

2026 EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY STUDY

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACHIEVEMENT



PREPARED FOR THE SENATE AND HOUSE INTERIM
COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 3, 2026





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Arkansas's Standards.....	1
Establishing a State Curriculum and Expectations.....	2
Defining Academic Standards.....	3
Required Instruction	6
Additional Embedded Content by Law	11
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	12
ESSA Student Achievement Progress.....	14
ATLAS (2025) Grade Level Results.....	16
English Language Proficiency Assessment Results	17
Graduation Rates	18
School Support and Improvement Activities.....	21
ESSA School Index.....	21
Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.....	22
School Report Card Data.....	23
High-Poverty/High-Minority Report	24
Equity Labs.....	25
BLR Teacher Quality Data Analysis.....	25
Arkansas's Standing Under ESSA	27
Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA).....	28
Statewide Student Assessment System.....	28
State Assessment Performance Results.....	29
Access to Educators	40
Educator Data	40
Levels of Support for Public School Districts	45
State Intervention - Intensive Support	46
School and District Rating System.....	47
School Letter Grades.....	48
District Letter Grades.....	52
Additional Accountability for Public School Districts and schools	56
Fiscal Distress.....	56
Academic Facilities Distress	57
Appendix A ESSA Achievement Goals.....	58



INTRODUCTION

The State of Arkansas has expressed the intent of what public school students should learn in law, rule, and in the definition of “educational adequacy,” as adopted by the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education (“the committees”) in the biennial adequacy study process.¹ The “adequacy study statute” requires the General Assembly to assess, evaluate and monitor the entire spectrum of education across the State of Arkansas to determine whether “equal educational opportunity for an adequate education is being substantially afforded to the school children of the State of Arkansas.”²

As part of that adequacy study process, the committees shall review the Arkansas academic standards developed by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the state's standing under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act), the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA), § 6-15-2901 et seq., and facilities and fiscal distress programs.³

This report seeks to fulfill that review by addressing legislative changes to relevant educational programs and subsequent revisions to Arkansas's comprehensive accountability systems for public education.

ARKANSAS'S STANDARDS

The Arkansas Public Education Act of 1997 (Act 1108 of 1997) establishes “a goal to provide a quality educational opportunity to every public school student” in the state. The General Assembly acknowledges that the State of Arkansas must “raise student academic achievement in the basic curriculum; increase the number of students who complete the courses required for graduation; and ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and preparation to be contributing members of society.”⁴ Pursuant to the act, Arkansas public school students will:

- (1) achieve competency in the basic core of knowledge and skills,
- (2) meet required standards in academic areas of the curriculum that will serve as a basis for students to pursue immediate and lifelong educational and employment opportunities, and
- (3) achieve competency in:
 - a) “Language arts, writing, spelling, speaking, listening, and reading;
 - b) Math, computation, measurement, probability and statistics;
 - c) Problem solving, basic algebra, data analysis, and geometry concepts;
 - d) Science, physical and life science knowledge and scientific problem solving; and
 - e) Social studies, history, geography, economics, and civic education.”⁵

The act outlined general academic areas for which “required standards” needed to be developed. In addition to setting the expectations for public school students to “demonstrate achievement,” the General Assembly found “a revision of existing statute is necessary” and established what schools and school districts must do to meet this challenge.⁶

In 2002, the Arkansas Supreme Court in *Lake View Sch. Dist. No. 25 v. Huckabee* cited the Arkansas Public Education Act of 1997 in determining that the Arkansas General Assembly was “well on the way to defining adequacy.”⁷

¹ Final Report on the Legislative Hearings for the 2018 Educational Adequacy Study, page 117, available at https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2Feducation%2FAdequacyReports%2FYearlyFinalReports%2F2018%2F2018EducationalAdequacyReportVolumeI_11-1-2018withAddendum.pdf

² Ark. Code Ann. § 10-3-2102.

³ Ark. Code Ann. § 10-3-2102(f)(2)-(5).

⁴ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1002(a).

⁵ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1003(a)(1)-(3).

⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1002(d).

⁷ *Lake View Sch. Dist. No. 25 v. Huckabee*, 351 Ark. 31, 91 S.W.3d 472 (2002) pages 29-33.

Arkansas's Standards

The Quality Education Act of 1983⁸ authorized and directed the SBOE to “develop comprehensive rules, criteria, and minimum standards to be used in the accreditation of school programs in elementary and secondary public schools” known as the “standards for accreditation.”⁹ The “Omnibus” Quality Education Act of 2003 (Act 1467 of 2003) removed “minimum” and required all public schools and public school districts to meet the “Arkansas standards for accreditation. It further established a comprehensive system of accountability for enforcement.¹⁰ In 2004, the Masters’ conclusions cited the Act 1467 of 2003 to conclude that the “General Assembly and Board of Education have made ‘a good beginning’ toward monitoring, assessing, and evaluating school curricula, with dramatic improvement to be evident in five to ten years.”¹¹

Establishing a State Curriculum and Expectations

In 2003, Act 1761 requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to develop a comprehensive plan to review and revise these standards as part of the “Arkansas Academic Content Standards and Curriculum Frameworks process,” and requires the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to review the plan.¹² The initial review by the SBOE adopted the “core academic areas” of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, civics, and other courses identified by the SBOE as “state-mandated graduation requirements” into the “comprehensive plan and process for establishing consistency and rigor in coursework.”¹³ These areas were then promulgated into rules along with “curriculum course content standards identified and set out in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education curriculum frameworks,” and the “curriculum frameworks” in “Section 9.00 of the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts.”¹⁴

Once embedded into the Standards for Accreditation, several of these standards proved to be “an adequate education,” according to *Lake View Sch. Dist. No. 25 v. Huckabee*.¹⁵ The Joint Committee on Educational Adequacy in 2003 went on to define “educational adequacy” as “the standards included in state’s curriculum frameworks,”¹⁶ and in 2006, add “the specific grade level curriculum and a mandatory thirty-eight (38) Carnegie units defined by the Arkansas Standards of Accreditation to be taught at the high school level.”

Following the second Adequacy Study, the state’s consultants stated in the Final Report that, “the state’s curriculum frameworks for those core subjects, [math, English, science, and social studies], which articulate what schools are teaching and how, might very well be the most important factor in ensuring an opportunity for an adequate education.”¹⁷

2003 Definition of Educational Adequacy, Part 1

The standards included in the state’s curriculum frameworks, which define what all Arkansas students are to be taught.

⁸ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-201 *et seq.*

⁹ Act 1467 of 2003, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-201 *et. seq.* (Revising the “Quality Education Act of 1983,” Act 445 of 1983), available at

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2FACTS%2F2003%2FPublic%2FACT1467.pdf>.

¹⁰ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-202(b)(1).

¹¹ 2004 Master’s Conclusions Summary (p.11).

¹² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1504(a).

¹³ 6 CAR § 95-102(3).

¹⁴ 6 CAR § 95-102(4).

¹⁵ *Lake View Sch. Dist. No. 25 v. Huckabee*, 351 Ark. 31, 91 S.W.3d 472 (2002), pages 29-33.

¹⁶ An Evidenced-Based Approach to School Finance Adequacy in Arkansas. Final Report. September 1, 2003, page 21, available at

https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2Feducation%2FAdequacyReports%2FYearlyFinalReports%2F003%2F2003+Final+Arkansas+Report+09_01_2003.pdf.

¹⁷ A Report on Legislative Hearing for the 2006 Interim Study on Educational Adequacy (Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003), page 48, available at

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2Feducation%2FAdequacyReports%2FYearlyFinalReports%2F006%2F2006+Adequacy+Report+01-22-07+FINAL.pdf>

To ensure that “all students have equal opportunity and access to the state curriculum,” public school district’s board of directors must annually adopt and implement a curriculum aligned to the “Arkansas academic standards.”¹⁸ To ensure this alignment, each local school district “shall establish procedures and a monitoring process,” and each superintendent must submit “a written statement of assurance” each school year.¹⁹ This form is provided as an attachment to the DESE rules for “Comprehensive Rigor in Coursework.”²⁰

Defining Academic Standards

Under Subpart 2, Standard 1, 6 CAR § 61-201, the DESE Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts state that “the academic system of a public school district ensures all students have access to a guaranteed viable curriculum aligned to the Arkansas academic standards for all academic areas.”²¹

In the last twenty years, the state’s curriculum and standards defined in the Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation have been referred to as “Arkansas Student Learning Expectations,”²² “Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks,”²³ “Smart Core” and “Core,”²⁴ and now “Arkansas academic standards.”²⁵ Similarly, the “adequacy study statute” has been amended to replace the duty of reviewing “the Arkansas curriculum frameworks developed by the Department of Education”²⁶ with “the Arkansas academic standards developed by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.”²⁷

In rules, “written curriculum” is defined as “identified sequences of student learning expectations, pacing, materials and resources used to teach the Arkansas academic standards and processes for evaluating mastery of the standards at particular points in time throughout the K-12 educational program;” however, “Arkansas academic standards” is not defined.²⁸

¹⁸ 6 CAR § 61-101.

¹⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1505(a)-(b).

²⁰ 6 CAR § 95-105 (b). <https://codeofarules.arkansas.gov/Rules/AppendixDocument?appendixID=16&partID=255>

²¹ 6 CAR § 61-201.

²² Standard 9.01.1. Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, Effective August 2015, [https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES \(Standards for Accreditation\).pdf](https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES (Standards for Accreditation).pdf)

²³ *Id.* Standard 9.01.3.

²⁴ *Id.* Standard 9.03.1 Smart Core and Core.

²⁵ 6 CAR § 61-201.

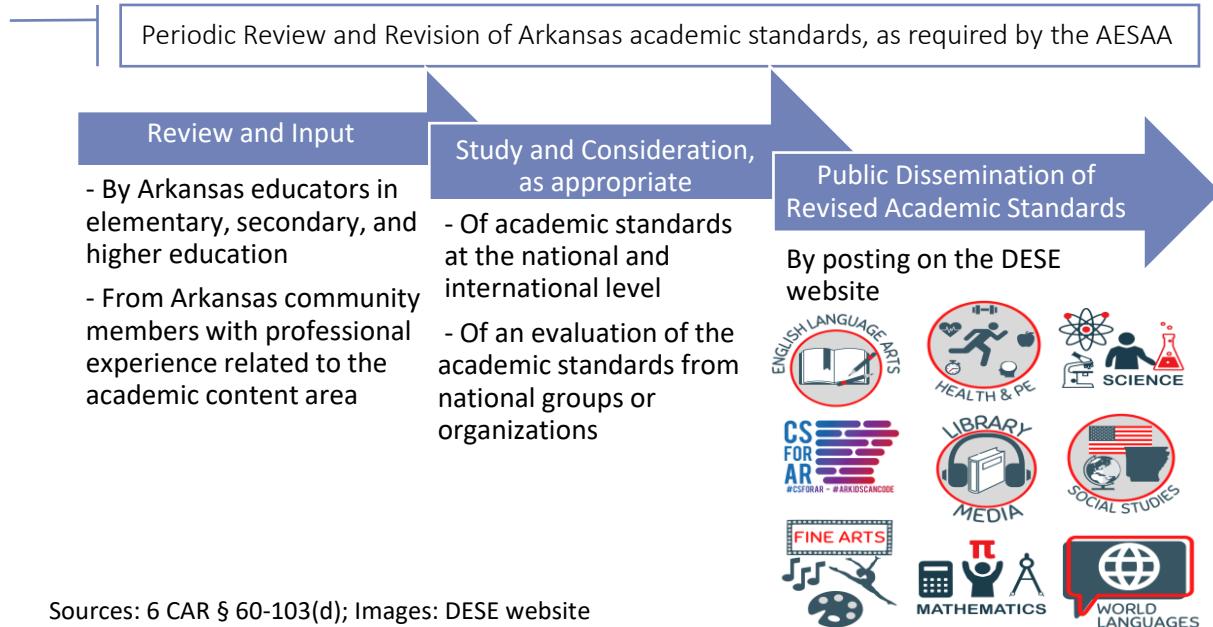
²⁶ Continuing Adequacy Evaluation Act of 2004, codified at Ark. Code Ann. 10-3-2102(f)(2).

²⁷ Act 936 of 2017, codified at Ark. Code Ann. 10-3-2102(f)(2).

²⁸ 6 CAR § 61-102(8).

Arkansas's Standards

The Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA) directed the DESE to establish “academic standards that define what students shall know and be able to demonstrate in each content area.”²⁹ The AESAA also requires DESE to “establish a schedule for periodic review and revision.”³⁰ To ensure that standards are “rigorous and prepare students for college, career, and community engagement” in all of these areas, the following chart shows the five elements that must be included in this periodic review, “at minimum,” according to the DESE Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act.³¹



Sources: 6 CAR § 60-103(d); Images: DESE website

The current “Arkansas Academic Standards” developed by the DESE, and approved by the SBOE, are defined for nine content areas for grades K-12.³²

- English Language Arts (ELA)
- Computer Science
- Fine Arts
- Health and Physical Education (P.E.)
- Library Media
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- World Languages³³

As the academic standards prepare students to demonstrate achievement in many of the above skills and competencies defined in statute, such as basic algebra, statistics, and geometry concepts,³⁴ on the DESE website,

²⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906

³⁰ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906(b).

³¹ 6 CAR § 60-103(d)

³² Arkansas Department of Education. *Arkansas Academic Standards*. (2021).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oV8bKFndPwA>

³³ Arkansas Division of Secondary and Elementary Education, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Academic Standards, <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/learning-services/curriculum-support/arkansas-academic-standards>

³⁴ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1003(b)(3).

as well as any related Disciplinary Literacy standards.³⁵ Statute and rules have defined “English Language Arts” as the academic standards for English, reading, and writing.”³⁶ With “civics, economics, geography, and history” embedded in “Social Studies,” these previously established “core academic areas” are present in the “core subjects” of ELA, math, science, and social studies. Additional standards align with the state’s expectation that “every school will offer opportunities for students to be able to study and participate in the visual and performing arts, health and physical education, and languages.”³⁷

Though the DESE review of academic standards has an established schedule, the DESE may revise or update the standards in more than one area or more frequently. Rules require that DESE develop a transition timeline for the implementation of new Arkansas academic standards when new standards are approved.³⁸ Once approved, the DESE is responsible for publishing them.³⁹ According to the last published revision cycle of Arkansas Academic Standards, the standards for Health and P.E., including Driver’s Education, are scheduled for SBOE approval in Spring 2027 and full implementation in the 2028-2029 school year.⁴⁰

Standards for Accreditation

The SBOE establishes the Standards for Accreditation, which reinforce the state’s curriculum and academic standards for public schools and school districts, and are defined as “the series of requirements that specify what a public school or public school district shall meet in order to be fully accredited by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.”⁴¹ The SBOE also promulgates the rules that, among other processes, set forth the “definitions and meaning of relevant terms governing the establishment and governance of the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and Public School Districts.”⁴² However, according to the Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and Public School Districts, the DESE is responsible for the development of the standards for accreditation and “shall review” them through a process that includes SBOE approval.⁴³

While DESE typically follows a revision cycle of every six years alternating subject areas of academic standards, the minimum standards for accreditation are reviewed at least every two years.⁴⁴ Both sets of state standards for public schools and education—accreditation and academic—have been more frequently revised in compliance with legislation, and in realignment to new state systems.

The most significant revision to the Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts was approved by the SBOE in 2018, which removed the detailed content standards of what students should know and the list of required courses from rules.⁴⁵ The DESE Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts set forth and describe the “minimum requirements and process for determining accreditation of schools and districts.” For several years, the minimum requirements

³⁵ Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Learning Services. Curriculum Support - Arkansas Academic Standards, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/learning-services/curriculum-support/arkansas-academic-standards>.

³⁶ See Ark. Code Ann. 6-15-2903(5). 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(1)(A).

³⁷ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1005(d).

³⁸ 6 CAR § 60-103(a).

³⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906(c)(4)

⁴⁰ Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Arkansas Academic Standards Revision Cycle, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/ARKANSAS_ACADEMIC_STANDARDS_REVISION_CYCLE_LS.pdf.

⁴¹ 6 CAR § 61-101(4)

⁴² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-209(4)

⁴³ 6 CAR § 61-103(a).

⁴⁴ DESE Document, Arkansas Academic Standards.

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126151255_Arkansas%20Academic%20Standards.pdf

⁴⁵ Commissioner’s Memo, COM-18-104, 06/17/2018, Final Rule: ADE Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, available at- https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-18-104--ADE_282_-_Standards_for_Accreditation.pdf.

Arkansas's Standards

for curriculum included “content-specific standards per subject area identified and set out in the course content frameworks.”⁴⁶ For instance, under Standard IX for Curriculum in the rules effective in 2015, “Mathematics” for students in Grades K-4 included “number sense, properties, and operations; measurement; geometry and spatial sense; data analysis and statistics; and patterns, algebra, and functions.”⁴⁷ Consistent in all previous revisions to the Standards for Accreditation were the “learning expectations” by grade level.⁴⁸ DESE explained in its Executive Proposed Rules Summary submitted to Arkansas Legislative Council, that the 2018 changes made to the accreditation standards were to “streamline the process, make it easier to understand, and ensure schools/districts are being held to measurable standards,” and added that changes were also “to match the systems prescribed by Act 930 of 2017”—the AESAA.⁴⁹

The AESAA requires that “instruction in all public schools shall be based on the academic standards to prepare students to demonstrate the skills and competencies necessary for successful academic growth and high school graduation.”⁵⁰ DESE Rules Governing the AESAA summarize this preparation as the definition of “college and career readiness,” meaning that the student has knowledge and skills in core academic disciplines and dispositions necessary to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement.⁵¹ With the specific competencies and standards published by DESE under “Arkansas Academic Standards,” the DESE Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts outline required instruction for similar curriculum areas.

Required Instruction

The DESE Rules require that each public school district’s board of directors “annually adopt and implement a curriculum aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards for the operation of the school district” and that

“reading, writing, speaking, and personal success skills” be incorporated into all curriculum areas.⁵² Written assurance that a public school district is offering “written curriculum” aligned to the standards approved by the SBOE must be submitted by the superintendent each school year.⁵³

According to DESE Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, all students in grades K-8 “shall receive instruction annually” in six academic content areas, as shown in the table by grade span.⁵⁴

Standard 1-A – Curriculum and instruction. Kindergarten – Grade 8	
Content Area	Grades
English Language Arts	K-4, 5-8
Mathematics	K-4, 5-8
Social Studies	K-4, 5-8
Science	K-4, 5-8
Fine Arts	K-4, 5-8
Health and Safety and Physical Education	K-4, 5-8
Career and Technical Education	5-8

Source: 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(2)-(3)(A).

⁴⁶ 6 CAR § 95-103(d)

⁴⁷ Standard 9.03.2.2 Mathematics. Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, Effective August 2015, [https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES \(Standards for Accreditation\).pdf](https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES (Standards for Accreditation).pdf)

⁴⁸ 6 CAR § 95-102(2)-(4).

⁴⁹ Summary Agenda, May 15, 2018, Meeting of the Administrative Rules and Regulations Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council (page 24), available at <https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2FAssembly%2FMeeting+Attachments%2F040%2F483%2FA+Summary+Agenda+6-12-18.pdf>

⁵⁰ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906(a)(2).

⁵¹ 6 CAR § 60-102(2).

⁵² 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(1)(A)-(B). Formerly “Reading, writing, and mathematics,” in rules effective through 2015.

⁵³ DESE Statement of Assurances (SOA) 2025-2026.

[https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Statement_of_Assurances_\(SOA\)_2025-2026_20250627180654.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Statement_of_Assurances_(SOA)_2025-2026_20250627180654.pdf)

⁵⁴ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(2)-(3).

Additional instruction in Arkansas history is required in each public elementary and secondary school in the state—beginning as a unit in social studies, then as a full semester course.⁵⁵ For all students attending elementary schools, instructional time per school day must also include at least 40 minutes for recess, “in accordance with the division’s nutrition and physical activity standards.”⁵⁶ The required instructional time in art and music (grades 1-8), and in physical education fall under fine arts and physical education respectively but are governed by separate DESE rules.⁵⁷

Consistent with Arkansas statute requiring that public school students “be offered courses in vocational preparation skills,” career and technical education (CTE) courses are part of the state’s curriculum.⁵⁸ While CTE not one of the nine areas within DESE’s “Arkansas Academic Standards,” the addition of “career and technical frameworks” to the **working definition of “educational adequacy”** was recommended to “reflect the career and technical standards” in public education.⁵⁹ Additionally, nine of the “mandatory” 38 units currently “defined by the Arkansas Standards of Accreditation” are made up of CTE courses.

Students in grades 5-8 must also receive annual CTE instruction that includes the “career awareness and exploration activities outlined in the Rule Governing a Career-Ready Pathway to Diploma.”⁶⁰ The Division of Career and Technical Education (DCTE) approves the activities and programs provided by each public school for grades 5-8 and grades 9-12. According to DESE rules, each activity “creates links between what a student does in school and what a student wants to achieve in life,” and require that public schools provide “a minimum of four (4) activities” annually.⁶¹

As shown in the table below, curriculum and instruction for students in grades 9-12 is outlined in the same content areas as grades K-8, with additional requirements for computer science and “foreign languages.” Each content area is provided as a number of units that “shall be offered annually for a total of thirty-eight (38) units.”⁶²

Standard 1-A Curriculum and instruction. Grades 9-12	
Six (6) units of English language arts	Two (2) units of the same foreign language
Six (6) units of mathematics	One (1) unit of computer science
Five (5) units of science	One and one-half (1 1/2) units of health and safety education and physical education
Four (4) units of social studies	Nine (9) units of career and technical education courses representing three (3) programs of study where each program of study represents at least three (3) units of sequenced courses. ⁶³
Three and one-half (3 1/2) units of fine arts	
Source: 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(4)(B).	

⁵⁵ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(3)(B).

⁵⁶ 6 CAR § 61-202(d)(4). See Act 641 of 2019, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102(a)(5).

⁵⁷ See 6 CAR § 97-106 for visual art and music; 6 CAR § 98-101 for physical education

⁵⁸ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1002(b)(3).

⁵⁹ Final Report on the Legislative Hearings for the 2018 Educational Adequacy Study, page 117, available at https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2Feducation%2FAdequacyReports%2FYearlyFinalReports%2F018%2F2018EducationalAdequacyReportVolumeI_11-1-2018withAddendum.pdf

⁶⁰ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(3)(A)(vii).

⁶¹ 6 CAR § 106-103(b)(1).

⁶² 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(4)(A).

⁶³ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(4)(B)(ix).

