative Audit's request. Legislative Audit had expressed concerns about staffing and whether its staff would be sufficient to conduct the increased number of audits. Under DESE rules, school districts must be audited annually; however, Legislative Audit does not conduct all school district audits. Under certain circumstances, districts may request that Legislative Audit conduct the audit, but otherwise, the school district board must select a private auditor.

Identification and Classification

Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1904 lists the indicators of fiscal distress. DESE may identify a district in distress if the district has any of the indicators. The indicators include:

- Declining balance determined to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the district
- An act or violation determined to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the district
- Material failure to comply with Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1913, which concerns the minimum qualifications for a general business manager
- Material failure to comply with reporting, debt approval, or other requirements placed on a public school district that has been returned to local control
- Any other fiscal condition of a school district deemed to have a detrimental negative impact on the continuation of educational services by the district

Such acts, violations, and conditions include:

- Material failure to maintain school facilities, provide timely and accurate financial reports to specific state agencies, meet minimum teacher salaries, comply with state purchasing, bid agreements, or audit requirements
- Material violation of local, state, or federal fire, health, safety, or construction codes
- Material default on any school district debt obligation
- Material discrepancy between budgeted and actual expenditures
- Insufficient funds to cover payroll, salary, employment benefits, or legal tax obligations

Once DESE has identified a district in distress, DESE is required to notify the district in writing prior to June 30; however, DESE may identify a school district as being in fiscal distress at any time after June 30 if DESE discovers that a fiscal condition of the school district negatively impacts the continuation of educational services by the district. Once the district receives the notification from DESE, the district has 30 days to appeal to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education must hear the appeal within 60 days after receiving the appeal from the district. If the district chooses not to appeal, the State Board of Education must still vote to classify the district in distress. While DESE *identifies* districts in distress, only the State Board of Education may vote to *classify* the district in distress.

Most districts do not appeal the fiscal distress identification. Districts that DESE has identified as being in fiscal distress are prohibited from incurring additional debt without written approval from DESE.

As of May 2022, three districts are currently classified as being in fiscal distress: Earle, Lee County, and Pine Bluff. Each of the districts will be discussed in greater detail below.

Possible Sanctions and Corrective Actions

Once a district is classified in fiscal distress, a district has certain responsibilities. A district in fiscal distress must:

- File an improvement plan with DESE that includes specific ways to correct fiscal deficiencies
- Allow on-site technical evaluations and other assistance conducted by members of the DESE Fiscal Services and Support Unit
- Adhere to recommendations from DESE to improve staffing and fiscal policy practices
- Report the reason for fiscal distress to the newspaper
- Obtain written permission from DESE before incurring additional debt

After a district is classified in fiscal distress, DESE and the State Board of Education may take actions in the district, including:

- Removing and replacing the superintendent
- Suspending or removing the local school board
- Requiring fiscal training for the district staff or local board
- Monitoring the fiscal operations and accounts of the district
- Petitioning to the State Board of Education to annex, consolidate, or reconstitute the district
- Imposing additional reporting requirements on the district
- Authorizing an individual appointed to the school district to remove, replace, reassign, or suspend public school district personnel in accordance with state law
- Suspending on a temporary basis some or all of the powers and duties granted to the current public school district board of directors but allow the board of directors to continue to operate under the direction and approval of the Commissioner (the State Board of Education defines the powers of the board of directors in this situation)
- Requiring reassignment of some or all of the staff of the district
- Requiring reorganization, closure, or dissolution of one or more of the district's schools
- Taking any other action allowed by law that is deemed necessary to assist a school district in removing the classification of fiscal distress

Removal

To be removed from fiscal distress, a school district must demonstrate that all causes of fiscal distress have been corrected. In addition, the district must not have experienced any additional indicators of fiscal distress.

The State Board of Education must vote to remove a district from distress. If a school district is not removed from fiscal distress within five years, the State Board of Education is required to annex, consolidate, or reconstitute the district. However, if the district is unable to be removed from fiscal distress due to conditions beyond its control, the law allows the State Board of Education to grant additional time. Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-20-1908 does not specify what conditions qualify as "beyond the school district's control."

Currently, Earle is the only district in fiscal distress close to the five-year mark. Earle was classified in fiscal distress in October 2017.

Districts returned to local control or removed from fiscal distress must comply with all monitoring and reporting requirements from DESE and the State Board of Education, cannot incur additional debt without written approval from DESE, and must use Arkansas Legislative Audit to conduct an annual audit. In addition, DESE must monitor the fiscal operations of the district for three years, provide support to the district, and may impose reporting requirements on the district.

If a district's board of directors has been removed, the Commissioner may return administration of the school district to the previous board of directors or a newly elected board of directors. DESE must first certify that the district has corrected all issues that led to the classification of fiscal distress and that the school district has not experienced any additional indicators of fiscal distress. The State Board of Education must also determine that the school district has corrected all issues that caused the classification of fiscal distress.

DISTRICTS IN FISCAL DISTRESS

This section discusses the districts that were classified as being in fiscal distress at any point since the last fiscal distress report in January 2020. Earle, Lee County, and Pine Bluff are still classified as being in fiscal distress. Marvell-Elaine and Dollarway were previously in fiscal distress; Marvell-Elaine has exited the program, and the Dollarway School District has been annexed to the Pine Bluff School District.

Dollarway

DESE identified Dollarway as a district in fiscal distress on March 7, 2016.²⁶ On April 14, 2016, the State Board classified the district as being in fiscal distress.²⁷ The district was placed in state takeover in December 2015 for academic distress; that classification was changed to being a district in need of Level 5 support on July 13, 2017, to comply with Act 930 of 2017. The State Board of Education removed the district's school board, reassigned the superintendent to her previous position as a School Improvement Specialist, and appointed a new superintendent.²⁸

DESE identified the Dollarway School District as being in fiscal distress due to declining balances and material audit findings. DESE noted at the State Board meeting when Dollarway was classified that the audit findings were some of the worst examples they had seen.²⁹ Audit findings included overpayments to staff members, unauthorized payments on district credit cards, improper and untimely recording of receipts in APSCN, failure to reconcile gate admission fees for athletic events, failure to reconcile the district's operating bank account, failure to timely deposit checks, failure to document payroll liabilities, employees working without contracts, employee contracts that did not match the salary schedule, and numerous recording errors. Recordings errors included failure to maintain receipt books, receipt ranges not indicated on deposit slips, posting errors to incorrect accounts, and receipt numbers not indicated on deposit slips.³⁰

Dollarway did not contest the fiscal distress classification.³¹

In Dollarway, DESE assisted in making transparent policies and procedures, building capacity in federal program funding, and providing support to the superintendent.³²

On December 10, 2022, the State Board of Education voted to annex the Dollarway School District to the Pine Bluff School District, effective July 1, 2021.³³

²⁶ Order Classifying the Dollarway School District in Fiscal Distress, Arkansas State Board of Education, April 15, 2016.

