

## Executive Summary

Arkansas has established a vision for and a plan to build an attractive, competitive education profession that is anchored in student growth. The LEARNNS Act, complemented by the LEARNNS Executive Order, ensures that, from teachers' first exposure to the profession— in an educator preparation program that includes a one-year residency with a skilled mentor—to recruitment into a competitively compensated teaching role and through meaningful career advancement opportunities, Arkansas is building a profession that will attract and retain talented, committed teachers who ensure student growth and grow into leadership roles.

Recent legislation also ensures the legal and regulatory framework governing Arkansas's educator workforce is structured around fair, student-centered decisions and tools. These laws and policies require the use of data to strengthen the profession at all levels, including data to identify high-demand certification areas and schools; data to characterize educator success, including for local superintendents; and data to inform compensation, advancement, and other significant personnel decisions.

This report makes key commitments that will ensure this vision becomes a reality, including commitments and detailed strategies. Specifically, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) commits to:

- **Ensure every teacher candidate has a year in the classroom with a mentor:** Ensure all of Arkansas's teacher candidates complete a one-year teaching residency alongside a skilled mentor by 2027.
- **Waive initial licensing fees for first-time teachers:** Recommend the State Board of Education waive first-time licensing fees from May 1 to August 31, 2023.
- **Increase licensing transparency and efficiency:** Save time and money by making teacher certification processes more efficient and transparent.
- **Update workforce management provisions:** Support local school boards and school districts as they update workforce management policies and practices.

The above commitments build on Arkansas's pioneering LEARNNS legislation and history of innovation to realize the promise of the nation's strongest teaching profession.

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## Overview of the LEARNNS Executive Order

On January 11th, 2023, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders published an Executive Order to prioritize Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, And School Safety (LEARNNS). The Executive Order called for Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) staff to review, report on, or plan to implement key educator workforce policies, systems, and processes. Taken as a whole, the Executive Order's provisions, listed below, are a call to strengthen Arkansas's educator workforce and streamline the systems and processes that undergird teachers' entry into and path through the teaching profession.

### LEARNNS Executive Order Provisions

1. A report analyzing Arkansas's educator workforce including:
  - a. Teacher shortage areas by geographic region, subject area, and student demographic groups, including consideration for teacher certification status; and
  - b. Teacher pipeline and retention metrics, including considerations for teacher training pathways.
2. Working with the Professional Licensure Standards Board and the State Board of Education to evaluate the burden of licensure fees on teachers in the State of Arkansas and consider eliminating new teacher licensure fees for one calendar year.

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3. Publishing on the agency's website, a user-friendly, readable, and accessible list of alternative certification programs to help districts recruit high-quality teachers. A published list of alternative preparation programs
4. Launching a process to review Arkansas's educator preparation and licensure requirements and
  - a. Remove any unnecessary, outdated, or burdensome requirements;
  - b. Implement best practices from other states; and
  - c. Decrease time-to-hire and reduce bottlenecks to attract experienced individuals and content experts, currently working in private industry, into the teaching profession
5. Ensuring that all graduates receiving a degree or alternate teacher training certificate from a state-approved educator preparation program in Spring 2027 and beyond have completed a one-year supervised residency alongside an experienced mentor teacher in a school setting.

### Background and Current State

The recently passed LEARNS Act, combined with the LEARNS Executive Order, sets a bold vision and a clear path to making Arkansas the best place to teach and the best place to learn in the United States. Arkansas has a strong foundation on which to build, including:

- Trailblazing efforts to stimulate innovation and improvement in educator preparation through the Educator Preparation Program Design Collaborative supported by Forward Arkansas<sup>1</sup>. The EPP Design Collaborative has fostered efforts among nearly half of Arkansas's educator preparation programs to design and launch one-year teaching residencies. Two of those programs were awarded over \$3 million to expand those efforts over the next three years.
- The Arkansas Teacher Residency Apprenticeship (ATRA)<sup>2</sup>, a U. S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeship that creates a pathway to teaching that compensates teachers-in-training (apprentices) and their mentors (journeymen).
- The University of Arkansas-Fort Smith (UA-FS) teacher apprenticeship program, an innovative teacher preparation model that enables budget-neutral paid residencies for prospective teachers.
- Legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure teachers receive feedback on their performance in the classroom and opportunities for development.

The LEARNS Act, complemented by the LEARNS Executive Order, ensures that, from teachers' first exposure to the profession -- in an educator preparation program that includes a one-year supervised residency -- to recruitment in a competitively compensated teaching role and through meaningful career advancement opportunities, Arkansas is building a profession that will attract and retain talented, committed teachers who ensure student growth and grow into leadership roles.

