

Summary of Arkansas's ESEA Flexibility

What standards does Arkansas use?

Arkansas adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in 2010. The state is also a lead state in the development of Next Generation Science Standards and may ultimately adopt those standards. The state plans to revise other curriculum frameworks and is evaluating other national efforts on standards development including those working to revise history/Social Studies, arts, and foreign language standards.

How is Arkansas measuring the performance of schools and districts?

Arkansas is implementing a Differentiated Accountability, Recognition and Tiered Support System (DARTSS) under which schools will be held accountable for reducing by half the proficiency gap (the percentage of students not scoring proficient) or growth gap (the percentage of students not meeting growth), and the graduation rate gap (for high schools) within six years for both the All Students group and a new Targeted Achievement Gap Group (TAGG). The TAGG is made up of students in economically disadvantaged, EL or SWD subgroups. Each year, every school will be rated: Exemplary, Achieving, Needs Improvement, Needs Improvement Focus or Needs Improvement Priority.

These ratings will be based on:

1. Performance or Growth. Schools must meet their individualized math and literacy AMOs for the All Students and TAGG group or meet the established growth AMOs for the same groups.
2. Graduation rate. High schools must meet a graduation rate AMO for the All Students and TAGG groups. Graduation rate will be weighted more heavily under this new system than it is currently.

Each school's individualized progress AMOs will be based on prior performance (similar to growth or progress targets for students). Schools must meet all established AMOs to be designated as Exemplary or Achieving. To be classified as Exemplary, a school must demonstrate high performance, high progress, high TAGG performance or high TAGG progress. All other schools are classified in one of the Needs Improvement categories based on the nature and degree of underperformance.

What targets has Arkansas set for its schools and districts?

In determining whether a school meets the proficiency gap AMO described above, the state will continue to use prior year performance or a weighted three-year performance average. Individualized AMOs will set incremental progress expectations based on a school-specific 2011 starting point. In determining the

growth gap, the state's current growth measure, a growth-to-standard model for grades 3-8 based on vertical moderation, will be used. A new growth measure based on PARCC assessments is planned.

What is Arkansas doing to support its lowest performing schools?

Arkansas is moving to a comprehensive system of differentiated support and intervention that is informed by lessons learned under the state's NCLB differentiated accountability pilot. Both Needs Improvement Priority and Needs Improvement Focus schools are required to engage in a diagnostic analysis of their systems that support student instruction and family/community engagement (facilitated either by ADE or an external provider, and to include district leadership for Priority Schools). The district and school are each required to establish a leadership team to support systemic change and continuous improvement.

Needs Improvement Priority Schools have persistent, systemic improvement needs that trigger system-level intervention. These schools are assigned a School Improvement Specialist (SIS) to help implement interventions and resource allocations and provide ongoing monitoring. Each school and its district must undertake a Scholastic Audit—an examination of the learning environment, organizational efficiency and academic performance of the school and district. They must utilize an external provider to assist with capacity building and implementation. A Priority Intervention Plan (PIP), developed with the district, must address all seven turnaround principles, and put an emphasis on teacher and leader effectiveness. The state may require replacement of the school leader if progress is insufficient (consistent with SIG). If a priority school does not make sufficient progress toward meeting the interim measurable objectives outlined in the PIP, the district may be placed in Academic Distress, leading to significant ADE intervention.

Needs Improvement Focus Schools must have comprehensive plans with targeted interventions and interim measurable objectives approved by the ADE each year, with ongoing monitoring by a site-based improvement specialist or external provider. External monitoring is required if the school does not make sufficient progress after one year. If the lack of progress persists, the school may be required to implement any or all of the turnaround principles.

What is Arkansas doing to support schools and districts beyond the lowest performing?

Arkansas differentiates recognition and consequences based on the degree of excellence or needs revealed through academic performance, growth, and graduation rates. The statewide system of support (SSOS) will be retooled to focus limited resources where they are needed most. For each of the five

performance ratings, the state has outlined the anticipated levels of state engagement and district autonomy, and the frequency with which the school and district will have to review and revise their comprehensive improvement plan.

- Achieving schools that meet performance and growth AMOs for math and literacy will participate in a three-year continuous improvement planning cycle with low state engagement and high district autonomy.
- Achieving schools that meet the performance targets but not growth targets are required to have an annual improvement planning cycle with heavy emphasis on data-driven analysis and with strategies, human resources and funding to address the needs of any subgroup that does not meet one or more AMO.
- Needs Improvement Schools are required to undertake a deep analysis of each area of underperformance, identify evidence-based practices or interventions to serve students in any subgroup that did not meet its AMOs, and have an improvement plan that focuses on the alignment of needs, interventions, and human and financial resources. They will receive support from education cooperative staff with moderate district autonomy.

Arkansas, through the enhancement of its longitudinal student data system and related efforts, has greatly expanded its capability and the capabilities of districts, schools and classrooms to access, analyze and utilize data. This includes the Teacher Student Data Link, an expanded data warehouse with local assessment data, a pilot project integrating classroom assessment scores with summative and interim scores and a data visualization project. In developing an improvement plan, schools must use multiple data sources, engage in a deep analysis of weaknesses, and then draw from evidence-based practices in developing specific strategies.

What is Arkansas doing to maintain focus on subgroups and target support to subgroups?

Arkansas will continue to measure and report on the performance of all of the ESEA subgroups, in addition to the performance of the new TAGG group. The state is also lowering its minimum N of 40 to 25 for all student groups. In reducing the N and utilizing the TAGG group, the state will increase rates of inclusion of students within the African American, Hispanic, EL and SWD student groups in school accountability determinations. Ninety-eight percent of the state's schools have a TAGG that meets the minimum N of 25. Each subgroup will also have individualized AMOs.

What is Arkansas doing for its top performing schools?

Arkansas will award its top performing schools, those with high performance or high progress, the designation of Exemplary Schools and recognition for their accomplishments. These schools will also be called on to help the ADE in its

capacity building efforts by collaborating with other schools throughout the state. Exemplary Schools will be put on a three-year continuous improvement planning cycle and will be exempt from state approval of the plan.

How does Arkansas report information to the public?

Under state law, districts are required to publish annual School Performance Reports. These reports are also published by ADE along with District and State Performance Reports. In addition, Arkansas is putting in place an enhanced reporting system that will highlight performance on critical indicators on the pathway to college and career-readiness. This will include a report of annual accountability designations, school progress in meeting AMOs (for the All Students, TAGG and ESEA subgroups), and a number of college and career indicators. Color coding will highlight performance and support continuous improvement planning.

How is Arkansas supporting effective instruction and leadership?

A complete human capital support system is central to the state's vision for establishing an aligned system to support college and career-readiness. In 2011, legislation was passed that will standardize a system of comprehensive evaluation and support for educators designed to drive improvement in instruction, provide a basis for making employment decisions, inform policymaking and encourage highly effective teachers to undertake challenging assignments.

Arkansas has worked with educators to develop model teacher and principal evaluation systems which differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories and require annual evaluations that rely on at least half of the evidence considered to be externally generated (not teacher designed or scored) indicators of student performance. The state is utilizing Charlotte Danielson's Frameworks for Teaching in its evaluation system. Consideration is still being given to the weighting of student achievement measures and the best measure(s) of student growth. In 2013-14, districts will pilot new systems, either the state-developed model or a nationally-recognized model approved by ADE; full implementation will follow in 2014-15.