



ARKANSAS  
DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION

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

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

## Introduction

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is pleased to provide a summary of the Consolidated Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) (ESSA). This document represents a year's worth of stakeholder engagement, planning, writing, and revising to create a coherent plan for the U.S. Department of Education.

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

ADE is particularly focused on ensuring districts, schools, and communities have the supports they need to help students succeed in college and careers, regardless of their background. This executive summary identifies the key components of the ADE's plan in an easy-to-read and concise manner.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ESSA stands for the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).
- ESSA replaces No Child Left Behind (2001).
- With ESSA, each state can have a more flexible and unique accountability system.
- The change is a positive shift for Arkansas educators, students, and citizens from compliance and labels to support and student-focused education.



## Background

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

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

Additionally, the Arkansas Supreme Court in *Lake View School District No. 25 v. Huckabee*, 351 Ark. 31 (2002) noted it is the absolute duty of the state to provide all public school children with a substantially equal opportunity for an adequate education. With this history, Arkansas’s response to state and federal requirements has focused on ensuring equity within the dominant “adequacy” mindset.

The new plan capitalizes on the unique opportunity that the ADE and local education agencies (LEAs) have to reimagine a coherent support and accountability system that integrates federal, state, and local efforts and resources to enhance equity and access to opportunities to benefit all students in Arkansas.

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

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## Vision for Excellence in Education

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

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

- The first four are student-focused,
  - Student Achievement
  - Student Growth
  - Personal Competencies
  - Student Success, and
- The fifth goal sets the tone for the ADE to provide leadership, support, and service to school districts through the development of personnel within the agency.

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





Figure A. Vision for Excellence in Education

Looking beyond the traditional education system, the vision sets a course to prepare Arkansas students for a future that may be different from today’s college and career paradigm. Already, the lines between college, technical, and career postsecondary readiness have blurred. The academic content and skills that students must acquire and demonstrate for success must dive more deeply into complex thinking and learning, creative problem-solving, synthesis, and design. Students need to develop internal motivation and the tenacity to persist in a future where change and innovation will be the norm.

The vision sets a new course for ADE leadership, as well as its support and service to LEAs. As noted in Arkansas

Educational Support and Accountability Act (2017), it falls to the state to provide the framework to ensure that all students in Arkansas public schools have a substantially equal opportunity to achieve and demonstrate the following:

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

To move toward this vision, the educational support and accountability system must drive the desired changes by including multiple measures of student success and



school quality in a coherent system which will support state and local decision-making to create and enhance effective student-focused learning systems.

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

*The ADE will support LEAs*

Figure B. Values Anchoring the Vision for Excellence in Education

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

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

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

1. Honors where students and schools currently are;
2. Recognizes the important input characteristics of schools and LEAs; and
3. Leads LEAs to personalize their pathway to an aspirational vision of the future (i.e., state long-term goals)

by a comprehensive support and accountability system.

 <p><b>Leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striving to be a model of excellence that is dedicated to professional and ethical standards, the whole child, and effective results.</li> <li>• Driving action toward excellence through informed risk-taking.</li> <li>• Protecting the public trust by ensuring quality and accountability.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with others through mutual respect, trust, and professionalism.</li> <li>• Communicating in an open, honest, and transparent manner.</li> <li>• Fostering new ideas and promoting effective practices.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Service</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing quality service in a respectful, effective, and professional manner.</li> <li>• Administering agency programs and services with integrity, honesty and transparency.</li> <li>• Leveraging state resources in a wise, efficient, and productive manner.</li> </ul>



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

### Theory of Action

A Theory of Action is used to communicate the logical, organized way the system is intended to work to achieve the desired results.

The purpose of the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System is to ensure all children have access to opportunities for a high quality education and to make progress in closing long-standing achievement gaps. The following are the goals of the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System.