Arkansas's Standards

These are the same “38 Carnegie units to be taught at the high school level as defined by the Standards for Accreditation” referenced in the current **working definition of “educational adequacy.”** Earlier versions of rules that outlined “content-specific standards per subject area,” included a list of the courses required to be taught at the high school level and courses taken for credit towards graduation.⁶⁴ According to the DESE Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, effective December 5, 2024, the courses that correspond to these required units are approved for each content area by the SBOE and posted annually on the DESE website.⁶⁵

The *Arkansas Required High School Courses* (formerly known as the Required 38 High School Courses) is DESE’s current publication outlining the “set of unique courses” that “must be offered even if they fall into two categories.”⁶⁶ For 2025-2026, more than 50 courses were listed for public schools to offer a total of 38.5 required credits, with the additional 0.5 credit required for oral communication under English Language Arts.⁶⁷ These course offerings “shall include advanced educational courses” pursuant to law or DESE rules.⁶⁸ According to DESE’s publication, an “accelerated course” can also be offered to satisfy required credits within their respective subject areas—Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate (IB), or concurrent credit or other approved offering, but schools must offer an accelerated course in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.⁶⁹

To satisfy certain statutory requirements, schools must also offer Arkansas History “if not taught in the 7th or 8th grade,” and “one math and one literacy transitional course.” An approved Pre-AP course from a corresponding crosswalk list could be implemented in lieu of a required course if approved by DESE (i.e. Pre-AP Biology for Biology-Integrated). One of the three pathways offered at the high school level must be designated by the Department as high-wage, high-demand (H2).⁷⁰

Since *Lake View*, several changes related to courses and coursework have been made as changes to accreditation requirements, including allowing Advanced Placement (AP) courses to be taken in place of regular courses (Act 1015 of 2007), allowing waivers to combine or embed content into a single course (Act 421 of 2013), and changing how required courses are “considered as taught” in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation (Act 853 of 2015).⁷¹

Arkansas statute specifies that the SBOE “may grant a waiver of any standard for accreditation for a time period of no longer than one (1) school year, except that no curriculum, student performance, school performance, or any standard required by law may be waived for any time period.”⁷² As an exception, from 2007 to 2015, school districts could petition the SBOE for a waiver from teaching one of the required courses if no eligible students were enrolled or remained enrolled “to attend the school district campus.”⁷³

Regarding the content of these courses, if a school district has failed to align the content of each class and subject area to the approved content standards and curriculum frameworks as required, the DESE “shall take

⁶⁴ Standard 9.03.4 Grades 9-12 and Standard 14.0 Graduation Requirements. Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, Effective August 2015, [https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES \(Standards for Accreditation\).pdf](https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/COM-16-014--FINAL RULES (Standards for Accreditation).pdf)

⁶⁵ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(4)(B).

⁶⁶ 2025-26 Arkansas Required High School Courses, updated March 2025, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pwwHCmq9AEGbH-dt_gR2tgDpBQcs6C9s/view.

⁶⁷ A high school unit of credit shall be awarded for a course that meets for a minimum of one hundred twenty (120) clock hours. DESE uses “credit,” “unit,” and “credit units” to refer a full-year course; one-half represents a semester course.

⁶⁸ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(4)(C).

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ 2025-26 Arkansas Required High School Courses, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pwwHCmq9AEGbH-dt_gR2tgDpBQcs6C9s/view.

⁷¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-213(1)(B).

⁷² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-202(b)(2)(B).

⁷³ See Act 1015 of 2007, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-213(2).

enforcement actions as outlined in the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts.”⁷⁴ Waivers for combining or embedding content are only granted for courses in grades 5-12. Additionally, a new waiver request must be submitted if the “curriculum frameworks” for either of the separate courses are revised.⁷⁵ It is still a violation for a school to “fail to teach the curriculum frameworks for each separate course that is combined or embedded into a single course,” and a violation to fail to offer one of the required courses.

However, as stated in the subtitle, “a school district is not in violation of the Standards of Accreditation for Arkansas public schools and school districts if a school district offers a course but no students enroll in the course.”⁷⁶ Accelerated learning courses offered in place of a required course of same subject area taken are also considered taught if no students enroll in the required course.⁷⁷

Required High School Courses

According to the Division of Learning Services of DESE, the “Arkansas Academic Standards and courses outline the academic expectations in the state.” Arkansas statute specifies that standards for high school courses “shall include the knowledge and skills necessary to enter the work force and also shall be aligned with the coursework required for admission to the state’s institutions of post- secondary education.”⁷⁸ In statute, the purpose of requiring AP courses was to “assist small, rural public schools in providing students access to the most rigorous courses available” while still meeting accreditation requirements.⁷⁹

Pursuant to Act 242 of 2023, the Career and Technical Education with Embedded Academics Certification Committee reviews academic standards for potential substitutions for “core academic classes that are required for graduation under the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts.”⁸⁰ The DCTE published the first crosswalk document required by law for the 2024-2025 school year, which shows “the alignment of relevant core academic standards to the career and technical education standards.”⁸¹ For the 2024-2025 school year, public school students could also substitute required academic credits from their CTE coursework in Math, Science, History, Computer Science, Oral Communication, Visual Art (required under Fine Arts), and “physical activity.”⁸² Courses taught in grades 5-8 may also be offered for high school graduation credit, with DESE approval.⁸³ Any additional courses not listed require course approval by the SBOE.⁸⁴

In addition to acquiring a minimum of 22 units of credit, students must earn a credit in a course that includes personal and family finance standards, pass the Arkansas civics exam, be trained in quality psychomotor skill bases in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and beginning with 2026 graduates, earn one credit of an “ADE-approved computer science or computer science-related CTE course.” An alternate pathway for students with most significant cognitive disabilities was adopted by the SBOE in 2019.⁸⁵ To graduate with a high school

⁷⁴ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1505(d).

⁷⁵ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-202(b)(2).

⁷⁶ See Act 853 of 2015, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-213(1)(B).

⁷⁷ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-214(c)(2).

⁷⁸ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1502(d)(3).

⁷⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-214(a).

⁸⁰ Act 242 of 2023, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906(d)(1).

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Final Course One Substitution 3-25-24.pdf. *Course Substitutions List*, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1caGph78PIVzTW4bd41E5xGyqaFJYtFrI/view>.

⁸³ 6 CAR § 61-202(a)(3)(C).

⁸⁴ DESE Learning Services - Curriculum Support - Course Approval & Management.

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/learning-services/curriculum-support/course-approval--management>

⁸⁵ ADE Commissioner's Memo - LS-19-069 - Alternate Pathway to Graduation for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities, available at <https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/ViewApprovedMemo.aspx?Id=3921>.

Arkansas's Standards

diploma, these students must participate in the state's alternate assessment, aligned to alternate achievement standards and also earn a minimum of 22 units of credit and meet the same requirements.⁸⁶

Students graduating in 2025-2026 must earn a unit of computer science, and students graduating in 2027 must complete a minimum of 75-clock hours of documented community service during grades 9-12.⁸⁷ According to the Rules Governing Community Service and Diploma Requirements, a minimum number of hours is required in each grade level for students graduating early or transferring to another school district to receive a diploma, and in extenuating circumstances, students may be granted a waiver.⁸⁸

The following table shows the number of credits assigned to each content area for the required high school course offerings and the required courses taken for graduation credit for 2025-2026 school year.⁸⁹

Comparison of Required High School Courses and Credits			
Required Credits	Required High School Courses	Required Credits	Required Courses for Graduation
6.5	English language arts	4	English language arts
5	Mathematics	4	Mathematics
5	Science	3	Science
4	Social studies	3	Social Studies
3.5	Fine arts	0.5	Fine Arts (semester course)
1	Physical education (two semester courses)	0.5	Physical education (semester course)
0.5	Health and wellness (semester course)	0.5	Health and safety education (semester course)
9	Career education (nine sequenced CTE courses) <i>three programs of study representing three different pathways, one must be high wage and high growth designation by the department.</i>	6	Career Focus or content electives
-	Oral communication ⁹⁰ (semester course)	0.5	Oral communication (semester course)
2	Same foreign language		
1	Computer science		
38.5		22	

Source: Arkansas Department of Education Publications

Note: Oral communication is a separate course requirement for graduation and required in the Required High School Courses under ELA.

⁸⁶ Arkansas Alternate Pathway to Graduation Requirements, available at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VDFEjQ-3wC8ZdYBK2DWK3dRnkoGkNV6_nfAltSePgS0/edit?tab=t.0.

⁸⁷ 6 CAR § 61-204(b)(3)-(8).

⁸⁸ 6 CAR § 104-102(d)-(e).

⁸⁹ Arkansas Department of Education. ADE Course Catalog for SY 2025-2026, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K6DjouK7f6v4zmN5Z4Ijybqa-hUZj7At/view>.

⁹⁰ One-half unit or oral communication is required to be offered under ELA in the Arkansas Required High School Courses for 2025-26.

Comparison of Required High School Courses and Credits			
Required Credits	Required High School Courses	Required Credits	Required Courses for Graduation
The two additional credits required for a course that includes Personal and Family finance standards and a computer science or computer-science related CTE course are considered additional graduation requirements not included in the 22 credit total ⁹¹			

As shown in the table, public school students could take the minimum courses required for graduation and receive instruction in most of the same content areas required for accreditation. However, because these required high school course offerings are “considered as taught” if no students sign up for the course, the curriculum and standards included in these required courses may not actually be taught every year, and all public school students in the state may not receive this instruction annually. As such, the total of 24 course credits earned for a student to graduate—the minimum 22 credits plus the two additional course credits—are more representative of the curriculum that each public school student is taught each school year.

Pathways to Graduation

According to the DESE Rules Governing Career-Ready Pathway to Diploma, a career-ready pathway to a high school diploma shall include “challenging academic courses” and CTE programs of study aligned with high-wage, high-growth jobs in Arkansas.⁹² State expectations for post-secondary student success are reinforced by the DESE Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts requiring schools to offer one “career-ready pathway,” which according to DESE rules are “a sequence of courses and activities to prepare students for success after high school that includes:

- The minimum academic core;
- A sequence of career and technical education courses in a program of study aligned with high-wage, high-demand jobs in Arkansas; and
- The opportunity to earn a credential of value”⁹³

Both the career pathways and CTE programs of study were revised in 2025 for full implementation by 2029; there are a total of 42 pathways across 14 clusters.⁹⁴ Of the 31 career-ready pathways available for the 2024-2025 school year, sixteen were designated as high-wage, high demand (H2). The 2024-2025 school year provided ninth graders with an option to graduate earning a Diploma with Merit or a Diploma with Distinction through another set of “success-ready” pathways developed to ensure students graduated ready for “enlistment, enrollment, or employment.”⁹⁵

Additional Embedded Content by Law

Since defining what Arkansas public school students will be able to achieve, apply, and demonstrate generally, the General Assembly has continued to enact additional requirements for the state’s curriculum. Most of the current state graduation requirements were established through 2017 legislation to be implemented over time.

⁹¹ Arkansas Graduation Requirements, last updated December 3, 2025, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/AR_Graduation_Requirements_12.3.25_LS.pdf

⁹² 6 CAR § 106-102.

⁹³ 6 CAR § 61-102(1).

⁹⁴ Division of Career and Technical Education. *CTE Pathways to Success*, available at

https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/2025_CTE_Pathway_Revision_Guide_085641.pdf.

⁹⁵ ADE Division of Career and Technical Education. Success-Ready Pathway Guide, updated November 13, 2025, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/17-KtYRG81GSHfpC9mlWFYbvlGWGuPO76/view>.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In the 2025 Regular Session, the General Assembly directed DESE to include the following curricula into relevant academic standards as appropriate by grade level or student age:⁹⁶

- Act 134 of 2025 requires DESE to review and update current social studies standards for grades seven through twelve to include age-appropriate adjustments to ensure curricula, standards, materials, and units accurately compare and contrast the resiliency of the United States' constitutional republic with the failures of communism and autocratic government systems and other democratic government systems. DESE is required to review and update the current social studies standards for grades 7-12 prior to the 2026-2027 school year.
- Act 229 of 2025 requires the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission, to determine the earliest grade in which it is appropriate for public school students to begin receiving instruction on firearm safety. Act 229 requires each public school district and open-enrollment public charter school to provide students with age-appropriate and grade-appropriate instruction on firearm safety, including the steps to take if a student finds an unsecured firearm, school safety related to firearms, and the proper handling and safe storage of firearms.
- Act 478 of 2025 required the religious and moral beliefs of the founding fathers to be embedded into existing social studies standards and courses for grades 6-12, including the influence of their religious and moral beliefs on the founding documents of the United States.
- Act 647 of 2025 requires DESE, in consultation with veterans' organizations, to develop and implement a unit within existing Arkansas history courses content guidelines dedicated to veterans and their families.
- Act 915 of 2025 required a discussion of human fetal growth and development into the relevant academic standards, the Department of Education (ADE), in consultation with the Department of Health, to determine the appropriate grade levels for the discussion, which must include a high-definition ultrasound, the process of fertilization, and every stage of human development inside the uterus.

In 1997, the General Assembly further acknowledged that every school district "must graduate academically competent students, must have qualified teachers and administrators, must provide a safe, efficient, and accountable program, and must be supported by and assisted by the state."⁹⁷ Arkansas public schools and school districts also must comply with state and federal accountability systems, including the student-focused learning system in the AESAA proposed in 2017 to fulfill the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that establishes how the State of Arkansas measures its progress towards this challenge.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

The Arkansas Standards for Accreditation and curriculum frameworks establish standards for what students in Arkansas should learn and skills that students should have upon graduating from high school. Laws exist at the federal and state level to establish how Arkansas measures the progress of districts and schools and whether students are graduating high school with the necessary competences and skills, as defined in the Standards of Accreditation.

Pursuant to the Continuing Adequacy Evaluation Act of 2004, one of the committees' duties shall be met by reviewing Arkansas's standing under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-10, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Pub. L. No. 114-95.⁹⁸

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), each state's plan must be approved by the United States Department of Education (USDE). The Arkansas ESSA consolidated state plan, most recently approved as

⁹⁶ Summary of General Legislation.

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2Fassembly%2F2025%2F2025R%2FDocuments%2F2025+Summary+of+General+Legislation.pdf>

⁹⁷ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1002 (c).

⁹⁸ Ark. Code Ann. § 10-3-2102(f)(5).

amended on April 22, 2022, is a contract with the USDE that outlines how the USDE will hold Arkansas accountable for school improvement in return for federal funding.⁹⁹ The table below describes ESSA requirements and how the Arkansas ESSA plan states that Arkansas will meet those requirements.

ESSA Requirement	Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)
Academic Standards and Assessment	
Challenging Academic Standards in English language arts or reading, mathematics, and science. Must contain at least three levels of achievement.	<p>Under Arkansas's ESSA plan, all public schools must administer assessments to at least 95 percent of all students annually to make sure they are achieving at grade level, based on the state's curriculum standards.¹⁰⁰</p> <p>Arkansas's statewide assessments for English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science have four levels of achievement</p>
Statewide Accountability System	
Must have a statewide accountability system based on the state academic standards.	Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act
Achievement and Growth Goals for all students and student subgroups	
Must establish long-term goals for proficiency on annual assessments.	Established a 12-year goal for academic achievement to have 80% of students achieving a test-based grade-level proficiency score.
Must establish long-term goals for progress towards achieving English Language proficiency	52% of students on track
Must establish long-term goals for high school graduation rates.	94% for 4-YR adjusted cohort rate 97% for 5-YR adjusted cohort rate
Must establish long-term goals for student growth or another indicator allowing for meaningfully differentiating school performance.	ESSA School Index Score, which includes all the measures above plus the School Quality and Success Indicator.
Including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English learners.	The above achievement goals are the same for each of the subgroups identified in the ESSA plan, which include African American, Hispanic/Latino, white, economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities.

⁹⁹ <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2022/05/AR-Consolidated-State-Plan.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ Arkansas's ESSA plan lists the assessments available for use by Arkansas to measure achievement and/or growth. Those include the ACT Aspire, Multi-State Alternative Assessment (MSAA), Arkansas Alternate Portfolio Assessment, Dynamic Learning Maps, ACT, English Language Proficiency Assessment for 21st Century, Northwest Evaluation Association, WorkKeys, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, Industry Recognized Certifications, and PSAT. See Every Student Succeeds Act Arkansas State Plan, April 22, 2022, pages 6-7.

ESSA Requirement	Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)
Teacher Effectiveness	
<p>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 educators.</p>	<p>ADE will identify schools receiving Title I, Part A funds that have children who are being served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers using the School Report Card, High Poverty/Minority Report, Workforce Stability Index, and Equity Labs.</p> <p>Districts that have disproportionate rates will be required to attend an Equity Lab and develop a local equitable access plan and to direct funding and other resources, if necessary, to schools that are receiving Level 4 or 5 Support.</p>
School Support	
<p>Must identify levels of support.</p>	<p>Schools will be identified if in need of support as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Support and Improvement • Targeted Support and Improvement • Additional Targeted Support <p>Arkansas exit criteria (for the above levels of support) requires a school to demonstrate continued progress by exhibiting an upward trend on the ESSA School Index for two or more years and meet or exceed the ESSA School Index score that initially led to identification. ADE will support districts in providing all children significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.</p>
Public Reporting	
<p>Must report the following on schools identified for support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment participation rates • Assessment results • Graduation rates • Progress toward goals • Number and percentage of English language learners' achievement in English-language proficiency 	<p>The ESSA School Index is the state's mechanism for annual meaningful differentiation of schools. Annual reporting occurs through the State Report Cards, which in addition to the ESSA School Index scores, include schools' progress toward meeting long-term goals</p>

ESSA Student Achievement Progress

Arkansas's ESSA plan establishes long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency. For student achievement and graduation rates, long-term goals are established for all students and student subgroups including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English learners. The state's ESSA plan notes that student subgroups who start lower than the baseline will need to make more progress to achieve the long-term goals.

The ESSA plan establishes 12 years as the timeframe for meeting the goals, meaning that the goals would be met by 2030. The state's assessment must test English language arts or reading, mathematics, and science. While ESSA requires that the state administer a science assessment, it does not include science in the requirement for long-term goals.¹⁰¹

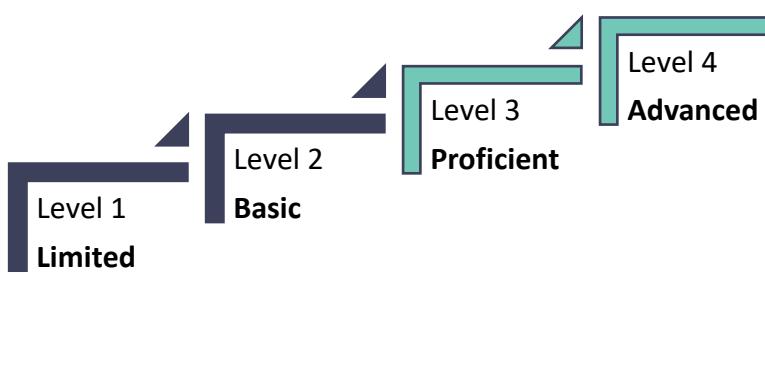
Student Achievement Results

The state's long-term achievement goal set in the ESSA plan is for 80% of all students, including each student group, to achieve a test-based grade level proficiency score in reading/language arts and math. Arkansas's ESSA plan includes interim checkpoints to measure progress towards this goal.¹⁰² However, these were based on the percentage of students scoring reading "Ready" or "Exceeding" on the ACT Aspire, which is no longer administered by the state.

Beginning in the Spring of 2024, the Arkansas Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (ATLAS) serves as the statewide student assessment system and encompasses a range of assessments intended to measure student progress. This includes the ATLAS summative assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and science "designed to measure student progress toward achievement of the Arkansas Academic Standards."¹⁰³

To calculate proficiency, DESE looks at the four ATLAS student performance levels, where Level 3 and Level 4 are considered proficient. The number of students scoring proficient in each subject is divided by the total number of students taking the assessment to calculate the percentage of students who are proficient.¹⁰⁴

Demonstrated Understanding of Knowledge and Skills Required of the Grade-Level Standards



To access content taught in the next grade/course, **Level 1** students will require significant support/scaffolding and intervention.

At **Level 2**, personalized support and intervention may be needed.

Level 3 and 4 students show mastery of grade-level standards and are on track for career and college and demonstrate readiness for content at the next grade/course.¹⁰⁵

The following charts provide the percentage of students scoring proficient by grade level for the 2024 and 2025 school years and show these results by ESSA student subgroups. Between the 2024 and 2025 school years, the percentage of all students scoring Level 3 or 4 on the ELA, math, and science assessments increased ranging from a 0.8%-point increase to 2.6%-point increase in science. At individual grade levels there were three decreases: in

¹⁰¹ See 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)(v)(I) and 20 U.S.C. § 6311(c)(4)(A)(i)(I)(aa).

¹⁰² See Every Student Succeeds Act Arkansas State Plan, April 22, 2022, page 13.

¹⁰³ Cambium Assessment, Inc., in collaboration with the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. (October 2024). Arkansas Teaching, Learning, & Assessment System (ATLAS) English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science 2023-2024 School Year, available at [AR-ATLAS SY2023-2024 Annual Technical Report FINAL 03.18.2025.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment-test-scores/2025) (p.6).

¹⁰⁴ DESE, Scores from 2025, ATLAS Cut Scores, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment-test-scores/2025>.

¹⁰⁵ Cambium Assessment, Inc., in collaboration with the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. (October 2024). Arkansas Teaching, Learning, & Assessment System (ATLAS) English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science 2023-2024 School Year. (p. 157), available at [AR-ATLAS SY2023-2024 Annual Technical Report FINAL 03.18.2025.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment-test-scores/2025).

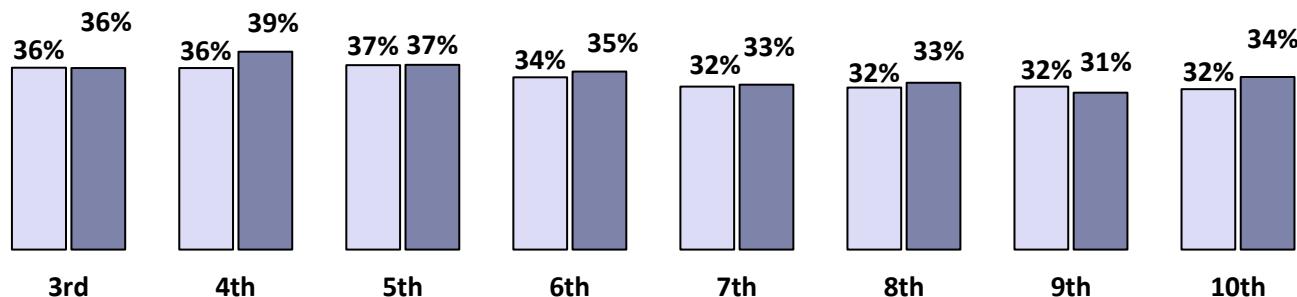
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ELA: third (-0.1%) and ninth grades (-1.2%) and in math: 5th grade (0.8%). While ACT Aspire scores cannot be compared to ATLAS scores, the results from the 2024 and 2025 ATLAS assessments show that no student group has met the achievement goal set in the state's ESSA plan.