Recent legislation also ensures that the legal and regulatory framework governing Arkansas's educator workforce is structured around fair, student-centered decisions and tools. These laws and policies require the use of data to strengthen the profession at all levels, including data to identify high-demand certification areas and schools, data to characterize educator success, including for local superintendents, and data to inform compensation, advancement, and other significant personnel decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> [EPP Design Collaborative](https://forwardarkansas.org/case-studies/transforming-educator-preparation/) (https://forwardarkansas.org/case-studies/transforming-educator-preparation/)

<sup>2</sup> [Arkansas Teacher Residency Apprenticeship](https://dcte.ade.arkansas.gov/Page/CteStakeholders) (https://dcte.ade.arkansas.gov/Page/CteStakeholders)

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In sum, Arkansas has established a vision for and a plan to build an attractive, competitive education profession that is anchored in student growth.

EDUCATOR WORKFORCE CONTINUUM: ARKANSAS'S PATH FORWARD				
Preparation	Recruitment	Continuous Improvement	Retention	Workforce Management
<p>By 2027, every educator is prepared for day one in the classroom through one-year residencies under the tutelage of Arkansas's strongest educators.</p> <p>The Right to Read Act ensures that teachers candidates are taught to deliver scientific reading instruction.</p>	<p>The LEARNs Act ensures that every full-time teaching position in Arkansas is guaranteed a minimum salary that is competitive with other professions.</p> <p>Through bonuses available under the Merit Teacher Incentive Fund, teachers are rewarded for teaching in high-need geographies and subject areas and, later, for achieving strong results with students and for building the profession by serving as a mentor.</p>	<p>Through continued investment in the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS), educators are provided support, evaluation, and professional growth and development opportunities.</p> <p>The Right to Read Act requires that school districts provide professional development on scientific reading instruction and, by the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, that teachers demonstrate proficiency or awareness, depending on their licensure area, in scientific reading instruction.</p>	<p>The LEARNs Act provides for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compensation that rewards success in the classroom,</li> <li>- Guaranteed maternity leave, and</li> <li>- Compensated teacher leader roles, including mentors of one-year residents.</li> </ul>	<p>The LEARNs Act gives local school boards tools to build and maintain a strong educator workforce that is focused on student success. These tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Superintendent contracts that are centered on student improvement and success; and</li> <li>- Fair, student-centered policies to manage reductions in force (RIF) and hiring.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, this report commits the ADE to ensuring that all districts have tools to manage their educator workforce, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to educator workforce data, and support to apply that data;</li> <li>- Access to an improved and more transparent certification processing system.</li> </ul>

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### Current Regulation and Legislation

Arkansas's path forward builds on a foundation of legislation and regulation that is designed to maximize student growth and educator success. Key laws and policies are detailed below.

#### *Current Regulation*

Current regulation in Arkansas sets forth baseline requirements that span the educator workforce continuum, from what it takes to earn an initial teaching credential to minimum standards for educator support and development opportunities. Key regulations include:

- Rules governing educator licensure (ADE 317), including:
  - Types of licenses and their requirements;
  - Requirements relative to scientific reading instruction (ADE 360);
  - Licensure renewal requirements; and
  - Educational leader certificates, including the Lead Professional Educator Designation and the Master Professional Educator Designation.
- Broad requirements governing the initial and ongoing approval of educator preparation programs and pathways, including key academic and clinical practice components that must be included in the program's design and, for ongoing approval, a state review process (ADE 317).
- Rules governing background checks required for educator licensure and employment (ADE 315).
- Rules governing financial incentives for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification (ADE 255).
- Expectations relative to educator support and development (ADE 344).
- Requirements relative to scientific reading instruction, including mandatory professional and demonstration of proficiency or awareness of principles of scientific reading instruction (ADE 360).

While many of these regulations will require updates in order to conform to the LEARNs Act, Arkansas's current policy framework will serve as a strong foundation on which to build.

#### *The Right to Read Act*

In 2017, Arkansas passed the Right to Read Act, which sought to prepare educators to teach the Science of Reading. The Right to Read Act requires educator preparation programs to teach candidates how to deliver scientific reading instruction and that all program completers are able to demonstrate proficiency or awareness of best practices of scientific reading instruction. The Right to Read Act also sets professional development requirements for districts, mandating that they offer training in scientific reading instruction to teachers.<sup>3</sup>

### Data and Analysis

In response to the LEARNs Executive Order, the ADE conducted a series of focus groups with and administered surveys to a wide range of stakeholders over the course of February and March 2023. These focus groups and surveys were designed to gather feedback and information on barriers to acquiring or renewing a teaching license, time-to-hire, and other bottlenecks relative to educator preparation and licensure requirements. ADE engaged with superintendents, personnel directors, principals, teachers, deans and directors of educator preparation programs, Educator Service Cooperative directors, members of the Redesigning Mentoring Task Force, ADE staff, the Teacher Collaborative Council,

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a list of requirements related to educator professional development and educator preparation programs.

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recruitment and retention facilitators, and the Professional Licensure Standards Board. The following sections highlight challenges raised by these stakeholders and issues highlighted by analysis of ADE data.

