

What is ESSA?

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December 2015 ushered in an unprecedented opportunity to reframe state support and accountability systems within states' unique contexts, enabling each state to personalize its approach to ensuring equity, access, and opportunity for all of its students. Specifically, the purpose of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) is to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” At the state level, Article 14, §1 of the Arkansas Constitution requires Arkansas to provide a general, suitable, and efficient system of free public schools to all children of the state. Further, the Arkansas Supreme Court in *Lake View School District No. 25 v. Huckabee* (2002) noted it is the absolute duty of the state of Arkansas to provide all public school children with a substantially equal opportunity for an adequate education.

The Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System described in this ESSA plan reflects the Arkansas Department of Education's Vision for Excellence in Education which moves beyond adequacy to excellence. The Vision capitalizes on the unique opportunity that the Arkansas Department of Education's and local education agencies (LEAs) have under ESSA (2015) and Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (2017). The Arkansas Department of Education's and LEAs have reimagined support and accountability to create student-focused learning systems that integrate federal, state, and local efforts and resources ensuring all students have access to opportunities for success.

The Arkansas ESSA application, submitted September 2017, is a contract with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) that outlines how the USDE will hold Arkansas accountable for school improvement in return for federal funding.