²⁷ Order Classifying the Dollarway School District in Fiscal Distress, Arkansas State Board of Education, April 15, 2016.

²⁸ Legislative Update for Dollarway School District, December 13, 2018.

²⁹ Testimony at Arkansas State Board April 14, 2016, meeting.

³⁰ Dollarway School District Regulatory Basis Financial Statements and Other Reports, Arkansas Legislative Audit, June 30, 2015.

³¹ Order Classifying the Dollarway School District in Fiscal Distress, Arkansas State Board of Education, April 15, 2016.

³² Dollarway School District Exit Criteria Review, Stacy Smith, Director of Office of Coordinated Support and Service, Arkansas State Board of Education, November 13, 2020.

³³ Order Annexing the Dollarway School District to the Pine Bluff School District, Arkansas State Board of Education, December 10, 2020.

Earle

DESE identified the Earle School District as being in early warning on October 19, 2016, based on the district's early intervention checklist completed in July 2016.³⁴ DESE identified Earle as a district in fiscal distress on August 31, 2017, based on an audit released June 30, 2017; the State Board classified Earle as a district in distress on October 12, 2017. The district did not appeal.³⁵

DESE identified Earle as a district in distress based on material audit exceptions or violations and an act or violation determined to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the district. DESE's identification letter noted that this included failure to fully develop and implement adequate corrective actions for previously identified audit findings and deficiencies. Some of the items in the audit released June 30, 2017, included internal control weaknesses, purchase of gift cards without documentation, credit card purchases without documentation and approval (including hotels, supplies, meals, cell phone, vacuum cleaner, computer, and other items), overpayments to staff, payments to staff not consistent with the salary schedule, National School Lunch categorical funds used to pay ineligible salaries, travel reimbursements made without approval or documentation, bank fees related to insufficient funds, salary increases made without required Board approval, and fund balances being at a deficit in violation of Arkansas statutes.³⁶

The Commissioner exercised his power to place the district in state takeover on November 6, 2017, removing and replacing the district's superintendent and removing the district's school board.³⁷ The district remains in fiscal distress and under state control. In addition, the State Board classified the district as being in need of Level 5 support for academic distress, at the request of the district and DESE.³⁸

DESE has assisted in establishing appropriate processes for requisitions, minimizing new debt, becoming current with bills, training staff, and maintaining the day-to-day finances of the district.³⁹

Lee County

On October 10, 2017, DESE identified Lee County School District as being in early intervention. DESE identified the district as being in fiscal distress on April 1, 2019. DESE's reasons for identifying the district were a declining fund balance determined to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the school district and material state or federal audit exceptions or violations. Some of the audit exceptions or violations included general ledger cash balance understated by \$69,770 (repeat finding), bank reconciliation \$2,811 less than general ledger balance (repeat finding), significant corrections to cash balance and bank reconciliation (repeat finding), failure to make timely and accurate tax deposits (repeat finding), IRS penalties of \$54,558, multiple payroll discrepancies (repeat finding), lack of proper controls in place for both employee health insurance benefits and employee retirement benefits, internal control weaknesses, and unallowable Title I expenditures.⁴⁰ The State Board voted to classify the district in

³⁴ Letter from Cindy Smith, Coordinator, Fiscal Services and Support, to Rickey Nicks, Superintendent, Earle School District, August 31, 2017.

³⁵ Order, Arkansas State Board of Education, October 12, 2017.

³⁶ Order, Arkansas State Board of Education, October 12, 2017.

³⁷ State Assumes Authority of Earle School District, Arkansas Department of Education, November 6, 2017.

³⁸ Order Classifying Earle School District in Need of Level 5 – Intensive Support, Arkansas State Board of Education, May 10, 2019. *See also* Letter from Richard Wilde, Superintendent, Earle School District, to Deborah Coffman, Division of Public School Accountability, Arkansas Department of Education, March 28, 2019.

³⁹ Earle School District Legislative Quarterly Report, January 13, 2022.

⁴⁰ Letter from Cynthia Smith, Coordinator, Fiscal Services and Support, to Zrano Bowles, Superintendent, Lee County School District, April 1, 2019.

fiscal distress on May 9, 2019. The district did not appeal.⁴¹ The district was already under state takeover for being in probationary status for accreditation; the State Board placed the district in state takeover on March 25, 2019, removing the superintendent and school board.⁴²

Changes in Lee County since the fiscal distress classification include the creation of a fiscal distress plan, creation of a preliminary budget, a new salary schedule, and starting a staff reduction in force.⁴³

Marvell-Elaine

DESE identified the Marvell-Elaine School District in fiscal distress on January 29, 2019.⁴⁴ The district did not appeal the fiscal distress identification. The State Board of Education classified the district in distress on April 11, 2019.⁴⁵

DESE testimony at the State Board of Education meeting indicated that there were two reasons for identification. The first reason was a declining fund balance determined to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the district. The district's fund balances have declined \$1.6 million since 2016. The other condition was the conduct of the district's business manager, which was deemed to have a detrimental negative impact on the continuation of educational services by the school district. Between July 1, 2014, and December 31, 2018, the district's business manager issued 90 unauthorized checks to herself totaling \$471,666. The business manager's employment with the district was terminated on January 17, 2019. Furthermore, the district was assessed a penalty for failing to make timely tax deposits.⁴⁶

