

LEARNS Work Groups Kick Off

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.**

Work Group Purpose

Group Intro

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



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

Meeting Objectives and Norms

Today's objectives

- ▶ Exchange introductions
- ▶ Introduce LEARNS and the Educational Freedom Account (EFA)
- ▶ Provide an overview of approach to SY2023-2024 rollout, and solicit your feedback and questions
- ▶ Share proposed next steps and asks of the Work Group (you)!



Norms

Prior to Meeting

- ▶ ADE will send out agenda 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 cannot attend.

LEARNS Background (1/2)

Prior to LEARNS, there were two primary school choice scholarships available to eligible Arkansas families:

1

Succeed Scholarship Program

- ▶ Provides eligible students (foster children, children with disabilities, and children of uniformed service members who have) up to 100% of the state's per-pupil foundation funding amount for use on eligible private school expenses.

2

Philanthropic Investment in Arkansas Kids

- ▶ Tax-credit funded scholarship program for eligible income-qualifying students to attend private school.
- ▶ Unused credits may be carried forward for three (3) consecutive years

Until now, Arkansas's school choice programs have been limited to select eligible special populations

LEARNS Background (2/2)

The LEARNS act represents a significant step forward in Arkansas's path to universal school choice, establishing the **Educational Freedom Account** :

- ▶ Participating students are entitled to ninety (90) percent of the state's per-pupil foundation funding for eligible private school expenses.

Eligible Students

- ▶ Students with disabilities
- ▶ Foster care children
- ▶ Succeed Scholarship participants
- ▶ Children of active-duty military
- ▶ Students enrolled in "F" schools or "Level 5" districts,
- ▶ First-time kindergarteners are eligible

Eligible Expenses

- ▶ Tuition, fees, and limited expenses required by schools (e.g., uniforms).
- ▶ *Starting in 2024-2025:* Instructional materials, tutoring, college course fees, technology, transportation to school, and curriculum

Eligible Schools

- ▶ Must meet state accreditation requirements
- ▶ Have been in operation for at least one (1) year
- ▶ Meet several general administrative requirements that are further detailed in the quick fact guide we will share with you after this meeting


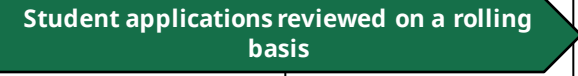
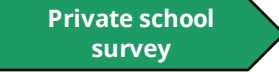
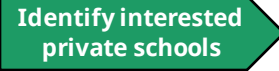








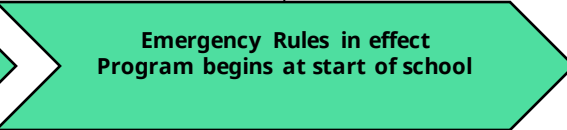
School Choice Work Group: Our Charge

This work group is focused on school choice, specifically the Educational Freedom Account . This working group’s responsibilities are:

Description	Timing
1 Provide feedback on our approach to the EFA Program rollout for the 2023-2024 school year (“Year 1”)	This week
2 Review Comm plan for Family and Schools, Review process flow, Review Applications	Next week
3 Review and Discuss rules – Emergency and promulgation process, updates on program and	Recurring meetings over next few months

Engagement from this group and other stakeholders is essential to ensure that the policy on school choice is representative of the perspectives from all parts of the state’s education system.

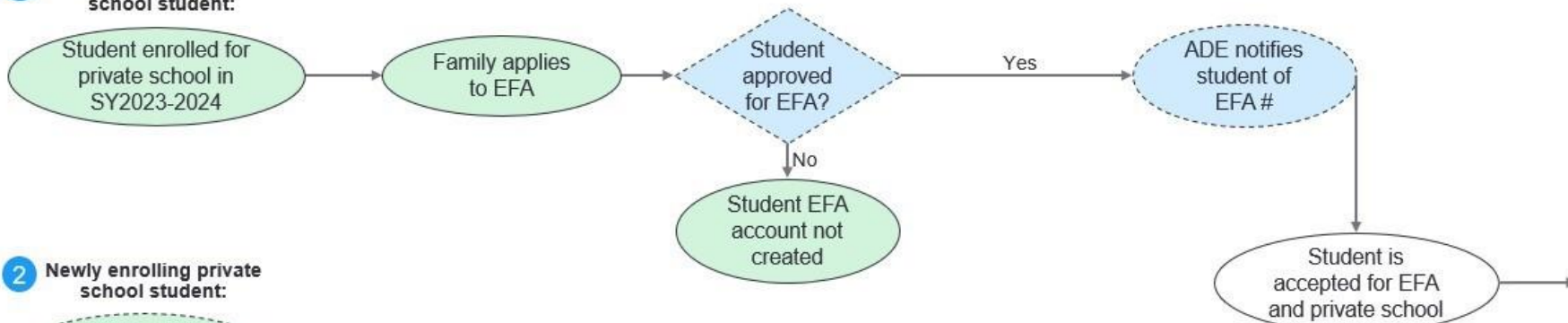
EFA Rollout: At a Glance

	May	June	July	August	September
Students		 Student application "go-live"			
		 Student applications reviewed on a rolling basis			
Schools	 Private school survey				
	 Identify interested private schools	 Incremental school applications reviewed on a rolling basis; accepted schools are immediately added to public list of participating providers			
ADE					
	 Finalize 2023-2024 EFA communication and applications	 Draft and get feedback on emergency rules	 Rule promulgation process	 Emergency Rules in effect Program begins at start of school	

