

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT




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On behalf of ForwARd Arkansas, the Office of Innovation for Education (OIE) collaborated with *ForwARd* officers and several state agencies to develop the series: *Opportunities to Advance Education in Arkansas*. This series of working documents uncover and highlight potential intersections among *ForwARd*'s recommendations, the Every Student Succeeds Act (*ESSA*), and related efforts among Arkansas agencies to transform Arkansas. These intersections are unpacked and situated in Arkansas' current context to provide a richer understanding of the current work, identify potential next steps, and spotlight the unprecedented opportunities to advance and accelerate Arkansas' transformation.



ForwARd Arkansas. ForwARd Arkansas is a partnership of parents, educators, civic leaders, business professionals, and policy makers committed to helping every Arkansas student graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace. In early 2015, following extensive input from stakeholders, the ForwARd Arkansas Steering Committee crafted “A New Vision for Arkansas Education”. The vision outlines seven areas of focus which include recommendations for realizing the vision.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA was signed into law December 10, 2015 replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in the latest reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA includes provisions for federal education funds and outlines the requirements under which state and local education agencies receive, distribute, use, and are accountable for the use of these funds.

The language of ESSA provides states and districts with more flexibility, enabling states to determine long-term goals for student success. Given this historic opportunity, it is timely to review ForwARd recommendations in light of state agency initiatives that might intersect with new opportunities under the law.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Unprecedented Opportunity. ESSA represents a unique opportunity at the state and local district levels to reimagine how federal, state, and local efforts and resources might be coordinated to enhance educational opportunities and outcomes to benefit all students in Arkansas and to close long-standing differences in student success. The launch of the *ForwARd* initiative to advance education in Arkansas provides additional intersections from which momentum might be gained to advance equity and access to opportunities to close those success gaps for the children in Arkansas.

In this Series

ESSA provides states unprecedented opportunity to develop new accountability systems mindful of the strengths and concerns of prior and existing state and federal accountability mechanisms. In particular, states can take advantage of the ESSA planning process to develop a more holistic approach to accountability that will address enduring inequities in schools, support continuous improvement, and enable local innovation and problem-solving. In this series, we highlight Arkansas' opportunity to create a flexible, comprehensive accountability model, innovate for excellence and equity, ensure college and career readiness, create a system for comprehensive support with strategic interventions, develop a robust evaluation system, and build capacity while strengthening community across the state and connecting to national networks.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for New Accountability Models</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA eliminates NCLB’s annual Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) system and provides states the 2016-2017 year as a planning year for new accountability models. States can select indicators beyond those the federal government requires, including additional measures of student outcomes, school functioning, and students’ opportunities to learn. They can also establish goals and determine school interventions based on their own contexts rather than adhering to a “one-size-fits-all nationwide metric.” States must publicly report the multiple indicators in annual report cards that are clear, concise, understandable and available beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.</p> <p>ESSA does not specifically require the adoption of an index for states establishing a system for accountability purposes. However, in order to meet the law’s requirements, each state’s accountability system will have to include a methodology for meaningfully differentiating schools and identifying the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools, which may require the relative ranking of schools in some way (Sec. 1111).</p> <p>According to the Final Regulations of ESSA, states may choose to use the determinations listed in ESSA itself-comprehensive and targeted support and all other schools-or they may chose additional categories to help differentiation schools and share useful information with parents and stakeholders.</p>	<p>ESSA allows an unprecedented opportunity to create a comprehensive, aligned and flexible accountability and reporting system for schools and districts using a multiple measures dashboard. A new system with meaningful differentiation of schools, including the lowest 5% of Title I schools, could provide useful early warning information, alerting schools and districts when one or more indicators in the system are showing signs of concern. Low performance, low growth, low graduation rates, etc., alone or in combination, would result in system warning lights on the dashboard enabling schools to proactively seek out root causes and make necessary changes.</p> <p>Prior to ESSA, multiple state and federal accountability requirements led to multiple determinations and labels, some of which were aligned and some of which were not. Under this system, information about school quality may have seemed fragmented and confusing, diminishing its value and utility. Although not always congruent, schools in Academic Distress tended to be among the bottom 2-3% of all schools in academic performance and often demonstrated low student academic growth and lower graduation rates.</p> <p>ESSA presents an opportunity for Arkansas to make progress toward its vision for educational excellence and equity—explicitly supporting a preschool to college- and career-readiness vision for all children.</p>

