



Professional Development (PD)

According to Arkansas statute, “The purpose of professional development (PD) is to improve knowledge and skills in order to facilitate individual, team, school-wide, and district-wide improvement designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state academic standards” (§6-17-704(b)).

PD Requirements

Districts and charters must include at least six PD days in educator contracts (§ 6-17-2402). Among those days, educators are required to complete two hours of the following on a rotating basis over four years: child maltreatment, parental involvement, teen suicide awareness and prevention, and Arkansas history (for those teaching Arkansas history). Additionally, educators are required to receive professional awareness on dyslexia. Districts are required to make available thirty minutes of professional development on human trafficking annually as well as specific scientific reading instruction. Athletic coaches shall complete training pertaining to health emergencies, environmental issues affecting student safety, communicable diseases, and cardiac arrest every three years.

Professional development can be earned in the following ways: approved conferences, workshops, institutes, individual learning, mentoring, peer-coaching, study groups, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, distance learning, micro-credentialing approved by the department, internships, and college or university course work (§ 6-17-704(d)). Up to twelve hours of PD credit may also be earned by licensed personnel for time required at the beginning of the school year for planning and preparing a curriculum and other instructional materials (§ 6-17-705(a)).

PD Funding History

The state provides funding to help districts and charters to pay for professional development programs. This money is one of four restricted state categorical funds. PD funding, like other state categorical funds, is considered restricted, meaning districts can only use the money on the programs for which it is intended. Districts are allowed to spend PD funding only on specific activities, such as conferences, web-training, workshops, or other PD-related activities.

Districts receive PD disbursements based on their average daily membership (ADM) calculated from the previous year. In 2003, Act 59 of the 2nd Extraordinary session authorized up to \$50 per student for 2004-05 PD funding. This amount remained relatively unchanged until 2015. In the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2013, the General Assembly passed Act 2, which reduced PD funding from \$54 per student to \$32.40 for the 2014-15 school year and each year since. Act 2 was implemented to generate savings to support the public school employee health insurance plan.

School Year	Per Student PD Funding Amount
2012-13	\$52
2013-14	\$53
2014-15	\$32.40
2015-16	\$32.40
2016-17	\$32.40
2017-18	\$32.40

In 2017-18, funding above \$32.40 will go towards the professional learning community (PLC) pilot program. This comes from Act 427 of 2017 which was based on recommendations from the 2016 Adequacy Report. Act 2318 of 2015 created the Arkansas Online Professional Development Initiative. The idea for the program was to create one online system that each school district could not have afforded to develop individually.

Section 29 of Act 2131 of 2005 authorized ADE to use up to \$4 million of the total PD appropriation for the online PD program. This special language set aside \$4 million and was included in every Public School Fund appropriation until 2015. The special language was removed that year in an effort to reduce unnecessary language but was re-added in 2017 at the urging of ADE. When it was re-added in 2017, the amount was decreased to \$3.5 million in an effort to have AETN spend down existing fund balances. ADE manages the online system by awarding grants to AETN to set up and maintain a portal for online courses, known as ArkansasIDEAS.

PD Funding and Expenditures

School Year	Total PD Funding by Statute	Transfers from Other Categorical Funds to PD
2014-15	\$12.58M	\$4.27M
2015-16	\$12.31M	\$4.75M
2016-17	\$12.32 M	\$5.61M

In 2016-17, districts and charters received a total of \$12.32 million in PD funding. Districts and charters are allowed to transfer money between categorical funds. In 2016-17, they transferred \$5.61 million into PD funds and \$772,216 out of PD funds into other categorical funds.

School Year	Total PD Expenditures	Transfers from PD to Other Categorical Funds
2014-15	\$17.09M	\$507,214
2015-16	\$17.44M	\$352,979
2016-17	\$17.12M	\$772,216

The most common PD expenditure was purchased services which were made up in large part by the costs of consultants, speakers, and course registration fees.