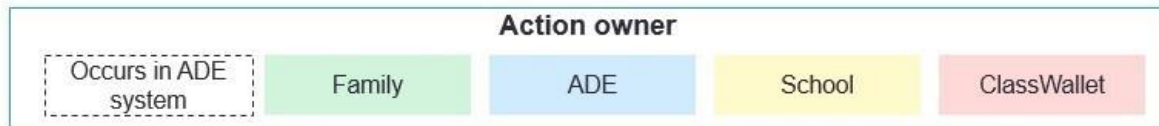
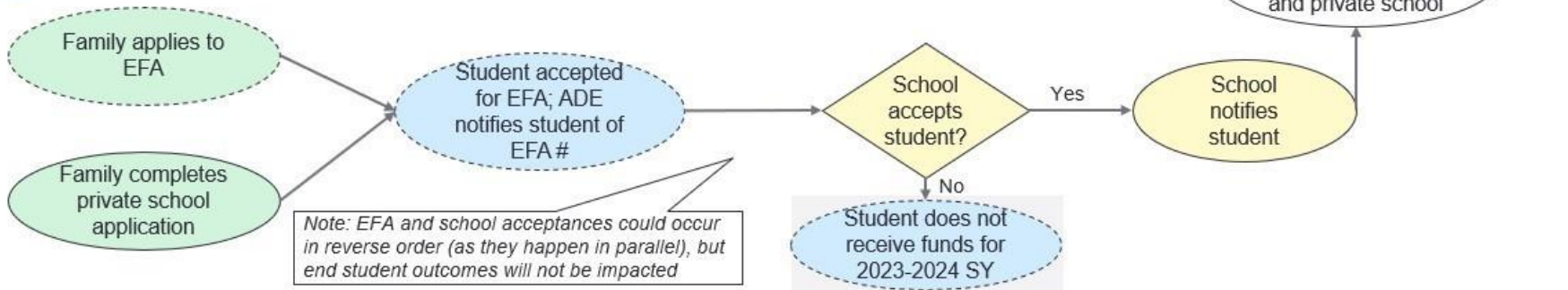
 Work group meeting (tentative)

'23-24 Process Flow (1 of 2)

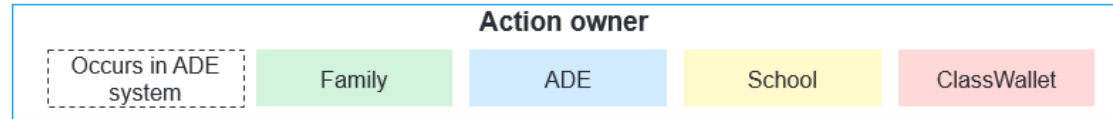
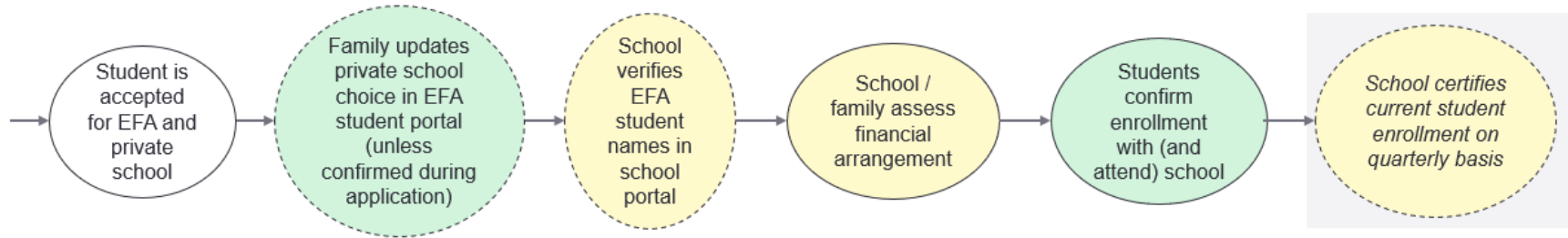
1 Already enrolled private school student:



2 Newly enrolling private school student:



'23-24 Process Flow (2 of 2)



Questions on EFA Rollout?

Next Steps

Next Step	Next Step Description	Timing
Review EFA Rollout and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Review draft communications package intended for private schools and families▶ Review Student and School Applications▶ Review EFA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Next Meeting▶ Proposed: 5/25/23 2pm▶ Virtual
Begin review of EFA Rules and Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Review and Discuss EFA rules▶ Discuss EFA launch and update on participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ June 6, 2023 : Time TBD

We will follow up on the schedule for June-beyond in the coming days

Discussion



What would success in “year 1” look like to you?



What are your suggestions for promotion and outreach such that all families in Arkansas are aware of the program?



What questions have been “top-of-mind” for you or your community regarding the EFA Program?