ForwARd Recommendations

Clearly explain how the “A-F report card” and Elementary and Secondary Act “focus” and “priority” schools relate to AD (Academic Distress) classifications in order to communicate more clearly with districts and communities, identify pre-AD schools, and require all schools identified as in distress to participate in a comprehensive evaluation process that includes specific recommendations in areas causing the designations (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 5).

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<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA requires that states have robust, multi-indicator statewide accountability systems for all public schools, including public charter schools, and underscores “the flexibility they have to choose new indicators that create a more holistic view of student success.” Those indicators must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the same for all public schools • Include valid, reliable, and comparable measures that are disaggregated by subgroup • Measure each of the following: academic achievement; four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for high schools (over no more than three years) and academic progress for elementary and middle schools; progress in attaining English language proficiency; and at least one state-selected indicator of school quality or student success (which may vary for schools in different grade spans). <p>Additionally, schools must also be identified by the state and provided targeted support when any subgroup is labeled as consistently underperforming beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. Targeted schools that fail to satisfy states’ exit criteria within the state’s determined number of years must be identified as a school in need of comprehensive support (Sec. 1111).</p>	<p>The use of a multiple measures approach could support “more strategic interventions than those informed only by a unidimensional rating, ranking or grade.” Data from a dashboard could track and illuminate schools who may be showing preliminary signs of very low performance overall, as evidenced by multiple indicators. A multiple measures approach also gives the opportunity for all schools to move from compliance to a continuous improvement approach. All schools can begin to identify any areas where they need to improve, using the dashboard to monitor, set and track goals in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.</p> <p>Additionally, by utilizing ESSA’s intent to identify not only schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement, but also schools with group(s) of students with needs, Arkansas can establish a more equitable system for identifying and intervening early in school’s failing to improve outcomes for a particular subgroup, including three new subgroups added by ESSA: homeless students, foster care students and children of active duty military personnel.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>Clearly explain how the “A-F report card” and Elementary and Secondary Act “focus” and “priority” schools relate to AD classifications in order to communicate more clearly with districts and communities and require all schools identified as in distress to participate in a comprehensive evaluation process that includes specific recommendations in areas causing the designations. The Academic Distress label should end as soon as a school rises above the performance threshold that signaled distress (Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8).</p>		

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Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for New Accountability Models</i>
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<p style="text-align: center;">ForwARd Recommendations</p> <p>School boards of districts with schools in AD or Pre-AD must participate in special trainings on the academic distress process. Include family-community partnerships as a way to turn around schools (Recommendations 13 and 18).</p>		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Excellence & Equity through Innovation</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA gives back power to states and holds states accountable for supporting districts in their efforts to improve teaching and learning. During the 2016-2017 school year, states are expected to consider any changes to their accountability systems that may be needed to advance states' vision and goals. States can design and re-design their organizational structures and management to meet the needs of comprehensive and continuous improvement under ESSA over the next 12-18 months.</p> <p>ESSA includes grants for education innovation and research. The funds are available to states, local education agencies, or nonprofits to “create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students” (Sec. 4611).</p>	<p>Shifting from a “loose-tight” model under NCLB to a “tight-loose” model under ESSA, where there is a shared agreement on a high-bar for accountability for all students and a “greater opportunity and responsibility to define efforts to achieve that bar.” Arkansas has an opportunity to approach accountability internally and externally in a similar manner, utilizing innovation to drive educational excellence and equity.</p> <p>The internal work at the ADE started in 2015 and the external work, connecting with stakeholders across the state, around the vision and mission, is currently in motion. As the ADE defines a “Vision for Excellence in Education” there is enormous opportunity for the state, the ADE, districts, and schools to improve and innovate to ensure a high-quality, well-rounded education that prepares every student for success in college and career.</p>
<div style="border: 2px solid #003366; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education Unit should be held accountable for the success of schools in AD and Pre-AD (Recommendation 29).</p> </div>		

