

Executive Summary

Roughly six in 10 jobs in Arkansas require advanced credentials beyond a high school diploma, but less than half of the state's workers meet these requirements. To ensure every Arkansan has the skills needed for success in the workforce, high schools must support students to earn certifications in high-wage, high-growth career sectors. As part of the LEARNNS Act, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) commits to:

- **Build career-ready pathways to a diploma:** Develop processes and requirements for career-ready pathways to ensure they lead to high-wage, high growth careers for all graduates.
- **Align student success plans with career-ready pathways:** Create a template for the 'student success plans' that aligns with career-ready pathways and provide guidance and support for districts on how to implement them.
- **Conduct an annual audit of the state's career pathways:** Engage third-party experts to conduct an annual audit of the state's career pathways, the first of which is due on July 10, 2023.

Overview of LEARNNS Executive Order

On January 11th, 2023, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders published the Executive Order to prioritize Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, And School Safety (LEARNNS). Included in this Executive Order is a call for the Secretary of the Department of Education to ensure that all Arkansas students are meeting the demands of today's workforce by engaging third-party experts to conduct an annual audit of the state's career pathways, the first of which shall be completed in no more than 180 days, and identifying available funding for high-quality workforce apprenticeships and other high-quality work-based learning workforce programs. This audit will be made available no later than July 10, 2023.

Background

The LEARNNS Act, strengthens Arkansas's workforce by providing students options and opportunities to pursue careers by:

- Building career-ready pathways where students earn meaningful credentials that lead to a high-wage, high-growth career and graduate through a career-ready diploma pathway;
- Supporting students to collaborate with parents and counselors to build a 'student success plan' that identifies and aligns with the courses they will take to graduate through a career-ready diploma pathway;
- Requiring students to complete community service hours prior to graduation; and;
- Creating a statewide strategic workforce dashboard that streamlines information related to employment opportunities, training and related resources from multiple state agencies.

Commitments

As ADE implements the LEARNNS Act, and ensures all Arkansas students can meet the demands of today's workforce, the ADE commits to:

- **Build Career-Ready Pathways to a Diploma:** Develop processes and requirements for career-ready pathways to ensure they lead to high-wage, high growth careers for all graduates. This will include processes and requirements to manage approved pathways over time. Markets change and the pathways offered must stay up to date with workforce opportunities.
- **Align Student Success Plans with Career-Ready Pathways:** Create a template for the 'student success plans' that aligns with career-ready pathways and provide guidance and support for districts on how to implement them.

Career Readiness in Arkansas High Schools



- **Conduct an annual audit of the state's career pathways:** Engage third-party experts to conduct an annual audit of the state's career pathways, the first of which is due on July 10, 2023.