

LEARNS Work Group: Human Resources

July 20, 2023

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

- Keep feedback centered on topic at hand.
- Stay engaged.
- 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.

Human Resources Work Group Charge

This work group is focused on school- and district-level human resource decisions and policies. LEARNS calls for new policy or guidance on:

- Celebrate and support great teachers and leaders
 - Teacher contracts
 - Superintendent contracts
 - Teacher salary schedules
 - Reduction in force (RIF) policies

Engagement from this group and other stakeholders is essential and ensures that policies and guidance on teacher effectiveness are representative of perspectives from across the State's education



Agenda: July 20, 2023

Today, the work group is focused on:

- **Celebrate and support great teachers and leaders**
 - **Maternity leave cost-sharing**
 - Providing feedback on questions from previous meeting of the maternity leave and cost-sharing agreement
 - Discuss timeline for reimbursement process
 - **Superintendent contracts**
 - Update on on process for Superintendent performance targets monitoring and guidance
 - **Teacher Salary Schedules and Reduction in Force Policies**
 - Update on process for monitoring teacher contracts, salary schedules, and district RIF policies
 - Discuss charter school rules



Law: Maternity Leave

Under the LEARNS Act public school districts or open enrollment public charter schools can elect to participate in paid maternity leave by signing a cost-sharing agreement that splits the incurred cost for paid maternity leave 50/50 between the district and DESE. If they do this their education personnel are eligible for up to twelve weeks of paid maternity leave.

This means that for districts that sign an MOU for cost sharing that the district will cover 6 weeks of paid maternity leave for employees and that ADE will cover 6 weeks of paid maternity leave on a reimbursement basis.



Maternity Leave: Rules and Guidance

As you review consider the following discussion questions:

1. What questions do you have?
2. Are there ways that the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) could improve these rules?

Law: Superintendent Contracts

Under the LEARNS Act by July 2023 each school district's board of directors must establish written performance targets in a superintendent's contract of employment. These targets must include:

- Student achievement and graduation rates for the entire public school district
- Student achievement and graduation rates for each schools with a "C", "D", or "F" letter grade designation.



Superintendent Contract Guidance

Moving forward ADE will be reviewing contracts using the following process:

- Upload to SFA
- Upload to District Website
- Commissioner's Memo



Law: Teacher Salary Schedules

Under the LEARNS Act each school district's board of directors has to pay teachers a minimum salary of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in order for a district to be eligible for state funds among other provisions they must adopt an employee salary schedule.



Charter Schools

Charter Schools may have the option of applying for waivers for salary schedules, however, in order to be eligible for additional funding for increased teacher salaries they must adopt a salary schedule.



Law: Reduction in Force

Under the LEARNS Act seniority and tenure are no longer allowed to be the primary criterion for decisions regarding the hiring, assignment, or dismissal of public school teachers and other public school employees. Public school districts must ensure their reduction in force plan is aligned to this.

Each district must submit its reduction in force plan to DESE whenever any of the following are updated:

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



Reduction in Force

Moving forward ADE will be reviewing contracts using the following process:

- Upload to SFA
- Upload to District Website
- Commissioner's Memo



Next Steps

- Next meeting: TBD
- Karli will send draft materials in advance of next meeting

Appendix: LEARNS Requirements

Law: Maternity Leave

LEARNS establishes the following definitions for maternity leave:

- (1) “Cost-sharing” means joint, equal responsibility for the cost shared between the State of Arkansas and a public school district or open-enrollment public charter school that employs an individual considered education personnel under this section;
- (2) “Education personnel” means an individual employed full-time by a public school district or open-enrollment public charter school in Arkansas for more than one (1) year; and
- (3) “Maternity leave” means partially or fully compensated time away from work within the first twelve (12) weeks following the:
 - (A) Birth of a biological child to an individual considered education personnel under this section; or
 - (B) Placement of an adoptive child in the home of an individual considered education personnel under this section.



