



Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jacob Oliva, Secretary

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ACT Aspire Results Show Little to No Rebound From Pre-Pandemic Levels

LITTLE ROCK – Statewide preliminary ACT Aspire results for Grades 3-10, released today by the Arkansas Department of Education, show little to modest increases from 2022, with many grades and subject areas reflecting decreases.

Due to COVID-19, administration of the assessment was cancelled during the spring of 2020. When using 2019 test scores as a baseline for pre-pandemic student performance, 2023 scores show little to no rebound.

Grade 3 reading scores showed the most alarming drop, declining from 35 percent of students reading at or above ready in 2022 to 32.2 percent in 2023. Even though modest gains were seen in Grades 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10, only Grade 8 reflects half of the students meeting grade-level expectations.

“These scores demonstrate the profound need for the transformative change offered by the Arkansas LEARNS Act,” ADE Secretary Jacob Oliva said. “These results are a wake-up call, and we must stop the red-light, green-light tug of war with implementation and act with urgency. It’s time we move forward and focus on evidence-based approaches outlined in LEARNS that will result in increased student learning. Our students deserve nothing less.”

The LEARNS Act offers numerous strategies to improve student outcomes. By empowering parents and investing in teachers, which includes raising salaries to some of the highest in the nation, students will have access to classrooms that best meet their needs. The act also includes provisions to hire statewide literacy coaches and provides funding for parents to employ high-impact tutors to assist struggling students.

Additional highlights of this year’s assessment are below.

- Math scores experienced the sharpest declines from 2019. When compared to 2022, scores remained flat in Grade 5. Increases were noted in Grades 3, 4, 6, and 7, with declines noted in Grades 8-10.
- Science scores in Grades 3, 7, and 9 showed gains, with Grade 3 showing the most significant increase from the previous year. Grades 4-6, 8, and 10 saw a decrease from 2022.

Spring 2023 was the eighth and final administration of the ACT Aspire assessment for Grades 3-10, as ACT is no longer offering the ACT Aspire test. Final ACT Aspire scores will be available in the fall of 2023.

ADE is developing an Arkansas-specific test – the Arkansas Teaching and Learning Assessment System (ATLAS) – which will be administered in the spring of 2024. ATLAS will align with Arkansas’ newly-adopted academic standards

for math and English Language Arts.

To learn more, visit <https://dese.link/2023TestScores>.

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