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<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA eliminated the requirement for the stand-alone School Improvement Grant (SIG) and replaced it with greater flexibility and a requirement to use 7 percent of Title I funds for improvement. This set-aside, as designated in ESSA Section 1003, must be used to support districts with CSI (comprehensive support) and TSI (targeted support) schools. At least 95 percent of these school-improvement funds must go to local school districts, education service agencies, or consortia of districts, by formula or competition.</p> <p>ESSA authorizes a new pilot program for 50 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to design a school funding system that targets additional funds to groups of students with the greatest need. As part of LEA’s applications for the pilot, they must describe their legal authority to use state and local funds for the weighted student funding system (Sec. 1501).</p>	<p>Providing a full system of supports can help connect accountability more fully to resources for evidence-based improvements, and can help address achievement gaps statewide, including within school, across schools, and across districts. Additionally, with the new flexibility, the state, districts, and district consortia can work creatively to maximize funds to address needs.</p> <p>Arkansas could consider viewing the seven percent Title I set aside as a “school improvement innovation fund.” Similar to the Investing in Innovation Fund “i3” grants, SEAs may reward districts that demonstrate the greatest need and commit to effectively implementing strategies with the strongest evidence.</p> <p>Arkansas could also consider dedicating additional state funds for schools in improvement and can support schools and districts in applying for grants for supportive programs that can impact continuous improvement such as Full Service Community Schools, Promise Neighborhoods, and 21CCLC.</p> <p>Arkansas could encourage, enable, and support districts in applying the “Weighted Student Funding Pilot,” which begins in 2018-2019 and is expected to expand in the 2019-2020 school year.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>In order to fund the specific supports recommended to schools in their comprehensive evaluations, the state should work with schools to: supplement existing funds from a dedicated state funding pool for schools in distress, reallocate existing funds from lower-impact programs where possible, and leverage all additional funds available to schools in academic distress (Recommendation 11).</p>		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Excellence & Equity through Innovation</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p>	<p>In addition to Title 1 funds set-asides, ESSA funds include competitive grants for supportive programs (including Full Service Community Schools, Promise Neighborhoods, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers). Set-asides may be used to conduct a grant competition permitting awards for up to 4 years, which may include a planning year. States must give priority to school districts who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve high numbers or percentages of elementary and secondary schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support • Demonstrate the greatest need, as determined by the state • Demonstrate the strongest commitment to using the funds to improve student achievement and outcomes <p>States may use federal professional development funds to increase access to effective teachers for students from low-income families and students of color, may access Teacher and Leader school improvement grant funds, and may use Title II funds for Teacher and Leader Academies.</p>	<p>Research indicates that people are motivated by a combination of autonomy, mastery, and purpose. By designing academies with the purpose of supporting schools in need, Arkansas could harness innovative practices around human capital, curriculum, instruction, and student-focused learning systems to take advantage of flexibility in design and funding while serving students in academically distressed schools.</p> <p>Arkansas could also consider how to better assess school- and district-level needs, more deeply understand root causes (such as early childhood access and the needs of English Language Learners), leverage accreditation efforts and enhance the educator pipeline, review resource allocations (Title I and Title II), and build a clear delivery system while strengthening capacity.</p> <p>Academies could provide a rich resource for Arkansas to move toward informed-risk taking that will inform not only schools in need of improvement, but schools across the state, while strengthening educator development from pre-service programs to professional programs. Arkansas could utilize the teacher and leader academies program in Title II (up to 2% of total state set-aside) to prepare candidates for high-needs schools with a yearlong residency. Arkansas could consider partnering with other states on such an academy. For more information see: CCSSO; Critical Area Outline: School improvement Supports.</p>
<div style="border: 2px solid #003366; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>Create “turnaround academies” to train teachers and leaders (including those in academically distressed schools) in specific skills necessary for turnaround environments, while providing financial and nonfinancial incentives. Academies should: be made accessible to participants living throughout the state, include a track for school-support personnel (including ADE and Educational Cooperative staff), and should be built from national best practices that include application of theory in the classroom and theory-based learning (Recommendation 12 and 28).</p> </div>		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for College & Career Readiness: Challenging Academic Standards & Assessments</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>Each student will develop and apply personal competencies that foster learning, community engagement, and success in life (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 3).</p> <p>Each student will be actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 4).</p>	<p>ESSA’s final regulations require that states have robust, multi-indicator statewide accountability systems for all public schools, including public charter schools, and underscore “the flexibility they have to choose new indicators that create a more holistic view of student success.” States must include indicators of Academic Progress and School Quality or Student Success that are supported by research indicating that high performance or improvement on such measures is likely to increase student learning. States must also set a maximum timeline for English learners to attain English proficiency using realistic, yet rigorous, targets.</p> <p>The regulations provide states with flexibility in their indicators to recognize the academic achievement of all students, including those who have not yet reached proficiency and students who have attained advanced levels, to reduce the focus of interventions solely on students “on the bubble” at the exclusion of others.</p> <p>The law also encourages states to consider measures of performance that contribute to college and career readiness, including critical abilities such as critical thinking, inquiry,</p>	<p>Arkansas could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider additional measures of school quality and equity, including for example, opportunity for student learning and access to critical resources, including curriculum, access to early learning, high quality teachers and leaders, funding, school climate/environment and conditions of learning such as school discipline and attendance • Include educator and community input as a norm (see CCSSO; Critical Area Outline: School improvement Supports for more information) • Encourage deeper learning by measuring student access to rich curriculum, which may include measures of participation in or completion of college- and career-ready pathways and student access to a full curriculum, including science, social studies and history, art, music, and world language. <p>As the share of English learners in American public schools increases faster than any other group, ESSA responds by moving accountability for EL’s from Title III to Title 1. Arkansas can respond by taking advantage of multiple provisions to support high-quality education for English learners.</p>
<div style="border: 2px solid #003366; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>Progress in AD and Pre-AD schools should be measured using a balanced set of metrics, not just proficiency levels on test scores. Evaluation should include progress implementing recommendations following timeline outlined in initial comprehensive evaluation (assessed through site visits), student achievement growth, leading indicator of achievement (attendance, tardiness, retention), educator and community input (survey, focus groups, interviews) (Recommendation 15).</p> </div>		

