

# MERIT PAY QUALIFICATIONS

The Arkansas Merit Teacher Incentive Fund, established by the LEARNS Act (Act 237 of 2023), is a state-funded initiative that rewards exceptional Arkansas educators who demonstrate outstanding performance and a strong commitment to student learning.

## Has an Arkansas Teaching License & 3 Years of Teaching Experience

The teacher should hold a standard or provisional Arkansas teaching license. Educators with a license currently under probation, suspension, or revocation due to a Code of Ethics sanction are not eligible.



## Meets the definition of “teacher” as outlined in the LEARNS Act for Merit Teacher Incentive Fund

“Teacher” is defined as a classroom teacher who spends at least 70% of their contracted time working directly with students in a classroom setting. School counselors and library media specialists also are considered teachers under the LEARNS Act.



## Demonstrates a positive impact on student growth

The teacher should have student growth data based on state summative assessments. The three-year average of this data should show students are growing, **AND** the teacher should have an “EFFECTIVE” or higher annual rating in the Educator Effectiveness System.

**-OR-**

If the teacher does not have three years of student growth data, the teacher must have an annual rating of “HIGHLY EFFECTIVE” in the Educator Effectiveness System in addition to supporting artifacts.



## Falls into at least one merit pay category

The teacher should qualify for at least one of these three categories:

- 1) demonstrate outstanding growth in student performance, 2) teach in a critical shortage area, or 3) serve as a mentor to aspiring teachers participating in a DESE-approved yearlong residency.

Details about merit incentive categories can be found on the next page.

# MERIT PAY CATEGORIES

1

## Demonstrating outstanding student growth

Teachers with the highest growth scores based on statewide summative assessments will be recognized in this category.

These teachers have a three-year average growth score, indicating they consistently increased students' academic performance.

2

## Teaching in a critical shortage area

Each year, DESE analyzes data to determine geographic, subject, and designation areas in need of certified teachers.

Teachers able to fill these critical shortage areas — and who meet the minimum requirements — are eligible for merit pay.

3

## Mentoring future teachers

By the 2026-2027 school year, all approved Educator Preparation Programs must include a yearlong supervised residency alongside an experienced mentor teacher.

As an incentive for sharing their expertise, these experienced mentor teachers — if they meet the basic minimum requirements — are eligible for merit pay.

