

**Minutes**  
**Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System Steering**  
**Committee Meeting**  
**November 18, 2020**

The Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System Steering Committee (ESSA Steering Committee) met Wednesday, November 18, 2020, in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Auditorium. Ms. Ouida Newton called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Present: Ms. Ouida Newton, Chair; Mr. Anthony Bennett; Ms. Melissa Bratton; Dr. Harold Jeffcoat; Ms. Starlinda Sanders; Ms. Joyce Flowers, Ms. Michelle Hayward; and Ms. Ima Etim.

Absent: Representative Bruce Cozart; Senator Jane English; and Ms. Melinda Kinnison.

The meeting was live streamed and the recording was posted on the DESE website at <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/public-school-accountability/every-student-succeeds-act-essa/stay-informed-archive/meeting-agendas-presentations-videos-minutes>

### **Consent Agenda**

#### **Consideration of Approval for Minutes - April 1,2020**

Ms. Joyce Flowers moved, seconded by Ms. Starlinda Sanders, to approve the April 1, 2020, minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **1. Perkins V Updates - Dr. Lydia McDonald and Dr. Denise Airola**

Dr. Lydia McDonald said the Arkansas Perkins V plan was approved June 26, 2020, and implemented on July 1, 2020. Arkansas received \$13,246,104.00 in Perkins Funding for FY 20, 85% of award for local funds, 10% for State Leadership and 5% for State Administration.

Dr. Lydia McDonald explained that Perkins is a federal education program that invests in secondary, postsecondary, and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories. Perkins is dedicated to increasing learner access to higher quality CTE programs of study including more emphasis on special populations, including equity and accessibility. CTE in Arkansas

has 64 programs of study. 96.9% of the graduates that are participating in the CTE program graduate on time. Funds support quality programs, sustainable professional development technical assistance, Career explorations, guidance and advisement, data collection and analysis and stakeholder engagement. The Arkansas Occupation areas funded are Agricultural Science and Technology, Business and Marketing Technology, Family and Consumer Sciences, STEM, and Trade and Industry. The goal is to get the right programs for students into middle schools in order to better prepare the students for the workplace after they graduate high school.

Dr. Lydia McDonald said the 2019-2020 Fiscal year (July 1, 2019-June 30 2020) is considered the 'transition year' - moving from Perkins IV or Perkins V. All states are allowed to use FY 2019 to gather baseline data to establish state-determined performance levels as required under Perkins. No performance data will be reported on the Core Indicators for FY 2020 due to COVID-19.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat asked, when discussing the concentrator modeling, would the data that is not able to be collected have any change in terms of Perkins?

Dr. Denise Tobin Airola responded that we are able to produce performance measures for everything except academic performance measures because of federal waivers for testing. We have data collection on students, courses, and course credit earnings. We are able to identify those students who are participants, completers, and concentrators. 75% of what we are required to report will still be reported.

Ms. Melissa Branton stated you talked about having emphasis on special populations. Who are those populations and could you give an example of what you are or will be doing to help those special populations?

Dr. Denise Tobin Airola responded that CTE hasn't seen their data broken down by special populations until 2019 reports which were broken down by gender, English Learners, Military dependent, economically disadvantaged, homeless, and foster care. For the first time schools will see their data each year for special populations and how they are doing relative to other students.

## **2. CARES Act Updates - Deborah Coffman**

Ms. Deborah Coffman said the CARES Act outlined 12 uses of funds. At this time, districts have been reimbursed for approximately half of those funds. Some districts are still waiting on orders, and will be reimbursed when those orders are received.

States were provided guidance by the U.S. Department of Education on how to calculate equitable services for the CARES Act. Equitable services are provided to eligible non-public schools. A federal lawsuit was filed resulting in the guidance being changed as noted in [Commissioner's Memo COM-21-029](#). Professional development

was offered to federal programs coordinators in order to revise the allocations for equitable services. The new allocations will be posted on the DESE website by the Finance Office.

Ms. Ima Etim commented she had a chance to talk to a school district about the allocations and they are excited for the new allocations.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat stated the biggest challenge is finding those students that live within the district boundaries but have always gone to private schools. It's a shared challenge across the state I'm sure.

Ms. Joyce Flowers asked what is the determination for the amount each district would receive?

Ms. Deborah Coffman responded that the original allocation was determined by the Title I formula.

Ms. Michelle Hayward asked what if nonpublic schools have already spent the funds?

Ms. Deborah Coffman responded we have been working with our federal programs coordinators. The LEA will work with the non-public school. Our first priority is serving the students and we are discussing the appropriate time for recovery of equipment.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat asked about the CARES Act Steering Committee allocating \$20 million for emergency leave for teachers. Does anyone know the status of those funds?

Dr. Ivy Phiffer responded that we are monitoring those funds and the last data pull indicated approximately \$10 million remaining funds. That number could change with the holiday coming up.

### **3. ESSA Updates - Ms. Deborah Coffman**

Ms. Deborah Coffman said that due to COVID-19, Arkansas submitted several waivers to the U.S. Department of Education and the requests and approvals are posted on the [ESSA webpage](#). The PSA team created a document to explain the approved waivers -*[The Impact of COVID-19 on State and Federal Accountability and Reporting](#)*.

Ms. Ouida Newton asked If there were no changes to the school that are identified, what was the impact?

Ms. Deborah Coffman said the extension of time allows the schools that qualify for 1003

grants to receive additional funds. The identified schools are also eligible for professional development and support from the District Support Team.

Ms Deborah Coffman also noted that Arkansas will release a 2020 School Report Card as per federal guidance.

Ms. Starlinda Sanders asked Ms. Coffman to explain more about the 1003 grant.

