



**National  
Urban League**

**State:** Arkansas

## **ESSA State Plan Equity Report Card**

As part of our Equity & Excellence Project (EEP), the National Urban League has reviewed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plans for 36 states and the District of Columbia where we have Urban League affiliates. Under ESSA, the U.S. Department of Education tasked each state with developing a consolidated, streamlined set of requirements for states to address in their plans and submit for federal approval. All plans were approved as of September 2018. These plans provide a preliminary indicator of how states intend to implement the new law and represent a blueprint for state- and district-level decisions that will work to move each state from promise to practice during implementation.

During our analysis, we assessed how well states incorporated equity into their plans and developed a series of report cards that use a green-yellow-red highlight system to rate the plans on 12 Equity Indicators including: early childhood learning, supports for struggling schools, and resource equity. These indicators were selected based on the evidence demonstrating their effectiveness for advancing equity and excellence for vulnerable students in our nation's public schools.

These report cards do not constitute an assessment or analysis of a state's school system. Rather, they identify the extent to which states have included the 12 equity indicators in their ESSA plans. Each state's ranking was determined based on its weighted average performances across each of our 12 equity indicators. Extra weight was placed on those areas that the National Urban League believes are especially critical to advancing equity—subgroup performance, supports, and interventions for struggling schools and for resource equity.

We believe these Consolidated State Plans are a reflection of each state's priorities and represent a road map that will guide a state's investments in districts, schools and communities. We hope that the absence of information in a state's plan is not an indication of its commitment to these education equity priorities and we remain optimistic that states and districts will continue to adopt these 12 equity levers into their plans as they move into implementation.

For more information on our findings, please read our executive summary and full report on [naturbanleague.org](http://naturbanleague.org).



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Plan Approved: January 16, 2018; Link to full text can be found [here](#)

Equity Indicators	NUL Score
<p><b>1. Goals and Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arkansas set very ambitious goals for through 2029 that include 80% grade-level proficiency on test-based measures which is the same for all subgroups.</li> <li>There is alignment between the accountability indicators and the long-term goals.</li> <li>The School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator is researched based and disaggregated: Student engagement as measured by chronic absenteeism for grades K–11; science achievement and growth, and reading at grade level for grades 3–10; ACT® score; high school grade point average; credits earned for community service learning and computer science courses; and credits earned in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or concurrent courses for grade 12.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Poor
<p><b>2. Subgroup Performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subgroups have no independent effect on school ratings, which are calculated using the “ESSA school index” based on the performance of all students. This will mask the performance of subgroups.</li> <li>Arkansas has chosen an n-size of 15 for accountability.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor
<p><b>3. Supports &amp; Interventions for Struggling Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The definition for “consistently underperforming” used to identify schools for “targeted support and improvement” (TSI) is narrower than “additional targeted support and improvement” (ATSI) and identifies subset of schools that should already be identified under the statutory definition of ATSI. This definition risks the under identification of schools in need of support.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor
<p><b>4. Resource Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) includes an indicator that measures resource equity in its accountability system. The access to and success in Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)/Concurrent Enrollment courses is part of the accountability metric for SQSS for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.</li> <li>The ADE’s plan describes the use of set-asides to fund evidence-based activities and strategies for school improvement.</li> <li>The ADE will report resource inequities such as the rate at which low-income and minority students are disproportionately taught by educators who are ineffective and disproportionate exclusionary discipline rates.</li> <li>The ADE’s plan describes a robust process for how it will support districts and schools identified for support and improvement to identify and address resource inequities. The ADE should clarify how it intends to meet ESSA’s reporting requirement of per-pupil expenditures.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Poor
<p><b>5. Educator Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ADE’s plan identifies several strategies to address Title 1 schools whose children are served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.</li> <li>The ADE will use their local needs assessment process to develop local equity plans to identify root causes of equity gaps and address disproportionality. ADE can strengthen</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Poor



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<p>these efforts by including a plan with timelines and interim targets for addressing inequities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ADE should also consider incorporating evidenced-based strategies such as culturally responsive training and mentoring and induction supports to increase pipeline diversity and placed-based efforts.</li><li>• The ADE could also strengthen its use of optional set-aside funding for leadership by using the funds to improve equitable access to effective and diverse leaders.</li></ul>	
<p><b>6. Stakeholder Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ADE’s plan highlights various ways in which diverse groups of stakeholders were consulted in the development of the ESSA plan, although it is unclear how equitable engagement was.</li><li>• The ADE has also developed a network of Equity Labs which will include: teachers, leaders, local school board members, parents, representatives from the business community, nearby educator preparation programs, regional education service cooperatives, and state leaders to continue to focus on educational equity issues during implementation of ESSA.</li></ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>
<p><b>7. Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As part of the school improvement process, LEAs with schools in need of Comprehensive Support and Targeted Support will use discipline data as one of the leading indicators to guide improvement planning.</li><li>• Data such as the number of disciplinary referrals, behavioral practices and teacher and student attendance will be analyzed to support the implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports, reduce class removals and to develop an improvement plan that improves school climate and culture of the identified schools.</li><li>• Students who need additional services will have access through developed school-based mental health service programs. Professional development will be make available to reinforce Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports work.</li><li>• The ADE could strengthen these efforts by including a measure of discipline in its accountability system.</li></ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Sufficient</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>
<p><b>8. Equitable Access to Early Childhood Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ADE’s plan describes how the state will use Title I funds to assist school districts to increase access to pre-k, improve the quality of pre-kindergarten across the state, and improve the transition of students from pre-kindergarten to the early elementary grades.</li><li>• The ADE can strengthen these efforts by adopting the voluntary use of Title II funds for early capacity building to provide effective instruction for early learning educators.</li></ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Sufficient</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>
<p><b>9. Equitable Implementation of College and Career Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As part of the SQSS metric, access and success in AP/IB and concurrent enrollment options exist in accountability for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.</li><li>• Arkansas will use 95% participation rate in AP/IB courses as the denominator for success in this metric..</li></ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>
<p><b>10. Out of School Time Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ADE’s plan includes summer enrichment programs as an allowable use of Title IV programs and should consider including this research-based framework as an allowable use for Title 1 school improvement planning.</li></ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Sufficient</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>



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<p><b>11. Equitable Access to High Quality Curricula</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ADE’s plan missed an opportunity to include career and technical education (CTE) as an indicator in its accountability, despite urging from Arkansas’ stakeholders. Doing so will incentivize further adoption of CTE and industry certifications as a career pathway on par with a college preparatory curriculum.</li><li>• The ADE should strengthen its approach to addressing all conditions for learning by identifying social and emotional learning (SEL) as a substantial component of its teaching and learning practices.</li></ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Poor</b></p>
<p><b>12. Clear Reporting and Transparent Data Systems That Are Easy to Understand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arkansas uses an A-F system and has a public reporting site to house other metrics and data that are not included in the accountability system.</li></ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p>
<p><b>Overall Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Sufficient</b></p>