Law: Maternity Leave

LEARNS requires that:

- (a) Education personnel employed by a public school district or open enrollment public charter school that elect to participate under this section shall be eligible for up to twelve (12) weeks of paid maternity leave.
- (c)(1) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall create and sign a standard cost-sharing agreement for paid maternity leave expenses between the division and a public school district or open-enrollment public charter school that elects to participate under this section.
 - (2) At a minimum, the cost-sharing agreement required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section shall obligate the state and the public school district or open-enrollment public charter school to each pay fifty percent (50%) of incurred costs for approved paid maternity leave.
 - (3) The division shall promulgate rules outlining:
 - (A) Management of a cost-sharing agreement required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section;
 - (B) Reimbursement processes; and
 - (C) Other related procedures required to implement this section.



Law: 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.



Law: Teacher Salary Schedules

LEARNS requires:

(a)(1) The board of directors in each school district in the state shall pay classroom teachers upon a minimum base salary of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000)

(2) To be eligible for funds to implement the minimum base salary under this section, a public school district shall:

- (A) Revise each teacher contract by the 2023-2024 school year to require that each teacher in the public school district is employed at least one hundred ninety (190) school days each year;
- (B)(i) Not adopt a personnel policy or incorporate terms into a personnel contract that provide more rights to personnel than those provided under state law in effect during the term of the personnel contract.
 - (ii) This subdivision (a)(2)(B) shall not be interpreted as:
 - (a) Denying personnel rights provided by other laws, including without limitation due process; or
 - (b) Prohibiting a school district board of directors from specifying in its policy the timelines and processes for providing notice and an opportunity for a hearing as provided under § 6-13-13 636(d);
- (C) Not have a waiver of teacher salary requirements; and
- (D) Adopt an employee salary schedule.

Law: 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.



LEARNS Key Components for Kids

✓ **Unified early childhood system**

Local early childhood lead organizations will build plans to address the local early childhood needs

- Arkansas will launch a new early childhood accountability system

✓ **Early Literacy**

- Every K-3 student not reading proficiently will:
 - Have an individual reading plan
 - Receive targeted reading interventions
 - Be eligible for a \$500 literacy tutoring grant
- Third grade students not reading proficiently will not advance to fourth grade

✓ **Numeracy**

- Students not yet proficient in math (grades 3 to 8) will receive individual math intervention plans

✓ **Tutoring**

- Arkansas high-dosage tutoring will be piloted and scaled across the state

✓ **High school pathways**

- Students can graduate with career ready diploma pathways
- Student success plans start in 8th grade for all students
- Students can access any course through course choice
- Students participate in 75 hours of community service to graduate
- Students will receive college credit for AP, IB, CLEP, etc courses

LEARNS Key Components for Schools

✓ **School Turnaround**

- Local school boards can contract with charter school/others to run campuses at risk of state takeover

✓ **Celebrate and support great teachers and leaders**

- Minimum \$50K salary
- Bonuses of up to \$10K for excellent teachers
- 12 weeks of paid maternity leave
- Repeal the teacher fair dismissal act
- School and district performance targets required in superintendent contracts

✓ **Improved teacher training**

- Offer four year scholarships to cover tuition, fees, and a teaching license exam
- Literacy coaches for K-3 teachers
- Train all teachers in crisis response, mental health awareness, youth mental health first aid

✓ **Incentivize teaching where we most need great teachers**

- Up to \$6K in loan forgiveness for teachers in critical shortage areas (up to three years)

✓ **Transportation**

- Modernize transportation for schools with innovation grants



LEARNINGS

In 2022 one in 10 educators exited Arkansas's workforce.

Every student deserves to be taught by a talented, committed educator, and every educator deserves to be supported to grow in their profession.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- ✓ **Celebrate and support great teachers and leaders**
 - Minimum \$50K salary and published salary schedule
 - Bonuses of up to \$10K for excellent teachers
 - 12 weeks of paid maternity leave
 - Repeal the teacher fair dismissal act and update personnel policies (e.g., reductions in force)
 - School and district performance targets required in superintendent contracts
- ✓ **Improved teacher training**
 - Offer four year scholarships to cover tuition, room and board, and a teaching license exam
 - One-year residencies with experienced mentors
- ✓ **Incentivize teaching where we most need great teachers**
 - Up to \$6K in loan forgiveness for teachers in shortage areas (up to three years)

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.

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.



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.