ATLAS (2025) Grade Level Results

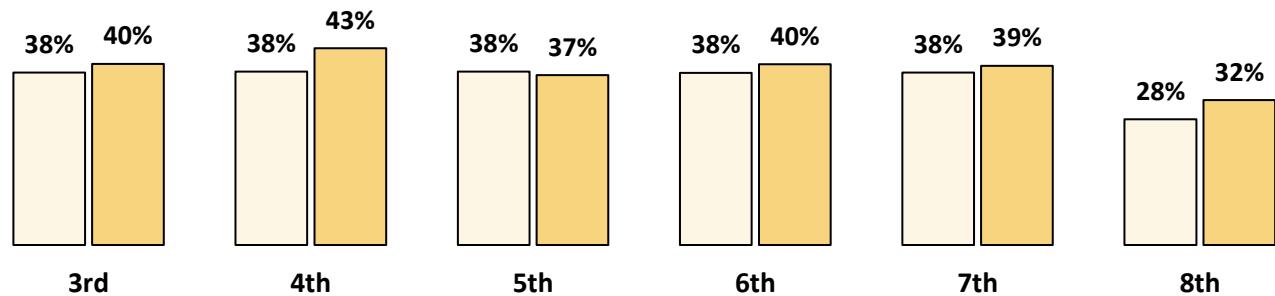
ATLAS - ELA by Grade - Percent Scoring Level 3 or 4

□ 2024 ■ 2025



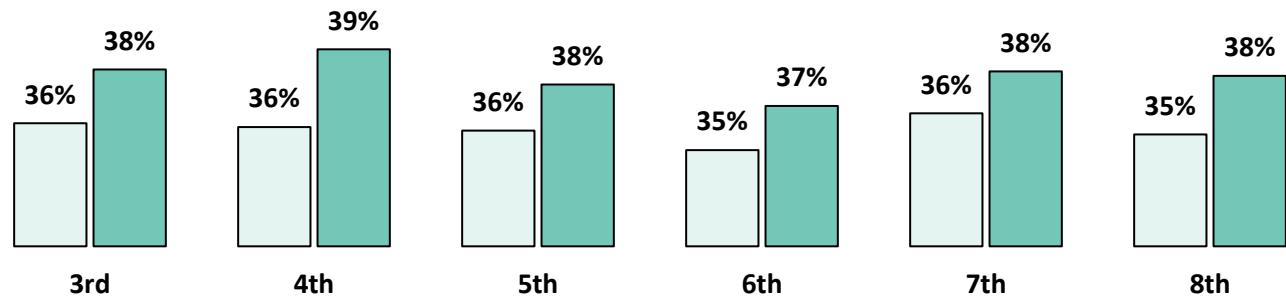
ATLAS - Math by Grade - Percent Scoring Level 3 or 4

□ 2024 ■ 2025



ATLAS - Science by Grade - Percent Scoring Level 3 or 4

□ 2024 ■ 2025



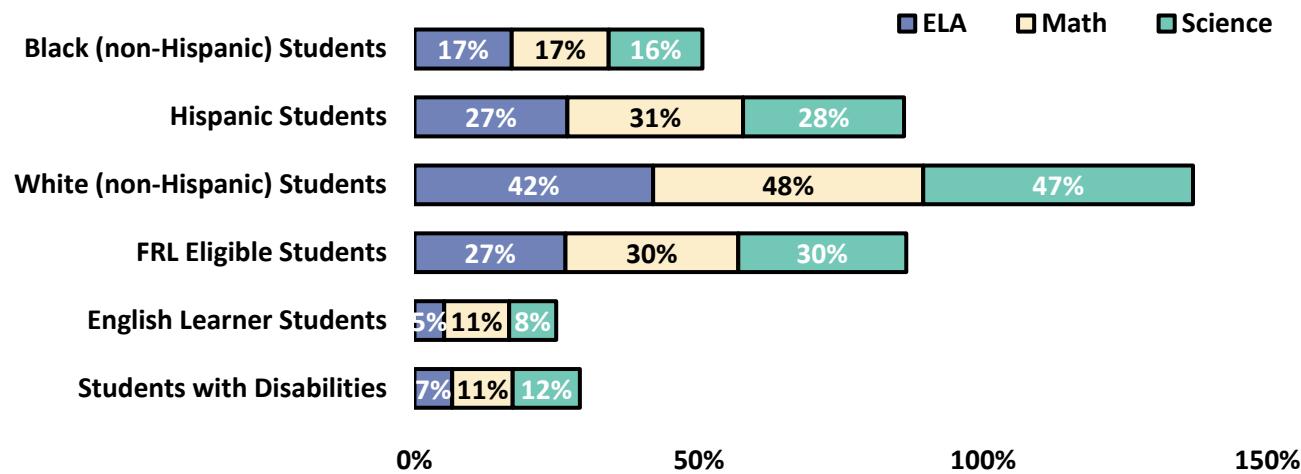
Data Source: DESE¹⁰⁶

Among the ESSA student subgroups in the 2025 school year, white students had the highest percentages of students scoring proficient or above in ELA (42%), math (48%), and science (47%). The student group with the lowest percentages of students scoring proficient were English learner students in ELA (5%), math (11%), and

¹⁰⁶ Deidentified Student-Level ATLAS Results, Email dated November 12, 2025.

science (8%). It is important to note that for the English learners and students with disabilities, these student subgroups do not include students who take the alternate assessments, Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) and the Alt ELPA (English Language Proficiency Assessment).

ATLAS Results by ESSA Student Subgroups



Data Source: DESE¹⁰⁷

English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

Arkansas's ESSA plan goal for English Language proficiency is to have 52% of English Language students on track to English Language Proficiency. An English learner (EL) is considered "On Track to English Language Proficiency" if any one of the following conditions is met:

- Exits English Learner status
- Meets time expectations on three or more ELPA21 domains
- Meets time expectations on all nonexempt ELPA21 domains (if the EL student has at least one domain exemption)

The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) is the assessment used in Arkansas to measure English language proficiency in English learners. It is a "comprehensive assessment and instructional system supporting the growth of educators and English learners".¹⁰⁸ The ELPA21 has three performance levels (emerging, progressing, and proficient) across four domains: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.¹⁰⁹

Arkansas's ESSA plan includes recommended interim checkpoints to measure progress towards this long-term goal. The graph below shows performance data from 2024, the most recently available data, for all EL students, EL students with disabilities, and long-term EL students¹¹¹ compared to the recommended performance checkpoints. The most recent data for 2024 shows that 41% of EL students were on track to English Language Proficiency, 18% of EL students with

Number of Full-Year Academic EL Students	2018	2024	Pct. Point Change
All EL Students	33,571	33,511	-0.2%
EL Students with Disabilities	4,371	5,608	28.3%
Long-term EL Students	15,540	13,744	-11.6%

Data Source: DESE¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Deidentified Student-Level ATLAS Results, Email dated November 12, 2025.

¹⁰⁸ ELPA21. (2025), available at <https://elpa21.org/why-elpa/>.

¹⁰⁹ DESE. Arkansas ELPA21 Scoring Interpretation Guide; Summative Assessment Grades K-12, <https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=3658449>.

¹¹⁰ DESE, Arkansas's Progress Toward Long-Term Goals for English Learners on Track for English Proficiency, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR#sectionLTG>.

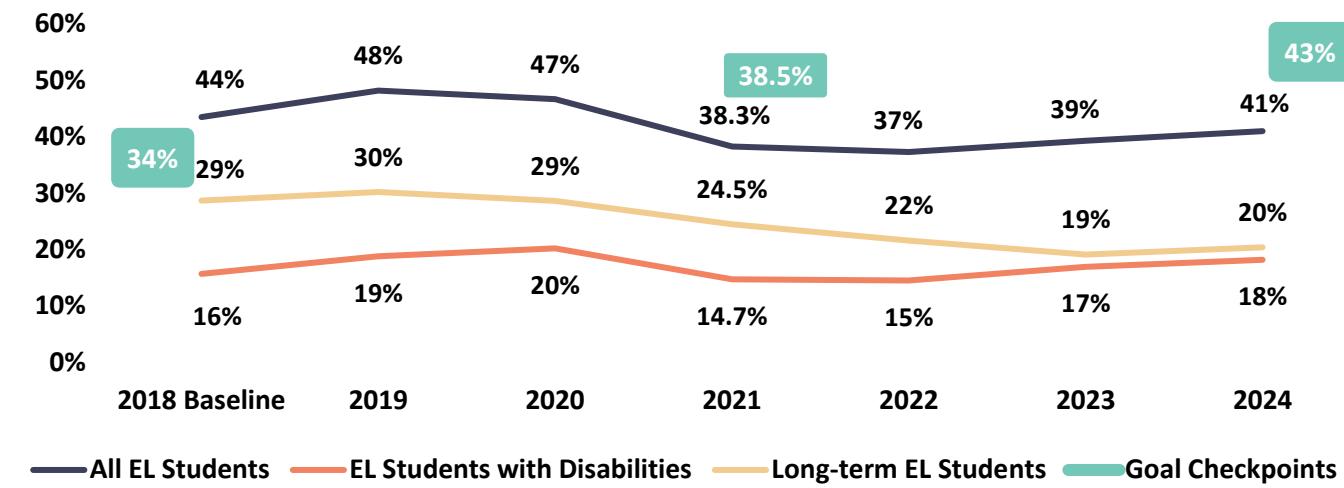
¹¹¹ Long-term EL students refer to those EL students who have remained classified as EL students for more than six years, available at <https://ncela.ed.gov/topic-english-learners-long-term-english-learners>.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

disabilities, and 20% of long-term EL students, all below the recommended 43%.¹¹² Among all EL students and EL students with disabilities, the 2024 percentages are increases from 2021, whereas the percentage of long-term EL students is a decrease. Since 2018, all percentages are decreases, excluding EL students with disabilities.

English Learners On Track to English Language Proficiency

2030 Goal: 52%



Data Source: DESE¹¹³

Graduation Rates

The state has a goal for both four-year and five-year graduation rates. The goal for four-year graduation rate is 94%. The goal for five-year graduation rate is 97%.

As with the academic achievement goal, the state's plan notes that student subgroups starting at lower points in the baseline year will need to improve at greater rates to achieve long-term goals within a 12-year cycle.

The following graphs show the four-year and five-year graduation rates, respectively, compared to the goal checkpoints. The most recent graduation rate data is for the 2024 school year.

Four-Year Graduation Rate

Percentage of students who graduated high school in **four** years with a regular diploma, including those with significant cognitive disabilities who earned a State-defined alternate diploma. It is calculated by dividing the number of actual graduates by the total number of students in the adjusted cohort for that class.

Five-Year Graduation Rate

Percentage of students who graduated high school in **five** years, rather than four. It's calculated by dividing the total number of students who earned a regular diploma in the four- and five-year cohorts by the total adjusted cohort of students who began 9th grade five years earlier.

Definition Sources: DESE¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Id.*

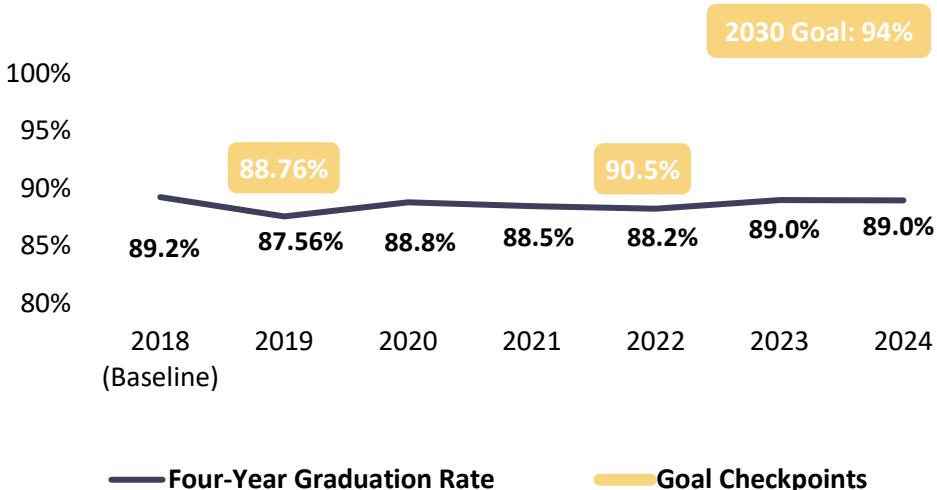
¹¹³ DESE, Arkansas's Progress Toward Long-Term Goals for English Learners on Track for English Proficiency, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR#sectionLTG>.

¹¹⁴ 2025, What is an Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR)? available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/school-performance-and-monitoring/graduation-rates#:~:text=The%205%20year%20ACGR%20measures,9th%20grade%20five%20years%20earlier>.

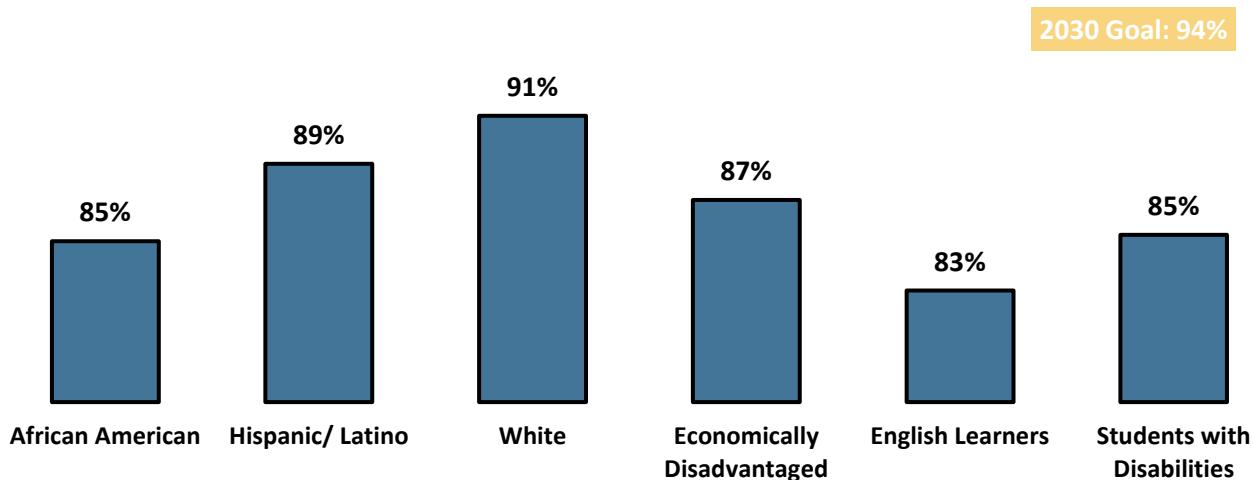
Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

For the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, the most recent checkpoint was 90.5% in 2022. At that time, Arkansas four-year graduation rate was below that checkpoint, at 88.2%. In the 2024 school year, Arkansas's four-year graduation rate was 89%.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates



Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2024) - By Subgroup



Data Sources: DESE ^{115 116}

Among the ESSA subgroups shown here for the 2024 school year, the four-year graduation rates ranged from 83% for students with limited English proficiency (English learners) to 91% for White students.

¹¹⁵ 2018 - 2024 Graduation Rates, available at

<https://adesandbox.arkansas.gov/project?v=fMTc0ZjVhNzJiMDY0MDkzMjMjOWQzN2ZmNGRkYzkzMTI>.

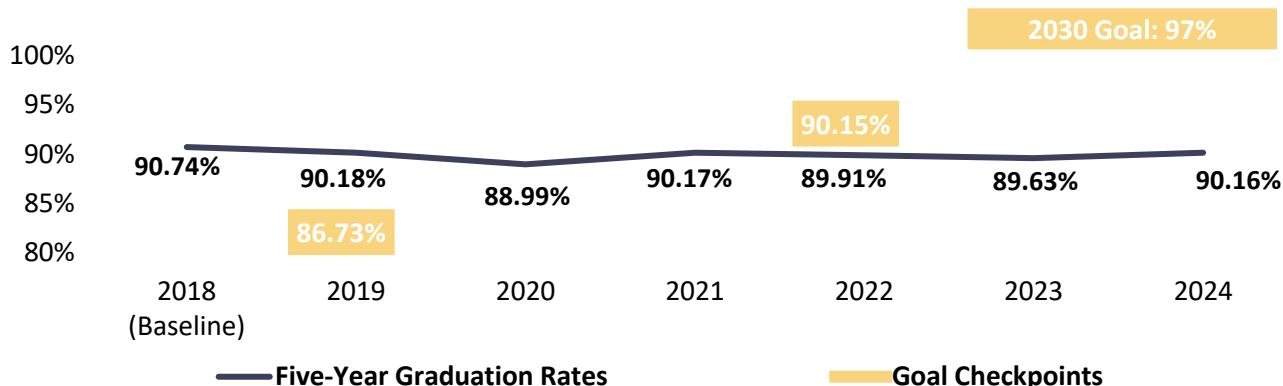
¹¹⁶ Arkansas's Progress Toward Long-Term Goals for High School Graduation Rates, available at

<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR#sectionLTG>.

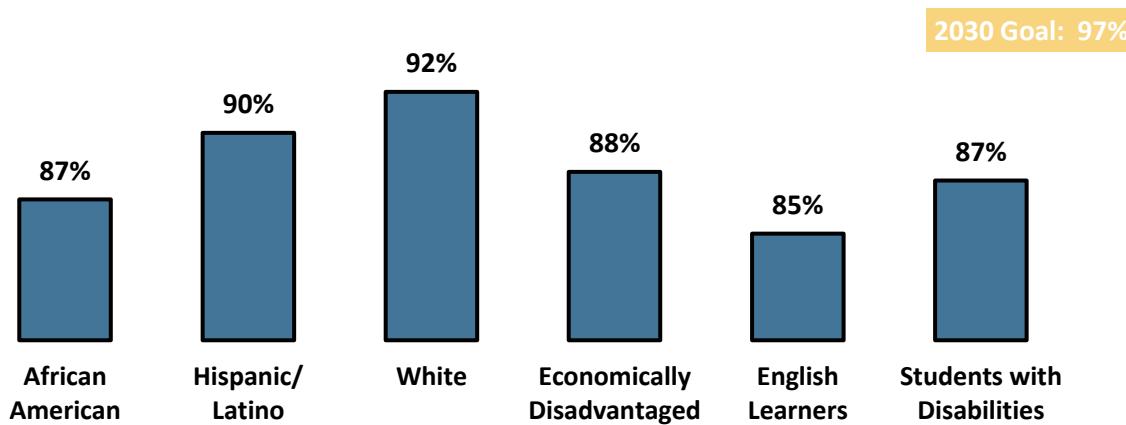
Five-Year Graduation Rates

For the five-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, the most recent checkpoint was 90.2% in 2022. At that time, Arkansas's five-year graduation rate was below that checkpoint, at 89.9%. In the 2024 school year, Arkansas's five-year graduation rate was 90.2%.

Five-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate



Five-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2024) - By Subgroup



Data Sources: DESE.^{117 118}

Among the ESSA subgroups shown here for the 2024 school year, the five-year graduation rates ranged from 85% for students with limited English proficiency (English learners) to 92% for White students.

¹¹⁷ DESE. 2018 - 2024 Graduation Rates, available at

<https://adesandbox.arkansas.gov/project?v=fMTc0ZjVhNzJiMDY0MDkzMjMjOWQzN2ZmNGRkYzkzMTI>.

¹¹⁸ DESE. Arkansas's Progress Toward Long-Term Goals for High School Graduation Rates, available at

<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR#sectionLTG>.

School Support and Improvement Activities

Additionally, ESSA requires states to identify schools in need of improvement.¹¹⁹ DESE uses the ESSA School Index scores to identify schools in need of support as outlined in the graphic below.¹²⁰ According to DESE, the last identification of schools occurred in 2022, and the schools identified are in their last year of support.¹²¹

Targeted Support and Improvement
Schools that are consistently underperforming for one or more student subgroups
Comprehensive Support and Improvement
Title I schools in the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools in the state; all high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students
Additional Targeted Support
Schools that, for any student subgroup, meet the criteria for the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools in the state for students overall

ESSA School Index

“ESSA (2015) requires states to develop a methodology for annual, meaningful differentiation among schools for the purpose of identifying schools in need of support and schools with consistently underperforming student subgroups. ESSA (2015) requires states to use certain indicators for this purpose as well as some optional indicators that can be included in the methodology.”¹²²

DESE uses a formula known as the ESSA School Index to calculate school ratings, which is the state’s system for meaningfully differentiating schools as required under ESSA.¹²³ According to Arkansas’s ESSA Plan, “[t]he ESSA School Index is an index-based score which includes all full-academic year students for each indicator that contributes to the overall ESSA School Index score. ADE will report scores on each indicator that is included in the ESSA School Index.¹²⁴ ADE will also “report progress toward long-term goals for indicators to increase transparency regarding school progress on each indicator within the ESSA School Index.”¹²⁵

As of the writing of this report, the ESSA school index data has not been released yet for 2023-2024 or 2024-2025.

The table below shows the measures included in each school’s ESSA School Index. The School Quality and Success measure accounts for 15% of each school’s ESSA School Index score.¹²⁶

ESSA School Index Indicators	
Weighted Achievement (English Language Arts and Math)	All schools
Growth (English Language Arts and Math)	All schools

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at pg. 17.

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ Email from Courtney Salas-Ford, January 28, 2026.

¹²² Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas Plan, pg. 17, available at

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²⁴ *Id.*

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ *Id.* at 55.

ESSA School Index Indicators	
Progress to English Language Proficiency	All schools
Four-year graduation rates	For high schools
Five-year graduation rates	For high schools
School Quality and Success Indicator	<p>Components include (without limitation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading at grade level • Achievement and growth in science • Chronic absenteeism/ student engagement • ACT Scores (high school only) • ACT Readiness Benchmark (high school only) • High School GPA (high school only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-time credits earned (high school only) • Computer science credits earned (high school only) • Number of high school graduates earning one or more AP/IB/Concurrent credits (high school only) • Community service learning credits earned (high school only)

Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Under ESSA¹²⁷, states are required to “describe how low-income and minority children enrolled in schools assisted under Title I, Part A are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers, and the measures the SEA agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the State educational agency with respect to such description.”¹²⁸ Title I, Part A “provides financial assistance through State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.”¹²⁹

Under Arkansas’s ESSA plan, “ADE will identify schools receiving Title I, Part A funds that have children who are being served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers by using the following methods:

- School Report Card
- High Poverty/High Minority Report
- Workforce Stability Index
- Equity Labs”¹³⁰

Additionally, “districts that have disproportionate rates will be required to attend an Equity Lab and develop a local equitable access plan and to direct funding and other resources, if necessary, to schools that are receiving Level 4 or 5 Support.”¹³¹

¹²⁷ ESEA section1111(g)(1)(B)).

