



Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jacob Oliva, Secretary

February 25, 2026

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Arkansas Recognized as a Leader in New 50-State Study on the Future of High School

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The XQ Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focused on rethinking high school, today released a new study of high school policies in every state. The study finds that Arkansas is leading the way in preparing students for life after graduation.

The Future Is High School: A Strategy for State Leaders to Accelerate Learning, Work, and American Renewal identifies ten policy actions to make high school more rigorous and career-connected. With five policy actions in place and another underway, Arkansas is a national model in preparing students for the future.

"From day one, education has been a top priority of my administration because the future of our state depends on the success of our students," **said Governor Sanders**. "We're making high school more rigorous, more relevant, and more connected to opportunity, so every student has the skills and knowledge to thrive and a clear path to success."

The study highlights Arkansas' leadership in real-world learning through Career and Technical Education (CTE). Every public high school in Arkansas is required to offer at least three CTE pathways, and at least one pathway in a High Demand and High Wage occupation. This ensures every student graduates ready to enlist, enroll, or employ. Additionally, the report highlights Arkansas' success in expanding postsecondary coursework and guaranteeing that every high school offers a minimum of four AP courses in core academic subjects.

"Arkansas is setting students up for success by providing them with a wealth of CTE pathways and rigorous coursework to prepare students for college," **said Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva**. "Whether they decide to enlist in the military, enroll in a trade school or university, or enter the workforce, we are giving students every tool in the kit to find stability and success after they leave our schools."

The report, which will be released every two years, underscores the need for strong implementation to ensure that educators, schools, and communities have the support needed to turn innovative policy into real impact.

“States have more opportunity, responsibility, and authority over public education than at any time in recent memory, and Arkansas is showing the entire country what's possible when leaders focus on high school,” **said Russlynn Ali, CEO of XQ Institute and Managing Director of the Education Fund at Emerson Collective.** “With 157,000 job openings to fill each year, Arkansas isn't waiting around to unlock new opportunities for students — because they've realized that high school is the future of everything.”

This spring, XQ will embark on the first leg of its *Future Is High School* bus tour. The tour will be stopping in Arkansas as part of a multi-phase effort to activate local expertise and showcase what is possible when communities lead.

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