To correct the criteria for being in fiscal distress, the district reduced the number of staff positions, used federal funding for allowable expenses previously paid for with state and local revenues, acquired supplies from other district surpluses or at yard sales, and used coupons for purchases. The district also built up its reserve funds from approximately \$250,000 to \$2 million. The State Board of Education removed Marvell-Elaine from fiscal distress in September 2021. DESE will continue to monitor the district for three years after removal.⁴⁷

Pine Bluff

Pine Bluff was originally classified in fiscal distress on December 2, 1998, under the original fiscal distress statute. Pine Bluff was removed from fiscal distress on May 8, 2000.⁴⁸

On August 8, 2018, DESE identified Pine Bluff as a district in fiscal distress.⁴⁹ The State Board of Education classified Pine Bluff as being in fiscal distress on September 13, 2018. The State Board also voted at that time to place the district in state takeover, removing the district's school board and superintendent and giving the Commissioner the authority of the board, the authority to appoint a new

⁴¹ Order Classifying Lee County School District in Fiscal Distress, Arkansas State Board of Education, May 10, 2019.

⁴² Order Classifying Lee County School District in Probationary Violation of the Standards of Accreditation, Arkansas State Board of Education, March 25, 2019.

⁴³ Lee County School District Legislative Quarterly Report, January 13, 2022.

⁴⁴ Letter from Cynthia Smith, Coordinator, Fiscal Services and Support,

⁴⁵ Order Classifying Marvell-Elaine School District in Fiscal Distress, Arkansas State Board of Education, April 15, 2019.

⁴⁶ Testimony at Arkansas State Board of Education April 11, 2019, meeting.

⁴⁷ Arkansas State Board of Education, Meeting Minutes, May 9, 2021.

⁴⁸ Arkansas State Board of Education, Meeting Minutes, May 8, 2000.

⁴⁹ Letter from Cynthia Smith, Coordinator, Fiscal Services and Support, to Monica McMurray, Interim Superintendent, Pine Bluff School District, August 8, 2018.

superintendent, and the authority to take other actions he deemed appropriate. The district did not appeal the fiscal distress classification.⁵⁰

The reasons DESE identified the district as being in fiscal distress included declining fund balances (from approximately \$6 million to approximately \$3 million between June 2016 and August 2018), projections that the district would be in the red financially at the end of the school year, IRS penalties, late submissions to teacher retirement, two reports to the IRS not filed in 2017, and reductions in funding due to decreasing enrollment.

The district was in early intervention prior to DESE identifying the district as being in fiscal distress; however, the district did not adopt all of the DESE recommendations made during early intervention. At the time the district was in early warning, DESE did not have the authority to require districts to take suggestions made during early intervention. DESE indicated that this was one reason for identifying the district as being in fiscal distress; once the district is classified, DESE can require the district to follow DESE recommendations.⁵¹

DESE indicated at the State Board meeting that the district's declining enrollment would not have put the district in danger of being in fiscal distress if the declining enrollment were the only factor. The district increased salaries, added positions, made non-necessary expenditures, and incurred significant expenses in maintaining safe, warm, and dry facilities. DESE indicated that the district could have managed its declining enrollment in a way that would not have put it in danger of being in fiscal distress. At the time of classification, the district was spending into fund balances each month to meet its monthly expenditures.⁵²

On Thursday, November 8, 2018, the State Board classified Pine Bluff as a district in need of Level 5 Intensive Support.⁵³

Changes in Pine Bluff included a staff reduction-in-force, identifying unused and underutilized buildings and putting those up for sale, creating a fiscal distress plan, and using fiscal year 2019 numbers to create a budget for fiscal year 2020.⁵⁴

On July 1, 2021, the Pine Bluff School District annexed the Dollarway School District.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Order, Arkansas State Board of Education, September 14, 2018.

⁵¹ Testimony at the Arkansas State Board of Education September 13, 2018, meeting.

⁵² Testimony at the Arkansas State Board of Education September 13, 2018, meeting.

⁵³ Legislative Update for Pine Bluff School District, December 13, 2018.

⁵⁴ Legislative Update for Pine Bluff School District, January 13, 2022.

⁵⁵ Order Annexing the Dollarway School District to the Pine Bluff School District, Arkansas State Board of Education, December 10, 2020.

Facilities Distress

Act 1426 of 2005 established the Academic Facilities Distress Program to provide the state with a mechanism to intervene when districts do not provide adequate academic facilities or comply with facilities rules.

MECHANISMS FOR COMPILING FACILITIES CONDITION INFORMATION

The Division has several methods for compiling facilities condition information. Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-813 requires random, unannounced on-site inspections of all academic facilities in the state, conducted by the Division. In addition, superintendents are required to report to the Division if they are aware that the district has experienced two or more indicators of facilities distress that the superintendent deems to be nonmaterial but that could result in a facilities distress classification if not addressed. Finally, Act 933 of 2019 requires school districts to use the Computerized Maintenance Management System (known as “School Dude”) to:

- Enter and track all reactive and preventive maintenance work;
- Enter preventive maintenance schedules for academic and non-academic facilities systems;
- Document completed reactive and preventive maintenance work; and
- Schedule state-mandated inspections.

EARLY INTERVENTION

The Division uses the information provided by Division inspections, state-mandated inspections, and school districts reports in any Early Intervention Program created by Act 798 of 2009. This program seeks to address facility issues before they advance to the point a school or school district is classified as being in facilities distress. State law requires the Division to notify superintendents when they have identified two or more indicators of facilities distress that, while nonmaterial, could place the district in facilities distress if not addressed.⁵⁶ The statute further requires the notification of school board members of these indicators of facilities distress and requires the issue to be placed on the agenda for the next scheduled board meeting for discussion. When a code violation is discovered and reported, school district maintenance personnel are required to schedule a follow-up inspection with the Division and submit a work order through School Dude.

IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION

Under Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(a)(1), the Commission for Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation (Commission) “shall classify a public school or school district as being in academic facilities distress if the Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation recommends and the commission concurs that the school or school districts has engaged in actions or inactions that results in any of the following:

- Material failure to properly maintain academic facilities;
- Material violation of local, state, or federal fire, health or safety code provisions or laws;
- Material violation of applicable building code provisions or law;
- Material failure to provide timely and accurate facilities masters plans to the division;
- Material failure to comply with state law governing purchasing, bid requirements or school-construction related laws or rules in relation to academic facilities projects;

⁵⁶ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(c).