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ForwARd Recommendations

Progress in AD and Pre-AD schools should be measured using a balanced set of metrics, not just proficiency levels on test scores. Specifically, evaluation should include progress implementing recommendations following timeline outlined in initial comprehensive evaluation (assessed through site visits), student achievement growth, leading indicator of achievement (e.g. attendance, tardiness, retention), educator and community input (for example, survey, focus groups, interviews) (Recommendation 15).

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ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Comprehensive Support, Evaluation & Strategic Interventions</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA’s final regulations give states and districts more opportunity for ownership of their “accountability, intervention, and support systems, with the additional responsibility to make sure that those systems will result in a well-rounded education for every child” and reinforce the state’s role in technical assistance, monitoring and other support, including ongoing efforts to evaluate the use of school improvement funds for evidence-based interventions. States are required to take meaningful action where whole schools or groups of students within schools are struggling by working with Comprehensive (CSI) and Targeted (TSI) Schools to develop CSI and TSI School Improvement Plans.</p> <p>Schools are allowed to choose locally designed, evidence-based strategies to fit school needs and must build improvement plans with stakeholders. Resource inequities related to the following must be identified for schools in improvement (Sec. 1111):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per-pupil expenditure • Access to advanced coursework • Access to ineffective, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers • Access to specialized instructional support • Full-day kindergarten and preschool programs 	<p>As a part of ESEA flexibility, several states, including Arkansas, began to focus their efforts more deeply on comprehensive school support and continuous improvement. With ESSA, Arkansas has an opportunity to self-assess strengths and weaknesses of the current system and identify critical opportunities to advance college and career readiness through supporting strategically and evaluating progress. Taking lessons learned from the ACSIP Field Test, Arkansas can build a stronger statewide system of support.</p> <p>According to a report from Chiefs for Change, “Chiefs will want to be clear about what they see as the SEA’s role in advancing student outcomes, as well as what types of supports and resources they expect the SEA to provide. ESSA provides states the opportunity to drive significant resources to low-performing schools, while also enhancing flexibility for states and districts to make their own decisions about what school improvement activities to implement.”</p>