### *Preparation*

A strong preparation experience ensures that teachers are committed to teaching and ready for their first day in the classroom as a credentialed teacher. Through coursework and clinical practice experiences that are governed by regulation and ADE program approval business rules, ADE is empowered to ensure that initial teacher preparation meets this bar.

An analysis of Arkansas Educator Workforce by the University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy found that:

- **Many who show initial interest in education do not end up in the classroom.** Of those who declare education as their initial major, only 27 percent graduate with an education degree. While some of this attrition may be productive and appropriate (e.g., teacher candidates who are not able to meet minimum academic expectations), Arkansas is losing prospective teachers before they complete a preparation program.
- **Most educator preparation enrollees complete their program, but a significant portion do not work in Arkansas public schools.** About 75 percent of teacher preparation enrollees complete the program and earn their initial credential, but only 50 percent of those completers are then employed in an Arkansas school. This may be because the program completer is waiting for a particular role or for a vacancy in a particular school or school system.
- **Alternative preparation programs are playing a bigger role.** In 2022, 42 percent of teacher candidates were enrolled in an alternative teacher preparation program. It is critical that any improvement to teacher preparation applies both to university-based programs and alternative programs.

The LEARNS Executive Order stipulates that the ADE must develop a **plan to ensure that all teacher candidates completing an Arkansas-approved teacher preparation program must participate in a one-year residency by 2027**. This requirement builds on Arkansas's community of teacher preparation providers piloting and expanding teacher residencies, including apprenticeships, and has potential to address the challenges noted above, including for alternative preparation programs. Additionally, this shift is backed by research that teacher residencies broaden the pool of individuals entering the teaching profession. On average, teacher candidates who complete a residency are more likely to continue teaching in the same district for longer than those who did not complete a residency.<sup>4</sup>

Educator preparation programs must update their coursework and practice experiences in order to meet this expectation. Deans at university-based educator preparation programs expressed concerns relative to the timeframe for making these design shifts and updating the university catalog. ADE has an opportunity to support educator preparation program leaders and faculty as they make these design shifts and seek administrative or board approval.

Part of preparing prospective teachers for Arkansas's classrooms is **ensuring that candidates are prepared to pass required certification exams**. Arkansas requires passing scores on Praxis exams in order to ensure that teachers have basic content knowledge and professional knowledge to teach, and the candidate's preparation program should prepare them to pass those exams.<sup>5</sup> Yet prospective educators face challenges in passing these exams after completing their

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<sup>4</sup> Regional Education Laboratory Mid- Atlantic, [What are teacher residency programs?](#)

<sup>5</sup> For a full list of required Praxis exams and scores by licensing area see ETS Praxis website, [Arkansas State Requirements](#)

preparation program: 25 percent of those taking Praxis elementary math and English must take the exam more than once and more than 50 percent of those taking the Praxis for middle school math must take the exam more than once before achieving a passing score.<sup>6</sup> Focus group feedback reflects these challenges: “The K-6 Praxis is a barrier to so many of our novices, specifically the Social Studies Praxis. That is the subtest that so many novice elementary teachers struggle with.” ADE has begun to address this issue by providing Praxis-specific tutoring taught by experts in the content area through the Education Service Cooperatives.<sup>7</sup> One focus group member indicated that this effort was helping, “They [teacher candidates] have a hard time passing Praxis. However the tutorial sessions have been helpful.” Additionally, the Alternative Assessment Plan allows candidates for those that score within two standard error of measurement (SEM) to earn a credential through alternate means that may include micro-credentials or performance based assessments.

### Recruitment

All students in Arkansas deserve a well-prepared, fully credentialed teacher who is focused on student growth. Across Arkansas, there is substantial variation in the extent to which this is true. For example, students in east and south Arkansas are much less likely to have a certified teacher. Similarly, across the state students in science, mathematics, and other high-need subject areas are less likely to have a certified teacher. An analysis of Arkansas Educator Workforce by the University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy found that:

- **Certain regions are experiencing an acute need for certified teachers.** Arkansas Rivers ESC, Great Rivers ESC, Pulaski County Schools ESC, Southeast Arkansas ESC, had a total demand as defined by as the percentage of teachers in each category that were unlicensed, retired, or eligible to retire that was greater than 30 percent across 14 or more subject areas.
- **East Arkansas faces a particular migration challenge.** East Arkansas has no four-year institutions of higher education. As a result, prospective educators are migrating for college and not returning, leaving east Arkansas with significant hiring challenges.
- **Certain subject areas are lacking an adequate supply of teachers,** including the following ranked by total demand:

Subject Area	Total Demand Percentage <sup>8</sup>
Foreign Language	44%
Secondary Mathematics	39%
Art/Drama	37%
Secondary Science	35%
Secondary Social Studies	35%
Secondary English Arts	34%

<sup>6</sup> See full Office for Education Policy Teacher Workforce Analysis.