- Material default on any school district debt obligation; or
- Material failure to plan and progress satisfactorily toward accomplishing the priorities established by the division and the approved school district’s facilities master plan”

DESE is required to provide written notice to the superintendent and president of the board of directors of a school district identified or containing a school identified by the division as being in facilities distress. In addition, DESE must notify superintendents of a school district if DESE is aware the school district has experienced two or more indicators of facilities distress in one school year that DESE deems nonmaterial but that without intervention could place the district in facilities distress. As discussed above, superintendents are also required to report the same to DESE.

REQUIREMENTS AND REMOVAL

A district in facilities distress is required to submit a facilities improvement plan for Division approval within 30 days from the date of classification.⁵⁷ The plan must identify and provide a detailed timeframe to remedy all material failures that led to facilities distress.

The Division, with the approval of the Commission, may provide on-site technical evaluation and assistance and make written and binding recommendations to the superintendent regarding the care and maintenance of school facilities.⁵⁸

If a district or school has immediate needs for urgent repairs, renovations, or construction, it may apply for a loan from the Division⁵⁹ or other assistance, such as the Academic Facilities Partnership Program. If a loan is provided, it must be repaid from funds not required to provide an adequate education. In addition, a school or district in facilities distress may not incur a new debt obligation without permission from the Division.

Besides restriction on debt, the Division (with permission from the Commission) can impose other sanctions on schools or districts in facilities distress such as:

- Requiring a special election for a millage increase to support facilities construction or repair;
- Requiring the superintendent to step down and appoint a replacement;
- Suspending or removing local school board members;
- Assuming authority over a district in facilities distress;
- Prohibiting the district from spending money on any activity that is not part of providing an adequate education; or
- Petitioning the State Board of Education to consolidate, annex, reconstitute, or dissolve the district.

During this time, a student may transfer to another district or school that is not in facilities distress.⁶⁰ More information can be found below in the School Choice section.

To be removed from facilities distress, the Division must certify that the school or district has corrected all issues that caused it to be in facilities distress. Then, the Commission must approve the Division’s recommendation for removal. Schools or districts in facilities distress must correct their academic facility issues within five consecutive school years.⁶¹ A school district that cannot be removed from facilities distress within five years must be consolidated, annexed, or reconstituted. However, the

⁵⁷ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(d)(1).

⁵⁸ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(g).

⁵⁹ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(k)(1)(A).

⁶⁰ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-812(a).

⁶¹ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(g)(11)(C).

State Board may grant more time if it determines that the school or district could not be removed from facilities distress “due to impossibility caused by external forces beyond the control of the public school or school district.”⁶²

DISTRICTS IN FACILITIES DISTRESS

No individual schools have been placed in facilities distress, and, to date, only one school district has received that designation. Hermitage School District was put in facilities distress in 2008 due to building code and procurement law violations. After correction of the violations, Hermitage was removed from facilities distress in 2009.

School Choice

This section of the report provides a brief history of school choice programs in the state, programs that allow students to enroll in a public school other than their assigned school. Because the Succeed Scholarship Program is covered in a different report (complying with the requirements of Act 827 of 2019), it is not covered in this report.

ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE ACT OF 1989

School choice programs began in Arkansas with the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989. The act allowed “any student to attend a school in a district in which the student does not reside.” The act contained the restriction that “no student may transfer to a nonresident district where the percentage of enrollment for the student’s race exceeds the percentage in the student’s resident district.” However, transfers were allowed if the transfer was between two districts within the same county and the percentages of minority and majority races remained within an acceptable range. The General Assembly included the limitation on race to prevent increased racial segregation due to student transfers.⁶³

The Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989 was ruled unconstitutional in United States District Court in June 2012.⁶⁴ In 2013, the Arkansas General Assembly passed Act 1227 to establish the Public School Choice Act of 2013 and repeal the Public School Choice Act of 1989. In July 2013, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the case concerning the constitutionality of the 1989 act was moot because the General Assembly had repealed the act.⁶⁵

Act 1227 of 2013 repealed the 1989 law and created a new school choice law that would remain in effect until July 1, 2015.⁶⁶

⁶² Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-21-811(g)(11)(D).

⁶³ Anderson, K.P., et al. Public School Choice and Desegregation in Arkansas. Office for Education Policy, October 23, 2013.

⁶⁴ See *Teague v. Ark. Bd. Of Educ.*, 873 F.Supp.2d 1055 (W.D. Ark. 2012).

⁶⁵ See *Teague v. Cooper*, 720 F.3d 973 (8th Cir. 2013). See also Anderson, K.P., et al. Public School Choice and Desegregation in Arkansas. Office for Education Policy, October 23, 2013.

⁶⁶ Impacts of the Public School Choice Act of 2013, Office for Education Policy, Vol. 12, Issue 2, February 2015.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE ACT OF 2015

In 2015, the General Assembly passed Act 560, which amended the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989 and removed the July 1, 2015, end date.⁶⁷

Currently, the program allows students in Arkansas to attend a school in a nonresident district. A school district's board of directors must adopt specific standards for acceptance and rejection of applications. The standards may include the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or school building, and shall include a statement that siblings and stepsiblings who resident in the same household will receive priority. Standards cannot include academic achievement, athletic or other extracurricular ability, English proficiency level, or previous disciplinary proceedings (except expulsion from another district).⁶⁸

Districts are required to participate in the program; however, if a district is operating under an enforceable desegregation court order or a court-approved desegregation plan which explicitly limits the transfer of students between school districts, the provisions of the order or plan control.⁶⁹ Districts must submit proof of the desegregation order or plan to DESE.⁷⁰ For the 2022-23 school year, nine districts are not required to fully participate in the program due to desegregation orders or plans.⁷¹

School choice transfers must not exceed three percent of the enrollment that exists in the school district as of October 1 of the immediately preceding school year, less any school choice transfers into the school district.⁷²

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education is required to produce an annual report on participation in the Public School Choice program.⁷³ According to that report, in the 2020-21 school year, 21,035 students participated in the program. The race and ethnicity and gender of the students is shown below⁷⁴.