- To identify schools in need of support and subgroups of students within schools and notify LEA leaders when schools within their systems are most in need of the LEA’s support to achieve immediate and sustained improvement.
- To provide support that will empower LEAs to uncover the needs of their schools in need of support and/or student subgroups and enable LEAs to implement evidence-based strategies to address those needs.
- To inform educators and stakeholders about school quality and student success as well as the progress and outcomes of schools’ and districts’ continuous improvement efforts.

The Theory of Action signals how these goals are expected to be accomplished. Specifically, the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System shifts the focus of ADE efforts from directly intervening in schools in need of support to empowering and enabling LEAs. LEAs are then empowered to harness local, state, and federal resources to enhance outcomes for all students, particularly those schools in need of support and those schools historically underserved.



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



ewide system of support based on data-informed needs.

The Theory of Action can also be used to promote transparency in communicating expectations for and reporting the progress of LEAs' and their schools' continuous inquiry and improvement efforts to achieve or make progress toward expected outcomes for students. These local cycles of inquiry will inform LEAs in their strategic provision of support and resources (human and fiscal) to their schools.

**Figure D illustrates ADE's high-level Theory of Action for the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System.**

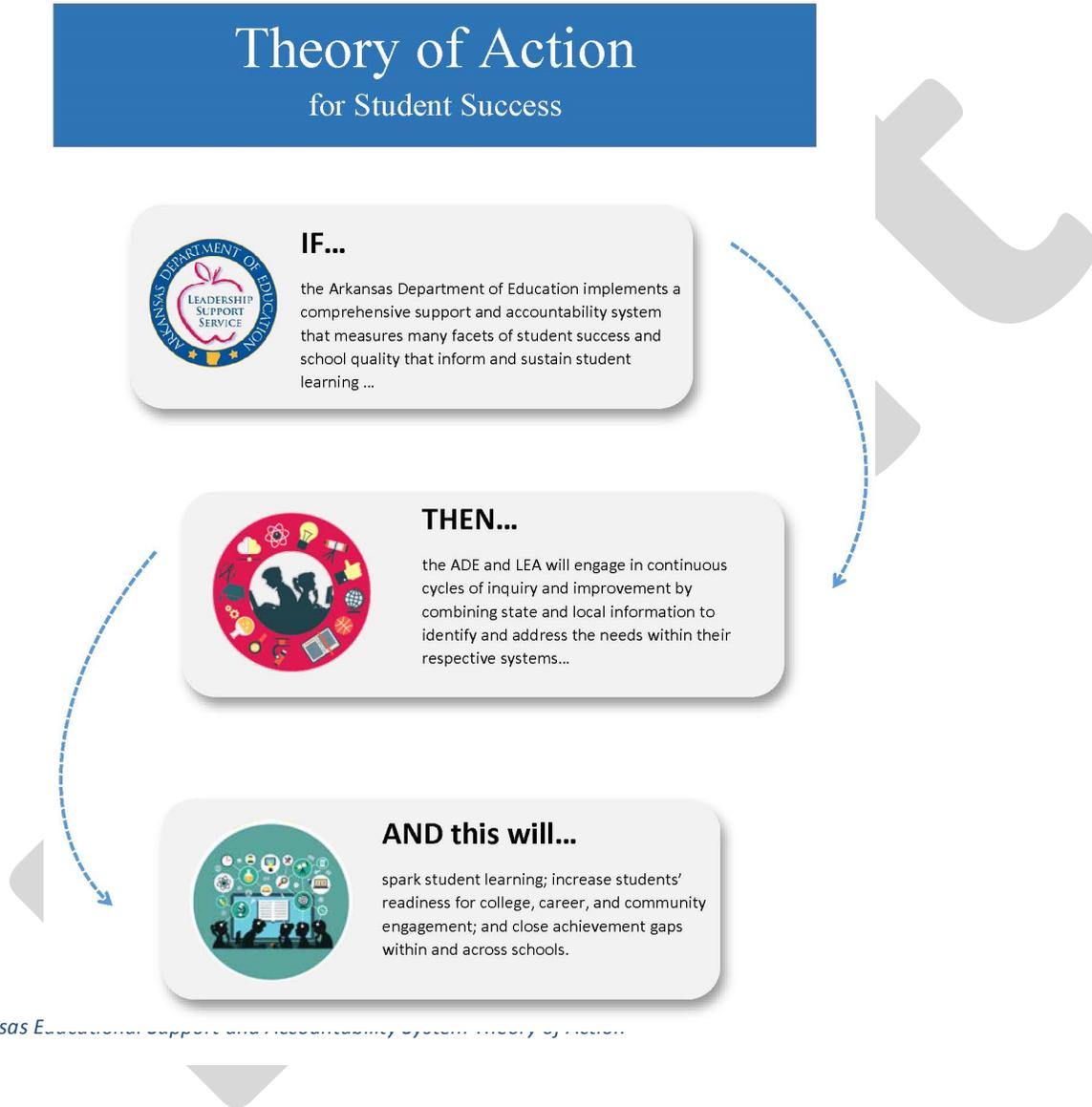


Figure D. Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System Theory of Action



## Support and Accountability

ESSA (2015) requires states to develop a method for annual, meaningful differentiation among schools for the purpose of identifying schools in need of support and schools with consistently underperforming student subgroups. States are required to use certain indicators for this purpose as well as some optional indicators that can be included in the methodology. ESSA (2015) also requires states to set long-term goals for the indicators and measurements of interim progress.

States have some flexibility to determine how to combine and weight indicators that are used to meaningfully differentiate among schools. The ESSA School Index was developed based on the Theory of Action and in consultation with stakeholders to inform the selection of indicators, as well as use and weighting of indicators to meaningfully differentiate among schools.