<sup>7</sup> Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, [PRAXIS Test Specific Tutoring](#)

<sup>8</sup>Total Demand Percent as the percentage of teachers in each category that were unlicensed, retired/T-DROP, or eligible to retire out of the total number of unique teachers.

Subject Area	Total Demand Percentage <sup>8</sup>
Computer Science	33%
Career and Technical	32%
Special Education	32%
Music	32%
Middle School English Language Arts	31%
Middle School Social Studies	30%
Middle School Mathematics	30%
Middle School Science	30%

**Competitive compensation**, including a professional minimum base salary and compensation matched to performance and need -- all of which are provided for in the LEARNNS Act -- are critical pieces of the solution to ensuring that Arkansas is the most attractive place to teach in the nation.

Another means by which teachers enter Arkansas’s teaching profession is from another state. Most of those teachers seek **licensure reciprocity**. Focus group and survey feedback raised concerns and recommendations relative to the process for seeking reciprocity. Many respondents raised the Arkansas history requirement, a 45-hour professional development course on Arkansas history for certain licensure areas.<sup>9</sup> Feedback indicated that this requirement prevented local school districts from hiring otherwise qualified educators. “Reciprocity from another state: AR history 45 hours is excessive especially for content areas not required to get the AR history Professional Development (PD) once every four years for example secondary science teachers.” Part of the challenge named was that, “Reciprocity takes too long with the PD and AR history requirements. The employee is about to get all the training they need to do their job, once hired.”

*Retention*

Many factors influence teachers’ decisions to stay in the profession. **Opportunities for career advancement and compensation progression** play an important role in retaining talented, committed teachers who ensure student success. Focus group feedback surfaced perceptions that, historically, recruitment and retention bonuses have favored new recruits rather than mid- or late-career teachers. Regulation and administration of the LEARNNS Act’s Merit Teacher Incentive Fund Program are opportunities to address these concerns and to use competitive compensation and career progression to retain the state’s strongest teachers.

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<sup>9</sup> The Arkansas history is required for Early Childhood, Elementary Education, Middle Childhood Social Studies and Secondary Social Studies licensure areas. Please see DESE, [Licensure by Reciprocity](#) for a full list of requirements for reciprocity.



### *Workforce Management*

**Effective and efficient educator workforce management policies and tools** enable efficient, student-centered personnel management. New legislation -- the LEARNs Act -- provides for transformational policies and tools that are discussed in subsequent sections of this report. Current policy and practice yielded extensive comment from stakeholders, primarily focused on credentialing inefficiencies. That feedback is summarized below and detailed in Appendix F.

- **The licensing process needs to be more transparent.** Educators seeking licensure and district leaders involved in the certification process are not able to see where a certification application is in process or pinpoint the source of a delay. The Arkansas Educator Licensure System (AELS) is a public site that allows public access to licensure data (and restricted data to personnel directors and ADE staff) but does not provide information relative to application completeness or processing. Superintendents said that, “Districts cannot tell candidates why they are not yet licensed.” This leads to hiring bottlenecks and may contribute to leaky teacher pipelines. The Redesigning Mentoring Task Force suggested that the online platform for licensing (AELS) expand to store all documents required for licensure so educators may access their documents and view where their application is in process.
- **Grade spans for licenses are mismatched to teaching opportunities.** Current regulations establish teaching credentials that are, for some certification areas, misaligned to current positions in elementary, middle, and high school grade spans.<sup>10</sup> For example, a teacher licensed in a secondary content area (e.g., mathematics) is credentialed to teach grades 7-12, however, many middle schools include a 6th grade that this educator would not be certified to teach. The elementary credential includes grades K-6, however, many schools include a Pre-Kindergarten, which is licensed separately. Additionally, the K-6 grade band covers a broad range of skills and standards. In short, certain grade bands for licensure are not well matched to school configurations or instructional standards. Both the principal and the Redesigning Mentoring Task Force named this as a challenge and called for greater flexibility to make it easier for schools to staff based on student needs. One attendee said, “It’s a challenge for teachers to switch from middle to elementary or high school with the current licensing grade bands and endorsements.” Another said, “Licenses that limit by grade levels is a challenge i.e. licensed to teach 7-12 math but not 6th grade math. It may be useful to move to a more straightforward endorsement i.e. 4-8 to K-6 or 7-12 or to a P-12.”
- **The background check process is burdensome, expensive, and could be streamlined.** One of the most commonly mentioned burdens for educators was the requirement that they must submit new background checks in many instances, including when changing districts and when renewing their license. One survey response provided an example of why this is a barrier for districts and individuals: “If a person has been working in your district and had one [background check] previous year when they were hired but they need to renew their license the very next year and have to pay again.” Additionally, the checks themselves are often slow to complete and delay hiring. Feedback from the Arkansas State Association of School Personnel Administrators (ASASPA) included: “Background checks need to be faster and information given to HR in districts. It’s so difficult to find out why they have not been processed. And takes forever.” Preschool teachers face a unique challenge, as they must undergo two background checks, one through ADE and one for the Department of Human Services. Many focus group and survey respondents indicated that background checks should be streamlined and made safer for students through the use of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Rap Back Service, which enrolls

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<sup>10</sup> Arkansas Department of Education, [Educator Licensure Levels and Areas](#)

educators for life and automatically and expediently reports on future arrests. See Appendix F for a detailed justification for using the Rap Back Service.