Public School Choice Participants' Race and Ethnicity 2020-21	
Black	1,549
White	18,370
Asian	165
Hispanic	1,072
Native American/Alaskan Native	117
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	14
2 or more races	609

Public School Choice Participants' Gender 2020-21	
Male	10,690
Female	10,345

⁶⁷ Act 560 of 2015.

⁶⁸ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-1901 et seq.

⁶⁹ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-1906.

⁷⁰ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-1906.

⁷¹ Hot Springs, Lakeside, Mountain Pine, Cutter Morning Star, Jessieville, Fountain Lake, Lake Hamilton, and El Dorado are not required to participate. Camden Fairview must participate but is exempt from allowing transfers to the Harmony Grove School District. The current list of schools not required to participate can be found at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/legal/school-choice>.

⁷² Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-1906.

⁷³ Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-227(f).

⁷⁴ DESE Summary Report of Participation in Arkansas Public School Choice and Arkansas Opportunity School Choice for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 School Years.

OPPORTUNITY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE ACT

Act 35 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2003 created Opportunity Public School Choice. At that time, the program allowed students to transfer from a “failing school” to another school in the state, with a “failing school” defined as a public school designated as a Level 1 school (in the state’s accountability reporting system at the time) for two or more consecutive years.

Act 754 of 2019 changed the program to allow students attending a school in a school district classified by the State Board of Education as being in need of Level 5 Intensive Support or a public school with a rating of “F” to transfer to a school or district not in need of Level 5 Intensive Support or that does not have a rating of “F.” As discussed above, Act 930 of 2017 created the system of levels of support, and Act 744 of 2017 created the school grade system.

As with the Public School Choice Act of 2015, if a federal desegregation court order conflicts with the Opportunity Public School Choice Act, the federal desegregation court order controls.⁷⁵ School districts must participate in the program, and cannot deny a student a transfer except for lack of capacity at the nonresident school.

In the 2020-21 school year, 232 students participated in the program. The race and ethnicity and gender of the students are shown below⁷⁶.

Opportunity Public School Choice Participants’ Race and Ethnicity 2020-21	
Black	165
White	103
Asian	3
Hispanic	5
Native American/Alaskan Native	0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	0
2 or more races	6

Opportunity Public School Choice Participants’ Gender 2020-21	
Male	111
Female	121

FACILITIES DISTRESS SCHOOL CHOICE

Under Act 1426 of 2005, which created the facilities distress program, students attending a district classified as being in facilities distress were automatically qualified to transfer to a geographically contiguous school district not in facilities distress under the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989.

Act 1227 of 2013, which repealed the 1989 act, allowed students to transfer under the 2013 program (which was then changed to the Public School Choice Act of 2015). The student must comply with the provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015 (except filing a petition to transfer by May 1). The district no longer has to be geographically contiguous.

⁷⁵ DESE “Rules Governing Public School Choice” Rule 3-1.05.7.

⁷⁶ DESE Summary Report of Participation in Arkansas Public School Choice and Arkansas Opportunity School Choice for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 School Years.

OTHER SCHOOL CHOICE PROVISIONS

A foster parent (or a foster child over the age of 18) may request that the Department of Human Services approve the transfer of a foster child to another public school or school district.⁷⁷ The department must approve the transfer if it is in the best interests of the foster child.

Under Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-320, a student who is a victim “of a violent criminal offense while in or on the grounds “ of a public school in Arkansas or who is “attending a persistently dangerous public school” may attend a safe school within the local education agency under rules that the State Board of Education may establish.

In addition, both the Public School Choice program and the Opportunity School Choice program allow students who have a parent or guardian who is an active-duty member of the military who has been transferred to and resides on a military base to apply to transfer under different timelines than other students.

⁷⁷ See Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-18-233.

Appendix A: 2021 Part B Results and Compliance Matrices

2021 Part B Results Matrix		
	Performance	Score
Reading Assessment Elements (Children with Disabilities)		
Percentage of 4th Grade Participating in Regular Statewide Assessments	N/A	N/A
Percentage of 8th Grade Participating in Regular Statewide Assessments	N/A	N/A
Percentage of 4th Grade Scoring at Basic or Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	19%	0
Percentage of 4th Grade Included in Testing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	89%	1
Percentage of 8th Grade Scoring at Basic or Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	21%	0
Percentage of 8th Grade Included in Testing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	86%	1
Math Assessment Elements (Children with Disabilities)		
Percentage of 4th Grade Participating in Regular Statewide Assessments	N/A	N/A
Percentage of 8th Grade Participating in Regular Statewide Assessments	N/A	N/A
Percentage of 4th Grade Scoring at Basic or Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	30%	0
Percentage of 4th Grade Included in Testing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	93%	1
Percentage of 8th Grade Scoring at Basic or Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	14%	0
Percentage of 8th Grade Included in Testing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	88%	1
Exiting Data Elements		
Percentage of who Dropped Out	10%	2
Percentage of who Graduated with a Regular High School Diploma	87%	2

Source: U.S. DOE.⁷⁸

Note: Indicators for results-driven scores relied on statewide assessment scores from 2019-20, Since no statewide assessment was administered in that school year, no results are reported here.

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Education. "2021 SPP/APR Submission Part B – Arkansas; 2021 Part B Results-Driven Accountability Matrix." Retrieved at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters?selected-category=sppapr-part-b&selected-year=&state=Arkansas#>.

Part B Compliance Matrix			
Part B Compliance Indicator	Performance	Full Correction of Findings of Noncompliance Identified in FFY 2016	Score
Indicator 4B: Significant discrepancy, by race and ethnicity, in the rate of suspension and expulsion, and policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with specified requirements.	0.38%	Yes	2
Indicator 9: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services due to inappropriate identification.	0%	N/A	2
Indicator 10: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories due to inappropriate identification.	0%	N/A	2
Indicator 11: Timely initial evaluation	99.71%	Yes	2
Indicator 12: IEP developed and implemented by third birthday	100%	Yes	2
Indicator 13: Secondary transition (Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, and annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition services needs.	71.26%	Yes	0
Timely and Accurate State-Reported Data	100%		2
Timely State Complaint Decisions	100%		2
Timely Due Process Hearing Decisions	100%		2
Longstanding Noncompliance			2
Special Conditions	None		
Uncorrected identified noncompliance	None		

Source: 2021 AR-B Results Matrix.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of Education. “2021 SPP/APR Submission Part B – Arkansas; 2021 Part B Results-Driven Accountability Matrix.” Retrieved at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters?selected-category=sppapr-part-b&selected-year=&state=Arkansas#>.