ForwARd Recommendations

In order to fund the specific supports recommended to schools in their comprehensive evaluations, the state should work with schools to: supplement existing funds from a dedicated state funding pool for schools in distress, reallocate existing funds from lower-impact programs where possible, and leverage all additional funds available to schools in academic distress (Recommendation 11).

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<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>ESSA gives states flexibility to customize strategies for school and district improvement. The four turnaround models for school improvement and the requirement of turnaround strategies for Priority Schools that existed under NCLB are not included under ESSA. Rather, ESSA requires CSI and TSI implement “evidence-based interventions,” and states set “exit criteria” for identified schools. ESSA requires additional action where initial interventions do not work to improve student outcomes.</p> <p>The final regulations give States flexibility to establish evidence-based interventions for use by LEAs and schools identified for support and improvement either by creating lists of State-approved, evidence-based interventions for use in any identified school, or by developing their own alternative evidence-based interventions that may be used specifically in comprehensive support and improvement schools. Interventions supported by strong, moderate, or promising evidence, are required for any improvement plans funded by the school improvement funds (Sec 1003).</p>	<p>Arkansas has many tools to guide, support, and evaluate the improvement process, including the continued field testing use of Indistar as part of the ASCIP statewide pilot that began in 2014-2015. According to pilot documents, “working together in teams, interacting in a culture of high expectations and candor, educators use research-based indicators of effective practice to guide the creation and implementation of improvement plans within the system.” The platform has been used with schools in improvement since 2013 with success and is based on a continuous plan for improvement. Assessing the use and effectiveness of Indistar in guiding continuous improvement could strengthen the statewide system of support under ESSA.</p> <p>As outlined in the Department of Education’s Non-Regulatory Guidance, ways to strengthen the effectiveness of ESEA investments include “identifying local needs, selecting evidence-based interventions that SEAs, LEAs, and schools have the capacity to implement, planning for and then supporting the intervention, and examining and reflecting upon how the intervention is working. When taken together, these steps promote continuous improvement and can support better outcomes for students.”</p>
<p><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>The comprehensive evaluation process should result in binding recommendations that are created and shared with stakeholders. Support and recommendations should continue until a school demonstrates it can sustain turnaround. The decision to exit schools from state control should be made on a case-by-case basis, but should occur as soon as the school has met performance and demonstrated sustained progress. (Recommendations 6, 7, 9, 10).</p>		

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ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Comprehensive Support, Evaluation & Strategic Interventions</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>ESSA requires more rigorous actions for schools that are not meeting exit criteria. States must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide how many years (not to exceed four) comprehensive support and improvement schools will be identified for status in order to meet the criteria for continued support • For comprehensive support and improvement schools, decide on “more rigorous” actions (which may include addressing school-level operations) if improvement isn’t seen within the state-determined number of years • For targeted improvement and support schools, states determine the number of years after which such schools will instead be identified for comprehensive support and improvement if they do not improve • Ensure the system of accountability captures and reflects schools with struggling subgroups by demonstrating that a school with a consistently underperforming subgroup receives a lower summative determination than it would have otherwise received without the underperforming group <p>Initiate additional changes in districts where either a significant number of schools are consistently identified for comprehensive school improvement and are not meeting the state’s exit criteria or a significant number of targeted improvement and support schools exist (Sec. 1111)</p>	<p>Currently in Arkansas, “AD” designation is established in code, but state statute gives the state board the authority to define “AD” criteria. Consequences for “AD” differ and may include an increasing loss of autonomy. CCSSO, in a recent publication, detailed opportunities for states as they reconsider accountability and supports, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish systems of periodic review and continuous improvement for the state’s system of accountability and supports (e.g., annually) based on information such as rapid-cycle feedback loops, data and evaluation, and broader research • Ensure that systems of periodic review and continuous improvement are in place for supports to lowest-performing schools and/or subgroups to best promote success, reinforce the need for learning systems, make an impact over time, and improve equity • Promote systems of diverse stakeholder engagement as part of initial plans (above) and continuous improvement • Consider how this can promote broader shifts toward learning systems and a culture of innovation, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement
<p style="text-align: center;">ForwARd Recommendations</p> <p>The comprehensive evaluation process should result in binding recommendations that are created and shared with stakeholders. Decisions to remove leadership and/or assume state control should be case dependent and made if leadership demonstrates an inability to implement the plan and make improvement. Leadership should continue if they demonstrate progress (Recommendations 6, 7, 14).</p>		<p>After binding recommendations have been met, and in order to help exiting schools find greater stability and sustainability, Arkansas could also choose to taper off coaching and monitoring, rather than removing all support at once and differentiate support on a case-by-case basis.</p>