- **Streamline and unify teacher professional development requirements for certification renewal.** Current policy requires that teachers complete professional development requirements in order to renew their teaching license. Feedback from focus group and survey respondents indicates that the system for tracking these requirements is fractured, which makes verifying that teachers have met professional development and continuing education requirements time consuming. Teachers who have transferred between districts face particular difficulty. Focus groups indicated that there was a need for a “more streamlined PD system, [that is] unified for all districts.”

Streamlined systems and processes for educator workforce management are likely to improve time-to-hire and retention outcomes.

### **New Legislation**

On March 7, 2023, the Arkansas legislature passed S.B. 294, the LEARNNS Act, which amends Arkansas Statute. The LEARNNS Act ensures that, from teacher preparation to recruitment and throughout their career, Arkansas teachers are joining the strongest education profession in the nation. The LEARNNS Act also provides legal and regulatory tools and requirements that ensure fair, student-centered decisions and tools. Many of the provisions in the LEARNNS Act address the feedback and findings noted above and buttress the provisions included in the LEARNNS Executive Order. Key provisions of the LEARNNS Act are noted below.

#### *Recruitment*

- **Increasing the minimum salary to \$50,000 for teachers** and providing at least a \$2,000 salary increase for all teachers.
- **Increasing the federal loan repayment amount for teachers in critical shortage areas** to \$6,000 per year for licensed teachers who teach in a subject area or geographic area that has a critical shortage of teachers.
- **The Teacher Academy Scholarship Program** incentivizes individuals to enter the teaching field and teach in public schools and critical shortage areas in Arkansas. Academy attendees at an eligible postsecondary institution will have their tuition and fees paid for two to four years, and have the cost of obtaining a teaching license and one required exam covered. Recipients of the scholarship will agree to teach in a public school or a school that primarily serves students with disabilities.

#### *Retention*

- **Providing financial incentives for teachers and mentors** through the Merit Teacher Incentive Fund Program. This program will reward teachers with up to a \$10,000 annual bonus for the following:
  - Demonstrating outstanding growth in student performance, based on value-added growth model scores;
  - Serving as a mentor to aspiring teachers in one-year residencies;
  - Participating in residencies (for aspiring teachers); and
  - Instructing in subject areas or geographical areas in a critical shortage area.

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- **Providing 12 weeks of maternity leave for full-time school staff** who give birth to a child or adopt a child into their home.

### Workforce Management

- **Superintendent contracts that include performance targets**, including targets that address:
  - Student achievement for the whole district;
  - Student achievement for each “C”, “D” and “F” rated school in the district;
  - Graduation rates for the whole district; and
  - Graduation rates for each “C”, “D” and “F” rated school in the district.
- **Updating hiring policies and reduction in force (RIF) policies** so that they are primarily based on effectiveness.

The LEARNS Act provides the following general revenue funding to support these efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Fund Source	Purpose	Amount
General Revenue	Maternity Leave	<b>\$3,000,000</b>
General Revenue	State Teacher Education Program	<b>\$1,100,000</b>
General Revenue	Teacher Academy Scholarship Fund	<b>\$12,000,000</b>
General Revenue	Merit Teacher Incentive Fund	<b>\$10,000,000</b>
General Revenue	Teacher Salary Increase	<b>\$180,000,000</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$206,100,000</b>

### Commitments

Through the bold and transformative LEARNS Act, the LEARNS Executive Order, and through its foundation of excellence and innovation, Arkansas is poised to build the most attractive teaching profession in the nation, where educators are valued and supported as they guide students to academic growth. Achieving this vision will require substantial effort over the coming years. Listed below are key commitments that the ADE will make in order to achieve this vision.

**Ensure every teacher candidate has a year in the classroom with a mentor:** Ensure that all of Arkansas’s teacher candidates complete a one-year teaching residency alongside a skilled mentor by 2027.