Appendix B: Reward Schools

PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸⁰	School Name	Award	Performance Award Amt.
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	APPLE GLEN ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,000.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	BRIGHT FIELD MIDDLE	Top 5%	\$58,300.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	COOPER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$63,300.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	ELM TREE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$48,400.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	EVENING STAR ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$71,000.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT JR HIGH	Top 5%	\$64,700.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	LINCOLN JUNIOR HIGH	Top 5%	\$70,500.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	OSAGE CREEK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$62,700.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	SUGAR CREEK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$48,700.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	WASHINGTON JUNIOR HIGH	Top 5%	\$69,600.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	WILLOWBROOK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$82,400.00
BRYANT SCH. DIST.	SPRINGHILL ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$51,800.00
DEWITT SCH. DIST.	GILLETT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$5,300.00
EMERSON-TAYLOR-BRADLEY SD	EMERSON ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$16,100.00
EMERSON-TAYLOR-BRADLEY SD	TAYLOR ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$29,200.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	ROOT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$42,600.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	VANDERGRIFF ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$58,500.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	WOODLAND JUNIOR HIGH	Top 5%	\$77,100.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	JOHN P. WOODS ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$53,500.00
GENOA CENTRAL SCH. DIST.	GARY E. COBB MIDDLE	Top 5%	\$38,600.00
GENOA CENTRAL SCH. DIST.	GENOA CENTRAL ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$41,000.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER EASTSIDE ELEM	Top 5%	\$36,500.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER MIDDLE	Top 5%	\$57,400.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER SPRINGHILL ELEM	Top 5%	\$48,000.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER WESTSIDE ELEM	Top 5%	\$44,000.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER WOOSTER ELEM	Top 5%	\$34,300.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	EAST POINTE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$70,200.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$69,100.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL ACADEMY	Top 5%	\$44,400.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL ACADEMY AT LANE	Top 5%	\$31,900.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL ACADEMY JONES CTR	Top 5%	\$22,100.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL BENTONVILLE	Top 5%	\$40,100.00
HARRISBURG SCH. DIST.	WEINER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$11,000.00
LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	DON ROBERTS ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$100,600.00
LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	FOREST PARK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$38,100.00
LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$34,700.00
POTTSVILLE SCH. DIST.	POTTSVILLE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$52,400.00
POTTSVILLE SCH. DIST.	POTTSVILLE MIDDLE GRADE	Top 5%	\$42,500.00

⁸⁰ Reward Schools 2021, retrieved at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Reward_Schools_2021_20211104100433.pdf.

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸⁰	School Name	Award	Performance Award Amt.
PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL DIST	BAKER INTERDISTRICT ELEM	Top 5%	\$37,700.00
PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL DIST	CHENAL ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$44,400.00
RESPONSIVE ED SOLUTIONS NW ARK CLASSICAL ACADEMY	NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY	Top 5%	\$69,600.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	BELLVIEW ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$37,500.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	FAIRVIEW ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$59,500.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	JANIE DARR ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$35,600.00
RUSSELLVILLE SCH. DIST.	CENTER VALLEY ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$34,100.00
RUSSELLVILLE SCH. DIST.	SEQUOYAH ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,800.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	BERNICE YOUNG ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,100.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HUNT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$50,100.00
VALLEY SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	VALLEY SPRINGS MIDDLE	Top 5%	\$23,300.00
ACADEMICS PLUS PUBLIC CHTR	MAUMELLE CHARTER ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$39,700.00
ARMOREL SCH. DIST.	ARMOREL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$11,000.00
BATESVILLE SCH. DIST.	SULPHUR ROCK MAGNET ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$13,600.00
BENTON SCH. DIST.	PERRIN ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$28,200.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	ARDIS ANN MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$27,900.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	BENTONVILLE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$153,000.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	CENTERTON GAMBLE ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$33,000.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	OLD HIGH MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$29,800.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	THOMAS JEFFERSON ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$21,400.00
BERGMAN SCH. DIST.	BERGMAN MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$15,850.00
BISMARCK SCH. DIST.	BISMARCK MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$14,500.00
BRYANT SCH. DIST.	BETHEL MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$35,450.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	MAGNESS CREEK ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$16,050.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	MOUNTAIN SPRINGS ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$23,650.00
CONWAY SCH. DIST.	CAROLYN LEWIS ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$25,500.00
CONWAY SCH. DIST.	WOODROW CUMMINS ELEM	Top 6%-10%	\$24,150.00
DES ARC SCH. DIST.	DES ARC ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$15,200.00
EL DORADO SCH. DIST.	HUGH GOODWIN ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$24,350.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	HAPPY HOLLOW ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$23,100.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	HOLCOMB ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$30,750.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	MCNAIR MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$33,750.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	CAVANAUGH ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$16,050.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	ELMER H. COOK ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$24,650.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	L. A. CHAFFIN JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$42,900.00
FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY PINE BLUFF	FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE ACADEMY	Top 6%-10%	\$15,100.00
GRAVETTE SCH. DIST.	GRAVETTE MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$23,000.00
GREEN FOREST SCH. DIST.	GREEN FOREST ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$19,700.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$28,750.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	GREENWOOD JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$29,850.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	EAST HILLS MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$29,500.00
HARRISON SCH. DIST.	HARRISON KINDERGARTEN	Top 6%-10%	\$22,600.00