¹²⁸ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 76, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹²⁹ DESE, Title I, Part A Program, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/Federal-Programs/federal-programs/title-i-part-a-program>.

¹³⁰ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 76, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹³¹ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 79, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

➤ Quick Terminology

Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS)	Provides a statewide system for observation and support of K-12 classroom and specialty teachers.
Inexperienced Teachers	The percent of teachers in the school or district who are in one of their first three (3) years of teaching
High Poverty Schools	Highest Quartile of Schools Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) Percentage
Low Poverty Schools	Lowest Quartile of Schools Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) Percentage
Ineffective Teachers	Teachers not rated effective or above under TESS
Workforce Stability Index	Measure of workforce quality used to "identify districts and schools with potential gaps in access to effective teachers and target interventions and resources intended to close those gaps"

Sources: DESE^{132 133 134 135}

School Report Card Data

The school report card is a comprehensive report of state and federal accountability and additional reporting requirements, including measures to help determine rate at which low-income and minority students are disproportionately taught by educators who are ineffective.¹³⁶

The school report card for the 2025 school year is not available as of the writing of this report. Additionally, there is limited data available for the 2024 school year. Currently, the only 2024 data available for the measures identified in the state's ESSA plan for educator effectiveness include the percentage of effective and inexperienced teachers by economic levels at the state level, not by Title I schools.

The following graphs show the rates of effective teachers under the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and inexperienced teachers broken out by economic level, including high poverty and low poverty schools. These are not limited to Title I schools, as noted in Arkansas's ESSA plan. School report card data for the 2022 through 2024 school years did not include rates of out-of-field teachers.

¹³² ADE Data Center, FAQ – Personnel, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/FAQ/Personnel>

¹³³ Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS), available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/educator-support--development/teacher-excellence-and-support-system-tess>.

¹³⁴ 2024 School Report Card, Teacher Quality, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR>

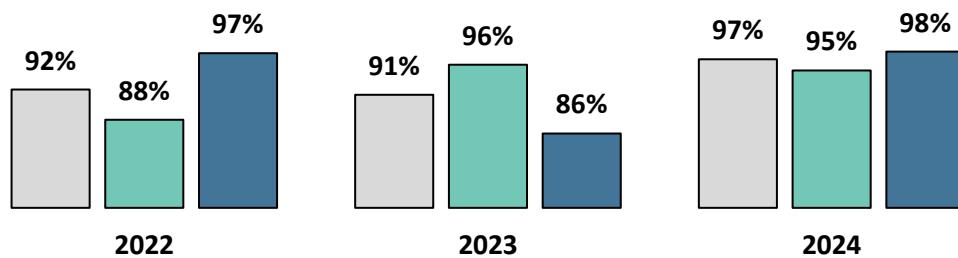
¹³⁵ Business Rules for the 2024 Arkansas State Report Card, pages 44 and 47, available at

<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/content/documents/schoolreportcard/2024/Business%20Rules.pdf>.

¹³⁶ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 78, available at

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

Teachers Effective or Above under TESS



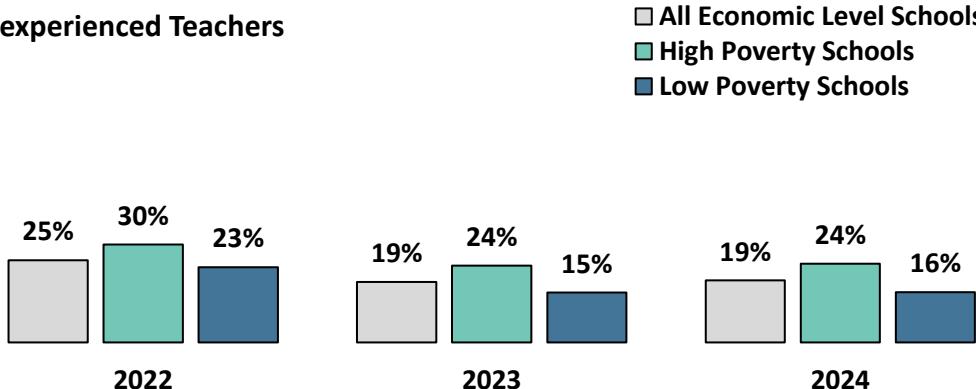
All Economic Level Schools
 High Poverty Schools
 Low Poverty Schools

In the 2022 and 2024 school years, the percentage of effective teachers under TESS was lower in high poverty schools than in low poverty schools.

Data sources: DESE¹³⁷

In the 2022 through 2024 school years, the percentage of inexperienced teachers was higher in high poverty schools than in low poverty schools.

Inexperienced Teachers



All Economic Level Schools
 High Poverty Schools
 Low Poverty Schools

Across all schools, the percentage of teachers rated effective or above under TESS increased from 92% in 2022 to 97% in 2024. In high poverty schools, that percentage increased from 88% in 2022 to 95% in 2024, a drop from 96% in 2023. In low poverty schools, the percentage of teachers rated effective dropped from 97% in 2022 to 86% in 2023, before increasing to 98% in 2024.

Across all public schools, the percentage of inexperienced, on average, decreased from 25% in 2022 to 19% in 2024. In high poverty schools, that percentage decreased from 30% in 2022 to 24% in 2024. In low poverty schools, the percentage of inexperienced dropped from 23% in 2022 to 16% in 2024, a percentage point increase from the 2023 school year.

High-Poverty/High-Minority Report

This report was “developed to address long-term needs for improving access to excellent Arkansas teachers and leaders”.¹³⁸ It “publicly report[s] progress toward ensuring that low-income and minority children in Title I schools are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers.” The report assists school districts in identifying staffing issues and ensuring that all students have access to effective teachers.¹³⁹ The last report published by DESE was in 2024 using data from the 2023 school year.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ 2024 School Report Card, Teacher Quality, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/SRC/34/AR>.

¹³⁸ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 81, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹³⁹ DESE, 2024 Workforce Stability Index (WSI) HighPoverty/High-Minority Report for Title I Schools, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2024_Title_I_HPHM_Report_EEF.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ DESE, available at <https://dev-dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/educator-workforce-data>.

Equity Labs

According to Arkansas's ESSA plan, equity labs were recommended to begin during Spring 2018 with a minimum of 15 labs per school year to occur beginning in the 2019 school year.¹⁴¹

BLR Teacher Quality Data Analysis

Despite not having school-level data showing the percentage of inexperienced, ineffective, and out-of-field teachers, BLR used additional measures of teacher quality available from DESE at the school level for the 2025 school year to help analyze teacher quality for schools receiving Title I assistance.

➤ Quick Terminology

Emergency/ Provisional Credentials	"Temporary license issued by the SBOE that allows the license holder to teach or work in Arkansas schools."
Approved Additional Licensure Plan (ALP)	A plan that allows an educator to hold a standard license, but not in the area in which they are employed.
Emergency Teaching Permit (ETP)	"Authorizes the permit holder to be hired to fill a vacant teaching position without a license as teacher of record."
Approved Long-term Substitute (LTS)	"Someone who takes the place of the contracted teacher for longer than sixty (60) consecutive days when they are out on military, medical, catastrophic, or maternity leave. The individual must hold a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree or be licensed to teach by the state of Arkansas."

Definition Sources: DESE^{142 143}

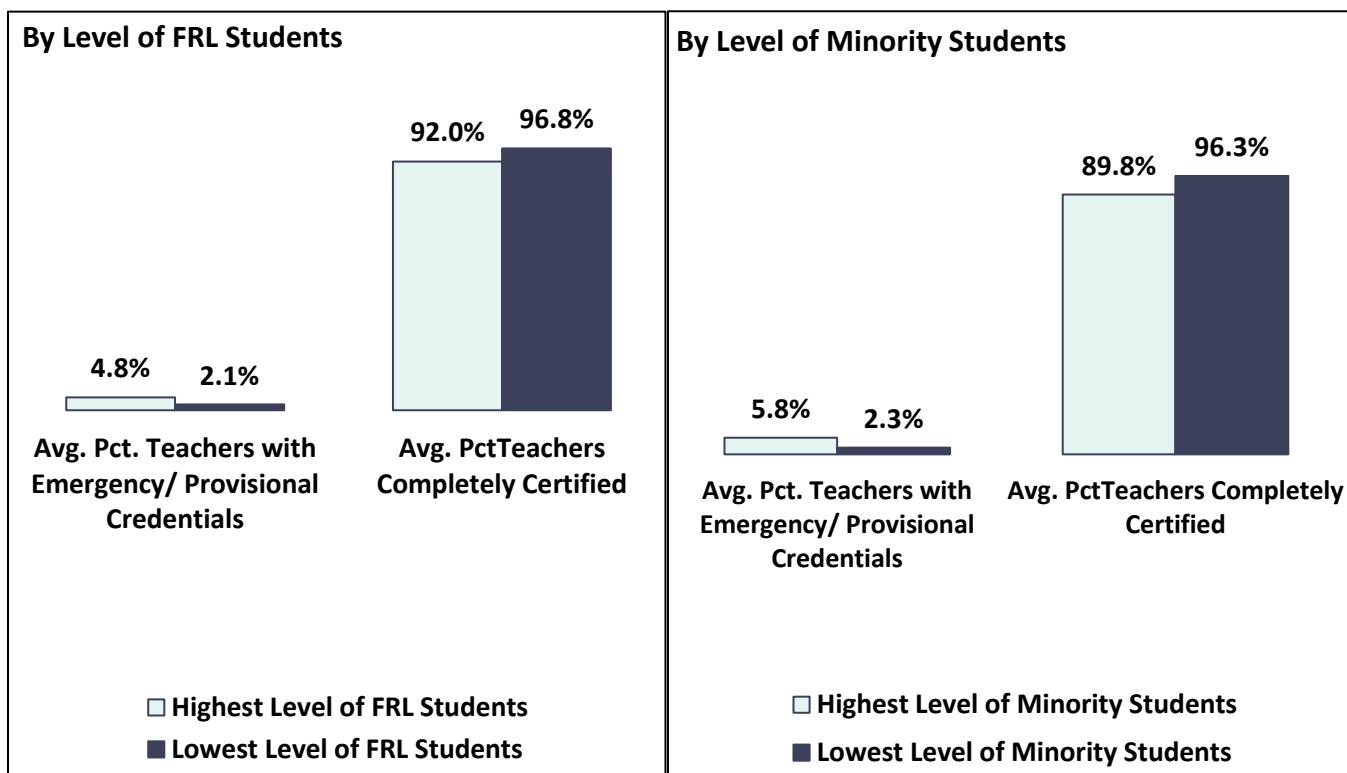
The following tables show teacher quality measures in Title I schools broken out by the high and low poverty and high and low minority student populations for the 2025 school year.

¹⁴¹ See Arkansas ESSA Plan, last updated April 22, 2022, page 81, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹⁴² Rules Governing Educator Licensure (September 2, 2024), at Sections 1-2.42, 7-2.0, and 7.70, available https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Educator_Licensure_Rules - Final - 9-2-24_Legal.pdf

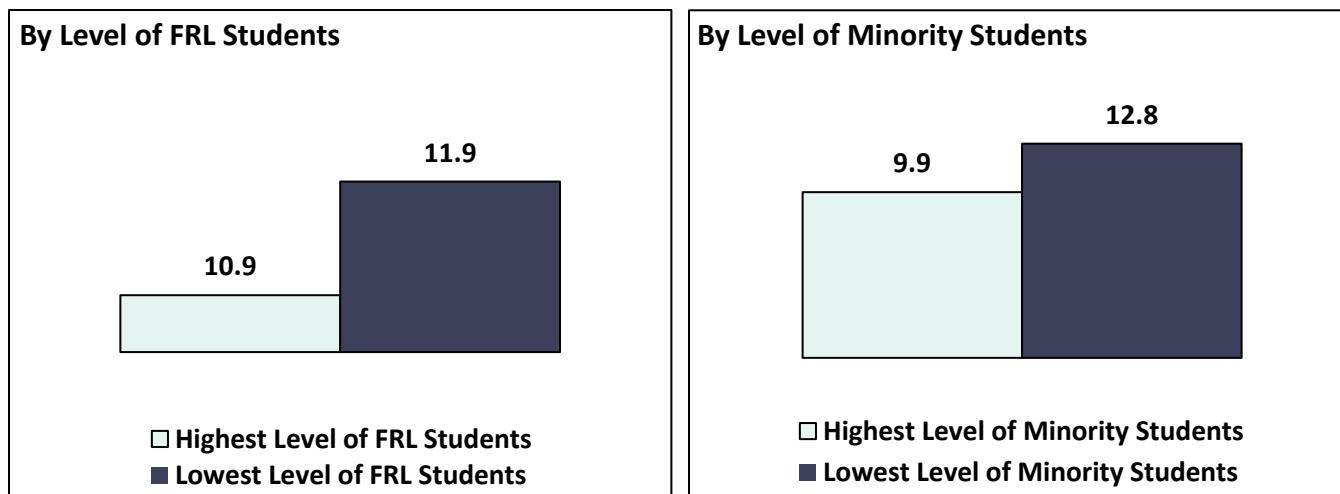
¹⁴³ Long-Term Substitutes, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/licensure-exceptions/long-term-substitutes-lts>.

2025 Title I Schools by Educator Licensure



Title I schools with the highest percentage of FRL students and with the highest percentage of minority students had more than double the average percentage of teachers with emergency/provisional credentials. These schools also had a lower percentage of completely certified teachers.

2025 Title I Schools by Educator Experience



Data Sources: DESE^{144 145}

¹⁴⁴ MySchoolInfo, School Statewide Reports (2024-25), available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

¹⁴⁵ Title I Status, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Title_I_Status_List- 2024-2025_OSEFP.pdf.

Title I schools with the highest percentage of FRL students and with the highest percentage of minority students both less average year of teaching experience, almost three years less than Title I schools with the lowest percentage of minority students.

Arkansas's Standing Under ESSA

The Continuing Adequacy Act of 2004 requires the committees to review “the state’s standing under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-10, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95”.¹⁴⁶ The state’s standing under ESSA is currently unclear. The remainder of this section looks at requirements from the Arkansas ESSA plan and whether those requirements are being met.

The state’s ESSA plan requires that all public schools must administer assessments to at least 95% of all students annually to ensure they are achieving at grade level, based on the state’s curriculum standards.

The state’s ESSA plan contains a list of acceptable assessments to measure achievement and growth.¹⁴⁷ The ACT Aspire is listed as the assessment to measure growth and achievement for third through ninth grades. The ACT Aspire was last administered in Arkansas in 2023; the state now administers the ATLAS.

ESSA requires that the state have a statewide accountability system based on the state academic standards. Arkansas’s system is currently the AESAA.

ESSA requires that states set goals for academic achievement, graduation rates, English Language proficiency, and at least one other indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation of school performance.

Arkansas’s goal for academic achievement is 80% of students achieving a test-based grade-level proficiency score. This goal is the same for each subgroup identified for reporting in the ESSA plan. As shown above, looking at ATLAS scores rather than ACT Aspire scores, no student group met the goal in the ESSA plan in 2025.

The most recent checkpoint for English language proficiency was 43% of students on track in 2024. At that time, 41% of all students were on track, with 18% of English learners with disabilities on track and 20% of long-term English learners on track.

Looking at the graduation rate goals, the latest checkpoint for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate was 90.5% in 2022; the four-year graduation rate at that time was 88.2%. The latest checkpoint for the five-year adjusted cohort graduation rate was 90.2% in 2022; the five-year graduation rate at that time was 89.9%.

ESSA requires that the state have a method for meaningfully differentiating school performance. In Arkansas’s ESSA plan, that method is the ESSA School Index. As of this writing, DESE has not issued ESSA School Index scores for the 2024 or 2025 school year. According to DESE, DESE has issued an index score in the form of letter grade ratings (discussed later in this report).¹⁴⁸

The state is also required under ESSA to identify schools in need of three types of support. In Arkansas’s ESSA plan, the identification is based on the ESSA School Index. Since DESE has not issued ESSA School Index scores since 2023, it is unclear how DESE is identifying the schools in need of support or determining when schools are no longer in need of support. Again, DESE states that an index score has been released in the form of letter grade ratings; however, the ESSA plan has not been updated to reflect the change from the ESSA School Index to the letter grade ratings.

Arkansas’s ESSA plan has multiple methods for ensuring that low-income and minority students are not taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced educators. Those methods include the School Report Card, High Poverty/Minority Report, and Equity Labs. As of this writing, School Report Cards have not been issued, and the information on teachers provided in the 2024 report cards did not provide separate data for

¹⁴⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 10-3-2102(f)(5).

¹⁴⁷ Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas State Plan, pages 6-7.

¹⁴⁸ Email from Courtney Salas-Ford, January 28, 2026.

Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA)

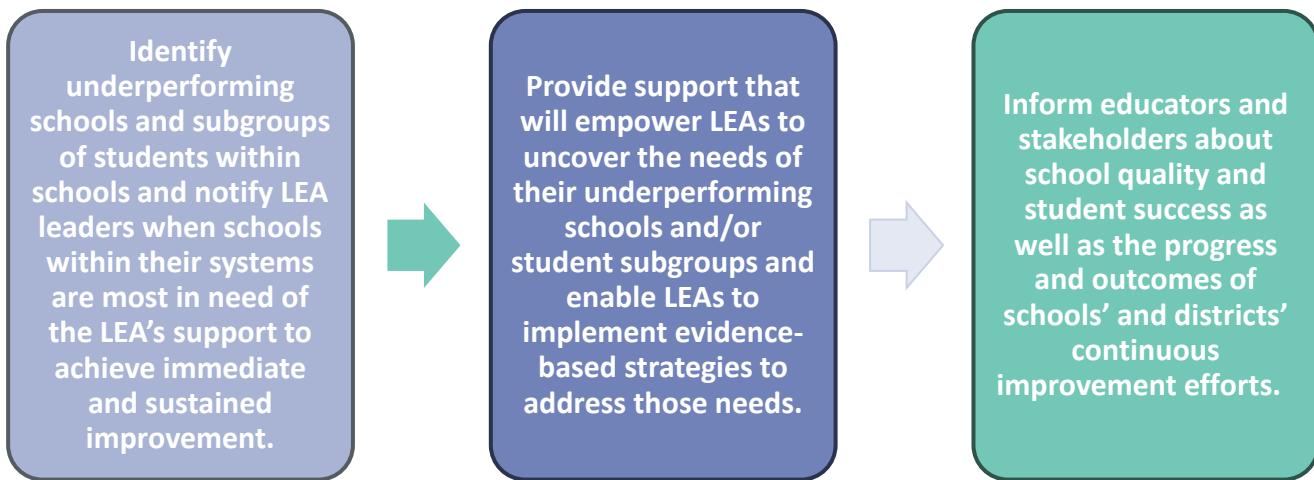
Title I schools as required in the Arkansas ESSA plan. The High Poverty/Minority Report was last issued in 2024, reporting data for 2023. Equity Labs were scheduled to begin in 2019.

The Arkansas ESSA plan specifies that the ESSA School Index is part of the public reporting that the state is required to conduct under ESSA. The plan also specifies that annual reporting occurs through the State Report Cards. While DESE continues to issue report cards, ESSA School Index scores have not been released for the 2024 or 2025 school year.

ARKANSAS EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (AESAA)

The AESAA, enacted in 2017, is the state's current accountability system. The major components of the system closely mirror those outlined in the state's ESSA plan, including establishing challenging academic standards that are periodically reviewed and revised¹⁴⁹, maintaining a statewide student assessment system¹⁵⁰ that includes a variety of assessment measures¹⁵¹, establishing levels of support for public school districts¹⁵², and maintaining information systems composed of performance indicators that allow DESE to identify levels of public school district support and generate reports for the public.¹⁵³

According to Arkansas's ESSA Plan, “[t]he 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.”¹⁵⁴ The plan indicates the Arkansas Educational Support System is intended to achieve the expectations identified in the graphic below, known as ADE's “Theory of Action,” which “shifts the focus of ADE efforts from directly intervening in schools in need of support to empowering and enabling LEAs.”¹⁵⁵



Statewide Student Assessment System

In addition to public school students demonstrating achievement and meeting required academic standards, “school districts, schools, and students shall participate in the state assessments in the basic core of knowledge

¹⁴⁹ 6 CAR § 60-103.

¹⁵⁰ 6 CAR § 60-104.

¹⁵¹ 6 CAR § 60-116.

¹⁵² 6 CAR § 60-119.

¹⁵³ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2904.

¹⁵⁴ Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas State Plan, pg. 14, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ *Id.* at pg. 14.

and skills as defined by DESE in the AESAA, § 6-15-2901 et seq.”¹⁵⁶ Arkansas law directs DESE to implement a statewide student assessment system for Arkansas public schools.¹⁵⁷ It also requires the state’s participation in the administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) examinations.¹⁵⁸

State Assessment Performance Results

All students enrolled in a public school must participate in the statewide student assessment system. DESE is required to provide analyses of data on the statewide student assessments.¹⁵⁹ The AESAA directs DESE to establish “academic standards that define what students shall know and be able to demonstrate in each content area”¹⁶⁰ and provide for statewide assessments that are aligned to the “Arkansas academic standards.”¹⁶¹

The SBOE sets student performance levels for English language arts, mathematics, science, and English language proficiency, based on DESE recommendations.¹⁶² As required in statute, “student performance levels for academic content areas shall indicate the skills and competencies necessary for a student to be college and career ready by the completion of high school.”¹⁶³

According to the Rules Governing the AESAA, DESE also recommends, with SBOE approval, the performance levels for the Arkansas Alternate Assessment Program for students with disabilities as part of the statewide student assessment system.¹⁶⁴ DESE Rules Governing the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation of Public Schools and School Districts state that each public school must assess “at least 95% of its students on the annual statewide student assessment.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1003(c)(1)-(2).

¹⁵⁷ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907(a).

¹⁵⁸ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907(g).

¹⁵⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2908.

¹⁶⁰ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2906(a)(1).

¹⁶¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907(h)(3).

¹⁶² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2910.

¹⁶³ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2910(c)

¹⁶⁴ 6 CAR § 60-115(c).

¹⁶⁵ 6 CAR § 61-204(b).