The transition to a one-year residency alongside an experienced mentor for all graduates receiving a degree or alternate teacher training certificate from a state-approved educator preparation program by spring 2027 is a significant shift. In order to achieve this milestone, ADE commits to:

- Developing and recommending policy to the state board to clarify expectations for one-year residencies and to ensure consistency across educator preparation programs. This policy framework will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including educator preparation program deans and directors, local superintendents, personnel directors, and others. Key provisions may include:

<sup>11</sup> Arkansas Department of Education, [SB294 Fiscal Impact Statement](#)

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- A definition of “one-year supervised residency” for degree-granting institutions and for alternate programs, including parameters for how time is spent in residency (co-teaching, teaching, planning, engaging in professional development at the residency site, etc.);
  - Modifications to TESS for residents, in order to establish clear, ambitious, and reasonable expectations for resident skill and knowledge;
  - Expectations for teachers supervising residents, building from Master Teacher and Lead Teacher designations, including ways to incentivize National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certified educators and designated Lead or Master Professional Educators to serve as mentors;
  - Requirements for educator preparation programs to regularly report to ADE on progress toward 2027, and requirements for ADE to report this information publicly; and
  - Enhancements to the state review process to ensure that educator preparation programs and their school system partners receive information for improvement on the design and implementation of one-year residencies, and other key factors, such as preparedness for licensure exams.
- In consultation with educator preparation leaders, develop, request funding for, and offer a program of support to educator preparation programs making the transition to one-year supervised residencies. This program of support will use the Educator Preparation Program Design Collaborative as a model.

Draft Implementation Timeline				
2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Develop policy framework and program of support	Offer support and consultation to EPPs as they update program design using experts with a history of success	All EPPs are either piloting or expanding one-year residencies	EPPs continue to pilot and expand one-year residencies	All candidates have completed or are completing a one-year residency
Develop key milestones and systems for educator preparation programs (EPP) to report progress toward milestones	EPPs finalize program design	All EPPs receive a program review that is focused on the one-year residency experience	Continued feedback and improvement via program reviews	
Develop expectations for mentors of residents	Existing one-year residencies expand			
	EPPs pilot one-year residencies			
	Expand the cadre of mentors			
ADE annually reports on each EPP’s progress toward the one-year residency requirement				

**Waive initial licensing fees for first-time teachers:** Recommend that the State Board of Education waive first-time licensing fees from May 1 to August 31, 2023.

**Increase licensing transparency and efficiency:** Save time and money by making teacher certification processes more efficient and transparent.

- In consultation with key stakeholders, including personnel directors, develop and propose to the State Board of Education a policy framework that streamlines and strengthens Arkansas's educator credentialing requirements. This policy framework should address:
  - a. Certificates' grade spans,
  - b. Renewal requirements, including the Arkansas history requirement and continuing education requirements.
- Develop solutions that address certification processing transparency, ideally via Arkansas Education Licensing System (AELS), so that district leaders and certificate applicants are able to easily access information about their application status.
- Explore the feasibility of participating in the FBI's Rap Back Service and, if feasible, adjust background check requirements in Board of Education policy.<sup>12</sup>
- Establish a target timeframe for processing initial and out-of-state licenses and for renewals. Establish the current baseline (mean, median, and range), analyze inefficiencies or barriers, and adjust processes as needed. Track application processing times against the baseline and annually report to the State Board of Education on processing timeframes. Recommend policy changes, technology updates, or other tools and resources needed in order to meet processing targets.

**Update workforce management provisions:** Support local school boards and school districts as they update workforce management policies and practices.

Over the next six months, develop, recommend, and implement regulations, plans, and a program of support for school boards and school districts meeting workforce management provisions in the LEARNNS Act. These provisions are relative to Superintendent contracts, hiring, reductions in force, and salary schedule updates that include differential compensation.

### Conclusion

Arkansas has established a bold vision for and a plan to build an attractive, competitive education profession that is anchored in student growth. This vision addresses every stage of a teacher's career and gives local school boards and leaders tools and guidelines for building a strong educator workforce. The above commitments build on Arkansas's history of innovation and establish a path to realizing this vision.

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix F for a justification from ADE on rap back.

**Appendices**

*Appendix A: The Right to Read Act*

RIGHT TO READ ACT: REQUIREMENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EPP	
Professional Development	Educator Preparation Programs
<p>All teachers licensed in kindergarten through grade six (K-6), special education for kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), and reading specialists for kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) must demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction.</p> <p>All other licensed teachers must demonstrate proficiency or awareness in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction.</p> <p>All public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools must annually provide professional development programs on the Science of Reading.</p>	<p>Completers of a state-approved educator preparation program leading to Elementary (K-6) or Special Education (K-12) licensure (and those seeking a teaching license in these areas by reciprocity) must have proficient knowledge and skills to teach reading aligned to the best practices of scientific reading instruction.</p> <p>Completers for all other licensure must demonstrate an awareness of the best practices of scientific reading instruction.</p> <p>EPPs shall post on its website information describing its program to prepare teachers to teach reading using scientific reading instruction.</p> <p>A state-approved educator preparation program shall include in its annual report to the Department of Education a description of the provider's program to prepare educators to teach reading using scientific reading instruction.</p>



## A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce

*Appendix B: Educator Workforce Analysis*

[Teacher Workforce Report](#), University of Arkansas,

## A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce



### *Appendix C: Teacher Turnover Analysis Report*

[Movers, Switchers, and Exiters: Teacher Turnover during COVID-19](#), University of Arkansas,



## A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce



### Appendix D: Licensure Fee Evaluation

As required of the LEARNs Executive Order ADE conducted an evaluation of licensure fees. They found that licensure fees totalled \$124.25.