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸⁰	School Name	Award	Performance Award Amt.
HARRISON SCH. DIST.	HARRISON MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$41,250.00
HARRISON SCH. DIST.	SKYLINE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$22,600.00
HEBER SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	HEBER SPRINGS MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$18,750.00
HILLCREST SCH. DIST.	HILLCREST ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$10,950.00
HOT SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	PARK MAGNET AN IB PYP WORLD CLASS	Top 6%-10%	\$19,600.00
MELBOURNE SCH. DIST.	MELBOURNE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$20,450.00
MOUNTAIN VIEW SCH. DIST.	RURAL SPECIAL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$4,850.00
NEMO VISTA SCH. DIST.	NEMO VISTA MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$4,850.00
OUACHITA SCH. DIST.	OUACHITA ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$11,600.00
RESPONSIVE ED SOLUTIONS NW ARK CLASSICAL ACADEMY	NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$10,250.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	EASTSIDE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$23,150.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	ELMWOOD MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$48,250.00
SALEM SCH. DIST.	SALEM ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$21,200.00
SOUTH PIKE COUNTY SCH. DIST.	DELIGHT ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$4,150.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HELLSTERN MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$39,850.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	JOHN TYSON ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$22,500.00
VALLEY SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	VALLEY SPRINGS HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$13,850.00
VALLEY VIEW SCH. DIST.	VALLEY VIEW ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$43,100.00
VALLEY VIEW SCH. DIST.	VALLEY VIEW INTERMEDIATE	Top 6%-10%	\$43,100.00
VALLEY VIEW SCH. DIST.	VALLEY VIEW JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$36,350.00
VAN BUREN SCH. DIST.	RENA ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$19,350.00

GROWTH SCHOOLS

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸¹	Name	Performance Award	Performance Award Amt.
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	WILLOWBROOK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$82,400.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	STAGECOACH ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,100.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	WESTSIDE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$32,900.00
CONCORD SCH. DIST.	CONCORD HIGH	Top 5%	\$18,800.00
CONWAY SCH. DIST.	CAROLYN LEWIS ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$51,000.00
CONWAY SCH. DIST.	JULIA LEE MOORE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$42,300.00
CONWAY SCH. DIST.	WOODROW CUMMINS ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$48,300.00
COSSATOT RIVER SCH. DIST.	WICKES ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$25,500.00
DANVILLE SCH. DIST.	DANVILLE HIGH	Top 5%	\$23,100.00
ESTEM PUBLIC CHARTER	ESTEM HIGH	Top 5%	\$54,500.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	ROOT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$42,600.00
FAYETTEVILLE SCH. DIST.	VANDERGRIFF ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$58,500.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	CAVANAUGH ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$32,100.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	ELMER H. COOK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,300.00
GENOA CENTRAL SCH. DIST.	GENOA CENTRAL ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$41,000.00
GREEN FOREST SCH. DIST.	GREEN FOREST ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$39,400.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER WOOSTER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$34,300.00
GREENBRIER SCH. DIST.	GREENBRIER SPRINGHILL ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$48,000.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$69,100.00
GREENWOOD SCH. DIST.	EAST POINTE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$70,200.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL ACADEMY	Top 5%	\$44,400.00
HAAS HALL ACADEMY	HAAS HALL ACADEMY AT THE LANE	Top 5%	\$31,900.00
HARRISBURG SCH. DIST.	WEINER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$11,000.00
JASPER SCH. DIST.	JASPER HIGH	Top 5%	\$19,400.00
JASPER SCH. DIST.	KINGSTON HIGH	Top 5%	\$12,300.00
JASPER SCH. DIST.	OARK HIGH	Top 5%	\$7,400.00
LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	FOREST PARK ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$38,100.00
MARMADUKE SCH. DIST.	MARMADUKE HIGH	Top 5%	\$30,900.00
MOUNTAIN VIEW SCH. DIST.	RURAL SPECIAL HIGH	Top 5%	\$9,100.00
MT. VERNON-ENOLA SCH. DIST.	MT. VERNON-ENOLA HIGH	Top 5%	\$25,400.00
OZARK SCH. DIST.	ELGIN B MILTON PRIMARY	Top 5%	\$50,300.00
POTTSVILLE SCH. DIST.	POTTSVILLE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$52,400.00
PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL DIST	BAKER INTERDISTRICT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$37,700.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	BELLVIEW ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$37,500.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	EASTSIDE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$46,300.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	ELZA R. TUCKER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$47,600.00
RUSSELLVILLE SCH. DIST.	SEQUOYAH ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,800.00
SALEM SCH. DIST.	SALEM ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$42,400.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	BERNICE YOUNG ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$49,100.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	GEORGE ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$44,600.00

⁸¹ Reward School 2021, retrieved at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Reward_Schools_2021_20211104100433.pdf.

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸¹	Name	Performance Award	Performance Award Amt.
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HARP ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$41,400.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HUNT ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$50,100.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	JOHN TYSON ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$45,000.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	LINDA CHILDERS KNAPP ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$54,200.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	MONITOR ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$55,300.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	WALKER ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$43,200.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$40,000.00
VAN BUREN SCH. DIST.	KING ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$39,600.00
VAN BUREN SCH. DIST.	PARKVIEW ELEMENTARY	Top 5%	\$34,500.00
ALPENA SCH. DIST.	ALPENA HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$11,400.00
BENTON SCH. DIST.	BENTON HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$61,200.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	BRIGHT FIELD MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$29,150.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	CENTERTON GAMBLE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$33,000.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	COOPER ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$31,650.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	EVENING STAR ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$35,500.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	LINCOLN JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$35,250.00
BENTONVILLE SCH. DIST.	WASHINGTON JUNIOR HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$34,800.00
BISMARCK SCH. DIST.	BISMARCK HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$14,750.00
BOONEVILLE SCH. DIST.	BOONEVILLE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$12,200.00
BRYANT SCH. DIST.	COLLEGEVILLE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$23,850.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	MOUNTAIN SPRINGS ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$23,650.00
CABOT SCH. DIST.	WARD CENTRAL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$21,800.00
CLARENDON SCH. DIST.	CLARENDON HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$9,650.00
CLEVELAND COUNTY SCH. DIST.	RISON HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$17,850.00
CLINTON SCH. DIST.	CLINTON HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$20,250.00
CROSS COUNTY SCH. DIST.	CROSS COUNTY ELEM TECH ACADEMY	Top 6%-10%	\$15,750.00
DARDANELLE SCH. DIST.	DARDANELLE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$29,050.00
EAST END SCH. DIST.	BIGELOW HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$15,350.00
EUREKA SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	EUREKA SPRINGS HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$9,350.00
FORT SMITH SCH. DIST.	EUPER LANE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$21,550.00
GOSNELL SCH. DIST.	GOSNELL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$29,800.00
GRAVETTE SCH. DIST.	GRAVETTE MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$23,000.00
HAMPTON SCH. DIST.	HAMPTON HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$12,300.00
HARMONY GROVE DIST OUACHITA	HARMONY GROVE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$18,900.00
JESSIEVILLE SCH. DIST.	JESSIEVILLE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$16,650.00
JUNCTION CITY SCH. DIST.	JUNCTION CITY HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$11,750.00
LISA ACADEMY	LISA ACADEMY NORTH HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$14,150.00
LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	DON ROBERTS ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$50,300.00
MAYNARD SCH. DIST.	MAYNARD HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$10,600.00
NASHVILLE SCH. DIST.	NASHVILLE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$20,100.00
NASHVILLE SCH. DIST.	NASHVILLE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$21,500.00
NASHVILLE SCH. DIST.	NASHVILLE PRIMARY	Top 6%-10%	\$27,300.00
NORTH LITTLE ROCK SCH. DIST.	NORTH LITTLE ROCK CTR OF EXCELLENCE	Top 6%-10%	\$17,250.00
POTTSVILLE SCH. DIST.	POTTSVILLE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$18,550.00