➤ Quick Terminology

Arkansas Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (ATLAS)	The statewide student assessment system encompassing a range of assessments. It also refers to the screeners, interim, and summative assessments given to K-10 students, excluding the alternate, English learner, and college and career readiness assessments.
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	The alternate assessment system used in Arkansas for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for whom the general state assessments are not appropriate, even with accommodations. It is given in "grades 3-10 for ELA and math and grades 3-8 and 10 for science."
English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21)	The assessment used in Arkansas to measure English language proficiency in English learners. ELPA21 is "a group of states committed to supporting educators, member states, and the public as they adopt and implement the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards and college- and career-ready standards."
Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (Alt ELPA)	The alternate English language proficiency assessment used in Arkansas designed specifically for K-12 English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible to participate in the DLM.
National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)	<i>"The largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in public and private schools in the United States know and are able to do in various subjects"</i> • It includes a range of subjects in grades four, eight, and twelve. NAEP "assesses a sample of students across the country to be representative of all students in the United States, including Arkansas students."

Definition Sources: DESE^{166 167 168 169 170}

The **working definition of "educational adequacy"** includes the following goal: "[T]o have all, or all but the most severely disabled, students perform at or above proficiency on these tests."¹⁷¹

The table below shows the state assessments or screeners required under the statute. This report will use available data from each of these assessments and screeners to determine if the above goal has been met.

¹⁶⁶ ATLAS Assessment Overview, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/atlas-assessment-overview>.

¹⁶⁷ Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternative Assessment, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/dynamic-learning-maps-dlm-alternative-assessment>.

¹⁶⁸ ELPA21, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/elpa21>.

¹⁶⁹ Alt ELPA, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/alt-elpa>.

¹⁷⁰ NAEP, What is NAEP? Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2FEducation%2FAdequacyReports%2F2026%2F2025-11-03%2FHANDOUT+1C+-+Definition+of+Adequacy.pdf>

Statewide Student Assessment Statutory Requirements	Assessments or Screeners
Developmentally appropriate measurements or assessments for kindergarten through grade two (K-2) in literacy and mathematics	<p>ATLAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - K-2 Interim and Summative Assessments (Literacy and Math)
High-quality, evidence-based literacy screeners for kindergarten through grade three (K-3)	<p>ATLAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - K-3 Screeners (Math and Literacy)
Assessments to measure English language arts, mathematics, and science as identified by the SBOE	<p>ATLAS Summative/End of Year Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grades 3 - 8 (English language arts, mathematics, science) - Grades 9 - 10 (ELA, Algebra I, Geometry, and Biology)¹⁷² <p>DLM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grades 3 - 10 (ELA and math) - Grades 3 - 8 and Grade 10 (science)
Assessments of English proficiency of all English learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ELPA21 - Alt ELPA
Assessments to measure college and career readiness in grades 10-12, including a career readiness Assessment that leads to a nationally recognized work readiness certificate, as determined by the SBOE to each student before he or she graduates from high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACT - WorkKeys
May include additional assessment options approved by the SBOE, including without limitation assessments to measure application of knowledge and skills in civics, government, and additional sciences, as measured on a schedule determined by the SBOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSAT/NMSQT - Arkansas Civics Exam
Participation in the administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAEP assessments

Sources: Arkansas Statute;¹⁷³ DESE¹⁷⁴

Arkansas Code § 6-15-2907 states that DESE shall collect and publish aggregated public school district, open-enrollment public charter school, and overall state literacy assessment results annually by October 1.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Accelerated students may take math end-of-course (EOC) exams for algebra I, geometry, and biology in 7th or 8th grade instead of the grade level test in math. See 3-10 ATLAS Content Assessments, DESE, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/3-10-atlas-content-assessments>.

¹⁷³ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907.

¹⁷⁴ ATLAS Assessment Overview, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/atlas-assessment-overview>.

¹⁷⁵ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907(a)(2)(B)(iii).

Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA)

The assessments and screeners for students in Kindergarten through second grade do not measure proficiency in the same way. For example, “screeners are given within the first 30 days of the school year to provide teachers with actionable data to inform instruction” and the interim and summative assessments for kindergarten through second grade students are “administered in the middle of the year and at the end of the year to monitor student progress”¹⁷⁶

Results from the statewide assessment administered in the 2024 and 2025 school years are shown in the following charts. These charts demonstrate the percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 on each of the respective assessments (excluding the ELPA21, which have different achievement levels).

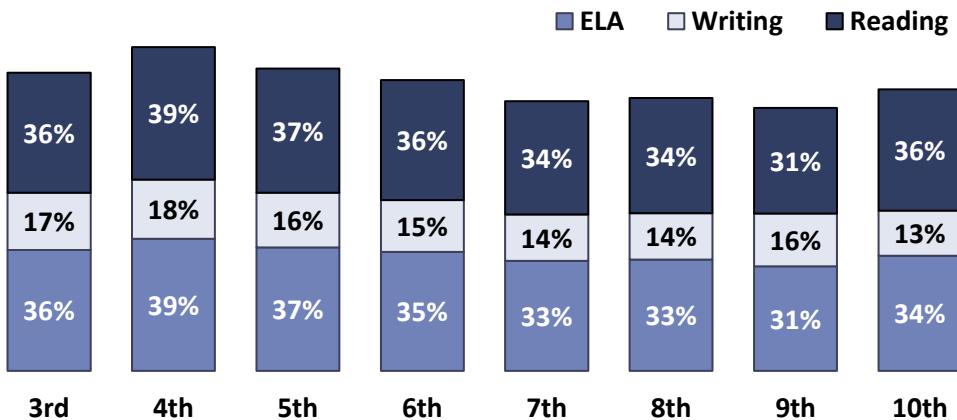
At the time this report was written, the 2024 and 2025 K-2 interim and summative assessments, and K-3 screener results have not been released.

Based on the goal noted in the adequacy definition, shown here, these assessment results indicate that goal has not been met in the 2025 school year.

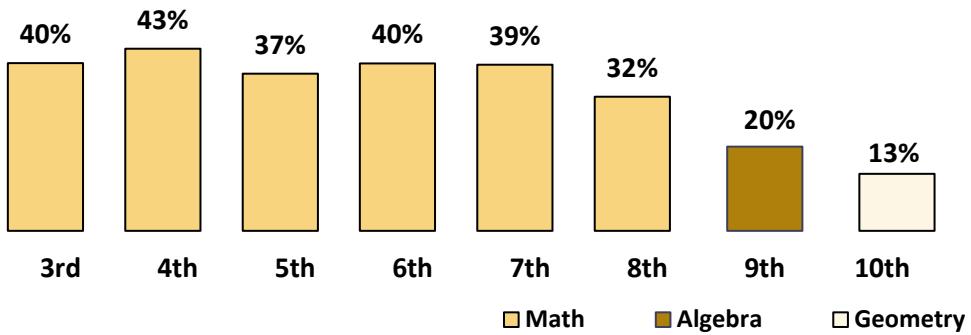
¹⁷⁶ DESE (2025). K-3 ATLAS Screener & K-2 Content Assessments, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/k-3-atlas-screener--k-2-content-assessments>.

ATLAS Achievement Results

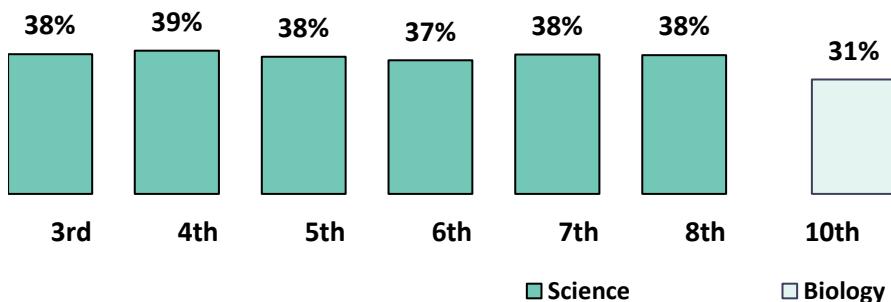
ATLAS (2025) - ELA Subjects by Grade Level



ATLAS (2025) - Math Subjects by Grade Level



ATLAS (2025) - Science Subjects by Grade Level



Note: Scores from 9th grade biology, 10th grade algebra, and 9th grade geometry are excluded due to a lower number of students taking assessment.

Trends from 2024 to 2025:

ELA

- Increases across all subjects except 3rd grade ELA (-0.1%) to 9th grade ELA (-1.2%)
- In 5th grade, there were no increases or decreases
- Average year to year increase: 1.4%

Math

- Increases across all grades except 5th grade math (-0.8%)
- Increases ranged from 1.5% in 7th grade math to 10.5% in 10th grade algebra.
- Average year to year increase: 3.9%

Science

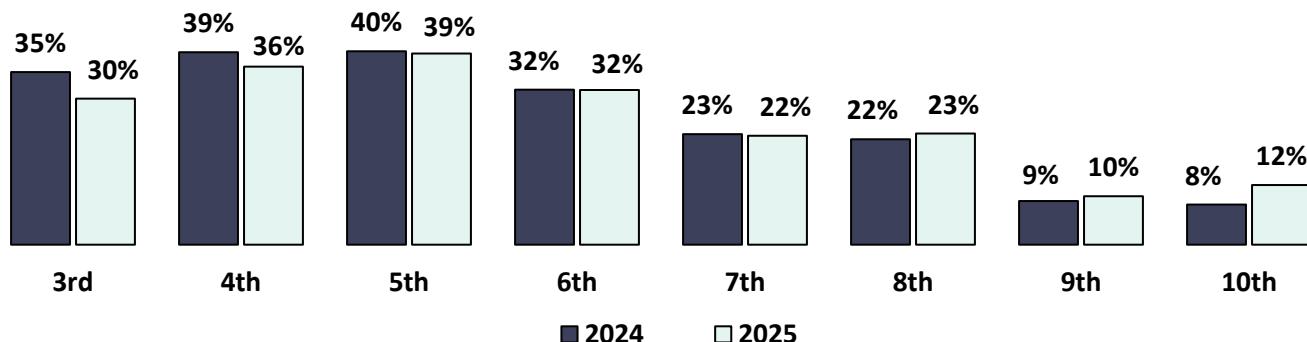
- Increases across all grades
- Increases ranged from 0.5% in 10th grade Biology to 4.7% in 9th grade Biology
- Average year to year increase: 2.6%

Dynamic Learning Map (DLM) Achievement Results

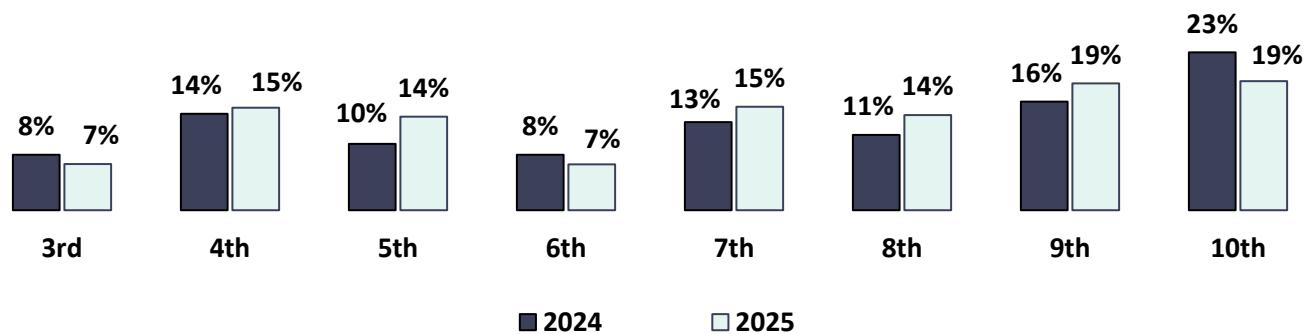
Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities must meet eligibility criteria to take an alternate assessment aligned to alternate achievement standards.¹⁷⁷ The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Essential Elements are linked to the Arkansas Academic Standards in the core academic areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, and science.¹⁷⁸

The following charts show in ELA, the percentage of students taking the DLM scoring Level 3 or 4 were generally higher in lower grade levels (3rd – 5th), before decreasing in 6th grade onward, for both the 2024 and 2025 school years. Conversely, in math, the percentage of students taking the DLM scoring Level 3 or 4 was lowest in lower grades (3rd – 6th), for both school years, and increased in higher grades (7th – 10th). There was a broader spread of proficiency levels across the grade levels in the science assessment. There was a mix of increases and decreases in proficiency levels from 2024 to 2025 in the ELA and math assessments. In science, however, the percentage of students taking the DLM scoring Level 3 or 4 decreased from 2024 to 2025 across all grade levels, excluding 9th grade in which no test was given. These decreases ranged from 4% points in 10th grade to 18.8% points in 6th grade and 8th grade.

DLM (2025) ELA by Grade Level



DLM (2025) Math by Grade Level

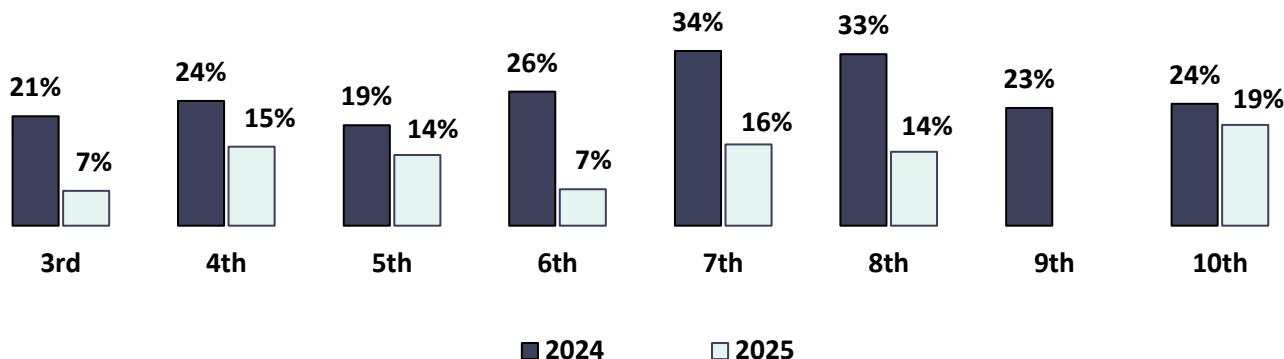


¹⁷⁷ Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. Special Education, Curriculum & Assessment, available at <https://dev-dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/special-education/curriculum-assessment/assessment>.

¹⁷⁸ Arkansas Alternate Assessment Participation Manual 2023-2024, page 4, available at

<https://arksped.ade.arkansas.gov/documents/curriculumAssessment/assessment/Arkansas-Alternate-Assessment-Participation-Manual-2023-24.pdf>.

DLM (2025) Science by Grade Level



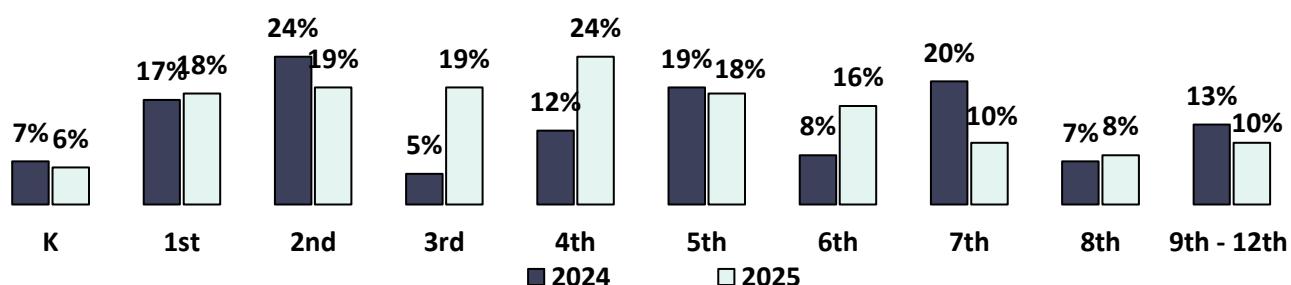
Note: There were no science results available for 9th grade in the 2025 school year because no test was given.

English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

The English Language Proficiency standards were last updated in 2024.¹⁷⁹ The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) is the assessment used in Arkansas to measure English language proficiency. There are eleven other ELPA21 states: Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington (Braille only) and West Virginia.¹⁸⁰ Students can score Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient. A score of proficient means a student is eligible for exit consideration, alongside other performance information.¹⁸¹

The chart below shows there was a mix of increases and decreases in the percentage of students scoring proficient on the ELPA21 from 2024 to 2025. The biggest increase was in third grade, which had a fourteen-percentage point increase. The biggest decrease was in sixth grade, which had a ten-percentage point decrease. In the 2025 school year, fourth grade had the highest percentage of EL students scoring proficient, 24%.

ELPA21 Percent Scoring Proficient by Grade Level



Data Source: DESE¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Arkansas English Language Proficiency Standards with Correspondences to K–12 English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science Practices, Arkansas ELA Standards for K–12, and Arkansas Disciplinary Literacy Standards for 6–12 | Dec 2023, available at [https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Arkansas_ELP_Standards_Grades_K-12_FINAL_2.29.24_\(1\)_LS.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Arkansas_ELP_Standards_Grades_K-12_FINAL_2.29.24_(1)_LS.pdf).

¹⁸⁰ DESE, ELPA21 states, available at <https://elpa21.org/resources/>.

¹⁸¹ Every Student Succeeds Act, Arkansas State Plan, pg. 124, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/2022.05.13_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_PSA.pdf.

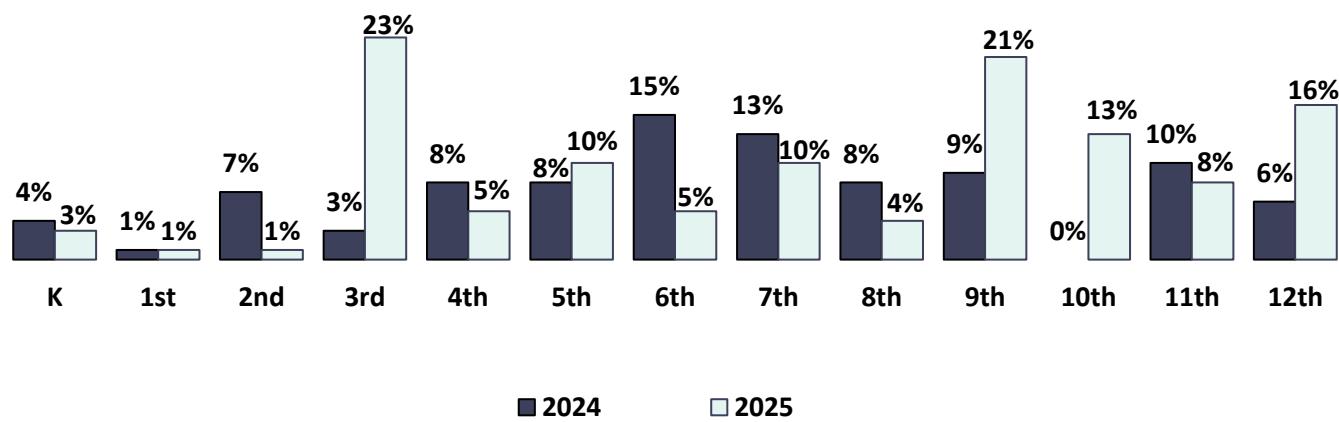
¹⁸² Email from Alan Lytle, December 1, 2025.

Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

The Alt ELPA is an “alternate assessment of English language proficiency designed specifically for K-12 English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible to participate in Arkansas’ alternate assessment (DLM), as determined by a student’s IEP team.”¹⁸³ There are ten other Alt ELPA states: Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and West Virginia.¹⁸⁴ Similar to the ELPA, the Alt ELPA also has three performance levels (emerging, progressing, and proficient) across four domains: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.¹⁸⁵

The following chart, similarly, shows a mix of increases and decreases from 2024 to 2025, with a similar large increase in the third grade of twenty percentage points and the largest decrease was in the fourth grade, ten percentage points. In the 2025 school year, the third-grade portion had the highest percentage of EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (eligible to take the DLM) with 23%.

Alt ELPA Percent Scoring Proficient by Grade Level



Source: DESE¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ DESE, Alt ELPA, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/alt-elpa>.

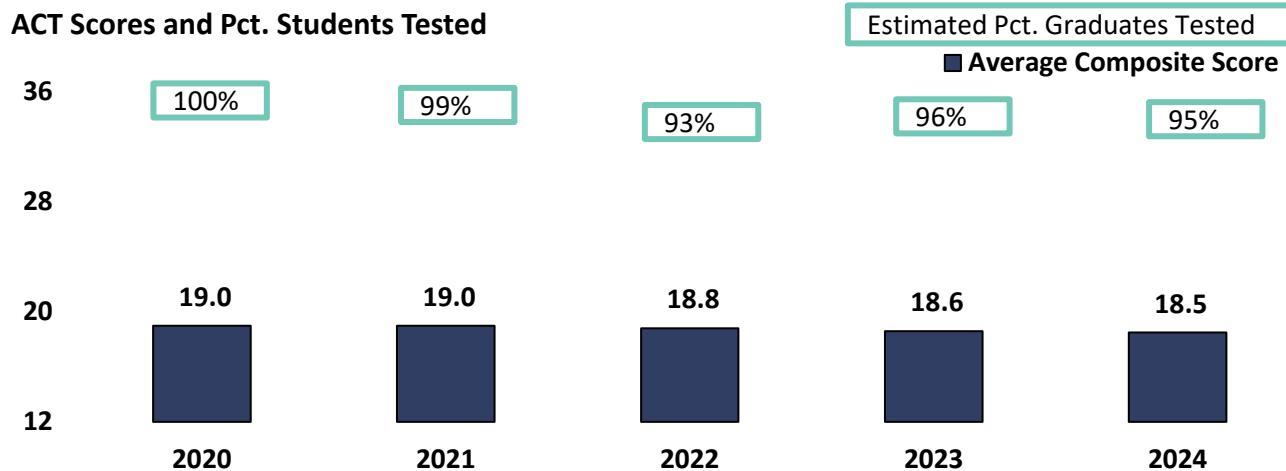
¹⁸⁴ DESE, Alt ELPA States, available at <https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=3658450>.

¹⁸⁵ DESE, Alt ELPA, 24-25 Scores, Assessment Information, available at <https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=3658450>.

¹⁸⁶ Email from Alan Lytle, December 1, 2025.

ACT Test Scores

The following information shows ACT data for Arkansas and other states. The following chart shows Arkansas's composite scores for high school graduates for 2020 through 2024 (the most recent year of data available) alongside the estimated percentage of high school graduates tested. The average composite score dropped from 19.0 in 2020 to 18.5 in 2024 and estimated percentage of graduates dropped from 100% to 95% during that same time frame.