Fee Type	Cost	Distribution
Application Fee	\$75.00	\$3.25 INA Processing Fee \$71.25 PLSB
Background Check	\$38.25	\$2.00 INA Processing Fee \$22.00 State Police \$14.25 FBI
Central Registry Child Maltreatment	\$11.00	\$1.00 INA Processing Fee \$10.00 DHS
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$124.25</b>	

The cost for initial licensure varied by license area but typically made up between 20% to 50% of the total cost of licensure; the below serve as examples of the total cost of a license inclusive of required checks and exams.

Elementary Education (K-6)	
Praxis 5001 – Elementary Education (Includes 4 subtests)	\$180.00
Foundations of Reading	\$139.00
Application Fee	\$75.00
Background Check	\$38.25
Child Maltreatment	\$11.00
<b>Total Cost of License</b>	<b>\$443.25</b>

Special Education	
Praxis 5354 Special Education: Core Knowledge and Application	\$130.00
Praxis 5511 Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge	\$130.00
Foundations of Reading	\$139.00
Application Fee	\$75.00
Background Check	\$38.25
Child Maltreatment	\$11.00
<b>Total Cost of License</b>	<b>\$523.25</b>

Secondary Math	
Praxis 5165 – Mathematics	\$130.00
Application Fee	\$75.00
Background Check	\$38.25
Child Maltreatment	\$11.00
<b>Total Cost of License</b>	<b>\$254.25</b>

## A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce



ADE found that application fees accounted for \$818,548.50 of the Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB) revenue in fiscal year 2022. Renewal applications accounted for 67.63% or \$553,551.25 and first time licenses accounted for 32.37% or \$264,997.25 of that revenue. PLSB has a budget total \$1,394,219 for fiscal year 2022

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
2021-2022 CASH FUND BUDGETS (NED)

Budget is the authority to spend; it does not indicate amount of funds available. Please verify funded amounts on Cash Fund Reports  
disbursed by Chrissy Billingsley  
Education Effectiveness and Licensure

56P NED0013 Professional Licensure Standards Board

351070 Prof Lic Stds Board

		<u>FY21 Final</u>	<u>FY22 Budget</u>	<u>YTD Expenditures</u>	<u>Balance</u>
501:00:00	Regular Salaries	\$566,537.78	\$640,742.00	\$516,253.08	\$124,488.92
501:00:03	Personal Services Matching	\$191,822.86	\$207,647.33	\$193,382.03	\$14,265.30
502:00:02	Operating Expenses	\$192,530.60	\$376,325.00	\$216,923.17	\$159,401.83
505:00:09	Conference Fees/Travel	\$2,134.00	\$10,000.00	\$5,473.52	\$4,526.48
506:00:10	Professional Fees and Services		\$9,505.00		\$9,505.00
510:00:04	Grants & Aid	\$458.56	\$100,000.00	\$322.50	\$99,677.50
512:00:11	Capital Outlay	\$25,845.00	\$50,000.00		\$50,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$979,328.80</b>	<b>\$1,394,219.33</b>	<b>\$932,354.30</b>	<b>\$461,865.03</b>

In the PLSB Full Board Meeting March 3, 2023 the board passed a motion to recommend to the State Board that first time license be waived beginning May 1st to August 31, 2023. This would result in a \$97,000 loss of revenue for PLSB.

# A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce



## Appendix E: List of alternative preparation programs

ADE has published a list of alternative preparation programs and providers on their [website](#) with a list of alternative preparation programs available

The screenshot shows the Arkansas Department of Education website. At the top left is the logo for the Division of Elementary & Secondary Education. In the center is a profile for Jacob Oliva, Secretary, with a 'Read Bio' link. At the top right is the Arkansas Department of Education logo. Below the header is a dark blue navigation bar with icons and labels for 'About', 'Stakeholders', 'State Board', 'Offices', 'Directory', 'Tools', and 'Search'. The main content area is titled 'Alternative Pathways to Licensure'. On the left is a sidebar menu with categories like 'Effectiveness and Licensure', 'Pathways to Licensure: Alternate Route', 'Educator Licensure Area', 'Support and Development', 'Educator Career Continuum', 'Administrator Information', and 'Becoming a Teacher or School Leader'. The main text explains 'Licensure Pathways for Individuals with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher (Alternative Pathways to Licensure)'. Below this text are several blue buttons representing different pathways: American Board (ABCTE), Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC), Arkansas Professional Educator Pathway (ArPEP), eSTEM Residency Program, Highly Qualified Professor (HQP), iTeach, Provisional Professional Teaching License (PPTL), Teach for America (TFA), and Master's Degree leading to a first-time license (MAT, MEd, MTL). A dark blue section titled 'American Board (ABCTE)' is highlighted, with a 'What does it offer?' section describing a pathway leading to licensure in various subjects. A 'Questions?' icon is visible in the bottom right corner of the page.