The ESSA School Index will be used for annual meaningful differentiation of schools as well as to identify schools and student subgroups in need of support within schools based on multiple indicators valued by stakeholders. Based on schools' index scores, ADE will notify LEAs of schools in need of support or subgroups within their schools, and collaborate with LEAs to support their work in improving school outcomes.

The ESSA School Index is comprised of multiple, robust indicators which include these five elements of the School Performance Rating:

- Achievement,
- Growth:
  - Academic growth combined with
  - English Learner growth in English proficiency,
- Graduation rate, and
- School Quality/Student Success indicators for each grade span responsive to stakeholders and state and federal requirements.

The ESSA School Index will be used along with measurements or checkpoints of interim progress to provide information to the ADE and LEAs to steer the course toward achieving long-term goals. The indicators in the ESSA School Index, while robust for high-stakes accountability use, are not intended to be the sole focus of LEA and school efforts for continuous improvement. The ESSA School Index provides a snapshot of the

outcomes of school quality and student success. A focus on these outcomes alone would **short-circuit** true continuous inquiry and improvement.

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

### Key Points to Remember

- Accountability informs support and provides transparency for outcomes of the learning system.
- The Theory of Action describes how support and accountability are intended to work together to improve outcomes for students.
- The ESSA School Index will identify schools in need of support.
- The new system has a focus on long-term learning versus one-time snapshot test scores.
- Long-term goals reflect the Vision—reflecting ADE and LEA dreams for all students' success.
- Checkpoints for interim progress are for LEA and school self-reflection and for pacing their progress toward the vision.

### Combining and Weighting Indicators for ESSA School Index

Component	Weight of Indicator within Index Grades K – 5 & 6 - 8	Weight of Indicator within Index Grades 9 - 12
Weighted Achievement Indicator	35%	35%
Growth Indicator Academic Growth English Language Progress	50%	35%
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%



## Assessment

The Arkansas State Board has approved the state assessment system to include high-quality assessments that measure college- and career-readiness. Recommendations for the current state assessments were based on numerous hearings and public feedback regarding the state's previous standards and assessments. In 2016-2017 the state changed from the previous PARCC assessment to ACT Aspire® for grades 3-10. Content areas covered by ACT Aspire include English language arts, mathematics, and science.