Data Sources: ACT¹⁸⁷

According to ACT, “a best practice is to examine a cohort of states with similar percentages of tested graduates.”¹⁸⁸ The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks “are the ACT scores that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher and about a 75-80% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing courses.”¹⁸⁹

The following table shows a state comparison with other states with a similar percentage of high school graduates tested for the 2024 school year.

ACT Results for 2023-2024						
States with 90% - 100% of Estimated High School Graduates Tested						
	Estimated Pct. of Graduates Tested	Average Composite Score	Pct. Meeting English Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Math Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Reading Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Science Benchmark
Alabama	100%	18.0	43%	18%	30%	21%
Kentucky	100%	18.6	48%	23%	36%	24%
Louisiana	100%	18.2	46%	20%	32%	22%
Mississippi	100%	17.7	42%	17%	27%	17%
Nevada	100%	17.2	37%	15%	25%	18%
Oklahoma	100%	17.6	40%	15%	29%	17%

¹⁸⁷ Average ACT Test Scores by Graduating Class of 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, available at <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2024-Average-ACT-Scores-by-State-Percent-Meeting-Benchmarks.pdf>.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.*, Average ACT Test Scores by Graduating Class of 2024.

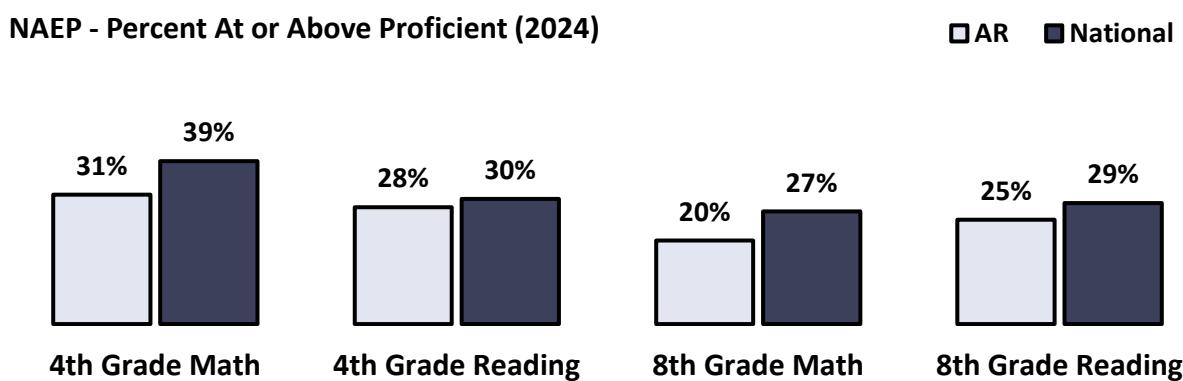
¹⁸⁹ ACT, ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, available at <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/college-and-career-readiness/benchmarks.html>.

ACT Results for 2023-2024 States with 90% - 100% of Estimated High School Graduates Tested						
	Estimated Pct. of Graduates Tested	Average Composite Score	Pct. Meeting English Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Math Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Reading Benchmark	Pct. Meeting Science Benchmark
Tennessee	100%	18.8	50%	25%	36%	26%
Wyoming	100%	19.1	49%	26%	37%	28%
Arizona	100%	17.7	41%	22%	28%	19%
Montana	97%	19.5	53%	31%	41%	31%
Arkansas	95%	18.5	48%	19%	32%	24%
Nebraska	95%	19.1	49%	28%	36%	28%
Wisconsin	94%	19.4	52%	30%	37%	32%

Note: This table includes states with an estimated percentage of high school graduates tested of 90% to 100%.¹⁹⁰

National Assessment Performance Results

The following chart shows the percentage of fourth and eighth grade students who scored proficient or above on the math and reading NAEP assessments in 2024.



The percentage of Arkansas students scoring proficient or above ranged 20% in 8th grade math to 31% in 4th grade math. Nationally, the percentage of students scoring proficient or above ranged from 27% in 8th grade math to 39% in 4th grade math.

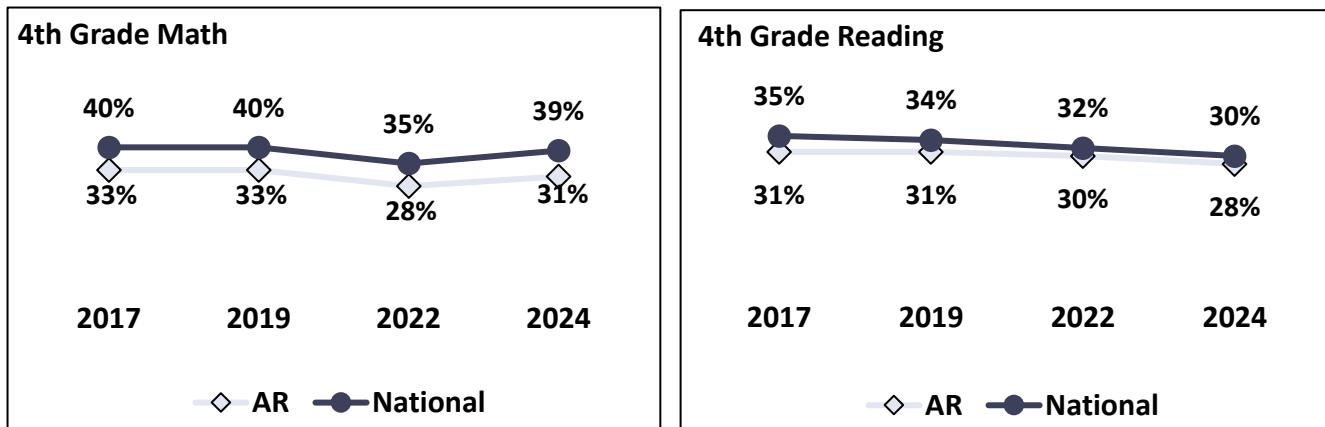
¹⁹⁰ Average ACT Test Scores by Graduating Class of 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, available at <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2024-Average-ACT-Scores-by-State-Percent-Meeting-Benchmarks.pdf>.

NAEP - Percent At or Above Proficient (2024)

SREB States	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
Alabama	37%	28%	18%	21%
Arkansas	31%	28%	20%	25%
Delaware	35%	26%	19%	23%
Florida	45%	33%	21%	25%
Georgia	38%	30%	24%	31%
Kentucky	38%	33%	24%	29%
Louisiana	35%	32%	21%	27%
Maryland	37%	34%	25%	33%
Mississippi	38%	32%	22%	23%
North Carolina	41%	30%	31%	27%
Oklahoma	31%	23%	17%	20%
South Carolina	40%	32%	24%	26%
Tennessee	42%	32%	31%	31%
Texas	43%	28%	24%	25%
Virginia	40%	31%	29%	29%
West Virginia	31%	25%	18%	21%
National	39%	30%	27%	29%

Data Sources: NAEP,¹⁹¹ SREB States¹⁹²

Overall, the 2024 assessment percentages of students at or above proficient are decreases from the 2017 assessment, both in Arkansas and nationally. In 4th grade math, the percentage of students at or above proficient increased for both groups from the previous year. The 4th grade reading assessment results have shown a steady decrease since 2017 for both groups.

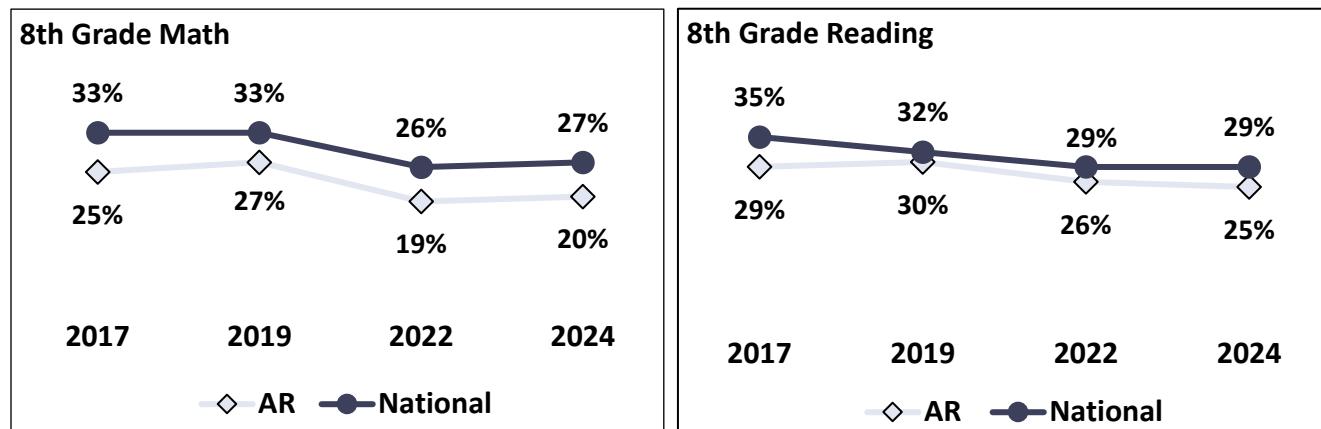


¹⁹¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017, 2019, 2022, 2024 Mathematics and Reading Assessments. [NAEP Data Explorer, Subjects: Math and Reading, Grades: 4 and 8, Jurisdictions: National public and State - ALL, Variable: All Students, Statistic: Achievement levels – cumulative, available at <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE>.

¹⁹² Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). (2025). About SREB, available at <https://www.sreb.org/about>.

Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA)

On the 8th grade math assessment, the percentage of students at or above proficient in 2024 also increased from the previous year in both student groups. However, on the 8th grade reading assessment, the percentage of Arkansas students at or above proficient in 2024 held steady from the previous year whereas nationally, that percentage decreased.



Access to Educators

The AESAA requires DESE to “assess whether all students have access to excellent educators” as part of the comprehensive accountability system for Arkansas public schools and districts.¹⁹³ According to Arkansas Code § 6-15-2912, “[i]t is the intent of the General Assembly that all students in Arkansas public schools be taught by qualified and effective educators and that low-income or minority students not be taught at disproportionate rates by educators who are ineffective, inexperienced, or teaching a subject for which they are not currently licensed.”

Additionally, the State Board may promulgate rules to promote the state’s goal and include, “without limitation, systems to support educator effectiveness.”¹⁹⁴ Specifically, the Rules Governing the AESAA provide the following:

(c) “To promote the state’s goal of providing all Arkansas public school students with qualified and effective educators, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education will support educator effectiveness by implementing state board-approved systems that will:

- (1) Encourage licensure and career advancement;
- (2) Provide flexibility to hire well-qualified individuals;
- (3) Provide personalized, differentiated professional support, growth, and development opportunities for all educators; and
- (4) Incentivize retention of effective teachers and leaders.”¹⁹⁵

Educator Data

The following tables and maps include teacher data from DESE showing the experience and education of teachers across the state. These data demonstrate a variance the education and experience of teachers across the state.

¹⁹³ Ark. Code. Ann. § 6-15-2904(3).

¹⁹⁴ Ark. Code. Ann. § 6-15-2912(a)-(b).

¹⁹⁵ 6 CAR § 60-101(c).

When looking at these measures by Title I schools and non-Title I schools, there is some variance. Title I, Part A “provides financial assistance through State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.”¹⁹⁶

Of the 1,063 public schools and charters, 79% were considered Title I schools in the 2025 school year.

	All Schools	Title I Schools	Non-Title I Schools
Average Percentage of Teachers with Bachelor's	55%	57%	49%
Average Percentage of Teachers with Master's	44%	43%	50%
Average Years of Teacher Experience	11.7	11.5	12.5
Average Percentage of Teachers with Emergency/Provisional Credentials	3%	4%	2%
Total Public Schools and Charters	1,063	79%	21%

In Title I schools, there was a higher average percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree and a lower average percentage of teachers with a master's degree. The average years of teaching experience was a year less among Title I schools and the average percentage of teachers with emergency/provisional credentials is close to two times higher in Title I schools.

Sources: DESE¹⁹⁷

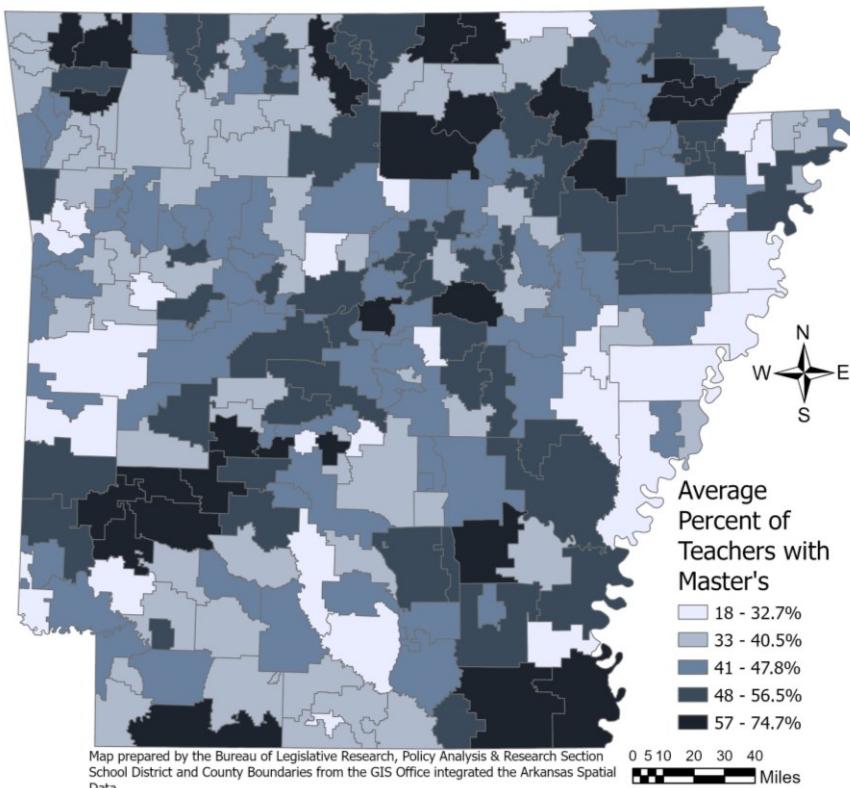
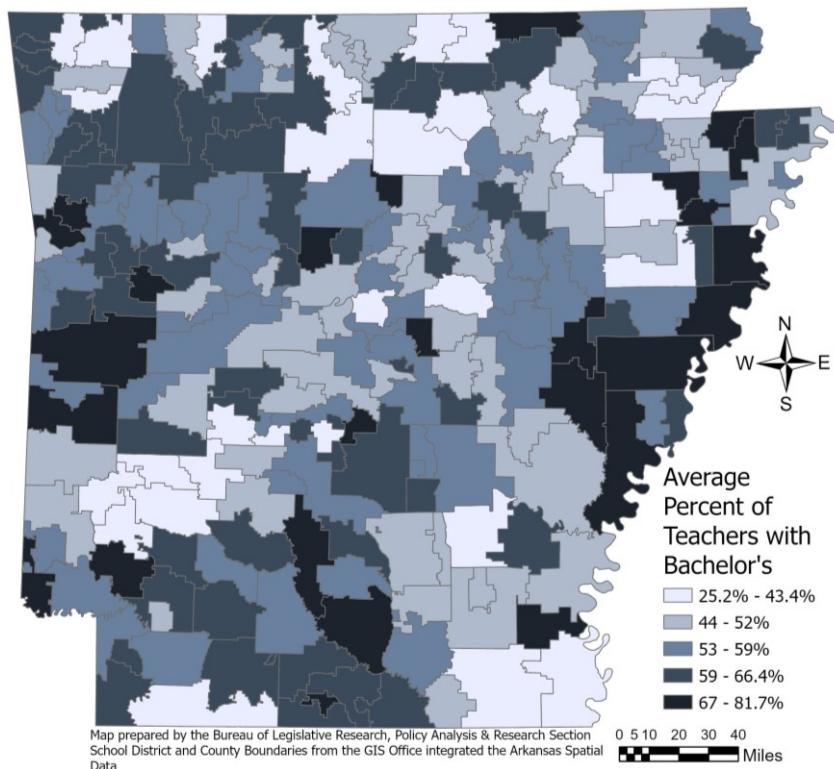
¹⁹⁶ DESE, Title I, Part A Program, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/Federal-Programs/federal-programs/title-i-part-a-program>.

¹⁹⁷ MySchoolInfo, School Statewide Reports (2024-25), available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

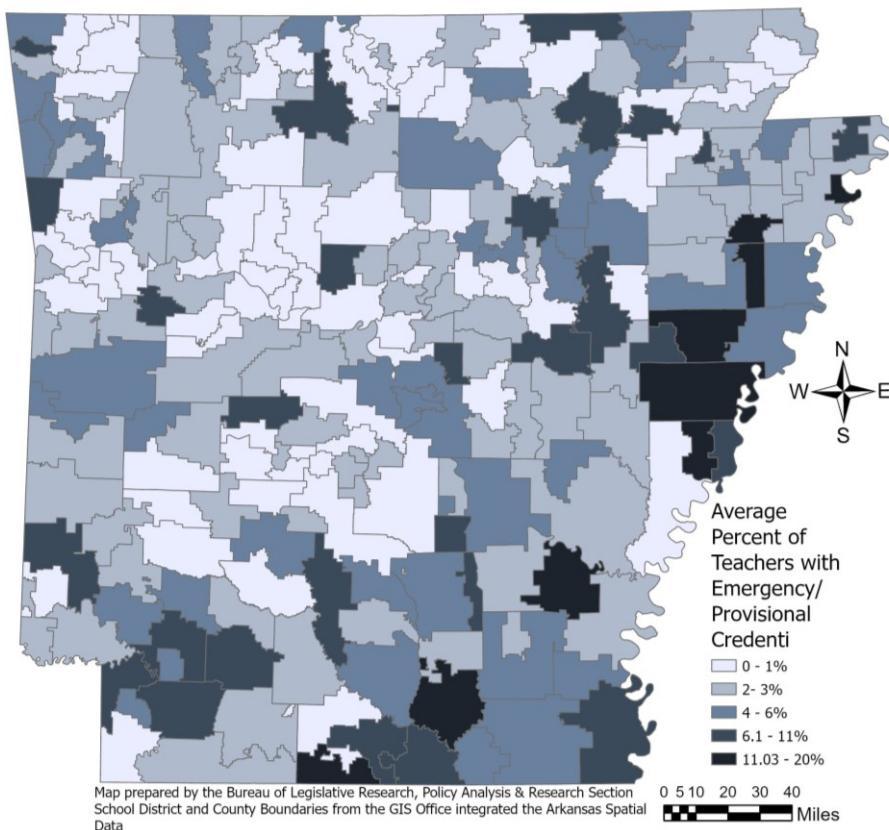
BLR Access to Educators Maps

The map to the right shows the average percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree ranges from 25% to 82%. The maps do not include open-enrollment public charter systems since they do not have geographic borders.

For these charters, the average percentage of teachers with bachelor's degree in 2025 ranges from 33 - 100%.

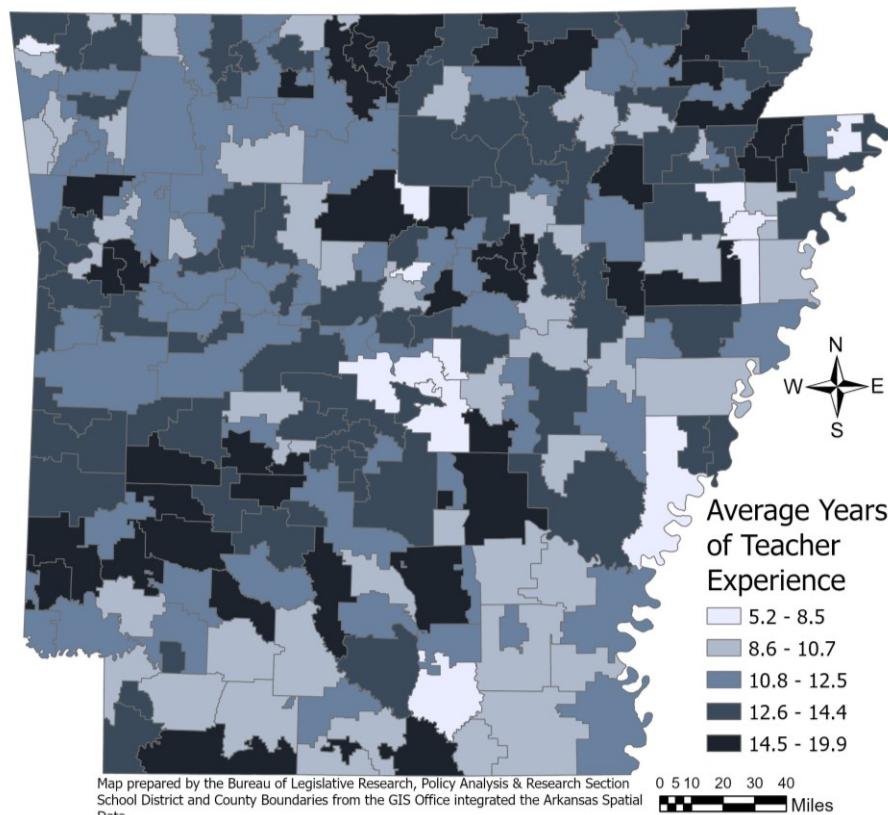


The map to the left shows the average percentage of teachers with a master's degree ranges from 18% to 75%. For charters, this ranges from 0% to 67%.



The map to the left shows the average percentage of teachers with emergency/ provisional credentials across the state which ranges from 0% to 20%. For charters, this ranged from 0% to 33%.

The map to the right shows the distribution of districts by average years of teacher experience, which ranges from 5.2 to 19.9 years. For charters, this ranged from 1 year to 17 years.



