

LEARNS Work Groups Kick Off: Human Resources

Meeting Norms

Prior to Meeting

- Karli will send out agenda and materials at least 3 business days in advance of each meeting.
- Members review all materials and come prepared to share feedback.

During Meeting

- Mute yourself when not speaking.
- Keep feedback centered on topic at hand.
- Stay engaged (e.g., actively participate and use the chat function).
- Be mindful of how much “air time” each member receives.
- All ideas are valued.

Materials (notes, slides) will be posted after the meeting for members who can not attend.



FOIA Made Simple

Legislative Intent:

- To ensure that public business is performed in an open and public manner so that the electors shall be advised of the performance of public officials and of the decisions that are reached in public activity and in making public policy

FOIA Made Simple

Who is subject to FOIA?

- All government entities
- Private entities that receive public funds and are intertwined with government activities

FOIA Made Simple: Public Records

Definitions:

- **Writings, sounds, electronic info, or videos** that (a) are kept and (b) constitute a **record of performance or lack of performance** of official functions

LEARNS Act

LEARNS stands for Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, and Safety. On Jan. 11, 2023, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed the LEARNS Executive Order, which calls for the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to conduct an analysis of key aspects of the state's education system and produce corresponding reports.

On March 8, 2023, the LEARNS Act was signed into law, signaling the start of the largest overhaul of education in the state's history.

After completing these analyses called for in the LEARNS Executive Order, **ADE is eager to engage stakeholders as implementation of the LEARNS commitments begins.**



Ensure the teaching profession in Arkansas is attractive and competitive.

In the LEARNS Executive Order Report for Educator Workforce ADE committed to:

- Launch teacher residencies:** 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 initial licensing fees for first-time teachers from May 1 to August 31, 2023.
- Increase licensing transparency and efficiency:** Make teacher certification processes more efficient and transparent, ultimately saving time and money.
- Update workforce management provisions:** Support local school boards and school districts as they update workforce management policies and practices.



LEARNS Act Requirements

Teacher Effectiveness

- Merit Teacher Incentive Fund: Reward eligible teachers with annual bonuses of up to \$10,000. Eligible teachers include those who demonstrate outstanding growth, serve as mentors, or teach in a critical shortage area or subject. Value-added growth model must be included. Aspiring teachers participating in yearlong residencies will also be eligible. This fund will replace the Incentives for Teacher Recruitment and Retention in High-Priority Districts fund.

Human Resources

- The minimum base salary for full-time teachers will be \$50,000. Base salaries will no longer increase by years of experience or for advanced degrees.
- All full-time school personnel will be eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, with half the cost paid by the state and districts agreeing to pay the other half.
- By 2023, school district superintendents will have school and district performance targets and school boards will submit superintendent contracts to the commissioner of ADE.
- School districts will hire school personnel including teachers and will make employment decisions based on performance, effectiveness, and qualifications.
- Repeals the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act.
- Education personnel employed by a public school district or open enrollment public charter school that elect to participate under this section 19 shall be eligible for up to twelve (12) weeks of paid maternity leave (parental leave).

Educator Preparation

- All teachers will participate in a one-year residency alongside a skilled mentor by 2027 (per LEARNS Executive Order).
- Through the Teacher Academy Scholarship Program, students at eligible postsecondary institutions who enter the teaching profession and commit to teaching in a critical shortage subject or geographical area can receive a scholarship to cover tuition and fees for up to four academic years and the cost of a teaching license exam.
- The State Teacher Education Program will provide a maximum of three years of loan forgiveness for teachers: \$6,000 for licensed teachers who graduate from a teacher education program and teach in a critical shortage area. This doubles the amounts previously provided under this program.

Work Group Purpose

The Arkansas Department of Education is convening work groups around key areas of LEARNS for external stakeholders to **provide ideas, expertise, and feedback to ADE as they develop rules and policies.**

- School Safety
- Early Learning
- Parental Empowerment
- Teaching and Learning
- Educator Workforce
- Career Readiness



Human Resources Work Group Charge

This work group is focused on school and district human resource components.

LEARNS calls for new rules or policy on:

- Superintendent Contract Guidance
- Teacher Salary Schedules
- Reduction in Force (RIF) Policy
- Maternity Leave

Engagement from this group and other stakeholders is essential to ensure that the policy on related to school and district human resources is representative of the perspectives of all levels of the state's education system.

LEARNS Background: Superintendent Contracts

LEARNS requires that by July 2023:

- Each local school district board of directors shall establish, as part of a superintendent's contract of employment, written performance targets for the public schools at both the school level and district level that include:
 - (1) Student achievement for the entire public school district;
 - (2) Student achievement for public schools within the public school district that have received any variation of a school performance letter grade designation of "C", "D", or "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and State Board of Education rules;
 - (3) Graduation rates for the entire public school district; and
 - (4) Graduation rates for public schools within the public school district that have received any variation of a school performance letter grade designation of "C", "D", or "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules.



LEARNS Background: Reduction in Force

LEARNS requires:

Seniority and tenure shall not be used as the primary criterion when making decisions regarding the hiring, assignment, or dismissal of public school teachers and other public school employees.

- (c)(1) Each public school district shall ensure that its reduction in force plan, as defined under § 6-17-2407, is aligned with all state laws, including without limitation subsection (b) of this section.

To ensure compliance as required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section, each public school district shall submit to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education its reduction in force plan each time it is updated, including without limitation updates regarding:

- (A) Staff positions that are to be eliminated;
- (B) Staff performance and effectiveness metrics applicable to each specific position; and
- (C) Any other general or specific change made to the reduction in force plan.



Workgroup Scope & Sequence

	Date	Key Topics
1	Week of May 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Objectives and structures for the Work Group● Background/Current state
2	Week of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Superintendent performance targets: guidance for school boards (note: contracts must be updated after July 1, 2023)● Teacher Salary Schedules including criteria to spot-check contracts, salary schedules, and highlighting innovative practices● Reduction in Force (RIF) Policy● Maternity Leave Policy
3	Week of	
4	Week of	
5	Week of	

Next Steps

- Karli will send draft materials in advance of next meeting
- Work group members review background materials
 - [Act 237](#)
 - [Educator Workforce Executive Order Report](#)