Appendix F: Educator licensure and preparation barriers: summary of focus group and survey results

FEEDBACK ON BARRIERS REDUNDANCY	
Issue	Feedback from Focus Groups
Praxis	Praxis exam costs are a barrier for teacher candidates and EPP enrollees need more support to pass Praxis exams including additional tutoring at the state and district level.
Teacher Residency Timeline	Deans flagged that the current timeline of implementing teacher residencies in EPP by 2027 will be a challenge and may require a longer runway due to the process of updating their education course catalogs.
Licensing grade spans	Current licensing grade bands and endorsements are a challenge for districts trying to hire and align their workforce with classroom needs. It may be useful to move to a more straightforward endorsement i.e. 4-8 to K-6 or 7-12 or to a P-12.
Certification processing transparency	Districts cannot tell candidates why they are not yet licensed. AELS should be updated to be more user friendly and should allow all candidates and districts to view the licensure application status and where it is in the process.
Background checks	Arkansas should use the Rap Back system to keep fingerprints and background checks on file so educators only need to complete one every five years, rather than having to go through the entire process including fingerprinting everytime they are hired, change districts, or renew their licenses. Pre-K teachers should only have to complete one background check rather than two, one from ADE and one from DHS.
Reciprocity	The reciprocity process needs to be quicker and the 45 hour Arkansas history requirement is a barrier that should be removed from some or all license types.
Professional Development	There should be a universal system that track teacher professional development, that all districts have access to.
Educator Preparation Programs	EPPs have inconsistent processes and requirements to recommend students for licensure (e.g., some require students to pass all Praxis exams before they intern in schools. And some don't allow students to use alternate assessment plan scores).

## A Review of Arkansas's Educator Workforce



### *Appendix G: Rap Back Justification*

ADE legal counsel prepared the following rap back justification for the Arkansas state police as they are the decision makers on moving the state towards a rap back system.

The DESE Rules Governing Background Checks define a “rap back program” as a state or federal program that provides notification to the Division of an arrest subsequent to an initial background check that is conducted pursuant to the rules. Per Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-417, Arkansas may participate at the state and federal levels in a program that provides notification of arrests subsequent to initial background checks.

The FBI offers a non-criminal justice rap back service via its Next Generation Identification (NGI) system. This service is managed by the FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Services Division. When an individual’s fingerprints are submitted through the NGI system, the individual can be enrolled in the rap back service. Once enrolled, the individual’s fingerprints will be subject to future searches in the NGI system. If the individual later engages in criminal activity and fingerprints are submitted to the NGI system, an electronic notification will be generated. A notification would also be generated if any previously unreported activity is updated to the individual’s identity history summary.<sup>13</sup>

Per Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-417, if an applicant is enrolled in the NGI system, the applicant would not be required to re-fingerprint when a subsequent request for a state or federal criminal history background check is required if: 1.) A legible set of the applicant’s fingerprints are obtained when the applicant enrolls in the NGI system; and 2.) The applicant is subject to the Rap Back service of the Next Generation Identification system. The DESE Rules Governing Background Checks provide requirements for the Division once the Division receives approval from the Arkansas State Police, the FBI, or ACIC, as applicable, to participate in the rap back program.

While the rap back program is voluntary, it would support the Arkansas Department of Education’s goal to ensure student safety. The program will also reduce or eliminate the need for re-fingerprinting each time applicants undergo a background check for employment or for licensure. In addition to streamlining the background check and fingerprinting process, the program would also benefit and offer a new convenience to many applicants in Arkansas who live in isolated or rural areas.

Without the rap back program, school districts and ADE must rely on educator self-reporting, updated background checks for license renewal or change of employment, or other methods for tracking disqualifying offenses listed in Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-410, 6-17-414, 6-17-421, and 6-22-105. The rap back program is a proactive approach to monitoring individuals who are entrusted with the care and education of Arkansas students. The rap back program would also prevent inherit errors and known inaccuracies regarding the re-fingerprinting of individuals.

In order for Arkansas to participate in the rap back program, additional programming must be put in place by the Arkansas State Police. The rap back program would be maintained by the Arkansas State Police, as well. Currently, 8 states are participating in state and/or federal rap back programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Source : FBI Official Wesbsite [https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/cjis-non\\_crim\\_rapback\\_2020.mp4/view](https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/cjis-non_crim_rapback_2020.mp4/view)