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Robust Capacity for Support, Improvement & Evaluation</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>Under ESSA, the Department of Education will no longer specify a set of school turnaround models, instead states and local education agencies have greater flexibility to implement “evidence-based” interventions. ESSA presents far fewer mandates, which while opening the door for innovation, it places greater responsibility on states to foster improvement through robust capacity for support, improvement, and evaluation.</p> <p>States have wide latitude to develop, implement or re-design how they operate and support schools in improvement. Under ESSA, implementation is a shared responsibility between the state and districts with the state providing support to districts to intervene and improve comprehensive and targeted support and improvement schools.</p>	<p>Currently a statewide advisory team of ADE and school staff exists as part of the ACSIP Field Test. Arkansas has seen success using this model, with Indistar. Building on this, the State could combine ESSA’s requirements for evidence-based interventions and establish transparent criteria for what constitutes successful turnaround or significant improvement. The state could continue to build local and state capacity for on-site coaching to support progress on evaluation recommendations (theory of action).</p> <p>To support new responsibilities and more freedom, some states are undergoing major restructuring, as they attempt to free up resources for new tasks and reorganize to better carry them out. Research suggests that states serve their districts best when they minimize compliance functions, streamline funding, and maximize technical assistance. Over the next year, careful and deliberate planning for recruitment of staff, including waiving hindering regulation and increasing salaries, may help the ADE fill critical roles, including roles supporting improvement efforts, such as turnaround academies, community schools and specialized ADE departments. Arkansas also has an opportunity to invest in existing external partnerships, explore new ones to develop relationships that allow them to focus expertise, time, and resources, including relationships with cross-state networks such as CCSSO, with external partners, such as The Office of Innovation for Education, cooperatives, ERZ’s, universities (particularly as potential sites for Laboratory Schools) and national partners. Such arrangements could add massive support and networking capabilities to support the state vision for excellence in education and ESSA’s requirements.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>School support personnel should have experience leading turnaround environments and demonstrate the ability to coach leaders in competencies for success. The ADE should prioritize the recruitment of highly skilled, highly qualified personnel and should offer salaries comparable to school districts. A distinct “evaluation process” team should be created by the ADE (Recommendations 25, 26, 27, 17).</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Opportunities for Robust Capacity for Support,</i></p>