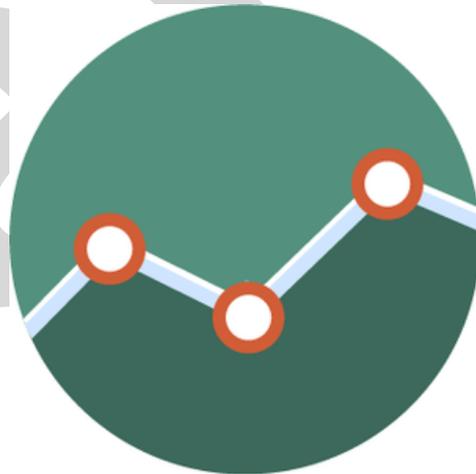
As the state continues to strive for reading improvement throughout all grades, the reading portion of the ACT Aspire assessment will be one of many student-focused components used in determining the School Quality and Student Success indicator. This indicator will include several student-focused areas including science proficiency and growth, student engagement, college and career readiness, etc.

As part of a comprehensive state assessment system, the state provides additional assessments outside of the required ACT Aspire for grades 3-10. The ACT®, a college and career readiness assessment, is provided for all 11<sup>th</sup> graders during the school day as a college reportable score. The state has also implemented a new K-2 assessment system to provide choice for districts. The new options will allow for immediate interim and summative information in literacy and math to inform instruction and practice within the schools.

As the ADE and local school districts continue to focus on multiple measures to determine school and student success, the agency will continue to explore and model other assessment tools to inform practice through the cycle of inquiry. Career readiness is a focus area for the ADE in collaboration with other state agencies.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ACT Aspire assessment will be used for grades 3-10.
- ADE is exploring expanded assessment options for the future.
- There is heightened focus on career readiness for high school levels, and assessment tools are being explored.
- ADE is focusing on grade-level reading for grades 3-10.
- Schools will have new options for grades K-2 assessments that will allow for interim and summative measurements in literacy and math.



## Educator Equity and Effectiveness

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

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

### *Key Points to Remember*

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



## English Learners

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

Some of the supports provided include:

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

The ADE has established new entry and exit criteria for English Learners that is common across the state for all districts. The current assessment for English Language Proficiency is the ELPA21. The ADE continues conversations with stakeholders addressing the timeline for proficiency; taking into account a student's grade and proficiency levels.

All 3-10th grade English Learners will participate in the ACT Aspire assessment. For recently arrived English Learners (first year in the U.S.), the first year they take the state assessment it will only be used as a baseline score. The second year, data will be used for growth measures. While, in the third year, data will be used for both growth and proficiency.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- ADE has new entry and exit criteria that are common across the state for all districts.
- There are two versions of the ELPA21 test. One is used to screen potential English Learners and the second is used to measure English Language Proficiency every year.
- Former English Learners are counted for accountability for four years.
- The timeline to proficiency takes into account grade level and proficiency level.
- The English Learner indicator is incorporated into the ESSA School Index as growth, one of the five indicators.



## School Support and Improvement

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

ADE will collaborate and coordinate with the education service cooperatives to efficiently and effectively support and monitor LEA school improvement planning and implementation.

ADE will sponsor regional conferences to disseminate key information regarding:

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

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

The continuous inquiry and improvement cycle will build on prior analyses of improvement efforts and/or prior needs assessments. LEAs will intentionally build on and integrate new efforts with existing improvement processes. The local inquiry and improvement process is enhanced when teachers and leaders focus on key factors that are closely connected to student learning, for example, instructional and learning strategies and classroom and school routines that support and enhance deeper learning.

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

Figure F illustrates the intended local inquiry and improvement cycle.