DESE Teacher Shortage Map

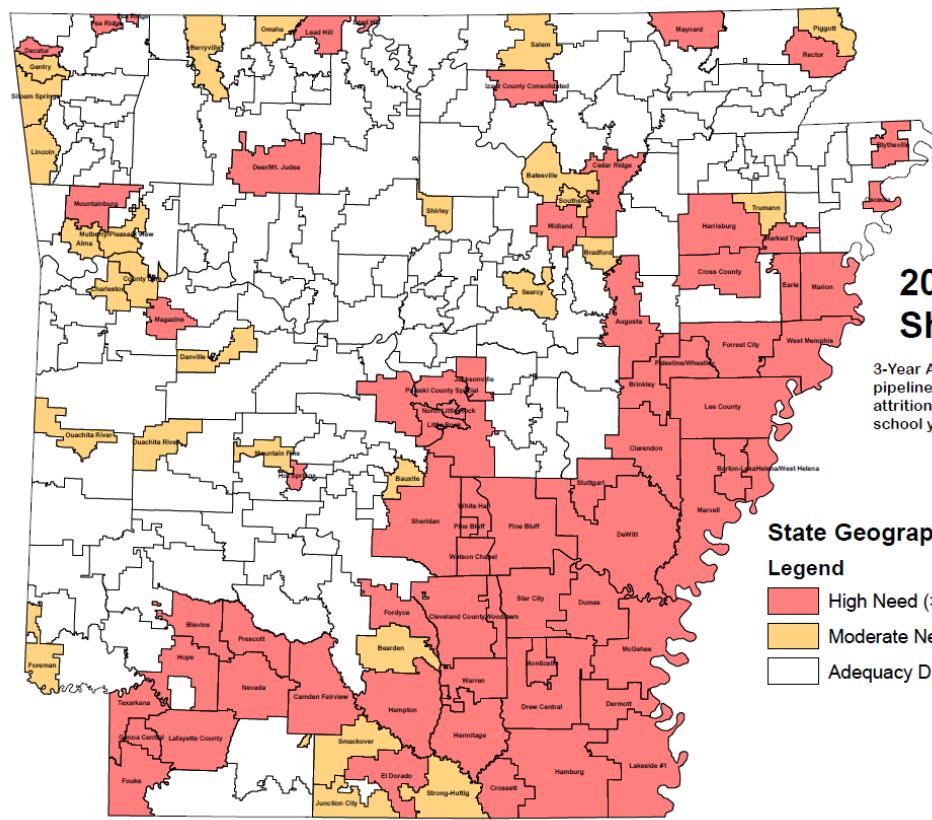
The following map from DESE shows the geographic shortage school districts for the 2025 school year. According to DESE, the shortage areas shown in the map below “are based on data from three consecutive school years (2022, 2023, and 2024).

Percentage Need=
 $(\text{Demand} - \text{Supply}) / \text{Total Teachers}$

- Demand percentage of unlicensed teachers and teacher attrition
- Supply-educator preparation program pipeline”^{198 199}

The map below shows that high need districts (20% or more need) are primarily concentrated in the southeast portion of the state.

Source: DESE²⁰⁰



2024-2025 Geographic Shortage Districts

3-Year Averages based on supply (educator preparation pipeline) and demand (unlicensed teachers and teacher attrition) during the 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 school years.

State Geographic Shortage Areas

Legend

- High Need (>=20% of teachers) or in a High Need Coop
- Moderate Need (>=15% Need)
- Adequacy Districts (<15% Need)

¹⁹⁸ DESE, Educator Workforce Data, available at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/educator-workforce-data>.

¹⁹⁹ 2024 Arkansas Teacher Workforce Report, available at [2024 Teacher Workforce Report 12-18-24 EEF.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Teacher%20Workforce%20Report%2012-18-24_EEF.pdf).

²⁰⁰ 2024-2025 Geographic Shortage Districts, DESE, available at [https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Teacher Shortage 2024-2025 SY EEF.pdf](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Teacher%20Shortage%202024-2025%20SY_EEF.pdf).

Levels of Support for Public School Districts

The accountability system, under § 6-15-2904, requires DESE to establish levels of support for each public school district. The five levels of support are shown in the table below.²⁰¹ While DESE has discretion in determining the levels of support for each district, the statute mandates two instances where specific levels of support must be provided based on a district's reading scores.²⁰²

For districts in which 40% or more of its students scored "in need of support" on the state's prior year summative assessments in reading, Arkansas Code mandates Level 3 – Coordinated support, and Level 4 – Directed support for districts in which 50% or more of the students scored "in need of support."²⁰³ The summative assessment, ACT Aspire Assessment, administered during 2016 through 2023 school years designated "In Need of Support" as the lowest of four performance levels²⁰⁴. According to the Rules Governing the AESAA,²⁰⁵ it is unclear how DESE is identifying districts that meet the 40% and 50% criteria for the 2024 and 2025 school years.

Levels of Support for Public School Districts and Open-Enrollment Public Charters			
Level	DESE Support	District Requirements	Classification
1—General	- Guidance and tools - Access to DESE contacts	- School improvement plan	
2—Collaborative	- Minor or temporary technical assistance	- School improvement plan - District support plan	
3—Coordinated	- Technical assistance and monitoring	- School improvement plan - District support plan, including a literacy plan	40% or more of district's students scored "in need of support" on prior year summative assessment in reading
4—Directed	- Direct guidance on the development and implementation of school-level plans - Resource allocation - Monitoring - Evaluation	- School improvement plan - District support plan (approved by DESE)	50% or more of district's students scored "in need of support" on prior year summative assessment in reading
5—Intensive	- DESE creates district improvement/exit plan in collaboration with district; - SBOE may take other actions, including assuming authority of the district	- School improvement plan - District support plan	SBOE approval

Under Arkansas Code § 6-15-2913, the SBOE must promulgate rules to establish the process for determining the differentiated levels of support that DESE will provide for public school districts.²⁰⁶ Under the rules, DESE must

²⁰¹ Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act, effective October 4, 2024. Post January 1, 2006: 6 CAR § 60-120.

²⁰² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2913(a)(3).

²⁰³ 6 CAR § 60-119(c)-(d).

²⁰⁴ 2024 Business Rules for the Arkansas State Report Card, pages 7-9, available at

<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Content/documents/schoolreportcard/2024/Business%20Rules.pdf>

²⁰⁵ 6 CAR § 60-119.

²⁰⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2913(1)(A).

Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA)

review data for all students and defined subgroup populations and consider several measures including without limitation:

- public schools identified as in need of targeted or comprehensive support as defined in ESSA,
- fidelity of district implementation of school-level improvement plans and district support plans,
- public school and district data obtained from DESE's comprehensive information systems, and
- fidelity of district implementation of directives from DESE or SBOE.²⁰⁷

State Intervention - Intensive Support

The SBOE must vote to classify a district in Level 5—Intensive Support.²⁰⁸ Under Arkansas Code § 6-15-2916, when the SBOE classifies a district as in need of Level 5- Intensive Support, the SBOE may take certain actions in the district, including without limitation assuming authority of the district and removing the superintendent and school board. Currently, five districts are classified as in need of Level 5—Intensive Support and are under state authority. The table below shows the districts, when they were classified as needing Level 5—Intensive Support, any other classifications (like fiscal distress), whether the district is under state authority, and the dates and additional information for the implementation or removal of state authority as applicable.²⁰⁹

Level 5 District	Classification Date	Other Classification	State Authority
Blytheville	May 29, 2025	None	May 29, 2025
Earle	May 9, 2019	Fiscal distress (October 2017 to June 2023)	November 6, 2017 (limited authority board of directors as of June 1, 2023)
Helena-West Helena	July 14, 2022	None	July 14, 2022 (school board remained in place but personnel decisions made by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education)
Lee County	May 13, 2021	Accreditation—Corrective Action Status (June 2020) Fiscal distress (May 2019 to May 2024)	State assumed authority due to Standards of Accreditation on March 25, 2019; State assumed authority due to Level 5 on May 13, 2021
Marvell-Elaine	November 28, 2022	Fiscal distress (April 2019 to September 2021)	July 7, 2023
Dollarway	July 13, 2017	Fiscal distress	Annexed to Pine Bluff School District December 10, 2020; effective July 1, 2021.
Little Rock	July 13, 2017		Placed in state takeover for academic distress January 28, 2015; removed from Level 5 July 8, 2021;

²⁰⁷ 6 CAR § 60-119(b)(2).

²⁰⁸ See Ark. Code Ann. §6-15-2916; 6 CAR § 60-120.

²⁰⁹ State Authority, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Public School Accountability, last updated January 4, 2024, available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ivVX5KvYn-mTNt1Pi2vZl5qwyFe3FqvhCCpOwYyvn3k/edit?tab=t.0>.

Arkansas State Board of Education Order Denying Blytheville School District Appeal, May 29, 2025, available at

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/Order_Denying_Blytheville_School_District_Appeal_Legal.pdf. Arkansas State Board of Education Order Classification of Marvell-Elaine in Need of Level 5 Support, November 28, 2022, available at https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/ORDER -- Classification_of_Marvell-Elaine_in_need_of_Level_5 -- Intensive_support_20221128143545.pdf.

Level 5 District	Classification Date	Other Classification	State Authority
Pine Bluff	November 8, 2018	Fiscal distress	Placed in state takeover for fiscal distress September 13, 2018, removed from state takeover September 13, 2023, and Level 5 September 15, 2023

Under Arkansas Code § 6-15-2917, a public school district classified as in need of Level 5—Intensive Support that meets the exit criteria set by the SBOE must be returned to full local control as soon as the SBOE determines that the public school district meets the exit criteria, but in no case longer than five years after the assumption of authority of the public school district.

If a public school district cannot demonstrate that it has met the exit criteria, the SBOE must either return the public school district to full local control or annex, consolidate, or reconstitute the district. Both must happen no later than five years after the assumption of state authority.²¹⁰

On the 2025 ATLAS assessments, less than 30% of students in all grade levels in each district classified as in need of Level 5—Intensive Support scored a level 3 or 4 for English Language Arts, Math, and Science.

	Percent Level 3 or 4		
	ELA	Math	Science
All Districts	34.7%	38.7%	38.2%
Blytheville SD	11%	8%	8.9%
Earle	7%	9%	9.6%
Helena-West Helena SD	15%	13%	11.3%
Marvell-Elaine Sd	12%	13%	11.0%
Lee County	18%	14%	8.0%
Little Rock SD	26%	26%	27.1%
Pine Bluff SD	11%	10%	8.0%

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT RATING SYSTEM

Arkansas Code § 6-15-2105 requires publication of school performance category level ratings annually by DESE and by the school district on DESE's website.²¹¹ "Each parent and guardian is entitled to an easy-to-read written report describing the rating of the school in which his or her child is enrolled",²¹² which includes identification of the school rating as "A", "B", "C", "D", or "F," commonly referred to as School Letter Grades.²¹³

Act 744 of 2017 created Arkansas Code § 6-15-2108 requiring a school rating system with a "multiple-measures approach" with indicators that allow for meaningful differentiation in school performance and are valid, reliable, comparable, and applicable statewide.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2917(e).

²¹¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2105(b)(1).

²¹² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2105(b)(2).

²¹³ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2105(b)(3).

²¹⁴ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2108(b).

School and District Rating System

The Arkansas ACCESS Acts (Acts 340 and 341 of 2025²¹⁵) amended those measures, which “shall include without limitation:

- (1) Academic achievement on the annual statewide student assessment;
- (2) Student growth on the annual statewide student assessment; and
- (3) School-level graduation rate or rates.”²¹⁶

Arkansas Code § 10-3-2102(f)(3) requires “reviewing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act.” While the school and district rating system is not part of the AESAA, the school ratings are an embedded part of the statewide reporting on school performance.

School Letter Grades

In the 2025 school year, DESE began using a new calculation to determine school letter grades.²¹⁷ According to DESE, this index will be used to meet ESSA requirements beginning in 2024;²¹⁸ however, the Arkansas ESSA plan has not been updated to reflect that as of the writing of this report. The table below shows the indicators that make up the school ratings, as well as the measures that go to each indicator.²¹⁹

Indicator	Elementary and Middle School (K-8) Measure Description	High School (9-12) Measure Description
<i>Achievement</i>	% Proficient English Language Arts	% Proficient English Language Arts
	% Proficient Math	% Proficient Math
	% Proficient Science	% Proficient Science
<i>Growth of All Students</i>	% Met Growth Target English Language Arts and ELP	% Met Growth Target English Language Arts and ELP
	% Met Growth Target Math	% Met Growth Target Math
	% Met Growth Target Science	% Met Growth Target Science
<i>Growth of Lowest Quarter</i>	% Met Growth Target English Language Arts and ELP	% Met Growth Target – Average of English Language Arts, Math, and Science
	% Met Growth Target Math	
	% Met Growth Target Science	
<i>Success Ready Graduate</i>	Not included in K-8 Formula	% Graduating in four-year cohort % Graduates with merit or distinction A transitional readiness measure will be used until Success Ready Pathways are fully implemented

Letter grades are to be included in DESE’s Report Cards to provide parents and the public with an easily understood method for understanding a school’s performance.²²⁰ DESE calculated letter grades using the ESSA School Index from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, and again from the 2021-2022

²¹⁵ Act 340 of the Regular Session 2025. Section 16. (p. 25), available at

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Home/FTPDocument?path=%2FACTS%2F2025R%2FPublic%2FACT340.pdf>.

²¹⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2108(a).

²¹⁷ See Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2108; 6 CAR §§ 64-101 and 64-102.

²¹⁸ Email from Courtney Salas-Ford, January 28, 2026.

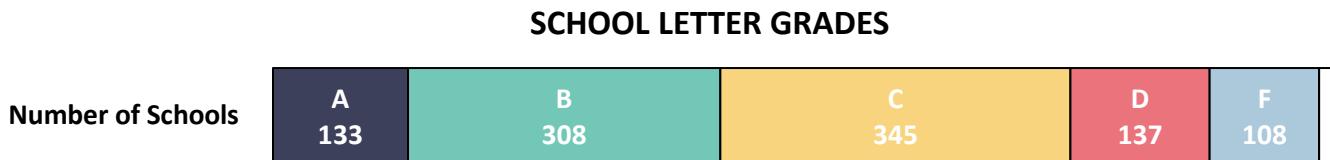
²¹⁹ 2025 Business Rules for Calculating Arkansas School and District Letter Grades, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Public School Accountability School Performance Unit, Revised October 22, 2025, available at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rYv6MSk875qmVOrvBpr6rbTnzVLEP5U-fDk1dJY71s8/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.dyi5nilxxfea>.

²²⁰ Arkansas School Performance Report Card, available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/>, as of December 2025.

school year to the 2022-2023 school year.²²¹ Under Act 474 of 2025, DESE was prohibited from issuing letter grades under the current school rating system for the 2024 school year.²²²

The graph below shows how many schools received each letter grade in the 2025 school year.²²³



2025 School Letter Grades by Additional Student Subgroups

SCHOOL LETTER GRADES
By Average Percentage of Select Student Subgroups



For all letter grades, the average percentage of special education students in a school is close to the percentage statewide. Like special education, for all letter grades, the average percentage of English Language Learner students in a school is close to the percentage statewide.²²⁴

The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch is lowest in "A" schools and rises with each letter grade.

2025 School Letter Grades by Race and Ethnicity

The next graph shows the averages for race and ethnicity by school letter grade.²²⁵

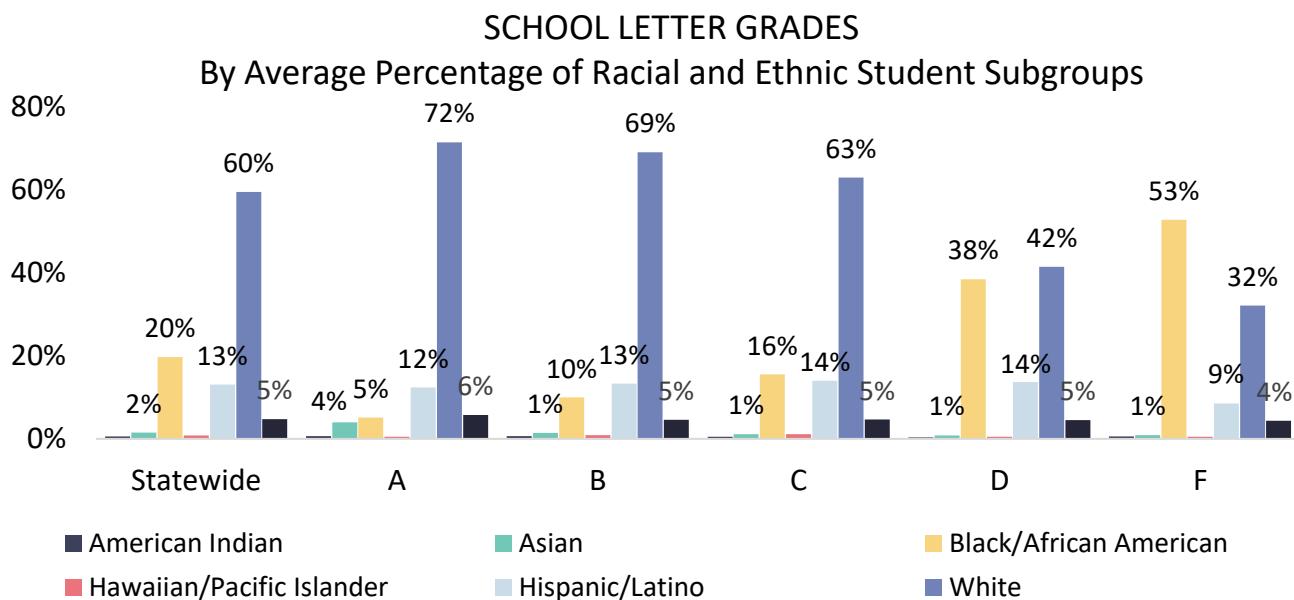
²²¹ DESE did not issue letter grades for 2020, since schools did not conduct assessments due to COVID-19. Under Act 89 of 2021, DESE did not issue letter grades for the 2021 school year.

²²² Act 474 of 2025 expires June 30, 2026.

²²³ Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025.

²²⁴ Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025. My School Info, accessed December 9, 2025.

²²⁵ Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025. My School Info, accessed December 9, 2025.



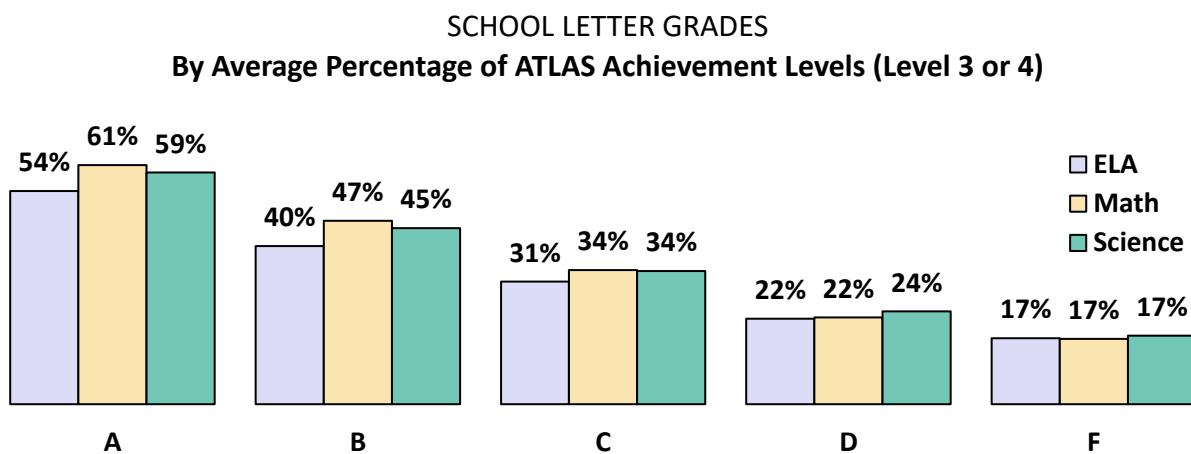
The average percentages of American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races are all close to the statewide percentage across all letter grades. For Asian students, the average percentage increases in "A" schools, but otherwise is close to the statewide average.

For Hispanic/Latino students, the average percentage is close to the state percentage except in "F" schools, where it is lower than the statewide percentage.

The average percentage of white students is highest in "A" schools and drops with each letter grade. Conversely, the average percentage of Black/African American students is lowest in "A" schools and rises with each letter grade.

2025 School Letter Grades by ATLAS Achievement Levels

The following chart shows the average percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 on the 2025 ATLAS ELA, math, and science portions of the assessment.

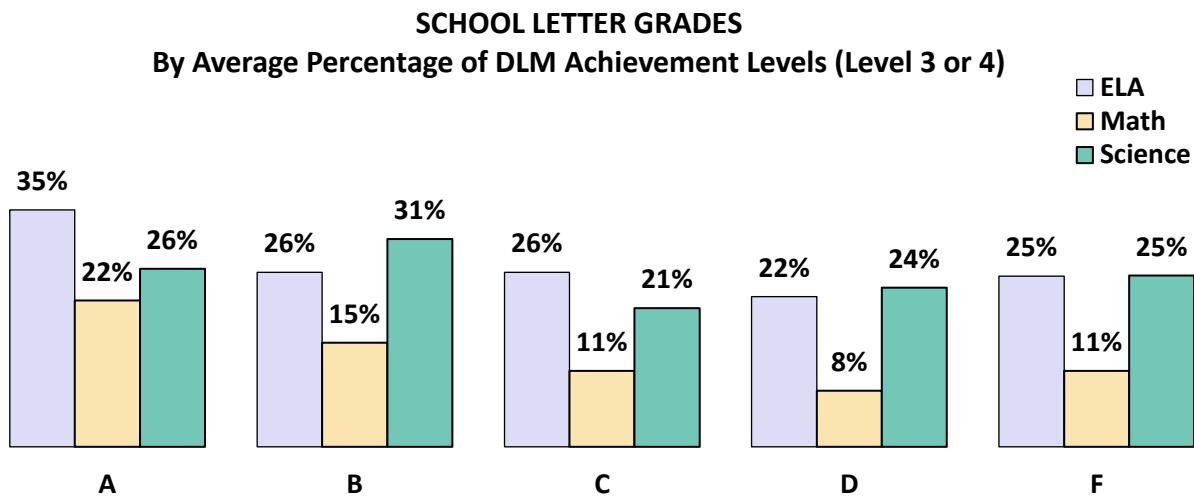


Data Source: DESE²²⁶

²²⁶ Deidentified Student-Level ATLAS Results, email dated November 12, 2025.

As shown in the chart, the percentage of students scoring level 3 or 4 decreases with lower school letter grades. That percentage ranges from 54% to 61% in "A" schools to 17% across all three subjects in "F" schools.

The following chart shows the average percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 on the 2025 Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) ELA, math, and science portions of the alternate assessment. That percentage is more equally distributed across schools with different letter grades. The math portion achievement levels are the lowest across each category of schools.



Data Source: DESE²²⁷

Access to Educators Letter Grade Data

The average percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree and the average percentage of teachers with emergency/ provisional credentials increased from "A" schools to "F" schools. Additionally, the percentage of teachers with a master's degree and the average years of teaching experience decreased from "A" schools to "F" schools.

School Letter Grade	A	B	C	D	F
Average Percentage of Teachers with Bachelor's	48%	51%	53%	56%	59%
Average Percentage of Teachers with Master's	51%	48%	47%	43%	39%
Average Years of Teacher Experience	12.6	12.8	12.2	11.2	10.3
Average Percent of Teachers with Emergency/Provisional Credentials	1%	2%	3%	5%	6%

Sources: DESE²²⁸

²²⁷ Deidentified Student-Level ATLAS Results, email dated November 12, 2025.