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Agencies		<i>Improvement & Evaluation</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p>	<p>ESSA requires states to work with districts to ensure that schools in comprehensive support and improvement conduct a school-level needs assessment, develop or adapt existing plans based on the findings of the needs assessment, and monitor, and review improvement plans for progress and achievement of goals.</p> <p>Districts must plan, implement, support, and monitor evidence-based interventions and periodically review resource allocations for equity of allocation for schools in comprehensive improvement.</p>	<p>For greater impact, districts and their schools could consider how the availability of supports to lower-performing schools compares to those of higher-achieving schools with similar demographic populations. Supports can be considered for availability, quality and access to drive equity for all students including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly qualified teachers including teachers certified by the National Board, certified to teach GT classes, certified to teach Advanced Placement or pre-AP courses (not excluding other measures of highly qualified teachers), or teachers with previous success in high-need schools, average class size • Instructional coaches/facilitators including math/literacy coaches, interventionists and other certified staff • Building administrators including assistant principals and principals-perhaps redefine roles to include a dean of instruction whose role is to ensure student-focused learning is supported at the classroom and building levels. • Rigorous classes including GT classes (including seminar classes) for secondary schools, pre-AP classes for secondary schools and AP classes for secondary schools, EAST lab classes for elementary and secondary schools • Information on school quality and community resources, along with parent, family, staff, and community feedback, including but not limited to school climate, safety, housing, healthy food options, public transportation, and green spaces
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>Progress in AD and Pre-AD schools should be measured using a balanced set of metrics, not just proficiency levels on test scores. Specifically, evaluation should include progress implementing recommendations following timeline outlined in initial comprehensive evaluation (assessed through site visits), student achievement growth, leading indicator of achievement (e.g. attendance, tardiness, retention), educator and community input (for example, survey, focus groups, interviews) (Recommendation 15).</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Opportunities for Robust Capacity for Support, Improvement & Evaluation</i></p>

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Agencies		
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>Under ESSA, states are allowed to support struggling schools through sustainable community schools and increase parent, family, and community engagement. ESSA also contains provisions on supportive programs including Promise Neighborhoods and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.</p> <p>ESSA requires states to use a rigorous review process to recruit, screen and evaluate any external partners for the school improvement process.</p> <p>States may work with schools and districts to propose and implement evidence based interventions for low performing schools and ESSA requires independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions for school improvement funding.</p>	<p>Arkansas could consider building specialty teams to boost results-focused school-community partnerships, including integrated student supports, needs assessments, and professional development for educators to work more effectively with families and communities. Such a focus would require Arkansas to consider the ratio of school-support personnel. New teams could network with existing organizations in the state and be housed geographically to more closely work with schools.</p> <p>With ESSA, Arkansas can continue to shift to continuous improvement, engaging schools and entire communities and impacting students from the community to the classroom. For more information on Community Schools, which are expressly mentioned in ESSA under Title IV, see Southern Education Foundations report.</p>

ForwARd Recommendations

School-support personnel should maintain a 3:1 ratio of AD and Pre-AD schools to support personnel. New teams with specialized capabilities should be created inside the ADE. A community engagement team of specialists, designed to empower schools to build their own capacity to support their communities and an ongoing evaluation team, designed to create, pilot and implement the new AD evaluation process should be created (Recommendations 23 and 24).