SCH. DIST. Name ⁸¹	Name	Performance Award	Performance Award Amt.
POTTSVILLE SCH. DIST.	POTTSVILLE MIDDLE GRADE	Top 6%-10%	\$21,250.00
POYEN SCH. DIST.	POYEN HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$14,050.00
PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL DIST	CHEVAL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$22,200.00
QUITMAN SCH. DIST.	QUITMAN HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$10,550.00
RESPONSIVE ED SOLUTIONS NW ARK CLASSICAL ACADEMY	NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CLASSICAL ACADEMY HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$10,250.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	GRACE HILL ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$18,900.00
ROGERS SCH. DIST.	WESTSIDE ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$20,750.00
RUSSELLVILLE SCH. DIST.	CENTER VALLEY ELEMENTARY	Top 6%-10%	\$17,050.00
SOUTH SIDE DIST (VAN BUREN	SOUTH SIDE HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$11,600.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HELEN TYSON MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$33,900.00
SPRINGDALE SCH. DIST.	HELLSTERN MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$39,850.00
VALLEY SPRINGS SCH. DIST.	VALLEY SPRINGS HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$13,850.00
VILONIA SCH. DIST.	VILONIA HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$47,350.00
VILONIA SCH. DIST.	VILONIA MIDDLE	Top 6%-10%	\$24,550.00
YELLVILLE-SUMMIT SCH. DIST.	YELLVILLE-SUMMIT HIGH	Top 6%-10%	\$20,400.00

Appendix C: Schools on the Move

For 2021, DESE identified Schools on the Move in the following categories:

- Overall ESSA School Index Score Increases
- Weighted Achievement Increases
- Value-Added Growth Increases

OVERALL ESSA SCHOOL INDEX SCORE INCREASES

For the 2020-21 school year, two schools increased their overall ESSA Index Score by more than ten points: Parkview Elementary School in the Van Buren School District, and the Academic Center for Excellence in the Cabot School District.

One hundred twenty-five schools improved their overall ESSA Index Score in 2021. The DESE report lists schools that showed improvement from 5.03 point increases to 10.26 point increases.⁸²

School	District
Parkview Elementary	Van Buren
Academic Center for Excellence	Cabot
Elgin B. Milton Primary School	Ozark
Grace Hill Elementary	Rogers
Westwood Elementary	Greenwood
Poyen Elementary	Poyen
Weiner Elementary	Harrisburg

WEIGHTED ACHIEVEMENT INCREASES

In the 2020-21 school year, forty schools increased their Weighted Achievement Score. Four schools improved their Weighted Achievement Score by more than four points.⁸³

School	District
Academic Center for Excellence	Cabot
Parkview Elementary	Van Buren
Weiner Elementary	Harrisburg
Arkansas School for the Blind High	Arkansas School for the Blind

VALUE ADDED GROWTH INCREASES

The Value Added Growth Score is an average of students' growth scores, which are based on individual students' growth toward his or her expectation (a student's expectation is calculated from previous history of achievement and the current assessment). Schools that report a growth score of eighty are schools where students, on average, are growing in their learning as expected. Five hundred

⁸² Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>.

⁸³ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>.

thirty-one schools earned eighty or more points for student growth. Six elementary schools had growth scores two standard deviations or more above the mean.⁸⁴

School	District
Weiner Elementary	Harrisburg
Parkview Elementary	Van Buren
Pottsville Elementary	Pottsville
George Elementary	Springdale
Hunt Elementary	Springdale
Genoa Central Elementary	Genoa Central

Seven middle schools scored two standard deviations or more above the mean.⁸⁵

School	District
Washington Junior High	Bentonville
Gravette Middle	Gravette
Helen Tyson Middle	Springdale
Vilonia Middle	Vilonia
Hellstern Middle	Springdale
Lincoln Junior High	Bentonville
Bright Field Middle	Bentonville

Ten high schools scored two standard deviations or more above the mean.⁸⁶

School	District
Danville High	Danville
Haas Hall Bentonville	Haas Hall Academy
Marmaduke High	Marmaduke
Kingston High	Jasper
Haas Hall Academy at the Lane	Haas Hall Academy
Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy High	Responsive Ed Solutions Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy
Haas Hall Academy Jones Center	Haas Hall Academy
Jasper High	Jasper
Horatio High	Horatio
Bradley High	Emerson-Taylor-Bradley

⁸⁴ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>

⁸⁵ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>

⁸⁶ Schools on the Move Toward Excellence 2021, retrieved at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oqxnnazwd1FotHQcVJ6KFy8XtrdMzDxk616dkcfB6BY/edit>