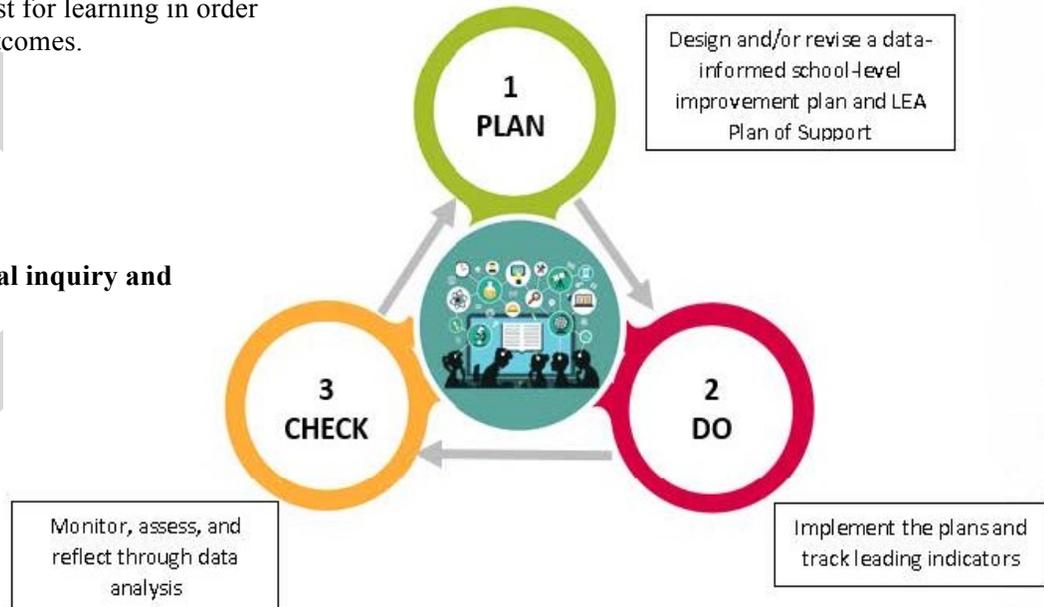


Figure F. LEA Local Continuous Inquiry and Improvement Cycle



The ESSA School Index for annual meaningful differentiation will enable the ADE to identify schools in need of support based on multiple indicators, notify LEAs of schools in need of support or student groups within their schools, and collaborate with them to support their work in improving school outcomes. Data from the ESSA School Index will enable the ADE to design and provide strategic, data-informed support to LEAs. By reporting on each indicator within the ESSA School Index, stakeholders will have transparent information for critical indicators of school quality and student success.

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

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

The results of LEAs' needs assessments, their responsive local improvement plans, and their reports of progress on outcomes relevant to the plan will inform the ADE's continuous inquiry and feedback cycle for adjusting and continuously improving support at all levels, and in particular, for LEAs with schools in need of support.

### *Key Points to Remember*

- In general, ADE will support districts and districts will support schools.
- Through this support, districts will gain strategies to better support their schools.
- ADE will notify LEAs of any schools within their LEA identified (through multiple indicators of success, including growth) for a level of support.
- The three key levels of support under ESSA are:
  - **Comprehensive Support:** Lowest 5% of Title I schools.
  - **Targeted Support:** Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups.
  - **Additional Targeted Support:** Schools with subgroups performing at or below the lowest 5% of all students.
- ADE will approve additional funding, when available, for LEAs with schools identified needing Targeted Support or Additional Targeted Support.
- Stakeholders must be involved in the development of all improvement plans.
- Schools will have three years to show improvements after which more rigorous LEA interventions may apply.



## Next Steps

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

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

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

### Key Points to Remember

- ADE will submit the final plan to the U.S. Department of Education in September 2017.
- Federal feedback is expected by the end of the year, and ADE will implement aspects of the plan beginning in the 2018–19 school year.
- ADE will continue to seek meaningful stakeholder engagement during the implementation the plan.

Figure G. Draft Mockup for the School Report Card