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Intersection with Arkansas Agencies	Every Student Succeeds Act	<i>Opportunities for Strengthened Community</i>
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>ESSA's requires that students, families, and other stakeholders are provided quality information and calls for states to consult with parents to design state and district report cards that are easily accessible, meaningful, and have clear information for families on student progress and school quality. ESSA Report cards must "include a robust set of information for parents and the public about school performance, while also affording states flexibility to include additional information." ESSA also requires states to report which schools get school-improvement dollars, and requires states to evaluate the quality of the interventions.</p>	<p>According to 2015-2016 ADE ACSIP handbook, every district and school must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and state statute requires districts and schools to involve parents in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the ACSIP. It is recommended that community members, and for secondary schools--students, are also involved in this work.</p> <p>States have an opportunity to renew, emphasize and, as stated by AdvancED, "provide transparency and encourage shared ownership of students success through public reporting of action and outcome measures, as well as qualitative information that accurately characterizes the education system and its effectiveness."</p> <p>Transparency is a critical component of any accountability system and Arkansas has an opportunity to reframe improvement from a compliance mindset to one of continual improvement and growth. Evaluations that include qualitative reviews for improvement, while focusing on low-performing schools, could become a part of the improvement process statewide and if publicly reported, could offer valuable insight to more deeply represent multiple measures reported at the state level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ForwARd Recommendations</p> <p>The results of ongoing evaluation should be clearly communicated to families and the community (Recommendation 16).</p>		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Agencies		
<p>Each student will meet or exceed educational milestones along pathways to graduate prepared for college, career, and community engagement (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 1).</p> <p>Each student will meet or exceed his/her expected individual growth annually (Arkansas Department of Education, Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 2).</p> <p>The Arkansas Department of Education will build the capacity of each team member to provide efficient and effective customer service that benefits students, respects taxpayers, and serves stakeholders (Vision for Excellence in Education, Goal 5).</p>	<p>ESSA requires district to reserve at least one percent of its Title I funds to carry out parent and family engagement activities. Ninety percent of these funds must be distributed to schools, with priority given to “high-need” schools. The law further requires that parents and family members of low-income students must be included in decisions regarding how these engagement funds are spent. Funds must be used for at least one of the below activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting schools in training school staff regarding engagement strategies; • Supporting programs that reach families at home, in the community, and at school; • Disseminating information on best practices focused on engagement, especially for increasing engagement of economically disadvantaged families; • Sub-granting to schools to collaborate with community-based organizations or businesses that have a track record of improving family engagement; or • Engaging in any other activities that the district believes are appropriate in increasing engagement. • A state must provide an assurance in its state plan that it will provide school districts and schools with effective parent and family engagement strategies. 	<p>Regular and frequent parent, family, and community engagement is “positively associated with improved academic achievement, lower rates of grade retention, and fewer years that students spend in special education, and gains for English Language Learners.”</p> <p>With the heightened focus on family and parent engagement in ESSA, Arkansas has an opportunity to shift from compliance requirements for parent and family engagement to real partnerships that will impact low-performing and non-status schools across the state. As a part of the overall school improvement unit, the ADE could have a team for this specific focus. Federal grants (under Title IV) for Statewide Family Engagement Centers will be awarded to statewide organizations to establish statewide family engagement centers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist parents in participating effectively in their children’s education and helping their children meet state academic standards. • Develop and implement, in partnership with the state, statewide policy to provide services that will help to remove barriers for family engagement. • Develop and implement parental involvement policies required in the ESSA.
<div style="border: 2px solid #003366; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ForwARd Recommendations</u></p> <p>Family-community partnership with schools is an important part of turning around schools. Partnerships will ensure families and communities will have a say in the overall direction and sustainability of the turnaround. Communities need frequent, relevant communications and engagement to keep them well informed. A new ADE team to empower schools in building capacity to support their communities will further assist this effort (Recommendation 16).</p> </div>		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

[Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law No: 114-95](#)

[Forward: A New Vision for Arkansas Education](#)

[ISBE ESSA Public Bill Review](#) Feb. 29, 2016

Accountability

[Pathways to New Accountability Through the Every Student Succeeds Act](#), April, 2016. Learning Policy Institute.

Personalized Learning

[New Opportunities to Advance Personalized Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), 2016, Knowledge Works.

Implementation

[Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act](#), February 16, 2016.

State-Level Guidance

[Background and Recommendations, Attachment to the May 2016 State Board Of Education](#)

College and Career Ready

[Roadmap for College and Career Readiness for Accountability](#), February, 2016

School Improvement and Equity

[Critical Area Outline, School Improvement Supports](#), CCSSO

[Proposed ESSA Regulation Supports Well-Rounded Education](#), May 26, 2016

[ESSA Call to Action White Paper](#)

[ESSA Accountability Summary](#), May, 2016



OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS ESSA & SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

[Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools](#), February, 2016

[Implementing Change: Rethinking School Improvement Strategies and Funding Under ESSA](#)

[Redesigning school accountability and support: Progress in pioneering states. Stanford, CA:](#) Learning Policy Institute and Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

[Education Department Releases Final Regulations to Promote High Quality Well-Rounded Education](#), November 28, 2016.

[ESSA Non-Regulatory Guidance, Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#), 2016.

[Advancing Equity through ESSA: Strategies for State Leaders](#), October, 2016.

[Developing a Comprehensive State Plan Pursuant to ESSA](#), November, 2016

[Equity and ESSA, Leveraging Education Opportunity through ESSA](#), November, 2016.