Ms. Deborah Coffman responded that 1003 is a subgrant under Title I. 1003 funds are provided to districts with schools that are identified in need of comprehensive support and schools identified in need of additional targeted support. The schools must use the monies on evidence based practices.

#### **4. ESSA Advisory Group Reports**

Ms. Deborah Coffman asked everyone to keep this question in mind for this next section, "What are the considerations when developing a communication plan for 2020-2021?"

##### **A. District Support - Ms. Jayne Greene**

Mrs. Jayne Green met with the District Support Advisory group and talked about the four concerns for communication:

1. Testing 95% percent of students
2. How to communicate with parents regarding the importance of all students testing
3. Flexibility within the testing window considering quarantine or shutdowns
4. Training for test administration, finding people within the district to train

Recommendations to communicate with parents included communicating through Facebook and working with the Family and Parent Engagement unit on outreach.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat commented he can understand the concern of getting 95% of students for assessment with students being virtual, but we can accomplish it.

##### **B. English Learners- Ms. Tricia Kerr**

Ms. Tricia Kerr said one of the biggest impacts on us is how to identify English Language Learners when we usually identify face to face. Guidance was released in May 2020 that allowed us to identify students during the pandemic. Educators must still use the ELPA 21 screener when the student is available face to face.

Ms. Melissa Branton stated that it's been a lot of work for districts and she is excited to continue down this path.

Ms. Ima Etim asked are the majority of the ESL or ELL students receiving onsite or virtual support?

Ms. Tricia Kerr said that 18.5% of English Learners participate in virtual instruction.

Dr. Denise Airola commented that based on Cycle 2 data, 62% of non English Learners receive onsite instruction and 69% of English Learners are onsite.

### **C. Educator Equity and Effectiveness- Ms. Karli Saracini**

Ms. Karli Saracini stated that her office has provided guidance regarding TESS and LEADS regarding district flexibility regarding educators in a summative rating year. The law requires summative ratings every 4 years. Summative ratings are needed for educators on improvement plans, employment reasons, and teachers who are completing National Board. Due to the waiver, summative ratings are optional for the school year 2020-2021.

### **D. Assessment- Ms. Rachel Horn**

Ms. Rachel Horn thanked Ms. Jayne Green for sharing her advisory group's concerns around testing all students. The Student Assessment Unit is aware that there are some concerns over the logistics of assessment and how that will work this year. Districts are learning from the implementation of the ACT Aspire interim assessments, Grades K-2 assessments, and the Grades 3-8 Ready for Learning assessments. We have seen creative logistics for assessment as districts adjust to meet local needs. Districts are working with families to meet the needs of those students who are remote. Because some districts may be concerned about pivoting during the assessment window, the Student Assessment Unit is encouraging districts to test early if their infrastructure, staff, and technology will allow it.

### **E. Accountability- Ms. Tammie Reitenger**

Ms. Reitenger met with the ESSA accountability advisory committee to discuss communication. This group wants to test in the spring to see the data and know the needs of the schools, districts and state. But the committee is concerned with how the school rating (A-F) will be misused. The parents need to feel comfortable sending their student to test at the school. She suggested districts consider surveying parents to see what their needs are for their student's safety in coming to school for assessments.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat commented that he also feels testing is important but also shares that same concern about how to do it safely? How to make parents feel comfortable bringing their students onsite to test.

Ms. Rachel Horn commented that she wanted to provide assurance that we did have strong numbers of percent tested in the Fall window. If districts communicate and provide safety measures for students, I think parents will be able to see the schools taking student safety seriously. I think those participation numbers will go up in the

Spring.

### **5. Next Steps for ESSA - Ms. Deborah Coffman and Dr. Denise Airola**

Ms. Deborah Coffman recommended no amendment to the approved Arkansas ESSA plan at this time. She recommended considering amendments such as including CTE data and more SQSS components for elementary at a later date.

Mrs. Starlinda Sanders asked how often do we reevaluate changing our ESSA plan?

Mrs. Deborah Coffman responded that we examine the data yearly to see if anything should be amended and bring that information to this committee. Districts rely on the ESSA School Index and the consistency of the data for evaluating progress and planning school improvement.

The committee agreed not to amend the ESSA plan at this time..

Ms. Deborah Coffman said in 2018, Arkansas identified the lowest performing schools in need of comprehensive support. In 2019, 31 out of 41 of these identified schools met the first year exit criteria. The 2020 data would have been the second year exit opportunity. Due to COVID-19 and the federal accountability waivers, everything moved up a year. The 1003 monies and support will continue.

The U.S. Department of Education has offered an accelerated pathway to a one-year addendum that must be submitted by February 1, 2021.

Ms. Deborah Coffman said DESE must ensure that the accountability system is valid, reliable and comparable. She said that Dr. Airola has modeled and analyzed data to present to our Technical Advisory Committee regarding each indicator and component of the ESSA School Index.

Dr. Denise Airola ran simulations regarding percent tested and the data indicates that Arkansas is highly likely to meet the 95% tested requirement at the state level. Individual schools and districts may dip below depending on efforts to engage students and families for testing by spring.

Ms. Deborah Coffman said the approved ESSA plan is a contract with the U.S. Department of Education for accountability and reporting in return for federal funds.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat said he feels confident that statewide we can reach 95% but each district may have issues.

Dr. Harold Jeffcoat made a motion to move forward with asking Secretary Key to proceed with putting the addendum out for public comment and Ms. Ima Etim seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## 6. Plan for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2021, at 9:30 a.m.

## Adjournment

Ms. Starlinda Sanders moved, seconded by Ms. Joyce Flowers, to adjourn the meeting.  
The meeting adjourned.

*Minutes recorded by Lindsey Stroud.*



Ouida Newton, Chair