²²⁸ MySchoolInfo, School Statewide Reports (2024-25), available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

District Letter Grades

The Arkansas ACCESS Act required DESE to develop a formula to determine a letter grade for public school districts and education service cooperatives, under the school rating system in § 6-15-2105.²²⁹ The public school district grades are calculated in the same manner as the school grades, with the public school district treated as one K-12 school.²³⁰

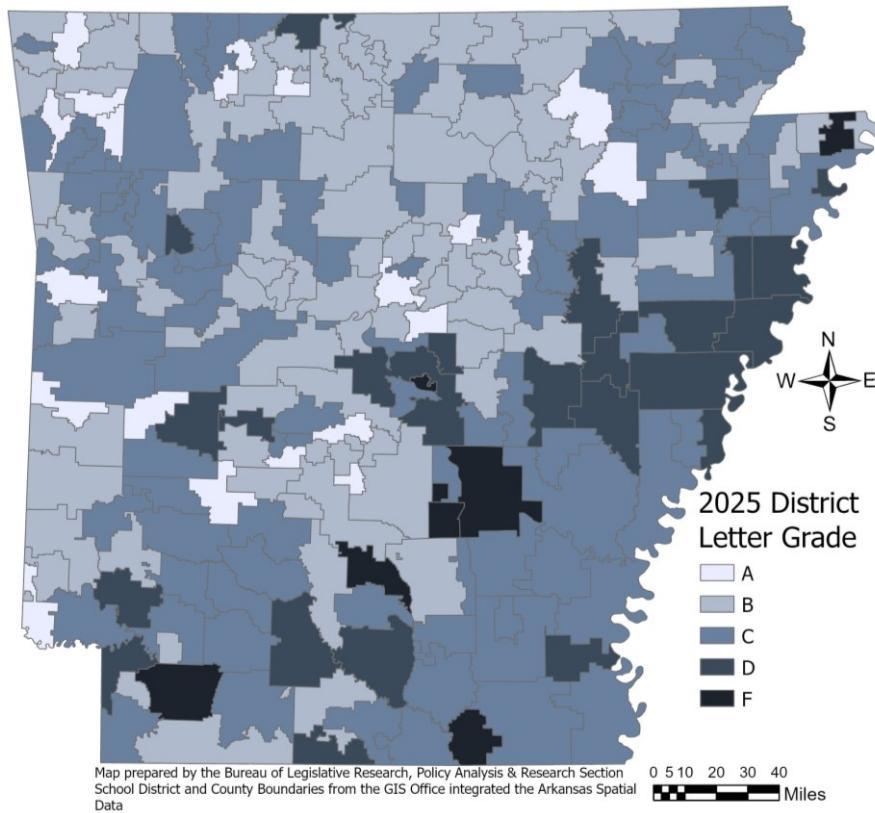
The graph below shows the number of traditional districts and open-enrollment public charter systems by letter grade for 2025.²³¹

DISTRICT LETTER GRADES

Number of Districts	A	B	C	D	F
	22	95	99	27	13

The map below shows traditional public-school districts by letter grade.

DESE published the first district grades in November 2025. Five of the six traditional districts that received “F” grades are in the southern or eastern part of the state, while one “F” district is in central Arkansas. The districts receiving “D” grades are also concentrated in the southeast, southwest, northeast, and central regions.



The districts receiving “A” grades are more concentrated in the northwest and north central regions of the state. The open-enrollment public charter systems receiving “F” grades are concentrated in central and northwest Arkansas. Most of the charter systems in the state are in central or northwest Arkansas.

Like school letter grades, more districts received a “C” than any other grade. A higher percentage of districts than schools received “B” letter grades (37.1% compared to 29.4%). For all other grades except “B,” the percentage of districts receiving the grade was lower than the percentage of schools.

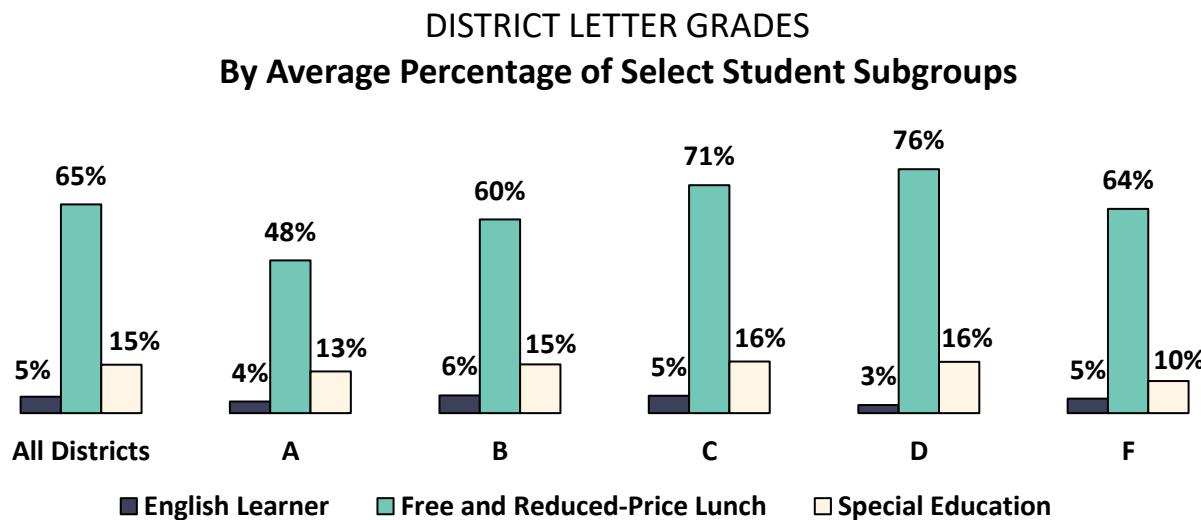
²²⁹ Acts 340 and 341 of 2025.

²³⁰ 2025 Business Rules for Calculating Arkansas School and District Letter Grades, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Public School Accountability School Performance Unit, revised October 22, 2025, available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rYv6MSk875qmVOrvBpr6rbTnzVLEP5U-fDk1dJY71s8/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.dyisnilxxfea>.

²³¹ Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025.

District Letter Grades by Additional Student Subgroups

The following data shows the average percentage of students per subgroup in the districts receiving each letter grade, as well as the statewide average percentage of those students from all public school districts. For consistency, the students are identified by the subgroups outlined in ESSA.²³²



Both the “A” districts and the “F” districts have average percentages of special education students slightly lower than the statewide percentage.

Like special education, the average percentage of English Learner students in both the “A” district and the “F” districts are slightly lower than the statewide average.

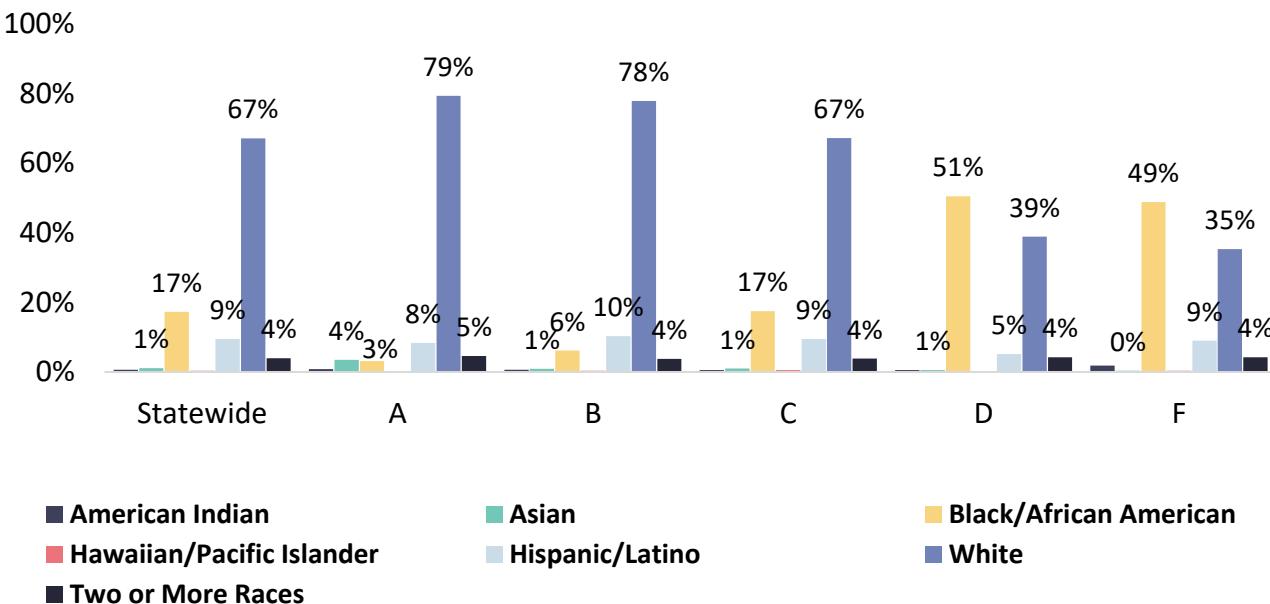
For students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, the average percentage is lowest in “A” districts and rises for each letter grade until “F”. The average percentage for “F” districts is lower than for “C” and “D” districts and close to the percentage statewide.

The next graph shows the averages for race and ethnicity by district letter grades.

²³² Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025. My School Info, accessed December 9, 2025.

DISTRICT LETTER GRADES

By Average Percentage of Racial and Ethnic Student Subgroups



For American Indian students, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, and students of two or more races, the average percentage for all grades is close to the statewide percentage.²³³

For Hispanic/Latino students, the average percentage is close to the statewide percentage except in “D” districts, where the percentage is lower.

For Asian students, the average percentage is highest in “A” districts and is close the statewide percentage for all other grades.

For white students, the average percentage is highest in “A” districts and drops in each grade. Conversely, for Black/African American students, the average percentage is lowest in “A” districts and rises in each grade.

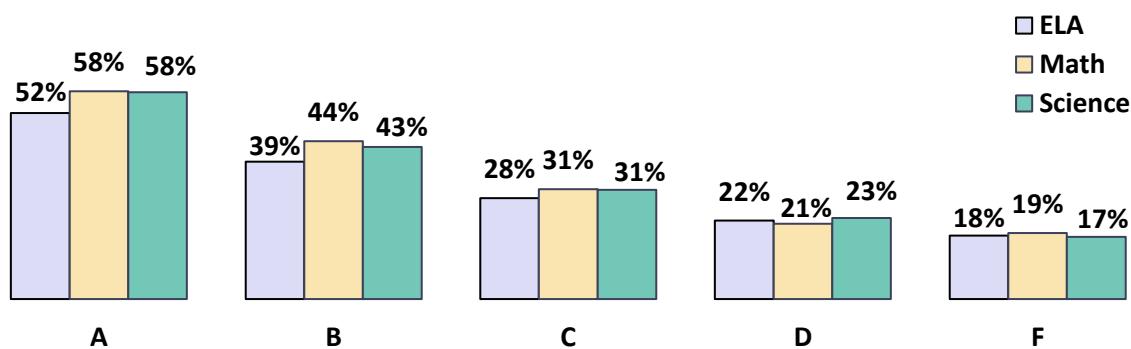
2025 District Letter Grades by ATLAS Achievement Levels

The following chart shows the average percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 on the 2025 ATLAS ELA, math, and science portions of the assessment.

²³³ Email from Louis Ferren, November 21, 2025. My School Info, accessed December 9, 2025.

DISTRICT LETTER GRADES

By Average Percentage of ATLAS Achievement Levels (Level 3 or 4)



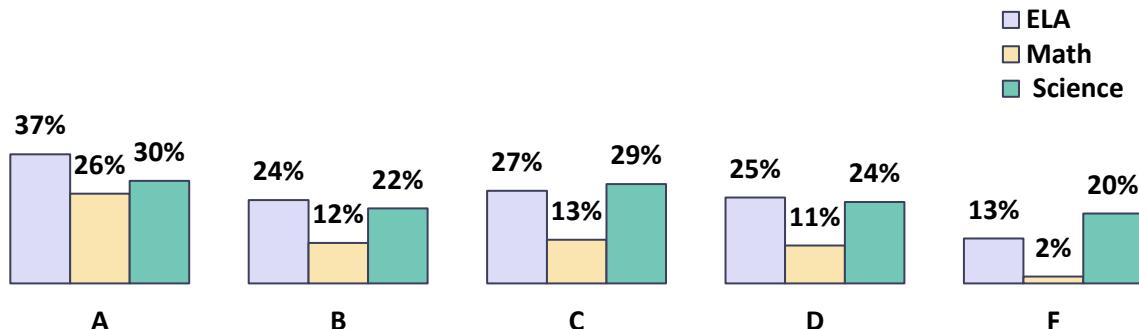
Data Source: DESE²³⁴

As shown in the chart, the percentage of students scoring level 3 or 4 decreases with lower district letter grades. That percentage ranges from 52% to 58% in “A” districts to 17% - 19% across all three subjects in “F” districts.

The following chart shows the average percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 on the 2025 Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) ELA, math, and science portions of the alternate assessment. That percentage is more equally distributed across districts with different letter grades. The math portion achievement levels are the lowest across each category of districts.

DISTRICT LETTER GRADES

By Average Percentage of DLM Achievement Levels (Level 3 or 4)



Access to Educator District Letter Grade Data

When compared across district letter grades, the average percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree was lowest among “A” districts (46%) and increased with lower letter grades with 60% in “F” districts. The inverse happened with the average percentage of teachers with a master's degree with that percentage decreasing from 53% in “A” districts to 38% in “F” districts and similarly with the average years of teaching experience. Average years of

District Letter Grade	A	B	C	D	F
Average Percentage of Teachers with Bachelor's	46%	51%	54%	59%	60%
Average Percentage of Teachers with Master's	53%	48%	45%	40%	38%
Average Years of Teacher Experience	12.7	12.6	12.2	10.3	9.2
Average Percent of Teachers with Emergency/Provisional Credentials	1%	2%	4%	5%	6%

Sources: DESE²³⁵

²³⁵ MySchoolInfo, School Statewide Reports (2024-25), available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

Additional Accountability for Public School Districts and schools

teaching experience was highest in "A" districts (12.7 years) and decreased to 9.2 in "F" districts. Additionally, the percentage of teachers with emergency/provisional credentials increased from 1% in "A" districts to 6% in "F" districts.

ADDITIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

In addition to the accountability system established under the AESAA, two additional accountability systems were established by the General Assembly to provide state oversight of public school finances and academic facilities.

Fiscal Distress

The General Assembly created the Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Program, also known as fiscal distress, in 1995. The purpose of the state's fiscal distress program is to identify and correct school districts that are struggling to maintain fiscal stability.

The Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Program governs fiscal distress.²³⁶ Under state law, DESE identifies districts in fiscal distress, and the SBOE approves or denies the identification and classifies school districts as being in fiscal distress.²³⁷ DESE, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, and SBOE have authority to take corrective actions in districts identified and classified as being in fiscal distress.²³⁸ As of December 2025, no districts are in fiscal distress.

Under Arkansas Code § 6-20-1904, DESE is required to notify the superintendent of a district that DESE is aware that the district has experienced two or more indicators of fiscal distress in one year that DESE deems to be at a nonmaterial level but that without intervention could place the public school district in fiscal distress. In addition, superintendents are required to report the same to DESE.²³⁹ Districts that are identified in this manner are placed into early intervention. Districts in early intervention must comply with all requirements established by the SBOE in rules and not incur any debt without prior written approval of DESE.²⁴⁰ Districts may move in and out of early intervention at any time during a school year.

Two of the four districts in early intervention in the 2025 school year have previously been in fiscal distress. The Lead Hill School District was in fiscal distress from 2005 to 2007. The Helena-West Helena School District has previously been in fiscal distress twice, from 2005 to 2008 and from 2010 to 2016.

Early Intervention Districts, as of December 2025

England

Helena-West Helena - Previously in fiscal distress 2005-2008 and 2010-2016

Lead Hill - Previously in fiscal distress 2005-2007

Nevada

Under § 6-20-1912, DESE provides monitoring for three years after a district is returned to local control or removed from fiscal distress. The following districts are currently in the three-year monitoring phase.

²³⁵ MySchoolInfo, School Statewide Reports (2024-25), available at <https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/Plus/Schools>.

²³⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1901 *et seq.*

²³⁷ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1906.

²³⁸ Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-20-1909 and 6-20-1910.

²³⁹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1904.

²⁴⁰ 6 CAR § 270-110.

Districts Under Monitoring	Fiscal Distress Classification Date	Fiscal Distress Removal Date	Was district in early warning?	Anticipated Monitoring Removal Date
Earle	October 12, 2017	June 1, 2023	Yes	2026
Pine Bluff	September 13, 2018	September 15, 2023	Yes	2027
Lee County	May 9, 2019	May 9, 2024	Yes	2027

As of December 2025, Earle and Lee County are both in Level 5—Intensive Support and under state control. Pine Bluff was released from Level 5—Intensive Support and state takeover on September 13, 2023.

Academic Facilities Distress

Under Arkansas Code § 6-21-802, “[t]he General Assembly finds that because of the opinions of the Supreme Court in the matter of Lake View School District No. 25 vs. Huckabee, it is the absolute duty of the State of Arkansas to provide all public school children with an opportunity for an adequate education, which includes access to adequate academic facilities and equipment.”²⁴¹

As such, the General Assembly created the Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities Program Act, also known as academic facilities distress, in 2005 to provide the state with a mechanism to intervene when districts do not provide adequate academic facilities or comply with facilities rules.²⁴²

The Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation (DPSAFT) administers the academic facilities distress program. The Commission for Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation classifies districts or schools in academic facilities distress.²⁴³ The DPSAFT may impose sanctions on a school or district that is in academic facilities distress.²⁴⁴

The commission has not classified a school or district as being in academic facilities distress since 2008 when the commission classified the Hermitage School District for violations of building codes and procurement laws. The commission removed Hermitage School District from academic facilities distress status in 2009.

The DPSAFT maintains an academic facilities distress indicator tracker. The table below shows how many districts had violations on the academic facilities distress indicator tracker in the 2024 and 2025 school years, and how many of the issues were resolved in the same school year. In both years, several of the violations related to a failure to notify the DPSAFT as required prior to performing maintenance or construction and having unsecured exterior doors.

Facilities Distress Indicator Tracker			
School Year	Number of Districts	Violations	Remediated in the Same School Year
2024	14	15	14
2025	10	14	10

²⁴¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-802(b).

²⁴² Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-801 *et seq.*; 6 CAR § 325-101 *et seq.*

²⁴³ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-811(a).

²⁴⁴ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-811.

APPENDIX A ESSA ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

ESSA Goal 1	Must establish long-term goals for proficiency on annual assessments.			
Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)	Established a 12-year goal (2030) for academic achievement to have 80% of students achieving a test-based grade-level proficiency score.			
Summary - Actual Achievement Results	As of 2025, this goal has not been met. Current long-term interim checkpoints based on ACT Aspire and unable to be compared to ATLAS results.			
	<u>ATLAS Summative Assessment</u>	<u>Grades Tested</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
	ATLAS - English Language Arts	Grades 3 - 10	33.90%	34.70%
	ATLAS - Mathematics	Grades 3 - 8	36.40%	38.70%
	Algebra I	End of Course - Grade 9	17.70%	20.00%
	Geometry	End of Course - Grade 9	47.20%	52.10%
	Algebra I	End of Course - Grade 10	6.60%	17.10%
	Geometry	End of Course - Grade 10	10.90%	13.50%
	ATLAS - Science	Grades 3 -8	35.60%	38.20%
	Biology	End of Course - Grade 9	60.10%	64.80%
		End of Course - Grade 10	31.00%	31.50%

ESSA Goal 2	Must establish long-term goals for progress towards achieving English Language proficiency			
Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)	52% of students on track (by 2030)			
Summary - Actual Achievement Results	The 2018 checkpoint of 34% was met by the total EL student average (44%), but not the additional EL subgroups (EL students with disabilities and long-term EL students).			
	The 2021 checkpoint of 38.5% was just missed by the total EL student average (38.3%). Both student subgroups fell below that checkpoint.			
	The 2024 checkpoint of 43% was also just missed by the total EL student average (41%). Both student subgroups fell below that checkpoint.			
		<u>2018</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2024</u>
		<u>Checkpoint Goal: 34%</u>	<u>Checkpoint Goal: 38.5%</u>	<u>Checkpoint Goal: 43%</u>
	All Students	44%	38.3%	41%
	EL Students with Disabilities	29%	24.5%	20%
	Long-Term EL Students	16%	14.7%	18%

ESSA Goal 3	Must establish long-term goals for high school graduation rates.					
Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)	94% for 4-YR adjusted cohort rate (by 2030)			97% for 5-YR adjusted cohort rate (by 2030)		
Summary - Actual Achievement Results	As of 2024, this goal had not been met and the 2019 and 2022 checkpoint goals have been narrowly missed by the state average.			As of 2024, this goal had not been met. The 2019 state average did surpass the 2019 checkpoint goal of 86.73% but narrowly missed the 2022 checkpoint goals.		
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2024</u>
	<u>Checkpoint Goal: 88.76%</u>	<u>Checkpoint Goal: 90.5%</u>		<u>Checkpoint Goal: 86.73%</u>	<u>Checkpoint Goal: 90.15%</u>	
	87.56%	88.20%	89.0%	90.18%	89.91%	90.2%

ESSA Goal 4	Including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English learners.					
Arkansas's ESSA Plan (2022)	The above achievement goals are the same for each of the subgroups identified in the ESSA plan, which include African American, Hispanic/Latino, white, economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities.					
Summary - Actual Achievement Results	As of 2024 and 2025, no ESSA student group has met any of the long-term goals.				<u>12-Year (2030) Goal: 80%</u>	
	<u>Percent Level 3 or 4 (2025)</u>		<u>ELA</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Science</u>	
	African American students		17.1%	17.1%	16.5%	
	Hispanic/Latino students		26.9%	30.9%	28.3%	
	White		42.0%	47.5%	47.4%	
	Economically Disadvantaged		26.6%	30.4%	29.5%	
	English Learners		5.2%	11.4%	8.3%	
	Students with Disabilities		6.7%	10.6%	11.8%	
	<u>Four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate</u>					<u>2024</u>
	African American students					85.1%
	Hispanic/Latino students					88.5%
	White					90.6%
	Economically Disadvantaged					86.9%
	English Learners					82.9%
	Students with Disabilities					85.4%
	<u>Five-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate</u>					<u>2024</u>
	African American students					86.5%
	Hispanic/Latino students					89.6%
	White					91.5%
	Economically Disadvantaged					87.8%
	English Learners					85.0%
	Students with Disabilities					87.4%